

news from the future (2010-2017)  
by Christopher Healey

Addressing concerns of the binary media relationship between post-truth and activism, this work is framed as a news transmission from the future with an ambiguous message. Is this communication from a Dystopian or Utopian future? Or is it fake news from the present—or maybe a malfunction?

I am interested in issues of situated knowledge in the decentralized media ecosystem. In this sense, one can argue visuals are the landscape and audio is the wind of our digital public commons. Problematic in the sense that each component is intentional, or derived (as accident or neglect) from the intentionality of broadcasting information that not only is representation but meant to saturate. The individual, isolated from a sense of truth in available information, is left to be buffeted by this post-truth weather, navigating micro-bursts of calls to action and conflicting statements of fact that are manufactured rather than natural.

Framed as such, “news from the future” encompasses the idea of the anthropocene not only as a physical environmental reality but a psychosomatic post-reality. Features and landmarks of this post-truth reality include characteristics such as production values and musical jingles familiar to newscasts are incorporated into the work.

Thus we have also moved beyond the Simulacra and Simulation of Jean Baudrillard and into a kind of brave new Pragmatism where truths and untruths, fake or real, insider or uniformed, authority and resistance are equally weighted values. These values drive the emergent processes of mining for analytic data of our behaviour, our reactions, our choices that in turn deny our ability to opt out of this process (as even choosing to not participate is data to decide the next iteration of our common environment as media). Hence, post-truth is an industrialized and embedded cultural practice that has grown beyond central authorities to become ubiquitous—an example of a shifting baseline syndrome where constructed media totems of ideology are granted life through uncritical acceptance.

Resistance and authority create a formal tension through the use of the movement of text, spoken and printed. Sometimes jarring but with a relentless frenetic drive forward with beats and flashes, “news from the future” utilizes formal elements of glitch art and text work. Visual messages are repeated and enforced amidst a rapid, almost violent shifting corporate aesthetic environmental imagery of skies and clouds. Industrial emissions are represented as well, associating with this cultural maxim of hope. As an embedded narrative, this perhaps offers a clue to the origins and intent of the transmission. Whether that source is corporate, governmental, charitable or extremist is not clear and thus the work as a communication production wavers between truth, post-truth and propaganda. It is problematic for the viewer as it resists attachment to a particular ideology whilst obviously insisting on an ideology. This familiar lexicon also includes elements of resistance that disrupts and disputes the broadcast but is equally as problematic as it is also opaque to source, intention and alignment to a particular ideology. It simply reflects a shallow counter-claim to equally shallow claims and leaves the viewer with little to form a rational—as problematic as much as our current media reality.

Issues of ideological isolation are addressed by promises of the newscaster: both insignificant and drastic, they reflect detached-from-the-present priorities that at best could be described as lost in translation. At worst they reflect the media ecology beyond our current political and sociological sphere. It is this point of contact between an unknowable future and our politically fragmented, silo'd present that manifests itself as broadcast. A pitch, a puff piece, corporate advertisements, a social activism Public Service Announcement, a billboard—these familiar aesthetics act as a map and legend for understanding an intent to the message through our

situated knowledge of ground level saturation of such media.

The work itself is composed of thousands of images individually rendered and animated, taken through site specific photography in industrial areas that adjoin communities and are normalized as environment through corporate and political media and persistence.