Hard-Boiled Wonderland

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts at Massey University
Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand.

2020

Finn Chadwick

HARD-BOILED
WONDERLAND

FINN CHADWICK

The act of arrangement.
The act of rearrangement.
The act of installation.
The act of
The act of making.
The act of making as a process of attempted discovery.
The act of making as an attempt at answering questions.
The act of making as generation of further questioning.
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The act of remaking.
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The act of redaction.
The act of analysis.
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The act of Hypothesis.
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The act of function.
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The act of pastiche.
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Hard-Boiled Wonderland is a sculptural and multi-media
installation inquiry into the myriad possible relationships
between popular-culture, science fiction and science fact. (As
the artist, I am interested in the When/Where/How of things.-
a congregation within our lives to both form and haemorrhage
our understandings of the world, our existence and beyond).

An ontological investigation ███████████████████████████
███████████both object-orientated as well as a form of
philosophical questioning. ██████████████████████
Hard-Boiled Wonderland reflects upon ████ histories of
contemporary technocratic ██████████████████████ culture
embedded within the material detritus of the real world.

Inevitably, this ████████████████████████ involves engagement
with both fictitious and factual narrative.
Operating under a guise of pseudo-science, objects and
documents referential to research, form a quest for logic both
within and without Hard-Boiled Wonderland.
██
██
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This body of work questions the role of inquiry and research
within contemporary art practice. █████████████████████████
██
resulting in a fragmented experience of understanding.
██
███████████████ a reflexive hyperreality?

The project becomes situated within a rich field of sculptural
practice, often making direct reference to influential works
in recent local and international art history, in contemporary
practice and in popular-culture. █████████████████████████
████████████████████████████ material, form, trope and
satire.

Informed by both the fact and fiction, known and unknown
workings of many varied technological apparatus, Hard-Boiled
Wonderland's sculptural language ██████████ stems from ████
aesthetics of the 'Machine' ███████████████████████████
Bound within ███████████████████ diagrammatic, scientific and
engineered outflow/output/infrastructure is a reflection of
our understandings and misunderstandings of a technological
methodology.

Hard-Boiled Wonderland raises more questions than it answers.

Murakami

A narrative particle-accelerator that zooms between Wild Turkey Whiskey and Bob Dylan, unicorn skulls and voracious librarians, John Coltrane and *Lord Jim*.
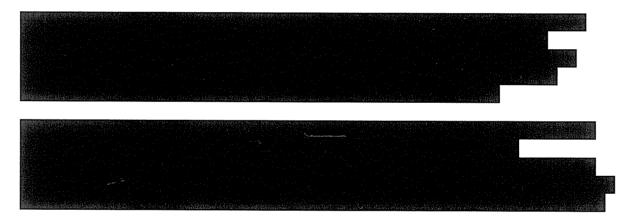
Science fiction, detective story and post-modern manifesto all rolled into one rip-roaring novel, *Hard-boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* is the *tour de force* that expanded Haruki Murakami's international following. Tracking one man's descent into the Kafkaesque underworld of contemporary Tokyo, Murakami unites East and West, tragedy and farce, compassion and detachment, slang and philosophy. The result is a wildly inventive fantasy and a meditation on the many uses of the mind.

- Murakami, H. Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World. (Vintage Books. London, England. 2003)

Hard-Boiled Wonderland takes its title from the 1985 Haruki
Murakami Novel, 'Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the
World'.

(INSERT BLURB SCAN)

With the project Hard-Boiled Wonderland, I ████████████████
████████ seek to experiment with realities. ████████████████
████████████████████████ This investigation ████████████████
deals with aspects of science-fiction and popular culture,
while simultaneously being anchored within the reality of
science fact.
(Somewhere between both scientific research and cultural production.)

The title 'Hard-Boiled Wonderland' utilises the notion of
'Hard-Boiled' detectives often depicted within many stories of
the science-fiction, crime and spy genres.

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(The Potential for Wonderment)

████████████████████ the term 'Wonderland' ████████████████████
allows for a potentially ████████ perpetual investigation
within any of its particular installations. Whether or not
there is any concrete resolution (within the installation or
the installation itself) may end up being the determining
factor in its consideration as a 'Wonderland'.

Does the definition of 'Wonderland' rely on the 'success' ██
████████████ of a logic?

It may in one case be the perfect scenario for a hard-nosed
sleuth, to be forever in search of an 'answer', yet
simultaneously become no less than frustrating when their
efforts are very poorly rewarded.

Or perhaps this is not the case at all, and the 'Wonderland'
is to ████████ act as a metaphor for the recombinant nature of
████████████████████████████ semiotics.
(Semiotics within Hard-Boiled Wonderland reduced to its
simplest form of signs and symbols of reference, communication
and understanding.)

It may be both.

The nature of the 'Wonderland' investigation constantly relies
on varying degrees of speculation.

"You take the red
pill - You stay in
Wonderland . . ."
- (Morpheus, The Matrix, 1999)
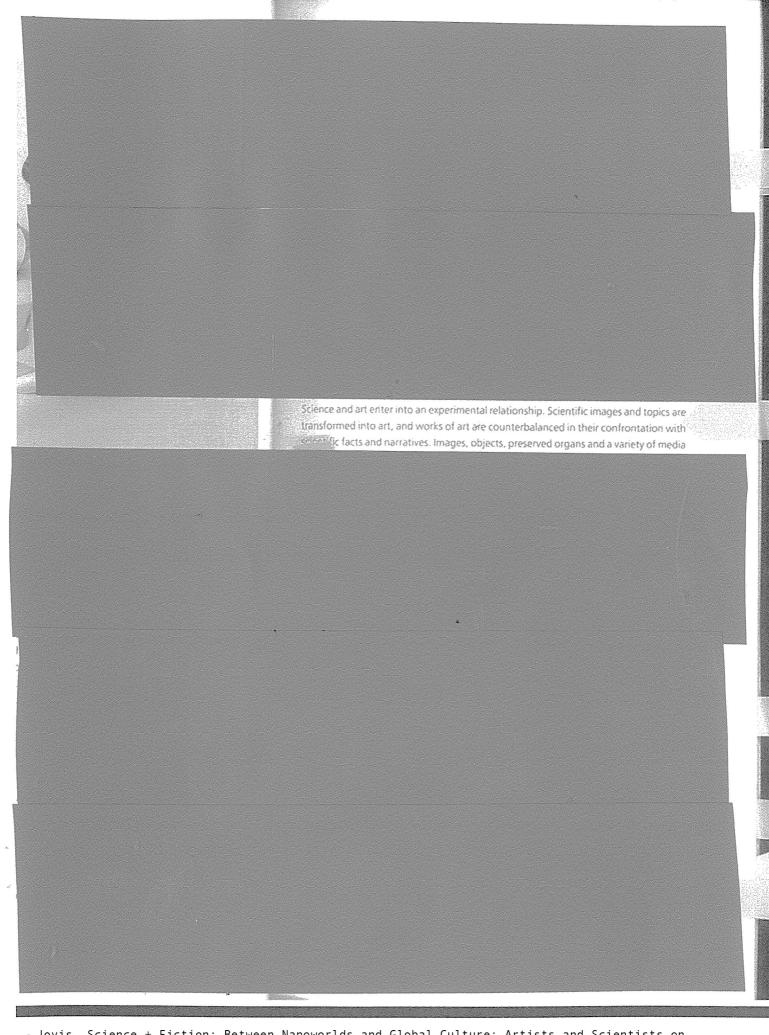
████████ threads may lead to a much more enriching engagement ██
██, yet
there is no 'key' to secure your assumptions as 'fact' and/or
'correct'. Other threads may illicit the complete opposite
effect, only to shatter any previous notions of understanding
your assumptions may have been built upon. ██████████████
████████████

An assemblage of iconography, ideology, colour, form,
material, sound ██████████ hint toward an esoteric knowledge
system. An esoteric epistemology built upon pop-culture and
science.

What is trying to be understood?
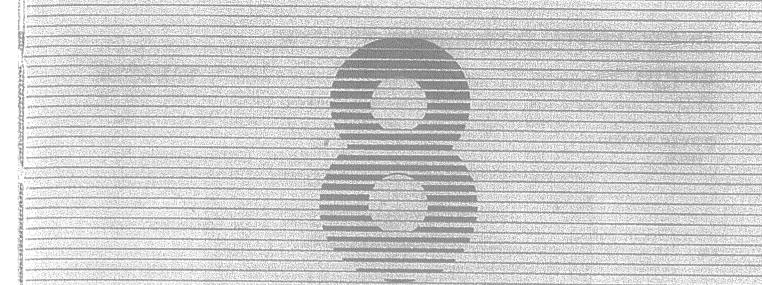
Is the aim to understand the globalisation process guided by
science and technology?
Or the structures of knowledge systems within these fields?
To question the role? The potential? The fact?

Science and art enter into an experimental relationship. Scientific images and topics are transformed into art, and works of art are counterbalanced in their confrontation with scientific facts and narratives. Images, objects, preserved organs and a variety of media
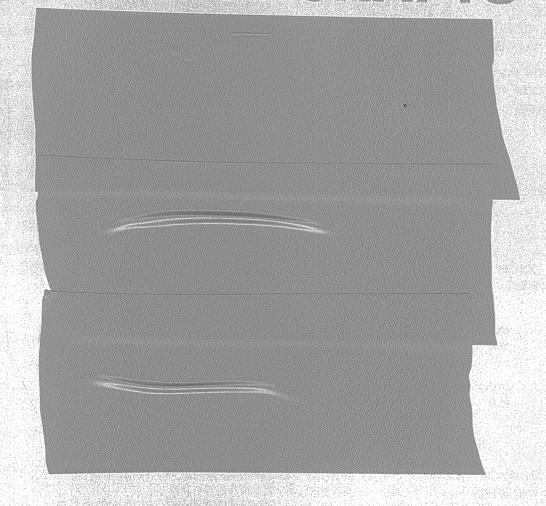
- Jovis. Science + Fiction: Between Nanoworlds and Global Culture; Artists and Scientists on Cultural Identities, Brain Research, Nanotechnology, Science and the Public. (Sprengel Museum, Hannover. 2003)

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ARTS and CRAFTS

(What you see is sometimes what you get)

This body of work is a direct investigation into understanding
the methodologies inherent in the technological
(over)saturation of contemporary life.

Investigative tinkering is the predominant process executed
sculpturally within Hard-Boiled Wonderland ██████████
installations.
The hands on direct approach of tinkering allows for an
████████████████████ mode of thinking in relation to █████
found materials that have been selected from pre-existing
contexts.
A physical exploration of previously established diagrammatic
██
████████████████ leading to an "instruction manual' like
interpretation of a Wonderland methodology.
What value does a diagram hold in the age of the rhizomatic
network?
To reproduce a diagram as an object or an object as a diagram
unites the two, while simultaneously creating more distance
between them.
This distance is one of understanding. To understand the
ontology of an object is ███████████ different from an attempt
to make sense of the diagrammatic language with which it is
described.
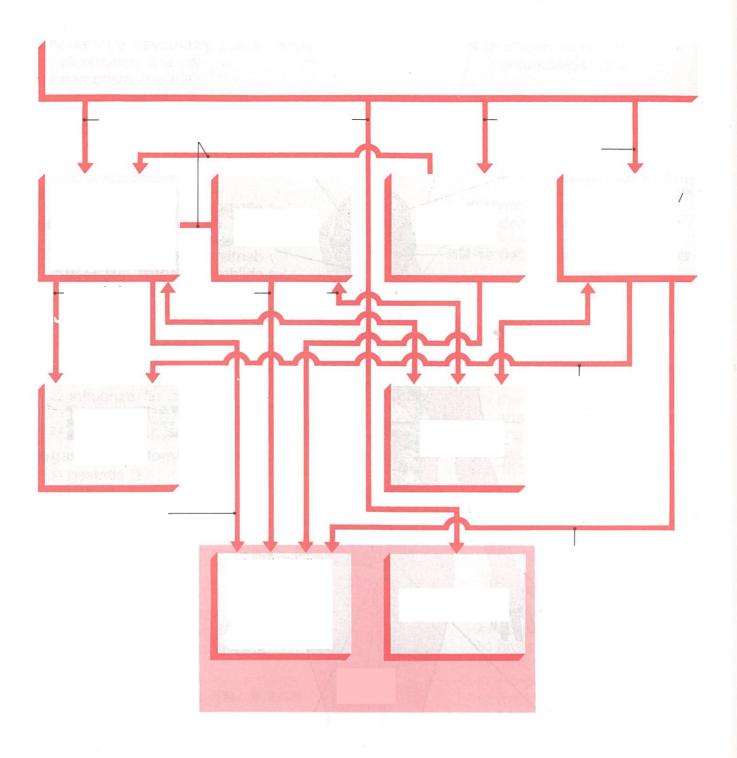
If the diagram does not quite match up to the object, or the
object does not quite match up with the diagram the object,
the results can be rather uncanny. There can be hints that the
'instructions' were followed, yet a particular component may
be present in the object and not the diagram or just as easily
something missing from the object which is shown in the
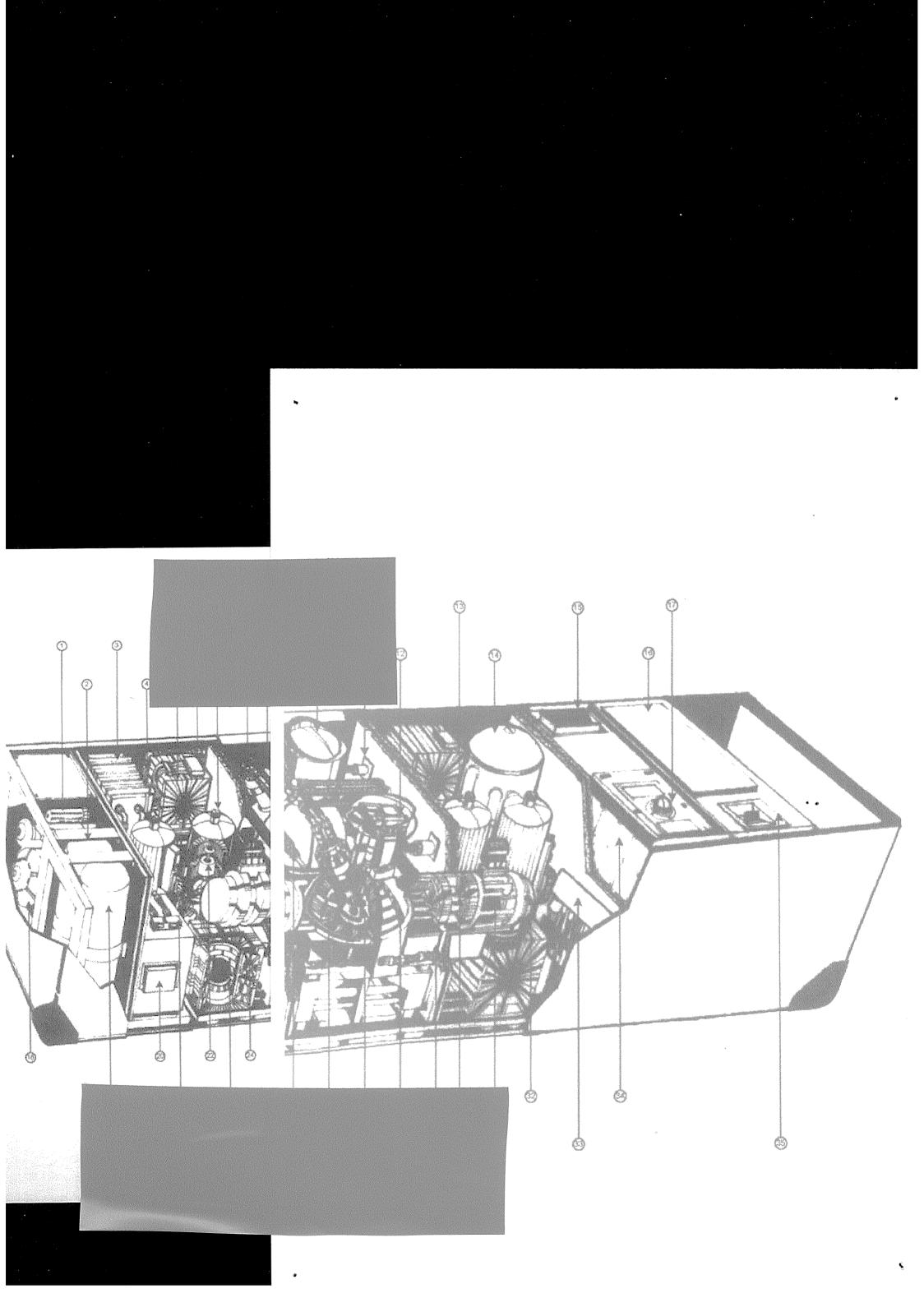diagram.
Deliberate removal of aspects of a diagram scramble its
possibilities.
One potential of this is to enable a new reading of the
remaining depiction.
This is even more potent when thought of in relation to the
removal of 'instruction' within the diagram, such as numbers
and language. ████ the diagram must rely entirely on a form of
semiotics, but the definitions of which have ████ become far
less accessible.

What has been redacted?
Why has it been redacted?
What remains?
What are the boundaries of a diagram?
Without relevant information, is it still a diagram?
What came first, the diagram or the object?

The future of 'computational machines' was accurately projected to fall further from 'visible' perception, the workings of which taking place 'behind the scenes' and on a much smaller scale. (Norman, D A. 1999.)
Post-PC formalism was described by Donald Norman in 1999 as the 'invisible computer'. This trajectory has been long predicted, such as by the founder of computational giants 'Intel', Gordon E. Moore, in 1965. What has since come to be known as 'Moores Law'. Moore noted an historical trend that shows the number of transistors within an integrated circuit roughly doubles every two years. In turn, this has led to an exponential growth ■ in computational power, enabling both the size and cost of computers to decrease.
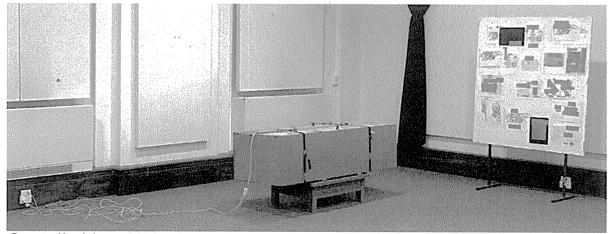
How stable is the trajectory of 'smaller doing more'?
What of bigger doing less?

Is a larger machine completing a simple task ■ viewed as inefficient and therefore insufficient?

"Now, some industry experts believe **Moore's Law** is no longer applicable. "It's over. ... In 2019, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang declared that **Moore's Law** is dead and now it's more expensive and more technically difficult to double the number of transistors driving the processing power. "
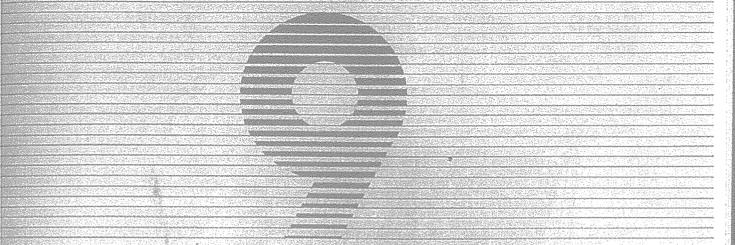   - (https://www.techrepublic.com/article/moores-law-turns-55-is-it-still-relevant/)

A machine that does only what it needs to, may be the key to late stage capitalism and the ongoing industrialisation of life. This could be seen as the 'end game' for modernism, through mechanisation.
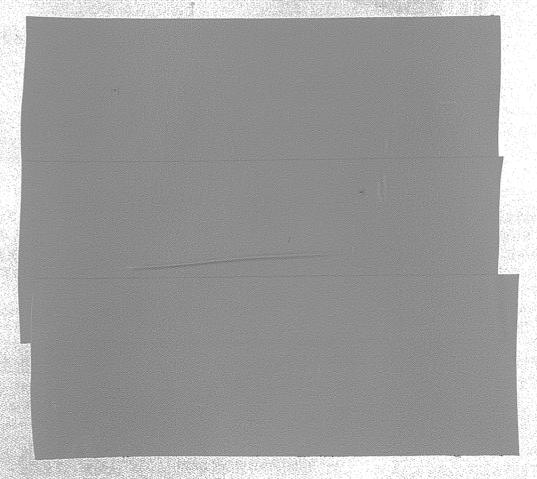

Grunt Machine, 2020, image by author.

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links technological progress to a timeless future in which rationality and abstraction remain untouched by reality. Yet these highly designed objects stand futile, sorry witnesses to the unfolding of events.

other images and conversations meander in and out. The decisive yet

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- Rendell, J. Art and Architecture: A Place Between. (Bloomsbury Academic. 2006)

SIGNS and SYMBOLS

The majority of found and sourced ███████████ used within
Hard-Boiled Wonderland are technological detritus of the late
20th Century.

The now obsolescent nature of these objects allows for their
perceived function to be difficult to pin down (ever slipping
away), perhaps, even, to a point beyond recognition.
The objects may indeed already exist to many as alien-like
███████████ relics, the function of which either void or lost
to the annals of history.
This ██████████ ambiguity █████████ lends itself to a
misguiding or misrepresentation of functionality ████████████
███████████. This may be never more applicable than in an
art exhibition, as they lend themselves to inspection within a
'map' toward figuring something out.
(If I don't know what this thing is, am I missing something?
Do I need to know what this is in order to understand the
entirety of what is going on? Can I move on to the next step
in the process of 'understanding' or 'learning' if I do not
know what this thing is or does?)
Uncertainty becomes a more obvious point of focus, in that
perhaps even I, the artist, may not be sure what these
'things' are 'meant' to do. (But, in spite of that, I am
making them do what I want and/or need them to do,)

CODEC, 2020, image by the author.

The removal of these 'objects' and 'materials' from their
original contexts, such as museums, offices buildings or
commercial displays, warrants them more 'breathing space'.
The objects now exist within an esoteric semiotic state,
signifying what we want them to signify, more so than or
opposed to, what they did in their original surroundings.

Objects become the signifiers of their own technological
redundancy, rather than that of the particular function they
once previously were intended to have.

In reference to Moores law, the now redundant and obsolete
technologies operate on a larger scale.
This scale is emphasised by the 'monolith'-like lockers. The
size of these lockers extends the boundaries of ▮ modern PC
and/or commercial computation and returns to formal qualities
of the past, such as room-sized IBM punch-card computers.

These objects seem absurd when contextualised by Moores Law.
When once a computer large enough to fill an entire room was
seen as the heights of computing power, now something of such
size 'performing' so little seems somewhat ridiculous▮

However, without access to the internal compartments of the
lockers, the contents remain ambiguous.
Various components assembled in conjunction with these
'machines', hint toward 'a happening', likely computation.
If that is the case, what is to say that this is not a 'retro-
fitted' housing for a modern super-computer?

If a current commercial device, such as an Apple Ipad, has the
same processing power as the largest and most powerful super-
computer of the 1990's, how powerful might an integrated
circuit of this scale be?

What would it compute?

How could this be applied?

How would this compete within the modern market of Super-
computation?

How are we to comprehend and/or understand the resulting
calculations of a computer that is beyond recognition?

CODEC, 2020, image by the author.

Many of the objects and materials chosen for Hard-Boiled
Wonderland, are of a time and space into which I as born (The
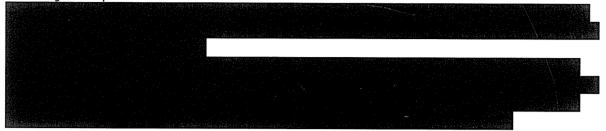1990's and earlier).
My thinking developed across and beyond the turn of the
century. Witness to not only my own, but to a global (at least
developed Western) feeling of the end of a 'Future Positive'.

"What haunts the digital cul-de-sacs of the twenty-first century is not so much the past as all the lost futures that the twentieth century taught us to anticipate. "

- (Mark Fisher, *What is Hauntology?* - What Is Hauntology? Author(s): Mark
Fisher Source: Film Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Fall 2012), pp. 16-24
Published by: University of California Press Stable URL:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16)

This is a point of nostalgia for both lived experience, as well as feeling as if I 'just missed out' on something.

I feel as if I was only able to experience very little of 'possible futures' and instead remain searching for a 'Faux-Nostalgia' of the excitement and anticipation that seems to have just preceded me.

(Attempting to make sense of the 21st century through 20th century detritus. Searching for clues within the leftovers.)
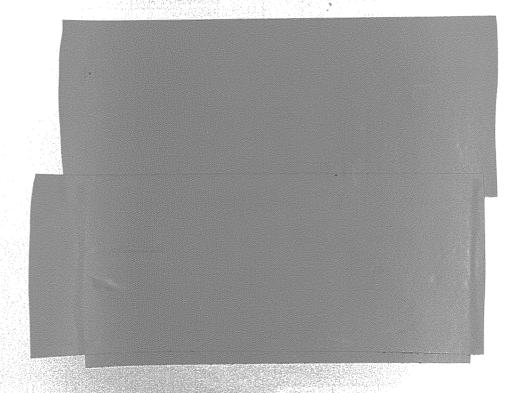
How did we get here?

Where did we go wrong?

What now?

CODEC, 2020, image by the author.

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TRANSPORTATION

A point in time when the speed of technology ultimately caught up with its potential and began its ever-increasing ███████ ██ ████ acceleration toward a possible post-human future, came 'The Matrix', 1999.
The film, The Matrix, depicted the decade of the 1990's as the reference point for the end of humanity as we know it and the beginning of a 'technological take-over'.
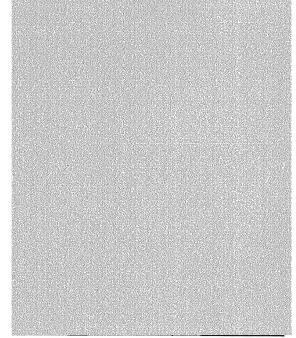Within the film, 'The Matrix' itself is a computer programme, a hyperreal simulation of the earth circa 1999, in which to 'house' the subconscious of human beings while their bodies are harvested for its energy.
The simulation takes place within the 1990's, due to its description ██████████ as being the 'peak of civilisation'. The moment before the 'shit hit the fan' and technologically advanced computers broke free from their exploitation of human control.

The Matrix is one of many lenses, through which to look into the past. Not only as a 20th century ████████████████ science-fiction film, but as an interpretation of contextual philosophical and theoretical work such as Jean Baudrillards Simulacra and Simulation.

(INSERT SIMULACRA AND SIMULATION QUOTE)

The film ████████████████ utilises many concepts of Baudrillard, while also directly depicting the book within the film.
At once, the film is an imagining of simulation theories and within its setting, you are able to locate a reference point to the origins of the films philosophies.

These threads have been explored by many others throughout
popular culture, such as Bladerunner (1982) and Bladerunner
2049 (2017) and their replicants.

"A replicant was a genetically engineered, bio-enhanced person
with para-physical capabilities, "composed entirely of organic
substance," created for slave labour by Tyrell Corporation and
its successor, the Wallace Corporation. The Tyrell motto was
"More Human than human."
Replicants were sometimes referred to as "skinjobs" as they
were indistinguishable from non-engineered humans, except for
their empathetic abilities"
  - (https://bladerunner.fandom.com/wiki/Replicant)
Newer models of these 'replicants' are employed as
'Bladerunners' who in turn track down and 'retire' (eliminate)
older model replicants.
A metaphor for the cannibalisation of technological
advancement upon its predecessor(s) and/or itself.
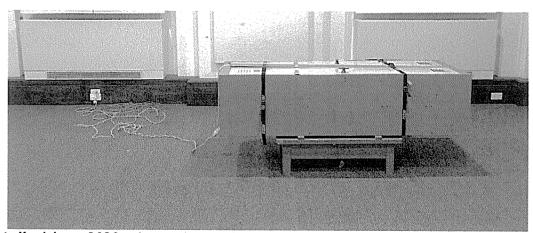
Popular culture references 'content' (itself, theory, art etc)
in such a way that it cannibalises meaning and context.
This has lead to a hyperreality, in which the origins of
cultural production become lost ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ within other
cultural production.

[A Logic of: Philosophical text transferred into a film, which
is then referenced in a song, which is further heard by an
artist, who then interprets these ideas as an installation?]

Through this logic, the semiotics of Hard-Boiled Wonderland
offer a rich and reflexive service.

For example, aspects of the corporate reality of the late 20th
century, as depicted in the simulation of 'The Matrix', can be
seen reflected within the uniformity of the formal aspects and
institutionally 'dulled' colour palette of the chosen
detritus, most notably, the lockers.

Grunt Machine, 2020, image by author.

Hard-Boiled Wonderland raises more questions than it answers.

How ▪ can one tell they are operating at the end of one era and the beginning of another?

What and where are those margins?

Throughout popular culture, most notably fashion and music, 'era's' are often categorised by decade.
Hence the Matrix, and the majority of Hard-Wonderland, is able to evoke something simultaneously specific yet broad, the corporate 1990s.

The 21st century has seen an increasing rise in the 'retro'. Enacting the same angst as futurism once did as an escape from the then present, the modern 'retro' yearns to return to the familiar, the past, even beyond that of one's own recollection.

"anachronism constitutes a ''waning of historicity,'' and that this brings home ''the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience.''

- (What Is Hauntology? Author(s): Mark Fisher Source: Film Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Fall 2012), pp. 16-24 Published by: University of California Press Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2012.66.1.16)

Tellus, The Truth, 2019, image by the author.

'*Tellus the truth*', 2019, suspends two 'retro' objects in a constant cycle of repetition. A 'Tellus' brand vacuum cleaner forever extracting and feeding off of the air produced by a Ralta brand hair dryer, emphasised by an oversized and absurd amount of vacuum tubing. Both of these 'machines' are circa mid 20th century and bring with them a reliable sign value of 'retro'.

This 'pseudo-scientific' experiment was presented within a difficult to locate room deep within the recesses of a building. The location and difficulty of finding the room is more significant here than the relation to the building itself. Nothing about the specificity of the building is needed to understand the relationship of the objects to their installation. The main point of focus is on the size of the room, the lighting of the room and the clean yet outdated and used aesthetic. These atmospheric conditions were more important in the decision-making process.

The resulting installation displayed as if ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ an interrogation room. These objects become personified somewhat by the characterised roles of an 'interrogation'. What information is trying to be extracted is unclear…
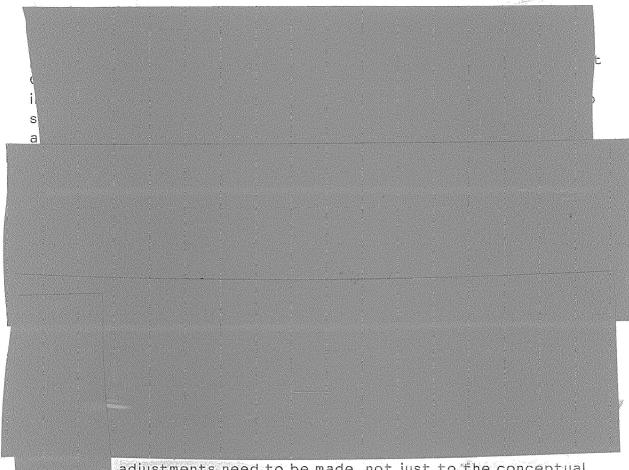An energy, a 'life force' a signifier for redundant function, yet here they are, functioning as they always had, to be forever performing their roles to no end. A never-ending loop. A metaphor for the fetsihisation of the 'retro' and the capitalist extraction of equity from cultural capital.

How does this repeating loop get broken?
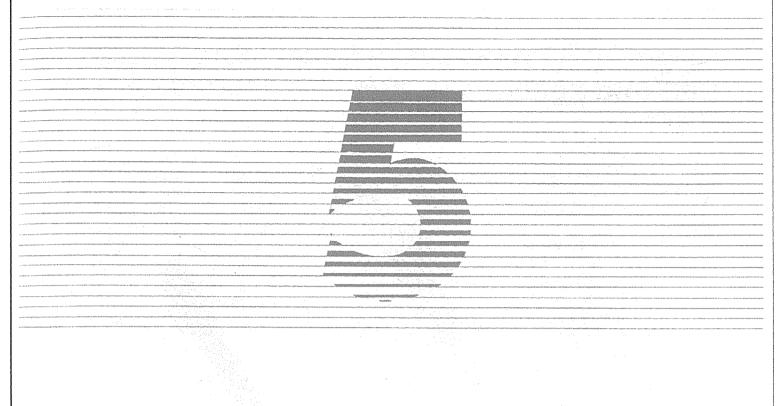
To what end must the 'retro' perform?

Is this the end of 'new'?
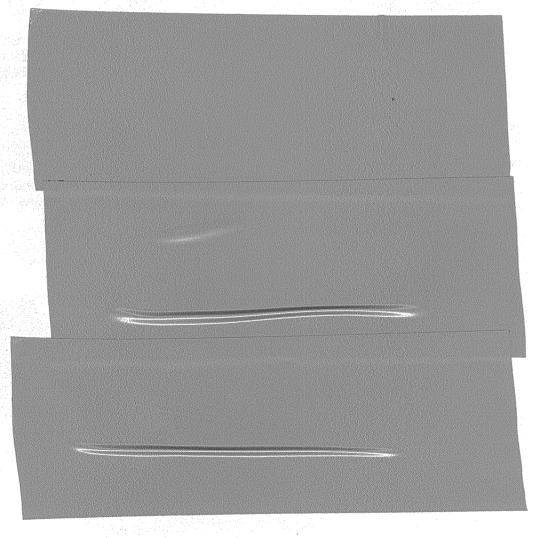
Tiny revolutions

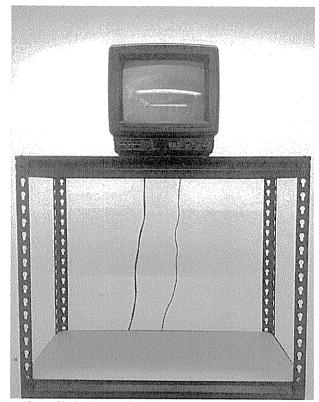adjustments need to be made, not just to the conceptual model, but to reality, "

- Cullen, P. Explaining the Results of Observation. (Centre for Contemporary Art. Hamilton, New Zealand. 1991)

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COMMUNICATIONS

A 'half-way point' (or near enough) between historical
scientific projection of the future and achieving the fact in
actuality (or the fiction in naught), is *'Martian McLuhan'*.

Martian McLuhan, 2019, image by the author.

A small millennial television perched on the top of a shelving
unit, a pair of empty rungs above a small pile of old National
Geographic magazines.
The screen shows the surface of a planet, assumed to be Mars.
The magazines are curated in such a way that they showcase
either the cover images or opened onto articles, all in
reference to the red planet, Mars.

In the year 2020, we have 'live' footage of the surface of
Mars. In comparison to what was possible ███████████, it
seems we are living in a science-fictionalised projection of
the future, or at least, of the 21st Century. But that is
exactly what it is, fictionalised. This is not a live stream
of the surface of mars, this is in fact a static image. A
simulation of a live feed played through a 1990s CRT
television screen, presented in a manner which may suggest an
educational, if not archival display.

If the focus is shifted to the formal qualities or the medium of display, the faux Martian 'stream' may become more obviously fictionalised.

The technology is stuck somewhere between the present year of 2020 and ██████████ mid 20th century (the presented National Geographic magazines era of publication.) ███████████

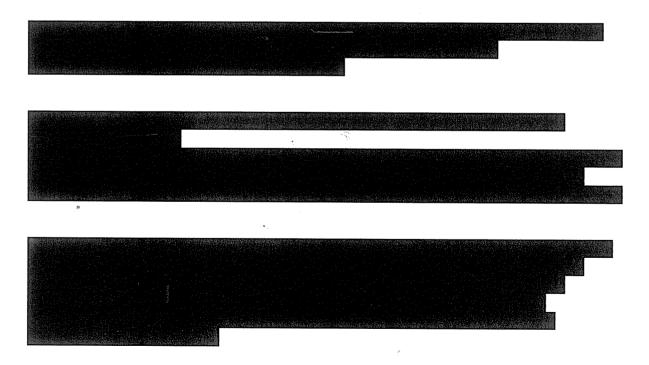██████████████████, the history and development of the technology becomes more potent, when thinking about a lineage of interplanetary fiction and fact, so too can a lineage of our depiction.
We can trace a history of the improvements to our Method/Medium/Media which has allowed us to communicate, depict and project our imagined potential futures.
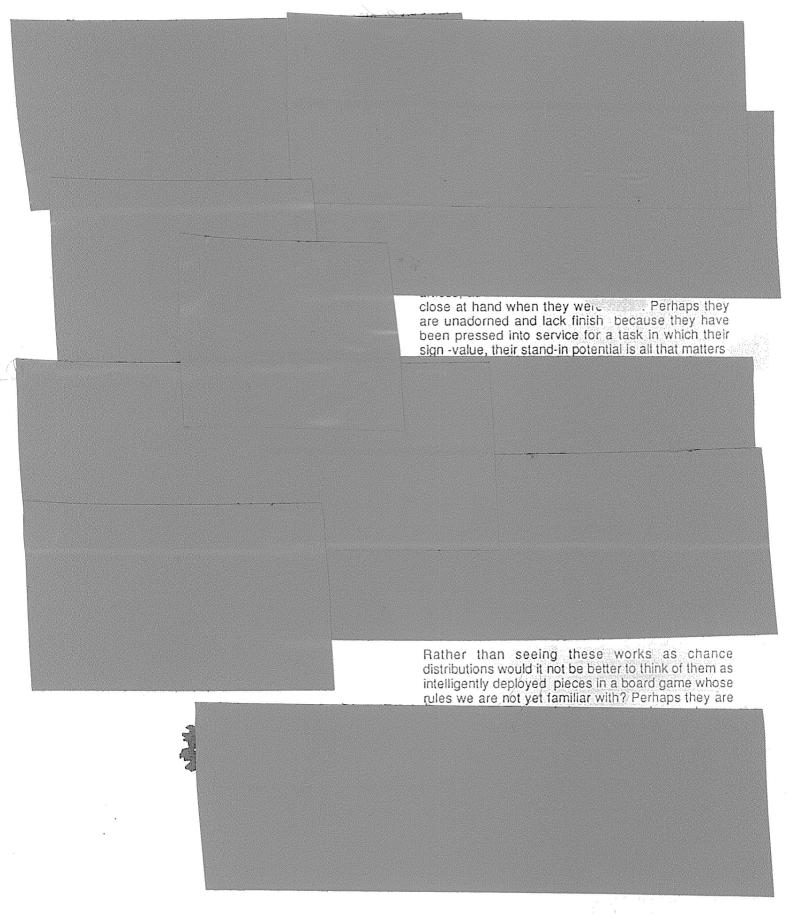
Perhaps our technology will develop beyond Mars?

Virtual realities may be all we get to experience of Mars. We have to live vicariously through captured imagery from Mars rovers and look at them on our screens. Something real yet entangled within the medium of fictionalised realities.

Caught in time between the height of the international space race and the actuality of escaping earth.
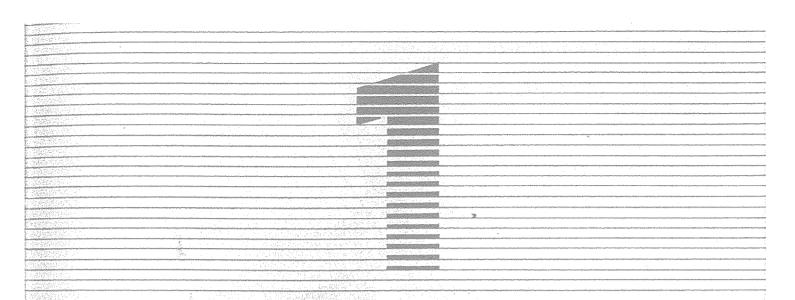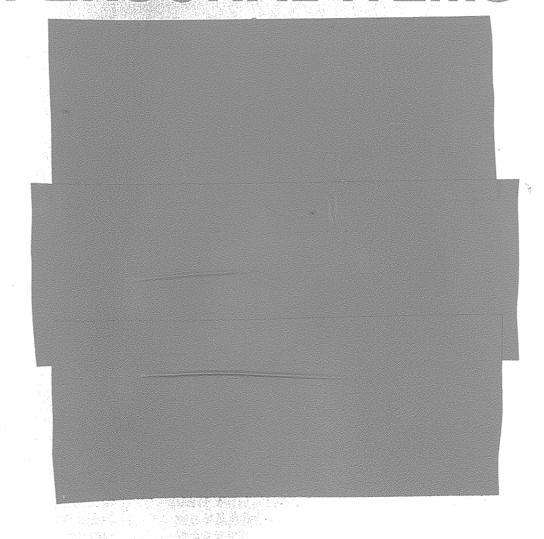
AN ART OF POSSIBILITIES

close at hand when they were   . Perhaps they
are unadorned and lack finish because they have
been pressed into service for a task in which their
sign -value, their stand-in potential is all that matters

Rather than seeing these works as chance
distributions would it not be better to think of them as
intelligently deployed pieces in a board game whose
rules we are not yet familiar with? Perhaps they are

- Cullen, P. Explaining the Results of Observation. (Centre for Contemporary Art. Hamilton, New Zealand. 1991)

PERSONAL ITEMS

Hard-Boiled Wonderland raises more questions than it answers.

Artist?

Historian?

Archivist?

Critic?

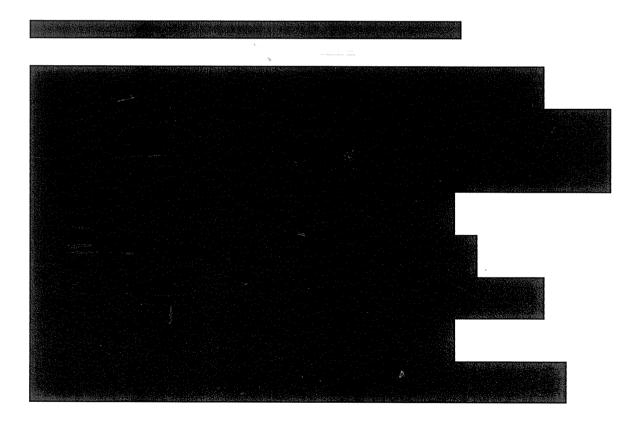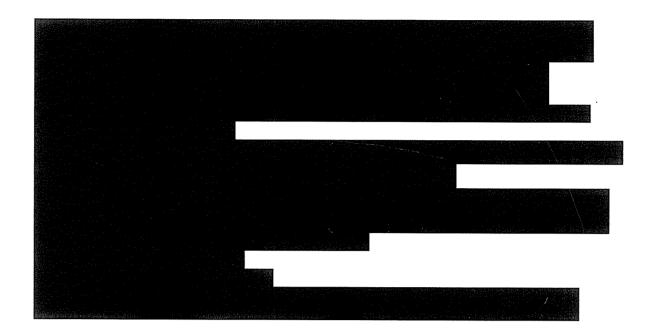The role ███████████ cannot ████████ easily be determined
and each work must own up to this reality in one way or
another.

To capitalise on this notion, Hard-Boiled Wonderland places
the viewer in the role of the 'detective' in order to somewhat
'retrace the steps' the artist has taken.
What lead the artist to attach this component to that
component?
The viewer is then cast into a spiral of (mis)understanding,
trying to 'crack a code'.

Through the process of Hard-Boiled Wonderand, I have come to realise my ambivalence.
When reading through media theorists such as Marshall McLuhan and Arthur Kroker, I fall into the trap of idolising them.
My process begins with thinking I have a grasp on a concept and how that concept may play out within the context of my practice. I then get to work exploring these ideas through tinkering with my 'plethora of detritus'. Somewhere along this path, I begin to realise how far I may stray from, and in many cases, contradict what it was I had set out to 'achieve'.

I realise the fence I climbed over makes for a far more comfortable perch, in turn allowing me to see the fields on each side.

I find I am very pluralistic and indecisive about the multiple positions that I hold. I am constantly pulled back and forth between fandom and critique of the 'retro' faux-nostalgia, while furiously attempting to find a way in which to break the cycle and create something 'new'. When this endeavour once again proves to be an unattainable impossibility, I am back at square one, only this time with heavier luggage.

Hard-Boiled Wonderland may be an attempt at creating my own 'hyperreality', one in which I can enjoy the nostalgia of the 'retro', suspended within a form of critique.
This is the state in which it exists, not as an answer or an 'end-game', but as a 'tool' or system for understanding the present moment.

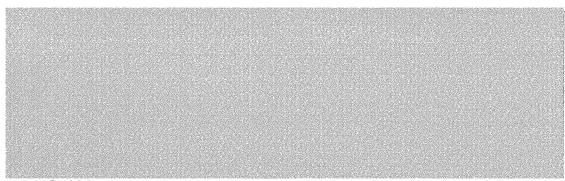# Hard-Boiled Wonderland raises more questions than it answers.

Does Hard-Boiled Wonderland pose an equation(s)?

Fact + Fiction = ███████████████████████████████

███

I find parallels between the 1998 Darren Aronofsky film, 'Pi', and its protagonist, and the 'vernacular' of the roles that I play with Hard-Boiled Wonderland. ████████████████████████ Suspended within an attempt to work out the answer to something, searching for clues within popular-culture, science-fiction and science fact.
This 'leads' to becoming 'lost making art' and returns the notion of 'Hard-boiled'. ████ in turn leading to a collection of clues, leads, threads, numbers, words, objects…

A collection of this nature is much like that of an evidence room within a police station, only more chaotic. Much like the complexities of the apartment that Max occupies as the 'P.I' (Personal Investigator) in 'Pi'.

- (Stills from '*Pi*', 1998)

I sympathise with Max's obsession of trying to equate an understanding of the universe.

"One: Mathematics is the language of nature. Two: Everything around us can be represented and understood through numbers. Three: If you graph the numbers of any system, patterns emerge. Therefore, there are patterns everywhere."
- Max, (*Pi*, 1998)
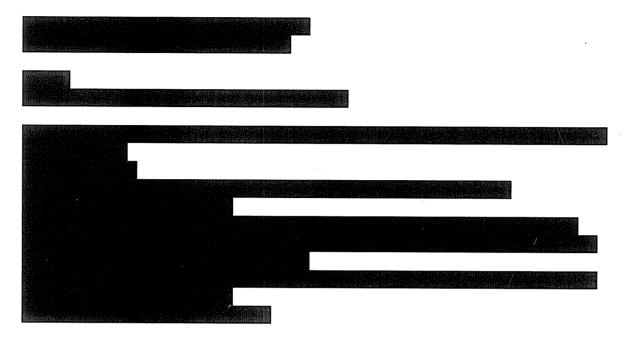
███

Into a void

to evoke the mythology of the obsessive inventor, backyard engineer, or gentleman scientist which attaches itself to the independent and historical pursuit of new discoveries. The ongoing cycles of water

- Cullen, P. Explaining the Results of Observation. (Centre for Contemporary Art. Hamilton, New Zealand. 1991)

"This is
insanity
Max!" -
"Or maybe
it's
genious!"
- (*Pi*, 1998)

A sense of self-awareness is present within Hard-Boiled
Wonderland. The unfinished or 'DIY' pseudo-scientific
appearance hints at an attempt to actualise an idea, yet
remains earnest within its limitations to do so. The
limitations to achieve any form of 'finished' product or to
'crack a code' after feeling as if 'I'm on to something'.

The 'natures' of Hard-Boiled Wonderlands installations are
just as important as any individual component. ███████

The 'nature' of the installation meaning the ███
aestheticisation and/or emulation of a 'B-grade film set' or
'computer server room, for example.
The entirety of the installation is not only a 'set' of
signifiers, but as a whole, a signifier itself.
For example, the notion of a 'set' is utilised as a tool to
engage pre-conceived understandings of what a 'set' is. It is
not simply a set for the sake of being a set, but rather to
tint the lens through which the installation may be ███████
conceived. ███████████
Beyond this, each material component may then come under a new
form of scrutiny, both in its relation to, and purpose within,
this ███████ 'set'.

This hyperreal 'set' equally shifts the focus on where and/or
what the boundaries are to a supposed 'reality'.
What may or may not be present within a real 'server room' in
comparison to its emulation…?

It is possible that the 'computer' (or sculpture) could be the emulator?
Without the computer, it is just a room. The addition of the computer emulates a form of server room. Each object projects their own emulation within Hard-Boiled Wonderlands diagrammatic installations.

"the conceptual dimensions of time and space have become fundamentally destabilised due to modern technology's strategic urge to produce better results and more complete knowledge"

- (*Paul Virilio and The Articulation of Post-Reality*, Marc Hanes. Page 2.)

Objects or diagrams which exhibit signs of redaction or extraction lead to a sense of mystery and intrigue. Not only as a parallel to scientific discovery and the pursuit of knowledge, but the potential for something more suspicious.
At times, the work leans upon this more so than others, but in the situations where they do, coincidence can quickly lead to conspiracy.
Whether due to the pastiche of science-fiction, or the chosen materials preconceived and/or previous contexts, Hard-Boiled Wonderland can at times conjure up aspects of 'Spy-Fi'.
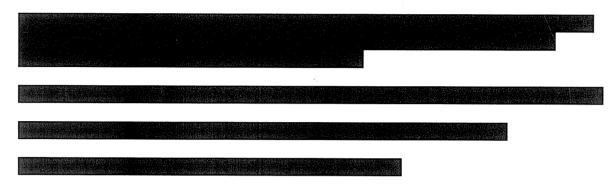Both fictitious narrative and historical realism are at play within this frame of thinking.
Assembled science-fiction references become grounded by the 'reality' of their object-hood. For example, if computational pseudo-scientific equipment of the mid 20th century is in direct reference to the science fiction of the era (or set in that era), it is also referencing the real-world connotations of that time, the Cold War.
(The act of reconnaissance between the Soviets and the West, in order to discover blueprints or plans of their technological advancements and weapons development.)
Unusual additions and/or subtractions within Hard-Boiled Wonderland ███████████ are a sign of tampering.

11

WEAPONS

Another guise of mine, alongside artist, ███████
reconnaissance/ recognisance agent.
At least, this metaphor could be applied as a parallel to the
extraction of information. Whether it be an attachment within
the displayed equipment or a particular treatment of
documents, it is unclear who is extracting from who, and who
may in turn be trying to prevent it.

The borders between simulation and reality allow for slippage
in space-time.

What exists in fiction also exits in reality. (that is the
nature of existence).
For example, I understand that James Bond, an agent of the
British Secret Service, has time and time again protected the
world from the international criminal organisation known as
Spectre.
James Bond exists in Fictional World 'X'. In the Real World
Fictional 'X' is understood, thus James Bond is an agent of
the British Secret Service.
Therefore, any and all of Hard-Boiled Wonderland exists
simultaneously as computer room, film set, art installation,
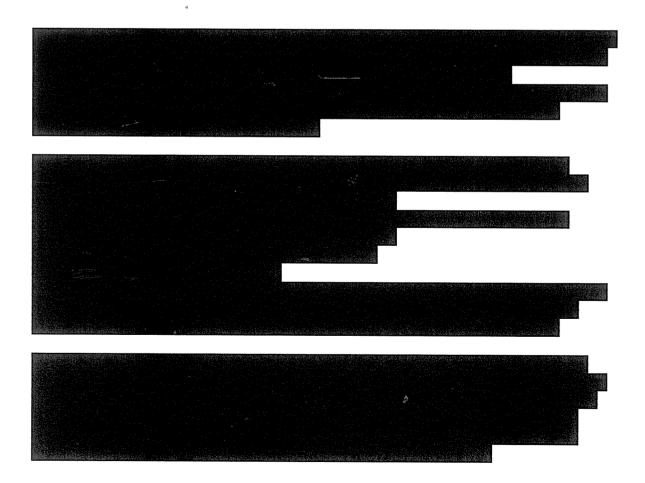commercial display, pseudo-scientific experiment…

"the implications of the post-modern 'cult of simulation' for education, historiography and ethics."

- (THE CRISIS OF NARRATIVE IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE Author(s): RICHARD
   KEARNEY Source: Metaphilosophy, July 1997, Vol. 28, No. 3 (July
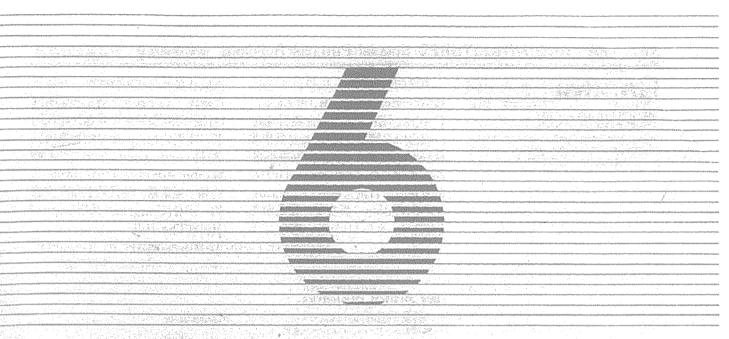   1997), pp. 183-195 Published by: Wiley)

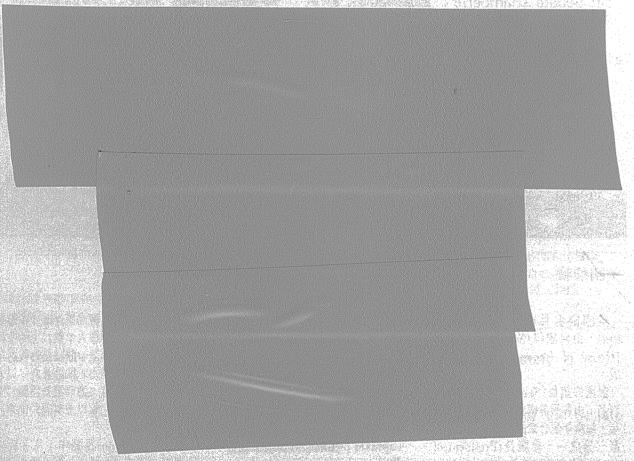# "Beyond the fiction of reality, there is the reality of the fiction"

- (Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*)

The act of arrangement.
The act of rearrangement.
The act of installation.
The act of
The act of making.
The act of making as a process of attempted discovery.
The act of making as an attempt at answering questions.
The act of making as generation of further questioning.
███
The act of remaking.
███████████████████████████████████████
The act of ██████████████████████████ reproducing.
The act of redaction.
The act of analysis.
The act of reanalysis.
The act of
The act of Hypothesis.
The act of narrative.
The act of failure.
The act of system.
The act of redundancy.
The act of anachronism.
The act of function.
The act of thinking.
The act of rethinking.
███████████████████████
The act of solving a puzzle.
The act of rethinking representation.
The act of assemblage.
The act of pastiche.
The act of science.
The act of pseudoscience.
██████████████████████████████
The act of logic.
██████████████████████
The act of repetition.
The act of repetition.
The act of repetition.
The act of secrecy.
The act of thinking.
The act of logic.
The act of repetition.
The act of redundancy.
The act of
The act of
The act of espionage.
The act of extraction.
The act of recognisance
The act of counterintelligence.
The act of
The act of

SHELTERS and STRUCTURES

Hard-Boiled Wonderland raises more questions than it answers.
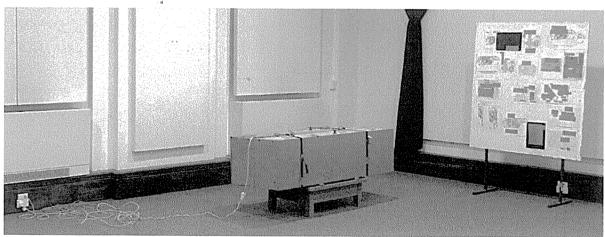
Site Responsive.

The ███████████ works within Hard-Boiled Wonderland have taken place on site at the Wellington Campus of Massey university, Whare Wananga o Massey at Pukeahu.
Initially this could be read as nothing more than convenience, the various classrooms, test spaces and hidden cupboards obviously ██████ utilised due only to ease of access, ████████████████████████████. However, each of these spaces were specifically chosen to play their role within a series of developing narratives.
As the 'Hard-Boiled' body of work ████████ developed, so too did its response to ambiguity.

The results of Hard-boiled were a reflexive and analytical tool to inquire of the institutional context(s) in which they were deployed.
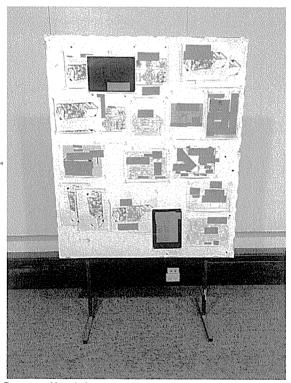

Grunt Machine, 2020, image by author.

Adding 'Grunt Machine' into a former conference room raised question marks over empty rooms. Rooms in institutional buildings are charged by what enters them and what is introduced, because otherwise existing office furniture is plain ubiquitous through the world. What corrupts vacant rooms are the people and briefcases, filing stations and luggage brought into them. Thus, inclusion of the 'Grunt Machine' within the room simultaneously eliminated and added to the possible ways in which the space could now operate.

The layout of the room was only slightly altered ever so to allow for set up of the work, while remaining furniture in the room, such as tables and chairs, were mostly left as they were found, stacked up and to the side ready to be (re)organised in whatever fashion the next 'conference' meeting may call for.

This action allowed the work to lean into the notions of fiction and speculation. An institutional conspiracy was born out of a certain desire to make sense of 'what' the work is and 'why' it is located 'where' it is.

Grunt Machine was thrust into the spotlight as the focal point of the room. If the plaque on the door was read on entry, one would imagine any form of 'conference' being held in this room would now surely be centred around this 'thing'.

Grunt Machine, 2020, image by author.

Grunt Machine ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ with accompanying documents posted upon a pin-board, present as if a pseudo-educational classroom.
These documents display a form of redaction, in this case with duct tape, to remove various amounts of information. What cannot be determined, is what is being hidden. All that remains are mere sections of diagrammatic drawings. The addition of duct tape removes the initial reading from any concrete specificity, only remnants of ▮▮▮ graphs, objects and diagrams.
The duct tape itself is not a permanent form of removal. Adding duct tape does not remove the information entirely, ▮▮ merely skews it, and even this may only be temporary.

The duct tape could be removed, hence hinting that it may indeed merely be a temporary act ███████████████████████
████████████████████████

A draft?
A work in progress?

An attempt to figure out what is and is not important to either the formal or theoretical aspects of these objects?
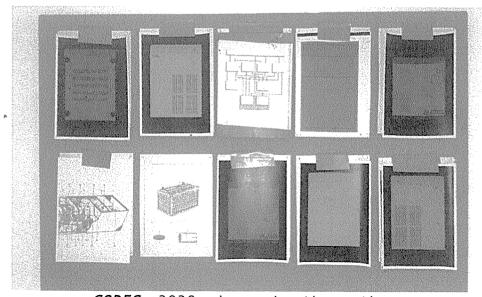
What came first, the Machine or the Diagram?

Have these documents and diagrams been found?

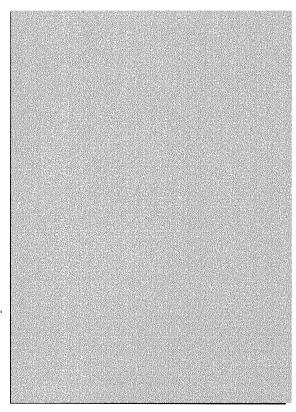Were they redacted before being found?

Does the machine then act as a way of making sense of what information was left available?

Perhaps the grey tape isn't covering anything, yet itself is another language entirely, not meant for our interpretation (but for that of a computer system, for example.)

CODEC, 2020, image by the author.

The title 'Grunt Machine' makes direct reference to the
materials used within the work, the 'Grunt' branded straps
used to hold the piece together, as well as making a direct
reference to the publication 'Grunt Machine' put out by the
Physics Room in the late 1990's documenting 'New, New Zealand
Video Art'.

- Cuming, S & Porter, G. *Grunt Machine: New New Zealand Video Art.* (The Physics Room
  Trust. Christchurch, New Zealand. 1999)

The straps could be seen as a way of the work 'tying' itself
in to a history of contemporary New Zealand art practice while
simultaneously poking fun at that very notion of 'New'.
'New New Zealand' art that is no longer contemporary.
At one level, 'Grunt Machine' qualifies as a form of
satirical, or even literal, time machine. The function of
which may only be a rather specific journey, travelling back a
mere 20 years, to a specified time and place. The publication
itself being in reference to a mid-70's New Zealand rock music
television show of the same name, a shrine of pastiche for the
nostalgia of a period within New Zealand contemporary art and
popular culture history.

This very specific reference is not essential in the reading
of the work. Perhaps for some, this revelation may be
rewarding, but for others, this machine does exactly what is
stated on the box. Read simply, it is a machine that grunts.

The works begin to take on a developing plot ██████████████ ██████████████ further thickening (and development) when read together as a collective whole.

██ If more items are added, the further █████████ investigation is needed █████ to inquire into. █████████ This, though, does not necessarily result in getting any closer to uncovering the 'truth' or logic of what may █████████ be going on here.

The number of works presented, or in some cases discovered, generates confusion, █████████ intrigue and new mechanisms under which other works █████████ are analysed.

'Presented' works referring to works which indicate their intention to be viewed by an audience. █████████████
Whereas, in some instances, works are also installed within locked, or at least difficult to access, rooms. (The likelihood of 'discovery' of these works depends on 'how deep' you are willing to investigate.) These more 'exclusive' installations hint at the idea that perhaps they are not meant to be seen, at least not yet. They are more 'private investigations'.
This in turn allows a more 'behind the scenes' look at the development of logic, mechanism, files, objects and installations 'under the bonnet'. This results in access to much more 'raw' and in some cases unedited material.
████████████████████████████████████

(There is an irony to the idea of artist as both detective and 'culprit'. In one case 'investigating', yet on the other hand leaving behind traces of 'evidence', some of which are meant to be followed and some are not. A strange dichotomy between wanting the leads to be followed and also trying not to 'get caught' and 'get away with something'.)
The realisation that this material may not be intended for viewing creates the potential of a 'fourth wall', and if so, it has been broken.
If a viewer happened to have stumbled upon or 'peeked behind the curtain', they may now be in the act of espionage!
Furthermore, if 'the curtain' was drawn back for them, who or what is to say that this isn't an act of counterintelligence by the artist and the newly accessed 'information' is not 'counterfeit' with the aim to further dilute the investigation?
███

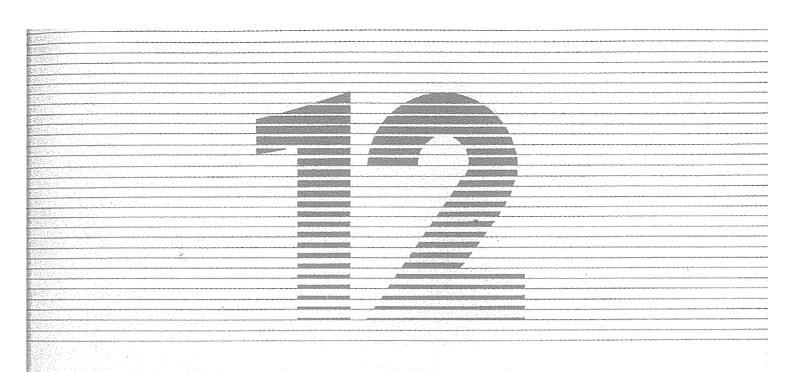Who is performing espionage?

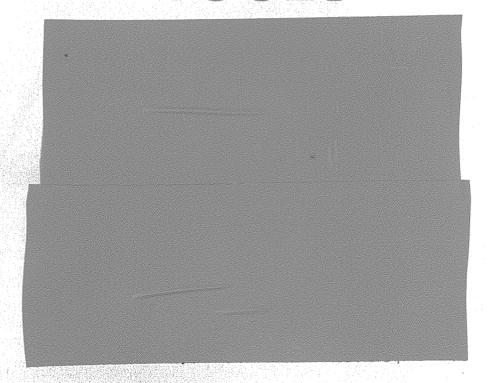And who is performing counterintelligence?

Each 'Machine' is a
component of an even
larger mechanism.

A 'super-machine', a super
computer, an art machine,
a knowledge system, a
nostalgia device, a
counterintelligence
measure, an espionage
tactic, a semiotec, a
counterfeit, a
hyperreality, an
emulatior, a pastiche, a
redactor, a codec, an
equation, a set, a
proposition …?

The act of arrangement.
The act of rearrangement.
The act of installation.
The act of
The act of making.
The act of making as a process of attempted discovery.
The act of making as an attempt at answering questions.
The act of making as generation of further questioning.
██
The act of remaking.
████████████████████████████████████
The act of ████████████████████   reproducing.
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The act of espionage.
The act of extraction.
The act of recognisance
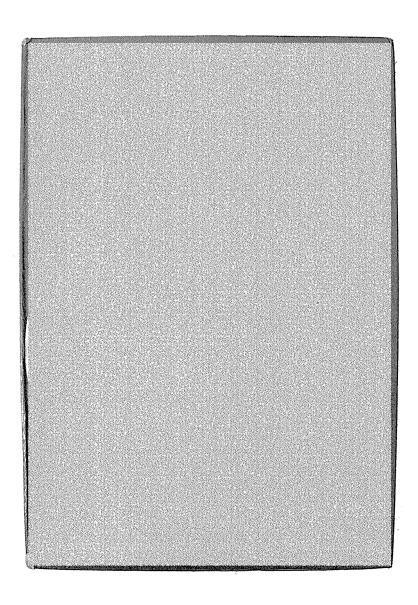The act of counterintelligence.
The act of
The act of

12

MACHINERY and TOOLS

Hard-Boiled Wonderland appropriates fonts, numbers, names, symbols, colours, sounds and form(s) from many pop-culture references. These 'threads' can be used to lead a deeper investigation into 'what is going on here'.

For example, utilising the font and number from 'Joe 90' ███████████████████████ for machine number '90' would suggest it is somehow connected (or at least a pastiche of) the narrative of Joe 90. One step further would be a direct reference to the 'Big Rat', the central role of a knowledge machine within the show. This would directly parallel the functionality of 'Machine 90' with that of the 'Big Rat', placing more emphasis than the simple use of 'font' or 'number'.

(Sourced from: https://www.comicpriceguide.co.uk/uk_comic.php?tc=joe90ann)

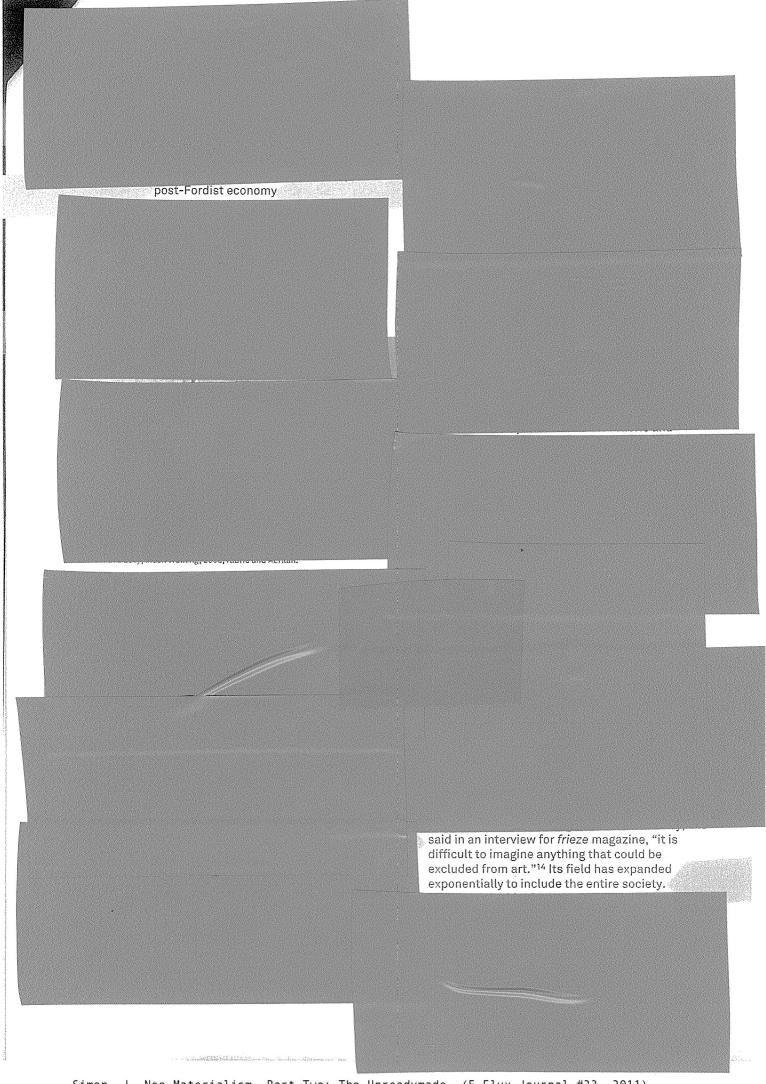Each thread carries their own weight, depending on what each 'sign' is recognisable as to each viewer.
Whether you pick up on 3 signs here, and miss 2 signs there, does not ultimately lead to a better or worse understanding of what the work is trying to do.

Following this trend, the less information supplied is read as a less direct and much more ambiguous reference. In turn, an ambiguous reference may only connect the work to the ████ ██ 'universe' of a particular narrative, unlike a direct reference such as specified titles and/or imagery, which would narrow the point of focus ███████████ to things within the fictional universe.

██

██

When dealing with 'access to information', the assumption is that there is an inherent value to either what is ██████ obtainable or what is not. For example, housing a computational component within a dehumidifier packaging box, the information on which remaining untampered, would suggest one of two things. Either I, the artist, am happy for the viewer to go on thinking 'okay, I accept that this contains a dehumidifier' in hopes to hide the true nature of the hidden contents. Or, rather in opposition, the box is a place holder, the signifier for a dehumidifier in the absence of one.

Both readings are equally valid in Hard-Boiled Wonderland.

██

post-Fordist economy

said in an interview for *frieze* magazine, "it is difficult to imagine anything that could be excluded from art."[14] Its field has expanded exponentially to include the entire society.

- Simon, J. Neo-Materialism, Part Two: The Unreadymade. (E-Flux Journal #23. 2011)

If there is 'nothing to find', the point must be in the
attempt to find it?
Perhaps if there is no point to something, trying to find the
point is the point. (In that case, finding a 'point' becomes a
paradox, in the sense that if you arrive at a point you must
have missed the point, so you return to searching for what the
point was in not ending up at a point.)

**"Also known as the Russell-Zermelo paradox,
the paradox arises within naïve set theory by
considering the set of all sets that are not
members of themselves. Such a set appears to
be a member of itself if and only if it is not
a member of itself. Hence the paradox."**

- (https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/russell-
  paradox/#:~:text=Also%20known%20as%20the%20Russell,Hence%20the%20paradox.)

This again hints at the breaking of a fourth wall between art,
artist, viewer and reality, or 'not art'.

The involvement in Hard-Boiled Wonderland often feels
unintentional. The boundaries are hard to define for both
artist and viewer.

Where is the line drawn in order to determine the 'outside' of
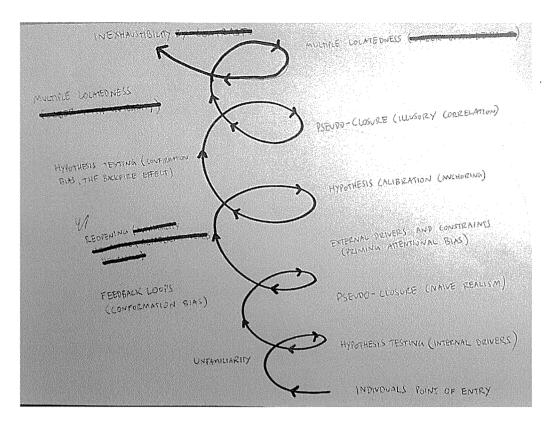Hard-Boiled Wonderland?

Where does it end?

When does it end?

Is there a boundary between Hard-Boiled Wonderland and not
Hard-Boiled Wonderland, or do they simultaneously exist within
the same universe?

If Hard-Boiled Wonderland and reality sit on opposing sides of
a line, is one only understandable through an understanding of
the other?

Thus, is Hard-Boiled Wonderland in fact a reality generator?
Emulator? Simulator?

Is the role of Hard-Boiled Wonderland to then perpetuate this
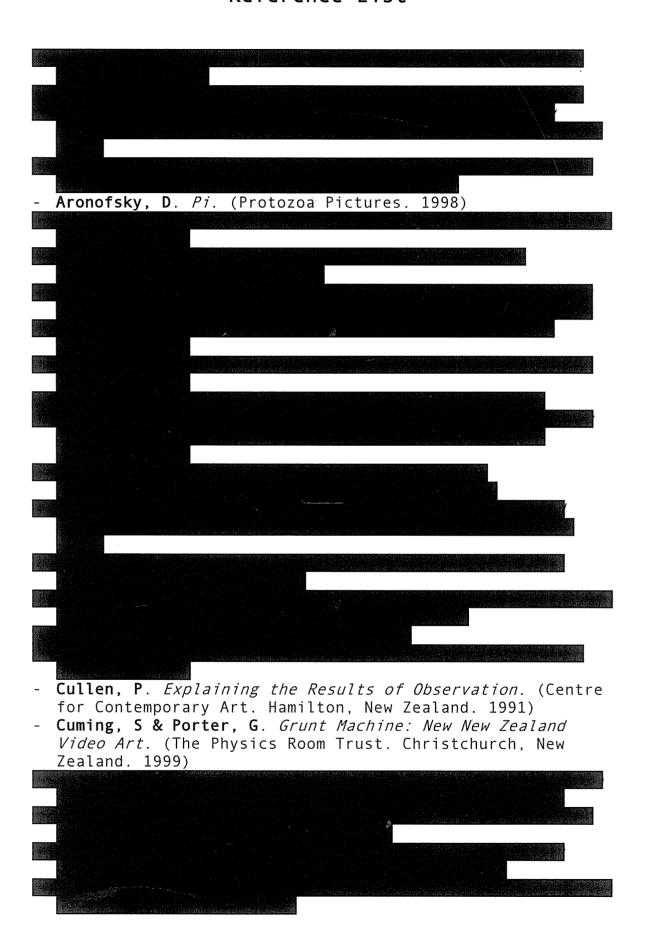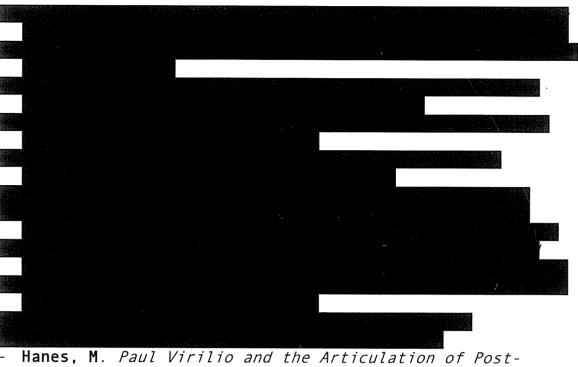notion of a potentially 'never-ending' spiral?

(Artists interpretation of 'The Hermeneutic Spiral')

Hard-Boiled Wonderland is a metaphor for a motivation of intrigue for both artist and audience of contemporary art.
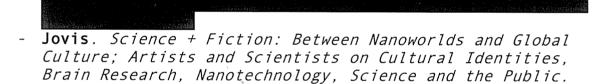
The act of arrangement.
The act of rearrangement.
The act of installation.
The act of
The act of making.
The act of making as a process of attempted discovery.
The act of making as an attempt at answering questions.
The act of making as generation of further questioning.
██
The act of remaking.
██
The act of ████████████████████████ reproducing.
The act of redaction.
The act of analysis.
The act of reanalysis.
The act of
The act of Hypothesis.
The act of narrative.
The act of failure.
The act of system.
The act of redundancy.
The act of anachronism.
The act of function.
The act of thinking.
The act of rethinking.
████████████████████
The act of solving a puzzle.
The act of rethinking representation.
The act of assemblage.
The act of pastiche.
The act of science.
The act of pseudoscience.
██████████████████████████
The act of logic.
██████████████████████
The act of repetition.
The act of repetition.
The act of repetition.
The act of secrecy.
The act of thinking.
The act of logic.
The act of repetition.
The act of redundancy.
The act of
The act of
The act of espionage.
The act of extraction.
The act of recognisance
The act of counterintelligence.
The act of
The act of

Reference List
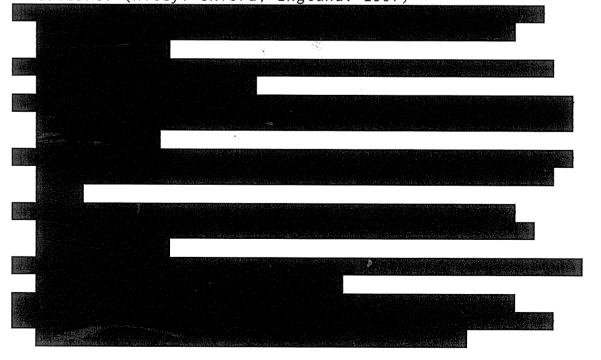
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