AS IF

THE MEDIA
ARTIST
AS TRICKSTER

20 JAN–
05 MAR 2017
FRAMER FRAMED

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THE MEDIA ARTIST AS TRICKSTER

EXHIBITION AT FRAMER FRAMED
20 JANUARY - 5 MARCH 2017

CURATED BY DAVID GARCIA AND
ANNET DEKKER, IN COLLABORATION
WITH IAN ALAN PAUL (GBMAH)

The exhibition *As If: The Media Artist as Trickster* focuses on politically inspired media art that uses deception in all its forms. It shows the artist as trickster, as 'dark jester', using a variety of hoaxes, hacks and ruses to reveal the hidden workings of power structures and the possibility of alternative futures. At the heart of *As If* is the desire to address one of today's most urgent political issues: a radical shift in the boundary between fiction and reality in public discourse, in a world increasingly governed by 'post-truth' politics.'

As well as acting as a timely reflection on the nature of truth in a time filled with fake news, misinformation, and tactical propaganda, the show also serves a historical purpose. Many of the high-speed media interventions showcased in the show are, to a degree, legacies of 'Tactical Media'; a cultural and political movement that flourished briefly in the late 90s. Tactical Media was the first to combine the power of art, the tricks of the PR and advertising world, and an experimental approach to digital media, to mount hit-and run interventions in the media sphere.

As If will show how the influence of this DIY media movement remains all around us. Whether it be the social media meme tactics of alt-right or the live streaming of police shootings to social and mainstream media platforms around the world; whether it be Trump's midnight tweets or the exposure of the totality of the surveillance state through Snowden's actions and information unveiled by Wikileaks: it is clear that the critical role of "do it yourself" media politics is as relevant today as ever.

Featuring works by twelve artists/artist collectives - all united in their underlying purpose of engaging with urgent social and political events - the show includes exciting new commissioned work by Morehshin Allahyari (IR).

ARTISTS

Morehshin Allahyari, Arabian Street Artists, Paolo Cirio, Coco Fusco, Paul Garrin, Robert Ochshorn, Julian Oliver / Danja Vasiliev, Ian Alan Paul, Superflux, The Yes Men, UBERMORGEN, Wachter & Jud.

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition is organised into two principal areas, designed by Ruben Pater. Zone 1: *Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History* and Zone 2: *The Newsroom*.

For the first zone, the curators invited artist and chief-curator Ian Alan Paul of the *Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History (GBMAH)* to co-curate and present a series of interconnected installations revealing the way in which the trickster ethos is used to interrogate a number of urgent related themes and issues. Works range from subversive acts of resistance by Arabian Street Artists and UBERMORGEN, to digital acts of cultural reclamation from Morehshin Allahyari, and the latest satirical campaign of The Yes Men.

Zone 2, *The Newsroom*, looks into hacks and fabricated 'news fictions' where deception or provocation has interfered with the media landscape, and opened it up for discussion and debate. Showcasing a number of interconnected works, this zone demonstrates how these tactics are grounded in a long history of politicised hoaxes and hacks eventually morphing into contemporary, web-based activism.

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

As If: The Media Artist as Trickster is an example of "public research", presented in various aspects of the exhibition. The role and risks of hoaxes will be explored in a range of public events, highlighting the urgent need to develop a more "populist language" for progressive politics.

The public program includes two opening events organised by Eric Kluitenberg in collaboration with David Garcia:

A FRAMER FRAMED EXHIBITION

Saturday January 21, at Eye Filmmuseum Starts 13.00 *Digital Archives and Popular Revolts* Public debate and screening program on the tenuous relationship between the activist movement and digital documentation. With: artist Lara Baladi, artist Robert M. Ochshorn.

Sunday January 22, at Tolhuistuin (Tuinzaal) Starts 12.00 *Conference: Tactical Media in the Society of Post-Control* Within the complex techno-social context we are currently ingrained in, which produces more and more unpredictable results, how can we reimagine the space for progressive political interventions? Especially in the face of an 'authoritarian turn' in politics in Europe, the US, and beyond? With amongst others Michael Seemann, Bernardo Gutiérrez, Geert Lovink, Ingrid Lee and Steve Kurtz. Moderated by Eric Kluitenberg and David Garcia.

As If: The Media Artist as Trickster has been developed in partnership with FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) Liverpool (UK) and HeK (House of Electronic Arts), Basel (CH). Iterations of the exhibition and its accompanying programmes will take place at these venues between 2 March – 31 May 2017, and 21 March – 21 May 2017, respectively, with a change of exhibition title to *How Much of this is Fiction*.
   Presented with the support of Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, Tolhuistuin, Creative Industries Fund NL, Fonds21, the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts and the Video Data Bank.

ABOUT FRAMER FRAMED
Framer Framed is an Amsterdam-based platform and exhibition space for contemporary art, visual culture and critical theory & practice. Throughout the year, the organisation presents exhibitions in collaboration with varying international curators and artists. Next to the exhibitions, an extensive public program is organised to contextualise the topics concerned. With this common space for dialogue, Framer Framed aims to show a plurality of voices in a globalized society.

ABOUT THE CURATORS
Annet Dekker (NL) is an independent researcher and curator. She is currently Assistant Professor of Media Studies: Archival Science at the University of Amsterdam and Visiting Lecturer at the London South Bank University.
   Previously, Annet worked as Researcher Digital Preservation at Tate, London, and as core tutor at Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam (Master Media Design and Communication, Networked Media and Lens-Based Media). She was also Programme Manager at Virtueel Platform, Webcurator at SKOR, and Head of Exhibitions, Education and Artists-in-residence at the Netherlands Media Art Institute.

David Garcia (UK) is an artist, academic and organiser. He has pioneered new forms of critical engagement with art and media, based on an occupying of the cracks which began to appear in the edifice of broadcast media in the 1990s. Through a series of events, Garcia (with others) identified these kinds of interventions as part of a wider trend: a set of cultural and political practices they called "Tactical Media". These ideas have since been recognised as one of the more significant and distinctive cultural movements of the last two decades. To connect the 'memory' of Tactical Media to the radical proliferation and transformation of these practices, Garcia co-founded, (with Dutch Media theorist Eric Kluitenberg), the award-winning Tactical Media Files, an online repository of Tactical Media materials past and present.
   Alongside these projects Garcia has been active in Higher Education, focusing on processes that unlock the radical potential of art as research. He has developed these ideas as Professor of Design for Digital Culture University of Portsmouth & Utrecht College of Art in the Netherlands. Currently he holds the position of Professor of Digital Arts and Media Activism at Bournemouth University.

ZONE 1 GUANTANAMO BAY MUSEUM OF ART AND HISTORY

IAN ALAN PAUL (US)
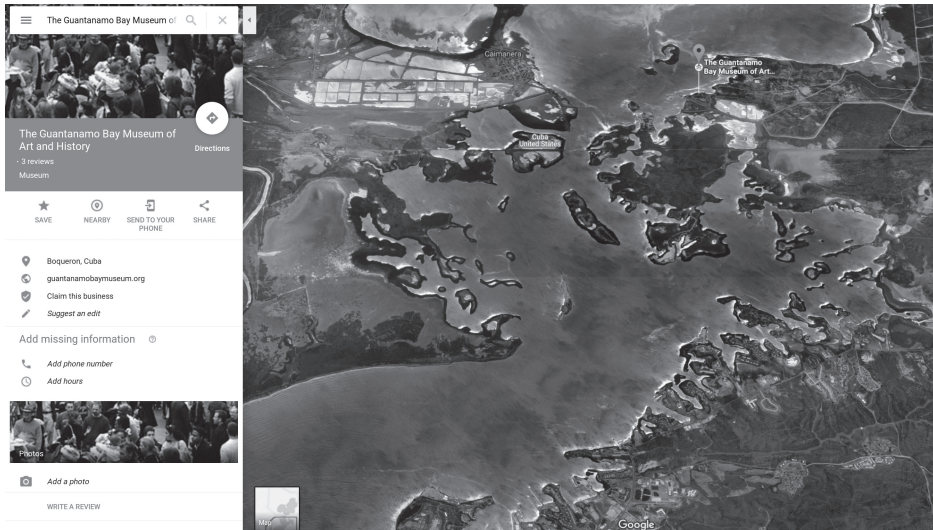# GUANTANAMO BAY MUSEUM OF ART
AND HISTORY (SINCE 2012)
Installation

Ian Alan Paul is a transdisciplinary artist, theorist, and curator born in the United States, working and living in Abu Dis (PS). Guantanamo Bay, or Gitmo as it is usually referred to, is one of those places that doesn't seem to exist. No one really gets to see the place, as reporters' and other visitors' experiences are carefully shaped and guided by U.S. authorities. The detention camp, as a place where people are held, interrogated, and sometimes tortured, remains an imaginary place for all but the prisoners and the national security officials who operate it. Week by week, we seem to read both of its imminent closure and its stubborn persistence, making the end of the prison paradoxically appear as inevitable and impossible. The Guantanamo Bay Museum of Art and History (GBMAH), an imaginary museum that speculatively exists in place of the prison, draws its power from this resonance: if Gitmo exists because of one fiction, perhaps another can close it? In other words: if one form of legal and political exception allowed for Gitmo to emerge, perhaps another kind of imaginative exception is needed to finally make it nothing more than a memory.

WACHTER & JUD (DE/CH)
ZONE*INTERDITE (2000-ONGOING)
Installation

Artist duo Christoph Wachter and Mathias Jud live and work in Berlin (DE) and Zurich (CH). Their work *Zone*Interdite* caused a sensation by uncovering the children's prison in Guantánamo, the prison camp in Bagram or Camp Bucca in Iraq. *Zone*Interdite* isn't about world politics or military strategy, but about something that affects us all personally: our own imagination and our ability to perceive independently. The project *Zone*Interdite* (French for: 'restricted military zone') emerged from a paradox: It is forbidden to depict or enter military areas, yet these pictures appear in the mass media. *Zone*Interdite* focuses on these images and takes a sounding of the restricted terrain through virtual reconstructions. The project questions concepts between power and powerlessness: behind a reflex of right and wrong, friend or foe, patriot or traitor, appear ideas of sovereign reflections.

COCO FUSCO (CU)
OPERATION ATROPOS (2006)
Video (59:00)

Coco Fusco is an interdisciplinary artist, writer and professor born in Cuba, living and working in New York and Miami (US). In July 2005, Fusco gathered a group of female students with the aim of taking a course to learn the different techniques that can be used to extract information from captured prisoners. Retired U.S. Army interrogators subjected the group to immersive simulations of POW (prisoner of war) experiences to show them what hostile interrogations can be like and how members of the U.S. military are taught to resist them. The group of interrogators, called Team Delta, regularly offer intensive courses which they refer to as "Authentic Military Experiences" for civilians.

Operation Atropos is a documentary about the interrogation and POW resistance training and the result of Fusco and six other women filming the workshop depicting their training. The video shows the process of being a prisoner of war—being ambushed, captured, strip searched, thrown in a pen and subjected to several interrogations. Afterwards, the tactics were analysed and the group was taught how to perform the actions done to them onto others. The documentary includes interviews with the interrogators that shed light on how they read personalities, evaluate an interrogatee's reliability, and use the imposition of physical and mental stress strategically. More fundamentally, however, the film shows how interrogators rationalize what they do and how they imagine both themselves and their enemies.

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ARABIAN STREET ARTISTS (EG/DE)
HOMELAND IS NOT A SERIES (2015)
Video (07:15)

The activist artist collective Arabian Street Artists is made up of Heba Y. Amin (born in Egypt, based in Cairo, EG), Caram Kapp (born in Egypt, based in Berlin, DE) and Don Karl (born in Germany, based in Berlin, DE). In 2015, they were commissioned to apply realistic graffiti to sets for the popular US television series *Homeland*. Under the moniker of Arabian Street Artists, they took the opportunity to critique their employer by painting satirical and damning phrases in Arabic — such as 'Homeland is NOT a series' and 'Homeland is racist' — that nobody on the Homeland team seemed to notice. That is, until an episode that aired worldwide in October 2015 was watched by viewers who could read Arabic. Within days, the political prank became an international sensation. The video *Homeland is Not A Series* shows the process of the artists' 'Homeland Hack'.

MOREHSHIN ALLAHYARI (IR)
# MATERIAL SPECULATION: ISIS
(2015-2016)
Installation & workshops

Image: Morehshin Allahyari, Material Speculation: ISIS, Image courtesy of artist and Upfor gallery, 2015-2016.

Morehshin Allahyari is a new media artist, activist, educator, and occasional curator. She was born and raised in Iran and is currently based in New York (US). Her work *Material Speculation: ISIS* relates to one of the main tasks of any museum: taking care of cultural heritage. While vast amounts of objects, sculptures and monuments are destroyed throughout history for different reasons, the recent destruction by ISIS in 2015 spawned a renewed concern for cultural heritage. In her project *Material Speculation: ISIS*, Allahyari creates a practical and political possibility for artefact archival, while also proposing 3D printing technology as a tool both for resistance and documentation, and as a process for repairing history and memory. *Material Speculation: ISIS*, goes beyond metaphoric gestures and digital and material forms of the artefacts by including a flash drive and a memory card inside the body of each 3D printed object. Like time capsules, each object is sealed and kept for future civilizations. The information in these flash drives includes images, maps, pdf files, and videos gathered in the last months on the artefacts and sites that were destroyed. These materials were sourced through an intense research process involving contacting different archaeologists, historians, and museum staff.

SUPERFLUX
THE DRONE AVIARY (2015)
Video (06:34)
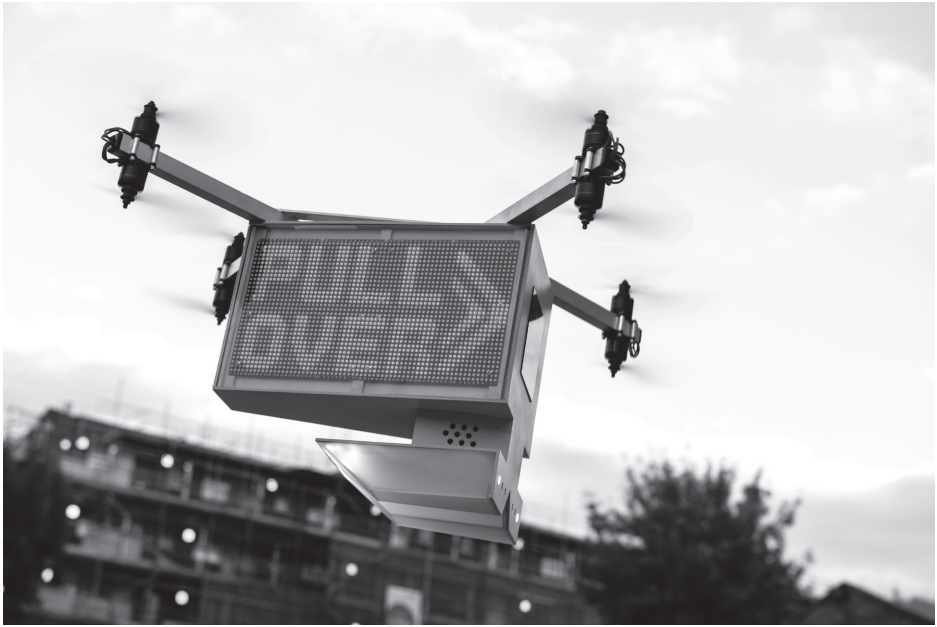
Superflux is an Anglo-Indian design practice, based in London (UK) but with roots and contacts in the Gujarati city of Ahmedabad (IN). *The Drone Aviary*, a project by Superflux members Anab Jain (IN) and Jon Ardern (UK), is an investigation of the social, political and cultural potential of drone technology as it enters civil space. Through a series of ongoing installations, films and publications, the project aims to give a glimpse into a near-future city with 'intelligent' semi-autonomous, networked, flying machines. The installation includes a film introducing a family of five drones and an accompanying narrated editorial by Warren Ellis. The film hints at a world where the 'network' begins to gain physical autonomy, moving through and making decisions about the world, influencing our lives in often opaque yet profound ways. A speculative map highlights where physical and digital infrastructures merge as our cities become the natural habitat for 'smart' technologies. With the European Commission working towards a basic regulatory framework for the civil use of drones, these near future scenarios are becoming more and more plausible - but are they desirable?

IAN ALAN PAUL (US)
THE EU BIRD MIGRATION AUTHORITY (2013)
Website

Ian Alan Paul is a transdisciplinary artist, theorist, and curator born in the United States, based in Abu Dis (PS). Playing off the tracking possibilities of drones and other radar devices and relating it to a historical European mission, the *EU Bird Migration Authority* started to track, manage and control non-native bird species in the EU member states. Fostering the free movement of birds has been an important objective of European integration since the 1950s. In 1995, the EU abolished bird-monitoring procedures within its internal borders and implemented bird migration monitoring stations at its single external border. To keep a balance between ecology and security, participating member states agreed to introduce so-called 'compensatory measures'. These are focused on cooperation and coordination of the work of the border authorities. This includes the live tracking of migrating bird flocks using state-of-the-art satellite and atmospheric sensor technologies, catch-tag-release programmes, bird population management, flock relocation, and disease monitoring. The goals of the BMA can be defined in three topic areas: Ecology, Economy, and Society.

THE YES MEN (US)
SHARE THE SAFETY (2016)
Website

The Yes Men are Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, both based in New York (US). On 22 June 2016 a new online store *Share the Safety* was announced. It stated that 'the revolutionary online store takes its cue from other "buy one, give one" retailers, customers of ShareTheSafety.org will have the pleasure of knowing that for each handgun purchased, one will be donated to an at-risk American citizen in the urban centre of their choice'. *Share the Safety* was at first instance presented as an initiative of the NRA (National Rifle Association) in the US, in collaboration with arms manufacturer Smith & Weston, as a next step in the ongoing efforts of the NRA to 'spread the freedom and security that come from gun ownership, and their commitment ensuring that every American regardless of income can exercise their Second Amendment rights'. The site caused an outrage, but investigations revealed it as a hoax from The Yes Men. Like their previous projects, the project is elaborate and detailed in its execution, playing off similar trends in marketing and business, as well as obvious hints to the shooting in Orlando and the response and attitude of the NRA.

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ZONE 2
THE NEWSROOM

PAUL GARRIN (US)
MAN WITH A VIDEO CAMERA (1988)
Video (06:03)

Paul Garrin is a media artist born in the United States, living and working in New York (US). A rather accidental set of circumstances pitted Garrin right in the middle of what became known as the Tompkin Square anti gentrification riot (6 August 1988), holding a video camera. Recording the events, while besieged by police officers, Garrin managed to get the tape aired on different news channels; documenting and exposing police violence, and sparking, in Garrin's words, 'the camcorder revolution'. Documentation of his camcorder activism featured on major US news channels in 1988, 3 years before the infamous recorded police assault on Rodney King.

THE YES MEN (US)
DOW DOES THE RIGHT THING (2004)
Video (06:40)

The Yes Men are Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno based in New York (US). On the 20th Anniversary of the Bhopal Catastrophe, BBC World News invited a representative from the company responsible to appear live on their program. The representative did agree to speak – but as it happens he was not really from Dow Chemical. The man, who called himself "Jude (patron saint of the impossible) Finisterra (earth's end)" was an activist from the media pranksters known as The Yes Men. In the broadcast, "Jude" promised a huge compensation for the thousands of victims of the Bhopal gas disaster of 1984, for which Dow Chemical's subsidiary Union Carbide India was responsible. This temporarily sent the stocks of Dow Chemicals tumbling and ensured that the scandal of Bhopal was once again in the public spotlight. The trick was to act as if a desired outcome has been attained -- in this case the generous settlement of Dow's outstanding liability. When the live broadcast happened, it became the number one news story of the day globally, first as a real announcement from Dow, and then as a report on the hoax. A video installation shows the unedited news broadcast alongside a very nervous Yes Man, mic'd up and waiting to "go live" in the BBC's Paris Bureau.

UBERMORGEN (AT/US)
[V]OTE-AUCTION'S 27 MIN. ON CNN
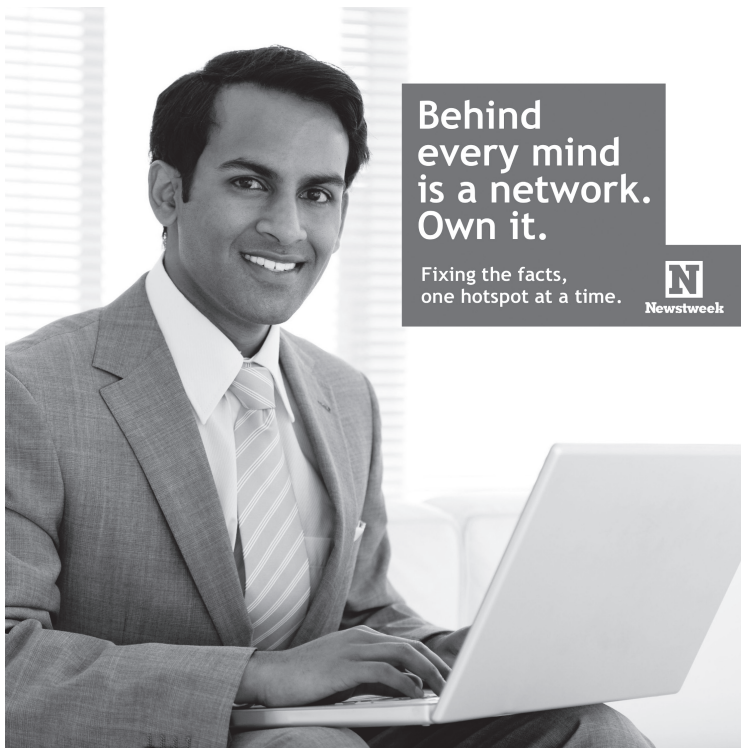# "BURDEN OF PROOF" (2000)
Video (27:00)

UBERMORGEN was founded in 1995 by artist lizvlx (born in Austria) and artist Hans Bernhard (born in the United States). The duo live and work in Vienna (AT) and St. Moritz (CH).

In 2000, at the peak of the worldwide media and Internet hype, UBERMORGEN.COM launched a large-scale action of 'media hacking' during the Bush vs. Gore US presidential elections. The artists, at that time still an unknown collective which rather looked like an obscure e-commerce company, adopted the domain name voteauction.com and revamped it into a website on which American voters had the opportunity to sell their vote to the highest bidder. This action triggered a media explosion, reaching millions of people through print, television, radio and the online medium. Legal fights with US courts and intelligence agencies followed. This video shows a 27-minute exclusive feature on CNN about the VoteAuction action.

A FRAMER FRAMED EXHIBITION

JULIAN OLIVER AND
DANJA VASILIEV (NZ/RU)
NEWSTWEEK (2011)
Video (03:20)

Behind
every mind
is a network.
Own it.

Fixing the facts,
one hotspot at a time.

N
Newstweek

Julian Oliver is a Critical Engineer and artist born in New Zealand, based in Berlin (DE). Danja Vasiliev is a Critical Engineer born in Russia, currently living and working between Berlin (DE) and New York (US). Together they created *Newstweek*, a device for manipulating news read by other people on wireless hotspots. Built into a small and innocuous wall plug, the *Newstweek* device appears part of the local infrastructure, allowing writers to remotely edit news read on wireless devices without the awareness of their users. While news is increasingly read digitally, it still follows a top-down distribution model and thus often falls victim to the same political and corporate interests that have always sought to manipulate public opinion. *Newstweek* intervenes upon this model, providing opportunity for citizens to have their turn to manipulate the press; generating propaganda or simply 'fixing facts' as they pass across a wireless network. As such, *Newstweek* can be seen as a tactical device for altering reality on a per-network basis. Shown in the exhibition *As If* is a video documentation of *Newstweek*.

PAOLO CIRIO (IT)
DAILY PAYWALL (2014 – ONGOING)
Installation

Paolo Cirio is a conceptual artist born in Italy, based in New York (US). In his project *Daily Paywall*, tens of thousands of articles were appropriated from the websites of Street Journal, Financial Times, and The Economist through hacking their paywall systems. The artist redistributed the pay-per-view articles for free and offered to pay readers and writers of the news articles. Readers could earn one dollar for responding correctly to quizzes about featured articles, and journalists were invited to claim compensation for their writing. Donors could offer any amount to crowdfund the system. This circular economic model aims to monetize pirated content for informing the public about socioeconomic issues. The artist sifted through thousands of news articles, editing fifteen issues, each featuring eight articles. DailyPaywall.com has over 60,000 articles and 1000 print copies were distributed as a free paper available in custom news racks and bookshops throughout New York City.

All the material of DailyPaywall.com and the related statements published by the artist haven't been manipulated, they are accurate and factual. No fictitious elements were ever added to this project.

FRAMER FRAMED   FACT   H3K

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TOLHUISTUIN   AFK amsterdams fonds voor de kunst   FONDS 21

FRAMER FRAMED
VENUE AND CONTACT

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