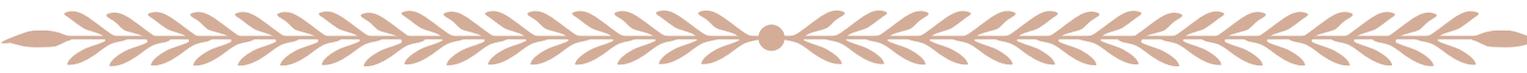




Transcript of the

CONGRESSIONAL CONFIRMATION

*on the Existence and Reality
of Morgan Hamilton*



*Official Documentation of
Hearing Proceedings
as Required by Law*



*Life
Is
Neither*

Morgan Hamilton



COMMITTEE OF REVIEW ON THE
DOCUMENTATION WHEREIN

MORGAN HAMILTON

HAS SUCCEEDED TO DEFEND
HIS ARTISTIC INTEGRITY

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Charlotte Thurman
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Stevie Tanner
Peer Reader

Ryan Craycraft
Peer Reader

Phil McGaughy
Peer Reader

Senator Kip Tunamelt How do you change someone's mind?

Reporter Morgan Hamilton I have to meet someone in their delusion and, with them, walk along it to convince them it's just a story they were told and that they are retelling, while remembering not to fall for my own.

While some artists try to make state of the art, I want to make art of the State. My work is public, it is federal, it is philosophical, and it tends to be procedural. Though I make individual performances, videos, and installations, they are all united: part and parcel of an expanding realm that I am in the process of creating. Procedure as a distortion of the practicality of an institution. I create facsimiles of everyday experiences: web pages, newspapers, flags, even people. It is a parallel narrative of the American experience, of a personal experience.

Say Goodbye to Saturnalia

By

Morgan Hamilton

EXT. BARRANCAS NATIONAL CEMETERY - DAY

The heat of the August day is mimicked in silver shrill by cicadas sounding summer's swell. Live oaks drip with Spanish moss and lazily lift long limbs to shrug at passers-by.

Row by row white marble mounds, cut in slices, dash dotted lines down dull hills. Marking graves and gravely marking men and women gone from this time and into the next. Crosses here and glen-roses there sprinkled across a lawn green and brown from heated drought. The humidity hangs like pots and pans in the air.

Paths plot passage through blank-faced tomb stones waiting for a name and a body to fill them. We marched on beyond them yonder to white walls hallmarking ashes to ashes and dust to dust. The inured honored in urns by vertical vessels stacked and rowed in marble walls. Mausoleum by efficient standards elicit empathy for being deconstructed by fire, final defeat.

MORGAN held his father in his lap. The cool bronze box cut into his fingers with the weight of the day.

MORGAN

How can such a tall man fit in such
a small space?

Bothered BROTHER brought his WIFE who brought his Mother-In-Law. Two too many strangers to feel at home-these distant spectators sharing our grief, structuring our sadness, suffocating us "surviveds by".

MORGAN

(whispering to box)
Did you know, daddy, that your
daughter-in-law doesn't like us?
Don't despair, Big Dave. Day by day
D-I-L loses ground and loses us.

MOTHER mocked misery making mention of a morbid moment.

MOTHER

Your dad would have really loved
this.

BROTHER

Yea, he really would have.

SISTER S somber while SISTER B strokes NIECE'S hair. Such a lovely bunch, despite two. Memories pile of board games round dinner table, much like now, father watches on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2.

SISTER S
(to Morgan)
This breeze is bliss.

MORGAN
(to his box)
If it is it is.
(to Sister S)
This breeze is bathwater.

The family makes cordial conversation while walking to cover. A pagoda protects patriots' families from puckered skin picked raw by sun. The group stiffly saunters to shade and shares a sigh of relief. Two benches offer rest, the family takes them.

Honor guard arrives, TWO SAILORS in white cotton with black skin, they've done this all day; dozens of dead men and women. Dozens of dying dearly-beloveds. Nevertheless nicely, neatly, the white-clad army of two whistle clear waiting while the gathered stand.

SAILOR
Salute.

The only audible break in the circuiting cicadas were cracks of rifles honoring, shell-by-shell, the fallen.

Three rounds of four rifles.

The two dough-boys retrieve the old glory. Choreographed, they cover the colors with folds and movements fitting military precision. One cradles the folded blessing as one checks its corners and fixes faults. Tight triangle takes its trip.

Dance diminishes, now a march to mother's feet.

SAILOR
(holding flag)
On behalf of the US Navy and the
President of the United States, I
would like to present this flag to
you in recognition of your husbands
duty. We are sorry for your loss.

His eyes never left the horizon. He picks a spot miles and years beyond the crying eyes of widows, wondering where we went wrong.

D-I-L and M-I-L moved by motives mounting. Brother and Mother bring tremors to tears. Sister S and Sister B are silent in thought. Morgan takes his father-box to a white

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3.

marble wall. A hundred square doors, never hinged, held in place high above their heads. Morgan watches a falling feather buckle under the foamy breeze.

They peer into an open cave in the wall, another dimension through which we'll never see their physical father again. A helmet man screws on the door.

MORGAN
(to himself)
Where's the knob?

And like that all involved are done. A year of yearning tension released resulting in relaxed gaits. Closure is as simple as an enclosure. A place permanently protected.

MORGAN
What about the waters?

No one hears him, perhaps he never says it.

MORGAN
We are yawning yards from a hot gulf and gallons exponential of expanding water that'll excavate icebergs from Antarctic and Arctic. That marble tomb isn't waterproof. Florida floods futures from now and I don't have a divers license. Will his ashes be mud by then? Will our father be the sea bed?

Sister S, Sister B, Niece clamber in their car and drive to a dinner spot. Mourning is best with food. Brother and D-I-L with M-I-L shut themselves off one last time, start their engine and engage to restaurant.

Like when it started, Morgan and Mother are left alone to find their way.

MOTHER
I really need you two work out whatever you and your brother are going through.

Morgan is never one for conflict.

MORGAN
He and I have heavy amounts of hearts-to-heart, but we don't have hate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

4.

MOTHER
(exhausted)
Whatever it is, get over it, for my
sake.

That isn't how this works, that isn't how any of this works.
No sake outside of solidarity of sight is why it's done.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS - EVENING

A sheep slips by Morgan, bleats pitifully. He hangs out
under a standing stone, weeks into a family trip.

MORGAN
(to the air)
Beyond the yellow-blue sunset is an
infinity of chemistry churning
light from darkness.

If we paid one million dollars
every hour it would take 800 years
to pay off our national debt.

If I traveled at the speed of
light, it would take 100 billion
years to reach the edge of our
universe, paradoxically it would
still be expanding, and I would
never catch up.

There are more than seven billion
people alive on this planet.

And my reality is shifted by the
death of one of them.

INT. FIVE SISTER'S RESTAURANT - DAY

The gathering gathers and settles at a lengthy table.
Appetizers, beer, orders placed. Most family members feign
mortal fortune when forced to meet fate, they will hum a
tune and melt their hearts a'bleeding. Not so likely with
the Hamiltons.

Morgan fiddles with a butter knife, wondering if it could
cut the tension.

The conversation meanders, everyone's daily plans are
presented.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5.

No one is happy, yet the pantomime continues.

MORGAN
(to no one)
I share blood with this table
despite two. And yet only a few
friendships exist. Will I too part
with paradigms when they start
dying?

The food is fast and we ferociously devour it. Talk is
little.

MOTHER
(to everyone)
Well I'm just so glad to have
everyone here.

No one says a word.

CUT TO BLACK

Life is neither
Good nor bad;
Life is life,
And all we know.

Good, and bad,
And joy, and woe,
Are woven fine;
Are woven fine.

Leonard Bernstein

INTRO

It wasn't until my father died that I realized I make personal work.

I always thought I was talking about politics and “We The People” and about ‘us’ versus ‘them’, but this entire time I’ve been talking about ‘me’ versus ‘me’. It started with a newspaper. In the deepest darkest winter I have ever experienced, tucked under the blankets of snow in the crook of the Delaware River, I found out how low I could actually go. It is all a blur to me now, but I remember some highlights: I ruined a friendship which was dear to me, I alienated my sister and friends, I looked for the bottom of every beer bottle in the state (and found many), and I made some of the best work I’ve ever done. I can’t say everything was worth it, but I managed to salvage most of what I had damaged, and come out of the winter. In a bout of self defiance, I decided to write a newspaper for a group show in the spring. At the time, I didn’t think I made personal work, so I wrote a newspaper entirely about me.

I wanted it to capture mundane and banal parts of my every day life, I sort of used it as a way to mock myself for the past few months of depression and selfishness, so I adopted an over-the-top, Onion-esque treatment of my recent life. *The Hamilton Tribute* was printed by the hundreds, and I placed them in the gallery space for visitors to take as many as they wanted. I projected a six foot tall video of myself telling passers-by to get the papers, to take them home, read them then use them to line litterboxes, train their puppies, put under a leaky car, to start a campfire! I wanted the pseudo-faux periodicals to be useful to someone, not in the way it had been useful to me.

In the eight pages of nonsense, I wrote one page that truly mattered. I am often putting on airs to conceal my emotions from people foreign and familiar, and this paper was no exception. I touched on the tropes and clichés of newspapers from movie times to the comics section, but on page five, I wrote about the day my dad died, and I didn’t sugar-coat it. It was cathartic, horrifying, meditative, and gut-wrenching; ultimately, it was necessary. That exercise made me realize what my work is about: myself. The politics and critique and satire are just techniques of approaching my message and making it applicable to anyone else. I use the public format of government to talk about issues I have with mine and my society’s flaws.

I consider myself a new media artist, and I will express myself in accessible ways using accessible materials like video and the Internet. What I’ve learned is that I am at the center of each of my pieces; I am a filter through which experience and experiment has passed and what comes out is me.

Extry! Extry!
2015





The Hamilton Tribute
2015

When I'm working on a problem,
I never think about beauty.
But when I've finished, if the solution is not beautiful
I know it's wrong.

R. Buckminster Fuller

Eighty percent of how, and sometimes what, I make is mental while twenty is physical. I once spent six months thinking about a painting that only took one to paint. I have to be so completely sure of what it is I am approaching and how I want to express it that the end result very closely resembles my original idea. This may seem counter-intuitive for a creative process, but the structure is what drives me to complete a project. Despite my thorough thought process, I am very receptive to new ideas along the way that may result in diverting from the original plan. Painting was a very forgiving medium, and now it is fascinating to use a medium as unforgiving as performance in tandem with one so forgiving as video.

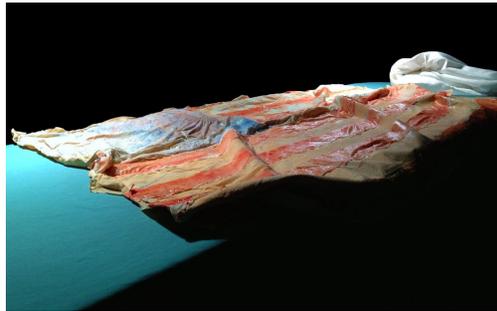
In order to accept the world I show you on stage or screen, you must be so completely convinced by the realm I have created that all you are focused on is what I'm saying or doing. This technique came from assessing my own ability to suspend disbelief. What really made me fall for a story being told? The characters have an entire life, I don't necessarily know it—but I can tell it's there. The setting is solid, everything you see has a purpose to either further the story or introduce the character. The sound is ambient, it is all-encompassing, and it should put you on another plane of consciousness, not distract you from what's going on.

I previously did a series of performances which then became videos. Each one began as a piece in a triptych and they followed the same rules. I focused on the obsession of symbols, the obsession of work, and the obsession with self. My character in each had to use his hands, open something, and speak through his actions. These rules were at first arbitrary, but they became interesting parameters that added obstacles that I had to overcome creatively, like a painter eliminating a color from her pallet. After I created this framework I took many drives down I-95, listened to countless records, absorbed the world around me. For instance, during an interstate trance, I considered what would happen if America became so obsessed with the flag as a symbol, that we spawned a living prototype of it? My process of thinking, writing, building, and sewing resulted in my performing as a surgeon in the midst of a procedure on a flesh-like flag to extract the *Third Living American Flag*. I found real surgical tools, hazard suits, and created a box with a science fiction-style glowing interior. I put

the fetal flag in the box and carried it out of the performance space. The mystery of the scene was what I wanted. *Is it a C-section? Or an Abortion?*

Television and films have always been the standard for creativity for me. They are the culminations of all of the ways I want to express myself: through music, costumes, construction, writing, photography, etc. I love story telling. I have played the flute for 18 years and with it I helped to tell such stories as *Lohengrin*, *West Side Story*, *Candide*, *Rhapsody In Blue*. I have acted on stage since middle school in comedies and dramas. I have helped short films behind the scenes and in front of them. Any chance I could lull someone into the trance of a tale, I took it. Escapism is a big part of how I cope with existing; I just want to pay it forward.

I put myself on the spot with my performances, expressing a thought I've had in all three dimensions and time. I like the use of installation and performance because it engages the viewer in ways that other mediums can't. When you walk into a darkened room where a hazmat figure is cutting into a slab of flesh, it is hard to not be present. And presence is what I aim for not only for my audience, but for myself. I am never more in the now than when performing with a flute, with a cast, with a crew, or as a work of art.



The Third Living American Flag
2015

[CONTINUATION OF THE SENATE CONFIRMATION HEARING ON THE EXISTENCE OF MORGAN HAMILTON. THE FIVE SENATORS ARE PLAYED BY MORGAN HAMILTON AND ARE PROJECTED ON THE WALL FACING THE DEFENDANT.]

Senator Featherbuckle Mr. Hamilton, you consider yourself a maker. Can you tell us what you mean by that?

Mr. Hamilton I make things. I made you, and you, and you, and you, and you.

[THEY LAUGH]

Senator Longreen Well, that can be argued can't it?

Senator Tunamelt Yea which came first? The chicken or the *bad* egg?

[SNICKERS]

Mr. Hamilton I make things. Decisions, good and bad. Points, sharp and not-so-sharp. Friends, some who stay and some who go.

Senator Longreen Not quite the conventional maker, but I see your point. You know one of my favorite things to make is—

Mr. Hamilton Laughter. I know.

Senator Longreen Yes I supposed you do. The day my father died I found the only way to cope was to make laughter. I suppose I was the only one who could get away with it in the family.

Senator Tunamelt Hey, now. I make lots of stuff. Money, summer homes, headlines, newspapers, damn you name it I'll make it.

Mr. Hamilton Yes, but all of those things can be lost, or taken away can't they?

[SILENCE]

Mr. Hamilton I make memories, too, Senator Featherbuckle. I make people think, I make myself heard—all of the things I make cannot be lost, or stolen, or damaged. Those are the things that are important to me.

Senator Glennross You are pretty good at making impressions too, I see.

Senator Tunamelt Margaret, come on, he's winding you up.

Senator Glennross Kip, shut up.

Mr. Hamilton Yes, though, I make things conventionally. I can paint. A friend taught me how to build furniture, how to light things, basic electrical work. I can sew just about anything. But I guess those are all just things that add up to an experience. They all are empty by themselves. So what if I can make a light box, or a 16th century silk redingote, or a soundtrack, if they don't leave someone with an impression? I'm not making these physical elements to exist, I'm making them to change someone in an intangible way. If I make an environment well enough, it will affect who ever comes in contact with it. So I think what I'm trying to create is art in the space that doesn't fill a room.

Senator Featherbuckle You make believe.

Mr. Hamilton I think, as you five sit before me, that's evident.

Senator Glennross Thank you Mr. Hamilton, you've given us a lot to think about.

[THE SENATORS EXCEPT FOR TUNAMELT LEAVE THE DAIS. MR. HAMILTON IS GATHERING HIS THINGS]

Senator Tunamelt You can talk your way out of anything, can't you?

Mr. Hamilton That would imply I'm caught in something. This is all your idea, I'm just playing along.

[SENATOR TUNAMELT LEAVES ANGRILY. MR. HAMILTON EXITS.]

The Incident In Room 216
2015



The Universe
is under no obligation
to make sense to you.

Neil Degrasse Tyson

What I make has become a personal reflection expressed using the format of public performance. I began with paint; the subject matter I focused on was that of actors, politicians, and television. *What a strange thing to use such a slow and methodical medium to capture things so fleeting and chaotic as the aforementioned*, I thought. I asked myself why I chose such a medium. I painted because I enjoyed taking things with cultural turnaround of about five years and portraying them in an art-historical sense. One of the oldest mediums depicting some of the newest; I plucked the portraits from Google, from a TV living room, from a DVD box set, and set them in Oil on canvas.

Enjoying that tongue-in-cheek approach to answering a question wasn't satisfying enough for me. Though entertaining, and a great way to master a skill, painting wasn't quick enough for everything I had to say. Ideas solidified and melted before I could stretch a canvas. A plan for a painting went from a traditional approach to experimental video by the end of my research into the subject matter. *So then video*.

DVDs changed the way I experienced movies. Previously, VHS had enough run time for a feature length film and credits. When DVDs came to popularity, they were able to pack in much more content in a smaller space. What could they do with all this extra room? Born were the outtakes, featurettes, and makings-of. The Bonus Features is where I would live from 1999 to 2010. I devoured the behind-the-scenes aspect of film making. I wanted to do all of that: costumes, makeup, lights, editing, music, etc.

Now I make videos, sometimes by themselves, sometimes a montage of existing material, sometimes I construct them from the ground up. It became important to me to have my hand in every aspect of what a viewer sees: costumes, music, sound, and effects. I like to think of my performances and videos as a DVD set that is missing Disc One. I see my work as sketches fitting into a larger story, perhaps caught in a storyboard made up of live performances, but never completely *whole*.

So, I ask a question, and I perform my answer, or an attempt at an answer. What I make is an ongoing process of call and response. What would happen if our obsession with the American flag went too far? What would happen if it were our sole responsibility to tap a telegraph key and

send a message to unknown masses? I work to answer these questions, sometimes I end up with more questions, but I inevitably take them with me into, my next answer.

I perform to demonstrate in the realest possible way how I function as a human being, an American human, and a white male American. My purview on life experience is privileged, so how can I make my narrative matter to anyone else? *What a question.*

[OVERHEAD SPEAKERS PROJECT THE GRINDING DIN OF AN ICEBERG COLLIDING WITH ANOTHER ICEBERG. THE HUM OF ONE THOUSAND THOUSAND FROZEN MOLECULES SHAKE AWAKE THE SOULS IN THE COMMITTEE CHAMBER]

Senator Featherbuckle And with that, I conclude my opening statements.

Senator Glennross Might I interject, Senator, you didn't speak a word.

Senator Featherbuckle What clearer words could I speak? Why not hear the music of the frozen waters of our own world? We should all replace these garbled languages with the soft sounds of nature.

Senator Longreen I'd hardly call that soft.

Senator Featherbuckle Then you hardly listened.

Senator Tunamelt Can we save your hippy mumbo-jumbo for the drum circle? I'd like to get to my statement.

Senator Featherbuckle By all means.

[SENATOR TUNAMELT LEANS BACK IN HIS CHAIR, MOLLIFIED. HE GATHERS SOME PAPERS AND LICKS HIS LIPS. WITH AN INAUDIBLE BELCH, HE SIGHS WITH RELIEF AND PEERS DOWN AT MR. HAMILTON]

Senator Tunamelt I would love to take credit for this committee coming together in the common goal of outwitting the troublesome Morgan Hamilton. He's been a thorn in my paw for years now, and I think the efforts of this tribunal to NOT confirm him would be the mouse to pluck it. It is the job of news media to cover, equally and fairly, the goings-on of society as a whole. What Mr. Hamilton does is play a dangerous game of

SLANDER, MISDIRECTION, and MISINFORMATION on behalf of The Hamilton Tribute against my office and me. It can easily be seen that he is quite butt-hurt to see me achieve so much, and himself so little. So that is why it brings me such pleasure to put his feet to the coals and find out truly whether or not he actually is. We should strive to prove Mr. Hamilton as a non-entity, therefore reclassifying him as a non-threat, non-citizen, non-every damn thing. Madam Glennross, I posit that we should not confirm Mr. Hamilton, and proceed to a fast and fair judgment. I thank you and I yield my time.

Senator Glennross Thank you, your time is so yielded. Does anyone have anything else to add?

[MR. HAMILTON RAISES HIS HAND]

Senator Glennross Yes, Mr. Hamilton?

Mr. Hamilton I would like to respond to Senator Tunamelt, and to the other committee members.

Senator Tunamelt No, no, no, he's just trying to play games. Don't fall for it Glennross!

Senator Glennross Senator please stay your temper, the defendant has as much right to an opening statement as any on the dais.

[SENATOR TUNAMELT IS VISIBLY DISTRAUGHT]

Mr. Hamilton Thank you Senator.

Cogito ergo sum. I think, therefore I am. It is a cliché by now, I know, but perhaps there is a deepness to it that can't be found without conscious life. This concept approaches our general agreement that the universe is deterministic. That is to say that when we find something to be a law of nature or science, there is nothing that goes against it. This is universal determinism. But what if there were a moment, let's say, when you wake up and your spouse of 18 years isn't there. And when you search for him or her, you come to find he never existed. What would that do to your world? What would that do to your reality? Your paradigm?

Madam Glennross I had a moment like this recently. I, for the first time, thought it would make sense to kill myself. A thought I had always scrutinized, never understood, and fundamentally never accepted. It shifted my world, reality, paradigm. What if I didn't exist? The thought was attractive. As if no longer living would end my existence, as if I would blink away, no tracers, no residue.

But that isn't a deterministic world. No, my trail of cause and effects would be hard, and unwelcome, and confusing, and disturbing, and unwarranted. Then I thought my death, at my own hand, would be that moment in a person's life, the moment I described to you just now, never existed. I'd be *their* paradigm shift.

What's to say it was a fleeting thought? Is this evidence of a deeper problem? Will it happen again?

Cogito ergo sum.

I was in my car when I had this thought. It was snowing, and I had no idea what to think. This was my first winter, it was a dark one, and what I thought life to be wasn't shaping up. Then Beethoven's Seventh Symphony came on. It was Movement two, conducted by Leonard Bernstein. I could tell, because he likes to take Beethoven slowly, he likes to feel every note, every dynamic, he wants every instrument to be a solo voice in a crowded room. His hands glided over the orchestra as if it were a lover. The basses undulated, the trebles bounced, I was inside the music. And then a new project came to mind. A spark started and I was inside the world of this new piece, figuring its ins and outs, running my hands over it as if it were a lover. It was then that the lightning bolt returned me to my deterministic world. It made sense again, I *thought*, and the thoughts were good. If I don't exist, how could I not only recognize two people making exquisite music on my radio, *and* use it to my own ends?

I think, therefore I am.

This is how I make my work. And my work is who I am. It is fragmented; life is fragmented. People come in and out, and we only see shards of each other, but why can't that be enough? I like the idea of seeing shards. It is my goal to make that enough. The shard in me recognizes the shard in you. Senator Tunamelt is a shard with many edges that rub me the wrong way, however he has a right to exist. That is something I cannot take away from him.

I do not want my work to look like art—I want it to look like me. Thank you for your time.

[THE ROOM IS SILENT, PAPERS SHUFFLE, PEOPLE SUPPRESS
COUGHS]

Well I think that is it for opening statements. We will adjourn and return tomorrow at 9 am. Thank you all.

[THE SENATORS GATHER THEIR BELONGINGS AND LEAVE]



Bernstein conducts
Beethoven's 7th Symphony
Mvt. 2 Allegretto
Wiener Philharmoniker
Musikverein, Vienna, 1978

I'm not interested
in having an orchestra sound like itself.
I want it to sound like the composer.

Leonard Bernstein

I often start with a song. This goes back to my childhood, I believe. As far back as I can remember everything was music. My mother introduced me to a broad range, I think people would say it's because she has bad taste, but at the time it was vital to forming me as a person. I heard everything from Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms to Mannheim Steamroller, Enigma, and Lou Vega. My first real memory of choosing a path in music came in the form of two CDs: the soundtracks to *Jurassic Park* and *Space Jam*. They served different functions, however satisfied similar parts of my soul. I would break off the telescopic antenna of my boom box and use it as a conductor's baton to "conduct" the orchestra. I was hearing the soaring movements of *Jurassic Park* were following *me*. Just as the T-Rex was battling with the contrabasses and cellos, *Space Jam* would introduce me to pop music, and its orchestral qualities. I would play, on repeat (to my parent's dismay), "I Believe I Can Fly". And at those moments, I really believed I could.

Before I see anything artistically, I have to *hear* it. I perfected my technique of finding inspiration while completing my undergrad in Tallahassee, Florida. It was about two and a half hours away from my hometown of Pensacola, so on weekends home I'd have about five hours of free time while driving. I would listen to as much music as I possibly could on those drives, and often my mind would wander while doing so. I'd think about anything: texts I shouldn't have sent, people I should call, assignments that are passed due, etc. However the most productive way I spent my time thinking about my projects. The music would play, and I would begin a thought experiment, looking at a mental version of a performance, costume, or video I wanted to make. I would end up spending my entire drive wandering through the ins and outs of installations, and by the time I got to my house I was ready to start working.

Delaware is eighteen hours from my hometown, quite a lot of time to kill while visiting Pensacola. My process has only increased in intensity, and I've been able to quicken my trains of thought. I revisit music that has consistently inspired me; Bernstein's *Candide*, Beethoven's *9th*, Laurie Anderson's "O Superman", but always searching for new muses. Music, and more recently noise, has been a constant factor in getting myself

into the world I want to create. That is why sound is an integral part to my performance pieces. In life, we are surrounded by it, it makes up one of the most importance sensory experiences, and it must exist for my performances, installations, and videos to be real.

I created a paranoid code-tapper whose sole job was to tap Morse code messages to unknown listeners. He was dressed in a 16th century redingote, paper wig, and breeches, he arrived in the space, knelt on a red velvet stool, and opened his glowing table. This concept came when I accidentally imported three different songs into Adobe Premier Pro, they began playing all at once creating a confusing and suffocating din. They were each distinct elevator music loops I found Online, and was trying to decide which one I wanted to use for this piece, however, the accident became an integral part of the piece. With this cacophony numbing the mind of the viewer, I overlaid exactly what was going through my head while performing the code-tapping. A strange non-linear stream of consciousness. *This was my character.*

Once my sound and persona were developed, I moved into his role in life, a projection of every president's portrait scrolled endlessly in front of him. But on this particular day, a glitch happened. The tone and the soundscape changed from amorphous blur to an urgent drum beat.

The sound is the backbone of my work. It is what has been there from the inception of an idea. Without it I would not be able to work, nothing I could create would be *real enough*; my realms that arise from sound would be without gravity. I hear, therefore I think. I think, therefore I am. I



Bush, Clinton, Bush, Obama []
2015



[THE HEARING IS COMING TO A CLOSE, SOME SENATORS ARE DESPERATE.]

Senator Longreen Please answer my question, Mr. Hamilton.

Mr. Hamilton I apologize, could you please repeat the question?

Senator Longreen I asked you to tell me why we're here.

Mr. Hamilton Yes, of course. I ask questions.

[SILENCE]

Mr. Hamilton I ask questions and then I have to answer them.

Senator Longreen Could you please elaborate?

Mr. Hamilton I ask myself a question, and then I answer it, through, I don't know, thought experiments, creative writing? You know artistic expressions. I asked myself one day, "Do I exist?". And I couldn't just ask this question and move on, I had to answer it. So, here we are.

Senator Longreen I don't follow.

Mr. Hamilton Well you should, we are all one here. One in the same. Imagine if a person were a glass prism, and life were a beam of light passing through it, every single member upon this panel would be a color on my spectrum. Some "person stage" who has either come and gone, or has stuck around.

Senator Tunamelt That is the kind of talk and behavior that got your ass in front of this committee. You are not here to disprove our existence, we are here to disprove yours.

Mr. Hamilton In disproving your existences I would be unraveling mine. This isn't an existential dilemma it's a revelatory awakening. It is all absurd. You seven members of the United States Senate are trying to confirm ME. When you're nothing more than a projection of light, the thickness of a photon, upon a wall. Allow me to stand in front of you.

[MR. HAMILTON STANDS FROM THE TABLE AND CASTS A SHADOW ON SOME OF THE COMMITTEE MEMBERS]

If any of this were real, you wouldn't be a darkened void. You would still exist no matter how much light I blocked. The only problem I have with this part is that the problem is not that the senators are not real, it's the nature of their reality, their relationship to you. Photons might be small but they ARE real.

[THE DISEMBODIED COMMITTEE MEMBERS LOOK UNSETTLED DURING
THE DEMONSTRATION]

So, let me tell you why we're here. For the first time in my life, just months ago, I wasn't sure where I was. If I even existed. I asked myself "Do I exist?" and I wasn't sure how to answer the question. So I imagined myself as a gathering of people: Mr. Tunamelt, Mr. Featherbuckle, Mr. Lawngreen, Mr. Passage, and Madame Glennross,.

My body is a government whose branches work in tandem to operate this strange meat puppet through an even stranger world. When looking at the size of the universe, we are the size of an atom, maybe even smaller, so it would be easy to ask "what's the point?" However, to the size of an atom, we are a Universe. Scale informs perspective, and perspective informs importance in the grand scheme. I am important, therefore I exist. I am minute, therefore I do not exist.

It only takes red, green, and blue light to create your reality, and darkness to destroy it.

Senator Glennross I think we need to take a recess, a lot of information has been imparted to us all, and we should be judicious in our assessment of Mr. Hamilton's existence from here on out.

Senator Passage I second the Madame's motion.

Senator Glennross Let's vote- those in favor?

[THE SENATORS ALL VOTE INT HE AFFIRMATIVE AND THE SESSION IS
RECESSED]

Two possibilities exist:
either we are alone in the universe or we are not.
Both are equally terrifying.

Arthur C. Clarke

One of the most creative way to address humanity is to write about aliens. I have learned this from my long-lasting love of science fiction. It started later than it could have, though, because when I was young my parents watched the *Star Trek* films and TV shows, along with *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Star Wars*, and *Battlestar Galactica*. But it wasn't until I was in middle school that I really started paying attention to the value of what sci-fi really is at its core. All of these shows had a common theme: philosophy. The way the writers treated current events happening to current humans in the guise of aliens fascinated me. I drew connections between xenophobia and racism, the future's history and our present, and embracing science and creating a utopic future. The visuals drew me in even further from the elaborate prosthetics that turned Michael Dorn into a Klingon, to the intricate costuming which told me I'm visiting a different world. These were all tactile things that were beyond my ability to replicate, but not beyond my ability to research and study. While students were dutifully reading for classes and finishing their math homework, I was reading *The Art Of Star Trek* and drawing fantasy star ships and deck layouts. The impact of the stories came later than the sensory experience of sci-fi and TV; it took a bit of maturing and learning before I was able to truly grasp what Captains Picard and Janeway were really talking about. But once I learned that every alien represented a human in virtue or flaw, storytelling became a whole new world.

It is important for me to place my work in the context of television. What I have made recently can be drawn parallel to episodic TV, from pre-production, production, and post-production. If you were to watch my videos in succession, it might seem like you are flipping between channels. I enjoy using seemingly disjointed "shows" to tell a broader story, perhaps each of my performance-videos is a season in a broader series. The most influential TV with which I grew up wasn't actually television. We lived in Okinawa, Japan and didn't have cable so my grandmother recorded our favorite shows to VHS and mailed them to us. We got *Home Improvement*, *Family Matters*, *Dinosaurs*, and *America's Funniest Home Videos* several weeks after they aired. I never knew the difference, it all seemed live to me.

I believe this was important because due to our VHS catalogue, I was able to watch whatever show I wanted without consideration of story-line. I was able to see a season 1 episode right after a season 3 episode. This non-congruity (not just in VCR reality, but the limited plot-arc of TV back then) helped establish my appreciation for non-sequitur in creating. Fast forward to today, when entire seasons, and sometimes entire shows, are based on a singular plot line. It is not so easy to watch a show out-of-order. Let's consider the "Netflix dump" style of television. When Netflix began making its own "television" shows, it invented the notion of making every episode of a season available at once, the first example of this was the American adaptation of BBC's *House Of Cards* in 2013. Though binge-watching a series has been possible since DVD box sets of TV shows came to popularity, Netflix revolutionized the activity since you could start episode one and it would play continuously. It has eliminated the "last week on [enter show name]" style of catching up viewers. If I were to watch Netflix-produced season four of *Arrested Development* out-of-order, I would lose half the jokes and be lost. The ability to pack in time-sensitive plot devices has intensified in recent years. The format is meeting the short attention spans of Twenty-First century minds.

Cable did happen to reach the shores of Okinawa before I left them. What cable brought was a whole new realization of what TV is. It is commercials in between an endless choice of shows. Nickelodeon assured me that being a rambunctious hard-headed kid was alright, and that kids are hilarious and get to make believe every Saturday on *All That*. What is most important to my development as a dreamer is the constant assurance that pretending is a real thing that real people can do for a living. It was planted deep in my brain, and later in life I would fight that notion, but I would ultimately come to accept it with open arms and an apology.

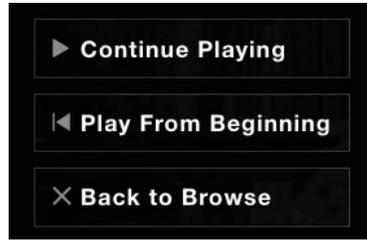
As I grew up I abandoned the multi-camera sitcom format of people talking in living rooms and found my way into comedy, satire, and parody. *Reno 911*, *Strangers With Candy*, *The Daily Show*, and *South Park* were all influential parody-satires that nurtured and fulfilled a dark humor within me. They lampooned commonly-accepted TV format and held us accountable for the fallout of reality TV, after school specials, news programs, and cartoons, respectively. This broadened my horizons from my nascent love of sci-fi to a wide range of socially-responsible topics. From philosophy to what's funnies, I was coddled by the glowing screen evermore.

I joined the dysfunctional juxtapositions of episodic storytelling with this new avenue of no-laugh-track programming through sketch comedy. England produced some of the funniest, most twisted, darkest sketch shows I could get my eyes on. America's sketch comedy in the mid-aughties were

Netflix: Continue Playing

Star Trek: The Next Generation

The Daily Show With Jon Stewart



mostly 90's hangovers and under-ground start ups in the form of *The State*, *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*, *The Whitest Kids U Know*, and *Mr. Show*. But what the British did was make mainstream a format that would speak to who I am at my core: a fucked-up kid who lives by schadenfreude. The likes of *The League of Gentlemen*, *That Mitchell and Webb Look*, and *The Big Train* were not hackneyed, contemporary rehashes of *Monty Python*, *The Fast Show*, etc. I feel that English shows use the sketch format as a device, not a novelty. The freshness and edginess coming from BBC compared to the inconsistency of American comedy programming was what I needed to point me in the right direction. The dry English wit wasn't lost on me, and I took it into what I was making.

During my formative years a bevy of films came out that introduced me to all sorts of possibilities and reaffirmed my love of comedic actors; Jim Carrey's *Ace Ventura*, Robin Williams' *Mrs. Doubtfire*, Bill Murray's *What About Bob*. Fictional characters galore, however, it was Jim Carrey's acute depiction of Andy Kaufman in *Man On The Moon* that was essential to my introduction of performance art. I saw the film when it came out in 1998, and it took a couple watches as I grew up to really see who Andy Kaufman was. He was an innovator, decades before his time, and perhaps still out there laughing at all of us. But his style was unapologetic, and he relished sitting in our discomfort. No one knew when the joke was over, or when it ever began for that matter. He presented himself as an amorphous performer, always searching for the laugh, creating persona for the purpose of being hated, never letting the other shoe drop. He would wrestle women and got in too deep before everyone realized it was a years-long staged event. He messed with his first solo TV program so the viewer at home would think their television set was on the fritz. He never stopped pressuring everyone around him to see the absurdity in our society, in our existence. That is what changed my idea of what it is to perform. I took from Andy Kaufman a lesson in treating reality as the absurdist novel it is.

These are all cultural landmarks that demarcated my path in life as a maker. But the onus of most of my twenty-first century influences would

be the Man of the Hour himself, George W. Bush. Perhaps not him exactly, but the world which he helped create. For better or worse, 9/11 shifted our country's paradigm by degrees and underlined social critique in the media for the greater part of two decades. Only now does it seem the clouds are lifting and equality is becoming more important than dominance. Military is no longer the only solution to international tensions, because of Secretary of State Clinton's efforts abroad, diplomacy has found its place on the global stage again. I found the only way I (and a lot of people) could cope was to laugh. Comedians like David Cross, Patton Oswalt, Jon Stewart, and Steven Colbert acted as America's immune system calling out the dystopian reality we lived in during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. The state of the union was tumultuous during my late teens and early twenties, and it left a mark of savage sarcasms and unforgiving wit.

I like to pretend to cope with reality, but also to augment it for myself and anyone close enough to witness it. When I touch every material that goes before an audience or a camera, it becomes an extension of myself. I am letting you in on the joke, and however you walk away from it, your answers will only produce more questions. The context in which I exist as a maker can fit within your TV, with that, though, comes your ability to turn it off and walk away. We all know the show is still going on.

And now for something completely different.
~~Don't Touch That Dial~~

[THE CHAMBER IS DARKENED AND AN OVERHEAD PROJECTOR PLAYS THE OPENING TITLES OF STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION]

Voice Over

Space, the final frontier.



These are the voyages of the Starship Enterprise.



Its continuing mission: To explore strange new worlds.



To seek out new life; new civilizations.



To boldly go where no one has gone before.

[THE CHAMBER BRIGHTENS]

Senator Longreen Ladies and Gentlemen, that was the opening sequence to Star Trek: The Next Generation. I have stayed relatively quiet throughout these proceedings because I did not want to become embroiled in the drama of something so hotly contested as to whether or not Mr. Hamilton exists.

We were charged with the task of determining whether or not Morgan Hamilton exists. We were not brought here to debate whether or not he is a good person, or whether or not he is capable of living, but does he *exist*?

In the spirit of closing arguments, I would like to go first, as I am last to speak on the matter.

I believe Morgan exists.

[THE PEOPLE IN THE CHAMBER COLLECTIVELY GASP]

He has proven to me, in many ways, that his reality is indeed the prime reality. Ours is only a shadow of it. What I can plainly see to my left is four Senators of the United States Senate, but what I cannot explain is how any of us got here. I don't remember a life further back than 27 years. I don't remember running for office. I just showed up to this committee hearing one day.

Why are you all so sure? Senator Tunamelt, you have been the bull on this hearing since you paid off Glennross to have it.

[MORE GASPS]

And Featherbuckle, your touchy-feely Pisces lifestyle is the antithesis of respect of authority, yet you wield it? Who elected you?

[SENATOR FEATHERBUCKLE GRUMBLES]

Passage is barely here, his nose has been to his phone since this thing started. Anyway, my point is, Morgan must exist. He has to, because I am convinced *we* don't. Morgan has only sought out new life, through us. He explores strange new worlds with new civilizations. Like everyone aboard a star ship, we have already boldly gone where no one has gone before. We have been given life, though purpose-specific, and most likely for a brief time, but I have been projected to the farthest reaches of imagination as possible.

With that, I am ready to cease.

This is a local shop
for local people.
There's nothing for *you* here.

Tubbs, from The League of Gentlemen

I walked into a vacuous space, it was completely dark, save the six-foot wide disco ball floating in the center, and for a moment I couldn't tell up or down, I was floating in an galaxy. Droning sine waves fluttered between the dots of light being flung to an indefinite ceiling and floor, and though difficult to tell, people were all around me, adding a dimensional parallax to the already disorienting starfield. I moved around the space, the disco ball looked more like a moon than a sphere of mirrors, it turned slowly clockwise then imperceptibly stopped and switched direction. This was probably the first time I'd ever been in a room which was wall-to-wall full of people on their cellphones, but that usual annoyance is made irrelevant by the starfield; our phones just became additional dots of light in this amorphous space that Laurie Anderson created. It was slightly encouraging to take my phone out and try to capture pictures of what was around me, all the while being an anonymous bystander in the darkness of the Park Avenue Armory. The night's performance would transport me to another plane of experience. The event could be broken down to two intangible elements, light and sound. I thought to myself, when this show ends only a few material objects will be removed. Everything else from the experience exists in the past and in our minds. Laurie Anderson is my patron saint of performance and video art, her studio albums turned performance turned video inspire me toward a process of transforming and transcending medium so that one piece can be experienced in different ways.

In the fall of 2015, in the vacuous space of the Park Avenue Armory, Laurie Anderson showed me a vision that would take my previous loves and synthesize them into a unified artistic and aesthetic drive. I never felt like I had a solid voice or idea of what I wanted to make or show people early on. In fact, I remember my trip to Art Basel Miami in the winter of 2012. Aside from the main convention center being filled with artist, gallery, and museum stalls, there were separate galleries and museums and public art exhibitions all over the beach and Wynwood. I was completely overwhelmed; I left Miami more discouraged as an artist than when I arrived. I asked myself "if all of this exists, and this is only one of many of these conventions, what is my voice? What is what I have to make ever going to matter?" I let it stop me for a bit, however after all is said and done,



Habeas Corpus
2015
Laurie Anderson
Photo by James Ewing

one piece stood out in that sea of work: Yinka Shonibare's *Gentleman Walking A Tight Rope*. A headless person filled a regency era frock coat and breeches; however, the fabric is from brightly colored and complexly patterned West African textiles. The figure is balancing on a rope strung across a corner; its costume is so powerful against the white walls. He depicted his personal struggle as an African with a precarious identity, born in England and raised in Nigeria; he removes references to the mannequin's race by taking off its head. Africa has a long history of colonialism, and subsequently post-colonial fallout, with very little recognition for artistic endeavors from the west. Literary works like Chinua Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*, and Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* all tell stories of pan-continental African life, from military political coup, to schisms in traditional and modern identities, to racially-based revolutions, respectively. Africa with its fifty-four countries has often told a story of struggle with post colonial turmoil, usually about syncretizing traditional ways of life with their modern counterparts. These writers and artists inspired a way of thinking about personal expression in me early on. Africans and many others were telling their story through the context of their country and its history; they sought to define their culture instead of having it defined for them. America's military, diplomatic, and cultural



Gentleman Walking A Tightrope
2006
Yinka Shonibare
Photo by Akron Art Museum

hegemony has been critiqued world-wide, and so, especially at home, if I want to be relevant in a sea of voices, I should do the same.

I started looking to myself to be the vessel in performance and video, I decided that I would have to embody the characters I saw in my creations. The first of these was my doppelgänger Mandrake Featherbuckle who was a transient patriot-in-waiting. Caravaggio depicted Matthew being called to repent, and so Featherbuckle found the constitution in its “living” form, as an imperfect document desiring to be perfected. There is something of that idea in humanity. Between an indistinct character like Featherbuckle and his cogent creator, I had to contend with a history of laws, culture, and tradition. My political education came from watching *The West Wing* on Netflix and keeping a permanent Google search page open. When they would mention some obvious operation of government in a line of dialogue, I would look up its origin and how the creators of the show interpreted it. Fictional President Jed Bartlett and his cadre of fast-talking, quick-walking, young professionals during a time of war and terrorism educated me better than a year of government in high school. The episodic drama demonstrated life-long lessons in governance that I would need as tools to critique as an artist.



The West Wing
2000
Screen capture

After my self-education in formal subjects such as world literature and US government, I have found that my work is most influenced by *The League of Gentlemen*. This BBC TV show from the early aughties put on display an entire town, Royston Vasey, played by three actors. I was taken aback at first, completely unbelieving that three men could play 60 plus characters as individual and unique as local shopkeepers Edward and Tubbs, restart officer Pauline Campbell-Jones, her nemesis Ross, and innocent man-child Mickey. The actors, Reece Shearsmith, Steve Pemberton, and Mark Gatiss opened a world to me of how diverse a performer can be. Royston Vasey and its denizens showed me that it was possible, with a little bit of tweaking, to change one's self into a whole other person. In watching three seasons and a hand full of specials, I discovered that a real person, or a fragment of the actor's personality, inspired each of these characters. I utilize this approach in my current projects, when I divide myself into six distinct facets of my personality (exaggerated in many ways) to try and decipher my existence as a person, an artist, and an American.

I laughed my way through most of my life, learning from what was funny and what was too sad to cry about. I took it upon myself to learn how this government operates; is it broken? How can we fix it? Our founders weren't even sure it would work. Why are we so confident that it does? The dogmatic technique of US economic and cultural influence across the globe has been a revisionist's attempt at defining foreign lands and people, and my Nigerian and South African muses have bucked this tradition by telling their own stories in their own voices. Laurie Anderson introduced me to a world of multi-sensory aesthetic experience and offered me a living artist to follow and admire. Finally getting to see her perform "O Superman" in the Starfield at the Armory was a highlight in my life. It will drive me beyond those daunting doubts from Art Basel and conventions like it. I am comfortable in my artistic schizophrenic spree, and *The League of Gentlemen* will always back me up if anyone doubts. I am telling a story about my country and my people in my multiple voices. Unlike Tubb's catch phrase, mine is a local story, for global people, there's everything for you here.



The League of Gentlemen
1999-2002
Tubbs character played by
Steve Pemberton
Photo credit BBC

“When a thing has history in it. Listen. One of those two Zippo lighters was in Franklin D. Roosevelt’s pocket when he was assassinated. And one wasn’t. One has historicity, a hell of a lot of it. As much as any object ever had. And one has nothing. Can you feel it?” He nudged her. “You can’t. You can’t tell which is which. There’s no ‘mystical plasmic presence,’ no ‘aura’ around it.”

From *Man In The High Castle*, by *Philip K. Dick*

More recently, I have discovered that the facsimile is a large part of what I do. I can trace this fascination to many sources; however, I believe the parody is largely to blame. Television shows like *Reno911!*, *Parks and Recreation*, and *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart* use facsimile in a creative way, though the subversion of its original form is exaggerated, the format is still the same. These shows have in common a play on existing institutions of television: reality TV, work place documentary, and news broadcast, respectively. I grew up watching these comedic farces alongside the shows they are based on. It’s an odd situation when an original and its facsimile are presented simultaneously, side-by-side. I believe that an original show (*COPS*) is infiltrated by the double (*Reno911!*) because the double, through intertextuality, can go undetected, therefore infiltrating the original and “established” television format.

Imagine the scene: an evil twin of the hero in a movie removes his eye patch so that they are identical, they get in a fight, they mix themselves up, which one is the hero? Such a campy plot device is at the heart of my fascination with the facsimile, how perfectly can I make something? Could it pass for the real thing? If it could, how many things could I change in it before the fake is detected? A Washington Post article exposes the inappropriate behavior of my character Senator Tunamelt, written by my journalist character Morgan Hamilton, in order to sell the idea, I must convince the viewer this exists in *our* world. I play six different people, if we all removed our disguises, could you tell which one is the hero? I believe that says more about the villain than it does the hero.

Television is essentially a poor simulacrum of what already exists. It’s a specious interpretation of every day life, and the fantastical. Who

would have thought every human on Earth would so easily dismiss reality as to believe what is glowing on a sheet of glass in his or her living room. We have been doing it since the 1910s at the advent of film, and its fundamental premise hasn't changed much in a century: REALITY WILL BE FLATTENED TO TWO DIMENSIONS AT VARIABLE LENGTH AND



Tunamelt Under Fire 2015

In The Know

Tunamelt under fire as NSA mire deepens

A [Print] [Comments: 170]



By **Morgan Hamilton** March 17 [Follow @MorganThough](#)



Tunamelt leans into the criticism and allegations of corruption at his press conference in Washington, D.C. (Morgan Hamilton/Hamilton Tribute)

WASHINGTON I was visiting a friend in Vermont when I got an unmarked manilla envelope with the words "TOP SECRET" red-ink stamped on the front, it was exactly the cheap prop you would see in a spy movie, yet it was addressed to me at my friend's cabin in the middle of the woods. I suspected him of an elaborate practical joke, however he had no idea what it was. I opened the thick docket and a stack of papers and inch thick dropped onto the desk, the very top page read "Confidential Information Passed Through Latvia. Senator Tunamelt Suspected." I was intrigued.

I have been following Senator Kip Tunamelt for the last year or two, he came up on my radar after I heard one of his speeches in which he called for "a lot more spying, I mean not the bad kind, the kind of spying that keeps y'all safe at night. The good kind." This was at a rally in Pensacola, Florida, where Tunamelt was campaigning for former governor Charlie Crist (with whom he has close ties). The rally was near the beach just after the Deep Water Horizon disaster in the gulf, the political jackpot was palpable. His opening remarks were brief, however he said a lot, including a laundry list of what is wrong with the American people. The most peculiar thing I heard, though, was his request for more spying, "the good kind".

When I returned home to D.C., I did some research on my new favorite Senator, and man what a wealth of information I found. Scandal after scandal, I peered back in time all the way to his incredibly troubled youth, and after an adolescence full of defaming his adopted mother, she got him a job in Florida's State House as a representative. I would say he was elected, but I couldn't find any concrete evidence of popular votes, so I am forced to conclude that the overwhelming amount of evidence of nepotism speaks for itself. He once told Vanity Fair about "this time in Riga":

Hold up I haven't told you about Latvia? Oh shit, hold on, so this time in Riga, me and my friend—I can't say who he'd fucking kill my ass. Anyway, we were on the train from Warsaw going up to Latvia, and we meet these two hookers, well I guess they were hookers, they certainly dressed like them--my point is it was consensual--where was I? Oh yea, on the train, and these two whores finish up on us then ask if we want to continue the party. So obviously we yell "hell yea" and they take us to the back of the train where the door was locked. The tiny one knocks on the door and says some shit in Polish and the door opens, I mean a wall of smoke pours out of this car, but we go in. Sitting on a goddamn throne of money is some sweaty looking bald dude, my friend says "hey we don't swing that way". The guy just sits there and the two girls kneel at his fucking feet and rest their heads on his lap. I can't make this shit up.



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1 Trick of a tiny belly:



WIDTH, PLEASE BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE. I find that riding the coattails of such a successful propaganda machine is a way to present my beliefs and my ideas as fact, I'll just add my ingredient to a soup everyone is already eating, and if it is subtle enough, no one will notice its bitterness.

An inspiration of mine comes in the form of double-act mischief makers The Yes Men. Collaborators Jacques Servin and Igor Vamos created the dynamic duo responsible for disbanding the World Trade Organization, accepting responsibility on behalf of the DOW for a tragic factory collapse in Bhopal, and other highly publicized high jinks. The pair and their network of collaborators start by creating websites identical to company websites they want to infiltrate. In the mid 1990s, when the world wide web was still a youngster, making facsimile websites was relatively easy, and telling the difference between a real one and a spoof was difficult for the layperson. They made real-world, interactive interfaces that are intended to dupe the media in order to get interviews posing as representatives from organizations such as the WTO, McDonalds, Dow Chemicals, and others. They use these opportunities on television interviews to satirize, spoof, and parody these controversial corporations. This approach to protest is fascinating to me, and I am never for want of laughter when researching them. I find that I differ from them in that my facsimiles don't work, they do not have the intention of deception for media recognition, and I want them to exist in a questionable plane of real or fake. If I activate a link or and ad on one of my fake news articles, it becomes real, tangible, and traceable. I must protect the uncanniness of my Internet creations by leaving them as broken links.

The line between facsimile and counterfeit is fine. Mal-intent usually demarcates counterfeit, however if a facsimile is used to dupe or to subvert, could that be construed as deceptive to the wrong audience? Consider Banksy's masterful infiltration of the museum; from high art to anthropological exhibits, Banksy inserted himself through mischievous facsimiles such as paintings and even a "cave drawing" depicting ecstatic

The Peckham Rock Painting
2005
Banksy



shoppers. Once the “artifacts” were discovered by the museum, it was so impressed with the deception they became part of the permanent collection. Does this end its life as a copy? Was it ever really a fake? Master forger Mark Landis could be considered a counterfeit artist, however no defraud took place as they were all donations. Certainly deception was at play, but I don’t think we could consider it any worse than Banksy and his foray into the museum. I want to engage the facsimile in a different way, deception is part of it, but I want details to shift out of focus and catch the eye of the layperson. No microscopes or investigation needed when viewing a Wikipedia article about my characters; in fact, the links don’t even work. I use familiar formats, things we take for granted on a daily basis, and rip the trust from it. Online news sources have employed “native advertising”, which is when an advertisement for a product or service looks and reads exactly like a journalistic article and is nestled under the names of trusted news sources. (Where does facsimile end and counterfeit begin?) I use copies to legitimize my story: of course my persona have Wikipedia pages, of course The Washington Post has done an exposé on misbehaving Senators, of course they have been on C-SPAN.

I utilize the copy, the double, the doppelgänger to lull the viewer into disorientation surrounded by familiar landmarks. My work is an uncanny trip at the top of the stairs, expecting one more step and it isn’t there. The viewer should be able to see the edge of the stage out of the corner of [THE CHAMBER IS PACKED WITH SPECTATORS TO HEAR THE FINAL VERDICT OF THE CONFIRMATION COMMITTEE]

Senator Glennross It’s been a daunting time here with you, Mr. Hamilton. However, it is time that we, the special committee to confirm you as existing or not existing, must? To is a bit awkward pass a verdict. Will everyone please rise?

[SENATORS FEATHERBUCKLE, TUNAMELT, LONGREEN, AND PASSAGE STAND. MR. HAMILTON STANDS. SENATOR TUNAMELT SEEMS NERVOUS.]

Senator Glennross Mr. Hamilton, it is the opinion of this special committee to determine that you in fact d—

[REDACTED]

OUTRO

Thought the focus of my recent work is squarely on me and my interpretation of existence, I want it to undulate between reality and virtual reality, real and fake, truth and lies, and for the viewer never to be sure which it is.

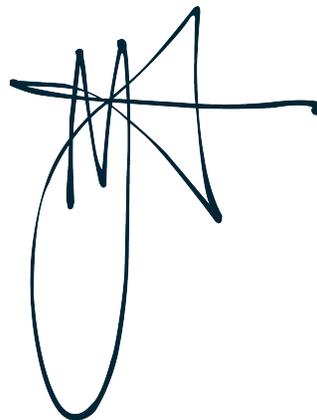
I have put myself through a Senate Confirmation hearing where I have to defend my existence to myself. It is a thought experiment that I presented in fragments, and that is how it will ultimately exist, never beginning, never ending. That's how we all exist, I believe.

My personalities, characters, doppelgänger, and selves are a glimpse into how I work internally: I answer to a chorus of voices within me, speaking from my past, present, and future, to give me sound advice. I do not suffer as Sybil did, this isn't a schizophrenic episode, I am a fractured person, like all of us are, each personality trait is the edge of a shard. Each shard was created during the violent act of birth.

At the end of my performances and videos, I want the viewer to have more questions than answers, I want interpretations to range widely. What did he do to that flag? To whom was he sending the Morse code message? Is Kip Tunamelt more Morgan? Or is Morgan more Kip Tunamelt?

Is life real or imaginary? I've heard compelling hypothesis that the universe is nothing more than a holographic simulation. I think that is what I want to create with my fake web pages, unsearchable Wikipedia entries, embodied senators, etc. There are a lot of people who would argue that life is real, it is what gives ourselves everything we have, and our advanced evolution has allowed us to ask us such metaphysical questions. Some would say life is simulation, only a perception of things that don't actually exist, a string of stimuli being fed into our brain tubes a la *The Matrix*.

I've been asked if I think life is real or fake, but I'm beginning to believe that life is neither.



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“Well, I Finished It...”

-- ~~President Obama~~

Morgan is not entirely sure he exists. This nagging notion led to a full-fledged epiphany the likes of which hasn't been seen on Our Earth in centuries. He has spent his career pursuing artistic integrity and hopes to prove its existence so we can all stop trying so hard. His work is transient and lossy.

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