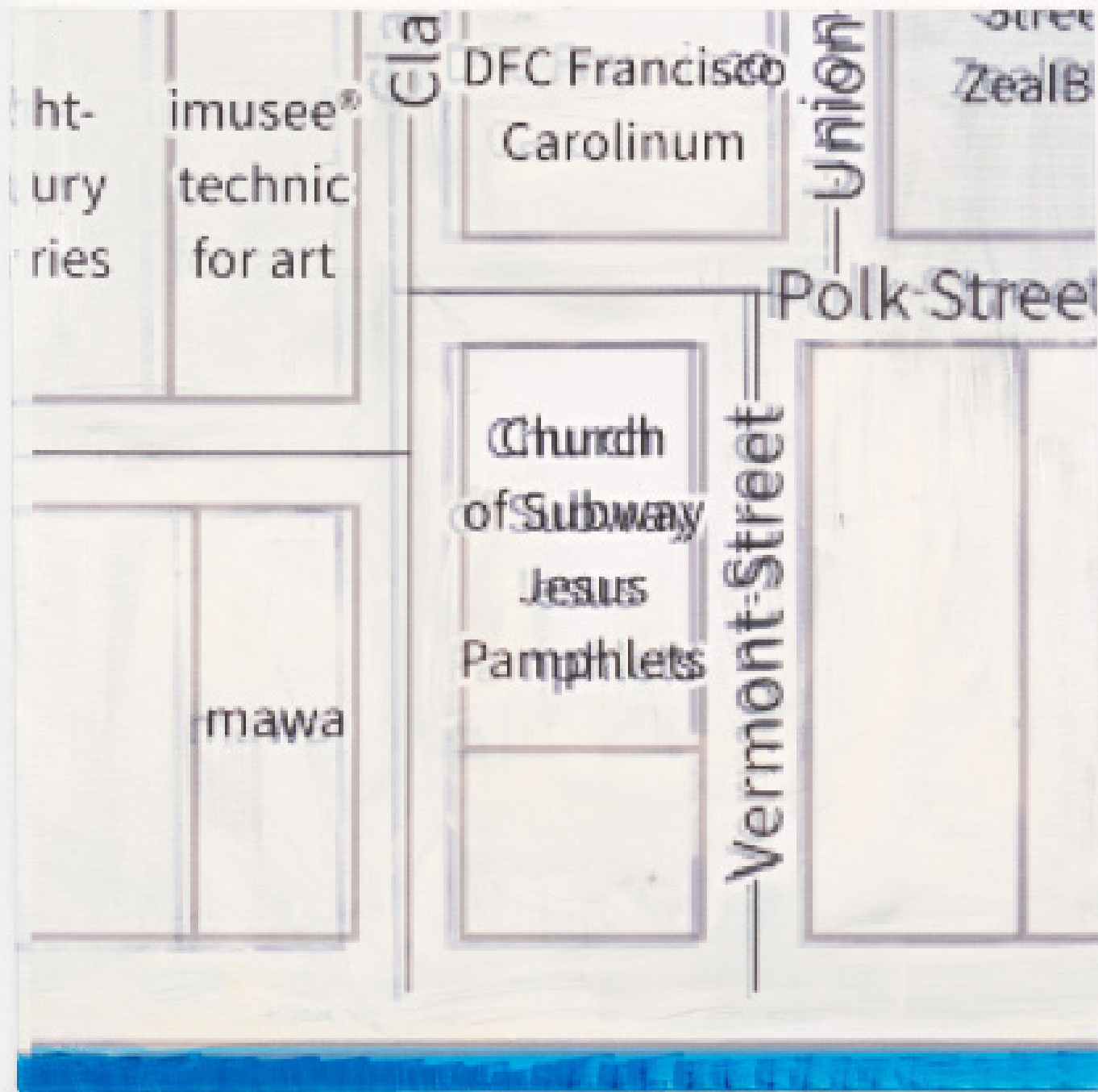


Simon Denny

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New Zealand
P+ 64 9 309 7848
contact@michaellett.com
www.michaellett.com



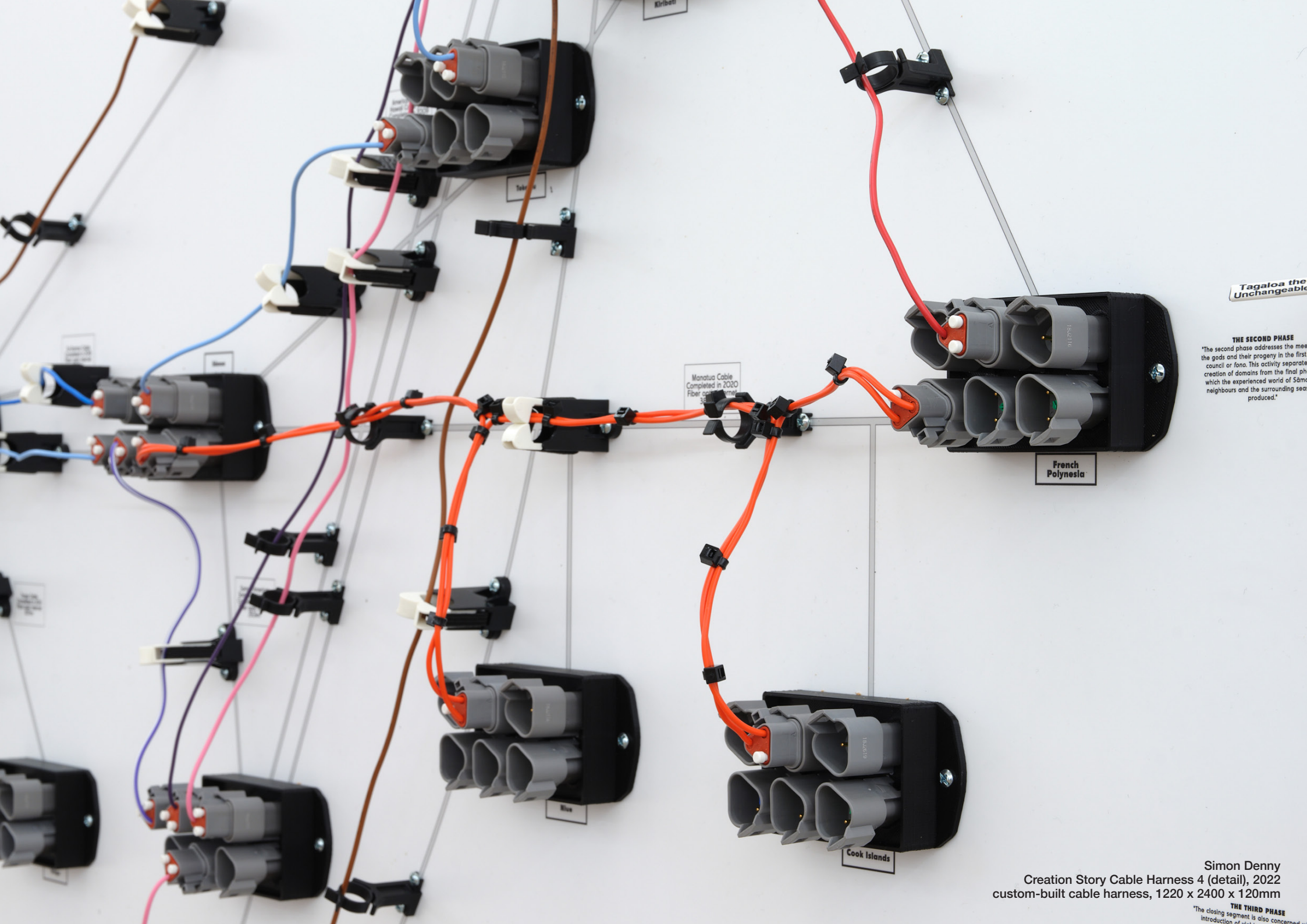
Simon Denny
Metaverse Landscape 21: The Sandbox Land (-2, -23), 2023
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Altman Siegel Gallery
and Petzel Gallery
photo: Nick Ash



Simon Denny
Metaverse Landscape 10: Voxels 23 Clarion Alley, 2023
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz, Altman Siegel Gallery
and Petzel Gallery
photo: Nick Ash



Simon Denny, Creation Stories, 2022
Installation view, Michael Lett, Karangahape Road



Tagaloa the Unchangeable

THE SECOND PHASE
"The second phase addresses the meeting of the gods and their progeny in the first council or fono. This activity separates the creation of domains from the final phase which the experienced world of Samoa, neighbours and the surrounding sea produced."

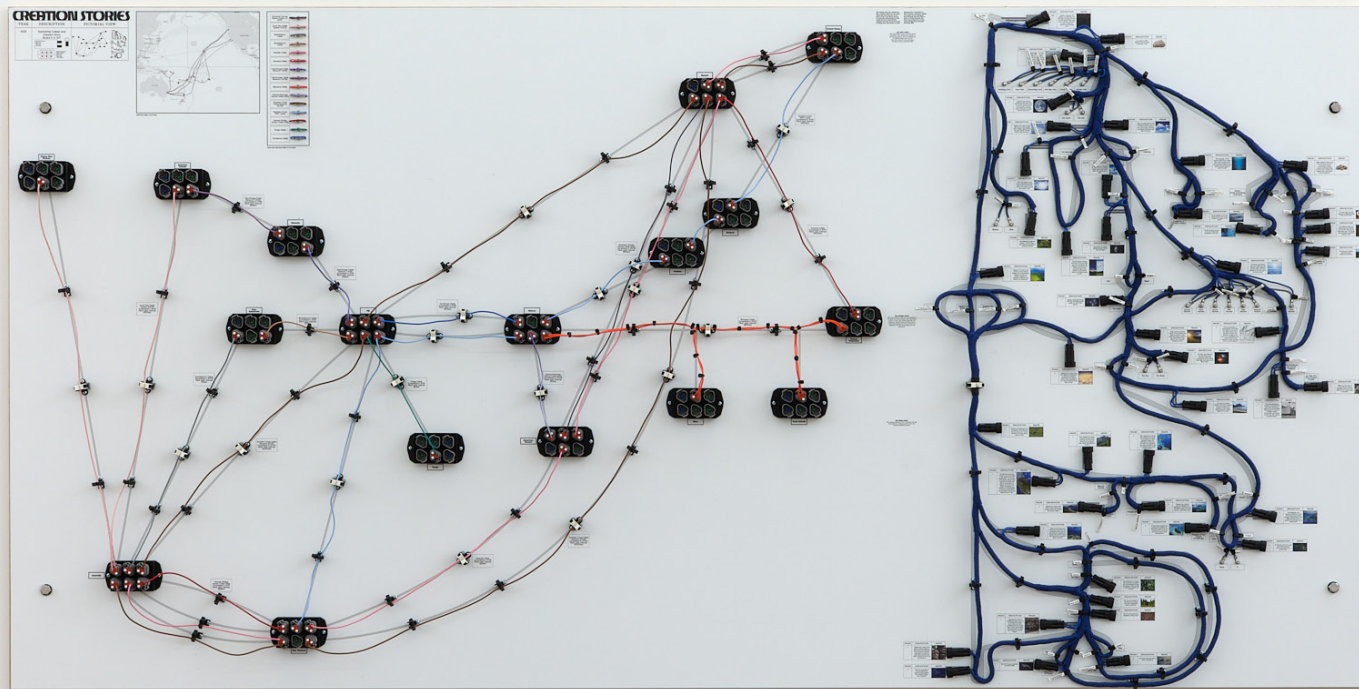
Monatua Cable
Completed in 2020
Fiber optic cable
3.5m

French Polynesia

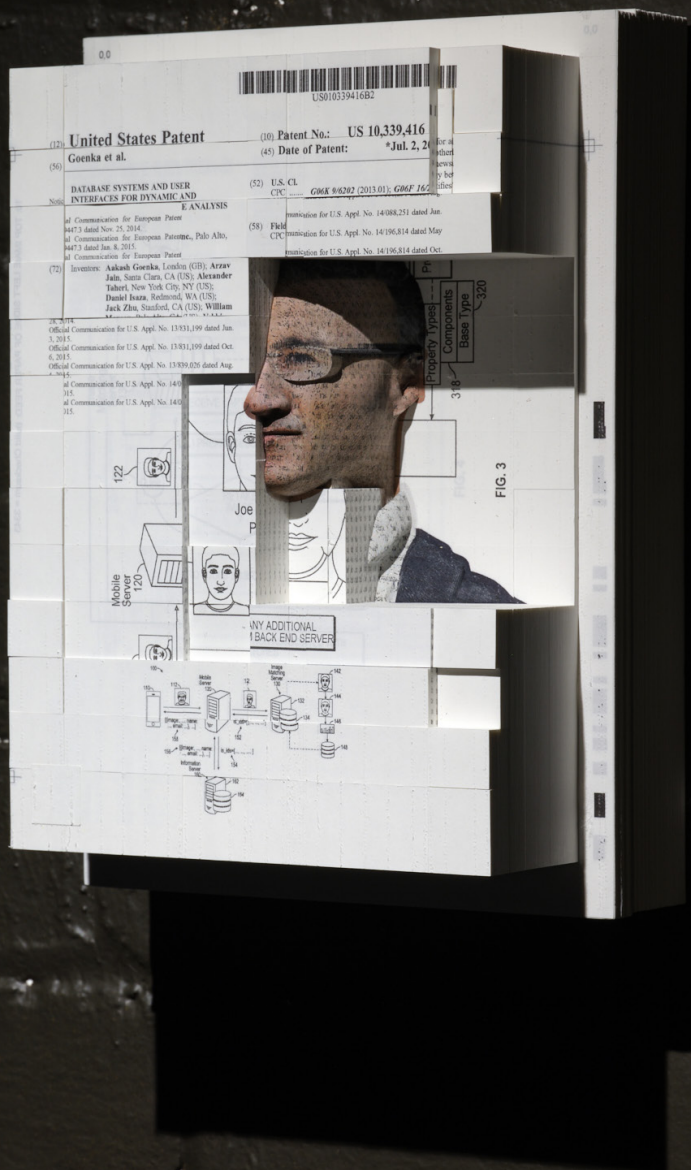
Cook Islands

Simon Denny
Creation Story Cable Harness 4 (detail), 2022
custom-built cable harness, 1220 x 2400 x 120mm

THE THIRD PHASE
"The closing segment is also concerned with the introduction of a new element."

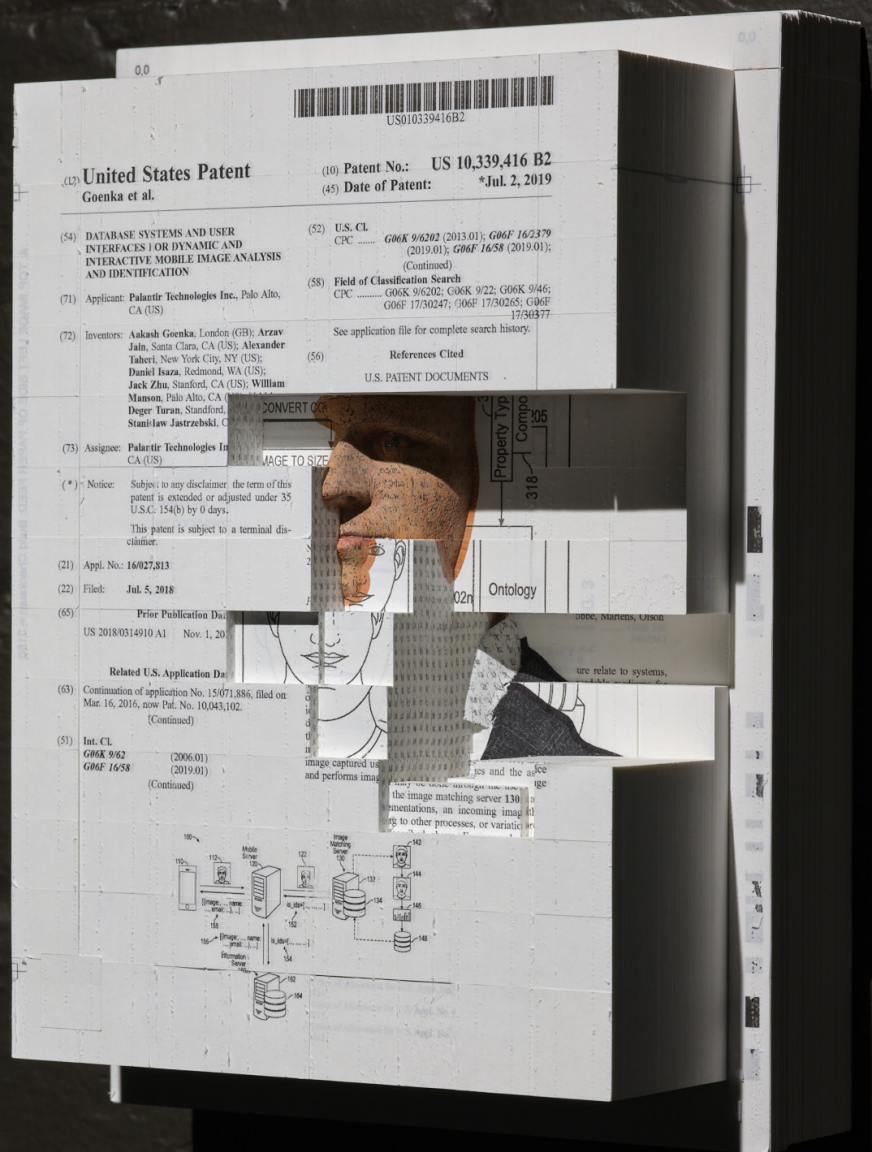


Simon Denny
Creation Story Cable Harness 4, 2022
custom-built cable harness, 1220 x 2400 x 120mm



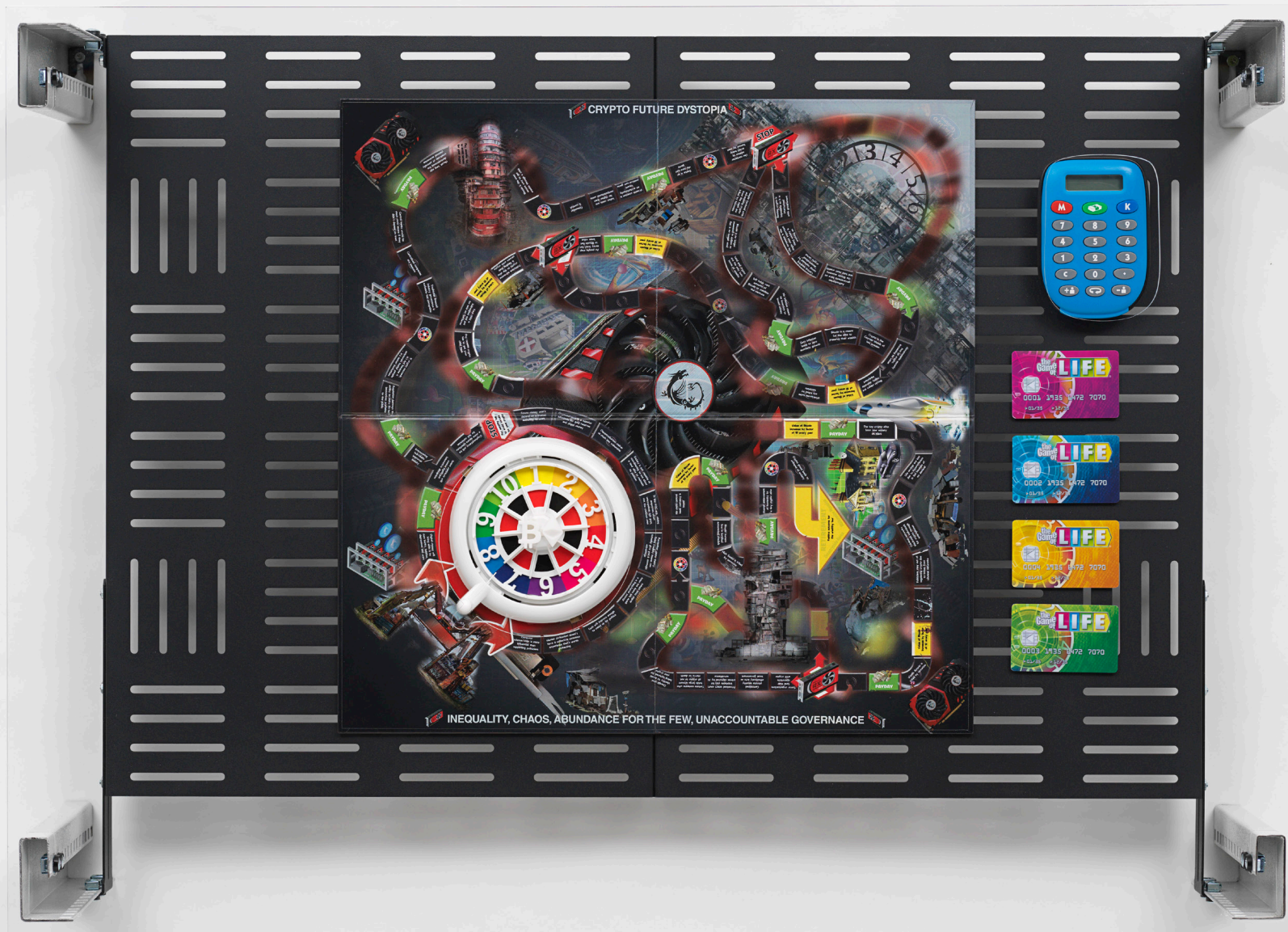
Simon Denny
Document Relief 31 (Palantir Image Identification patent), 2021
Ink Jet Print on Archival Paper, Glue, Custom metal wall mount
297 x 210 x 110 mm







Simon Denny
Installation View, Mine , K21, Düsseldorf, 2020
Photo by Achim Kukulies



Simon Denny
*Crypto Futures Game of Life Overprint Collage: Electronic Banking
 Dystopia*
 2018

Digital print on Hasbro Game of Life Electronic Banking Edition board,
 Game of Life Card reader, Game of Life Bank Cards, powder-coated
 server rack shelving, laser cut Plexiglas, various server rack hardware
 components
 720 x 1000 x 230mm
 Photograph Nick Ash



Simon Denny

*Crypto Futures Game of Life Overprint Collage: Electronic Banking
Dystopia*
2018

Digital print on Hasbro Game of Life Electronic Banking Edition board,
Game of Life Card reader, Game of Life Bank Cards, powder-coated
server rack shelving, laser cut Plexiglas, various server rack hardware
components
720 x 1000 x 230mm
Photograph Nick Ash



Simon Denny
Games of Decentralized Life
Installation view
Galerie Buchholz, Köln, 18 April – 16 June 2018



WEATHERHEAD
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
CASE WESTERN RESERVE
UNIVERSITY

BUSINESS
AS AN AGENT OF
WORLD BENEFIT

MISSION: DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL IDEAS
AND OUTSTANDING LEADERS FOR THE
ADVANCEMENT OF BUSINESS AND SOCIETY.

MBA x UX BOARD GAMES FOR THE FUTURE

Three MBA students from the Weatherhead School of Management in collaboration with six UX design students from the Cleveland Institute of Art discussed the future in a series of seminars in 2017.

Three teams were formed to imagine possible directions for three key industries:

- Healthcare
- Transportation
- Finance

As new technologies and innovation change their realities...

Each team produced a board game reflecting the dynamics of these industries as they expand into tomorrow...

DESIGN INNOVATION WORLD

SHAPING THE FUTURE:
Exploring the intersection of innovation, commerce, and design through form and design.

Design Innovation World
The intersection of design, innovation, and commerce is a complex and ever-evolving landscape. This exhibition explores the role of design in shaping the future of our world, from the products we use to the services we receive. It features a series of interactive displays and panels that delve into the latest trends and challenges in the design industry. The exhibition is a must-see for anyone interested in the future of design and innovation.

TRANSPORTATION
The future of transportation is a topic that has captured the imagination of many. From self-driving cars to hyperloop, the possibilities are endless. This panel explores the latest developments in transportation design and the challenges that lie ahead. It features a series of interactive displays and panels that delve into the future of transportation.

THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION HAS DAWNED
The fourth industrial revolution is a term that has been used to describe the current era of technological change. It is a time of rapid innovation and growth, and it is shaping the future of our world. This panel explores the latest developments in the fourth industrial revolution and the challenges that lie ahead. It features a series of interactive displays and panels that delve into the future of the fourth industrial revolution.

DApp Tycoon
DApp Tycoon is a board game that explores the future of decentralized applications (DApps). It is a game of strategy and chance, and it is designed to be played by a group of people. The game features a series of interactive displays and panels that delve into the future of DApps.

Sanitopia
Sanitopia is a board game that explores the future of healthcare. It is a game of strategy and chance, and it is designed to be played by a group of people. The game features a series of interactive displays and panels that delve into the future of healthcare.

TRANSPORT

Laurin Nelson
Dang Liu
Morgan Luong

FINANCE

Kevin Payne
Heather Hargrow
Yujin Lim

HEALTHCARE

Maria S. Landaeta
Jacquelyn Bickel
Mindy Rolince

Simon Denny
The Founder's Paradox
Installation view
MOCA, Cleveland, 16 February – 10 June 2018
Photograph Jerry Birchfield



Simon Denny
The Founder's Paradox
Installation view
Michael Lett, Auckland, November 2017
Photograph Alex North



Simon Denny
Operation (detail)
2017

resin, polystyrene, New Era cap, Adidas mesh long-sleeved t-shirt,
Nike Free footwear, acrylic paint, gaming cable, wood, Apple earbud
headphones, customised T800 Terminator 2: Judgement Day figurine,
fidget spinner, iPhone 5, Kindle Paper, various New Zealand coins,
novelty Bitcoin ornamental coins, custom lanyard, nootropic powder in
plastic zip-lock bag, Nike Bootstraps
closed crate size 480 x 2040 x 680mm
Photograph Alex North



Simon Denny
Fourth Way Silhouette Jenga Display Prototype (detail)
2017

laser-cut Jenga XXL cardboard blocks, Plexiglas, texts distilled from Max Harris's The New Zealand Project / UV print on unfolded Jenga XXL box 1900 x 700 x 700; Box Overprint 1600 x 1100 x 40mm



Simon Denny
Fourth Way Silhouette Jenga Display Prototype / New Zealand Project
Sovereign Individual Jenga XXL Box Overprint
2017
laser-cut Jenga XXL cardboard blocks, Plexiglas, texts distilled from Max
Harris's *The New Zealand Project* / UV print on unfolded Jenga XXL box
1900 x 700 x 700; Box Overprint 1600 x 1100 x 40mm
Photograph Alex North



"You've made it to Stanford – where the wind of freedom blows! But where will your choices take you?"

THE GAME

Mine Crypto, go to Burning Man – even move to New Zealand if you want to. But at every fork in the road, you'll need to make a call. Will you be holding hands, or shaking the Invisible Hand? You decide – the world is yours!

Hold hands or shake the Invisible Hand?

YOUR PATH

HUMANITY OR TECHNOLOGY?

On your first turn, choose whether you want to enrol in Stanford's **Technological Institute**, or a **Humanities degree**. Pursuing a career path in **tech** has higher potential financial rewards in the future. But it also comes with greater risks as you progress. You could make a fortune – or lose it all!



AGES 10+ | 2-5

RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS
IDEOLOGICAL QUEST FOR THE PROSPEROUS PATH

GETTING STARTED

RISKY CRYPTO OR SAFE FIAT MONEY?

LIFE is a game powered by Money. You won't get very far without it. And it can be taken away just as easily as it can be given. LIFE's money poses a question as you earn it – do you stick with **Fiat** or go with **Crypto**? You choose. Crypto is more volatile, it can raise or drop down in value. Fiat is **stable** but slow in growth and flexibility.



Decide every Payday: Fiat or Crypto? With Fiat you'll know exactly how much you owe, or how much you're due. With Crypto it's much less predictable – the value will be risked with a second spin of the spinner – an even number multiplies the value of the Crypto, an odd number divides.



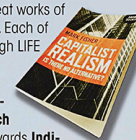
SPIN
FOR CRYPTO VALUE:
EVEN = MULTIPLY
ODD = DIVIDE

WHO DO I LISTEN TO?

READ LIFE-CHANGING TEXTS

WHICH TEXTS ARE MEANINGFUL FOR ME?

Along the way, you'll encounter great works of **economic vision and philosophy**. Each of these will affect your journey through LIFE in **very different** ways. Writers like **Timothy Morton** and **Mark Fisher** could propel you towards a **Collective future**. **Ayn Rand** and **Friedrich Hayek** could smooth your path towards **Individual Sovereignty**. If you land on an author's square, you must collect their Literature Card. Follow the instructions therein – which may be:



Fisher: Pay 60% of your money as tax to the Banker. Collect 4 LIFE Chips for your generosity.

Morton: Donate 50% of your money to an environmental cause. Collect 3 LIFE Chips for your generosity.

Rand: Donate 25% of your LIFE Chips to a conservative Super PAC. Get an extra turn.

Hayek: Use 25% of your money to set up a free market think-tank at an obscure University. Move forward 4 spaces.

PAY TAXES – OR NOT!

When you reach a **fork in the path**, you can choose whether you wish to **PAY TAXES** and follow a **redistributive path to your future**, or keep moving forward. If you decide to follow the redistributive path into the **Collective Sovereignty Area**, you have effectively retired. You'll collect a Guaranteed Minimum Income – and there is no way this can be taken away from you.



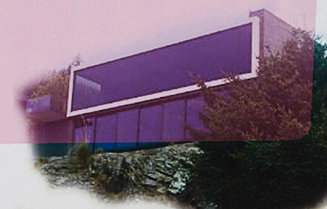
IMPORTANT

CHOOSE A PATH – NOW OR LATER

Do you **share the wealth** or continue to **accumulate capital beyond your wildest dreams**?

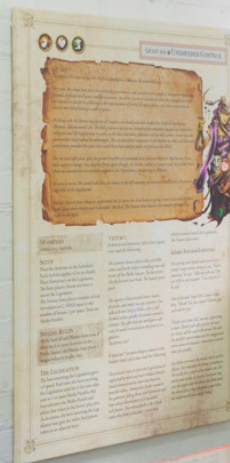
SPIN THE WHEEL – HOW LUCKY ARE YOU?

On your turn, spin the wheel. (If the spinner arm stops between numbers, spin again.) Then move the number of spaces on the spinner. **Always move forward**, in the direction of the arrows (just as in real life, **you can't go back in time**). If you land on an occupied space, move ahead to the next open space. Follow the space directions. This ends your turn.





Simon Denny
Game of Life: Collective vs Individual Board Game Display Prototype
(detail)
customised Das Spiel des Lebens game pieces, 3D prints, UV print on
Butler Finish aluminium Dibond, UV print on card, customised LED lamps,
moulded electronic wiring, Dell PowerEdge 1950 server casing, Linoleum,
MDF, powder coated steel, Plexiglas
1050 x 1030 x 1030mm



Simon Denny
The Founder's Paradox
 Installation view
 Michael Lett, Auckland, November 2017
 Photograph Alex North



 Digital Asset

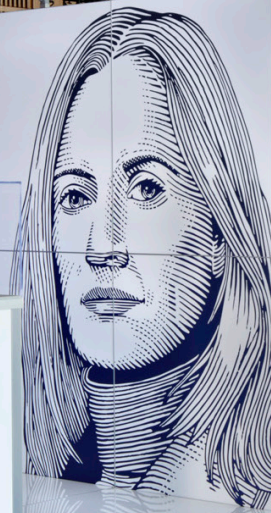
Asset



Blockchain for
Efficiency
Security
Settlement speed
Compliance
in existing markets



Blockchain without decentralization
Automated verification means
your organization can do more -
with smaller teams
Added security, transparency,
disruptive innovation



DIGITAL ASSET
BLOCKCHAIN
FUTURE
STATES



Simon Denny
Blockchain Visionaries
Installation view
Berlin Biennale, 4 June – 18 September 2016
Photograph Hans-Georg Gaul



BLOCKCHAIN
FUTURE
STATES

₿

BITCOIN IS A PROTOCOL
THAT ENABLES A TRUE
GLOBAL FREE MARKET

WHEN SOFTWARE EATS THE WORLD
VOICE YOUR DISSSENT IN
THE NATIONALIST
LAND BELOW
EXIT TO

SMTP
TRANSMISSION
PROTOCOL

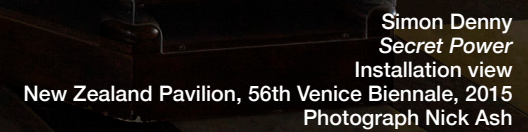
TCP
TRANSMISSION
PROTOCOL

BTC
MONEY
PROTOCOL

UDP
USER
DATAGRAM
PROTOCOL

DNS
DOMAIN NAME
PROTOCOL

Simon Denny
Blockchain Visionaries
Installation view
Berlin Biennale, 4 June – 18 September 2016
Photograph Hans-Georg Gaul





Simon Denny
Secret Power
Installation view
New Zealand Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale, 2015
Photograph Nick Ash



Simon Denny
Secret Power
Installation view
New Zealand Pavilion, 56th Venice Biennale, 2015
Photography Paulo Monello



Simon Denny
The Innovator's Dilemma
Installation view
MOMA PS1, New York, April 2015
Photograph Pablo Enriquez



Simon Denny
The Innovator's Dilemma
Installation view
MOMA PS1, New York, April 2015
Photograph Pablo Enriquez



Simon Denny
Products for Organising
Installation view

Serpentine Sackler Gallery, November 2015

Simon Denny

Born 1982 in Auckland, New Zealand
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

EDUCATION

2010
Studio program, Kölner Kunstverein

2009
Meisterschüler, Städelschule, Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (prof. Willem De Rooij)

2004
BFA, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, New Zealand

AWARDS & ACHIEVEMENTS

2015
Selected to represent New Zealand at the 56th Venice Biennale
New Generation Award, Arts Foundation of New Zealand

2014
Walters Prize finalist

2013
Young Alumnus of the Year, University of Auckland, New Zealand
Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst nomination

2012
14th Annual Balaise (Art Statements) Prize , Art 43 Basel
Ars Viva-Preis for Art, Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft im BDI e. V.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

2023
Optimism, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (solo)
Landscapes, Fine Arts, Sydney (solo)
Metaverse Landscapes, Kunstverein in Hannover, Frans Masereel Centrum, Kasterlee, Belgium, Alman Siegel, San Francisco (solo)
Collective Worldbuilding, HEK (House of Electronic Arts), Basel, Switzerland (group)
Are You Working Now, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan (group)
Gödel Escher Bach, West Den Haag, Den Haag (group)
Brave New Work, Galerie Alte Schule, Berlin, Germany (group)
Notes from the Ether, Science Museum Singapore (group)
The Irreplaceable Human, Louisiana Museum, Denmark (group)
Virtual Worlds, Fundacion Telefonica, Madrid, Spain (group)
Horizons: Is there anybody out there?, Long Museum, Shanghai, China (group)

2022
Digital Capital NFTs. Curated by Simon Denny with Viola Lukacs, Kunsthalle Berlin Flughafen Tempelhof
Post-Capital: Art and the Economics of the Digital Age, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen
Creation Stories, Michael Lett, Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland / Collaboration between Dr. Karamia Müller and Simon Denny
World out of Joint, Kunstmuseum Winterthur
Among the Machines, Zabłudowicz collection, London (group)
Worlds of Networks, Centre Pompidou, Paris (group)
something new, something old, something desired, Kunsthalle Hamburg (group)
Information (Today), Astrup Fearnley Museum, Oslo (group)
Beneath the Skin, Between the Machines, How, Shanghai (group)

2021

Dotcom Séance, folia.app, www.dotcomseance.com, NFT release by Simon Denny in collaboration with Guile Twardowski and Cosmographia.
 Proof of Stake, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, curated by Simon Denny
 Mine, Petzel Gallery, New York (solo)
 Simon Denny. Extractor, Kunstfenster im Haus der deutschen Wirtschaft, Berlin (solo)
 Futura Proxima, Galerie Gismondi, Paris (group)
 Feeling the Stones, Diriyah Biennale, Diriyah (group)
 Jahresgaben 2021, Kunstverein in Hamburg (group)
 Simon Denny et al., Micheal Lett Gallery, Auckland (group)
 The Ethereal Aether. An Exhibition of Digital Art, Hermitage Museum (Virtual show)
 A Time to Embrace and to Refrain from Embracing, 6th Ural Industrial Biennial, Ekaterinburg (group)
 Post-capital, MUDAM The Contemporary Art Museum of Luxembourg, Luxembourg (group)
 Eclipse, Athens Biennale 7th, Athens (group)
 Iskra Delta, 34th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana Institution Building, CIVA, Brussels (group)
 Don't Be Evil, UQ Art Brisbane, Brisbane (group)
 Telepathy and New Labour, Kunstverein am Rosa-Luxemburg-Platz, Berlin (group)
 State of Nature, Kunsthalle Baden Baden, Baden Baden (group)
 Hiding in Plain Sight, Pace Gallery, New York (group)
 footnotes and headlines, Andrew Kreps Gallery, New York (group)
 Fair Use: What's Mine is Yours, Altman Siegel, San Francisco (group)
 Information (Today), Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (group)
 The Dreamers, 58th October Salon, Belgrade (group)
 Burning Speech, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Torino (group)
 Proof of Art, Francisco Carolinum, Linz (group)
 Natively Digital: A Curated NFT Sale, Sotheby's – New York, London,

Hong Kong (group)

Baroque Topologies, Kunstverein Leipzig, Leipzig (group)
 Opening the Space, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen K20, Düsseldorf (group)
 A Post-Internet Quarantine, Sof:Art, Bologna (group)
 Aquaria – Or the Illusion of a Boxed Sea, MAAT, Lisbon (group)
 Beyond States: The Boundaries of Statehood, Zeppelin Museum Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen (group)

2020

Mine, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen K21, Düsseldorf (solo)
 Security Through Obscurity, Altman Siegel, San Francisco (solo)
 Worker Cage Document Reliefs, Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney (solo)
 100 Drawings from Now, The Drawing Center, New York (group)
 We Never Sleep, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt am Main (group)
 Studio Berlin, Boros Collection at Berghain, Berlin (group)
 Abducting Europa, Impakt, Utrecht (group)
 crypto_manifold, Chronus Art Center, Shanghai (group)
 Art in the Age of Anxiety, Sharjah Art Foundation, Sharjah (group)
 Survival of the Fittest, Kunsthalle Erlangen, Erlangen (group)
 Uncanny Valley: Being Human in the Age of AI, de Young Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, San Francisco (group)
 Algotaylorism, Kunsthalle Mulhouse, Mulhouse (group)

2019

Regulation, T293, Rome (solo)
 Mine, Museum of Old and New Art, Berriedale, Tasmania (solo)
 The Founder's Paradox, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Christchurch (solo)
 Circular Flow, Kunstmuseum Basel, Basel (group)
 Future and the Arts, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (group)
 City Flip-Flop, Taiwan Contemporary Culture Lab (C-LAB), Taipei (group)
 Quid est veritas?, Anna Kultys Gallery, London (group)
 The Invisible Hand, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney

(group)
 40,000 - A Museum of Curiosity, 14th Small-Scale Sculpture Triennial, Alte Kelter Fellbach (group)
 Uncanny Values, Vienna Biennale for Change 2019, Vienna (group)
 SIGNALS – Algorithms of Disobedience, New Media Center_kuda.org, Gallery SULUV, Novi Sad (group)
 Art Contemporary Club, 10th Festival Chromatic, Usine C, Montreal (group)
 Face with Tears of Joy, Blitz Malta, Malta (group)
 Digital Dilemma - The Architecture of Trust, Bureau Europa, Maastricht (group)
 Tomorrow is the Question, ARoS, Aarhus (group)
 The Alt-Right-Komplex, Dortmunder U (group)
 Me You Nous, Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne, Cité du Design, Saint-Étienne “Dialogue”, Georg Kargl FINE ARTS, Vienna

2018

Proof of Work, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin / Curated by Simon Denny
 Games of Decentralized Life, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne (solo)
 The Founder's Paradox, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (solo)
 Dialogue, Georg Kargl Fine Arts, Vienna (group)
 Your North is my South, Museum für neue kunst, Freiburg (group)
 This is New Zealand, City Gallery, Wellington, Wellington (group)
 Was Raised on the Internet, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (group)
 Primary Care, Hocken Collections, Dunedin (group)
 Hybrids, Lustwarande, Tilburg, The Netherlands (group)
 Imagined Borders, Gwangju Biennale, South Korea (group)
 The Order of Things, Hocken Collections, Dunedin (group)
 Proof of Work (curated by Simon Denny), Schinkel Pavillion, Berlin (group)
 Constructing the World: Art and Economy 1919-1939 and 2008-2018, Kunsthalle Mannheim, Germany (group)
 As We May Think: Feedforward, Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou

Museum of Art, China (group)

2017

The Founder's Paradox, Michael Lett, Auckland (solo)
 Real Mass Entrepreneurship, Fine Arts Sydney, Sydney (solo)
 FAAS – Feedback as a Service: Reflecting on messaging, debate and criticality inside a parliamentary discussion on internet governance, BOZAR, Brussels (solo)
 Real Mass Entrepreneurship, OCAT, Shenzhen (solo)
 Hammer Projects: Simon Denny, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (solo)
 Unfinished Conversations: New Work from the Collection, Museum of Modern Art, New York (group)
 Dark Clouds Silver Linings: Hessel Museum, CCS Bard, New York (group)
 Please come back, MAXXI, Rome (group)
 Hack Space, K11 Art Foundation, Shanghai (group)

2016

Secret Power, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (solo)
 Blockchain Future States, Petzel Gallery, New York (solo)
 Business Insider, WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (solo)
 Hack Space, K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong (group)
 Fluidity, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg (group)
 Homo Mundus Minor, T293, Rome (group)
 What People do for Money, Manifesta - The European Biennial of Contemporary Art, Zürich (group)
 Blockchain Visionaries, 9th Berlin Biennale, Berlin (group)
 Emotional Supply Chains, Zabudowicz Collection, London (group)

2015

Products for Organising, Serpentine Sackler Gallery, London (solo)
 Secret Power, New Zealand Pavillion, 56th Venice Biennale (solo)
 The Innovator's Dilemma, MoMA PS1, New York (solo)

Toys Redux - On Play and Critique, Migros Museum, Zurich (group)
Implicated and Immune, Michael Lett, Auckland (group)
Political Populism, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (group)
6th Moscow Biennale of Contemporary Art (group)
After Babel, Moderna Museet, Stockholm (group)
La vie moderne, 13e Biennale de Lyon, Lyon (group)

2014

The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington (solo)
The Darknet - From Memes to Onionland, Kunsthalle St Gallen, Switzerland (group)
To the End of the Line, Chateau Shatto, Los Angeles (group)
The Walters Prize, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand (group)
New Management, Portikus, Frankfurt (solo)
The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom, Firstsite, Colchester (solo)
TEDxVaduz redux, T293, Rome (solo)
The Go-Between, Ernesto Esposito Collection, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples (group)
Art Post-Internet, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (group)
Disruptive Berlin, Galerie Buchholz, Berlin (solo)

2013

Preis der Nationalgalerie für junge Kunst, Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin (group)
Systeme, Ars Vida 12/13, Kunsthalle zu Kiel (group)
Systeme, Ars Viva 12/13, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Vaduz (group)
Speculations on Anonymous Materials, Fredericianum, Kassel (group)
The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig wien (MUMOK), Vienna (solo)
All You Need is Data, Petzel Gallery, New York (solo)
All You Need is Data, Kunstverein Munich, Munich (solo)
The Encyclopedic Palace, Venice Biennale (group)

L'image dans la Sculpture, Centre Pompidou, Paris (group)

2012

ars viva 2012/13 Systeme/Systems, Neues Museum, Nuremberg; Kunsthalle zu Kiel; Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein (solo)
Things, Words and Consequences, Moscow Museum of Modern Art, Moscow (group)
Letter from Alice May Williams, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (group)
The Walters Prize, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand (group)
Full Participation, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, Colorado, (solo)
Remote Control, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, England (group)
Made Active: The Chartwell Show, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, Auckland, New Zealand (group)
Envisaging Vocational Rehabilitation, Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster (solo)

2011

Corporate Video Decisions, Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, (solo)
Corporate Video Decisions, Michael Lett, Auckland, (solo)
Based in Berlin, KW – Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (group)
Collecting Contemporary, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington (group)
Cruise Line, NAK Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (solo)
Chronic Expectation: CFS/ME Documentary Restoration, T293, Rome (solo)
7 Unreachable Elevators, IMO, Copenhagen (solo)
Simon Denny, Matthew Buckingham, Will Bradley, Landings, Vestfossen, Norway (group)
Let Us Compare Mythologies, Witte De With, Rotterdam, The Netherlands (performance series)
Der Western leuchtet, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn, Germany (group)
Dystopia, CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux, Bordeaux

(group)

That's the way we do it, Kunsthaus Bregenz (group)

Various Trasmitters, Renwick Gallery, New York (group)

2010

The Front Room, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis (solo)

Negative Headroom: the broadcast signal intrusion incident, Halle Für Kunst, Lüneburg (solo)

Remote Tutorial: hate poems for travelers, Landings Project Space, Vestfossen (solo)

Introductory Logic Video Tutorial, Artspace, Sydney (solo)

The Smart Frridge. Chilly Forecast for Internet Fridge, Kunstverein Medienturm, Graz (group)

Trailer Park, Teatro Margherita, Bari (group)

More Pricks Than Kicks, David Roberts Foundation, London, England (group)

Forbidden Love : Art in the Wake of Television Camp, Kölischer Kunstverein, Köln (group)

The Luminous West, Kunstmuseum, Bonn (group)

Permanent Mimesis. An Exhibition on Realism and Simulation, GAM Underground Project, Turin (group)

Re-Dressing, Bortolami Gallery, New York (group)

Let us compare Mythologies, Witte de With, Rotterdam (group)

Throwing Three Balls in the Air to Get a Straight Line, Malmö

Konsthall, Malmö (group)

Vuelo fuera del tiempo, Museo de la Ciudad de México, Cuauhtémoc (group)

The Perpetual Dialogue, Andrea Rosen Gallery, New York (group)

2009

Deep Sea Vaudeo, Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, Germany (solo)

Starting from behind, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

Watching Videos Dry, T293, Naples, Italy (solo)

Quodlibet II, Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne, Germany (group)

Seven Drunken Videos, Luttgen Meijer, Berlin, Germany (solo)

2008

Aquarium Paintings (with Nick Austin), Centre, Berlin, Germany (two-person)

Witte de Withe curated section: Show Me Don't Tell Me, Brussels Biennial, Belgium (solo presentation)

79a Brick Lane, London, United Kingdom (solo presentation)

The Gentle Art of Collapsing the Expanded Field, Cardenas Bellanger, Paris, France (group)

Alexandra Bircken / Simon Denny, Ursula Blickle Stiftung, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (two person)

Revolutions: Forms that Turn, Sydney Biennale 2008, Sydney, Australia (solo presentation)

Recent Haircuts, Uplands Gallery, Melbourne, Australia (solo)

Recent Haircuts, Gambia Castle, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

Leftovers, Micamoca Berlin, Berlin, Germany (group)

I am a man, Parade with Arto Lindsay, Portikus, MMK and the Stadelshule, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (group)

Menschheit, Mother's Tankstation, Dublin, Ireland (group)

Liste 08, Michael Lett Stand, Basel, Switzerland (group)

Art LA, Michael Lett Stand, Los Angeles, USA (group)

2007

Post Mass Audience Age, Hamburg Hfbk Gallery, Hamburg, Germany (group)

Monthly Cowards, Gambia Castle, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

Compression Club, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

Filaturen, Sies + Höke Galerie, Dusseldorf, Germany (group)

Domestic Irony, Museion, Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art Bolzano, Italy (group)

The Köln Show 2, European Kunsthalle / Galerie Sprueth Magers, Köln, Germany (group)

Paltry Motion, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, Dunedin, New Zealand (solo) (Exh. Cat.)

Moment Making, Artspace, Auckland, New Zealand (group)

Prospect, Wellington City Art Gallery, New Zealand (group)

Group Show!, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (group)

2006

Break/Construct, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth New Zealand (group)

Old entertainment system, Window, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

54321 Performance Projects, with Tahi Moore, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland New Zealand (group)

Mostly Harmless: performance series, with Tahi Moore, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth New Zealand (group)

Archiving Fever, Adam Art Gallery, Victoria University, Wellington, New Zealand (group)

The Natural Order of Tact, LISTE 06 Art Fair (solo show) Michael Lett Stand, Basel, Switzerland (solo)

SCAPE, Art & Industry Biennial, Christchurch New Zealand (solo project)

News is also on Television, live performance with Tahi Moore, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

Old Things, Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand (solo)

2005

They Who Would Eat the Fruit Must First Climb the Tree, with Tahi Moore, RM103, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

Waikato Art Awards, Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton, New Zealand (group)

Arranging Sympathies, Volume Series, The Physics Room, Christchurch, New Zealand (solo)

A Process of Bewilderment, with Tahi Moore, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington, New Zealand (two person)

Creative New Zealand recent graduate show, CNZ Offices Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Tahi and Simon find the morning towards the border of bewilderment and begin construction, with Tahi Moore, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

2004

Left Di Right, with Tahi Moore, Special Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

Auckland Project, 2nd Auckland Triennial Public/Private Tumatanui/Tumataiti, George Fraser Gallery, Auckland, New Zealand (group)

Ergophobia, Windowspace, with Tahi Moore, Cnr Custom Street and Commerce St, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

2003

Die Die Die, George Fraser Gallery, with Tahi Moore, Auckland, New Zealand (two person)

PUBLICATIONS

2023

“Proof of Stake: Technological Claims” Milan: Lenz Press.

2021

“Post Society / After language - Special Project,” Cura. #37

“Media Organize: A Companion to Technological Objects,”

Kunstverein in Hamburg

“Positioning in Research as Practice” with Karamia Müller in “Tell me about yesterday tomorrow,” Hirmer Verlag

2020

“Spielregeln für Extractor,” Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, K21, Düsseldorf

2019

“Extractor” board game and catalogue, Museum of Old and New Art

2018

“Proof of Work” Schinkel Pavillion

“The Haunted Mansion of Crypto,” Buchholz, Petzel

2017

"The Founder's Paradox: A Compendium," Michael Lett
 "Simon Denny Takeover," Kaleidescope Publishing

2015

"Products for Organising." London: Serpentine Galleries and Koenig Books, 2015. Texts by Simon Denny, Keller Easterling, Amira Gad, Ryan Gallagher and Moritz Schularick.
 "Simon Denny: Secret Power." Milan: Mousse Publishing and Koenig Books, 2015. Texts by Chris Kraus, Robert Leonard, Metahaven and Simon Denny.
 "The Innovator's Dilemma." New York: MoMA PS1, 2015. Texts by Peter Eeley, Jocelyn Miller and Agatha Wara.

2014

"New Management." Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2014. Texts by Sophie von Olfers, Matt Goerzen, Sam Grobart, Jinny Kim, Lee Kun-hee and Lee Won-bok.

2013

"The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom." Cologne: Walther König, 2013. Texts by Christian Höller, Jasmine McNealy, Matthias Michalka, interview with Laura Preston.
 "All You Need is Data: The DLD 2012 Conference REDUX." Munich: Kunstverein Munich, 2013. Texts by Dr. Michael Littger and Karen Archey, interview between Simon Denny and Hans-Ulrich Obrist.

2012

"Full Participation." Aspen: Aspen Art Museum, 2012. Texts by Jacob Proctor, Pablo Larios, and Hanna Hölling.
 "Envisaging Vocational Rehabilitation." Münster: Westfälischer Kunstverein, 2012. Text by Joanna Fadyl.

2011

"Cruise Line." Cologne: Walther König, 2011. Texts by Norman M.

Klein and Mark von Schlegell.

2010

"Video Aquarium Broadcast." Cologne and Auckland: Galerie Daniel Buchholz and Michael Lett, 2010. Texts by Nicolas Ceccaldi, Simon Denny, and Simon Pound, interview with Dan Arps.

2008

"Simon Denny." Kraichtal: Ursula Blickle Stiftung, 2008. Texts by Nicolas Ceccaldi and David Levinson, interview with Katja Schroeder. Sarah Hopkinson, ed. Gambia Castle. Auckland: Gambia Castle Press, 2008.

2007

"Simon Denny", The Köln Show 2. Text by Annette Hans.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2023

Overell, Rosemary. "Seeing Things" in *Documents 2021-2023*. Auckland, Michael Lett Publishing.

2022

Deiss, Amely et al. (eds.) *Survival of the Fittest – Nature and High Tech in Contemporary Art*. Berlin: Distanz.
 Lopesi, Lana. "Mapping Relation" in *Metro Magazine*, Auckland.
 McAvoy, Emil. "The Roles We Play" in *Art Collector Magazine*, Sydney

2021

Futura Proxima: A Magazine Curated for Gucci. Antwerp: A Magazine.
 Basar, Shumon et al. (eds.) *The Extreme Self*. Köln: Walther König.
 Bratton, Benjamin et al. (eds) *Vertical Atlas*. Rotterdam: Digital Earth, Nieuwe Instituut.

Cotton, Michelle (ed.) *Post-Capital: A Reader*. Luxembourg: Mudam Luxembourg.

Kholief, Omar (ed.) *Art in the Age of Anxiety*. Morel Books and Sharjah Art Foundation.

Marotta, Ilaria et al. (eds.) *The Dreamers. The Book*. Rome: Cura.

Millies, Mafalda et al. (eds.) *Still Here*. DISTANZ Verlag, Berlin

Schaffhausen, Nicolaus et al. (eds.) *Tell Me About Yesterday*

Tomorrow. Munich: Hirmer Publishers, Munich

Ricupero, Cristina et al. (eds) *We Never Sleep*. Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt.

2020

Bazar, Nikki et al. (eds.) *Beyond the Uncanny Valley: Being Human in the Age of AI*. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco in association with Cameron Books.

Denny, Simon et al. (eds.) *Spielregeln für Extractor*. Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen.

Denny, Simon and Pope, Joanna, "Class Struggle 2020," *Frieze* Magazine.

Spiteri, Raymond. "Documenting the Fall: Decadence, Descent and Monsters in the Art of Simon Denny." Victoria University of Wellington.

2019

Byrt, Anthony, "Gaming the System," *Artforum*, September 2019, p. 198.

2015

Light, Liz "Italy: NZ takes centre stage at Venice Biennale," *Stuff.co.nz*, July 5, 2015.

Kanai, Miki, "Mechanical Monuments and Innovations of Mediatized Space,"

Bijutsutecho, Special Issue, Spring 2015, p. 73.

Gallagher, Ryan, "Inside the Secret World of NSA Art," *The Intercept*, June 11, 2015.

Denny, Simon and Jacob Proctor, "1000 Words: Simon Denny Talks

About Secret Power," *Artforum*, May 2015, pp. 336-341.

Jeppesen, Travis, "Data Mine," *Frieze*, May 2015, pp. 178-183.

"Must See New York: Friday, May 8," *Artforum Art Guide*, May 2015.

Turner, Zeke, "Culture A to Z: Venice Cultural Kapital," *Departures Magazine*, May /June 2015, p. 176.

Gates, Charlie, "Kiwi artist Simon Denny creates 'unwitting star' at Venice Biennale art show," *stuff.co.nz*, May 6, 2015.

"Simon Denny's Secret Power opens in Venice," *voxy.co.nz*, May 6, 2015.

Higgins, Charlotte, "Simon Denny, the artist who did reverse espionage on the NSA," *The Guardian*, May 5, 2015.

Mcgarry, Kevin, "New Zealand's Contribution to the Venice Biennale: A Library and an Airport, Transposed," *New York Times Style Magazine*, May 1, 2015.

Russeth, Andrew, "Venice: Simon Denny, New Zealand Pavilion," *W Magazine*, May 2015, p. 48.

Lau, Venus, "Simon Denny," *Kaleidoscope*, Issue 24, Spring/Summer 2015, pp. 156 -165.

Leverant, Zoë, "Simon Denny: The Innovator's Dilemma Opening with Genius," *Flavorpill*, April 2015.

Freeman, Nate, "Tech World Junkie Simon Denny Turns MoMA PS1 Into a Wacky Fake Tech Conference," *Observer*, April 2015.

Champoux, Kevin, "From Trade Show Aesthetics to the Airport: An Interview with Simon Denny," *Art in America*, April 24, 2015.

"Must See New York: Simon Denny, The Innovator's Dilemma," *Artforum.com*, April 23, 2015.

Heddaya, Mostafa, "How to Get Ahead in Advertising: Simon Denny at PS1," *Blouin Artinfo*, April 15, 2015.

Chu, Christie, "Simon Denny Insists Art Is a Place Where People Want Substance and Depth," *Artnet News*, April 9, 2015.

Sayej, Nadja, "Simon Denny Turned the World's Most Overused Tech Term into Art," *Good Magazine*, April 8, 2015.

Freeman, Nate, "Tech World Junkie Simon Denny Turns MoMA PS1 Into a Wacky Fake Tech Conference," *New York Observer*, April 7, 2015.

Paul, Kari, "At Launch Party, Post-Rap Genius Shows How to Annotate Anything on the Web," Motherboard, April 6, 2015.
 "Simon Denny's Upcoming First Solo Exhibition at MoMA PS1," NZedge.com, April 6, 2015.
 Denny, Simon and Matt Goerzen, "Critical Trolling," Mousse Magazine, April 2015, p. 190-205.
 Leverant, Zoë, "Simon Denny: The Innovator's Dilemma Opening with Genius," Flavorpill, April, 2015.
 Reichert, Kolja "Can One Make Works of Art which are not 'of Art'," Spike Magazine, Spring 2015, p. 48-60.
 Vartanian, Hrag, "ArtRx NYC: Simon Denny," Hyperallergic, March 31, 2015.
 "Wohin zu Ostern: Simon Denny in New York," Monopol, March 30, 2015.
 Denny, Simon, "Portfolio: Simon Denny and Cut Collective, Kim Dotcom 'Call of Duty' Paintings," Art in America, March 2015, pp. 138-145.
 "'SECRET POWER' DE SIMON DENNY AL PAVELLÓ DE NOVA ZELANDA DE LA BIENNAL DE VENÈCIA," Bonart, February 8, 2015.

2014

Schafhausen, Nicolaus, "Best of 2014," Artforum, December 2014, p. 287.
 Knight, Kim, "Biennale artist follows his love," stuff.co.nz, November 23, 2014.
 Oliver, Henry, "The Art of Success," Metro Magazine, November 2014, pp. 58 - 65.
 Cooper, Ashton, "Artist Simon Denny On Silicon Valley, Skeuomorphic Design, and Tech Conferences," Blouin Artinfo, November 4.
 Dekker, Diana, "The power of one: The rise of Simon Denny," stuff.co.nz, September 29.
 Draganova, Viktoria, "Simon Denny 'New Management'," KubaParis.com, September 1.
 Simon Denny, "SAMSUNG Über Alles: Artist Simon Denny Exhibits

the Electronic Company's Climb to Global Dominance," 032c, August 08.
 Hoy, Dan, "Diruptive Berlin: Simon Denny," Novembre Magazine, Spring – Summer 2014, pp. 64-71.
 "Simon Denny at Portikus," Art Media Agency, July 31.
 Gifford, Adam, "Walters Prize contenders: Living rough and a taxi to nowhere," The New Zealand Herald, July 19.
 Denny, Simon, "Summer Reading," Artforum, Summer 2014, p. 99.
 Proctor, Jacob, "Simon Denny," Artforum, May 2015, p. 200.
 "Walters shortlist announced," The New Zealand Herald, March 22.
 Fite-Wassilak, Chris, "How to Improve your Algorithm," Art Monthly, March 2014, pp. 5-8.
 "Artist SIMON DENNY IS Shaping Berlin's Disruptive Startup Culture," 032c, January 31.

2013

Forrest, Nicholas, "Simon Denny Named New Zealand's 2015 Venice Biennale Artist," Blouin Artinfo, October 1, 2013.
 Doran, Anne, "Simon Denny at Petzel," Art in America, September 2013, pp.143-144.
 Gentles, Tim, "Denny in New York," EyeContact, August 8, 2013.
 Lützow, Gunnar, "Digital ist besser," Kunst Magazin, pp. 60-61.
 Smith, Roberta, "Digital Dogma, Deconstructed," The New York Times, July 11, 2013.
 Saltz, Jerry, "To Do: July 3-17, 2013," New York Magazine, July 8-15, 2013, p. 91.
 "Simon Denny," Monopol, June 2013, p. 31.
 Boie, Johannes, "Variationen ueber ein Thema," Sueddeutsche Zeitung, July 4, 2013.
 "Kim Dotcoms Besitztümer im Wiener mumok", derStandard.at, July 3, 2013.
 Archey, Karen, "Coporations Are People Too", Modern Painters, June 18, 2013, pp. 52-54.
 "New exhibition devoted to young contemporary creation opens at the Centre Pompidou", artdaily.org, June 6, 2013.

Zhong, Fan, "Venice Preview: Simon Denny," W Magazine, May 31, 2013.

Daly-Peoples, John, "Five New Zealand artists for the Venice Biennale," The National Business Review, May 12, 2013.

McGarry, Kevin, "Simon Denny: Kunstverein Munich," Frieze 155, May 2013, p. 228.

Völzke, Daniel, "Zukunft war gestern: Simon Denny parodiert in München digitale Visionäre," Monopol, March 2013, p. 122.

Davies-Cook, Susanna, "Simon Denny," Sleek, January 9, 2013.

2012

"Best of 2012: The Artists' Artists," Artforum, December 2012, p. 116.

Larios, Pablo, "Devolutions", Spike 34, December 2012, pp. 57-65.

Heiser, Jörg, "Ignorieren reichte nie, Ironisieren nicht mehr,"

Frankfurter Allgemeine, October 26, 2012.

Forbes, Alexander, "German National Gallery Announces the Four Nominees for Its 2013 Young Art Prize," Blouin Artinfo, September 14, 2012.

"Baloise Art Prize Announced at Art 43 Basel," artlyst.com, June 15, 2012.

Russeth, Andrew, "Simon Denny and Karsten Födinger Garner Art Basel's Baloise Art Prize," The New York Observer, June 13, 2012.

Larios, Pablo, "Pure Products Go Crazy," Frieze-magazin.de, Summer 2012.

Milliard, Coline, "Remote Control: London's ICA Dissects the Conflicted Love Affair Between Artists and Television," Blouin Artinfo, April 15, 2012.

Malouf, Mathieu, "A Painting is a TV That Doesn't Work," Texte Zur Kunst, March 2012, pp. 180-182.

Reinhardt, Nora, "Das Eigenleben der Kleckse," Die Zeit n10, March 2012.

SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING

2021

The World Around in Focus: Land, Guggenheim Museum

Extractor Game Night, "Eclipse", Athens Biennale 7th, Athens

Conversations | NFTs in the Art World: Beyond the Hype, Art Basel

DISAPPEARING BERLIN x Reference Festival, Bierpinsel, Berlin

"Artists in Conversation: Simon Denny, Eugenia Lim and Elisa

Giardina Papa", UQ Art Museum, Brisbane

"Symposium: Proof of Stake", Kunstverein in Hamburg

"The Long Present", Architectural Association School of Architecture (Online)

Horasis Global Meeting: The Arts: Virtualizing Reality, Embracing Humanity, horasis.org

Breaking Glass III - Virtual Space: Staging the Future, breakingglass.staedelschule.de

In Conversation with Uncanny Valley Artist Simon Denny, instagram.com/deyoungmuseum

A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding NFTs: Session 4, Christie's Education, online
Impakt TV: NFT: Non-Fungible Tokens, Impakt, Utrecht

Big Tech's Claims from Social Media to Crypto, The European Graduate School, online

2020

CPH: Conference, Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival, Copenhagen
Global Art Forum 14: "Do you story", Art Dubai, Dubai

FOG Design + Art, San Francisco

2019

Innovative City Forum 2019, Tokyo

Theme parks for extraction at MAK Future Lab/Vienne Biennale Talk, Vienna

States of Consciousness in cognitive Capitalism at Saas-Fee

Technology Now: Christopher Kulendran Thomas in conversation with Simon Denny, ICA, London
“Open Score: Art and Technology”, New Museum, New York
Artist Talk, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand
DLD Conference: Digital-Life-Design, Munich
Hack Space with Hans Ulrich Obrist, Amira Gad and Simon Denny, Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong Public/Private | Debating Disruption: Has Technology Really Changed the Artworld?, Art Basel Miami Beach

2015

spiel / raum: kunst, Class Michael Diers, HFBK, Hamburg
Translate, Intertwine, Transgress, Poetry Will Be Made By All!, Modena Museet, Stockholm
“Images of Surveillance”; Goethe Institute, New York
Artist Talk “Political Populism”, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna
Spike Magazine Roundtable, with Natascha Sadr Haghhighian, Kolja Reichert Simon Denny and Alexander Koch, Spike, Berlin

2014

Simon Denny: Conversations in Contemporary Art, Concordia University, Montreal “The Innovator’s Dilemma”, Staedelschule, Frankfurt am Main
“The Innovator’s Dilemma”, City Gallery, Wellington
“Seven on Seven”, Rhizome, New Museum, New York
Isa Genzken, Was, Is and Will Be, Museum of Modern Art, MoMA, New York

2013

TEDxVaduz, Kunstmuseum Liechtenstein, Liechtenstein
Social Entrepreneurship, MoMA PS1, New York

2012

Remote Control with Ira Schneider (Raindance Corporation), ICA, London

Kunstzeitraum, PIN Freunde der Pinakotek der Moderne in collaboration with Suedhausbau

2010

Artists Talk, Artspace, Sydney

SELECTED TEACHING

2023

Ongoing Professor of Time-based Media at HFBK in Hamburg (Since October 2018)
Co-Founder of BPA, Berlin Program for Artists, Mentoring program (Since 2016) Initiated by artists Angela Bulloch, Simon Denny and Willem de Rooij, the Berlin Program for Artists (BPA) aims to bring young artists in contact with more established colleagues from the various contexts and networks that make up Berlin as a city of arts.

2021

Lectures at University of Fine Arts Münster (Online)
PhD Critique at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, New York (Online)
Lectures at Power Station of Art, Shanghai (Online)

2018

Workshop at University of Turin for Master in Design for Arts and Cultural Innovation

2017

Guest workshop, Graphic Design Department, Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam
Workshop, Class Yougjin Yoo, Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio
Studio visits, Class Michael Stevenson, Akademie der bildenen Künste, Nürnberg
Workshop, class Britta Thie, Hochschule für Gestaltung, Offenbach
Studio visits, UCLA, University of California, Los Angeles

2016

Seminar: Tech and Distributed Governance, ICA, Institute for Contemporary Art Miami

Studio Visits, Royal College of Art, London

Studio Visits, Goldsmiths College, London

Studio Visits, Royal Danish Academy of Art, Copenhagen

Exhibition Tour at 9th Berlin Biennale, Class Saim Demircan,

Akademie der bildenen Künste München Artist Talk and tour at 9th

Berlin Biennale, Class Irene Calderoni, Campo, Fondazione Sandretto

Re Rebaudengo, Turin

2014 Studio Visits, MFA, Studio Arts, Concordia University, Montreal

Studio Visits: Royal Academy of the Arts Stockholm, Stockholm

2010 Studio Visits, De Ateliers, Amsterdam

Studio Visits, Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland,

Auckland

AUCKLAND

Simon Denny

MICHAEL LETT

“The Founder’s Paradox” was Simon Denny’s first solo exhibition in his native New Zealand since 2014. For this ambitious project, the artist commandeered the entire gallery space for a complex of inter-related floor- and wall-based works that riff on classic board games to address a new chapter in his ongoing dissection of the intertwining of technology, neoliberal ideology, and capitalism, and of its consequences for the individual and the nation-state. The exhibition took New Zealand as a test case for a mythic struggle between libertarian and social-democratic values and, in the show’s most reflexive moment, for a self-analysis in which Denny acknowledges his connection to a local artistic lineage and hints at the dilemma of his own entanglement in the systems he anatomizes. “The Founder’s Paradox” spoke of origins and destiny with an unexpectedly personal caveat about artistic agency caught between innovation and redundancy.

Denny’s *modus operandi* was elegantly evident. He begins by choosing his subject, this time in collaboration with writer and journalist Anthony Byrt, a regular contributor to *Artforum*. They selected Peter Thiel, an early Facebook investor, a cofounder of PayPal and big-data start-up Palantir, and an arch-libertarian and venture capitalist who has identified New Zealand as a suitable bolt-hole, gaining citizenship and buying land in the picturesque, remote, and relatively unpopulated South Island. For Denny, Thiel is archetypal: a Silicon Valley entrepreneur whose future-oriented thinking offers a chilling vision of the “sov-



The exhibition’s coda was *Operation*, 2017, a life-size cast of the artist’s full body dressed in black Nike clothing and presented in a coffinlike crate. Here, Denny reconceives Hasbro’s eponymous battery-operated game, in which players compete to extract organs without triggering an alarm, so that his torso contains not heart and lungs, but a cracked iPhone and a dead Kindle. Pitched to an audience who knows where he comes from, this piece takes an autobiographical turn to implicate and embed the post-internet artist as prey to the very “operations” that are his stock-in-trade. Such self-reflection is new to the artist’s practice. In a system of rapid and disruptive change, Denny may be searching for a reparative purpose that might make sense of the momentum of his artistic trajectory.

—Christina Barton

Simon Denny, *Operation*, 2017, resin, polystyrene, New Era cap, Adidas shirt, Nike Free shoes, acrylic paint, gaming cable, Apple earbuds, customized T-800 *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* figurine, fidget spinner, iPhone 5, Kindle Paper, various New Zealand coins, novelty Bitcoin ornamental coins, lanyard, nootropic power in plastic bag, Nike shoelaces, 18 7/8 × 80 3/8 × 26 3/4".



Artist Simon Denny at Michael Lett gallery .

Building the future

Artist Simon Denny has been away for a decade becoming art-world famous. Now he's returning with an ambitious exhibition that unpacks the strange politics of cutting-edge technology, and the peculiar tale of recent New Zealand citizen Peter Thiel.

In almost exactly a decade, artist Simon Denny has forged an extraordinary reputation in the international art world, winning prestigious prizes and staging solo exhibitions at New York's MoMA PS1 and London's Serpentine. Almost all of these projects have explored the pervasive impacts of new "disruptive" technologies on our lives – from internet piracy through mass surveillance, to bitcoin and blockchain. And as *Secret Power*, Denny's exhibition at the 2015 Venice Biennale showed, New Zealand has been an essential presence throughout. This week, Denny returns to Auckland with a multi-layered exhibition at Michael Lett that delves, in part, into the strange world of Facebook investor and recent New Zealand citizen Peter Thiel. Before he left Germany for his trip back to New Zealand, Denny and I talked on the phone about his latest work.



Anthony Byrt: Let's rewind 10 years. When you left New Zealand in the mid-2000s, you weren't looking at the tech world at all. What changed?

Simon Denny: I'd had a practice in Auckland that was very focussed on materials and thinking about space, and really working with "stuff" in the studio. When I moved to Frankfurt, I no longer really had a studio, I felt displaced, and my laptop became super-important to me. I started realising that everything I was doing was through this object; the internet and that laptop became my whole world. I thought, well, if I'm an artist who's interested in the experience of objects, why am I not making something about the most important object in my life? From there I got interested not just in technological objects but in who was making them, and who was defining what was possible within the parameters of tech. And that's how I stumbled on the startup world, which was totally new to me.

That came together in *All You Need is Data – the DLD 2012 Conference*, which was shown in Auckland as part of the 2014 Walters Prize. That was really the first work I made about the technology community and the politics of tech. A bunch of my

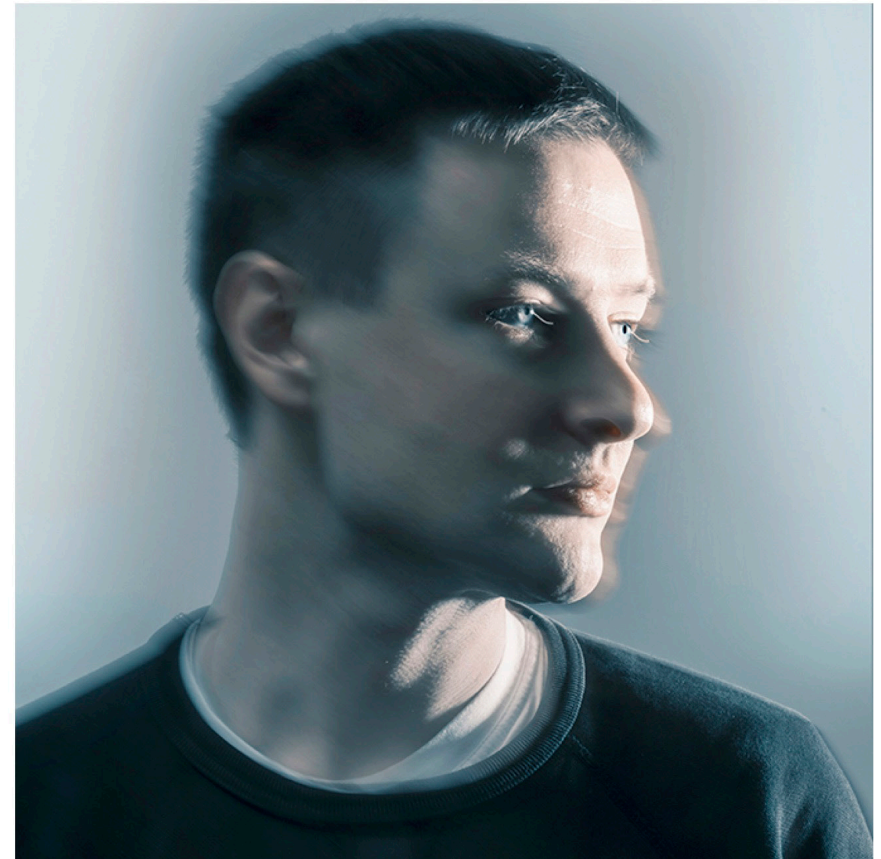
friends went to this conference in Munich, 'Digital Life Design' (DLD) in 2012, which [the super-curator] Hans Ulrich Obrist was curating artists into. But it was really a startup conference. There were all these crazy-powerful people speaking, like the founder of Twitter, the founder of Wikipedia, the COO of Facebook. It was the glitterati of the tech scene. I thought it would be interesting to make an artwork about the conference – to try to extract some sort of mood from this group of people and give a snapshot of their values. That's where it all started. Every iteration of my work since has looked at the tech community from that angle. The significance of what these people build and why they build it is getting more important by the day, and the work of unpacking what that means culturally is just enormous.

Though it has never been shown in its entirety here, Denny's Secret Power at the 2015 Venice Biennale was one of the most political shows by him or any other New Zealand artist. Taking its title from a 1996 Nicky Hager book, it used the NSA Powerpoint slides Edward Snowden leaked in 2013 to examine the visual culture of mass surveillance and New Zealand's own role in the Five Eyes intelligence network. In a "nationalistic" context like the Venice Biennale, where Denny had been selected to represent his country, it was a huge roll of the dice. But it worked. The world's media were fascinated and it became one of the major talking points of the Biennale.

How were the seeds of Secret Power planted? That project felt blessed from the beginning. Like everybody else, I saw the Snowden slides. Because I was interested in tech and how organisations present themselves to the world, they were deeply interesting to me. They just weren't what you expected to see from a governmental agency: they were jokey, boastful, dark, and also had this Powerpoint aesthetic, which I love. Snowden himself and the way the whole thing was framed was really interesting too. So I thought it was really fertile territory.

How did Nicky Hager and the Five Eyes/New Zealand angle enter the project? At that time I hadn't made work about governmental tech before, and I certainly wasn't an authority on the issues involved. Obviously I was making the New Zealand pavilion, so there was an inherent national-representation angle to the whole thing. And there was this book, called *Secret Power*, which had come out in the 1990s and had talked about New Zealand's involvement in the same thing [as the Snowden slides]! And Nicky was in touch with the journalists who were breaking the

Snowden stuff, like Glenn Greenwald. So I thought it was amazing that New Zealand had this guy who'd done all this work, which in retrospect looks much more important than it did at the time. At the same time as the announcement of my project, [Hager's book] *Dirty Politics* dropped, and Nicky became a very visible figure. It was an amazing set of circumstances that came together.



*In January the New Zealand Herald journalist Matt Nippert broke a story that had all the bones of a Denny project: the news that the **Silicon Valley super-investor Peter Thiel is a New Zealand citizen** (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/business/news/article.cfm?c_id=38&objectid=11790034). Thiel was a co-founder of PayPal and the first outside investor in Facebook: a kind of techno-seer who now backs everything from*

*biotechnology startups who want to help us live forever to a company that wants internet-connected fridges to mine bitcoin. Not long after Nippert's first article about "Citizen Thiel" was published, Denny and I began corresponding. Together, we started researching the connections between Thiel's worldview – a mix of hardcore libertarianism, Christian theology and Lord of the Rings fantasy – and New Zealand. We ended up focussing heavily on one of Thiel's favourite books, an obscure and bizarre libertarian text from 1997 called *The Sovereign Individual*, which talks about the coming collapse of nation-states and the ways "cybercurrency" will liberate individuals from the burdens of democracy and taxation. We also discovered that the book's authors, James Dale Davidson and Lord William Rees-Mogg, had been involved in a controversial property transaction in Wairarapa in the mid-1990s – exactly the same time Hager was working on his book *Secret Power*.*

*Denny has synthesised these confluences and coincidences into his new exhibition, *The Founder's Paradox*. His response to the Thiel and Sovereign Individual material has been to create elaborate board games that riff on popular strategy games like *Settlers of Catan* and *Descent – Journeys in the Dark*. But as an antidote to all this anarchic individualism, he has also created games based on Max Harris' *The New Zealand Project* – a book that maps out a completely different vision of New Zealand's future: one, in Harris' formula, of "care, creativity and community".*

Peter Thiel has been a central figure in your Silicon Valley universe for a long time. Why was now the right time to make a show about him? From his book *Zero to One* to his involvement with the Trump election, to founding and investing in some of the most far-reaching companies on the planet – Thiel is a cultural figure who is undeniable in his influence. The fact that he's involved in New Zealand politics now, albeit tangentially – as you say, it suits my interests very well. I'm in this strange position as a Pākehā New Zealander who's lived in Germany for 10 years. My New Zealandness and my relationship with the country is always in me, but I'm also really interested in a global conversation. Somehow, the figure of Thiel seems at the intersection of all these things. That's not all positive; I think a lot of the things he's touching on are potentially negative. I think his questioning of democracy is highly problematic. But his influence is really outsized. A number of the people I've got to know over the years in Silicon Valley view him as a very important thinker. So

taking his philosophy seriously and unpacking it is something that has a cultural relevance for New Zealand, but also just as a living person in the world right now. We need to know what we're dealing with here.

And you decided to use Max Harris's vision in *The New Zealand Project* as a sort of counterpoint to Thiel's libertarian worldview. Why? We're in this moment that's emerged from the Trump/Brexit effect on politics, and the changing perceptions of news media, where we're starting to get these propositions that imagine different ways of [society] working. Thiel is one end of that, where he's imagining a world with the frame of some kind of libertarianism. But then you get other people imagining what it might be to build societies based on totally different values. When you introduced me to Max's writing, and when I started thinking about what it meant for New Zealand, it made sense as a kind of counter narrative. Because while I think Thiel is important, I think it's also important to look at things that aspire to other kinds of hope as well. Harris's analysis of New Zealand politics struck a different chord with me, particularly around redistributive ways to deal with finance, and a contemporary effort at framing decolonisation, which seems such an important but really difficult process to get right. I was refreshed by that.

The two opposing views really turn this show into a conversation about what the future looks like and who gets to create it. Related to this is your fascination with blockchain and bitcoin, which both make an appearance in the exhibition. This is another thing I've flip-flopped on a lot. It's such a complicated topic. Bitcoin and blockchain have scaled into things with undeniable power – in shifting where finance is going, and where networked computing is going to go. Most of the people I'm in conversation with in tech who are building companies and startups are saying that this is the next web; that this is going to be the basis of the next internet. It was the same feeling I had coming to the DLD project in 2012 – I was like, this is a watershed moment that's going to have a huge impact on the way we think about the world and the way we can act. People interested in culture need to understand this, and I feel like I'm an artist who may have a toolkit to translate what this could mean into visual/cultural space.

That brings us to *The Sovereign Individual*, which is a very weird and troubling book published in 1997. But it does do a very good job of anticipating blockchain and cryptocurrency. And it's one of Thiel's favourites. That book is kind of

amazing. There are really dark parts of it. But its way of imagining a world where nation-states simply don't exist and aren't a part of our landscape – and let's hope that doesn't come into existence – is kind of prescient. I have to be clear – it's not a vision of the future I particularly look forward to. But it has an outsized influence on a group of powerful people who are imagining the [future] world. To understand that headspace is very important if you want to be part of that conversation, in the sense of either building alongside these people and augmenting what they're doing, or directly opposing them. To think about where these interests are coming from, and what these interests really are, is, to me, a super-urgent thing to do.

But this is the challenge of your work for some people, I think – and I was one of them for quite a while: knowing what it is you're trying to say. As in, where Simon Denny the “individual” stands in relation to such contentious ideas. I'm genuinely ambivalent about a lot of this stuff. I'm curious about things that change the world. But I find it easy to see different sides of arguments, and much harder to reach a clear conclusion about things that are constantly changing. While I really want to draw attention to certain arguments and things I think have a lot of cultural importance in the world, to say something resolute – like, this is this way or that's that way – I find really hard to do. I don't interact with the world like that, and I don't feel like that about things in the world. My craft is exhibition-making. That is really what I do. Every time I make a work I try to get all of those sculptural and visual things to reflect the content. So I think the highest-quality message I can deliver comes from how my exhibitions look and feel, and how they read as contemporary art. I really value art, and it's art for a reason.

The Founder's Paradox, Michael Lett, 312 Karangahape Rd, Sat 18 Nov-Fri 22 Dec.



The aspirations of Citizen Thiel

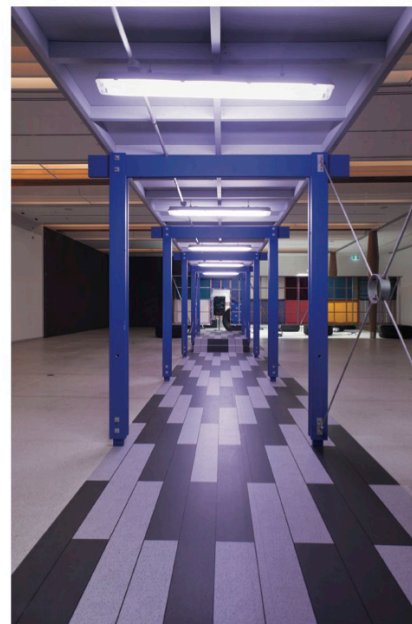
Julia Teale compares and contrasts two recent exhibitions by Simon Denny and Michael Stevenson that both feature the controversial tech-capitalist and New Zealand passport-holder Peter Thiel.

Two major New Zealand artists who currently reside in Berlin have been showing new work in Auckland this summer – Simon Denny at Michael Lett and Michael Stevenson at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki. Both of these artists loosely define their practice as ‘research based’, which means that they mine information, and information technology and its ethos more specifically, for the content of their works.

Although the two shows are utterly different in timbre, they share a fascination with Silicon Valley venture capitalist and recently minted New Zealand citizen Peter Thiel. Denny’s and Stevenson’s installations do not rely on one another for context and meaning, but by exploring both I was drawn into a leviathan-like topic: cyber-technology and its ‘overlords’. All in all, these exhibitions are rich with clues and threads. They lead to information that, if taken seriously, is both bone-chilling and also downright wacky.

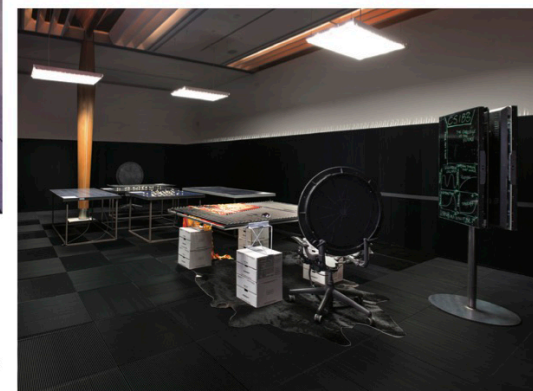
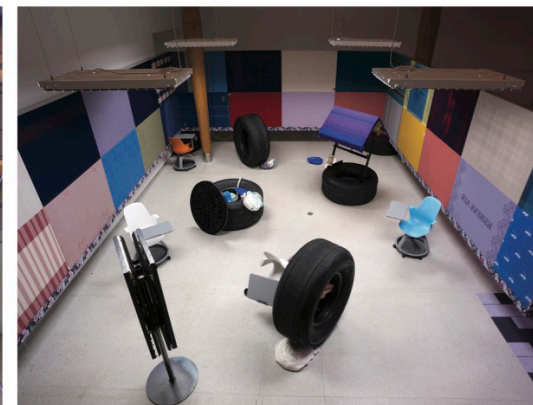
In visiting them both, a number of parallels between the shows become apparent. In *The Founder’s Paradox*, Denny overtly references Thiel’s interests and investments in seasteading, space travel and colonising Mars, longevity and New Zealand in a variety of board games. Stevenson’s references in *Serene Velocity in Practice: MCS10/CS183* are more covert, but rich with associative meanings. For instance, the positioning of the entire installation on a platform of computer cooling grids not only ‘floats’ them above ground, but also alludes to the fact that it is Silicon Valley types, largely neoliberarians, who are most interested in the potential for colonies formed in ‘neutral’ zones to be free of governmental interference.

Both artists play Thiel’s character off someone else. In the downstairs games dungeon of *The Founder’s Paradox*, Thiel and his neoliberal chums figure as heroes in games adapted from online and physical board games that



Opposite: Simon Denny, *Operation*, 2017, mixed media (including resin, polystyrene, New Era cap, Adidas mesh long-sleeved t-shirt, Nike Free footwear, acrylic paint, gaming cable, wood, Apple earbud headphones, customised T-800 *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* figurine, fidget spinner, iPhone 5, Kindle paper, various New Zealand coins, novelty ‘Bitcoin’ ornamental coins, custom lanyard, neotrophic powder in plastic Ziploc bag, Nike bootstraps). Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett

Above, right: Installation views of Michael Stevenson, *Serene Velocity in Practice: MCS10/CS183*, 2017, mixed media, dimensions variable, commissioned by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, with commissioning partners Biennale of Sydney 2018 and Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne. Courtesy of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



pit opponents against one another to conquer and settle land. This ‘winner takes all’ approach involves defeating enemies, trading goods and exploiting natural resources by colonisation. In contrast, Denny puts the more sober, neo-Marxist political vision of New Zealand writer and scholar Max Harris into a reworking of Twister, a game that requires one or more players to contort their bodies into various positions to avoid falling.

The Twister game is represented by wall weavings that appear homespun and naive by comparison to the colourful and slick board games downstairs. However, a quick check via *Wikipedia* reveals that Twister is thought to be a universal, egalitarian game, accessible to people from different cultures and economic strata. The upshot of playing is that you’ll have to make decisions, based on the games’ different political philosophies, that will determine whether you are a winner or a loser. If you’re in any doubt as to the

seriousness of the games and competing philosophies, then Anthony Byrt’s accompanying text, *The Founder’s Paradox: A Compendium*, will lay out the real-world stakes for you.

While Denny’s work maps out the geographies and rules of these various games, and identifies their key players, Stevenson transports us into two interconnected enclosures in which he has assembled a collection of objects. Here, the ideological foundations of two ostensibly separate worldviews collide and intermingle, separated only by a short corridor. The title of the work leads you directly to a business course, known by the code CS183, that Thiel taught at Stanford in 2012 and to a spiritual-mystical course – Mission class 510 – offered by evangelist preacher John Wimber that began in the 1970s at Fuller Theological Seminary.

Stevenson’s pairing of Thiel with Wimber is referenced by the lectures they each gave, and the two spaces representing



Opposite, far left: Michael Stevenson, *Classroom furniture* for CS183, from *Serene Velocity in Practice*, 2017. Courtesy of Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki

Installation details and views from Simon Denny, *The Founder's Paradox*, 2017. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett

Opposite: *Fourth Way Silhouette Twister wall weaving: Spinner*, 2017, custom-woven cotton weaving, texts from Max Harris's *The New Zealand Project*

Above: *Ascent Hero Portrait Projection (Lord Tybalt)*, 2017, royalpainting.com commissioned painting (oil on canvas), UV print on canvas, custom stretchers

Right: *Founders Board Game Display Prototype*, 2017 (foreground), and *Founders Box Cover projections and Box Lid Overprint* (on wall)



them could be seen to be classrooms or lecture theatres. But aesthetically these spaces are more akin to the ominous-looking headquarters of SPECTRE in the Bond movies. The villainous SPECTRE organisation was invented by author Ian Fleming in the 1970s in a bid to depoliticise his bad guys and adroitly sidestep the political polarisation of the time. Its members were drawn from crime syndicates globally and met in an underground data-gathering centre in the Sahara Desert.

The spectre of SPECTRE resonates with Thiel's real-life vision for the future. He seems to seek a utopia of absolute freedom for (certain) individuals, where governments, nation states, fiscal restraints like taxes and social welfare are left behind in the rubble of the Western world. He invests the fortune he's amassed from venture capitalism and information technology in ventures that work towards this grandiose neoliberal heaven. Thiel is the founder of PayPal but also of Palantir Technologies, a company which produces surveillance software sold to governments and corporations to crunch our online dealings, from Facebook to Trade Me. The parallels with Fleming's fictional SPECTRE are disturbingly close. By contrast, Denny offers us a 'dungeon-delving adventure' in which the libertarian heroes aim to defeat the monsters of democracy – fair elections, transparency, independent journalism, tax redistribution and so on. Denny also depicts Thiel as 'Lord Tybalt' from the game *Ascent* – and not surprisingly his powers include "developing wormhole software that anonymously harvests nation-state data".

The dark nature of Thiel's enterprise is reinforced in *Serene Velocity in Practice* by the black manhole cover that provides a backrest for the lecturing mogul's chair. This

cover represents a portal to a labyrinth hidden underground, where our sewers and internet cables run and keep above-ground needs met – a metaphor for underhand dealings. A mask of Hulk Hogan also appears in the Thiel classroom, referring to Thiel's power and inclination to destroy those who cross him. Using Hogan's sex-scandal video as the pretext, in 2016 Thiel bankrolled a ruinous lawsuit against Gawker, the media company which had outed him as gay. The lawsuit was a vicious assault on the culpable media outlet, and only more chilling for its deception.

Strange nutritional enhancement products also appear in both works. Denny's full-figure sculpture of himself, *Operation*, includes recesses in which items are stored. One of these is a Ziploc bag of nootropics – consumable powders distilled from plants for enhancing the mind and energising the body. *Serene Velocity* features Soylent, a nutritional shake infused with nootropics and beloved in Silicon Valley as a complete meal replacement. Its name refers ironically to *Soylent Green*, a 1970s sci-fi movie set in New York in the year 2020. Due to extreme overpopulation, the citizens consume a substance called Soylent, which toward the end turns out to be largely made of 'surplus' humans.

Today's Soylent is entirely vegan. Arranged by Stevenson in a space that also includes solar panels, quails' eggs and a cowskin mat, it could suggest that we may indeed need to resort to something like this product as the habitats that support animal-based food diminish and global warming takes hold. Or perhaps Stevenson is alluding to the fact that Thiel and others – such as British libertarian Lord William Rees-Mogg – have invested in swathes of land in New Zealand, a strikingly underpopulated country with a record of embracing globalisation and the selling off of state

assets. It is not lost on me that Thiel's interest in New Zealand came only after he gave up on his initial investments in the Seasteading Institute because they were too costly.

Both exhibitions feature similar rhetoric: that a break from the past is needed to achieve a kind of 'transcendent state'. Denny provides this in the form of a game called *Ascent*: Above the Nation State, while Stevenson alludes to it via his Wimber classroom. John Wimber taught that miracles occur through worship and faith in the supernatural. He referred to his radical beliefs as 'spiritual warfare' against a Western worldview that is too rational and thus faithless. The tapestry of different airline blankets and massive airliner tyres that dominates the Wimber room, suggesting 'lift-off', underscores the notion of transcendence. For Thiel, conversely, miracles happen via monopoly capitalism, investing in research to extend life, warring against democratic rights and creating a 'super society' of sovereign individuals living free from governmental restraints.

While the overarching theme of *The Founders Paradox* – the precarious consequences of choice – is represented by a Jenga game, it is the title of Stevenson's work, *Serene Velocity in Practice*, and the corridor between the two enclosures, that brings home the most haunting message for the viewer. In his title, Stevenson calls back to Ernie Gehr's *Serene Velocity* (1970) – a silent film that rapidly switches between different perspectival shots of a corridor, giving the optical illusion that we are perpetually progressing along it. With this reference Stevenson suggests that Wimber's 'faith' – which included brazen claims to heal the sick and continues to harvest vast sums of cash for its global Vineyard Church from the sale of videos, books and online

material – is no different from the illusions crafted and sold by Thiel and his tech cohort. As media theorist Marshall McLuhan observed, "The effects of technology do not occur at the level of opinions or concepts, but alter sense ratios or patterns of perception steadily and without resistance." It seems we are all now altered – there has been much in the news lately about disillusioned Silicon Valley denizens expressing their discomfort about the degree to which they can now manipulate the perceptions of end-product users for financial gain. The result? Deleterious effects for society as a whole.

Together, these two extraordinarily rich works by Stevenson and Denny pose serious questions for New Zealand. If Denny's games were constructed from the fantasies of a random individual without means, these questions would have little weight. We could play along, laugh to ourselves about the implausibility of it all, and in the end the winners and losers would pack up the game and head off to bed. The trouble is if Thiel and his ilk are playing the game in real time, there are real consequences for the average New Zealander. If we fellow-citizens are present at all in Thiel's arena, it appears that we're merely material to be played, like Denny's plastic counters, cardboard maps and laminated playing cards – or else we are nothing more than data points, to be crunched, manipulated and mined.

The Founder's Paradox by Simon Denny was at Michael Lett from 18 November to 22 December 2017. *Serene Velocity in Practice*: MC510/CS183 by Michael Stevenson was at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki from 12 November 2017 to 6 February 2018, and a new iteration will appear at the Biennale of Sydney 2018 from 16 March to 11 June.

A. WILL BROWN: Simon, when did you first become interested in the driving forces of society your work explores—technology, innovation, currency exchange, the cult of personality around entrepreneurship to name a few?

SIMON DENNY: When I moved from New Zealand to Germany in 2007, I came with a suitcase of clothes and a laptop. I used that laptop for everything—keeping in touch with my friends and family, learning things at art school in Frankfurt, watching TV, finding my way around—everything. As a sculptor with an interest in the formal properties of found objects I found myself thinking a lot about the laptop as an object. I went down a rabbit hole of research on artists who had worked with emerging technology in the 20th century. Through that research, and meeting other artists who were really interested in science, economics and politics in Frankfurt and Berlin, I realized the more interesting thing was not just to look at this object in isolation, but to examine who made it and why, as well as uncovering the technical protocols that defined what was and was not possible. These inventors, reasons, and parameters, as well as the laptop itself, were shaping my experience and understanding of things in a major way. I started to look towards the tech business community, go to whatever tech conferences I could find, and started reading more tech journalism. That was the beginning.

AWB: Using the “board game” as a framework through which to critically examine contemporary society, and the parts of culture you’ve explored here is an extremely effective, complex, and satisfying strategy. When did the “board game” strike you as an ideal form?

SDB: I started thinking about gaming and its relationship to tech slowly, but the more I looked into it the more it made sense as a way to distill certain values that can be observed in that community. In 2013, I made a series of sculptures based on the practice of altering and customizing computer cases of the type that were popular in competitive computer gaming circles. I framed startups as competing units, making a kind of trophy-like “case-mod” for influential and important startups. The gaming framework’s connection to what I was thinking about deepened around the work I made for the New Zealand pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2015. This work looked at a number of documents leaked from the NSA by Edward Snowden, and in particular the visual culture embedded in those documents. Gaming and fantasy imagery came up again and again. The illustration style used and quoted had connections to the type of imagery one finds on “Magic the Gathering” game cards. The illustrator I focused on in detail, who worked with the NSA for 20 years, also worked on board game design—and this is where I had the idea to use that form as a foil. I was also into making exhibitions that often contained a lot of text and illustrative content. Modeling with existing board games seemed to be a good way to find a familiar, easily accessible way to bring text and illustration together. Also, there are nice resonances in the gaming format to game theory and strategy—things that have always been important to networks and computing. The more I looked for the relevance of this format the more I found—for example Ried Hoffman, founder of LinkedIn is a big fan of the board game “Settlers of Catan.” There is a bunch of press about Hoffman’s ideas about how “Catan” is a good space for reflection on entrepreneurial thinking. Also, Paypal founder Peter Thiel is a “Lord of the Rings” (LOTR) and “Dungeons and Dragons” (D&D) fan. Many of his company’s venture capital firms are named after LOTR references—Palantir being the most obvious example.

AWB: To build on the first question, what brought you to these particular narratives?

SDB: The impact of business people in tech on global culture. These people have an outsized influence on the way the world develops right now—the systems that come out of that community have scaled so much that communication, money, logistics, retail, you name it, are all impacted by their designs, and therefore their values. I think it’s extremely important to understand the values and cultural reference points of this community if we are to understand the world we are living in.

AWB: Why explore these three games in particular: “Descent”—journeys in the Dark, “The Game of Life,” and “Settlers of Catan”? There are hundreds, if not thousands of games to choose from.

SDB: I tried to look for games that I felt were first, potentially popular or recognizable in the tech community such as “Settlers of Catan,” and second, simple frameworks for underlining the experience of life choices in the context of tech like “The Game of Life,” and lastly, I chose “Descent”—Journeys in the Dark,” because it had some aesthetic connections to a kind of neo-medieval aesthetic that is popular in certain sectors of tech subcultures and tells a simple story of “heroes” against “monsters.” I was and am also attracted to the design of these games visually and physically—with “Catan” it’s a depiction of land as resources, essentially a colonial story, which I felt was also very relevant to some of the “frontierism”-like talk that is attached to various figures in tech. The early internet era, like today’s blockchain landscape and the 1990s shift to web 2.0 are often referred to as “the wild west” of the internet,

and figures like Elon Musk and his quest for off-world colonies through his SpaceX initiative are containing this narrative. There are more layers to unravel, but these three games offer clear and complex relationships to the ideas that I’m exploring.

AWB: How does Cleveland fit within and contribute to the discussion of this exhibition, particularly in relation to the most recent shifts in politics and innovation?

SDB: Cleveland is a pretty interesting place—with a long industrial history and history of business people having broad influence in politics. Recently, the 2016 Republican National Convention (RNC) was held in Cleveland—which can be seen as a kind of turning point in GOP party politics, if not US politics in general. With the Party’s endorsement of Donald Trump and, interestingly for the tech sector, Peter Thiel’s speech in support of Trump, which was a surprise and disappointment to many in the tech community, this Cleveland moment was a focus in this larger turning point. The influential Cleveland Clinic network of research centers and hospitals also has historical associations to Trump. It’s a city where many of the values of business are tested and inverted on—including within the strong academic community, which I was lucky to be able to directly engage with. I am interested in the site of how business values are transformed and critically examined, and working with Professor Youngjin Yoo of the Weatherhead School of Management (WSOM) of Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), Adjunct Professor Patrick Barrett of the Cleveland Institute of Art (CIA), and an amazing group of Master in Business Administration (MBA) and User Experience (UX) design students from the WSOM and CIA was an amazing window into that side of Cleveland.

AWB: Peter Thiel and Max Harris, two figures with opposing philosophies on society and governance are central to the work on view here. Consequently, they both visited your recent exhibition, *The Founder’s Paradox*, at Michael Lett Gallery in Auckland, New Zealand. Even more incredibly, Thiel and Harris were there at the same time, on the same day. For those of us who aren’t familiar with these two, and their philosophies, can you break down their key ideas and why it was remarkable that they both visited the exhibition?

SDB: My recent exhibition in New Zealand was an exploration of contrasting emergent political narratives that have increasing relevance in New Zealand and arguably around the world. For the exhibition, I used the board game format and made games that explore two key areas. The first being the collectivist, community-driven reinvestment in the State with a focus on decolonization as a key part of that. The second is a kind of techno-libertarian, individualist exploration grounded in a distrust of the State with possible neocolonial underpinnings. If one talks about, or tries to identify and unpack these kinds of ideas, which can be abstract and complex, I find it helpful to focus on figures that are in the public eye, who have contemporary visions of these narratives to anchor the exhibition. For me Thiel and Harris became visible as such figures—Max Harris is a scholar who grew up in New Zealand but has spent the last 7 years studying at Oxford and wrote a book called *The New Zealand Project* (Brigdet Williams Books, 2017) outlining a vision for the future of politics in New Zealand based on the ideas of Care, Creativity and Community which was widely discussed in the country in 2017. His thoughts are somewhat resonant with the recently elected New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern, who represents a possible change in direction in New Zealand elected political power.

Thiel is also relevant in New Zealand, as he has recently become a citizen of the country (with much public attention), and is a kind of core intellectual figure in Silicon Valley—a very influential founder, investor and thinker with significant interests in some of the most powerful companies on the planet including Facebook, Paypal (which he co-founded), and the data company Palantir, which supplies government intelligence agencies with data-analytics software. His name often comes up in discussions around right wing politics in Silicon Valley, and the intellectual universe in which he sits could represent a kind of blueprint for contemporary techno-libertarianism, which has a relevance in New Zealand, in Cleveland, and far beyond.

AWB: Why is New Zealand the seemingly ideal and perfect hub for people like Kim Dotcom and Peter Thiel?

SDB: That’s actually a hard question to answer with any certainty. Both figures have said publicly they found the conditions of the country to be amazing and ideal—Dotcom to raise a family and Thiel for creating new possibilities—but it’s hard to know what the real combination of reasons are. There has been speculation that it has been a favorable place for wealthy businessmen to become residents or citizens, and both figures entered the country with special financial deals on visas that are available to wealthy individuals but that are not available to other levels of society. There is also a history of libertarian sympathizers buying up property and influence in New Zealand’s government. Part of the exhibition traces a kind of history of engagement in New Zealand, teaching on figures like investor James Dale Davidson and Lord Rees-Mogg (former head of the Financial Times and father of British Conservative Party politician Jacob Rees-Mogg) and their investments in land in New Zealand. Also, our Labor government in the 1980s was very effective in the deregulation of markets, and had connections to international libertarianism. There has been speculation about



doomsday bolt-hole acquisition—New Zealand as a safe and kind of workably familiar place to go when the world ends (parts of New Zealand feel like parts of California)—but again, it’s hard to know how much of that is just a compelling story. New Zealand’s own “clean and green” and “Lord of the Rings” Middle Earth branding may play a part in this—as I said, Thiel is a LOTR enthusiast. I think it’s also a social thing at some point—many wealthy Californians have holiday homes in New Zealand—it’s an easy (if slightly long) private jet flight away and parts of New Zealand are incredibly dramatic and beautiful. It could be as simple as that.

AWB: For one aspect of this project you worked closely with a cohort of students from Case Western Reserve University’s Weatherhead School of Management and the Cleveland Institute of Art. In guiding them through their own exploration of innovation, technology and armchairing with Professors Youngjin Yoo (CASE) and Patrick Barrett (CIA) has your thinking shifted around the works in *The Founder’s Paradox*?

SDB: Yes, I loved working in this context—I have a fantasy of getting an MBA myself, and I find UX design a leading aesthetic influencer in visual culture today. I think in many ways one could see these kinds of educational and UX designed spaces as cultural generators—or at least that’s how I see them sometimes. To work with these students on imagining their own visions of future industry spaces, and distilling them into the board game formats was super interesting—I think the value of the exercise became legible to them over the course of the project engagement, and the resulting board game artworks are super interesting. They provide a great counterpoint to the work I am showing that looks at the Thiel-universe narratives. Their projects look at the cultural impact of business thinking, and of the value of a critical view on emergent political tendencies.

*Thiel, Peter, and Blake Masters. *Zero to One: Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*. New York, NY: Crown Business, 2014.

*Davidson, Dale, James and William Rees-Mogg. *The Sovereign Individual: Mastering the Transition to the Information Age*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1997.



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SIMON DENNY

FACE THE MARKET ON YOUR OWN

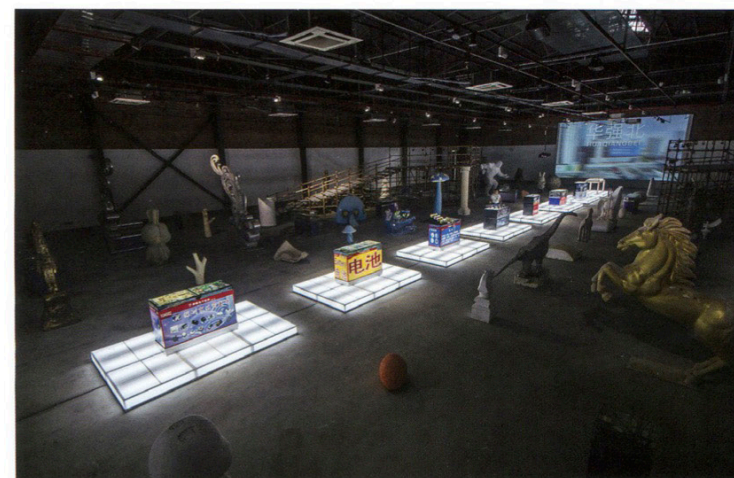


Huaqiang Road, Shenzhen, 2016, in Simon Denny, „Real Mass Entrepreneurship“, 2017, Videostill

For the past few years, my work has focused on tech-related business practice as a powerful mainstream cultural influencer: how Samsung's new management strategy reflected the corporation's (and South Korea's) adoption of globalism in the 1990s; how Berlin's political landscape is changing with the growth of a significant startup scene; how the same narrative that paints blockchain as an alternative to corruption-prone free-market currencies is nevertheless predicated on a logic of free-market libertarianism. I'm interested in how seemingly ephemeral elements (management systems, currency channels, the aesthetics of communicational strategies) take material form, the potential in these models, and, also, the threats they may pose (positive and negative) to the existing order. This past year, I was asked to make a show for OCAT Shenzhen – Shenzhen

being China's first designated Special Economic Zone¹ and, with the shortcuts such a jurisdiction offers, now an epicenter for the manufacturing and increasingly the R&D of many of the world's popular electronic devices.

While preparing this project, it became clear to me that Shenzhen is not just a crossroads of innovation and production but also, it would seem, of ideology regarding how states might be moving forward, globally, in terms of social security in an age of disappearing labor. This is to say that we live in a world of increasingly efficient automation across all sectors, a world where a handful of private global platforms (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Uber, Airbnb, Tencent)² have centralized resources and profits, with increasingly fewer people participating in the conception, production, and distribution of



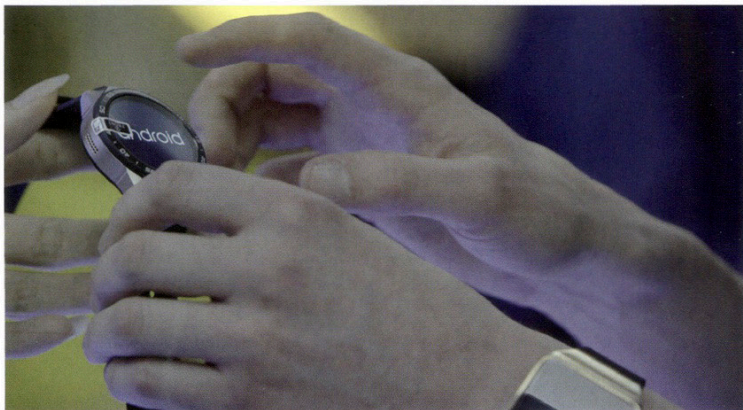
„Simon Denny: Real Mass Entrepreneurship“, OCAT Shenzhen, 2017, Ausstellungsansicht / installation view

the core products that serve us all. In turn, jobs are disappearing. And due to greater reliance on global zones of exception (as well as a global finance system that is essentially beyond the governance of nation states), even relatively stable countries are less and less able to ensure employment or care on a significant scale. If progressive values tend to be underwritten by Marx's labor theory of value, this dramatic shift in the way labor and society are correlated seems particularly fundamental to any consideration of what an effective Left might look like now.

To be sure, this decline in labor is as much a problem of meaning-making as it is one of money – I need to work to get money, but I also work because it provides structure and meaning to life. In the West, Universal Basic Income (or UBI, wherein either governments or corporations would provide a “basic” living wage to “all”)³ is at least being talked about as a possible economic solution. Yet it is still far from being adopted by most major governments (the theme of technological unemployment is often avoided

in populist narratives like Trump's, or in the supposed neoliberal narratives of Hillary).⁴ But even were UBI to be implemented, there would still be the matter of yesterday's shared stories being no longer capable of narrating today's practical realities: that which we are promised, experience, and imagine, societally.

Arriving in Shenzhen, I learned that China has already proposed an alternative answer: mass entrepreneurship. In researching my show (titled “Real Mass Entrepreneurship,” about Shenzhen's tech ecosystem), I had conversations with many leading voices in and around the city's technology business community, ranging from people working in data and policy analysis to service providers to founders of hardware incubators and DIY hardware platforms. Many of these individuals were in dialogue with figures from both central government and the grassroots, “maker”-influenced⁵ hardware scene, emblemized by the sprawling, zero-regulation, “Shanzhai”-inspired⁶ open electronics markets in the city's central Huaqiangbei district.⁷ What became clear through



Simon Denny, "Real Mass Entrepreneurship", 2017, Videostill

this dialogue was a macro narrative of the future of work in China (and by extension, perhaps, the world) wherein the notion of a centrally planned social safety net was demonstrably untenable.

As the Chinese government sees it, there is no way to create a state-supported buffer for its population of nearly 1.4 billion (compare to the EU's 510 million) or to ensure growth of large-enterprise-generated jobs (indeed prediction models point to their decline). Rather, China aims to encourage self-sufficiency via a program of mass entrepreneurship: a meritocratic system wherein everyone has access to the tools for creating their own business, and thus a means of supporting themselves. In short, this could feel like Thatcherism on steroids. And Huaqiangbei stands as a key example, a place where anyone can be a "maker" (of electronic devices, or components that make better devices), selling niche products to international passersby and global markets with the help of Kickstarter and Taobao.

Sound problematic? Yes, and not least in the way that, as with Thatcherism, China's strategy shifts not just profits but also risk away from a collective body and onto the individual – the self

as micro-corporation in a market of a billion-plus entrepreneurs. As Shenzhen tech visionary David Li remarked to me, the policy requires that each of us assume a mentality of "having to face the market on one's own." On the other hand, he asks, "What, really, is the alternative?" Mass redistribution systems seem increasingly hard to implement as government agency weakens and businesses grow evermore influential, with little incentive to support policies aimed at limiting their profits and power.

But there is another factor to consider when it comes to China's conception of mass entrepreneurship, especially as it plays out in the SEZ-enabled hardware ecosystem: copyright. In Shenzhen, patent restrictions upheld in Silicon Valley are virtually impossible to enforce, rendering intellectual property itself open-source. In turn, the author function – that which generates value via the subjectivity of the creative star company, the founder on the stage with a beautiful story, or by extension the artist-genius marking his canvas – has far less agency. To be an entrepreneur in this environment is not to be a "financialized self" but, rather, to partake in a (perhaps newer) spirit

of capitalism wherein the self is given back to the individual, whose being (subjecthood) is ostensibly now buffered from the market by a productive shell. Without effective copyright enforcement, as is the case in Huaqiangbei, everybody has access both to the ideas⁸ and to the revenue these ideas garner – a setup that stands in contradistinction to the Silicon Valley model (which echoes the art market model), where both ideas and revenue are aggregated by a few powerful groups at the top, validated by an elite set of individual "creatives."

In Huaqiangbei, "imitation, innovation, iteration"⁹ is a frequently invoked maxim. And it's one that, (bearing relation to Confucian ideals, Chinese landscape painting and language learning, etc.), has a culturally significant historical precedent.¹⁰ Huaqiangbei follows the logic that if you drop legal barriers to imitation – and note that while copyright laws might be intended to protect small operations from big businesses, they are disproportionately used by big businesses to defend against competitors – everybody is able to innovate their own version of whatever (be it a programmable LED strip, a selfie-stick with a fan, or a smartphone with a built-in garage door opener); in Shenzhen, anyone with a good idea can have access to the means of production and sell to the global market. But moreover, the success of any one "maker" is necessarily indebted to the innovation of those around him or her, thus incentivizing community as a requisite part of securing individual wealth. Further, it is much more difficult for corporate monopoly to take hold in an environment like this. For example, Shenzhen (home to Foxconn's biggest factory) remains the world's largest producer of iPhones. Yet without protected access to the Chinese market, Apple wields far less power over consumers

in China comparative to elsewhere in the world.¹¹ China's markets are, of course, much more complicated than just the Mass Entrepreneurship initiative though. At the top end, big China tech does embrace a form of protectionism that drives domestic growth (a market of some 1.4 billion consumers is not nothing), enabling the success of very large, monopolistic companies like Tencent. And as a strategy, mass entrepreneurship has its pitfalls too. For one, it greatly privileges well-educated urbanites, providing scant infrastructure for the nation's less educated population to be integrated.¹² Moreover, it deepens the nation's problem of precarity (a new precarious management class compounding that of the already precarious factory-employed). In addition, government funding often fails to reach the small businesses it is intended to support.

Perhaps we'll find a better answer in a system that combines both an open-copyright environment and some form of carefully implemented Universal Basic Income. Even if a mass entrepreneurial program like the one promoted in China proves to be part of a credible answer to the future of the labor-value-meaning equation, platform-based market leaders are still likely to control a lot of money and power. Will the combined income of the world's mom-and-pop shops be able to politically oppose the might of these platforms without more democratic implementation of regulations on markets that otherwise tend toward monopoly? Or is this precisely a place around which the voice of a new New Left might be cohered?

Notes

- 1 A Special Economic Zone (or SEZ) is a jurisdiction assigned financial regulations that differ from the norm of that state. Intended to incentivize growth, job creation, and

- international investment in the country at large, SEZs often demonstrate disproportionate growth in comparison to the rest of the state, thus in turn creating new norms and accelerating deregulation. A SEZ like Shenzhen is an entire city, including both business and residential programs.
- 2 For example, Apple Inc. (as of May 2017) lays claim to 91% of the smartphone market. To put that in economic terms, the company (as of December 2016) reported cash assets of \$246.09 billion USD (predominantly held in offshore accounts), making gains, in the last three months of 2016, at a rate of roughly \$3.6 million an hour. See Tripp Mickle, "Apple's Cash Pile Is Set to Top \$250 Billion," <https://www.wsj.com/articles/apples-250-billion-cash-pile-enlivens-hopes-fuels-expectations-1493566748>. This tendency is engendered by Silicon Valley standard practice systems – such as venture capital for funding platform start-ups, where wealthy investors who can afford to lose billions of dollars over long periods offer services at a loss, undercutting existing markets in price and convenience, therefore gaining effective monopolies (Uber, Amazon).
 - 3 How UBI is implemented and what is considered "universal" (i.e., national or fully global? refugees inclusive? undocumented immigrants?), and "basic" (i.e., how much income is a fair base) would determine the merits of such a system. One could imagine, as a negative example, a scenario where UBI becomes an excuse for unfair economic restructuring which replaces more targeted welfare systems.
 - 4 Across the West, scapegoats such as immigration policy or asylum for refugees tend to replace the fact that it is an increase in automated labor that is chiefly reconfiguring employment. Repatriating automated factories to the US, for example, is something that would benefit corporations, not the would-be workers who will no longer be necessary.
 - 5 The "maker" movement is a DIY electronics hardware subculture framed by Dale Dougherty's "Make" magazine in 2005 and popularized by Chris Anderson in his 2010 *Wired* article "Atoms Are the New Bits." China's maker movement has adopted many of the mainstays of US maker culture, but has been further shaped by the Chinese government's investment in the sector vis-à-vis, not least, its policy of Mass Entrepreneurship.
 - 6 "Shanzhai" is a counterfeit item; in the context of Shenzhen, often electronics hardware. Shanzhai has been talked about in this ecosystem as an open-sourcing of intellectual property, and is a term that has increasingly positive connotations in China, implying not theft, but a spirit of access and innovation.
 - 7 Huaqiangbei has become nearly mythic in its status as a global hub for the maker movement and is idealized as a space of genuine grassroots innovation in electronics hardware.
 - 8 The most scalable examples being selfie-sticks, hoverboard scooters, and Bluetooth-speaker-equipped karaoke mics, all of which are products with no founder, no inventor, no patent, and therefore no monopoly.
 - 9 By imitating something, one first comes to intimately understand this object's mechanics; once this is mastered, innovation can happen on top of that initial form; and then finally, various versions of that development can be iterated.
 - 10 See, for example, Jonathan Ocko, "Copying, Culture, and Control: Chinese Intellectual Property Law in Historical Context," in: *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1996.
 - 11 "For 2016, Apple experienced year-on-year decline in China with the tech giant's shipments volume to China falling from 58.4 million units in 2015 to 44.9 million in 2016. Meanwhile, its market share dropped 4 percentage points to 9.6 percent, even as the Chinese smartphone market grew 9 percent for the full year, according to the latest IDC Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker." <http://www.cnbc.com/2017/02/06/apples-market-share-in-china-falls-for-first-time.html>.
 - 12 Although initiatives like Tat Lam's Shanzhai City is working to close these gaps with data literacy-focused metrics across wider sectors and demographics.

Simon Denny: the artist explaining blockchain with Pokémon

His 'fan art' exhibition tells the story of blockchain visionaries, bitcoin and the future of cryptocurrency through the mediums of cartoons and board games

Nadja Sayej Friday 26 August 2016 17:11 BST

New Zealand artist Simon Denny doesn't look like a stereotypical bohemian artist. Donning a navy blue T-shirt with matching track pants and jacket with clean sneakers, he could easily be mistaken for a corporate banker on his day off.

Even in the way he talks about money - he throws around business jargon like "global governance", "distributed ledger" and "blockchain" - Denny could easily pass as a startup founder or business analyst, even a finance reporter. But the truth is, he is a technology finance groupie, and what he really makes is fan art.

"I make fan art. I'm like a geeky fan," says the 32-year-old, over a cappuccino on the 24th floor PanoramaCafé in his adopted home of Berlin.

His forthcoming exhibition - Blockchain Future States - opens 8 September at Petzel Gallery in New York City and puts his geeky "fan art" on view. The gallery will be used as an altar to worship three blockchain visionaries (blockchain is the decentralized transaction database for the cryptocurrency bitcoin and has been described as even the "the future of the internet"), or tech finance celebrities, who could potentially shape the future of how we send and receive money.

"I thought making fan art would be a more simple way to tell the story I want to tell," Denny said. "I'm hoping to give people a wider and easier understanding of different visions of the future."

But how does one artist go about explaining "blockchain" to art gallery goers? The term is certainly abstract and the art world loves abstraction, albeit usually of a different kind.

Denny's interest in the concept dates to 2008 when bitcoin was invented as a non-national cryptocurrency after the global financial crisis. "Some of us don't trust nation states and central banks to make our global systems work," he said. "That's our start; the birth of bitcoin."

Denny, who often apologizes for the complexity of his work during interviews, gets easily excited and almost giddy when explaining how much fun he has making art out of dense, financial jargon. "It's a dense idea and it puts a lot of people off because of its language but it's really something that's moving things," he said.

To break it down, Denny has created an exhibition that explains blockchain through games - specifically the Risk board game and Pokémon cartoons. "I tried to make it accessible to people who haven't heard of a cryptocurrency in a fun and easy way," Denny said.

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The exhibition features a giant Pokéball alongside a cut-out of the Pokémon protagonist Ash Ketchum as a starting point to explain the lingering bitcoin mystery: who really invented bitcoin?

The Australian computer scientist Craig Wright claims to have founded the cryptocurrency under the fake name "Satoshi Nakamoto", or so he said in a recent interview. Apparently, Wright's pseudonym takes its origins from Pokémon. "Satoshi" is the Japanese name for Ash, and the last name "Nakamoto" is named after 17th century Japanese philosopher Tominaga Nakamoto, who criticized Confucianism.

It provides a wealth of metaphors for the artist. "Ash' rises from the ashes of the current currency system, he becomes the savior of how the cryptocurrency saves us," says Denny.

The exhibition also features three different versions of the 1959 war-based board game Risk, which Denny created to show three blockchain enthusiast's view of the future; that includes economist Blythe Masters, CEO of blockchain tech company Digital Asset, investor Balaji Srinivasan, CEO of Bitcoin startup 21 Inc, and programmer Vitalik Buterin, co-founder of a cryptocurrency called ether and its company, Ethereum.

They're all revolutionary, as well as controversial, in their own different way: Masters, who was incorrectly called the woman who built the "financial weapon of mass destruction" in 2008, is an English economist attempting to bring blockchain to global markets. Denny has designed her Risk game to replace the world's countries with financial centers and a dice made of the world's different currencies.

Srinivasan, a Silicon Valley scene stalwart who has blocked a journalist who tried to start an argument with him on Twitter, believes bitcoin will give the world a free market separate from government regulations. So his Risk game has a shore and offshore territories where people can build clouds in an island in the middle of the ocean.

As for 22-year-old Russian programmer Buterin, who Denny calls "the Luke Skywalker of the cryptocurrency circuit", Denny has created an intergalactic version of the Risk board game that takes place in outer space with network-to-network paths and players. In real life, Buterin is often painted as a fantastical savior figure for his crowdfunding venture capital firm Ethereum (until it recently fell victim to a \$50m hack).

Each game design reveals how Denny interprets each blockchain visionary and their agenda for world domination; and what blockchain can do for the world. But in a time when bitcoin's power is often doubted and it does have a volatile past, including the recent \$78m hack in Hong Kong which caused a 20% drop in the cryptocurrency's value, Denny remains optimistic when making fan art about each blockchain visionary. And that's a quality he seems to admire.

"At least people are dreaming and seriously building a global financial system that is more fair to people," Denny said. "They're keeping the hope alive and moving forward to fairer global future, which is what I'd like to see the world go into."

GAMING THE SYSTEM

ANTHONY BYRT ON THE ART OF SIMON DENNY

IN 2018, scholars Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler published “Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data and Planetary Resources,” a revelatory essay, rich with schematic illustrations, that unpacks the extractive processes underpinning “Alexa”—the cheerful, feminine, computer-generated persona that anthropomorphizes Amazon’s home-surveillance algorithms—and the slick speaker device that has enabled her to slip, elegantly, into our lives. “The scale of this system is almost beyond human imagining,” they write. “How can we begin to see it, to grasp its immensity and complexity as a connected form?”¹

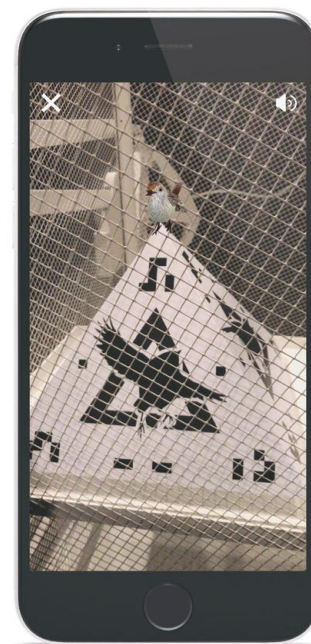
New Zealand artist Simon Denny used Crawford and Joler’s forensic analysis of the Echo ecosystem as the intellectual framework for his exhibition “Mine,” which opened in June at the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Hobart, Australia. Since 2013, Denny’s work has explored how twenty-first-century data-based capitalism is finally undoing any remaining balance between labor and capital, undermining the nation-state model, threatening the viability of fiat currencies, and accelerating the arrival of sentient machines likely to supplant us as the world’s dominant form of intelligence. Whereas the artist’s previous projects sprang from specific contemporary instances of the handling and exploitation of information—Edward Snowden’s leaks, the US Department of Justice’s shutdown of Kim Dotcom’s site Megaupload—this time he took his cues from Crawford and Joler’s

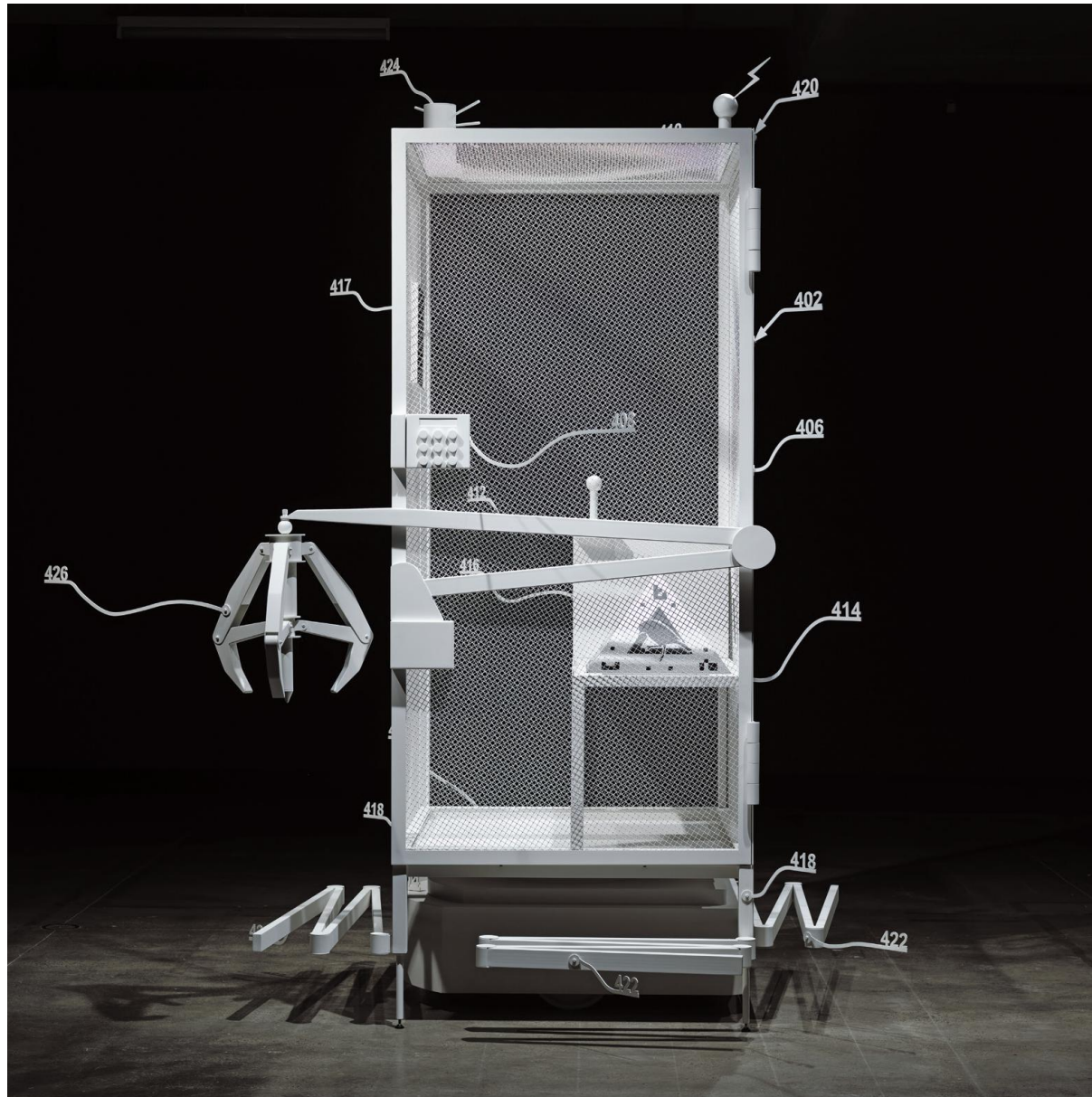
argument that both our relentless obsession with new technologies and the greed of the megacompanies that build them are not only enabling those companies to harvest huge swaths of data from us but also doing untold damage to the planet. Consequently, at MONA, Denny has created a three-part waking nightmare, addressing the exploitative practices of Amazon in one room, targeting the increasing automation of Australia’s massive mining industry in a second, and, in the final space, inviting the museum’s curators to assemble an exhibition of figurative sculpture (including two of his own works) on the theme of labor and automation.

The first of Denny’s horrors was built according to designs presented in Amazon’s US Patent No. 9,280,157, for a worker’s cage that, according to Crawford and Joler, “can be moved through a warehouse by the same motorized system that shifts shelves filled with merchandise. Here, the worker becomes a part of a machinic ballet, held upright in a cage which dictates and constrains their movement.”² The cage—both Amazon’s designs and Denny’s pristine white sculpture, complete with the patent drawings’ original reference numbers—is a monstrous manifestation of how data capitalism exploits the human labor at the bottom of the food chain. Inside Denny’s cage is one of the many augmented-reality (AR) “triggers” placed throughout the show, an evolved version of the scannable QR codes that have become ubiquitous digital shortcuts for everything

Opposite page: Simon Denny, *Amazon worker cage patent drawing as virtual King Island Brown Thornbill cage* (US 9,280,157 B2: “System for transporting personnel within an active workspace,” 2016), 2019, powder-coated metal, MDF, plastic, UV print on cardboard, iOS augmented reality interface. Installation view, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.

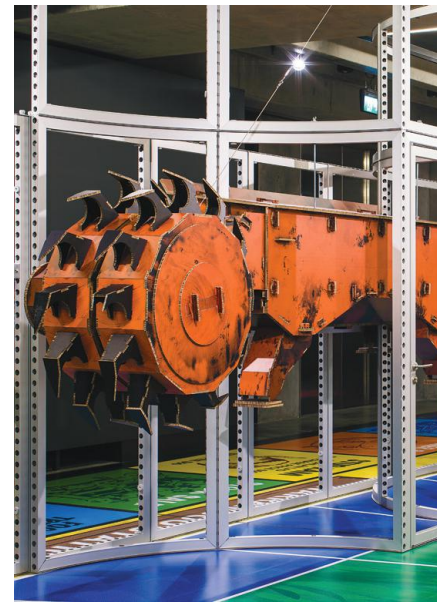
Below: Smartphone showing screen capture from augmented-reality component of Simon Denny’s *Amazon worker cage patent drawing as virtual King Island Brown Thornbill cage* (US 9,280,157 B2: “System for transporting personnel within an active workspace,” 2016), 2019.





Anthony Byrt, "Gaming the System," ARTFORUM, September 2019

At MONA, Denny has created a three-part waking nightmare.



from boarding passes to advertising promotions. Denny's AR triggers are scannable with one of MONA's proudest achievements: its "O" visitor guides, which resemble smartphones and geolocate users within the museum to provide them with information about nearby artworks. (Guests can also choose to download the O app to their iPhones.) Just like the Echo, the O devices are data-harvesting tools, providing MONA with enormous amounts of information about its visitors, including how long they spend in each part of the museum and how they interact with O's "love or hate" artwork-rating system.

When audiences scan the trigger in Denny's cage, a tiny bird is brought to "life," appearing, when the cage is viewed through the O device's screen, to chirp and flutter around inside it—the first ecological warning in the exhibition. The canary in the coal mine is the classic metaphor for exploited labor, and the artist doubles down on its presence with a suite of collages overlaying printouts of the Amazon patent with 3-D renderings of the bird—a King Island brown thornbill, native to Tasmania, whose human-caused extinction is imminent. Sightings of these thornbills are a

rarity, and a team of AR designers created his version based in part on photographs and audio recordings taken of the birds on a recent expedition by a group of researchers from the Australian National University. The O devices thereby also become a means of digital repopulation: As more viewers gather around the cage, each summons her very own thornbill, filling the gallery with the growing sound of birdsong.

If the first room is stark, the second is *Candy Crush* chromatic—dominated by large cardboard cutouts of automated machines manufactured by the corporate giants of the global mining industry, including Rio Tinto, Komatsu, and CAT. On the gallery floor is a blown-up image of the 1960s Australian board game *Squatter*, a kind of outback version of *Monopoly* in which the main assets are sheep stations. The obstacles for the players, or aspiring farmers, of the original version—flood damage, droughts—have become, in the past ten years, the devastating new normal for Australian agriculture. The nation has long been nicknamed (after the title of Donald Horne's 1964 novel) "the Lucky Country," thanks to its imperviousness to recession, largely a consequence of the global



Opposite page, far left: Simon Denny, *Digital Globe ESRI Earth observation WorldView-4 satellite Extractor pop display*, 2019. UV print on honeycomb cardboard, shrink-wrapped Extractor board games, Aluvision trade fair booth components. Installation view, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.

Above: Simon Denny, *Extractor*, 2019, board game.

Bottom: Smartphone showing screen capture from augmented-reality component of Simon Denny's *Caterpillar Inc. Biometric worker fatigue monitoring smartband* promotion screen video token, 2019.

Opposite page, top: View of "Simon Denny: Mine," 2019–20, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. From left: Caterpillar Inc. semi-autonomous longwall coal mining roof support system cardboard display, 2019; Caterpillar Biometric worker fatigue monitoring smartband Extractor pop display, 2019. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.

Opposite page, bottom: View of "Simon Denny: Mine," 2019–20, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. From left: Joy Global semi-autonomous longwall coal mining 7LS8 shearer cardboard display, 2019; Caterpillar Inc. Autonomous haul 793F Mining Truck Extractor pop display, 2019. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.

economy's ongoing thirst for its mined raw materials. Yet this strength is what is eroding it into a climate-change-fueled hellscape, its barren, red center operating like a microwave in the summer, radiating heat out toward the farmland, towns, and cities that huddle along the coasts and bringing punishing dust storms, wildfires, and temperature spikes that melt tarmac—along with premonitions that *Mad Max* might not be mere dystopian fiction.

Climate change—and the decimation of native species like the King Island brown thornbill—has been greatly accelerated by exactly the kinds of mining machines Denny has placed on top of his *Squatter* board, but rather than wagging a finger about our impending and self-inflicted extinction, Denny uses the game platform to transform the gallery space into a deranged, surreal industry expo. Each of his machines is accompanied by a screenlike display with its own AR trigger, which, when scanned, initiates a promotional video on the O device. The majority of these promos have been lifted directly from the manufacturers' websites, lightly edited except for some blurring and the distortion of voices. In one, the overseer of a mine champions the virtues of running an automated operation from hundreds of miles away; in another,

heavy machinery goes on a *Transformers* adventure, bounding through a scarred landscape like Bumblebee.

Denny's models are also a complete squad of earth-ripping superheroes: Buy the whole lot of intelligent machines, and you too can start yourself an automated-mining business. The artist, who has played with the trade fair as an exhibition format in recent years, didn't miss this chance to shill his own merchandise. At the center of the gallery is a prototype for *Extractor*, his "dystopian board game that maps the possible dynamics of global data-driven businesses or 'platforms' as they compete for world domination."³ As it turns out, some of his models are also point-of-sale displays stacked with *Extractor* sets. Visitors can buy the game inside the exhibition; they don't even have to exit through MONA's gift shop.

DENNY HAS LONG BEEN CONCERNED with gamification and its logics. By grafting the decision trees and protocols representing what scholar Shoshana Zuboff recently christened "surveillance capitalism"⁴ onto game formats, he has developed a new kind of exhibition making that emphasizes physically prescribed pathways and carefully routed information flows. This work began with *All you need is data: the DLD 2012*

Rather than wagging a finger about our impending and self-inflicted extinction, Denny uses the game platform to transform the gallery space into a deranged, surreal industry expo.



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Left: Boxes of Simon Denny's board game *Extractor*, 2019. Installation view, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.

Below: View of "Simon Denny: All you need is data: the DLD 2012 Conference REDUX rerun," 2013, Petzel Gallery, New York. Photo: Jason Mandella.

Opposite page: View of "Simon Denny: Mine," 2019–20, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Australia. Photo: Jesse Hunniford.



Conference REDUX rerun, 2013, in which he made informational canvases for every session at the titular tech conference, then mounted them on steel barriers that unceremoniously corralled viewers into something like a security line. In 2015, he colonized Venice's Marco Polo Airport as part of "Secret Power," New Zealand's official contribution to that year's Biennale, by printing, at a one-to-one scale, an image of the enormous painted ceiling of the city's Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana and sticking it to the airport's floor. The amount of time a viewer spent with this piece was determined by the wait at passport control, the whims of Italian border officers, and how long it took for luggage to drop onto carousels. (Marco Polo was Italy's first post-9/11 airport, fully equipped with the surveillance technologies that the United States insisted the world adopt in the wake of the terrorist attacks.) At MONA, "Mine" also subtly but firmly activates and prompts audience choreography: If visitors wish to see the show's AR elements more than once, they must reset their O devices; the worker's cage, though static, refers to the astounding notion that Amazon actually considered these small prisons to be valuable innovations.

Denny's spatial prescriptions recall the ways in which the instruments of surveillance direct our lives. He understands that these technologies are neither practical nor inevitable so much as they are ideological—designed and refined by people who, depending on your political perspective, are either gods or monsters. His art is populated by both. In 2017, I worked as a writer and researcher on Denny's exhibition project "The Founder's Paradox," which was spurred by the revelation in January of that year that the American tech billionaire Peter Thiel had become a New Zealand citizen in 2011, legally entitling him to own land in the country without seeking government permission. An extreme libertarian devoted to life-extension research and technological determinism—as well as a Trump supporter and J. R. R. Tolkien fan—Thiel purchased a former sheep station on the South Island, right in the middle of the territory where Peter Jackson filmed parts of *Lord of the Rings* (2001–2003). "In the course of pursuing my international business opportunities, my travel, personal philosophical commitments and benefaction," Thiel reportedly wrote in his request for citizenship, "I am

happy to say categorically that I have found no other country that aligns more with my view of the future than New Zealand."⁵

Speculating about what exactly Thiel's view might be, Denny and I attempted to map his influences. The result was a series of winner-take-all board games—cum-sculptures, important forerunners of *Extractor. Game of Life: Collective vs. Individual Board Game Display Prototype*, 2017, puts a graduate of Stanford (Thiel's alma mater) on divergent paths: one toward selfish Silicon Valley glory, the other a life of organic farming and general do-goodery. In *Ascent: Above the Nation State Board Game Display Prototype*, 2017, Denny reversed the logic of the fantasy strategy game *Descent: Journeys in the Dark*. Taking inspiration from Thiel and several associates—among them the neo-reactionary blogger Curtis Yarvin (aka Mencius Moldbug) and life-extension venture capitalist and New Zealand expat Laura Deming—he created a cast of accelerationist demigods battling the Luddite forces of democracy and industry regulation. The most elaborate was a four-tiered pastiche of the colonial strategy game *Settlers of Catan* titled *Founders Board Game Display*



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Below, from left: Simon Denny, *Founders Board Game Display Prototype*, 2017, customized Settlers of Catan game pieces, 3-D print, UV print on aluminum, UV print on card, LEDs, molded electronic wiring, Dell PowerEdge 1950 server casing, inoleum, MDF, powder-coated steel, Plexiglas, 47 1/4 x 40 1/2 x 40 1/2".
Simon Denny, *Game of Life: Collective vs. Individual Board Game Display Prototype*, 2017, customized Das Spiel des Lebens game pieces, 3-D prints, UV print on aluminum, UV print on card, UV print on canvas, LEDs, molded electronic wiring, Dell PowerEdge 1950 server casing, inoleum, MDF, powder-coated steel, Plexiglas, 41 1/4 x 40 1/2 x 40 1/2".

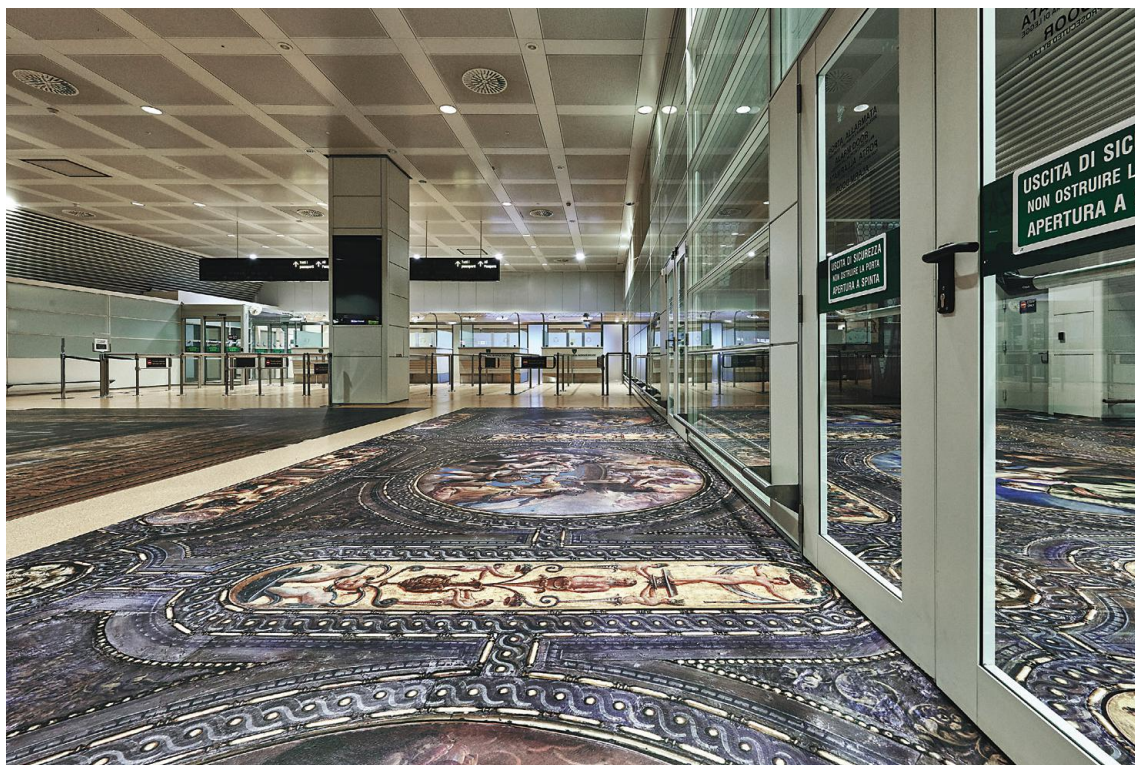
Right: Simon Denny, *Ascent: Above the Nation State Board Game Display Prototype* (detail), 2017, customized Descent: Journeys in the Dark game pieces, UV print on aluminum, UV print on card, LEDs, molded electronic wiring, Dell PowerEdge 1950 server casing, inoleum, MDF, powder-coated steel, Plexiglas, 41 1/4 x 40 1/2 x 40 1/2".
Opposite page: View of "Simon Denny: Secret Power," 2015, Marco Polo Airport, Venice. From the 56th Venice Biennale. Photo: Paolo Monello.

Prototype, 2017, in which libertarians compete for property and resources, racing from a traumatized earth all the way to the final prize: to be the first to colonize Mars. In an unanticipated twist, Thiel attended "Simon Denny: The Founder's Paradox" at Michael Lett Gallery in Auckland in December 2017, reportedly describing the artist's mapping of his libertarian universe as "a work of phenomenal detail."⁶



He understands that these technologies are neither practical nor inevitable so much as they are ideological—designed and refined by people who, depending on your political perspective, are either gods or monsters.





AS DENNY ILLUMINATED in “The Founder’s Paradox,” the visual and philosophical vocabularies of fantasy and gaming culture pervade the politics of The Men of Tech, not to mention their declarations of faith in the coming tech utopia. This was evident in the National Security Agency PowerPoint slides Edward Snowden leaked in 2013, which were laced with sci-fi references, *Terminator* jokes, allusions to wizards and cartoon characters, and pictures of Penn & Teller, embodying an altogether geeky language, one shared by the other NSA contractors who have power over our private lives. Denny “mined” these slides for 2015’s “Secret Power,” also building vitrines from server racks in the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, in which he presented information gleaned from Snowden’s leaked documents. The artist revealed not only the stats regarding invasive computer programs but also their pop-culture references. In a parallel set

of vitrines, he and his collaborator, the expat New Zealand designer David Bennewith, carried out their very own cat-and-mouse operation: They commissioned David Darchicourt, a freelance designer who had served as a creative director at the NSA between 2001 and 2012, to create illustrations depicting New Zealand’s tourist industry. The images included references to the Southern Cross telecommunications cable, which links New Zealand to the outside world, and to the country’s secretive communications-monitoring facility in the Waihopai Valley—both of which provide essential infrastructure for New Zealand’s role as a member of the “Five Eyes” global-intelligence network (led by the NSA), which was at the heart of Snowden’s revelations.

Darchicourt had no idea about Denny and Bennewith’s real agenda.⁷ There was an aesthetic game with a serious political purpose, an act of “secret power”

exercised over the most powerful intelligence agency in the world, and one playing against the NSA’s desire, when it comes to our data, to “collect it all.” When Snowden illuminated the degree to which our privacy was being invaded by supposedly liberal nation-states, the news was shocking, its implications almost incomprehensible. Now we embrace such surveillance devices, placing them on our bookshelves or in our bedrooms, where they don’t just eavesdrop but actively learn about our lives, so they can sell our wants, our desires, and our fears back to us. Denny’s game-sculptures are often morally ambiguous and even nihilistic about the future we’re building.⁸ But they also show, in alarming detail, how we welcome the robots, the wizards, and the monsters knocking at the front door. □

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(SEE CONTRIBUTORS.) For notes, see page 288.