



Operation: Human Intelligence

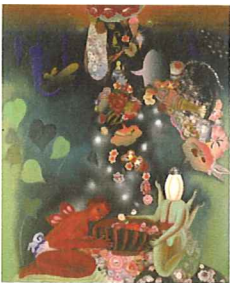
**Special Report
SR-03-2079C
The New Strategic Plan**

Overview

As the Agency has now ascertained, recent failures in the area of human intelligence have forced it to review and re-organize its operational strategies. Specific failings were cited in the area of counter-intelligence (See SR-01-10449 Sections A-D) and have thus led to numerous investigations into this area of the agency (See SP-02-1204 Appendix A and SP 02-10552). After many months of internal analysis and external research the CIA has now put in place several new strategies to allow its counter-intelligence wing to redefine itself as it moves into an ever-uncertain future. Most of the new strategies will continue covert operations in order to maintain the necessary invisibility mandated by counter-intelligence operations. These strategies will not appear to differ from previous work in this field except to those directly engaged in specific plans and operations. Another aspect of the recent restructuring that will bring a new look to the Agency is the formation of public events, presented as exhibits of contemporary art, in order to provide a public platform for our content. This will serve the dual purpose of informing covert operational cells of plans for future operations while also offering a public presence for an institution that has long been misunderstood by the communities it serves.

Operation: Human Intelligence is the first such public art exhibit. The CIA is proud to work with the Contemporary Arts Council and the Hyde Park Art Center, both prestigious arts presenters in the Chicago area, as it breaks new ground as an institution and opens new perspectives for our counter-intelligence work.

As always, the CIA is challenged to locate and analyze anything that might yield meaningful intelligence, that is, any information that can be used to benefit the Agency, our operatives, or the Intelligence Industry as a whole. Variables include not only what is being communicated but who is communicating to whom, what language is being used, and what



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medium or delivery system is being employed. Nuances in each of these can reveal what covert messages, if any, are being carried along with overt communications.

Subsequent to internal restructuring new strategies now include the reevaluation of how the intelligence and counter-intelligence disciplines operate within the CIA as well as how effectively they interface with other agencies and institutions. As demographics, geographies, and media change, so must the intelligence strategies for collecting and analyzing communication. The challenge of today's Intelligence Industry is to stay ahead of these ever-shifting variables. In order to attain this the Agency will continue to rely on new technologies as well as public strategies like **Operation: Human Intelligence**. By combining these efforts, we believe the Agency will be stronger and more properly equipped to address our responsibilities and serve the American public.



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Background

Under the new CIA agenda the counter-intelligence branch of the Agency will continue to devote itself to the protection of pre-existing intelligence. Our protections are actualized in numerous ways. Counter-intelligence *is* involved in the creation and acquisition of information although this information is not necessarily intelligence, per se. Counter-Intelligence operatives *do* generate information in all forms of communication that are intended to appear as authentic intelligence. Creating distractions, interference, and false leads are as much a part of the counter-intelligence agenda as are espionage and encryption. What counter-intelligence reveals is always interesting, albeit not necessarily meaningful, that is, the communication it generates sometimes includes meaningful content and

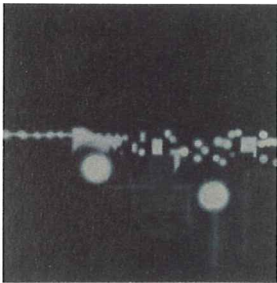
sometimes only serves as distraction. The more believable the distraction the more effective and interesting it becomes. Counter-intelligence is essential in our media-saturated world, but only for its form, not its content. Within the Agency real content is the work of the intelligence branch, everything else is under the auspices of counter-intelligence.

There do exist art world parallels to the relationships between form and content on the one hand, and intelligence and counter-intelligence on the other. The CIA aims to exploit these parallels in **Operation: Human Intelligence** by displaying recent art that appears as encrypted information or interference, i.e. counter-intelligence. As is evident in previous Agency memoranda, specific art world trends can be seen as early as 1943 when American artists and art critics were debating whether abstract art actually contained any content. The debate can be summed up in a quote collected from a letter written by the American abstract painters Adolph Gottlieb and Mark Rothko as a response to a review written by the *New York Times* art critic Edward Allen Jewell. The June 13, 1943 letter states that, "There is no such thing as a good painting about nothing" and thus aims to establish abstract painting as meaningful communication in the vein of all intelligence.

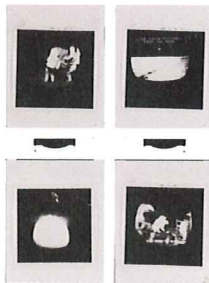
Reacting to the statement by Rothko and Gottlieb, fellow American abstract painter Ad Reinhardt declared in 1960, "There is no such thing as a good painting about something" thus articulating the possibility that abstract painting—and many other forms of contemporaneous art with it – might indeed include no content. Analysts within the Agency view these events as applicable to the distinctions between intelligence and counter-intelligence and have organized **Operation: Human Intelligence** around such themes. Counter-intelligence-as-art is a way to understand many recent works of art and many of the works in this current exhibit.



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While **Operation: Human Intelligence** reflects a new venture into the realm of overt public action by the CIA it is not the first time the Agency and the art world have worked together. In the aftermath of World War II, American artists and critics were arguing for the significance of recent American art while European nations were assessing collateral damage and debating whether to rebuild toward the free market democracy proffered by the United States or the communist Marxism of the Soviet Union. One of the keys to swaying Europeans away from the Soviets and embracing the American model was the informational and cultural arm of the Marshall Plan that included more than merely an economic stimulus for the people of Europe. Our American propaganda was based largely on the writings of art critic Clement Greenberg and the Museum of Modern Art director Alfred Barr. Under the Marshall Plan exhibits of American abstract paintings were sent to the cultural centers of Europe in an effort to display the independence and freedoms available under the American model. The history and spirit of fine art and high culture embodied in the citizenry of European nations was targeted by the American Intelligence community as a commonality to the Marshall Plan which linked artistic independence and cultural freedom to the program's economic benefits. These activities are now understood as contributing to Europe's resistance to Soviet influence

and to strengthening America's international standing culturally and economically.

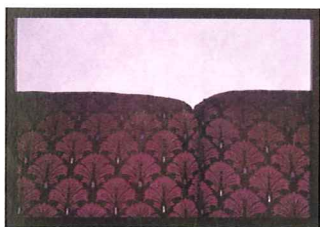
Artistic activities were attempted during subsequent Administrations of Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, and the first George Bush, but cultural pluralism was then altering the Agency's models for direct art world activity. Until very recently the cultural ambitions of the CIA remained dormant until the counter-intelligence-as-art model was embraced after the recent re-organization. However, over the last several decades artists have made work that challenged traditional notions of art as communication and intelligence. The work of artists as diverse as John Baldessari, Laura Owens, Tony Tasset, and Lorna Simpson can be understood as counter-intelligence-as-art. These individuals were providing possible avenues for the intelligence industry to develop. Each employed accepted aesthetic norms but communicated "nothing" in the guise of "something" and as such made work more akin to counter-intelligence practice than communicative works of art.

It is also pertinent to note that while the American Intelligence Industry was not culturally active during the last 30 years, our European counterparts were more sympathetic to how artistic output could be applied as counter-intelligence. This can be seen in the work of artists Joseph Beuys, Daniel Buren, Hanne Darboven, and others who established new creative avenues for the emptiness endemic to recent artistic practice. Their work was not only influential for the American artists listed above but was also employed by European intelligence in the 1970s and 1980s. When the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989 West German intelligence officials were quick to recognize the contributions of their fellow artists (See Memo – SR-90-110.2 Appendix A.)

Project Profile

The CIA looks toward the art world as a model that is grounded in numerous forms of communication yet open-ended with regard to content. As articulated above, analysts and operatives at the CIA see many similarities between the work of contemporary artists and the counter-intelligence field. It is for this reason that the CIA has invited seventeen artists and artists' collectives to participate in **Operation: Human Intelligence**.

The art world may seem an unlikely source for the CIA to engage. However, the art world is historically grounded as a field of communication and is also one of the few institutions that is able to absorb the kinds of change mandated by shifting demographics and media. Over the past 150 years the institutions of art have worked from within to challenge the societal definitions of art, the distinctions between art and life, and the function of art in society. This has occurred despite, or sometimes because of, the evolution of technology



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from the industrial revolution up to the digital age of today. Additionally, the art-for-art's sake movement, the successes and failures of various avant-garde movements and trends, and numerous other events have contributed to seemingly constant change within the definitions and functions of art, yet "art" still remains. (See Appendix A: Chronology of this report.) Throughout this history and at its core all art continues to be a form of communication and can be seen as a potential site for intelligence.

The artists in **Operation: Human Intelligence** each make work as – or in the guise of – meaningful communication. Some of the works appear to be clear communications of known intelligence while others are less easily defined. As examples of counter-intelligence each might simply be interference, distraction, or a false path intended to draw one's attention away from more pertinent information. This is the power and the challenge of counter-intelligence-as-art.

Some of the artists in **Operation: Human Intelligence** have previous experience working as CIA operatives. Their contributions to the fields of intelligence, counter-intelligence and contemporary art have aided in the Agency's domestic and international efforts of the past several years. (See SR-94-9807, SR-99-234 Section 4, and SR-01-557 Appendix B.) Others

have been chosen because their art looks so similar to pre-existing counter-intelligence that the Agency wanted to test how they functioned in a field where the work of other operatives was on view. Whether the audience is aware of which artworks are functioning as intelligence or counter-intelligence is not as important to the CIA as the possibility that each work might be either, both, or neither. In a world where anything can be art – as affirmed by numerous artworks and art world publications – and all communication is liable to yield meaningful intelligence, every form of discourse we encounter must be carefully scrutinized. Therefore a series of questions may help to establish the field in which **Operation: Human Intelligence** functions: Can a casual observer tell the difference between meaningful art and an empty vessel presented to look like art? How does the context of one affect the content of the other? Are forms of meaningful communication merely obscuring the ability to communicate meaningfully?

The photographs, paintings, drawings, video, and sculpture in this special exhibit are intended to appear as capable of communicating in various ways. They will be read differently as art, intelligence, or counter-intelligence. Each work may incorporate encrypted information. Some works might be mere interference, while others could be legitimate examples of intelligence.

Project Goals

As its first public endeavor applying the counter-intelligence-as-art model, the CIA hopes to redefine its role within the Intelligence Industry. This redefinition is as much about potential Agency activity as it is about following the model offered by the art world. Always adapting and forever testing its boundaries and definitions, the institutions of the art world constantly negotiate new forms of communication and new applications for intelligence. By expanding definitions and opportunities for counter-intelligence, the Curatorial Intelligence Agency intends to make counter-intelligence a more prominent aspect of everyday communication. By pushing the elusive boundary between counter-intelligence and intelligence the Agency will develop and enhance the scope and range of its ability to serve the American public. By modeling how this development and enhancement follows the trends set by the art world, the CIA will position itself to better serve the Intelligence Industry at large and in turn regain the confidence of the American public. From this point forward art and counter-intelligence will be merged and counter-intelligence-as-art will provide a point of reference for art and intelligence alike.

We hope that you will enjoy the artwork in the exhibit and we welcome your feedback.



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1. Phyllis Bramson, *Perpetual Offering*, 2002, mixed media on canvas, 68 x 56".
2. Mary Jane Duffy, *Litmus Test 1*, 2002, ink on paper, 22 x 30".
3. Jennifer Ramsey, *Refrigerator Show*, 2003, C-Print, 14 x 17".
4. Asian American Artists Collective-Chicago, *Unattended Questions*, 2003, mixed media, dimensions and duration variable.
5. Marc Fischer, *Photo files: Unedited / Photo files: Viewer's Choice*, 2003, mixed media, dimensions variable.
6. Scott Stack, *Baghdad at Night*, 1999, oil on polyester, 18 x 18", Courtesy of Michael Crocker, Chicago.
7. Shane Huffman, *A Woman, A Man, and A Moon (want to be a part of human race #37.64)*, 2003, silver gelatin prints, dimensions variable.
8. Andy Hall, *Crash*, 2002, oil on linen, 18 x 25".
9. Suzy Giles, *Bani, Bani*, 2003, DVD video.
10. Peter Power, *Lamb*, 2003, mixed media, 107 x 109 x 85".
11. Steve Harp, *Lubyanka*, 2002, Lambda print, 13 x 19".
12. Adelheid Mers, *After Vilém Flusser: Line and Surface*, 2003, acrylic on vinyl, 36 x 36".
13. Joel Ross, *Heartland Hotel*, 2002, C-Print, 24 x 30".
14. Brad Killam, *Trees*, 2002, oil on wood, 12 x 15".
15. HaHa, *Taxi*, 2003, mixed media, dimensions and duration variable.
16. Michael Kresse, *Self Portrait without Pants*, 2002, pastel on paper, 24 x 54".
17. Mary Patten, *Seen and Unseen (from the files of...)*, 2003, video installation, dimensions variable.

Appendix A: Chronology

This chronology presents some examples of art world activity over the past 150 years that provide models for how works of art can be understood as intelligence and/or counter-intelligence. The selections do not attempt to enter into a comprehensive art historical analysis but rather serve to illustrate themes applied toward the CIA's planning and development of **Operation: Human Intelligence**.

1850-1860s - Gustav Courbet's and Eduard Manet's paintings cause scandals at the annual Academic Salons of Paris. Aside from the specific and controversial subjects they chose to paint, most of which were deemed inappropriate by Salon judges, Courbet's ideas of art-for-art's sake and Manet's abrupt style challenge pre-existing notions of how and why art is made. Their innovative approaches to art making coupled with their refusal to obey official standards of art and taste lay the groundwork for modern art.

1870s-1890s - Impressionism and Post-Impressionism push modern ideals of art further by focusing attention on perception, material, and process. Art markets diversify as new nation-states and the Industrial Revolution redistribute wealth across the populations of Europe.

1900s - Avant-garde movements develop in Europe as a continuation of modernist thought to critique pre-existing ideals. Derived from a French military term meaning "advanced front" avant-garde artists make works that increasingly focus on the formal properties of art by exploiting the materials and processes. Specific movements include Fauvism, Cubism, and German Expressionism which maintain the traditional subject-matter of art while expanding the range of perception and palette.

1910s - More avant-garde styles and movements develop as the tendency to work against tradition is exacerbated by severe destruction wrought in World War I. Several new avant-garde groups develop in response specific political movements. Italian Futurism was closely linked to Fascism and modern urbanization. Constructivism and Suprematism in Russia were tied to technological advances and accepted by some by leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. In contrast, Dada simultaneously developed in several cities (including New York) as a protest against the logic applied by most modern political regimes.

Dada artist Marcel Duchamp develops and exhibits his readymades, everyday objects presented as works of art. Of particular note is "Fountain", a store-bought urinal, signed "R Mutt" and displayed upside down. Years later Duchamp said the readymades were an attempt at showing the futility of trying to define art. Duchamp's gestures asserted that art could take any form and need not be created by the artist him- or herself.

1930s - Many European modern artists move to America to escape the persecution of totalitarian regimes and an impending war. The influx of the Europeans allows for young American artists to develop and challenge their own avant-garde ambitions.

1940s - As war rages in Europe and the Pacific, artists in America explore European modern models and try to develop artistic practice expressive of human nature and universal values, that is, beyond national or cultural limitations. Abstract Expressionism is championed by American artists, collectors, and critics as an embodiment of such themes.

1950s - As Europe rebuilds, the American economy prospers. New York is now accepted as having replaced Paris as the international center of culture. Abstract Expressionist paintings gain credibility by inclusion in museum exhibitions and collections. Then Jasper Johns, of the next generation, makes paintings of targets and the American flag critiquing the universalist claims of the Abstract Expressionists while maintaining their painterly applications. The return to imagery is seen as Neo-Dada by some critics.

1960s - Political upheaval, assassinations, and riots establish widespread counter-cultural activity. Avant-garde critique begins to erode the hegemony of Abstract Expressionist universalism as artists slowly turn toward specific real-world content. Pop Artists begin using commercial art techniques to make paintings of consumer goods as high art. Minimalism and Conceptualism evolve to expose the institutional support structures around and behind the art world. The trend toward radical internal critique is understood as a rebirth of the avant-garde models from earlier in the century.

1970s - Cultural Pluralism begins to take hold as women and people of color continue the critique of traditional western (read: patriarchal) models of power. Feminists assert that the personal is political and thus blur the line between previously separate domains of self, property and propriety. These critiques from within the cultures and communities they serve are seen by many as mirroring the traditions of internal critique of art world models. The lack of faith in recent models of power and traditional modes of thought instilled by new critical models point to subsequent postmodern values and ways of thinking.

1980s - Postmodernism, identity politics, and cultural pluralism gain momentum as critical models reach into more and more facets of life. Increasingly, more institutional lines begin to blur as traditionally distinct disciplines and fields of study begin to draw from the methodologies and subjects of other fields.

1990s - The insider avant-garde critique has become so ingrained in postmodern rhetoric that any attempt at artistic criticality suffers from the lack of a clearly defined tradition to work against. The art-for-art's-sake and avant-garde movements of art history have assumed such canonical status in the world of art that any attempt at artistic critique seems futile.

2000s - The Duchampian critique that art could be anything coupled with the Feminist doctrine that the personal is political have sufficiently rendered a state of the artworld wherein everything and anything can be understood as art and/or politics. Context is still key for understanding how creative acts and gestures convey meaning and yield intelligence, but even context is vulnerable. Counter-intelligence-as-art could be everything everywhere. It's not...but it could be.