

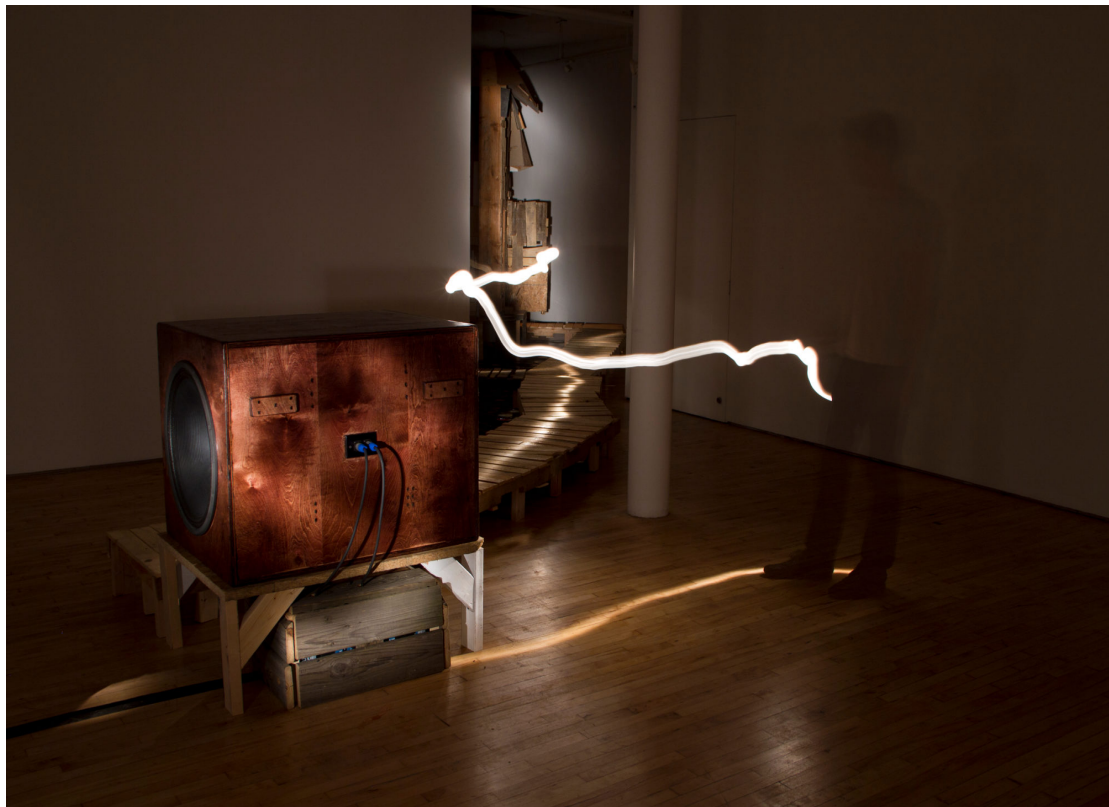


ENVIRONMENT, SOUND, THEORY

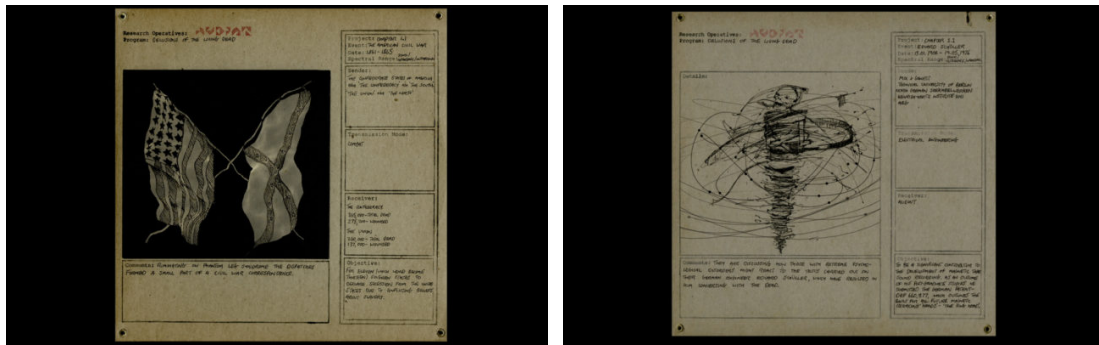
Published: 16/08/2017 | Views: 202 | c 0

## Dread Bass – AUDINT’s alternate timelines reverberate with fear and death

written by **Greg J. Smith**



*AUDINT is a European artist collective working across animation, installation, and publishing. While spaces and films designed by them have been featured at prominent venues including Tate Britain, Unsound Festival, and during MUTEK Montreal, their work is esoteric in both how it is presented and the ideas it propagates. In early 2017 CAN began a dialogue with the AUDINT team (Toby Heys, Steve Goodman, Souzanna Zamfe, Eleni Ikoniadou, and Patrick Defasten) and a funny thing happened, rather than discuss their practice in the usual ‘soundbite friendly making-of vernacular’ we usually get from artists, they replied from the fictional space their practice inhabits. This post is built around excerpts pulled from our exchange with the collective about the dystopian future-present and the nether zones that can be conjured through sound and vibration.*



↑ Putting the 'crypt' in cryptography: *Delusions of the Living Dead* tells its morbid tale of WW2 subterfuge via a series of reports and documents.

Not exactly a record label, and definitely outside traditional scholarly research, AUDINT's *modus operandi* is an enigma. "The research cell currently consists of Toby Heys, Steve Goodman (aka Kode9), Souzanna Zamfe, Eleni Ikoniadou and Patrick Defasten," they write via Google Docs. With expertise spanning future studies, cultural theory, and motion graphics the group is eclectic in their specializations. "The five have been individually drafted to the research cell due to their specific outputs at various moments since 2009, by an artificial intelligence called IREX<sup>2</sup>."

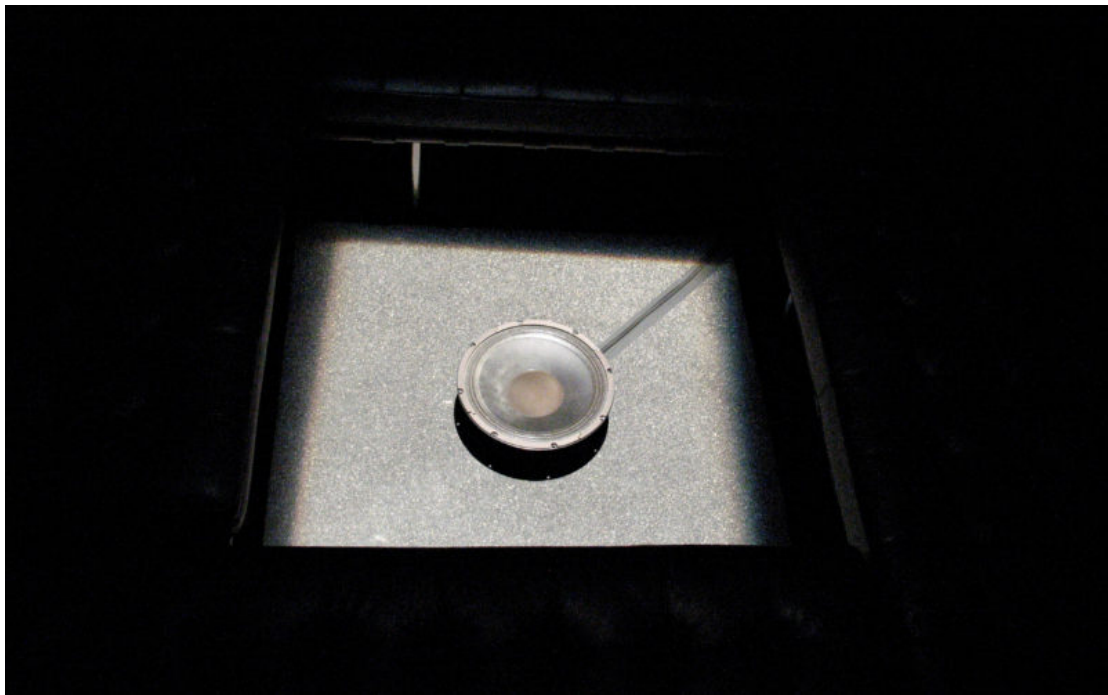
"Vibration has played a key role in military and scientific research, as well as in cultural production, due to its capacity not only to connect but to converge and deterritorialise the realms of the living and the dead."

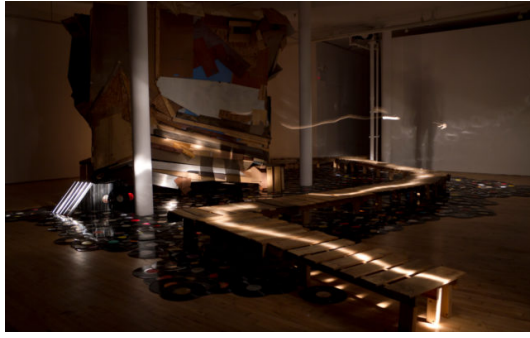


Woven into – and through – AUDINT's practice is an elaborate transmedia mythology that maps an alternate present that dates back to research conducted by three ex-members of the Ghost Army, a WWII-era 'tactical deception unit' that famously used inflatable tanks and fake radio transmissions in an elaborate disinformation campaign against Axis forces. "In recent years, AUDINT's research has focused intensely on the phenomenon of vibration. Ever since the invention of recording technologies such as the phonograph and telephone, vibration has played a key role in military and scientific research, as well as in cultural production, due to its capacity not only to connect but to converge and deterritorialise the realms of the living and the dead."

Perhaps best place to descend into AUDINT's narrative is probably *Martial Hauntology*, the inaugural release on the collective's eponymous imprint. A multimedia bundle – a triple gatefold package with 180gm vinyl 12" containing a pair of extended radio drama-like narratives, a 112-page book, and six colour prints – it chronicles an expedition to vinyl recycling plants in contemporary South China and an espionage game of cat-and-mouse during WWII. The latter of those narratives is also a short film, and both works have also been further fleshed-out in several installation contexts – the iteration is dizzying, for sure. *Delusions of the Living Dead's* narrative chronicles a plot to obtain the notebooks of nineteenth-century neurologist Jules Cotard, discoverer of Cotard delusion – a rare mental illness where a person believes they are already dead or have lost their blood or internal organs – a body horror affliction that you can file neatly alongside phantom limb syndrome.

That AUDINT find their muse in what Cotard called *Le délire des négations* (the delirium of negation) is telling. And with some irony this twisting tale of death and deceit is narrated by the butter-smooth voice of Jessica Edwards (aka Ms. Haptic), which heightens its morbid strangeness. Told via a sequence of dog-eared, yellowing archival documents and illustrated spatial diagrams, one particular interlude of bleepy distorted modem-like sound design reveals the underlying air of officiousness. This is knowledge work – delivered memorandum style – and told with the same icy professionalism of William Burroughs filing reports from the Interzone. The AUDINT team downplays questions about any such strategy, dryly noting “the current staff were merely tasked with assembling, cataloguing and disseminating entries from the Dead Record Archive, an accreting array of technological patents, books, recordings, events, films and personnel who have participated, one way or another, in the construction of autonomous vibrational agencies.”



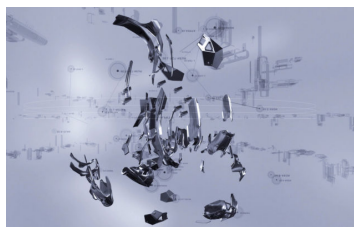
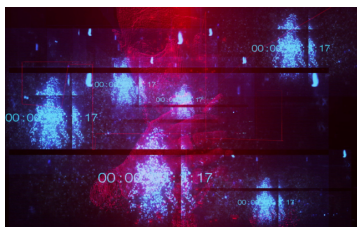


↑ AUDINT installations at the Berlin Academy of Art in 2009 (top), Brooklyn's Art in General in 2011 (lower left), and Sónar Istanbul this past spring.

So there is AUDINT via sound and/or moving image, but how do their works play out spatially? In one exchange the collective described their recent works as “an investigation of deceptive frequency-based strategies, technologies, and programs developed by military organizations to orchestrate the phenomena of tactical haunting within areas of conflict.” The operative phrase there is tactical haunting – that’s exactly what their installations achieve. The recent *AUDinst019: Upload=Delphic Panaceas* deployed smell (cedar chips), taste (miracle fruit – which reverses the polarity of the taste buds), and touch (SubPac bass rumble vests) to augment various fragments from their AV archives. Presented at Sónar Istanbul this past spring, the installation harnesses unconventional means and mediums – “transmodal affective environments,” in the collective’s nomenclature. The earlier *Dead Record Office* (above lower left image) deployed some of the same material in situ within kind of a ‘record store graveyard’ for their sprawling dead media collection.

While the fixation on haunting and the undead seems grim, AUDINT’s linking of these phenomena with vibration is not unfounded or entirely outside rational scientific or technological pursuits; they point to the attempts to leverage the early phonograph and telephone as ‘a connect’ to the afterlife, and the possible link between inaudible (but very tangible) infrasound and ghost sightings. In their eyes, they are merely continuing along a path forged by others. They don’t think this pursuit is singular and point to recent big stage holographic endeavors that resonate quite nicely with their interests. “...themes of hauntology have inflected the musical zeitgeist over the last decade, resonating with the notion of a general cultural malaise and a reinvestment in traces of lost futures inhabiting the present. Moreover, this generalized culture of the undead has already spawned a lazarian economy based on digitally re-vivified dead young African American musicians as laser-lit holograms: Tupac, ODB, and Eazy-E.”





↑ Scanning, darkly: AUDINT's recent film trailer *GHOSTCODE* teases a very dystopian reading of the second half of the twenty-first century.

If *Delusions of the Living Dead* reframes the world by cultivating nefarious cross-connections throughout history the more recent AUDINT project project *GHOSTCODE* turns its gaze forward. An eight-minute trailer for the work was presented alongside the aforementioned Sónar Istanbul installation and its narrative will be expanded on in a forthcoming book *From AI to IA: The Holo Wars*. Set in 2056, it explains an increasingly disturbing series of events that cascade out of 'the HOLO Accords,' a response to political upheaval imposed on the world by the competing 'corpo-nations' that have eclipsed sovereign nations and rule with an iron fist. Picking up on the, in their parlance, "rapperition" kitsch showbiz appropriation of black corporeality by way of the Pepper's Ghost trick in recent years, they imagine a hologram-based consumer home entertainment-hedonism-sexbot milieu that spills into law enforcement and international relations. Things get weird and posthuman quickly, and the *Sprawl* trilogy, *Existenz*, and *Ghost in the Shell* references drop freely – but this is no genre film, it's too deep and dark to be derivative. Like their earlier works its density envelops the viewer, but this time the dowdy tattered documents and piles of broken records have been traded in for a decidedly post-digital neon glow. After multiple viewings of the (currently under lock and key) trailer, we wondered about how AUDINT used timelines as material across their practice; did the same strategies they've used to remix the past work when speculating about the future?, we asked. "Confronting the infinite labyrinth of our extended archive, it soon became clear that temporality loses its linear connotations, but is constantly redistributed into packages that reassemble as unidentified vibrational intelligences," was their reply. Indeed that response is Vantablack-calibre opaque, but it does encapsulate their practice nicely: complex, permutational, and vibrating in synchronization with dark unseen forces.

While their physical media is scarcely distributed, their installations and screenings are ephemeral, and their practice demands close attention to parse, AUDINT offer a pretty captivating model for an interdisciplinary speculative design practice: their output has more in common with Chris Marker's video essays, Drexciya's aqua-mythology, or Kodwo Eshun's sonic fiction than scenarios crafted by Dunne & Raby or Superflux. Do the work to find or access their projects and surrender your attention to the dour bleakness – but don't say we didn't warn you.

AUDINT | Toby Heys + Steve Goodman + Souzanna Zamfe + Eleni Ikoniadou + Patrick Defasten

