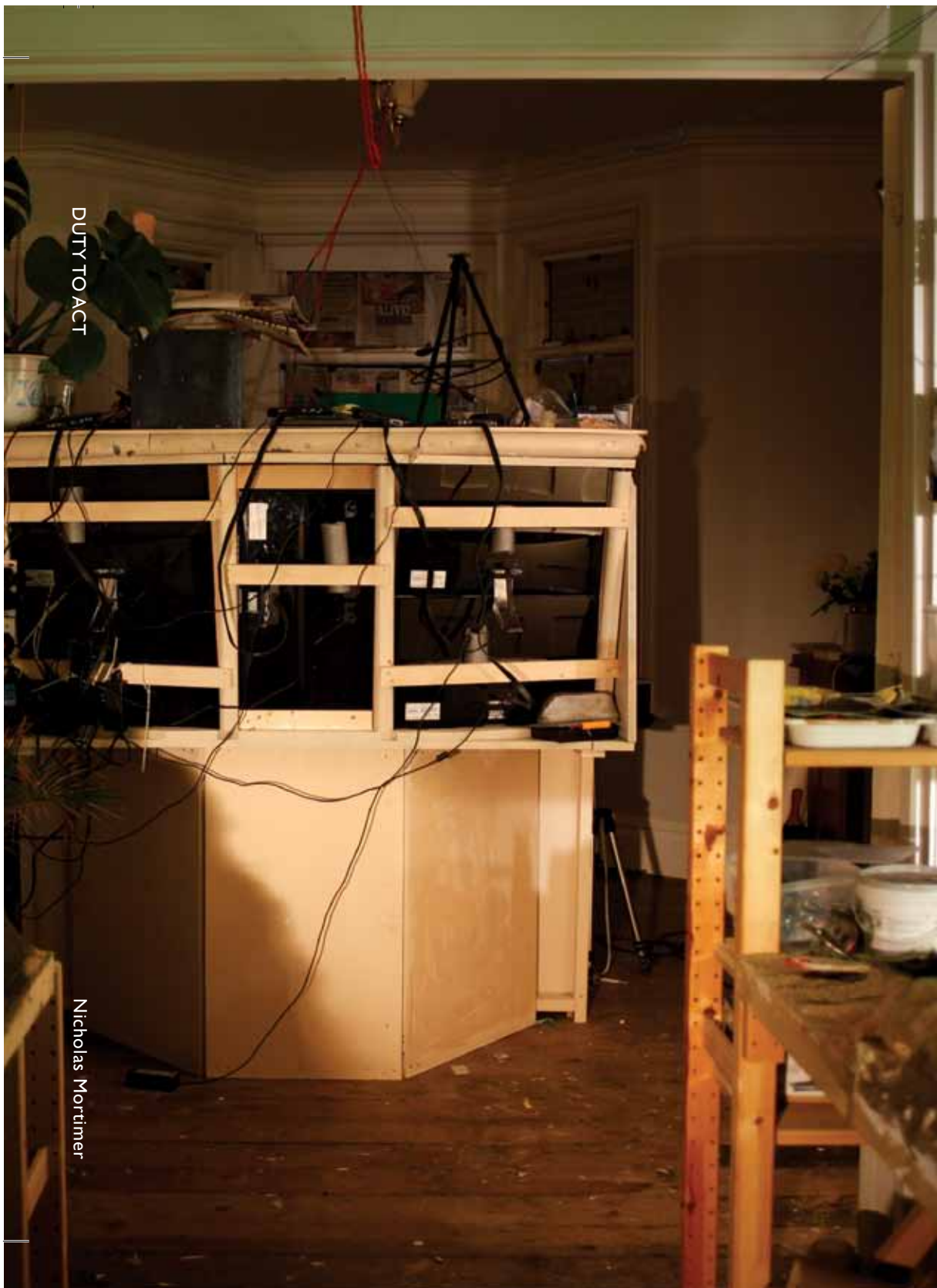
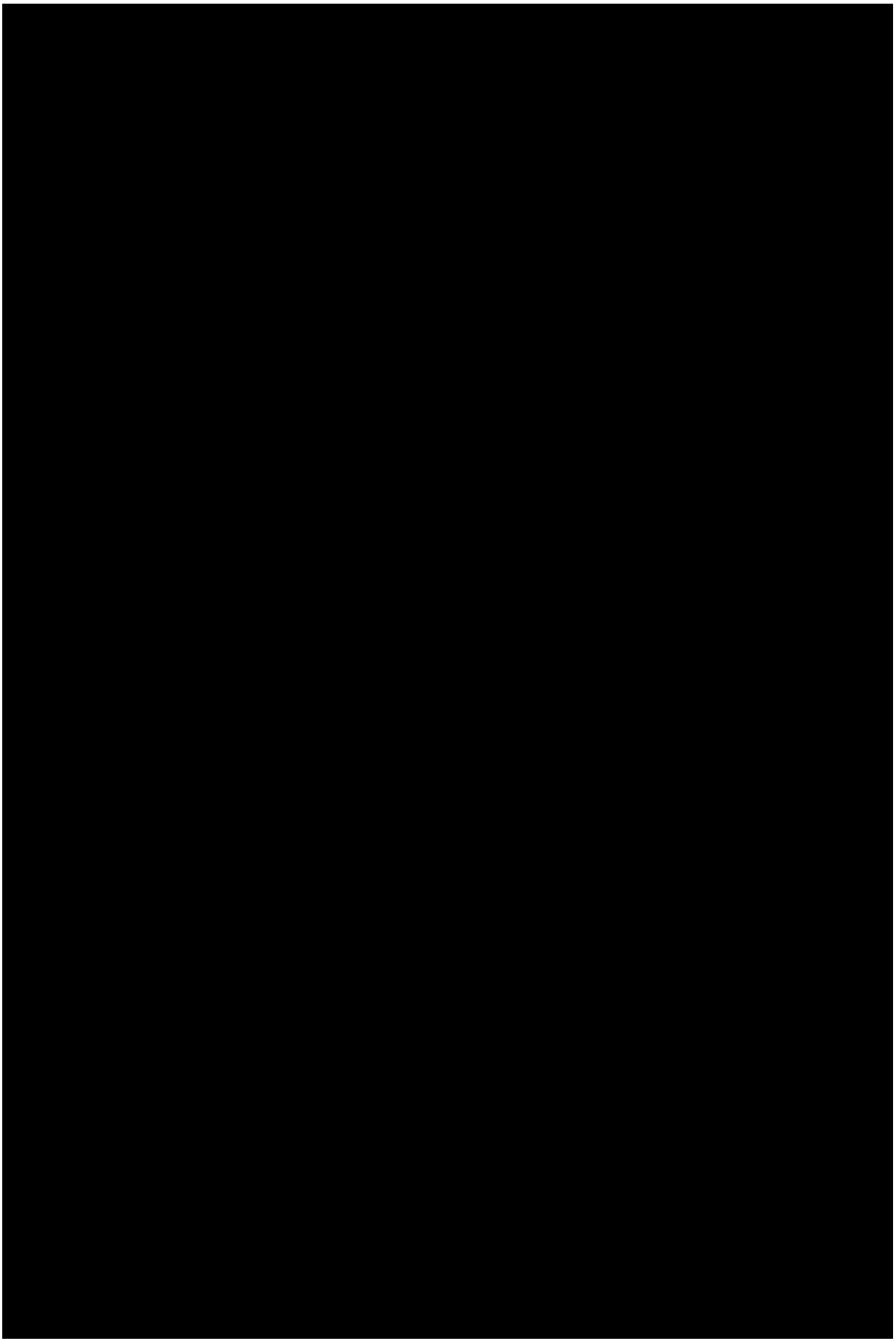


DUTYTOACT

Nicholas Mortimer

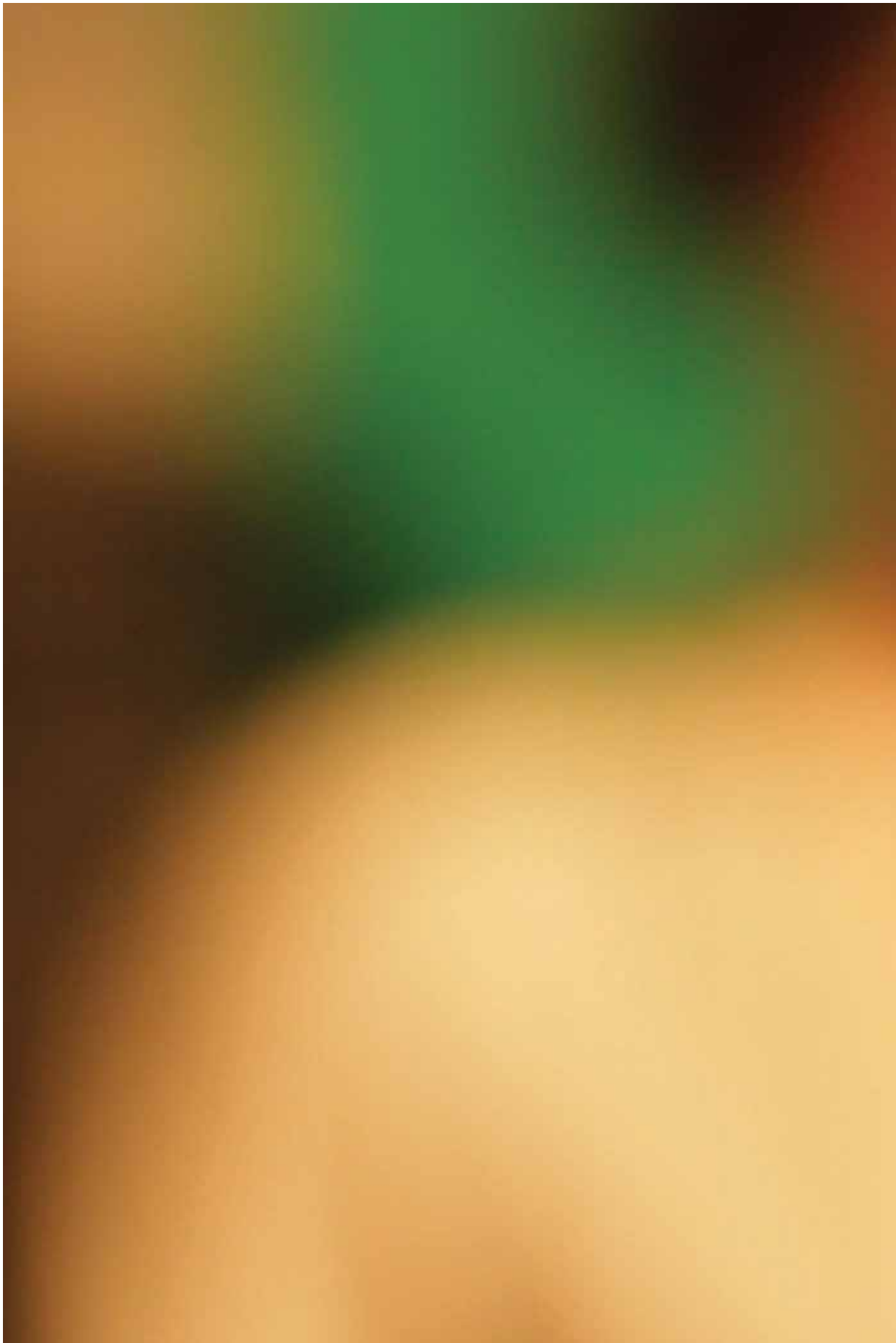


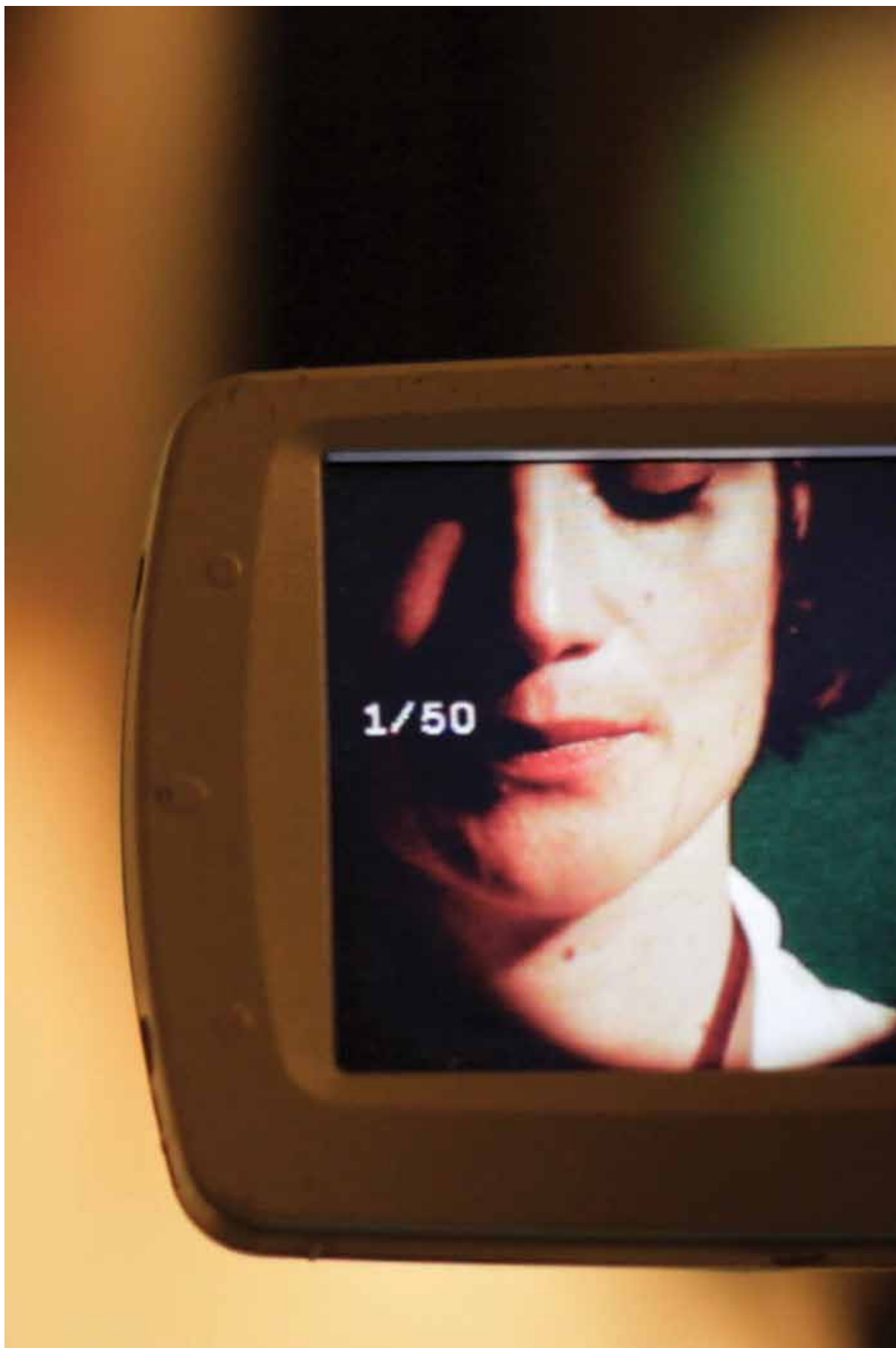


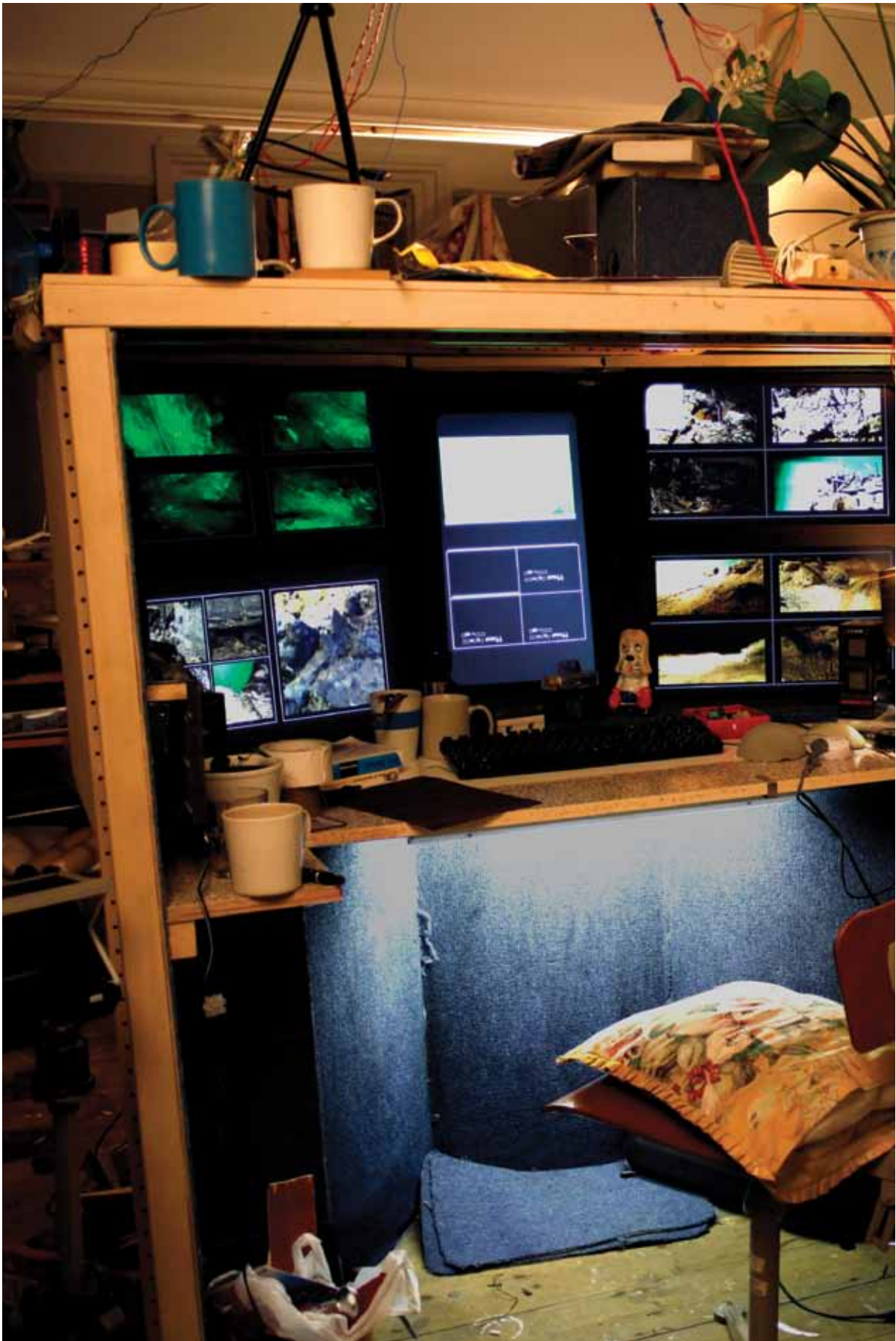
*UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS
MEN RESPOND AS POWERFULLY
TO FICTIONS AS THEY DO REALITIES
AND IN MANY CASES THEY HELP
CREATE THE VERY FICTIONS TO
WHICH THEY RESPOND*

WALTER LIPPMANN
Public Opinion - (1921)













DUTY TO ACT

NICHOLAS MORTIMER (2013)

THREE CHANNEL HD VIDEO : 11 MINS 50 SECONDS



1

*INTRODUCTION :
REALITY TESTING / TESTING REALITY*

2

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

3

*SELECTED TEXT 1
THE ECSTASY OF COMMUNICATION
JEAN BAUDRILLARD*

4

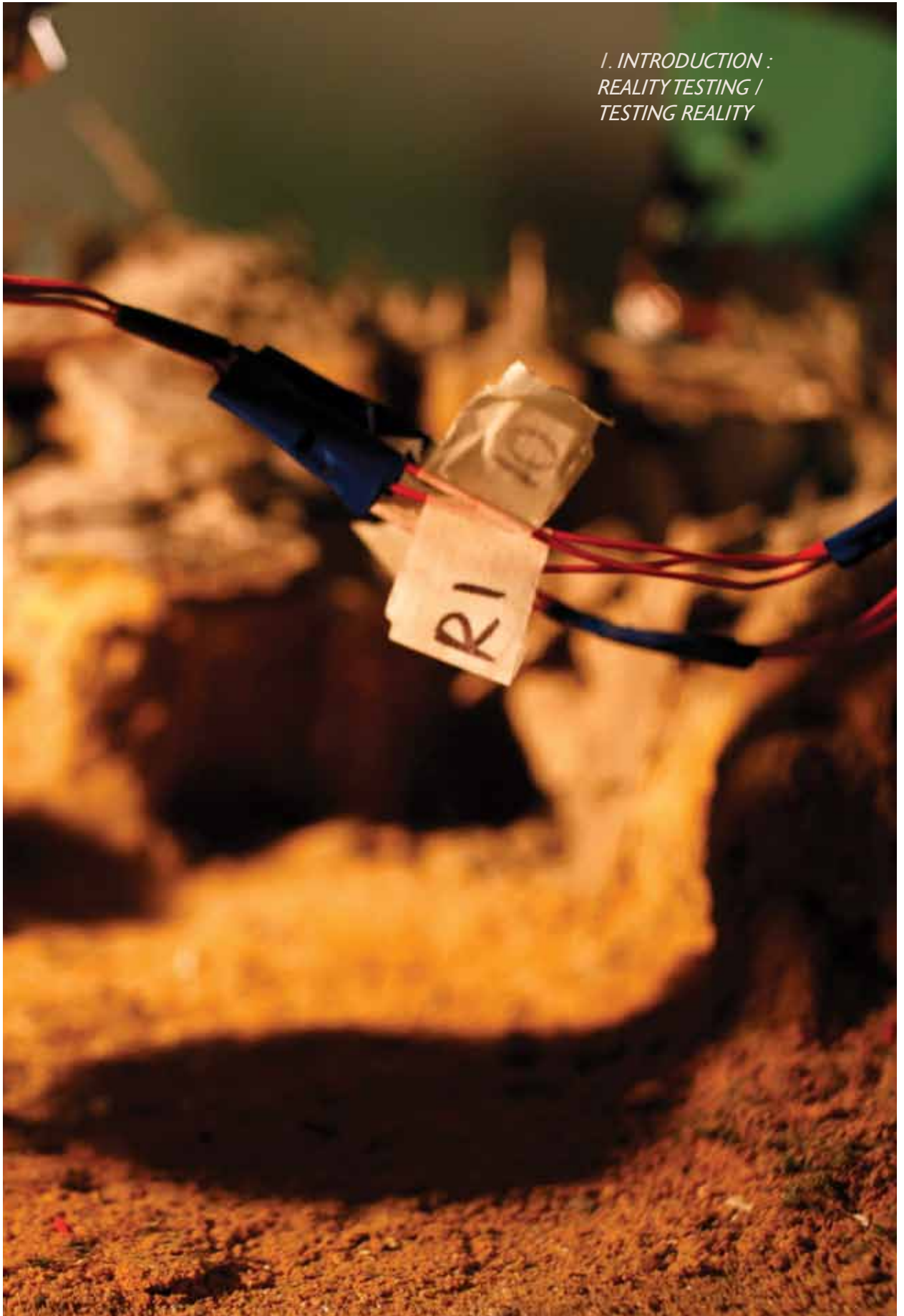
*SELECTED TEXT 2
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
-AIR ATTACK-*

5

CREDITS



*I. INTRODUCTION :
REALITY TESTING /
TESTING REALITY*



INTRODUCTION : REALITY TESTING / TESTING REALITY

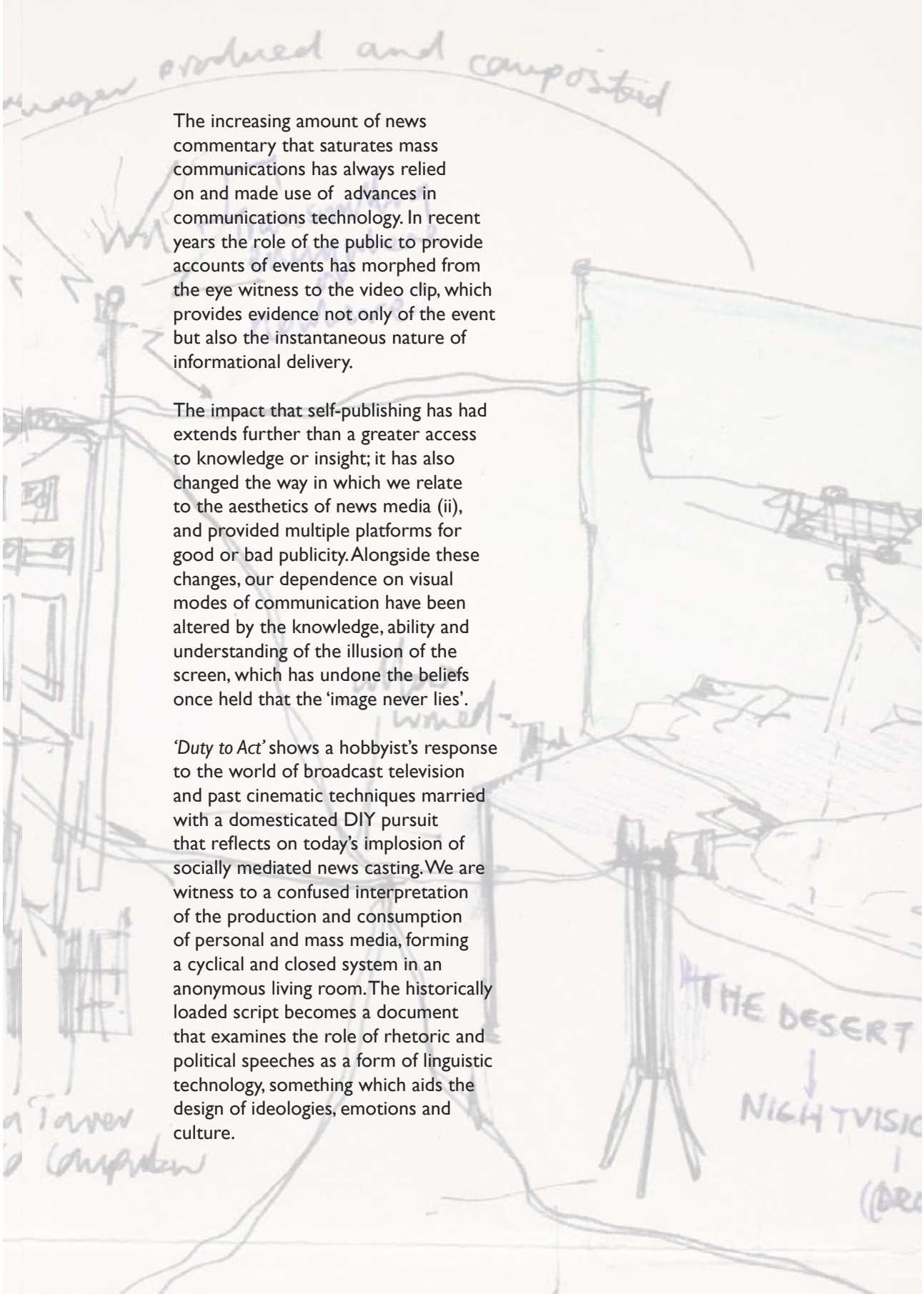
An aspiring television editor, film maker or spokesperson plays out a once plausible world event within an amateur media centre – ‘Duty to Act’ is a film which considers the construction, delivery and reception of media imagery, and the ability to create versions of reality in a variety of ways.

Blending a counterfactual history with a speculative obsession, the protagonist acts out a variety of roles, each considering the complex nature of role playing and re-enactment. An undelivered speech, written for John F Kennedy to announce the bombing of Cuba in 1962, forms the starting point for three performative actions - the composition of pseudo-television news imagery, scale model filming, and the recital of a pre-emptive, Presidential address.

In today's post-digital society we are all aware of the increasing ability to gather and distribute information and the consequences of a round the clock commentary on current affairs. This expansion allows us to distribute our opinions and add to the wider conversation, yet the uncanny ability for this to create new roles to mediate a personal propaganda is far more complex than a simple form of communication.

During the research process for this film, many areas of cultural and social history were considered, paying particular attention to the mechanisms involved in political theatre and the illusion of the moving image. The political arena relies heavily on a well crafted and highly developed form of storytelling, with carefully planned photo opportunities and high budget productions which are designed for our screens (i).





The increasing amount of news commentary that saturates mass communications has always relied on and made use of advances in communications technology. In recent years the role of the public to provide accounts of events has morphed from the eye witness to the video clip, which provides evidence not only of the event but also the instantaneous nature of informational delivery.

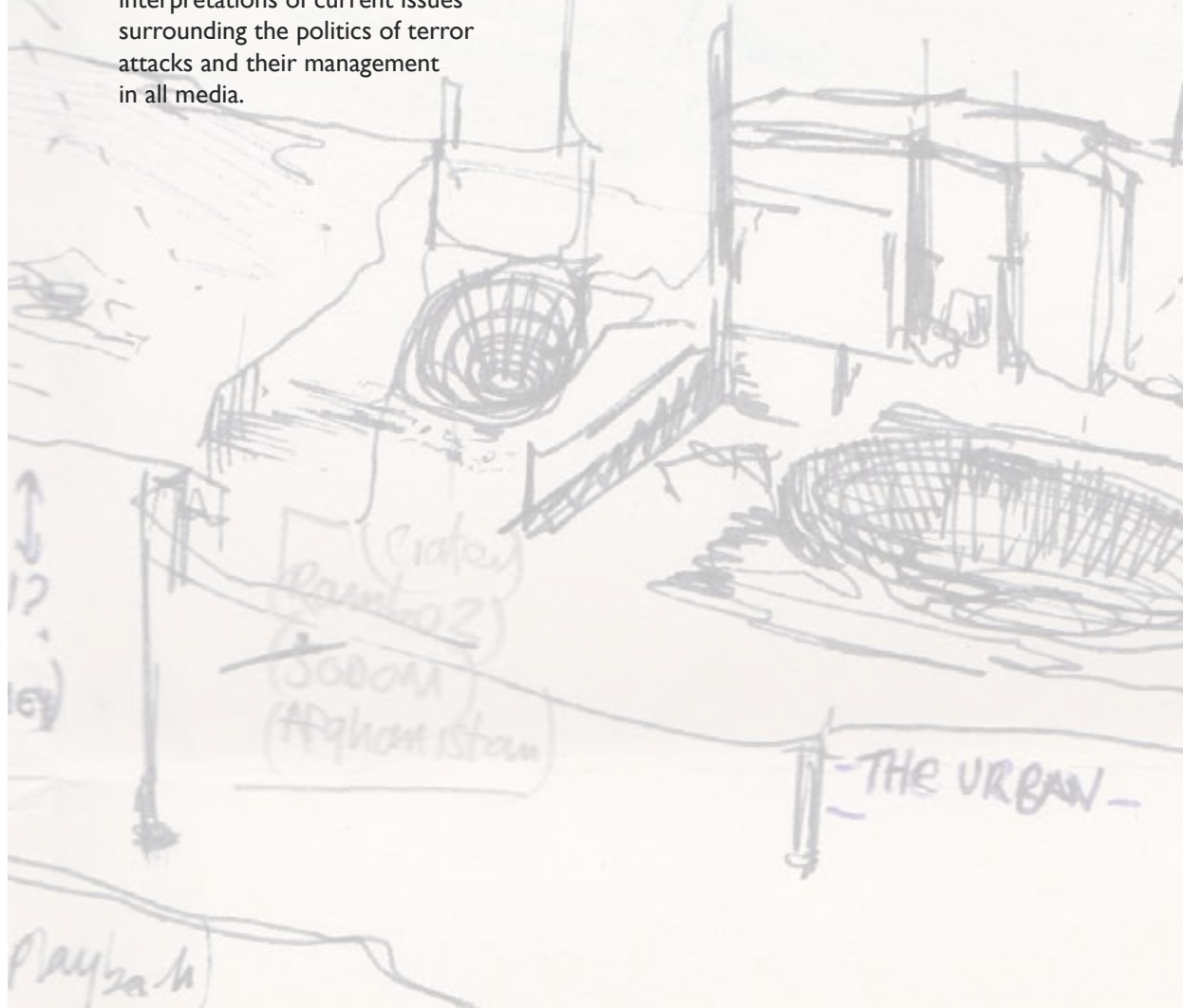
The impact that self-publishing has had extends further than a greater access to knowledge or insight; it has also changed the way in which we relate to the aesthetics of news media (ii), and provided multiple platforms for good or bad publicity. Alongside these changes, our dependence on visual modes of communication have been altered by the knowledge, ability and understanding of the illusion of the screen, which has undone the beliefs once held that the 'image never lies'.

'Duty to Act' shows a hobbyist's response to the world of broadcast television and past cinematic techniques married with a domesticated DIY pursuit that reflects on today's implosion of socially mediated news casting. We are witness to a confused interpretation of the production and consumption of personal and mass media, forming a cyclical and closed system in an anonymous living room. The historically loaded script becomes a document that examines the role of rhetoric and political speeches as a form of linguistic technology, something which aids the design of ideologies, emotions and culture.

With our changing relationship to a media environment that sees art imitate life, and vice versa (iii), our understanding of reality is in reference to a vast array of fictional scenarios, persuasive techniques and the careful translation of real world events.

'Duty to Act' is a layered approach to representing the ambivalence found in real life news events and their fictional counterparts. By constructing a character who presents an elaborate set of simulations, an overloaded environment emerges that questions our relationship to the projections of fact and fiction, in addition to interpretations of current issues surrounding the politics of terror attacks and their management in all media.

Have made false



i. (See page 20, Research Highlights)

The media department for the White House operate as 'visual story tellers' to the President, most notably Scott Sforza who managed the media image of George W. Bush, and constructed many large-scale media events. The 'Mission accomplished' speech of 2003 was perhaps a highlight of this directorial role, where the President landed on board the USS Abraham Lincoln wearing a flight suit and greeted by a huge banner reading 'Mission Accomplished'. The use of an aircraft carrier as the stage for a televised event shows the extent of real life situations created for 'the media' to enhance political ideals.

ii. The video taped messages that Osama Bin Laden recorded and distributed via news channels are one example of a subversion of the once nostalgic aesthetic of home movies. The importance of these video messages functioned with a dual purpose: not only did they act as publicity and propaganda for a terrorist organisation, but provided the West with a 'super villain' character who's existence as a screen based mastermind of terror could be easily manipulated. More recently, the murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich, London was a radicalised attack that was reported to have been willingly filmed, the perpetrators using the onlooking camera-phones as their immediate distribution for their horrifying message of politically motivated brutality.

iii. (See page 16, Research Highlights) One case of two-way imitation is the character of Matthew Santos in the television drama 'The West Wing,' as the design of aspects of his character were modelled on Senator Barack Obama who at the time was gaining popularity as a new force in the Democratic Party. It could be argued that television drama has the ability to perform a sort of social priming by introducing ideas that challenge social norms. The continuing power of simulation and spectacle works as a dual function by supporting real world notions of change, providing the storylines for primetime television.

Artificial
Narrative
Versus
Natural
Narrative



2. RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS



From West Wing to the real thing

Scriptwriters modelled TV's ethnic minority candidate on young Barack Obama

(Character for him)

Jonathan Freedland

The Guardian, Thursday 21 February 2008



"I drew inspiration from him in drawing this character," West Wing writer and producer Eli Attie told the Guardian. "When I had to write, Obama was just appearing on the national scene. He had done a great speech at the convention [which nominated John Kerry] and people were beginning to talk about him."

Attie, who served as chief speechwriter to Al Gore during the ill-fated 2000 campaign and who wrote many of the key Santos episodes of the West Wing, put in a call to Obama aide David Axelrod.

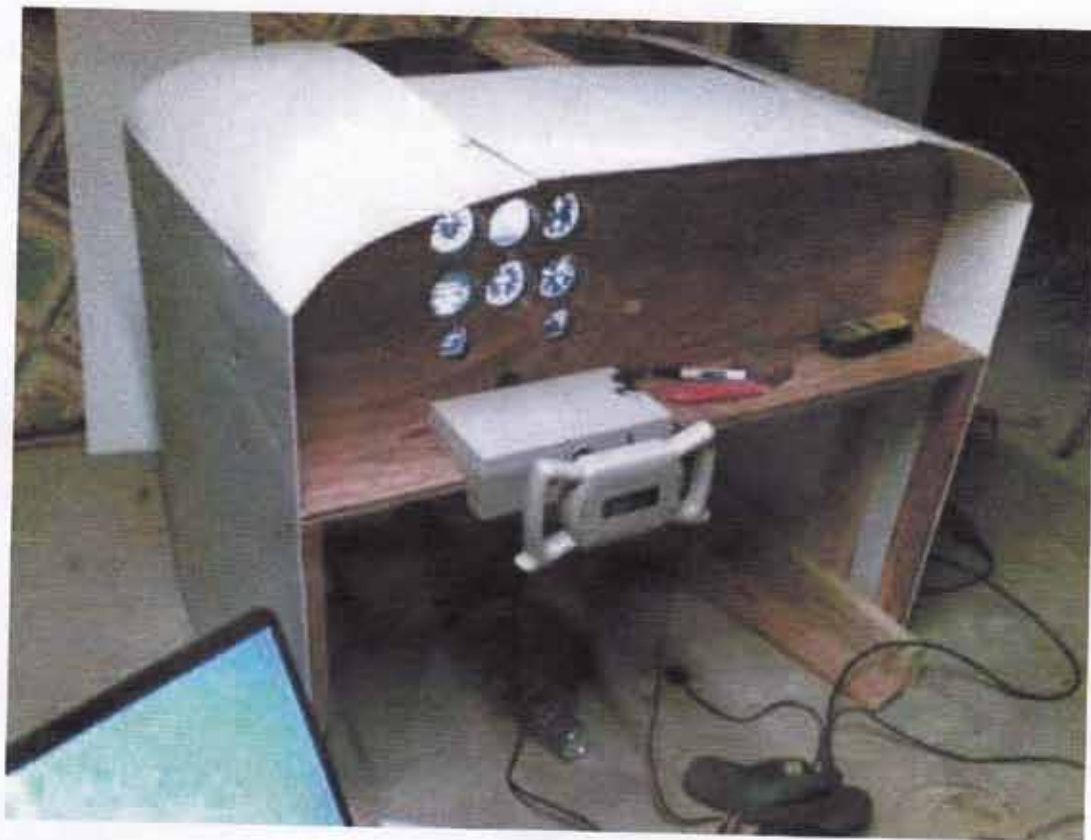
"I said, 'Tell me about this guy Barack Obama.'"

With the Latino actor Jimmy Smits already cast for the show, Attie was especially keen to know how rising star Obama approached the question of his race. Axelrod's answers helped inform Santos's approach to his own Hispanic identity.

In the TV show, Santos begins as the rank outsider up against a national figure famous for standing at the side of a popular Democratic president. There are doubts about Santos's inexperience, having served just a few years in Congress, and about his ability to persuade voters to back an ethnic minority candidate - even as his own ethnic group harbour suspicions that he might not identify with them sufficiently.

But the soaring power of his rhetoric, his declaration that the old divisions belong in the past and his sheer magnetism, ensure that he comes from behind in a fiercely close primary campaign and draws level with his once all-commanding opponent. Every aspect of that storyline has come true for Barack Obama. Axelrod, now chief strategist for the Obama campaign, recently joked in an email to Attie: "We're living your scripts!"





— Back to Original Article

BLOOD, SWEAT, DUST: In Israel for 'Rambo III,' Stallone Takes on the Russians and the Perils of Film Making in 120 Heat

October 11, 1987 | PAT H. BROESKE

SODOM, THE DEAD SEA — Sylvester Stallone was in his Rambo get-up, seated on the steps of his trailer in afternoon heat of 120-plus. It was a curious image: Instead of brandishing his glistening "survival" knife, Stallone was wielding a fly swatter.

Never missing a beat during an interview, he idly swatted at flies that landed on his pants and bare chest. And he whapped at flies that settled on the khaki-clad legs of the interviewer alongside him. "Did you meet this one?," Stallone said. "I'm gonna keep him as a pet and name him 'Killer.'"

As tenacious as these hordes of flies might be, fly swatting belied the mood of this particular mission. As Stallone noted, with a nod to a bodyguard who lounged against a nearby trailer, "This is a pretty serious place to be. There's a sense of danger here...."

In war-weary Israel, where military checkpoints dot the country, gun-toting soldiers are everywhere. Visitors can't help but be apprehensive.

The sense of tension is one reason that Stallone chose Israel to make "Rambo: First Blood Part III."

But there's another reason. The isolation of the country's rugged landscape fits the mood of lonely, dispirited Vietnam vet John Rambo.

Not coincidentally, it also fits the current mood of Stallone, whose personal life is in the midst of upheaval.

Budgeted at \$31 million, "Rambo III" will shoot through November at locations including Eilat and caves near Jerusalem. Filming, which will wrap in December in Thailand, is currently under way in Jaffa (near Tel Aviv), following three weeks in the hills above the Dead Sea.

In this sequel to the monster hit "Rambo II," which grossed about \$375 million worldwide, Israel's breathtaking vistas are doubling for Russian-infested Afghanistan.

"OK, Babe, you're on my turf now. This is Afghanistan."

Stallone motioned to the Soviet-occupied fort and its grounds that encircled him.

Production designer Bill Kenney ("Rambo II," "Rocky IV") created the stronghold to look like a "period" Afghani fort (more than 200 years old) that has been "modernized" by its Soviet occupants.

A crew of up to 80 worked day and night for 5 1/2 weeks erecting the seven-acre set.

Located a bumpy drive (some of it in first gear) from the production encampment, one side of the fort is nestled just feet away from a 2,000-foot drop-off. The script, after all, calls for Rambo to scale the canyon walls to get into the fort to rescue Trautman.

To another side, a watchtower looms ominously. It will be blown up during the final days of filming in the area.

There are also metal catwalks from which Soviet soldiers patrol. And tents. And burnt-out rubble, including blackened vehicles of war. There are also smoldering fires, rolled barbed-wire, sandbags and tanks and jeeps.

Like much of the film's weaponry, the tanks and jeeps are authentic. "There's no Hollywood cheating going on," said Kenney, who explained that the vehicles are being used through arrangements with the Israeli military, which acquired the equipment in battles with its Soviet-armed neighbors.

The same holds true for the film's cache of more than 500 guns.

When property master Sam Moore ("The Untouchables") first arrived in Israel, he had a back-up plan: "Just in case I couldn't find what I needed here, I planned to go to Rome."

A trip to a Tel Aviv weapons dealer the first morning he arrived in the country put any uncertainties to rest.

Deadpanned Moore: "No problem getting guns around here." In fact, much of the film's weaponry—according to the dealer through whom it's being rented—was captured from a ship bound for Lebanon. (For use in the film, they've been converted to shoot only blanks.)

Equally authentic are the costumes, especially of the "Afghans" (many of them bearing wounds of war) who wandered the set. The reason: Afghan consultant Sadiq Tawfiq suggested that clothes be purchased from real-life Afghans. So he went with costume designer Richard La Motte to Peshawar, the Pakistani border town where the *mujahideen* come to replenish their supplies and where displaced Afghans have gathered. Old clothing, some of it bloodied, was purchased, as were Afghan items from local shops. "So you see, not only will the movie look very real," enthused Tawfiq, a Laguna Beach shop owner, "but we have also helped the people there."

Israelis have been largely cast in the roles of Afghans, while the Soviets are being played mostly by Americans, English and French. To insure that the film doesn't come off sounding like a Tower of Babel, Tel Aviv dialect coach Yonny Lucas is on hand to oversee the Pashtu and Russian dialogue.



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Keepers of Bush Image Lift Stagecraft to New Heights

By ELISABETH SAMLER
Published: May 16, 2003

George W. Bush's "Top Gun" landing on the deck of the carrier Abraham Lincoln will be remembered as one of the most audacious moments of presidential theater in American history. But it was only the latest example of how the Bush administration, going far beyond the foundations in stagecraft set by the Reagan White House, is using the powers of television and technology to promote a presidency like never before.

Officials of past Democratic and Republican administrations marvel at how the White House does not seem to miss an opportunity to showcase Mr. Bush in dramatic and perfectly lighted settings. It is all by design: the White House has stocked its communications operation with people from network television who have expertise in lighting, camera angles and the importance of backdrops.

On Tuesday, at a speech promoting his economic plan in Indianapolis, White House aides went so far as to ask people in the crowd behind Mr. Bush to take off their ties, WISH-TV in Indianapolis reported, so they would look more like the ordinary folk the president said would benefit from his tax cut.

"They understand the visual as well as anybody ever has," said Michael K. Deaver, Ronald Reagan's chief image maker. "They watched what we did, they watched the mistakes of Bush I, they watched how Clinton kind of stumbled into it, and they've taken it to an art form."

The White House efforts have been ambitious -- and costly. For the prime-time television address that Mr. Bush delivered to the nation on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, the White House rented three barges of giant Musco lights, the kind used to illuminate sports stadiums and rock concerts, sent them across New York Harbor, tethered them in the water around the base of the Statue of Liberty and then blasted them upward to illuminate all 305 feet of America's symbol of freedom. It was the ultimate patriotic backdrop for Mr. Bush, who spoke from Ellis Island.

For a speech that Mr. Bush delivered last summer at Mount Rushmore, the White House positioned the best platform for television crews off to one side, not head on as other White Houses have done, so that the cameras caught Mr. Bush in profile, his face perfectly aligned with the four presidents carved in stone.

And on Monday, for remarks the president made promoting his tax cut plan near Albuquerque, the White House unfurled a backdrop that proclaimed its message of the day, "Helping Small Business," over and over. The type was too small to be read by most in the audience, but just the right size for television viewers at home.

"I don't know who does it," Mr. Deaver said, "but somebody's got a good eye over there."

That somebody, White House officials and television executives say, is in fact three or four people. First among equals is Scott Sforza, a former ABC producer who was hired by the Bush campaign in Austin, Tex., and who now works for Dan Bartlett, the White House communications director. Mr. Sforza created the White House "message of the day" backdrops and helped design the \$250,000 set at the United States Central Command forward headquarters in Doha, Qatar, during the Iraq war.

Mr. Sforza works closely with Bob DeSeri, a former NBC cameraman whom the Bush White House hired after seeing his work in the 2000 campaign. Mr. DeSeri, whose title is associate director of communications for production, is considered a master at lighting. "You want it, I'll heat it up and make a picture," he said early this week. Mr. DeSeri helped produce one of Mr. Bush's largest events, a speech to a crowd in Revolution Square in Bucharest last November.

To stage the event, Mr. DeSeri went so far as to rent Musco lights in Britain, which were then shipped across the English Channel and driven across Europe to Romania, where they lighted Mr. Bush and the giant stage across from the country's former Communist headquarters.

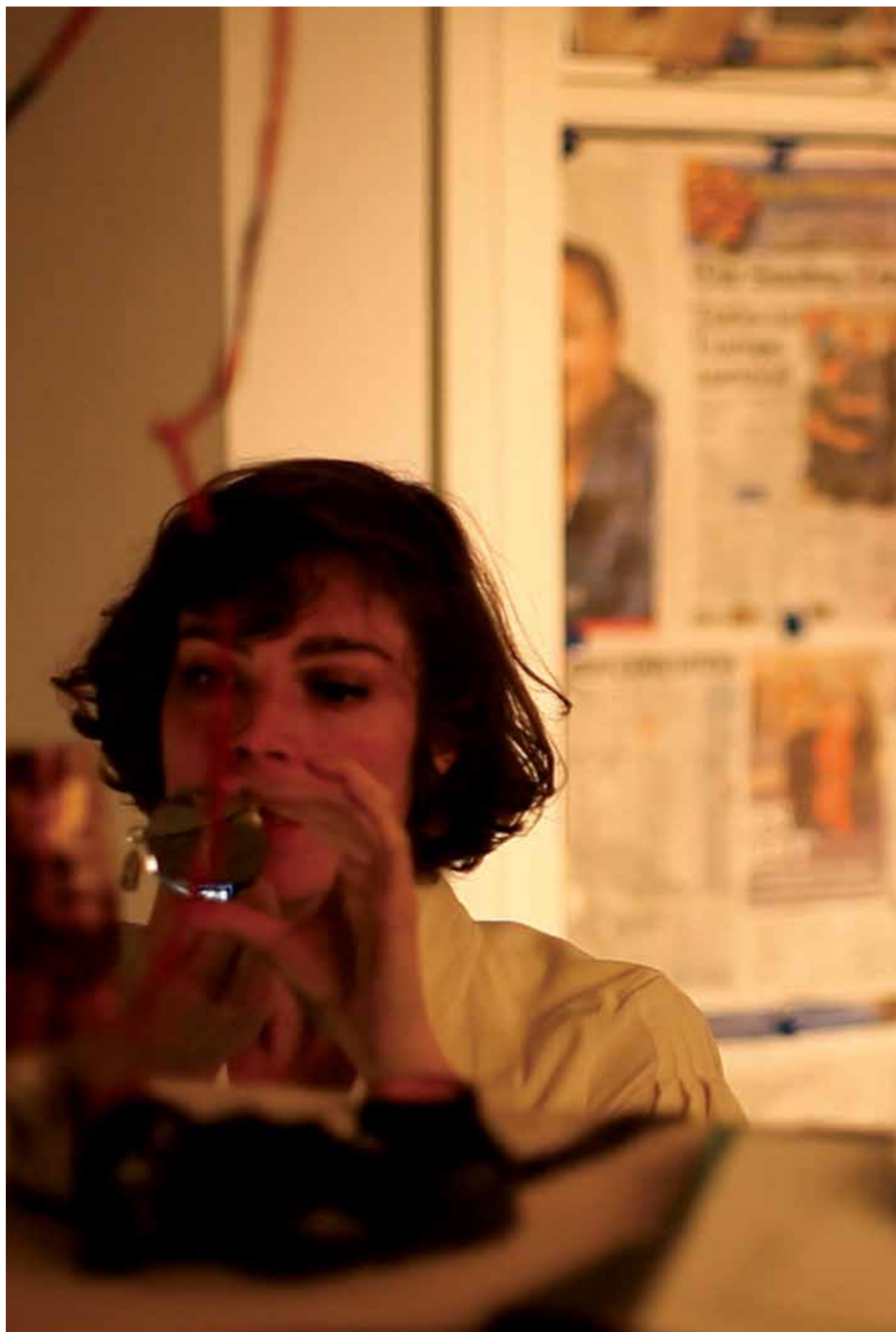
A third crucial player is Greg Jenkins, a former Fox News television producer in Washington who is now the director of presidential advance. Mr. Jenkins manages the small army of staff members and volunteers who move days ahead of Mr. Bush and his entourage to set up the staging of all White House events.

"We pay particular attention to not only what the president says but what the American people see," Mr. Bartlett said. "Americans are leading busy lives, and sometimes they don't have the opportunity to read a story or listen to an entire broadcast. But if they can have an instant understanding of what the president is talking about by seeing 60 seconds of television."

SIGN IN TO E-
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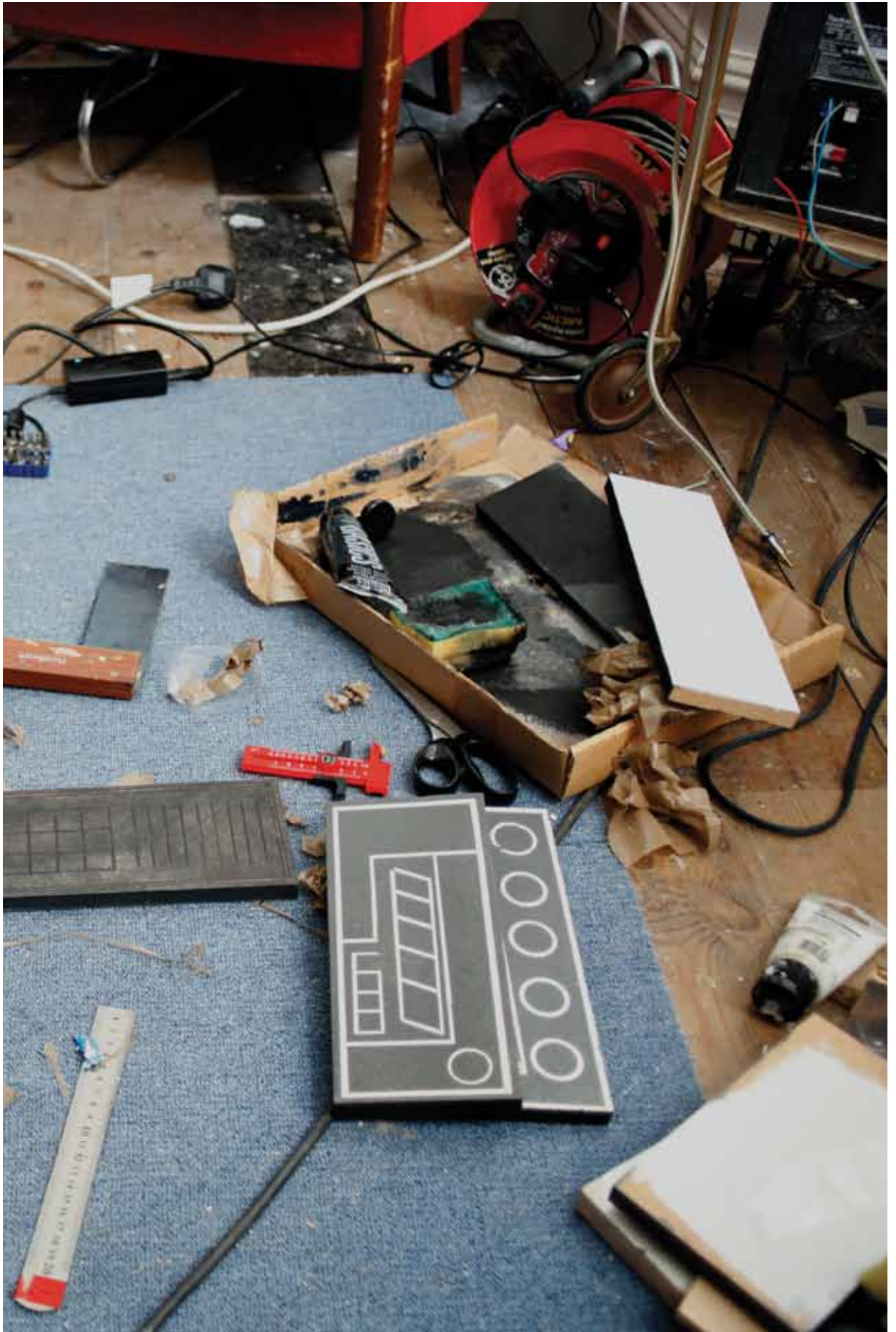












*3. SELECTED TEXT
THE ECSTASY OF
COMMUNICATION /
JEAN BAUDRILLARD*



The Ecstasy of Communication

JEAN BAUDRILLARD

There is no longer any system of objects. My first book contains a critique of the object as obvious fact, substance, reality, use value.¹ There the object was taken as sign, but as sign still heavy with meaning. In this critique two principal logics interfered with each other: a phantasmatic logic that referred principally to psychoanalysis—its identifications, projections, and the entire imaginary realm of transcendence, power and sexuality operating at the level of objects and the environment, with a privilege accorded to the house/automobile axis (immanence/transcendence); and a differential social logic that made distinctions by referring to a sociology, itself derived from anthropology (consumption as the production of signs, differentiation, status and prestige). Behind these logics, in some way descriptive and analytic, there was already the dream of symbolic exchange, a dream of the status of the object and consumption beyond exchange and use, beyond value and equivalence. In other words, a sacrificial logic of consumption, gift, expenditure (dépense), potlatch, and the accursed portion.²

In a certain way all this still exists, and yet in other respects it is all disappearing. The description of this whole intimate universe—projective, imaginary and symbolic—still corresponded to the object's status as mirror of the subject, and that in turn to the imaginary depths of the mirror and "scene": there is a domestic scene, a scene of interiority, a private space-time (correlative, moreover, to a public space). The oppositions subject/object and public/private were still meaningful. This was the era of the discovery and exploration of daily life, this other scene emerging in the shadow of the historic scene, with the former receiving more and more symbolic investment as the latter was politically disinvested.

But today the scene and mirror no longer exist; instead, there is a screen and network. In place of the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene,

there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold—the smooth operational surface of communication.

Something has changed, and the Faustian, Promethean (perhaps Oedipal) period of production and consumption gives way to the "proteinic" era of networks, to the narcissistic and protean era of connections, contact, contiguity, feedback and generalized interface that goes with the universe of communication. With the television image—the television being the ultimate and perfect object for this new era—our own body and the whole surrounding universe become a control screen.

If one thinks about it, people no longer project themselves into their objects, with their affects and their representations, their fantasies of possession, loss, mourning, jealousy: the psychological dimension has in a sense vanished, and even if it can always be marked out in detail, one feels that it is not really there that things are being played out. Roland Barthes already indicated this some time ago in regard to the automobile: little by little a logic of "driving" has replaced a very subjective logic of possession and projection.³ No more fantasies of power, speed and appropriation linked to the object itself, but instead a tactic of potentialities linked to usage: mastery, control and command, an optimalization of the play of possibilities offered by the car as vector and vehicle, and no longer as object of psychological sanctuary. The subject himself, suddenly transformed, becomes a computer at the wheel, not a drunken demiurge of power. The vehicle now becomes a kind of capsule, its dashboard the brain, the surrounding landscape unfolding like a televised screen (instead of a live-in projectile as it was before).

(But we can conceive of a stage beyond this one, where the car is still a vehicle of performance, a stage where it becomes an information network. The famous Japanese car that talks to you, that "spontaneously" informs you of its general state and even of your general state, possibly refusing to function if you are not functioning well, the car as deliberating consultant and partner in the general negotiation of a lifestyle, something—or someone: at this point there is no longer any difference—with which you are connected. The fundamental issue becomes the communication with the car itself, a perpetual test of the subject's presence with his own objects, an uninterrupted interface.

It is easy to see that from this point speed and displacement no longer matter. Neither does unconscious projection, nor an individual or social type of competition, nor prestige. Besides, the car began to be de-sacralized in this sense some time ago: it's all over with speed—I drive more and consume less. Now, however, it is an ecological ideal that installs itself at every level. No more expenditure, consumption, performance, but instead regulation, well-tempered functionality, solidarity among all the elements of the same system, control and global management of an ensemble. Each

system, including no doubt the domestic universe, forms a sort of ecological niche where the essential thing is to maintain a relational decor, where all the terms must continually communicate among themselves and stay in contact, informed of the respective condition of the others and of the system as a whole, where opacity, resistance or the secrecy of a single term can lead to catastrophe.)⁴

Private "telematics": each person sees himself at the controls of a hypothetical machine, isolated in a position of perfect and remote sovereignty, at an infinite distance from his universe of origin. Which is to say, in the exact position of an astronaut in his capsule, in a state of weightlessness that necessitates a perpetual orbital flight and a speed sufficient to keep him from crashing back to his planet of origin.

This realization of a living satellite, *in vivo* in a quotidian space, corresponds to the satellitization of the real, or what I call the "hyperrealism of simulation"⁵: the elevation of the domestic universe to a spatial power, to a spatial metaphor, with the satellitization of the two-room-kitchen-and-bath put into orbit in the last lunar module. The very quotidian nature of the terrestrial habitat hypostasized in space means the end of metaphysics. The era of hyperreality now begins. What I mean is this: what was projected psychologically and mentally, what used to be lived out on earth as metaphor, as mental or metaphorical scene, is henceforth projected into reality, without any metaphor at all, into an absolute space which is also that of simulation.

This is only an example, but it signifies as a whole the passage into orbit, as orbital and environmental model, of our private sphere itself. It is no longer a scene where the dramatic interiority of the subject, engaged with its objects as with its image, is played out. We are here at the controls of a micro-satellite, in orbit, living no longer as an actor or dramaturge but as a terminal of multiple networks. Television is still the most direct prefiguration of this. But today it is the very space of habitation that is conceived as both receiver and distributor, as the space of both reception and operations, the control screen and terminal which as such may be endowed with telematic power—that is, with the capability of regulating everything from a distance, including work in the home and, of course, consumption, play, social relations and leisure. Simulators of leisure or of vacations in the home—like flight simulators for airplane pilots—become conceivable.

Here we are far from the living-room and close to science fiction. But once more it must be seen that all these changes—the decisive mutations of objects and of the environment in the modern era—have come from an irreversible tendency towards three things: an ever greater formal and operational abstraction of elements and functions and their homogenization in a single virtual process of functionalization; the displacement of bodily movements and efforts into electric or electronic commands, and the min-

iaturation, in time and space, of processes whose real scene (though it is no longer a scene) is that of infinitesimal memory and the screen with which they are equipped.

There is a problem here, however, to the extent that this electronic "encephalization" and miniaturization of circuits and energy, this transistorization of the environment, relegates to total uselessness, desuetude and almost obscenity all that used to fill the scene of our lives. It is well known how the simple presence of the television changes the rest of the habitat into a kind of archaic envelope, a vestige of human relations whose very survival remains perplexing. As soon as this scene is no longer haunted by its actors and their fantasies, as soon as behavior is crystallized on certain screens and operational terminals, what's left appears only as a large useless body, deserted and condemned. The real itself appears as a large useless body.

This is the time of miniaturization, telecommand and the microprocession of time, bodies, pleasures. There is no longer any ideal principle for these things at a higher level, on a human scale. What remains are only concentrated effects, miniaturized and immediately available. This change from human scale to a system of nuclear matrices is visible everywhere: this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extension, in the multiplicity and complexity of its organs, its tissues and functions, since today everything is concentrated in the brain and in genetic codes, which alone sum up the operational definition of being. The countryside, the immense geographic countryside, seems to be a deserted body whose expanse and dimensions appear arbitrary (and which is boring to cross even if one leaves the main highways), as soon as all events are epitomized in the towns, themselves undergoing reduction to a few miniaturized highlights. And time: what can be said about this immense free time we are left with, a dimension henceforth useless in its unfolding, as soon as the instantaneity of communication has miniaturized our exchanges into a succession of instants?

Thus the body, landscape, time all progressively disappear as scenes. And the same for public space: the theater of the social and theater of politics are both reduced more and more to a large soft body with many heads. Advertising in its new version — which is no longer a more or less baroque, utopian or ecstatic scenario of objects and consumption, but the effect of an omnipresent visibility of enterprises, brands, social interlocutors and the social virtues of communication — advertising in its new dimension invades everything, as public space (the street, monument, market, scene) disappears. It realizes, or, if one prefers, it materializes in all its obscenity; it monopolizes public life in its exhibition. No longer limited to its traditional language, advertising organizes the architecture and realization of super-

objects like Beaubourg and the Forum des Halles, and of future projects (e.g., Parc de la Villette) which are monuments (or anti-monuments) to advertising, not because they will be geared to consumption but because they are immediately proposed as an anticipated demonstration of the operation of culture, commodities, mass movement and social flux. It is our only architecture today: great screens on which are reflected atoms, particles, molecules in motion. Not a public scene or true public space but gigantic spaces of circulation, ventilation and ephemeral connections.

It is the same for private space. In a subtle way, this loss of public space occurs contemporaneously with the loss of private space. The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret. Their distinctive opposition, the clear difference of an exterior and an interior exactly described the domestic *scene* of objects, with its rules of play and limits, and the sovereignty of a symbolic space which was also that of the subject. Now this opposition is effaced in a sort of *obscurity* where the most intimate processes of our life become the virtual feeding ground of the media (the Loud family in the United States, the innumerable slices of peasant or patriarchal life on French television). Inversely, the entire universe comes to unfold arbitrarily on your domestic screen (all the useless information that comes to you from the entire world, like a microscopic pornography of the universe, useless, excessive, just like the sexual close-up in a porno film): all this explodes the scene formerly preserved by the minimal separation of public and private, the scene that was played out in a restricted space, according to a secret ritual known only by the actors.

Certainly, this private universe was alienating to the extent that it separated you from others—or from the world, where it was invested as a protective enclosure, an imaginary protector, a defense system. But it also reaped the symbolic benefits of alienation, which is that the Other exists, and that otherness can fool you for the better or the worse. Thus consumer society lived also under the sign of alienation, as a society of the spectacle.⁹ But just so: as long as there is alienation, there is spectacle, action, scene. It is not obscurity—the spectacle is never obscene. Obscurity begins precisely when there is no more spectacle, no more scene, when all becomes transparency and immediate visibility, when everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication.

We are no longer a part of the drama of alienation; we live in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. The obscene is what does away with every mirror, every look, every image. The obscene puts an end to every representation. But it is not only the sexual that becomes obscene in pornography; today there is a whole pornography of information and communication, that is to say, of circuits and networks, a pornography of all

functions and objects in their readability, their fluidity, their availability, their regulation, in their forced signification, in their performativity, in their branching, in their polyvalence, in their free expression....

It is no longer then the traditional obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary, it is the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible. It is the obscenity of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication.

Marx set forth and denounced the obscenity of the commodity, and this obscenity was linked to its equivalence, to the abject principle of free circulation, beyond all use value of the object. The obscenity of the commodity stems from the fact that it is abstract, formal and light in opposition to the weight, opacity and substance of the object. The commodity is readable: in opposition to the object, which never completely gives up its secret, the commodity always manifests its visible essence, which is its price. It is the formal place of transcription of all possible objects: through it, objects communicate. Hence, the commodity form is the first great medium of the modern world. But the message that the objects deliver through it is already extremely simplified, and it is always the same: their exchange value. Thus at bottom the message already no longer exists: it is the medium that imposes itself in its pure circulation. This is what I call (potentially) ecstasy.

One has only to prolong this Marxist analysis, or push it to the second or third power, to grasp the transparency and obscenity of the universe of communication, which leaves far behind it those relative analyses of the universe of the commodity. All functions abolished in a single dimension, that of communication. That's the ecstasy of communication. All secrets, spaces and scenes abolished in a single dimension of information. That's obscenity.

The hot, sexual obscenity of former times is succeeded by the cold and communicational, contactual and motivational obscenity of today. The former clearly implied a type of promiscuity, but it was organic, like the body's viscera, or again like objects piled up and accumulated in a private universe, or like all that is not spoken, teeming in the silence of repression. Unlike this organic, visceral, carnal promiscuity, the promiscuity that reigns over the communication networks is one of superficial saturation, of an incessant solicitation, of an extermination of interstitial and protective spaces. I pick up my telephone receiver and it's all there; the whole marginal network catches and harasses me with the insupportable good faith of everything that wants and claims to communicate. Free radio: it speaks, it sings, it expresses itself. Very well, *it* is the sympathetic obscenity of its content. In terms a little different for each medium, this is the result: a space, that of the FM band, is found to be saturated, the stations overlap and mix together (to

was free by virtue of space is no longer. Speech is free perhaps, but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want, the space is so saturated, the pressure so great from all who want to make themselves heard.

I fall into the negative ecstasy of the radio.

There is in effect a state of fascination and vertigo linked to this obscene delirium of communication. A singular form of pleasure perhaps, but aleatory and dizzying. If we follow Roger Caillois⁷ in his classification of games (it's as good as any other)—games of expression (mimicry), games of competition (agon), games of chance (alea), games of vertigo (ilinx)—the whole tendency of our contemporary "culture" would lead us from a relative disappearance of forms of expression and competition (as we have remarked at the level of objects) to the advantages of forms of risk and vertigo. The latter no longer involve games of scene, mirror, challenge and duality: they are, rather, ecstatic, solitary and narcissistic. The pleasure is no longer one of manifestation, scenic and aesthetic, but rather one of pure fascination, aleatory and psychotropic. This is not necessarily a negative value judgment: here surely there is an original and profound mutation of the very forms of perception and pleasure. We are still measuring the consequences poorly. Wanting to apply our old criteria and the reflexes of a "scenic" sensibility, we no doubt misapprehend what may be the occurrence, in this sensory sphere, of something new, ecstatic and obscene.

One thing is sure: the scene excites us, the obscene fascinates us. With fascination and ecstasy, passion disappears. Investment, desire, passion, seduction or again, according to Caillois, expression and competition—the hot universe. Ecstasy, obscenity, fascination, communication or again, according to Caillois, hazard, chance and vertigo—the cold universe (even vertigo is cold, the psychedelic one of drugs in particular).

In any case, we will have to suffer this new state of things, this forced extroversion of all interiority, this forced injection of all exteriority that the categorical imperative of communication literally signifies. There also, one can perhaps make use of the old metaphors of pathology. If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclear promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore.

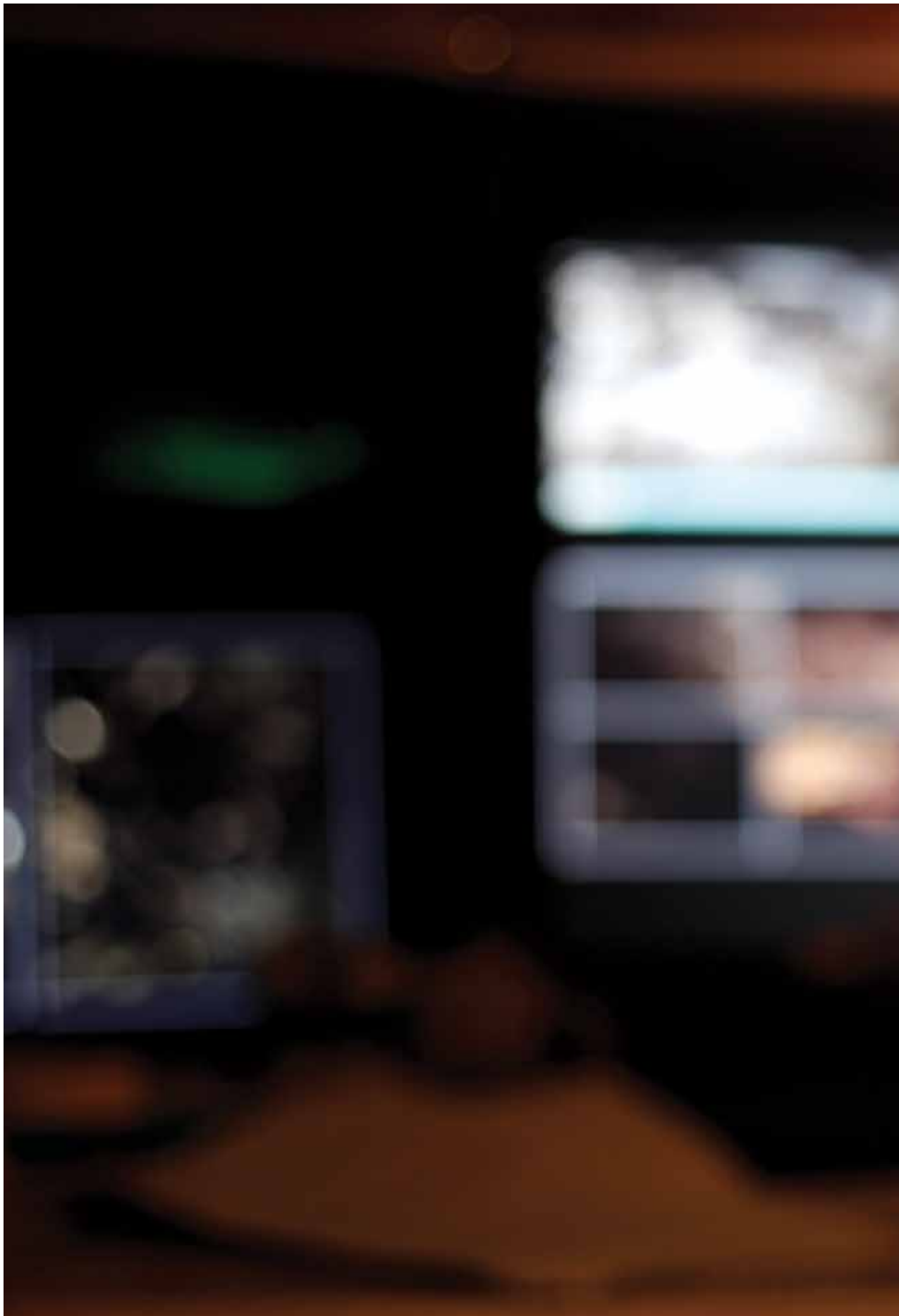
The schizo is bereft of every scene, open to everything in spite of himself, living in the greatest confusion. He is himself obscene, the obscene prey of the world's obscenity. What characterizes him is less the loss of the real, the light years of estrangement from the real, the pathos of distance and radical separation, as is commonly said; but, very much to the contrary, the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defense, no retreat. It is the end of interiority and intimacy, the overexposure and transparency of the world which traverses him without obstacle. He can no longer produce the limits of his own being, can no longer play nor stage himself, can no longer produce himself as mirror. He is now only a pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence.

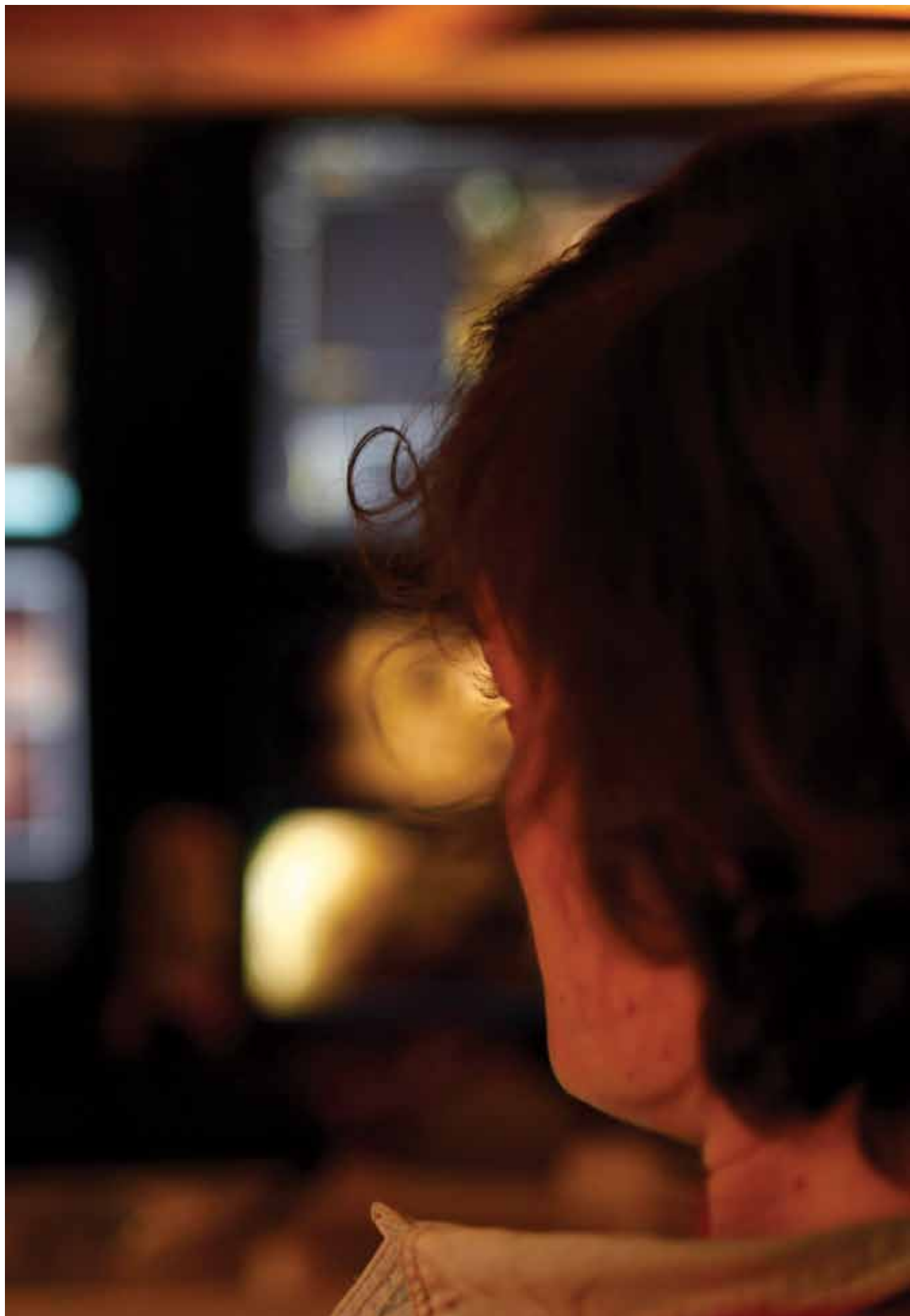
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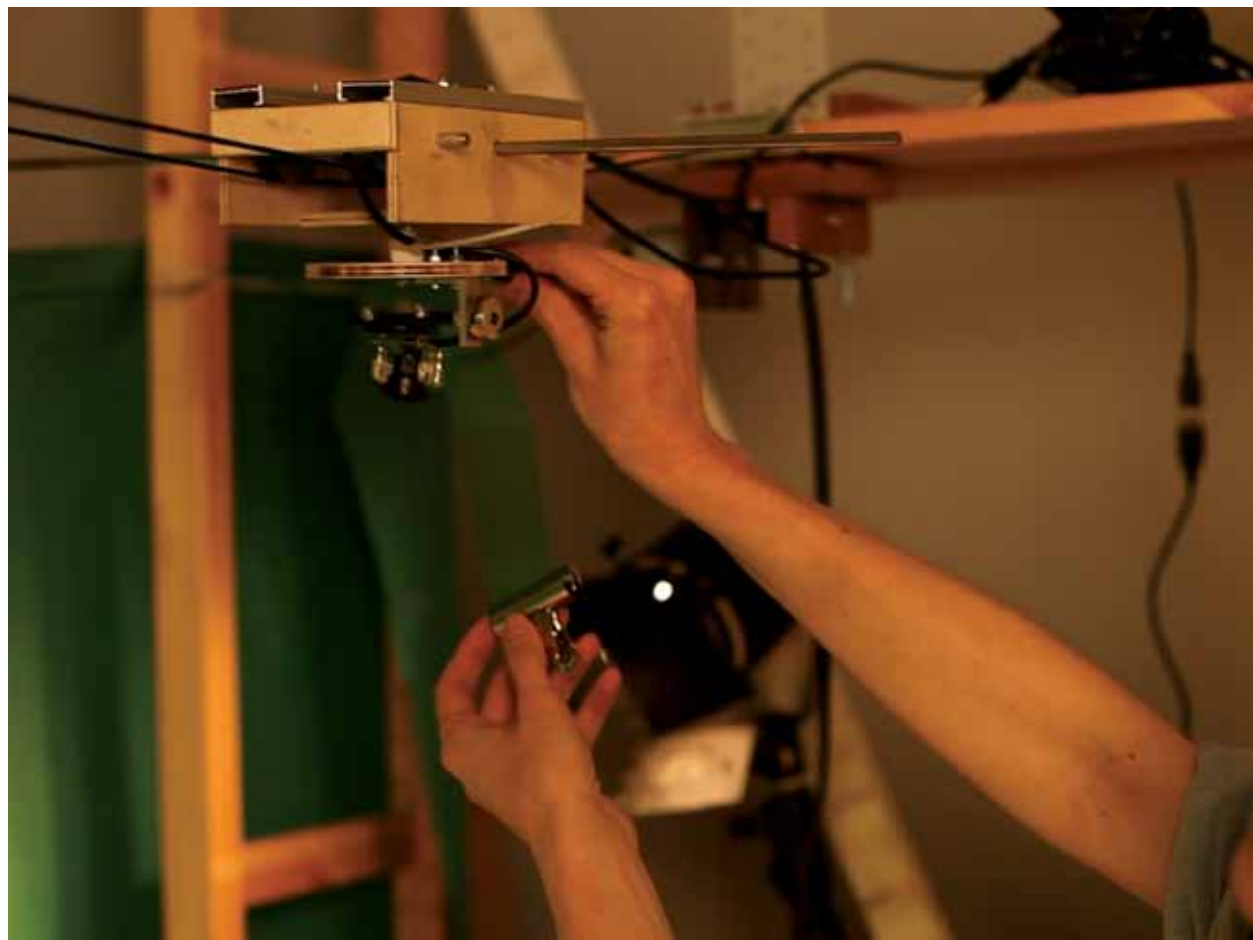
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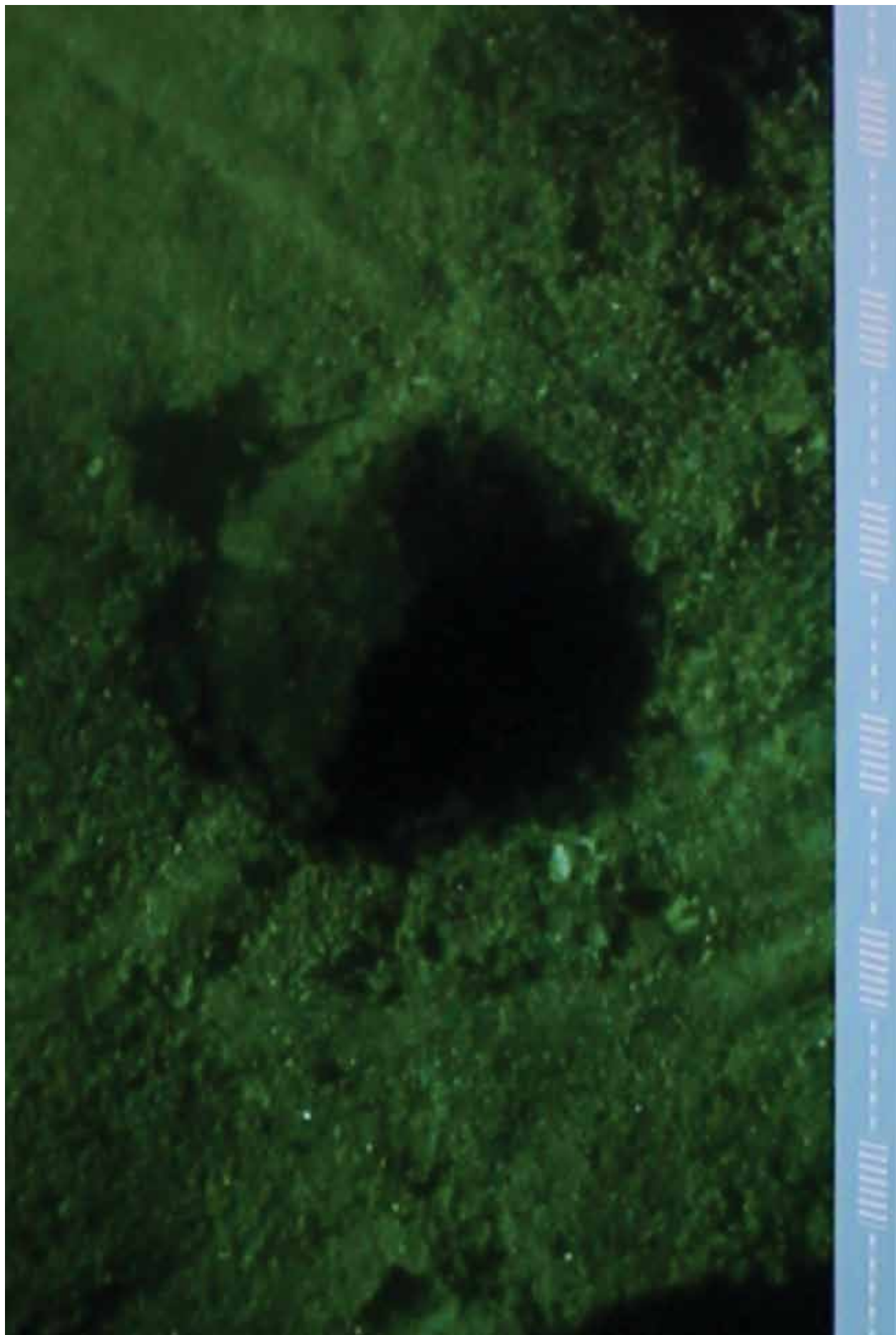
1. *Le Système des objets* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968). [Tr.]
2. Baudrillard is alluding here to Marcel Mauss's theory of gift exchange and Georges Bataille's notion of *dépense*. The "accursed portion" in the latter's theory refers to whatever remains outside of society's rationalized economy of exchanges. See Bataille, *La Part Maudite* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949). Baudrillard's own conception of symbolic exchange, as a form of interaction that lies outside of modern Western society and that therefore "haunts it like its own death," is developed in his *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976). [Tr.]
3. See Roland Barthes, "The New Citroën," *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp. 88-90. [Tr.]
4. Two observations. First, this is not due alone to the passage, as one wants to call it, from a society of abundance and surplus to a society of crisis and penury (economic reasons have never been worth very much). Just as the effect of consumption was not linked to the use value of things nor to their abundance, but precisely to the passage from use value to sign value, so here there is something new that is not linked to the end of abundance.

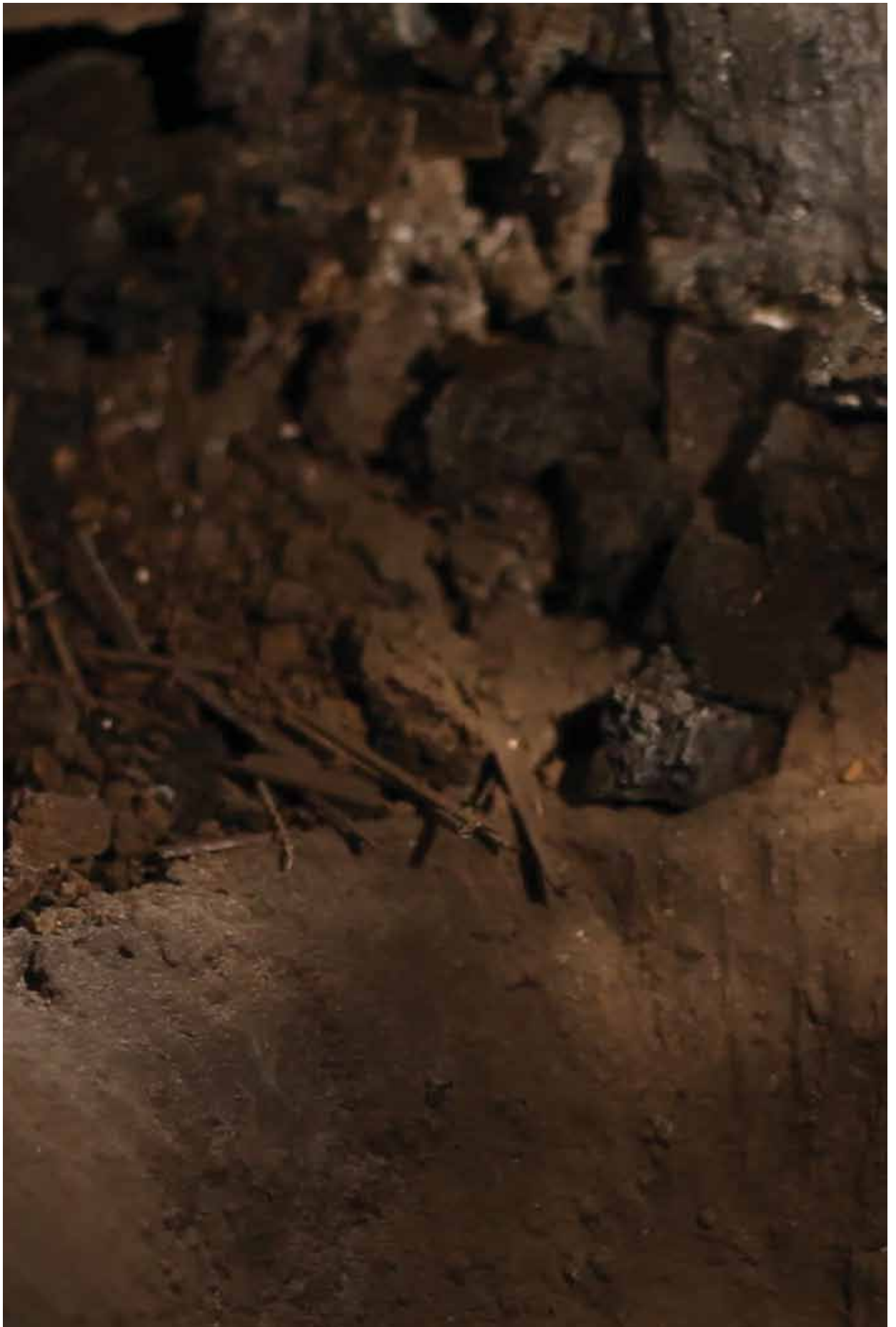
Secondly, all this does not mean that the domestic universe—the home, its objects, etc.—is not still lived largely in a traditional way—social, psychological, differential, etc. It means rather that the stakes are no longer there, that another arrangement or life-style is virtually in place, even if it is indicated only through a technological discourse which is often simply a political gadget. But it is crucial to see that the analysis that one could make of objects and their system in the '60s and '70s essentially began with the language of advertising and the pseudo-conceptual discourse of the expert. "Consumption," the "strategy of desire," etc. were first only a metadiscourse, the analysis of a projective myth whose actual effect was never really known. How people actually live with their objects—at bottom, one knows no more about this than about the truth of primitive societies. That's why it is often problematic and useless to want to verify (statistically, objectively) these hypotheses, as one ought to be able to do as a good sociologist. As we know, the language of advertising is first for the use of the advertisers themselves. Nothing says that contemporary discourse on computer science and communication is not for the use alone of professionals in these fields. (As for the discourse of intellectuals and sociologists themselves. . .)











4. SELECTED TEXT 2
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
- AIR ATTACK -
AUTHOR UNKNOWN



THE WHITE HOUSE

Honorable Robert Kennedy
The Attorney General

EYES ONLY

~~SECRET~~

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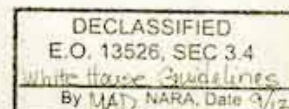
PRESIDENT'S SPEECH
— AIR ATTACK —
TOP-SECRET - SENSITIVE

My fellow Americans:

With a heavy heart, and in necessary fulfillment of my oath of office, I have ordered -- and the United States Air Force has now carried out -- military operations, with conventional weapons only, to remove a major nuclear weapons build-up from the soil of Cuba. This action has been taken under Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations and in fulfillment of the requirements of the national safety. Further military action has been authorized to ensure that this threat is fully removed and not restored.

~~Let me first tell you what has been going on. What it is that we have had to attack?~~ ~~In sum~~ There have been *unconfirmed* rumors of offensive installations in Cuba for some weeks, but it is only within the last week that we have had unmistakable and certain evidence of the character and magnitude of the Communist offensive deployment. What this evidence established beyond doubt is that in a rapid, secret and frequently denied, military operation, the Communists were attempting to establish a series of offensive nuclear

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missile bases on the communist island of Cuba. Three of these missile sites contained launchers, 4 to a site, to be loaded with Medium Range Ballistic Missiles, two for each launcher, for a total of 24. Each of these 24 missiles would be capable of carrying a 3000 pound nuclear warhead of about 2 megatons in yield -- or 100 times as destructive as the bomb which destroyed Hiroshima -- for a distance of more than 1000 nautical miles. Twelve other launch pads under construction were designed for intermediate range ballistic missiles -- capable of travelling more than twice as far and causing several times as much destruction -- and thus capable of devastating most of the United States mainland, most of Latin America and most of Canada. In addition, a large number of medium range jet bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons were being uncrated on Cuba, while appropriate air bases were being prepared.

The presence in Cuba of these large, long-range and clearly offensive weapons of sudden destruction constituted a threat to the peace and security of this Hemisphere -- in naked and deliberate defiance of the Rio Pact of 1947,

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the traditions of this nation and Hemisphere, the Joint Resolution of the 87th Congress and my own warnings to the communists on September 4 and 13. This action also contradicted the repeated assurances of Soviet and Cuban spokesmen, both publicly and privately delivered, that the arms build-up in Cuba would retain its original defensive character. The size of this undertaking makes clear that it had been planned some months ago. Yet only last month, after I had clearly stated that ground-to-ground missiles would be regarded as an offensive threat, the Soviet Government stated that "the armaments and military equipment sent to Cuba are designed exclusively for defensive purposes . . . there is no need for the Soviet Union to shift its weapons for the repulsion of aggression, for a retaliatory blow (that is, its strategic or offensive weapons) to any other country, for instance Cuba . . . the Soviet Union has so powerful rockets to carry these nuclear warheads that there is no need to search for sites for them beyond the boundaries of the Soviet Union." And only last Thursday, as this offensive build-up went on, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko told me

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in my office that, "as to Soviet assistance to Cuba, he was instructed to make it clear, as the Soviet Government had already done, that such assistance pursued solely the purpose of contributing to the defense capabilities of Cuba . . . Training by Soviet specialists of Cuban nationals in handling defensive armaments was by no means offensive. If it were otherwise, the Soviet Government would have never become involved in rendering such assistance."

The United States of America need not and cannot tolerate defiance, deception and offensive threats on the part of any nation, large or small. Nuclear weapons are so destructive, and ballistic missiles are so swift, that a sudden shift in the nature of their threat can be deeply dangerous -- especially when the trigger appears to be in the hands of a violent and unstable revolutionary leader. For many years, both the Soviet Union and the United States have deployed such weapons around the world with great care, never upsetting the precarious status quo which balanced off the use of those weapons in the absence of some vital challenge. These deployments are not comparable. Our own weapon systems, such as Polaris and Minuteman, have always

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emphasized invulnerability because they are intended to be retaliatory not offensive, and because our history -- unlike that of the Soviets since World War II -- demonstrates that we have no desire to dominate or conquer other nations or impose our system upon them. Nevertheless American citizens have become adjusted to living daily on the bull's-eye of Soviet missiles located inside the USSR or in submarines.

But this sudden and extraordinary build-up of communist missiles in an area well-known to have a special and historical relationship to the United States, ^{contradiction to} ~~in violation~~ ^{all previous Soviet practice, even with members of the Warsaw Pact, in direct violation of our} of Soviet assurances, and in defiance of American and hemispheric policy, was ^a provocative and unjustified change in the status quo which could not be accepted by this country, if our courage and our commitments are ever to be believed in the future.

If the 1930's taught us any lesson at all, it was that aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, will ultimately lead to war. This nation is opposed to war -- but it is true to its word.

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The discovery of this desperate and enormously dangerous move has required, in the last week, a most searching study of the courses of action open to us. The world can be sure that our choice of rapid, sure and minimum ^{force} ~~fire~~ was made only after all other alternatives had been most searchingly surveyed. Every other course of action involved risk, of delay and of obfuscation which were wholly unacceptable -- and with no prospect of real progress in removing ^{this} ~~their~~ ^{Communist} intolerable nuclear intrusion into the Americans. The size, speed, and secrecy of the deployment, the bare-faced falsehoods surrounding it, and the newly revealed character of the conspirators involved made it plain that no appeal, no warning, no offer would shift them from their course. Prolonged delay would have meant enormously increased danger, and immediate warning would have greatly enlarged the loss of life on all sides. It became my duty to act.

(Follows a description of first reports of action.)

The tragedy here -- self-evidently -- is in the loss of innocent lives on all sides. For the United States

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Government I hereby accept responsibility for this action and pledge that all appropriate efforts will be made, on request, to assist the families of these innocent victims. Neither Cubans nor Russians, as individuals, can be held accountable for the extraordinary and irresponsible conspiracy which has required this action. This was Communist militarism in action -- neither more nor less.

x x x x

We are, of course, reporting our actions at once to the Organization of American States and the United ~~XXXXXX~~ Nations. We shall ask the first for support and the second for understanding. We believe that the world will be relieved that a new threat of nuclear terror has been kept out of the Americas; ~~and that~~ the documentary evidence we shall be able to present will make the necessity of our action clear to all who care for freedom.

x x x x

The nuclear age is one of great danger, inevitably. Perhaps the most dangerous of all its aspects is the hazard that the will and determination of this nation may be overtaken by that force that aims so openly and so ruthlessly at world domination. If we had allowed the present plot to

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succeed, that danger would have been multiplied.

As it is, we remain, as we have been right along, steadfastly determined to do our best to limit the world's dangers and lower its tensions. We are prepared ourselves to consider with the Soviet Union and with all Governments how sudden and clandestine threats of the sort may be prevented, for all of us. We remain steadfast to all our other commitments -- and in particular I should publicly emphasize that we are more determined than ever to defend the freedom of West Berlin. And I remind you that no one has ever tried, either openly or covertly, to make West Berlin a military base -- much less a nuclear threat.

x x x x

Now what of the future?

First, I ask that the American people remain calm and self-confident and go about their business. There will be no major war; the strength and determination of your defenses are answer against that.

Second, the military blockade of Cuba will continue until other effective assurances can be obtained against any repetition of this conspiracy.

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Such a blockade can clearly be authorized both by the requirements of US self-defense and by the Organ of Consultation of the Organization of American States, acting under Articles 6 and 8 of the Rio Treaty and this year's Punta del Este Resolution. All ships bound for Cuba, from whatever nation or port, will be halted and searched -- and those containing cargoes of weapons or refusing to halt will be dealt with appropriately under the rules of international law. Such a blockade may be extended, if needed, to other types of cargo and carrier.

Third, I have directed our military forces to continue and increase their close surveillance of Cuba, as contemplated in the OAS Communique of October 6; to take further military action, if necessary, against offensive capabilities, and finally, to regard any missile that might possibly remain and be launched from Cuba as an attack by the Soviet Union requiring a massive retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.

Fourth, as a military precaution, I have reinforced our base at Guantanamo, evacuated the dependents of our personnel there and ordered additional military units to stand by on an alert basis.

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Fifth, I am asking Soviet Chairman Khrushchev to meet with me at the earliest opportunity with respect to the prevention of any further conspiracies which may strain the relations between our two countries. We do not wish to war with the Soviet Union -- we are a peaceful people who desire to live in peace with all other peoples. I am prepared to discuss with the Soviet Chairman how both of us might remove existing tensions instead of creating new ones. Our attitude on this was only recently shown in our acquiescence in the Iranian Government's announcement that it would not permit the establishment of foreign missile bases upon its territory -- and in our efforts to halt the testing and spread of nuclear weapons, and to end the arms race and all overseas bases in a fair and effective treaty. But we could not negotiate with a gun at our heads -- a gun that imperiled innocent Cubans as well as Americans. Our byword is: "Negotiation yes, intimidation no".

Finally, I have directed the United States Information Agency to use all available resources in making clear our position to the unhappy people of Cuba. We have no quarrel

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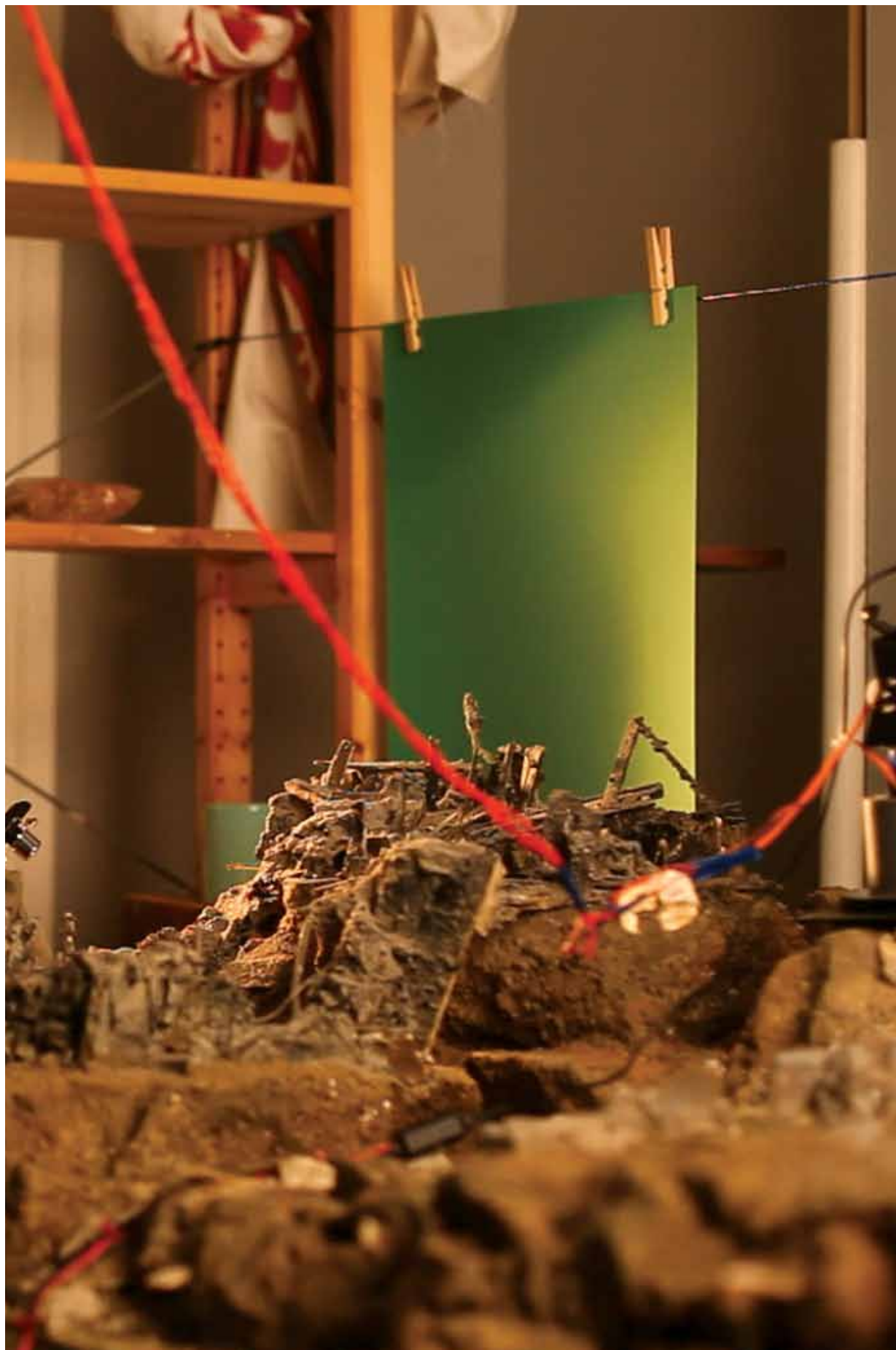
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with the Cuban people, only sympathy and hope. They did not consent to the building of this intolerable threat. Their lives and land are being used as pawns by those who deny them freedom. We have no wish to war on them, or impose any system upon them. Our objective, on the contrary, is to give them back the dream of their revolution -- the dream which Fidel Castro repudiated when he sold them out to the communists who may now sell him out in turn. Our objective in the world is peace and freedom -- including the peace and freedom of the Cuban people.

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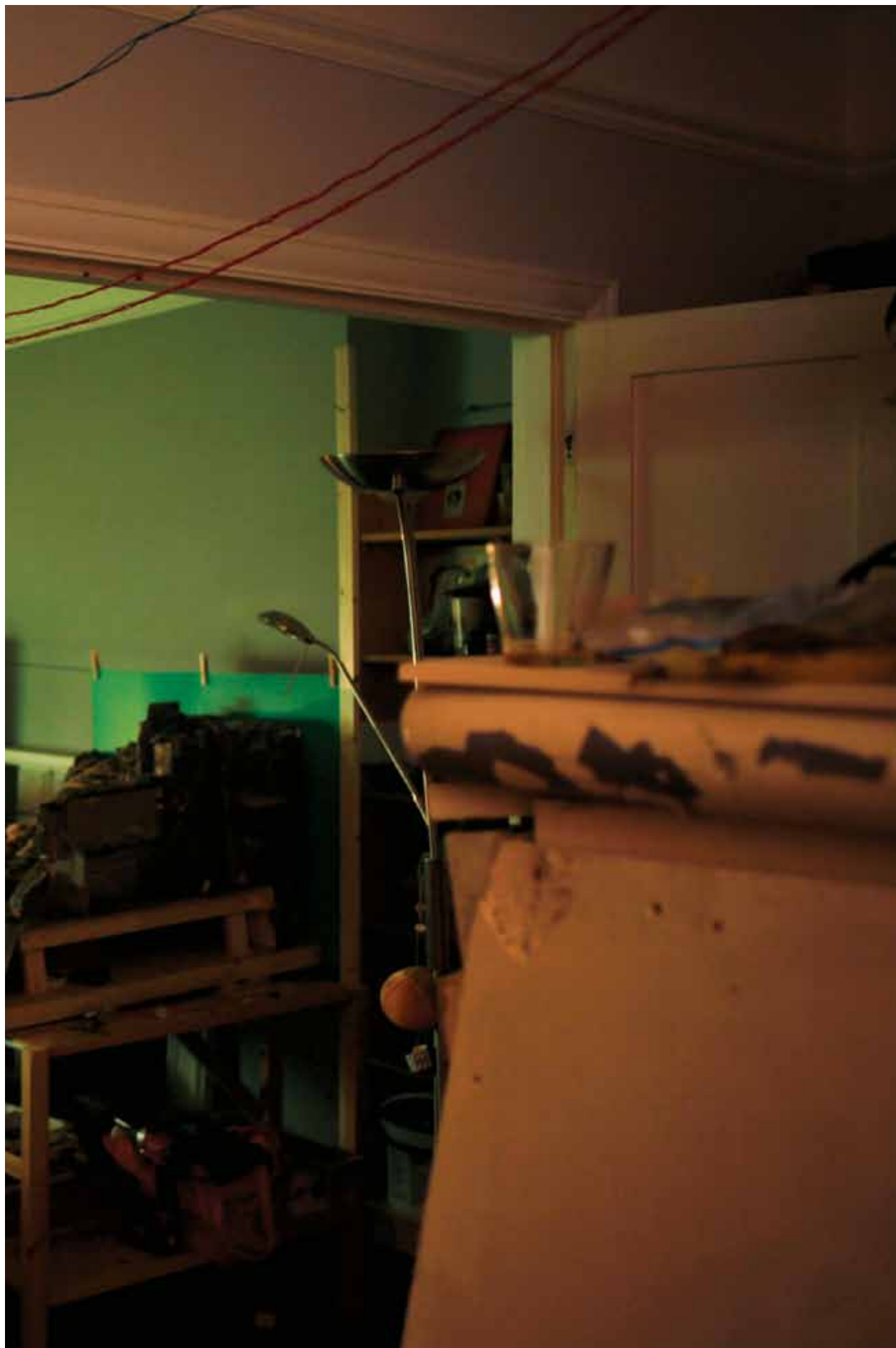












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