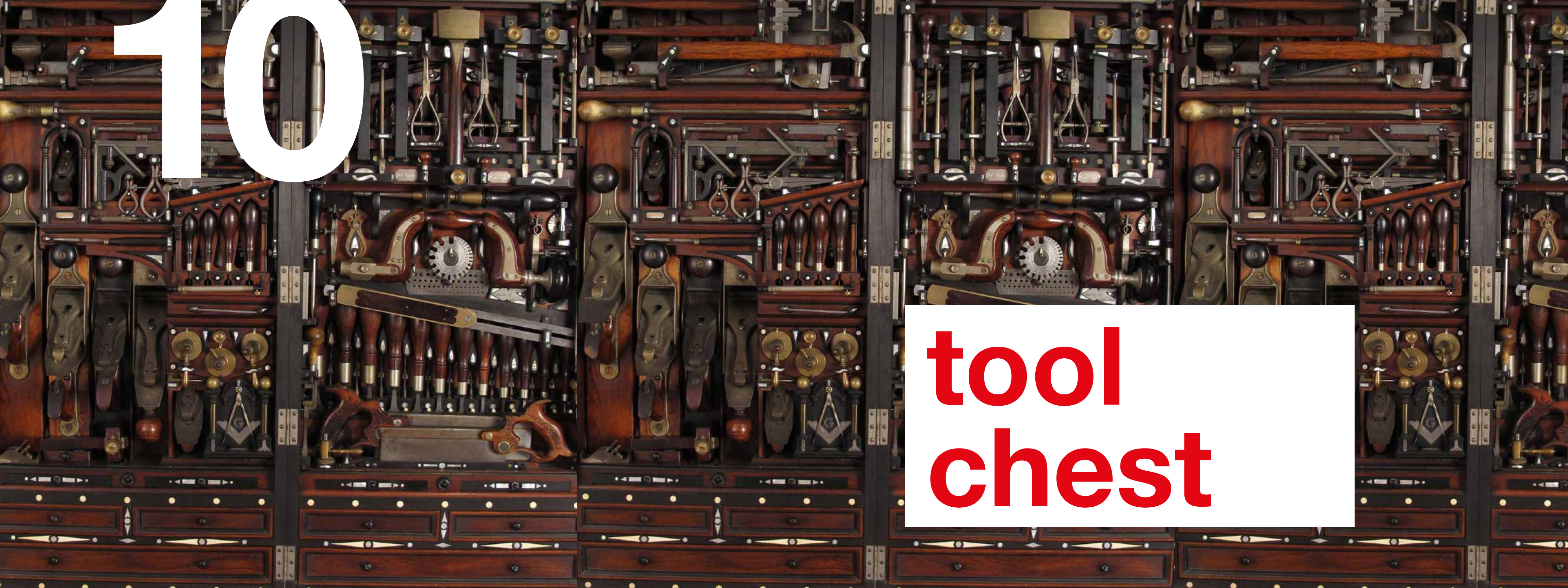
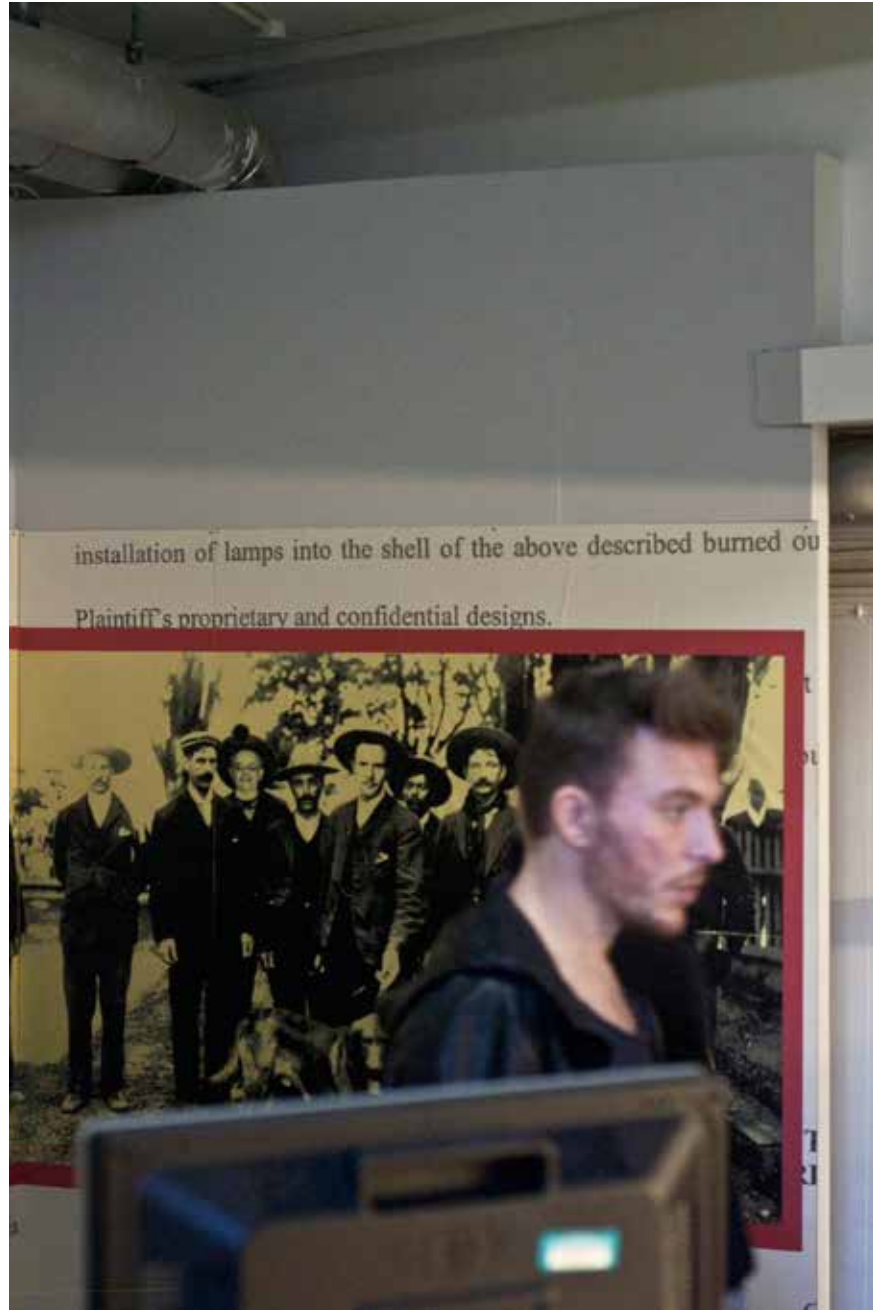


10

tool
chest





The St. Louis Posse was ballast couture, a flight jacket for a tera-perabyte world free-fall. Posse shows up in a line of agit prop assemblages, in the form of: documentaries, exhibitions, and lectures. The target for all was myth.

The first was "buildbetterbarrel." It was a documentary. "The Cartographer's Dilemma" next, an installation, then publication. "A Walk on the Digital Sublime" was a road-show exhibition. "Walk" triggered the documentary POSSE°S | PROTOCOLS | PERP°WALKS. It was agit-prop jacked up.

***buildbetterbarrel - nine events in new media** was a series of short vignettes that trace the media heritage and folklore of St. Louis, Missouri. Backdrops include Cahokia Mounds, the Chicago lakefront, the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts, and a street front media lab which was operating on September 11, 2001.

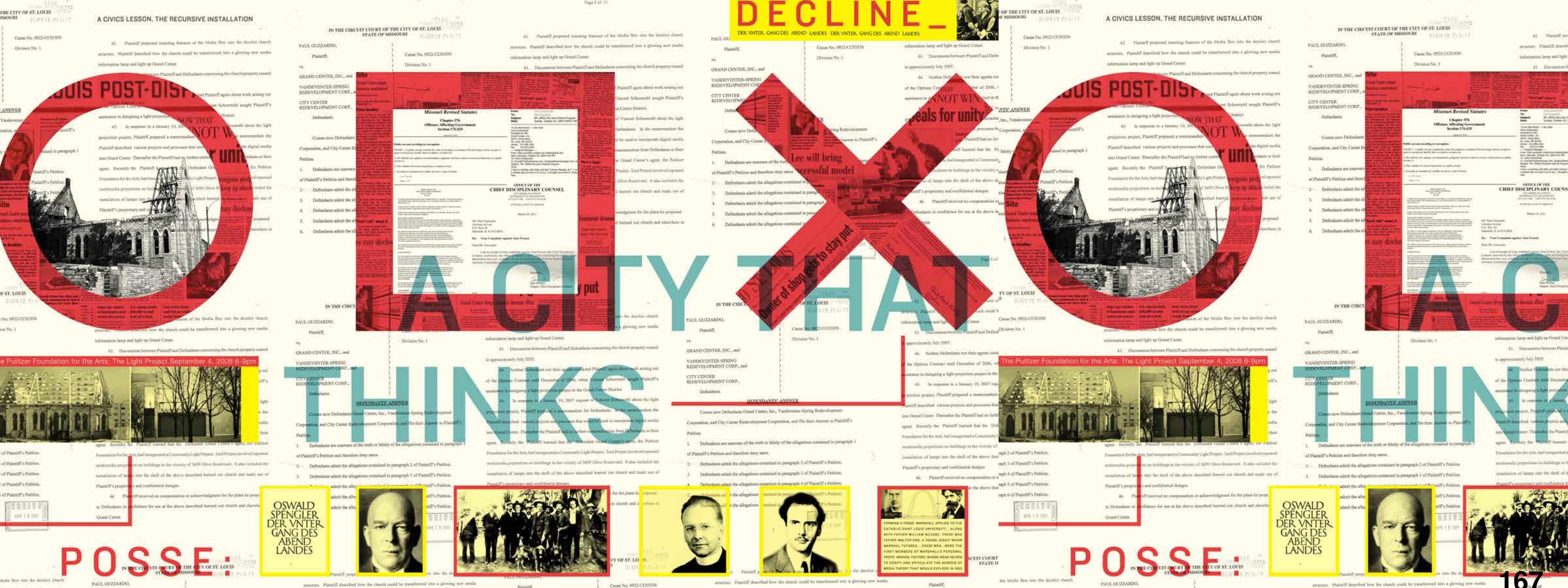
***The Cartographer's Dilemma** examined the digital fog of image and sound and how it affects our democratic public sphere and civic identity. It asks why existing noetic economies (knowledge systems) discourage the creation of a public sphere that promotes contest, collaborations and creativity.

***A Walk on the Digital Sublime** demonstrated two "recursive urbanism" protocols. The protocols are oppositional. One protocol uses the street as an evolving search engine, a tableau you drift through, synthesizing as you move. The other protocol uses the street as a beautiful girl or guy uses a conversation; they keep turning the conversation back on themselves.

***POSSE°S | PROTOCOLS | PERP°WALKS** tracked how a bogus idea of community provoked a lawsuit, and how a St. Louis elite forfeited and obliterated McLuhan's United States legacy, and then snagged a White House award while doing it.

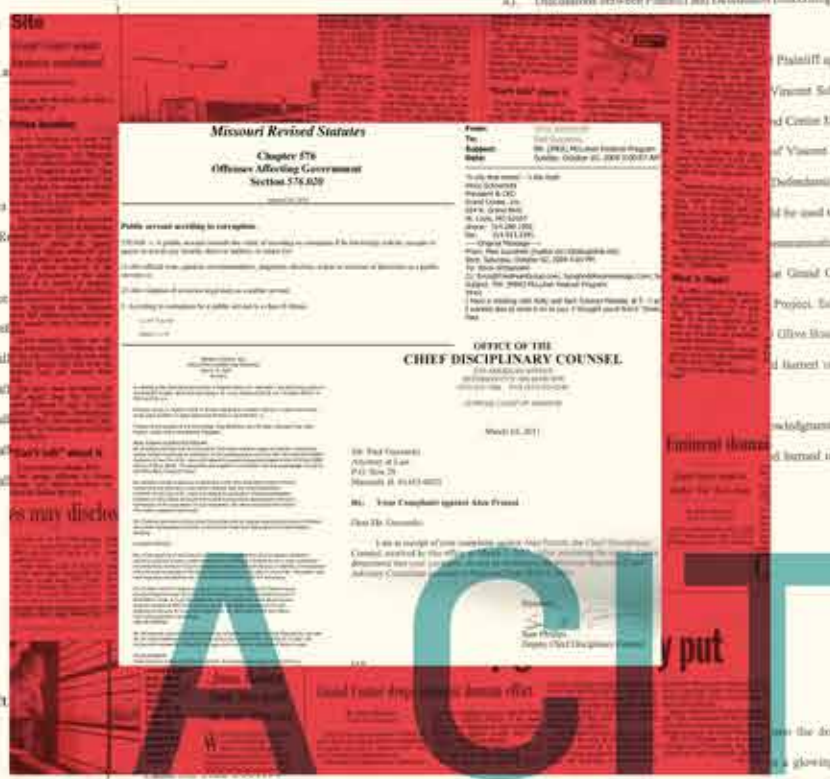
* the above blurbs were used in various promotional copy.



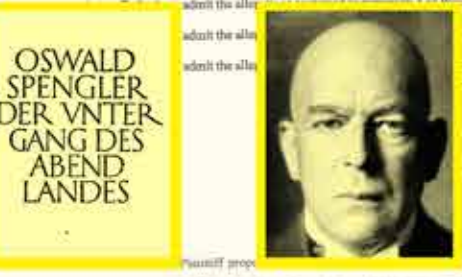


DECLINE

DER VINTER, GANG DES ABEND LANDES DER VINTER, GANG DES ABEND LANDES



THINKS



POSSE:

POSSE:

A Walk on the Digital Sublime



"A Walk on the Digital Sublime" bores into a St. Louis Missouri urban design praxis. The praxis _recursive urbanism_ uses the street as: 1) an evolving search engine, a tableau you drift through, synthesizing as you move, 2) a platform to assemble networks to critique the network, and 3) a probe into how digital kit edits-us. Videos and accompanying graphics frame a struggle of getting onto the street, and manning way-stations to navigate through a digital fog. This streetscape praxis is now snared in litigation in St. Louis. St. Louis is where Marshal McLuhan did foundational media work. McLuhan anguished that the "privileged diet for the elite" would thwart art as radar. "A Walk on the Digital Sublime" tracks how a bogus idea of community provoked a lawsuit, and why a St. Louis elite decided to forfeit and obliterate McLuhan's St. Louis legacy. And do it in time to celebrate his 2011 Centennial.

Paul Guzzardo

Fellow at the Geddes Institute for Urban Research

www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/fellows.htm

Connected Communities Symposium/Installation

Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

12th-14th September 2011



Graphic: Jesse Thomas Codling



United We Act: A scoping study and a symposium on connected communities. 12-14 September 2011, Culture Lab Newcastle, UK

University of Dundee, Dalhousie (Paul Guzzardo)



POSSE°S I PROTOCOLS I PERP°WALKS

From Paul Guzzardo 1 year ago | NOT YET RATED

POSSE°S I PROTOCOLS I PERP°WALKS documents "a walk on the digital sublime"
"a walk on the digital sublime" was a line of 2011 exhibitions and lectures
venues were england, scotland, northern ireland, and the united states
pros included videos and graphic tableaus
"the walk series" bored into a st. louis missouri new media - urban design protocol
a protocol is a recipe, this recipe was for the street as:

- 1 an evolving search engine
- 2 a tableau you drit through, synthesizing as you move
- 3 a platform to assemble networks to critique the network
- 4 a probe into how digital kit edits-us.

but the st. louis street was contested
and the protocol got caught in a street fight, it got snared in litigation
media guru marshall mcLuhan knew the st. louis street
he did his foundational work in st. louis, not canada
mcLuhan got himself a posse in st. louis
the posse did early code
they did radar
mcLuhan anguished that the "privileged diet of the elite" would thwart art as radar.
POSSE°S I PROTOCOLS I PERP°WALKS proves him right
the montage that follows tracks how a bogus idea of community provoked a lawsuit
and how a st. louis elite forfeited and obliterated mcLuhan's united states legacy
and then snagged a white house award while doing it

paul guzzardo
jesse codling

- Settings
- + Add to...
- Stats
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multimedia projects on buildings in the vicinity of 2007
installation of lanterns into the shell of the above described b
Plaintiff's proprietary and confidential designs.
46. Plaintiff received no compensation or acknowl
to Defendants in confidence for use at the above described b
Grand Center.
By
POSSE
IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE CITY
STATE OF MISSOURI

buildbetterbarrel



nine events in new media.



no.123456789
A: a gift from a mr] gutenberg.



the one with the big hat.



no.123456789

buildbetterbarrel - nine events in new media

buildbetterbarrel is a road movie.
it's a chain of short vignettes.
segments map a new media storyline
backdrops include:
cahokia mounds
a gamers' lounge
the chicago lakefront
the pulitzer foundation for the arts
a st. louis street front media lab

in this road movie we meet:
two suits and a trickster
mounds and mississippians
catholic boys and a bible press
and we run into an eskimo,
the one who started it rolling,
Nanook

planted too much corn.
no.123456789



no.123456789



i am not sleeping well,
these days.



buildbetterbarrel
the WORLD
123456789
weHAVEnow.

no.123456789

no.12345678



buildbetterbarrel

wood
stone
bronze



bbb segment 1

Edgar Allan Poe wrote a story about a whirlpool. He called it "A Descent into the Maelstrom." It was about a sailor in a small boat that was sucked into a gigantic whirlpool. With all hope lost the sailor watched the currents, the vortex. He saw that some objects didn't fall, but were whirled up to the level of the sea. By studying the whirlpool, and by cooperating with it, the sailor makes good his escape. But he didn't do alone; he did it with the help of a barrel. The sailor tied himself to the barrel, and then he threw himself into the Maelstrom. And around, and around they went, but in time the barrel and the sailor rose to the surface. He was saved.

All his life Marshal McLuhan was obsessed by Edgar Allan Poe's "A Descent into the Maelstrom." For McLuhan the maelstrom was a metaphor, a symbol for all the mechanical, technological forces that overpower us, sweep us away: the press, radio, movies, advertising, all around and everywhere, going, whirling faster, faster. McLuhan saw these things as the things that drown us. They empty us out. They leave us hollow. And this maelstrom is now the place where we find ourselves; it's home. We need the barrel as the way out, to stay whole, the barrel as a new platform.

bbb segment 2

Marshall McLuhan got here in a round about way, Manitoba, Canada, Cambridge, England, Madison, Wisconsin. Here is Saint Louis University a Jesuit school. It was more direct for Walter Ong. He came from Kansas City. Ong entered the Jesuit novitiate in 1935. Two years later he was in St. Louis. That's when the collar came under the tutorage of a trickster, McLuhan.

This was in the thirties when Saint Louis University was next door to a razzle-dazzle vaudeville district, a Midwestern Great White Way. Right out the school door was a line of theaters. Vaudeville, the entertainment channel for men, woman and children, at a time when there was only one channel.

When Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan showed up Vaudeville was fading, but there were still a lot of empty seats out there, empty seats, hungry eyes and hungry ears.

They sensed it first. They sensed it changing. The old and the new colliding, speeding up. McLuhan and Ong saw it coming, saw it before almost anyone else. What they saw was a coming wave, another place, another dimension, a place below, between, above. It was electronic. It's what we call new media. And they were the first ones to hear it. It was McLuhan who sent Walter on a quest, a quest to go back, go back five hundred years to the beginning.

Find out what happened to our heads, our minds, as a result of that other wave, that printing contraption. Find out what was the upshot of that gift by a Mr. Gutenberg, that bible press. This quest took Walter Ong to obscure libraries and stale archives in France, the Low Countries, and the English Isles. A decade long hunt in search of a grail.

Okay, no Dan Brown or Indian Jones story line here. What came out of this quest were books, books about books. They both wrote books, books on how we see, how we hear, and how we know, books about the interconnectedness of it all, about the faint line separating today from yesterday. And what they wrote began to chip away at the idea of books. And they started writing as the ground began to shift, when print and pictures began to bounce, really bounce, when solids became soft, and when Baker met Winchell and Hoover.

It was here, next door to those leave-taking vaudevillians, that McLuhan started his first book, a book about the sights, and the sounds of our razzle-dazzle popular culture, "the bride of razzle-dazzle."

He called it ***The Mechanical Bride***.



Segment 3 - Mound

The Stork Club wasn't the first media platform in the lower 48. This is it. And this ain't East 53rd Street in Manhattan. This is where our remix artist Baker hails from. It's on the eastern rim of the American Bottoms. This platform is a mound, Monk's Mounds, World Heritage site 1.9.8. It's made of clay, sand, mud and more mud. It goes back a thousand years. It was at the center of the greatest city north of the Rio Grand, for that matter the only city north of the Rio Grand, Cahokia. Once upon a time Cahokia had a population of almost 20,000 people. Cahokia was home to the Mississippian people, and home to over 120 mounds. The mound I'm standing on, named after a group of monks who lived near by, was the biggest and the best of all the mounds. This was, and is, the largest ever man-made earthen plaza. With a series of terraces, a base of 1,000 feet by 800, and over 100 feet high, this was their Media Platform. Mound and myth came together on this platform. This is where the high priests, the 10th century guys in suits, ran it all, and ran it into the ground. This is all that's left of the Mississippian people. Their communications system broke down – and not just a little – but all the way – a spectacular failure- a media collapse, and one that led to ecological misstep after misstep. Planted too much corn – all in the wrong places – dammed up the wrong creeks, then tried to open them up: result flood, fires, nasty, nasty things. What happened? Why? Priests, the guys in suits, suits without cuffs, the ones in charge of central mud planning just couldn't quite get it together. It was their job to talk to the guy/gal or the guys/gals up there in the clouds – polytheism was then the rage. Then talk to and to listen to the people down there, and then back and forth, and then up and down. This was how a media platform from our preliterate past was supposed to work: a communication node on top of a big mud pile. But those guys maybe just stayed up here a little too long, here in the Midwest's first gated community. Didn't look down, didn't listen, and when they did it, was too late. The Mississippian's myth cracked. It was a spectacular media collapse.

So this is the place where our remix trickster came from, a place with an old media platform history. But I suspect you might be asking what does a story about the disappearance of people who couldn't read or write, whose only media tool was their windpipe, have to do with Winchell, Hoover, Baker, and more importantly us today.

And for that we have to fast forward a few hundred years and ten miles to the west, to mid town St Louis, and to two good Catholic boys, one with a collar and one with a smirk



The buildbetterbarrel segment Mound gave rise to the article "Is There a Digital Future Landscape Terrain?" by Lorens Holm and Paul Guzzardo. It was published in AD Landscape Architecture Site/Non-Site, with Michael Spens, editor. Spens's Text Follows:

Lorens Holm and Paul Guzzardo speculate on a future landscape enriched by digital culture. Rather than provide sanctuary or comfort zones in the event of global environmental collapse, laser\net is a model for exploring landscape terrains that establish 'agora'-like meeting places as a basis for electronic exchange and progression. Re-mix platforms thus become collaborative sites for all who seek to engage in this rurality. Architecture Site/Non-Site.

...Lorens Holm and Paul Guzzardo assess the potential for a digitalisation and reformulation of the site/non-site parameters in the prevailing urban/rural scenario. They use the metaphor of the Mississippian lost or abandoned city of Cahokin, seen like a laser\net narrative creation for today. The consequent focus on the defoliation of rural cultures and global warming epitomises, to the authors, a 'style' of today, and accepts the end-result possibility of environmental death. Holm and Guzzardo anticipate a 'digital future landscape terrain', utilising laser/net technology, as a synthesis for a new awareness. Technology is harnessed to good effect, to protect and reformulate landscape ecologies.

Michael Spens: Site/Non-Site, Extending the Parameters in Contemporary Landscape.



and city. The narratives by which we fix ourselves within the coordinates of our desire are different.

'Hmmm, I think I'll pave a few more acres today. I think I'll drive a few more species to extinction.' But we do it anyway. It



not therefore about averting disaster by reversing the path of unsustainable development (it is, after all, our market

use. Without aestheticising them. Make the networks readable so that we can insert our stories into them, and so make them

buildbetterbarrel

bbb coda

The Mechanical Bride was Marshall McLuhan's first book. Edgar Allan Poe and a barrel open it. McLuhan started the draft of the book shortly after coming to St. Louis. That was almost seventy years ago. It was when he had an office ten miles from the Big Cahokia Mound, an office by that vaudeville district. He was working on his book when he sent Walter Ong off to distant lands in search of things not quite remembered nor understood. It started here. Both men are gone. Father Walter Ong recently died. It was after a long life of trying to understand how an old tool - print technology - changed us as human beings, and how we're being changed again by this swarm of electronic digital bits, the new maelstrom. Seventy years later the Mound of Mud is still around, and it marks the first collapse. The razzle-dazzle of that vaudeville district is gone, replaced by art-museums, a symphony hall and art galleries, platforms for something. Recently I projected *The Mechanical Bride* on a museum just a couple of blocks from where these Catholic boys first met. The platform was the Pulitzer Foundation. And this platform had the right mix of lime and sand. It was concrete. That evening the two Catholic sages were joined by two rough guys from the club world. McLuhan, Ong, Winchell and Hoover were the players at the time when things began to change, the brilliant thinkers who saw it first happening, and the pair who started it rolling, faster. But they weren't alone that night. The remix artist was there, Baker, the trickster who danced in the maelstrom. **And maybe that's all the barrel is, a platform for tricksters to dance in the maelstrom.**



bbb critiques

CONNECTIONS

[MedlaLit moments](#)

[Consortium for Media Literacy- Volume No. 64](#)

Recently, images of Ferguson, MO. have dominated the news, and these images are inevitably associated with public perceptions of St. Louis. Yet at the same time, St. Louis has been the focus of experiments in what it means to be a “mediated city,” as all cities are. For over two decades, Paul Guzzardo, media artist, lawyer, and activist, has made it his life's work to re-shape the social and media landscape of Saint Louis. One of the recurrent themes in his projects is the dilemma audiences face when they attempt to extract meaning from the constant stream of digital media to which they are exposed. In a semi-feature-length video titled “buildbetterbarrel.”

Guzzardo recounts one of the original ‘media literacy moments’ in Marshall McLuhan's first book, *The Mechanical Bride*. The book opens with a re-telling of Edgar Allan Poe's “Descent into the Maelstrom,” a story in which a sailor is quickly sucked into a whirlpool, clings to a barrel, and is vomited back out of the abyss.

Like many artists, Guzzardo is not ready to make all things intelligible to his audience, but lessons in media literacy can still be drawn from his work. For example, the “window” segment of “buildbetterbarrel” showcases new media art produced by Guzzardo and his colleagues which provide clear opportunities for navigating the maelstrom through public re-construction of memory. In this segment, digital remix artist Alan Brunnett comments on the short but productive career of Media ARTS lab in Saint Louis, which occupied a downtown storefront lobby from 1999 to the end of 2001. A large array of video screens was mounted in the windows, and the virtual jockeys (VJs) on duty produced and displayed thousands of digital media images--images grabbed from the Internet, remix works, surveillance-as-spectacle webcam videos of people in the vicinity of the storefront, messages about digital media (e.g., “How will the digital agora change the way we interact?”), and images of people from far corners of the globe, especially on New Year's Eve, 2000. In the days after 9-11, MediaARTS displayed huge memento mori of the attacks--images from ground zero, the list of victims' names, transcripts of their final phone calls. Many gathered at the corner of Tucker and Washington to watch.

A powerful media literacy lesson is implicit in the work of MedaARTS: the public, which can be so hard to define, can take the immediacy of the real through acts of witness. As Stephen Coleman and Karen Ross write in *The Media and the Public*, “It is impossible to live in the globalized world without depending upon events, information, and expertise which originate from far away.

[Machina Memorialis](#)

[A commonplace blog](#)

[John Paul Walter](#)

.....Edgar Allan Poe's short story, “The Descent into the Maelstrom,” which so captured McLuhan's own imagination: The vortices that can form in turbulent water are a familiar sight. Edgar Allan Poe described just such a whirlpool in his short story “A Descent into a Maelstrom” which he published in 1841: “The edge of the whirl was represented by a broad belt of gleaming spray; but no particle of this slipped into the mouth of the terrific funnel...” In this passage, Poe describes one of the crucial features of these rotating bodies of fluid: that they can be thought of as coherent islands in an incoherent flow. As such, they are essentially independent of their environment, surrounded by a seemingly impenetrable boundary and with little, if any, of the fluid inside them leaking out. If you're thinking that this description has a passing resemblance to a black hole, you'd be right. Haller and Beron-Vera put this similarity on a formal footing by describing the behaviour of vortices in turbulent fluids using the same mathematics that describe black holes. While McLuhan first makes use of Poe's “A Descent into a Maelstrom” in the Preface to *The Mechanical Bride*, he returns to it time and again throughout his writings and lectures.¹ Based on this MIT article, I'm now thinking about what McLuhan doesn't pay attention to in Poe's story, that is the description of the broad belt, what the MIT article calls “coherent islands in an incoherent flow.” What might the media/environmental equivalent of this belt of “coherent islands in an incoherent flow” be? Or is it even relevant because McLuhan clearly positions us within the maelstrom, inside the black hole, and, therefore, beyond the belt?

1. As can be seen in the image above, on pages 150-51 of *The Medium Is the Message*, McLuhan and Foire juxtapose an image of the surfing business man with McLuhan's claim that Poe's story “The Descent into the Maelstrom” can serve as “a possible stratagem for understanding our predicament, our electrically- configured whirl.” For more context on McLuhan's use of Poe's story, see this segment from Kevin McMahon's documentary *McLuhan's Wake* and “Lobby” and “Chapel” from Paul Guzzardo's “BuildBetterBarrel,” a series of nine new media events that takes its name from McLuhan's use of Poe's story.

that's all the barrel is, a platform for tricksters to dance in the maelstrom. and maybe that's all the barrel is,

