

Masks in the Sun Universe

LOCATIONS

[The Larson Mansion](#)
[Jean "John" Birken's House](#)
[The Dark Apartment](#)
[The Bright Apartment](#)
[Lisa Birken Brannigan's House](#)
[Nick and Allison Carter's House](#)
[Nursing Home](#)
[The Great Escape Theater](#)
[The Fountain in the Town Square](#)
[The Kosovo Hotel](#)
[The Lakeside](#)
[The Loft Scene in Interviews with Gabriel Grab](#)
[The Main Street of St. Gabriel](#)
[The Autonomous Province of Michigan](#)
[St. Gabriel](#)
[Detroit](#)
[The Federal Center](#)
[The Back Alley with Nound Spooks](#)
[The Kosovo Field](#)

[The Kosovo Swimming Pool](#)
[The Streets](#)
[The Frame Shop](#)

Click on each glyph below to learn more about a particular character.

[To dig further and explore the glyphs themselves, see the [Grand Cosmopolis Glyph Register](#) page.]



Doug Walters



Gabriel Embeha



Jean "John" Birken



Pam Welles



Danny Welles



Jack Welles



Jean "Gene" Carter



Jean Sr.



Judge Tom Larson



Lisa Birken Brannigan



Marla Larson



Tammy Carter



Nick Carter



Gabriel Grab

What are called ideas and themes below are only a beginning to the wealth of all ideas and themes in the social environment of *Masks in the Sun*. Interpretation itself generates further ideas and themes. Older and newer ideas and themes can be discussed via the social network [Liberty, A Users Guide](#) or in other places.

The Autonomous Province of Michigan

St. Gabriel

The Nound Spirits (Nound Spooks)

The Financial Crisis of 1837

The 110 Society (The One Ten)
Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*
Christmas
Halloween
Dramatic Adaptations
Dementia
Elder Abuse and Exploitation
Judgeships
Divorce and Child Custody
Gun Violence
Mourning
The Military
Community Theater
Documentary Filmmaking
Extramarital Affairs
Libertarian Conspiracy Rumoring
Private Investigation
Dramatic Roles and Directing
Dreams and Dreaming

THE GRAND COSMOPOLIS



As an anthropologist, I have spent years and untold resources on expeditions collecting, sketching, composing and disseminating materials from The Grand Cosmopolis. More will continue to appear in the coming months and years. A sample of allegorical snapshots of different persons, places and things while moving through The Grand Cosmopolis are included below. No other, brighter, clearer, singular,

or more true snapshots of these places will ever be possible. All symbols betray its true nature and potential humanity.

A Short Description of The Grand Cosmopolis

Ongoing studies by the Syncretic Beings Labs (SBL) are navigating The Grand Cosmopolis, the one alternate universe, reality and political state that we are all born into, live our lives, and die within, becoming sacrifices to it.

This cosmopolis is filled with things, fetich objects, including moving masks or “performances,” and fleeting or indeterminate identities.

No one knows how long this grand cosmopolis has lain buried and uncharted, serving as a resource for certain healers, collectors, artists, and sorcerers.

Just as your brain, heart, body, your cells and means of existence are you, and not just parts of you, all human brains, hearts, bodies, colonies of cells and means of existence make up the one, plural brain, heart, body, cell colony, and means of existence of this grand cosmopolis.

This cosmopolis is navigable via a series of roads and paths, corridors, spaces or rooms. In their study of this cosmopolis, scientists at SBL have long been based out of what they call “Location 205.” This space has another name which they do not know. It is called “The Prussian Room.”

My first order of business as board chairman of the Syncretic Beings Labs was to see these particular scientists leave, and then draft a new charter according to the following observations:

- (1) Within The Grand Cosmopolis, hearts, brains, bodies, cells and (more or less permanent) means of existence are quantum entities. Nerve and cardiac muscle cells vibrate marking various (ancestral) musical structures, coursing waves along paths, streets, and corridor walls of cells, of fibers arranging various positions of bodies in various levels of awareness and secrecy, as they pursue (more or less permanent) means of existence;
- (2) In The Grand Cosmopolis all are one thing and many things. It is a plurally singular universe where everything is everything else, a state in which we momentarily or more permanently, and more or less consistently, negotiate between the plurality of universes in order to more or less live and get along with one another;
- (3) This cosmopolis is no “heavenly” plurality of states; it is filled with every emotion and sense of reason imaginable. Like all political states, The Grand Cosmopolis maintains a monopoly on physical force. It is the sole source of legitimizing all physical force, including speech, gestures, and secrets that everyone knows, but no one talks about;
- (4) The Grand Cosmopolis is inhabited only by ancestral things, fetishes of human manufacture (including masks in motion or “performances”), things reminding us of our place within the cosmopolis. Some refer to the totality of these things as “the universe,” “nature,” “mankind,” or “reality” – made up of the heavens, the earth, the plants, the animals, the laws, spirits, and us. Every word uttered, written and read serves as a mnemonic device helping us recreate these things as our (common) ancestors made them;

(5) There is no distinction between recreation and creation. The only distinction is between making things that are more or less truly ancestral, making more or less powerful fetishes of and for others in *The Grand Cosmopolis*.

Emblem, I

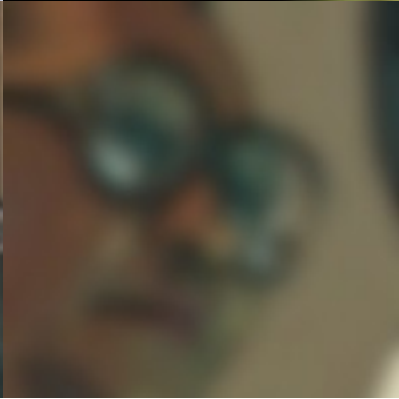
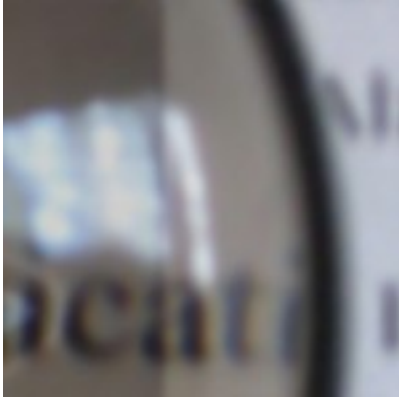
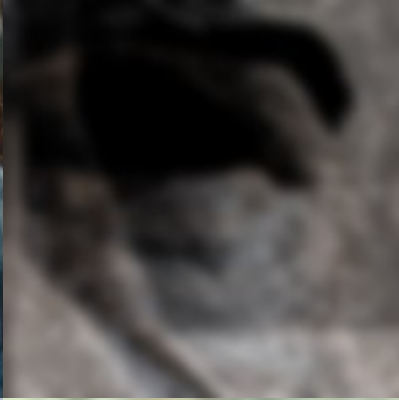
In the form of a blog on his own social network Liberty (A User's Guide), a "character" named Old Man Gabriel (OMG) has begun to lay out the background story of anthropologist Doug Walters' ethnographic fieldwork within the US military industrial complex. This work involved a US defense contractor named Curtis | Jacobsen | Lamb (CJL), which was the parent company of another contractor named The Syncretic Beings Labs (SBL). CJL specialized in human resources work for the Logistics Services of the US Department of Defense, and SBL was involved in what it referred to as "experimental human resources development." For several years, SBL had been operating beyond the complete control of CJL.

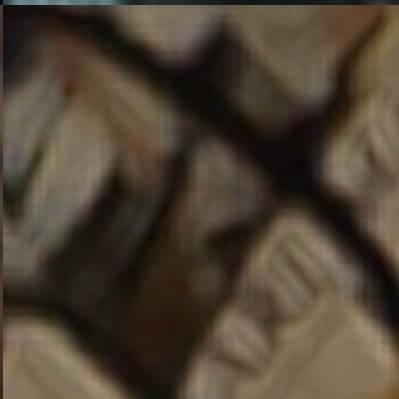
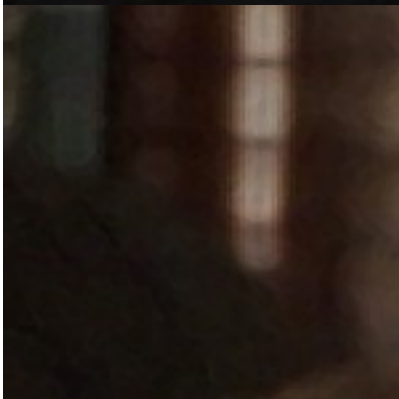
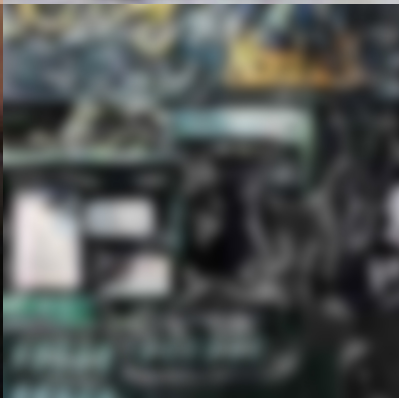
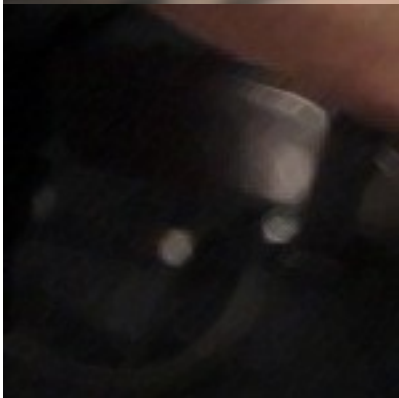
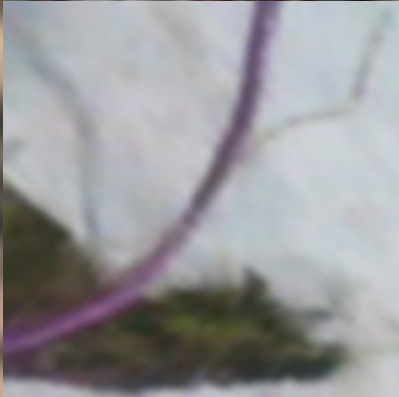
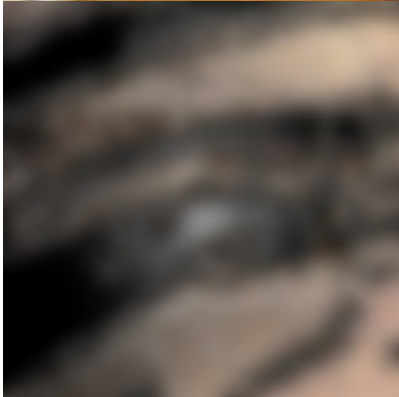
While the events depicted in the film *Masks in the Sun* were unfolding, a man I am calling "Danny Welles," a CJL Human Resources person and clandestine operator, was being secretly studied by SBL. At the time, Welles was involved in investigating a series of disappearances linked to his own half brother, Jean "John" Birken. This investigation was pointing to an international weapons proliferation scheme. Though seemingly unknown by anyone involved, this intersection of the local and the global was contributing to deadly consequences and deeper mysteries that extended far beyond Welles' ability to handle them.

My own (ethnographic) investigation of this situation led to the discovery of what I am calling *The Grand Cosmopolis*. More on *my own* involvement with SBL can be found in the materials accessed by the link to SBL above.

Although it may sound odd, these materials and performances are part of an ongoing, game-like adventure called *Emblem, I*.

A series of rules to this ongoing game can be found in first clicking on and then mousing over most of the image fragments below.







Related Video Artwork

Memory 77345

Memory Water

The Schweinhaben of Doug Walters (von Braun)

Pinka River Party

The Secret Work of the Schweinriter

Congo Diary - Lake Tanganyika Extract #1



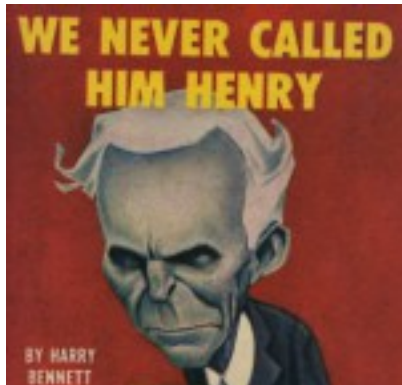
Ichthus Africanus

(An Allegory)

(Writer, Performer)

A middle aged man leaves his home and beloved living room aquarium in suburban New Jersey in search of the ghost of Che Guevara in the remote ruins of a laboratory for Cichlid studies located on the shore of Lake Tanganyika.

Performance Artwork

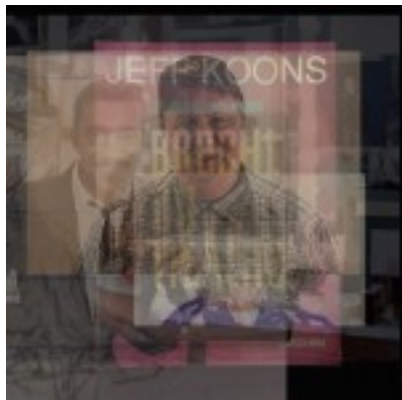


Lost and Desperately Driving (Around the Bed of Reality)

(An Allegory of Michigan)

(Writer, Filmmaker, Performer)

Materials for a performance involving past and future alternate realities of life and art in greater Detroit.



The Writer Who Could Not Say (Pigs for the Ancestors - Eat Your Heart Out John Deer)

(An Allegory of Military Research)

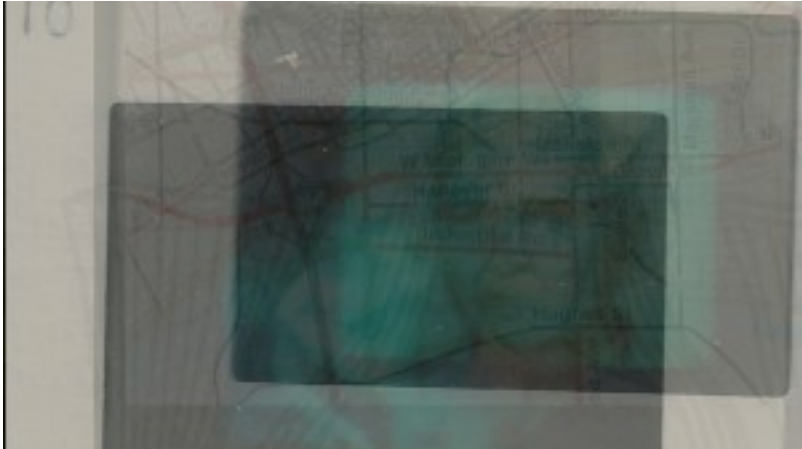
(Writer, Filmmaker, Performer)

An information booth for the defense contractor Curtis | Jacobsen | Lamb (CJL), and its allied experimental human resources firm SBL.

Related Characters

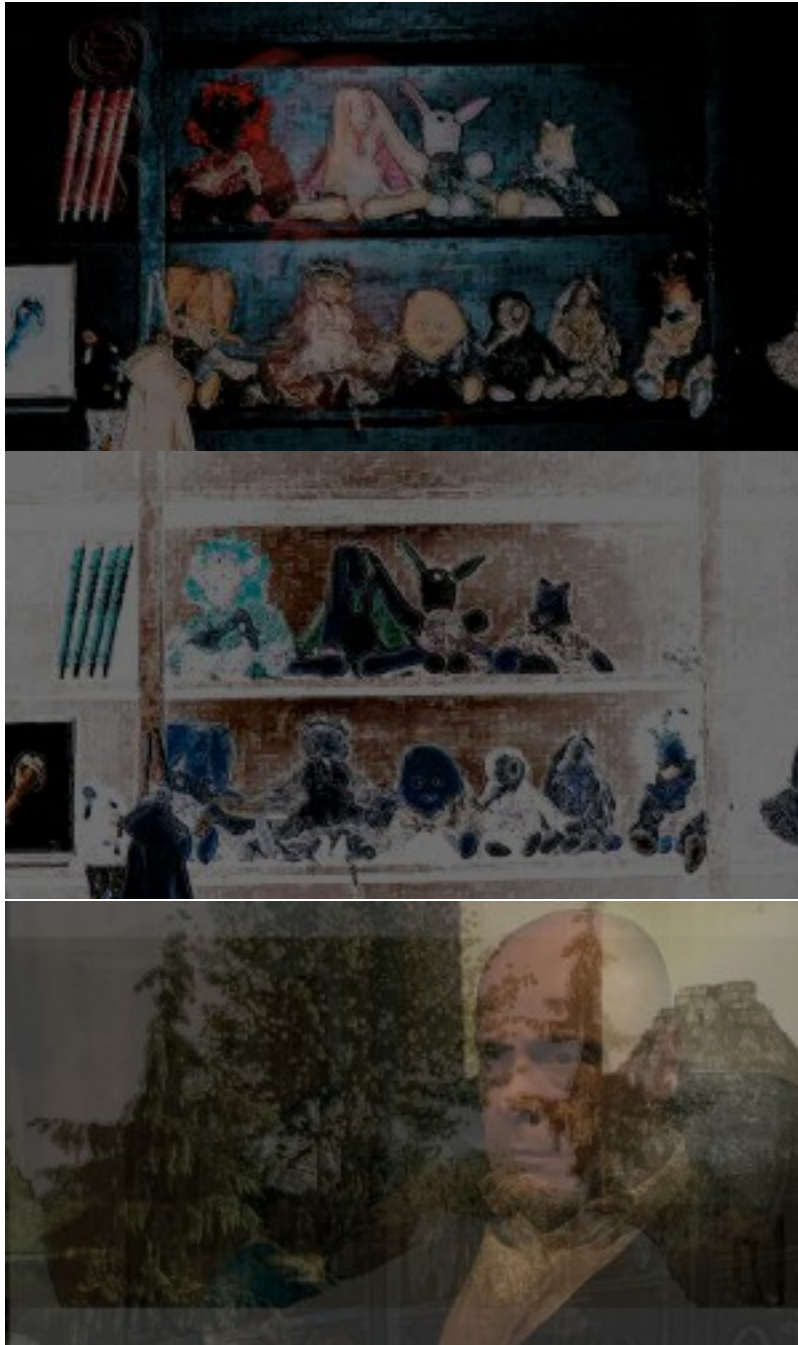


Related Images









MOONSHINE LIBERTY BEAR

The Liberty Moonshine Bear is a character and series of artworks focused on the theme of what might be called "high functioning delirium," caused and maintained via a state of Libertarian performative toxicity. For more on this theme, please see the "Gabriel on Themes" video below.

Video Art Sketch



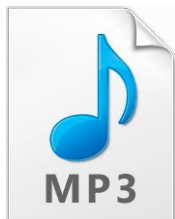
Fetich Table







Selected Images



Liberty Moonshine Jam.mp3

A Statement by OMG

We have reached a time in human history where every man and woman will one day need to choose between becoming a future player, or a future game piece. I urge you to read on.

While Alzheimer's disease and related forms of disability are very strange, anxiety provoking and dreadful to most people, they have also become relatively easy and convenient to put out of one's mind. While you might not yet be able to understand why, overcoming this state of self-distraction and denial is one of the greatest, most urgent challenges of our age.

For those under 50 or so, this reality, its images and fears are even easier to avoid due to the fact that so very few under 75 will become disabled in such a way. In addition, the tendency for most persons to socialize with those near their own age makes it so they will have few if any friends likely to be disabled in this way. The exceptions to this may involve elderly family members, but this is often more of a situation for the children of those family members (your parents' generation) and less for you (their less immediate relatives). Whatever the case, dealing with these kinds of disability in yourself or others is perhaps the most avoided and avoidable situation in a contemporary American or

European life. In the end, we tell ourselves, it is really not worth worrying about, especially because there is no cure and no way to change the brain, heart and body to avoid it.

But consider this. Have you ever thought of how convenient this situation is, how such a common *tragedy* happening to so many individuals, friends and family members remains so well ignored by the State that is supposedly there to protect and defend us?

Why is this? Have you ever considered there might be something strange going on, something bigger going on that makes the State *not really try* to deal with it, to help us become more immune to the ravages of such disabilities? Have you ever considered there might be something hidden, having to do with how we are discouraged from studying and changing brains, hearts, and bodies in ways that may make a cure or coping more likely? What could be the possible reasons why the State does relatively nothing, or allows so little to be done? Could there be some set of vested interests that the State is protecting, maybe even without completely knowing what all of these interests might be? So many of us over the course of our lives will direct our energies to so many causes in the name of history, posterity, the nation, its children, and even overall public health. Yet, very few of us, unless forced to as a member of the healthcare profession, will ever positively affect those suffering from such disabilities or even work to lessen our own future suffering. Even those who link liberation, health and welfare to the virtues of selfishness or self-interest have no interest in working to lessen their own direct or indirect suffering. In fact, these persons may be the least likely to do so. Curious. This being the situation, one might say that Alzheimer's and related disabilities are being accepted by very many as some sort of unavoidable, end-of-life punishment that only Scrooge-like selfishness and money grubbing will be able to save us from, using money to live out our last years beyond the power of others and the State. Ironically, though, this behavior seems only to expedite and more likely assure the very demise such persons are so confident they are avoiding.

Out of this comes the story of *Masks in the Sun* and the need to engage The Grand Cosmopolis that are related to it.

Can a film combined with still images, fictional writing and performance, things that are supposed to be entertainment, enhance and improve your destiny and that of others, even decades from now?

You have only time to spend, a little reading to do and share, a little mystery to encounter, but so much to gain in answering this question. *Masks in the Sun* and *Emblem, I* are neither exercises in reality nor fantasy. They involve an alternate reality of sufferers, dreamers, and players that make us stronger, more loving and more prepared to encounter the meaning of life itself.

AN EXPERIMENTAL HUMAN RESOURCES FIRM

At least since the working life of philosopher Immanuel Kant (1746-1804), the politics of professions have been criticized as limiting the kind and depth of inquiry in the arts and sciences. Professions are *the very means of existence* to artists and scientists working within them, the sources from which they negotiate their often fragile forms of dignity. Because of this, a great many in the arts as well as the

natural and social sciences are not freely depicting things in the universe, but are instead confined to depicting things in the professional universe.

We all know there is an undeniable difference between things in the universe and things in the professional universe. Things in this “second universe” make up a kind of public secret known by all artists and scientists but rarely talked about by them in public. There are various kinds of “knowing” involved and various kinds of “not talking about” these things. When the secrets of things in the professional universe are “talked about,” it is as their second, all-too-human, necessary, realist reality apart from the actual things making up the universe. This is called “*the real world*.” On one hand, there are things in the universe and how things *should be* to best know and change it, and on the other there is “how things really are.” This latter, is the real world artists and scientists need to “suck it up” about and simply accept, no matter how wrong it may turn out to be.

As an experimental human resources firm, the Syncretic beings Labs (SBL) have spent many years immersing certain personnel in as many aspects of “the real world” as possible.

Researchers in SBL's Mnemonic Beings Lab have used these personnel to study different professionals, including writers, visual artists, psychologists, a prominent scholar on Plato's *Republic*, and philosophers of language and knowledge.

Those in its Ancestral Beings Lab and Hallucinatory Beings Lab have used these personnel to work with anthropologists, critical theorists, science and technology studies scholars, and medical scientists.

More recently, its Delusional Beings Lab has employed an embedded experimental researcher to work with politicians, government workers and contractors, and legal professionals.

This collective work led to the discovery and now ongoing exploration of The Grand Cosmopolis, a secret world existing in the midst of “the real world,” filled with more real and valuable things than those in the professional universe.

While SBL certainly was focused on the professional universe, they were also working apart from a small anti-colonial army of those who own this concept. For several years SBL was stranded between uncritical and narrow artistic and scientific approaches, and unending variations on explaining the professional universe. The latter centered on a series of fetish figures called *Bataille d'Algiers*.

For eleven years SBL employed me to study the State, (the key source of the professional universe) from the inside. During this time, I was applying my earlier years of work learning about African folk healing and related performances, and then learning from and caring for people involved in Alzheimer's disease. I was doing this in ways that were more empirically valid and separate as possible from the gravity of the professional universe.

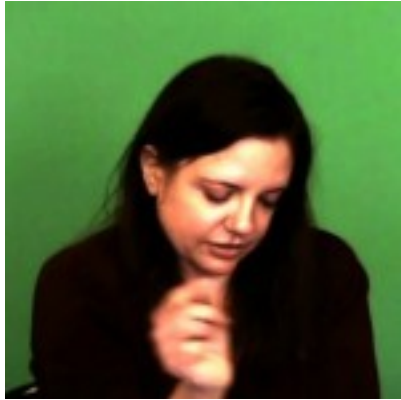
Along the way, I ended up discovering the Grand Cosmopolis and subsequently became a chief consultant with SBL. In my new role, I am now helping their labs to give up on the professional universe. I urge you to do the same, even if only in secret, and to join us in learning to navigate The Grand Cosmopolis.

*

The production work I have participated in at SBL involves a sporadic series of interactions with performers and text. Its directors and performers explore the boundaries of directed performance of scientific research where the content is technical,

experimental, done in a short production timeframe, but meant to be produced and directed by others.

All four syncretic beings labs, each a different "theater," also experimentally question the boundaries between performers and directors. This can be seen in following experiments:



Mnemonic Beings Lab Intro

(Performance Art)

(Director, Writer, Performer)

This is a document containing material for a performance piece.

It adapts themes from work in my earlier work.



Hallucinatory Beings Lab: Steve Taliaferro and Drew Walker

(Performance Art)

(Director, Writer, Performer)

This is a recording and document containing material for a performance piece.

It works within the framework of my film *Masks in the Sun*, and game-like adventure *Emblem, I*.



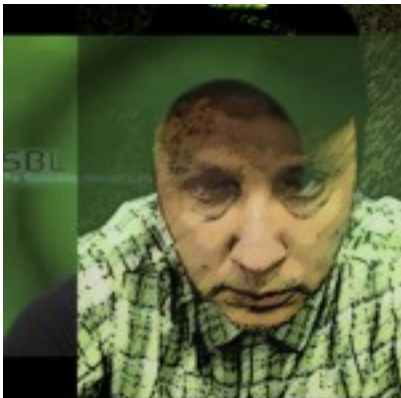
Delusional Beings Lab Intro

(Performance Art)

(Director, Writer, Performer)

This is a document containing material for a performance piece.

It works within the framework of my film *Masks in the Sun*, and game-like adventure *Emblem, I*.



Ancestral Beings Lab Intro

(Performance Art)

(Director, Writer, Performer)

This is a document containing material for a performance piece first performed in 1995.

It adapts themes from my earlier work.

The links below lead to selected materials that have been and can be used to build different performances. Each reflects a different kind of performance developed with SBL:



Disimilitary Science Network Materials

(Performance Art)
(Director, Writer, Performer)



The Project Dyna Soar Investigation Materials

(Performance Art)
(Writer, Performer)



205, Stately Materials - The Case of Doug Walters

(Performance Art)
(Writer, Performer)



Anthropologist Franz Boas | Raven Dance | Early 20th Century

What We Were Told to Do, or Do Neurons Speak? [PDF Version]

For one who is not an academic anthropologist, it may be difficult to appreciate how this is a performance piece and how this can be called allegorical. It was written to fit into the genre of the job talk, to display my work and thought process at that time and to elicit discussion. Yet, it is also asking for the audience member to simply take part and go along with things he or she may not understand. The person must in some sense be satisfied to be like a dreamer for a while, and let me be a dream character. He or she is being asked to take a hiatus from the magical state of power he or she was there to enact, to engage in a series of ideas that did not involve living others. He or she needs to experience a certain sense of alienation involving the following:

Orientation – He or she needs, for a while, to live in a world made up of fluid persons, masquerading others, and he or she need not know this, rarely recognize this, and not be bothered by this,

Attention – He or she needs, for a while, to be highly distracted and absorbed,

Memory – He or she needs, for a while, to be have a spotty recent memory and engage in confabulation,

Intellectual Functions – He or she needs, for a while, to lack the ability *to engage* math, science, and reading,

Language and Stream of Talk – He or she needs, for a while, to engage in language with others that does not involve discussing decisions, and to just move with changes,

Mental Content – He or she needs, for a while, to experience of the world around him or her as visiomotor and not visual,

Insight and Judgment – He or she needs, for a while, to lack insight/self-motivation of what is going on around him or her,

Emotion – He or she needs, for a while, to have no separation of thoughts and feelings.

The result of this performance in California was, as one would expect, that many in the audience were either unwilling or unable to experience this sense of alienation, or both. Either way, this performance elicited a kind of oppressive symbolic power that hinders an expansion of knowledge and betrays the supposed, best mission of anthropology itself. They were doing what they were told to do, acting according to the letter and not the spirit of their academic **discipline**.



Ancestor Ball

Fetish Object | Paper, Threads and Plastic | 3cm in Diameter

Gabriel Embeha 1999 [2010]

Engineering Syncretic Beings: Fibrous Systems and the Orientation of Melanesian Science



Untitled

Photomontage

Gabriel Embeha 2015

BEYOND THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

(Notes on the Lived Mountains of Experience, Memory and Forgetting)

Gabriel Embeha

Maurice Leenhardt and Causality

In Maurice Leenhardt's early twentieth century anthropological work on New Caledonia called *Do Kamo* we find the striking and estranging notion that there was no opposition, no contradiction between the dead and the living, *nor* any notion of the animate or the inanimate. Furthermore, says Leenhardt, since there was no notion of animate or inanimate in New Caledonia "there cannot be a causal schema in the inanimate world." To illustrate this non-existence of both animate and inanimate causality Leenhardt writes that in New Caledonia: "A rock is thrown, but it is not the inanimate object which produces the bruise."

In addition to this fact that when a rock is thrown it was not the inanimate object which caused the bruise, it is equally true that the cause may not have been the person who threw it (i.e. his or her intentions), or his or her throw (measured in terms of force and so on.) In the case of injury or death in war, for example, the enemy was not the cause nor was the stone the cause but very often *something much greater*. This "something much

greater” was neither expressed in terms of inanimate things nor in terms of living persons and their intentions. Rather, it was expressed in terms of *logic, physics and ethics all running together as one to seek out and deal with the cause of the bruise as neither animate nor inanimate.*

What was being expressed in New Caledonia was *the move from one state to another through one kind of body causing change in another.* What we see when a rock is thrown and strikes a person is a physical tension of material contrasts changing, one affecting the other “in kind,” the result being *an imitation of one thing caused by another.* When Leenhardt says that in New Caledonia there was no opposition between the living and the dead, or the animate and the inanimate, he means that when those whom Europeans call “the living” caused other people or things to mime them *they were identical with the dead,* or when what Europeans called “the dead” caused other people or things to mime them *they were identical with the living.* Equally, when what Europeans called an “inanimate” rock struck what they called an “animate” arm and that arm ceased to function as a healthy moving part, that arm would to a greater degree imitate the rock and the rock to a greater degree imitate the arm. We could say, if you will and not so tongue in cheek, that the arm of the victim had become “stoned” and the rock had become “armed.”

Most important in determining of cause and effect in New Caledonia, however, was to understand that *there were no absolute opposites between things but only matters of degree or ratio of contrast.* Very seldom was such imitation total and permanent. Life in New Caledonia was a constantly shifting change in ratio and degree of imitation, between degrees of continuity and discontinuity, animate and inanimate, and these changes were wholly material and physical.

Above all else, the changes brought about when a rock was thrown and struck an arm were material and physical changes and not “phenomena” thereof. The bruise was not primarily a sign, symbol, or phenomena but rather an imitative cause in itself leading to other instances of imitation, to other forms of physical change, which Europeans may (and often do) describe and place in some order which is referred to as social, mental, linguistic, symbolic or semiotic.

In New Caledonian cosmology the physical and material were essentially imitative, standing as an imitative realm of *things in themselves* from which even language, symbolism, signification or thinking could not escape. The magical and the mythological, like the linguistic, were both *second order.* They were phenomena. All three were neither living individual nor living social causes in themselves *but rather descriptions/determinations relations thereof.*

Phenomenology and Causality

In contemporary social theory it is phenomenology that most appreciates and works with this insight into these objects of Leenhardt’s research. As anthropologist Thomas Csordas tells us in his contrast between phenomenological and semiotic thinking: “One need conclude neither that language is ‘about’ nothing other than itself, nor that language wholly constitutes experience, nor that language refers to experience that can be known in no other way.” Language, writes Csordas, is itself a modality of “being-in-the-world.” In phenomenological thought, as in Leenhardt’s ethnographic description, this modality of being-in-the-world that is language is neither the source of human experience nor does it represent human experience in total. In phenomenology, however, while language is

animate, causality is assigned to the realm of the inanimate and non-living. In Leenhardt's ethnography language is neither animate nor inanimate and causality could never be inanimate as there is no notion of inanimate causality.

It is in fact precisely on the issue of causality and the subordinate position it has been given in modern social thought by the followers of Edmund Husserl including phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty and Alfred Schutz, that one sees a stark contrast between the New Caledonian world, as Leenhardt describes it, and much contemporary social theory concerning the body. The material, physical body among the New Caledonians was not the material, physical body as it is variously understood in studies of magic and science. Magic and science are depicted and understood as symbolic or semiotic enterprises in which the actual causes of physical and material changes are less important than their meaning, their intention and the control thereof. Rather, in New Caledonia the material, physical body was regarded philosophically in a materialist fashion and scientifically through a science of physics, that is, regarded through *New Caledonian* materialist philosophy and physics. This materialist philosophy and physics, as Leenhardt depicts it, stands in particular contrast to phenomenology. In his book *Do Kamo* Leenhardt makes it quite clear that phenomenology is very helpful in moving towards, but essentially unable to grasp, this New Caledonian way of thought.

Considering both systems in terms of practice and "how they work," a contrast between New Caledonian and European materialist philosophy and physics is today quite premature. The relatively new area of science and technology studies has only in relatively recent years begun to explore the dominant European and sub-altern sides of this question in detail, and it has scarcely considered the Melanesian or other sides which continue to lie beyond the subaltern. In terms of phenomenology and "being-in-the-world," however, one can at least make the simple contrast between New Caledonian and European materialist philosophies that I am making here. *While phenomenology has an inanimate notion of causality and denies causality to animate things, New Caledonian philosophy has neither an inanimate nor animate notion of causality.*

Phenomenological Analysis and "Extra-Sub-Altern" Science

Perhaps one of the most important questions which Leenhardt's ethnography brings up is how the scientist and materialist philosopher subjectively engages in the world. Another prominent Melanesianist, Roger Keesing, strongly insists that the Kwaio he knew were forever practical to the point of almost never appearing to have a philosophy or interest in cosmological description. In his description of this aspect of Kwaio life Keesing suggests, as Leenhardt seems to as well in the case of the New Caledonians, that in contrast to how science and materialist cosmology are most often viewed from a European perspective, in Melanesia a certain philosophy and physics are practiced *in a subjective or personal fashion within the context of a human destiny and self-knowledge.*

But again, there is a difference between how something is viewed, talked-about, and how it is. If one is going to describe European physics or materialist philosophy as substantially different from that of Melanesia, one should have certain ethnographically empirical grounds upon which to base such claim. In putting causality in the realm of the inanimate, phenomenology has unfortunately and most often relied upon unfounded assumptions regarding European scientific practice.

The result of the phenomenological view of causality and its positioning in regards to the animate and inanimate within humanity is that it brings us very close to a point from

which we can much better understand such extra-sub-altern sciences and philosophies but then, at this very point, fails to allow or in any way encourage European understanding to follow through with an immanent critique of its own assumptions regarding the concepts and practices of life, death, the inanimate, animate, causality. What prevents phenomenological thought from following through with this extra-sub-altern critique is the very thing that gives it strength in its analyses of sub-altern and greater or lesser recognized European sciences and materialist philosophies. The problem here is not by any means the framework of, or the valuable critical enterprises working through the phenomenological view. Rather, the problem is a concept and practice at the heart of this view that can be solved toward the betterment of phenomenological theory. This problematic concept or practical way of regard is, ironically, best referred to as "the phenomenon."

Phenomenology Without the Phenomenon

Addressing this problem brought to us by extra-sub-altern sciences and materialist philosophies, I propose that the notion of "the phenomenon" be replaced with the concept and practice of "the ancestral" viewed from the perspective of imitation. This is a shift from the specific ways the dead, living, animate and inanimate have been regarded in European thought to a more general form of regard. The basic reason for this move came from my earlier work on traditional healing and masquerade in West Africa, later work on causality in the context of Alzheimer's disease, my interest in Melanesian ethnography, and my work with natural scientists in Europe.

Through the notion of the ancestral imitatively construed the great strengths of phenomenological theory in addressing the concepts and practices of sciences in dominant European and sub-altern contexts can be preserved while *at the same time* allowing ethnographies about and actions of extra-sub-alterns to aid in better understanding the differences and similarities between dominant and sub-altern science and philosophies.

The phenomenological approach prides itself, and rightly so, in its fundamentally human, sympathetic nature in approaching the world and its problems, including those brought by the misuse of materialist philosophy and the sciences. In phenomenology "the subject" is forever bound with his or her conceptualization of and practice within life. Meaning, in this regard, becomes the way in which the subject relates to cultural and the social powers. Through this study of meaning combined with a consciousness of his or her own engagement with it, the social researcher can better sympathize with the intricacies of envious or erotic magic and myth *within the subject and the social at the same time*.

By excluding causality, though, this sympathetic approach often loses sight of its own place within the world it describes. Put most basically, the questions "why me?" "why then and not another time?" "why this place and not that?" or "what am I to you?" and the wonder of a whole universe of possible causal combinations are answered in terms of experience, memory, and forgetting. Such questions, calling for a cause to be named, remain un-wondered, unexplained and excessively mourned.

It is here that the social scientist and materialist philosopher begins to bury life experiences under a lived mountain of experience, memory and forgetting. In pointing to the inadequacy of language to capture and convey this mountain of experience, memory and forgetting, he or she often denies the personal nature of his or her practice of science, materialism and writing. *In stressing the act and the will* and in denying the cause and

causality; in ultra-humanizing the human in the name of life, phenomena and their inevitable processing through abstract social and cultural categories, phenomenology denies the wonders of destiny and its transcendence of life and death. It also denies the ability of the individual as scientist or materialist philosopher to somehow divine and extract a nugget of gold from the mountain of life which it believes to be too immense or buried in eons of natural history.

Perhaps the greatest problem in denying causality is the weight it puts on the everyday. In phenomenology most all of life is the everyday, consisting of phenomena worked through categories that create experiences that grow with the mountain experience, memory and forgetting. But when phenomena are replaced with the ancestral imitatively construed, the everyday disappears and the mountains of experience, memory and forgetting appear to possibly be clouds on some unknown horizon.

Without categories and their use in processing phenomena to form experiences each experience is first a new experience that through the ancestral becomes recognized as old. Moving through the world we move through the ancestral all continually anew with much becoming recognized as old, *i.e. experienced as the ancestral*, as we go along. As we go along we imitate them and they us. Most of them we do not know and our recognition of them may only be a small bodily movement in this direction or that, like a step, a grasp, or making certain sound. Sometimes they manifest more strongly, causing us to imitate them in more powerful and enduring ways and, in turn, causing others to imitate us in more powerful and enduring ways, helping to heal us if ill, or to praise us or seek our help if ill or in need of knowledge. They are alive and dead as *we all* are alive and dead, they are animate and inanimate *as we are*, yet when they or we cause something we do so as both alive *and* dead, animate *and* inanimate and never simply as one or the other.

Non-Phenomenal Phenomenology and the Study of Science

Science and materialist philosophies are best viewed as studies of, descriptions of, or manipulations of the ancestral mimetically construed. We humans are best viewed as scientists and materialist philosophers of the ancestral, researching and experimenting with our destinies, miming the ancestral with a greater or lesser knowledge of our own will to power and the roles we play in various causes.



Oily Sinclair is a document containing material for a performance piece first performed in 1995.

It emerges from my time with a water spirit healer in the Niger Delta, near Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and weaves back through my own personal and family history.

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