Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then
Alyssa Miserendino

Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art, 2016

Approved by:
Hong-An Truong (Chair)
Elin o'Hara slavick
Yun-Dong Nam

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ARTIST STATEMENT

My practice of art making begins by investigating connections between people. The formal departure, from this investigation, uses the mediums of photography, sculpture, installation, language, video and audio.

Often I am researching human connection in an illogical manner. I am investigating in a non-judgmental means, while being human, fallible, and judgmental. What does the language or logic of the irreconcilable look and sound like? This is what I imagine in a physical sense. This is the artwork I create and the space I occupy – a space of paradox.

To be in a state of paradox means to rest in a space of self-contradiction. It is an irrational place, where we recognize the possibility of conflicting ideas at the same time. This is not about existing as an "either/or," but rather about the existence of contradiction. Paradox is what makes us human – we are evil; we are good. I'm interested in propositions such as this.

I believe we exist in an Age of Empathy, past the Age of Faith and Age of Reason. The importance of connection becomes a means for survival. All of our activity is one of embodied experience – the participation with another person cannot be detached.

According to the social theorist Jeremy Rifkin, empathy and empathic expression is intrinsic to our development of the self. Our selfhood requires us to reflect on and interact with others in order to connect. The self and other go hand in hand in this development. Part of our cognitive development depends on our ability to mimic our parents, or anyone for that matter. There is an emotional importance in mimicry. Psychologist Martin L. Hoffman suggests that, "Mimicry is probably a hard-wired neurologically based empathy-arousing mechanism whose two steps, imitation and feedback, are directed by commands from the central nervous system."[1]

This self-reflexive or self-referential mode of human cognitive operation required to see, hear, and understand another human being is the spark that initiates my work. The mirror, glass, language, photographs and lenses operate as formal elements in harmony with this concept of perception. The mirror is a medium for mimicry. Glass is an element we often look through to another. Language can resolve into multiple meanings. Lenses distort phenomenological experiences. The camera functions as a paradoxical device, at once capturing the perspective of the photographer and mirroring back the perspective of the subject. These mediums are a means to my continued exploration of human connection.

Alyssa Miserendino, April 20, 2016

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1 [1] Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization* (Penguin Group, 2009) 144.

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Studio experimentation using string and pushpins to visually explore ideas of communication and connection

Approximately 1,600 photographic prints from family archive

17 individual portraits comprising a panorama

Mimic (9206), 2015

Mimic (9206), 2015
detail

1978

Excerpt from a forthcoming 2017 publication by Schilt Publishing

Excerpt from a forthcoming 2017 publication by Schilt Publishing

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Untitled (9511), 2015

1798 origin

AESTHETIC

from German Ästhetisch or French esthétique,
both from Greek aisthetikos:

"sensitive, perceptive,"

1909 translation

Einfühlung (German) → Empathy (English)

translation of Greek empatheia "passion, state of emotion,"
from assimilated form of en "in" + pathos "feeling"

Ein = **"in"**
Fühlung = **"feeling"**

Family Artifact (1509), 2016

Family Artifact (1509), 2016
detail

Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then (installation view), 2016

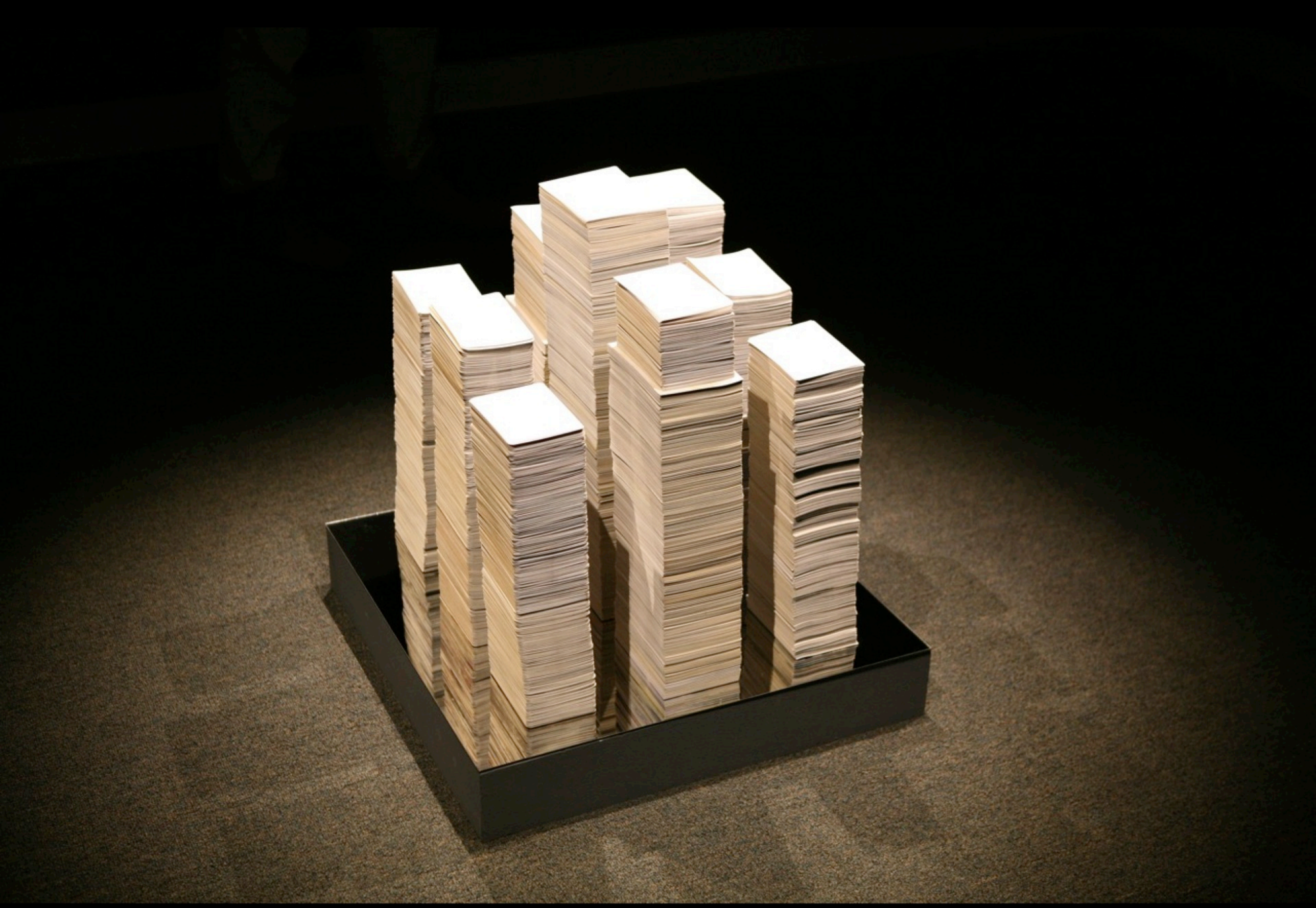
Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then (time lapse), 2016

Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then (installation view)
Interrogation mirror, 2016 - site specific installation 35’ x 10’ (unique) – outside view

Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then (installation view)
Interrogation mirror, 2016 - site specific installation 35’ x 10’ (unique) – inside view

Click, click saddle up see you on the moon then (installation view), 2016

Click, click saddle up see you on the moon the moon then (installation view)
One-way conversation, 2015 - re-engineered Amphenol phone with sound, individual chair and side table. (unique)

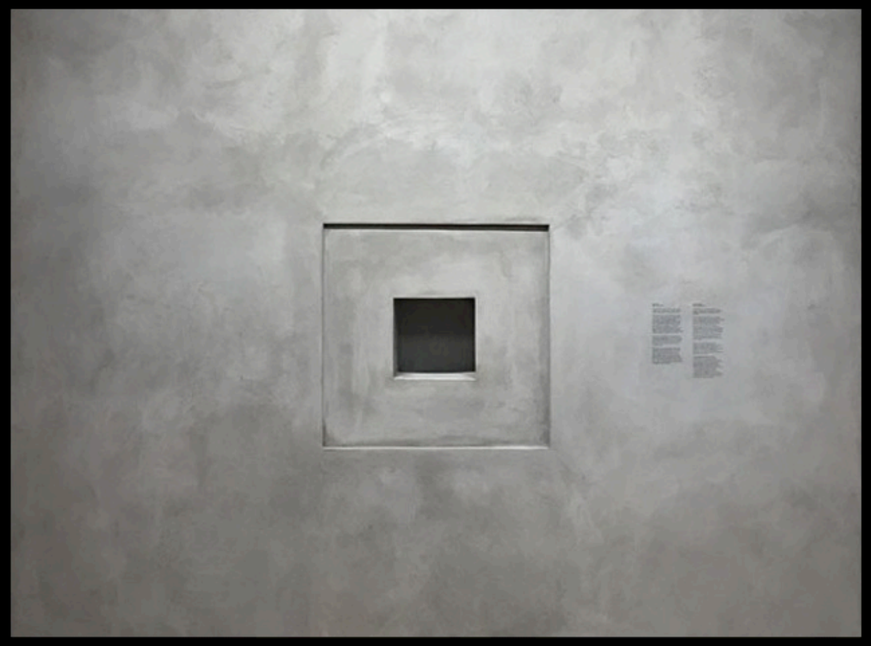


Not taken, 2016 - sculpture of approximately 5,000 photos from the artist's family archive. (unique)

Not taken, 2016 - sculpture of approximately 5,000 photos from the artist's family archive. (unique)
detail

Circles, 1970
De Wain Valentine
Photography courtesy of the 2015 De Wain Valentine/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Opposite of White – x.1, 2008
Portrait of an Image (with Isabelle Huppert), 2008
Roni Horn
Photography courtesy of Xavier Hufkens



Black Sqare XVII, 2015
Taryn Simon
Photography courtesy tarynsimon.com

Lost for Words, 1991
Jane Mulfinger
Photography courtesy janemulfinger.com

C-Curve, 2007. Kensington Gardens, London
Photo: AFP/Getty

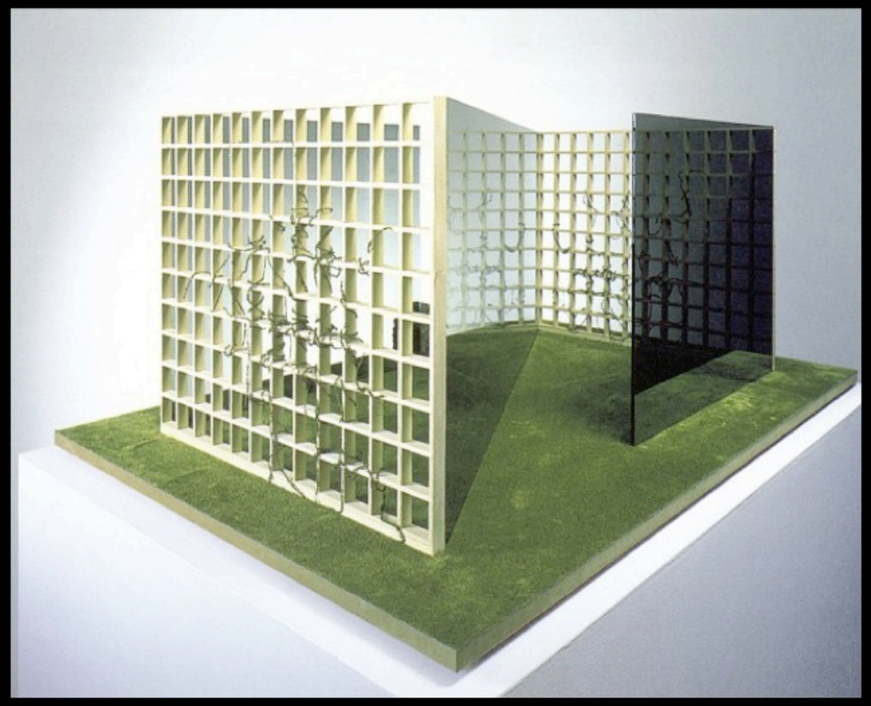
Cloud Gate, 2004. Millennium Park, Chicago
Photo: Peter J. Schulz, City of Chicago

Sky Mirror, 2006. Presented by Tumi at Rockefeller Center
Photo: Seong Kwon Photography

Hexagon Mirror, 2013
Photo credit scmp.com

Public Space/Two Audiences, 1976. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

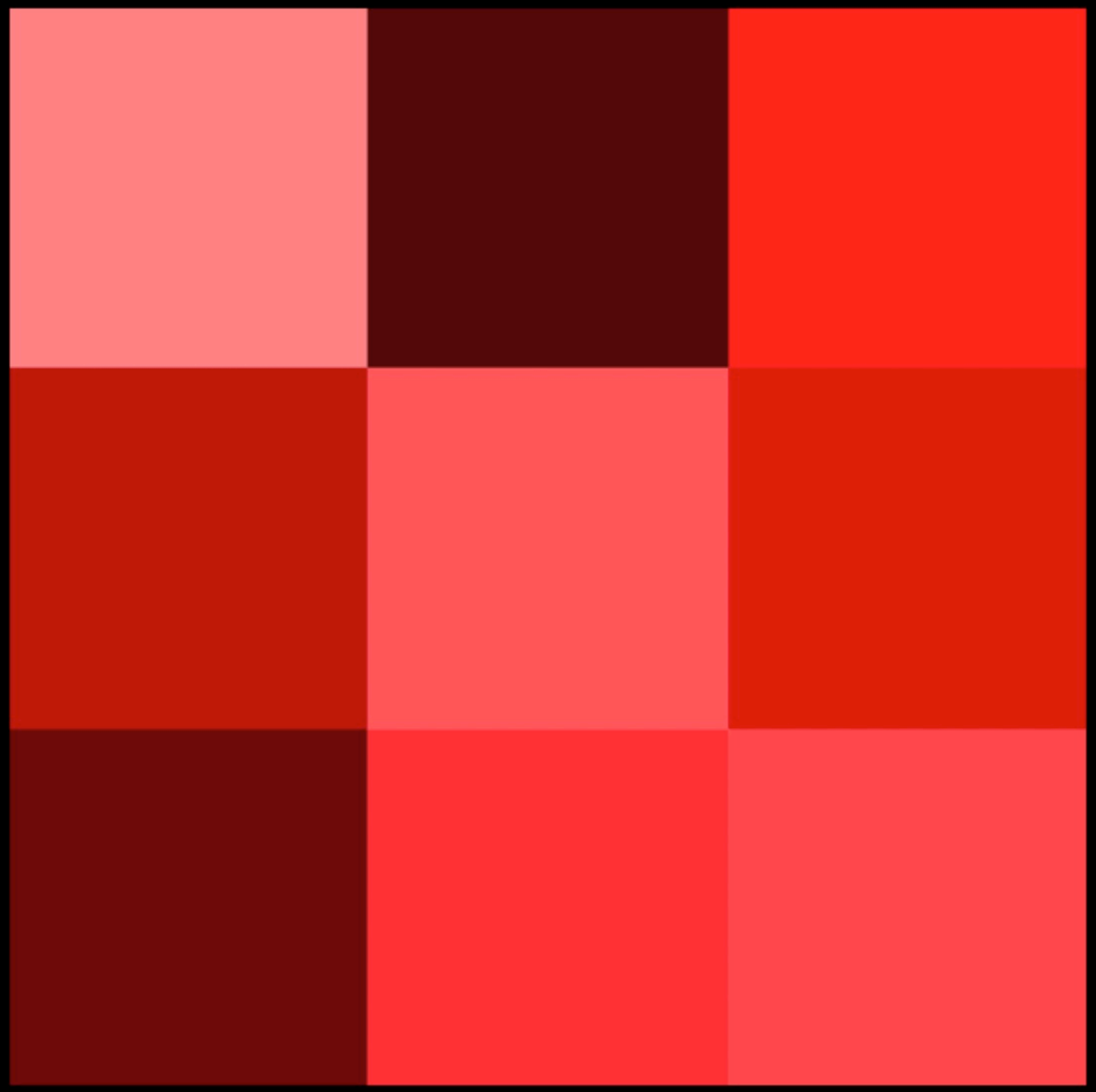
Double Exposure, 1995-2002. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.



Empty Shoji-Screen Pergola/Two-Way Mirror Container, 1992.
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

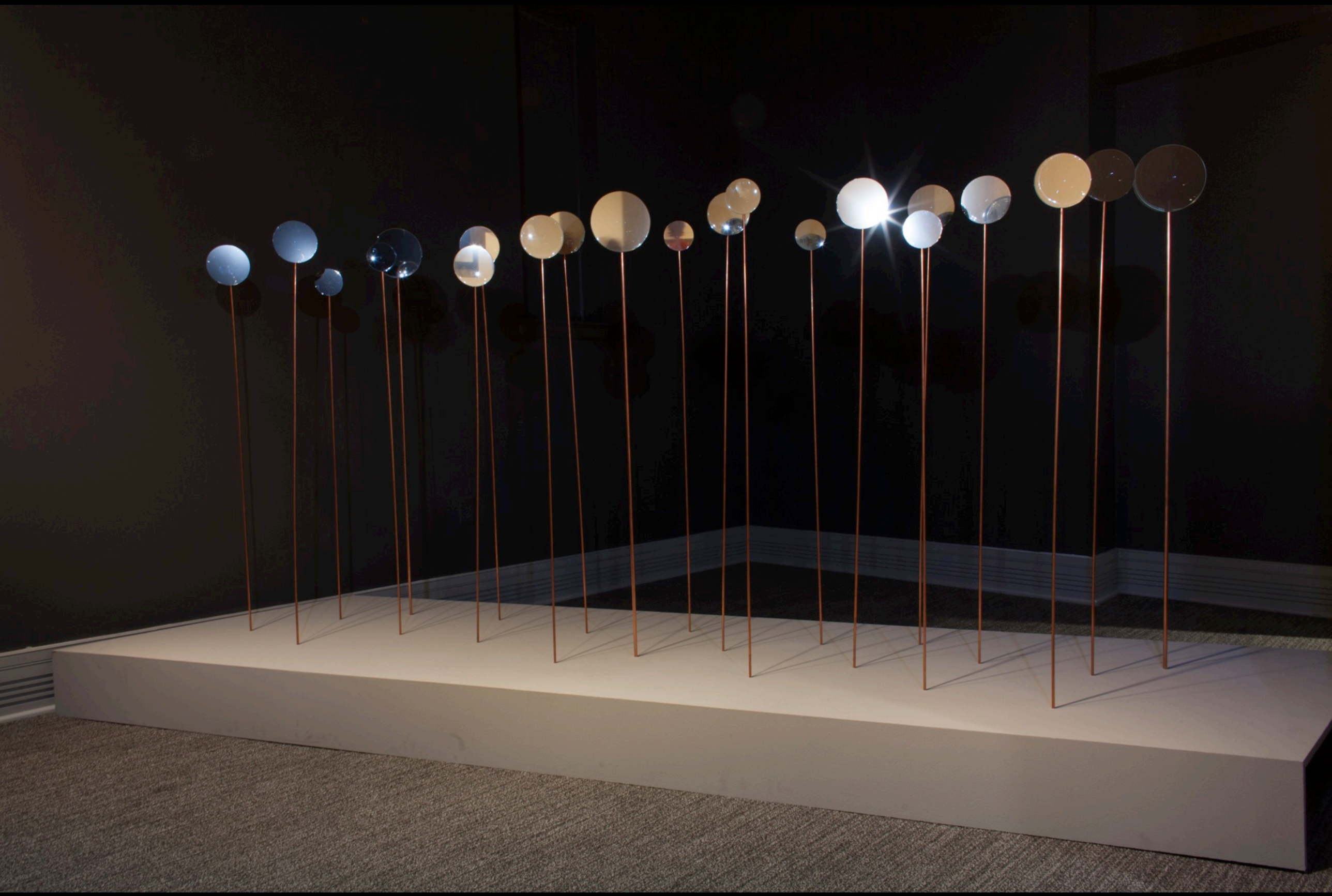
Half Square/Half Crazy, 2004.
Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

Goliath before the fight, sketch #1, 2014

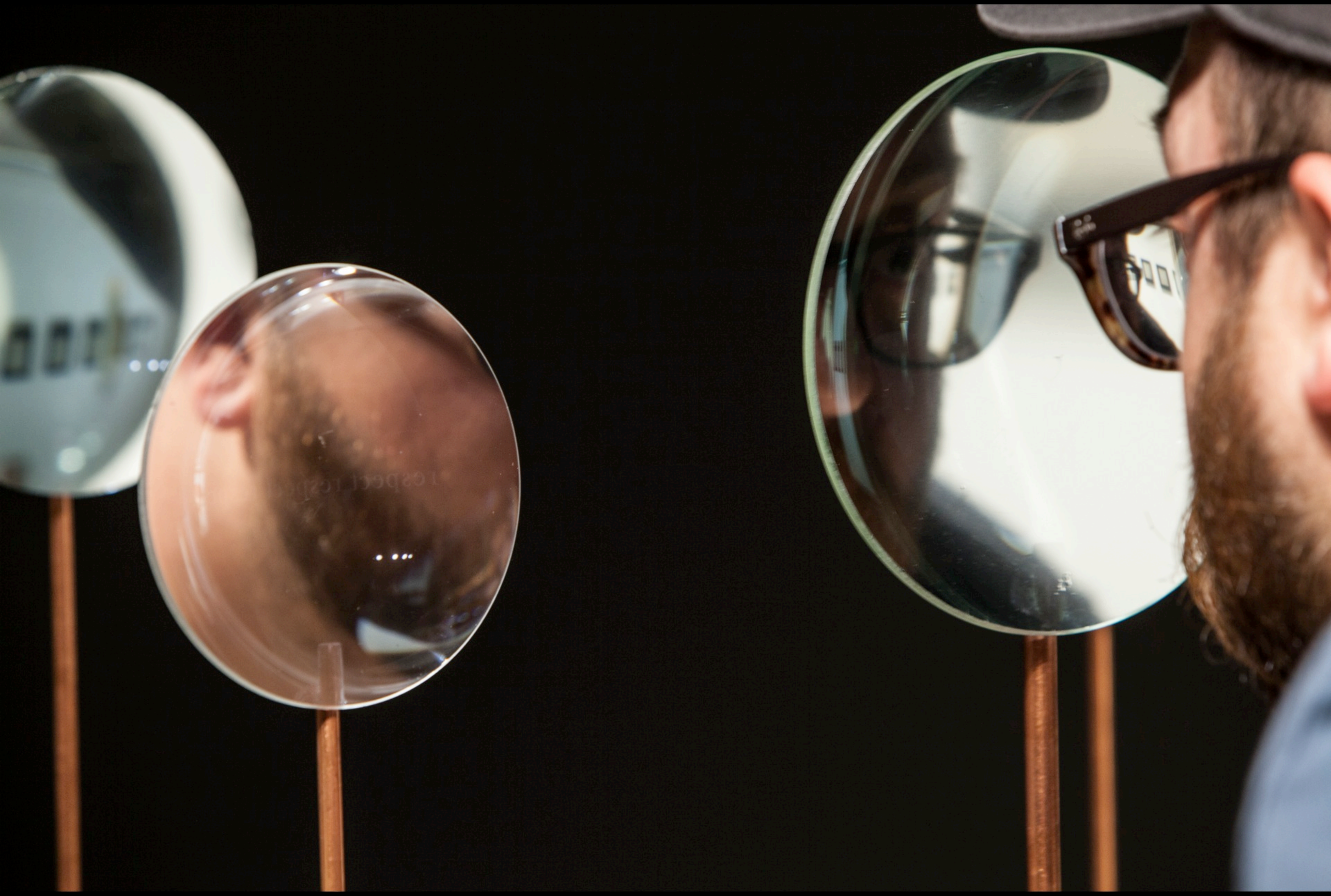


Different ways one can imagine the color red

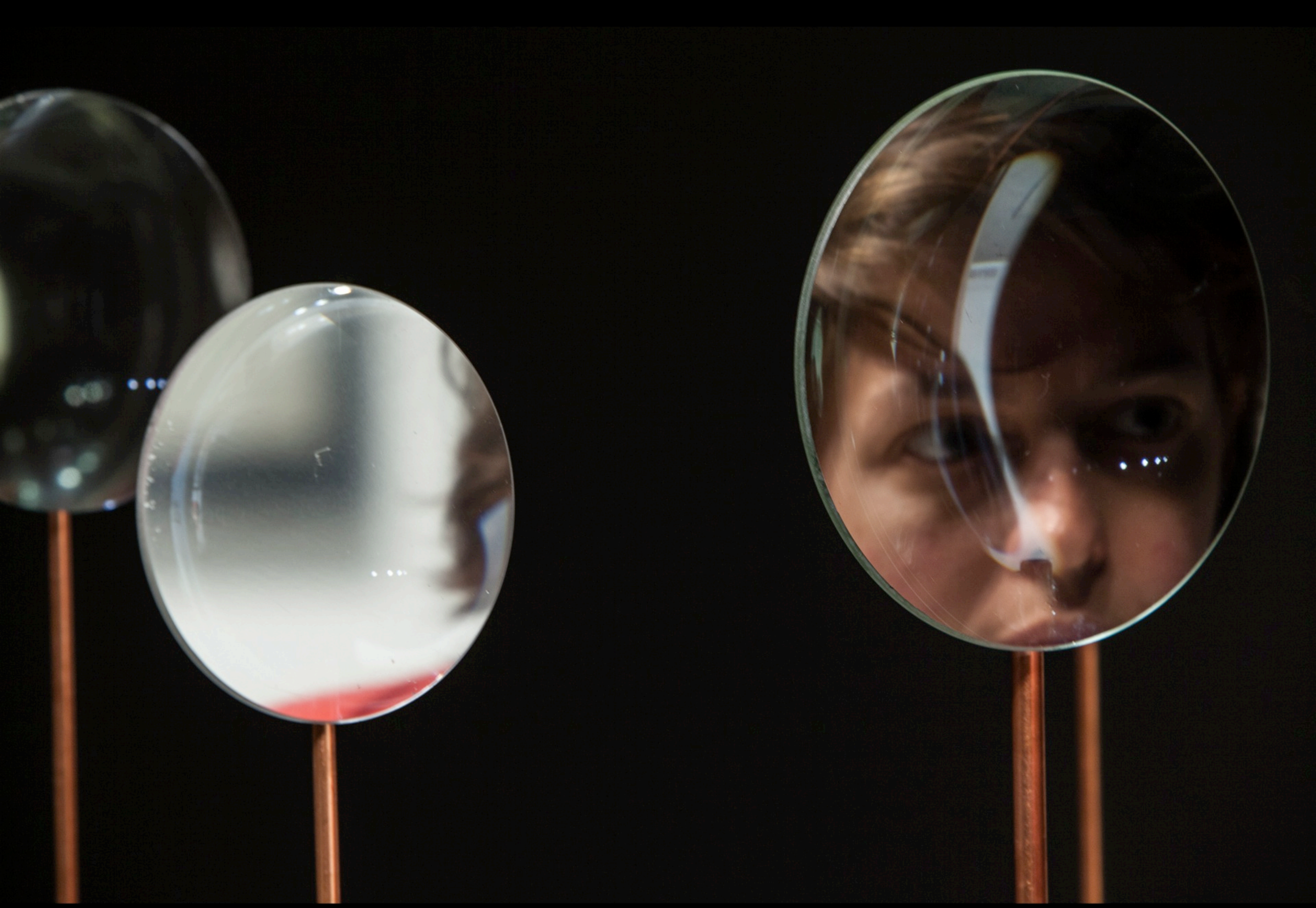
What we didn't hear, 2016



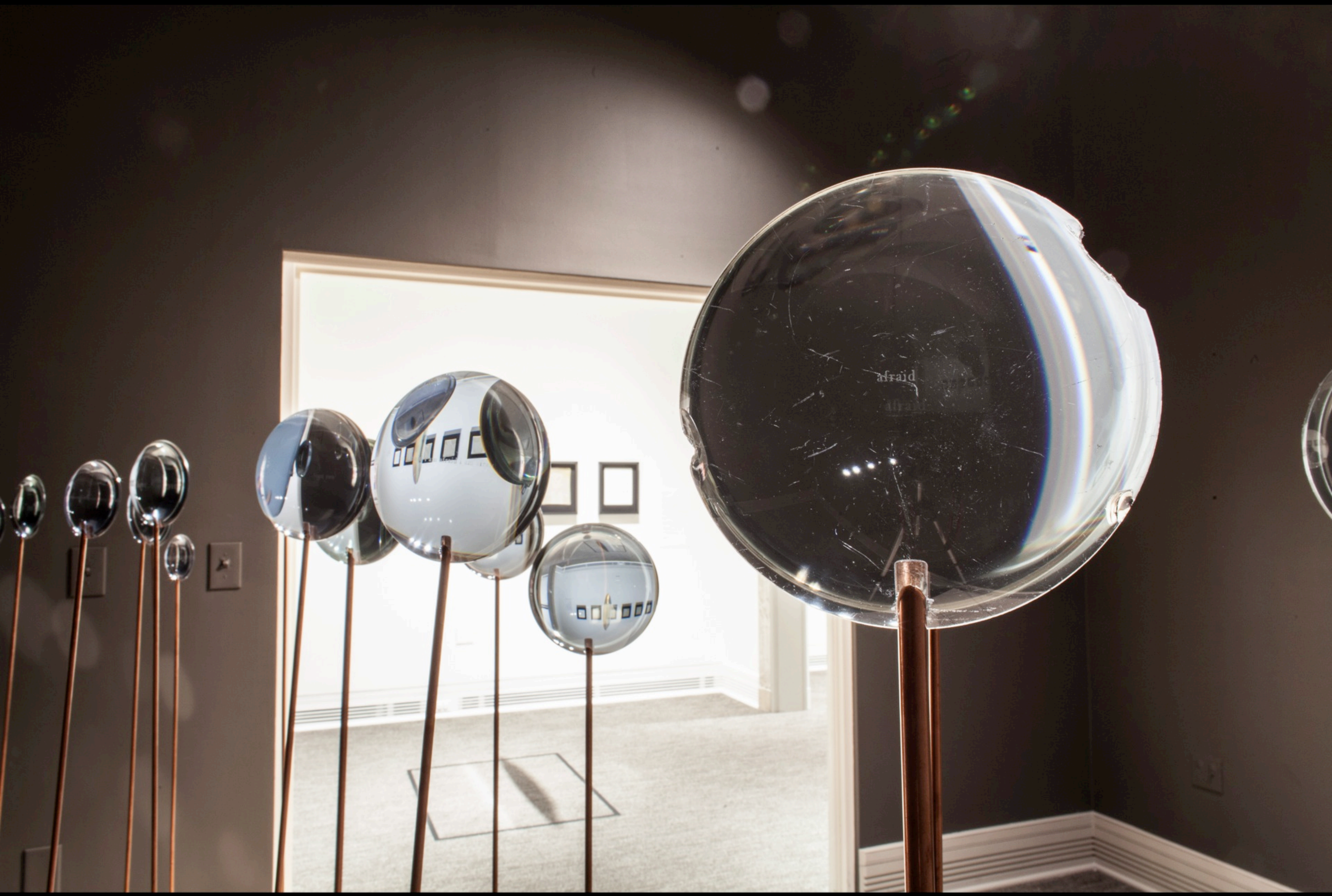
What we didn't hear, 2016



What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)



What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)



What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)

What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)

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(detail)

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(detail)

What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)

What we didn't hear, 2016
(detail)

Snake Skin, 2016

A Technical Report on the Nature of

MOVEMENT PATTERNING, THE BRAIN and DECISION-MAKING

With gratitude to

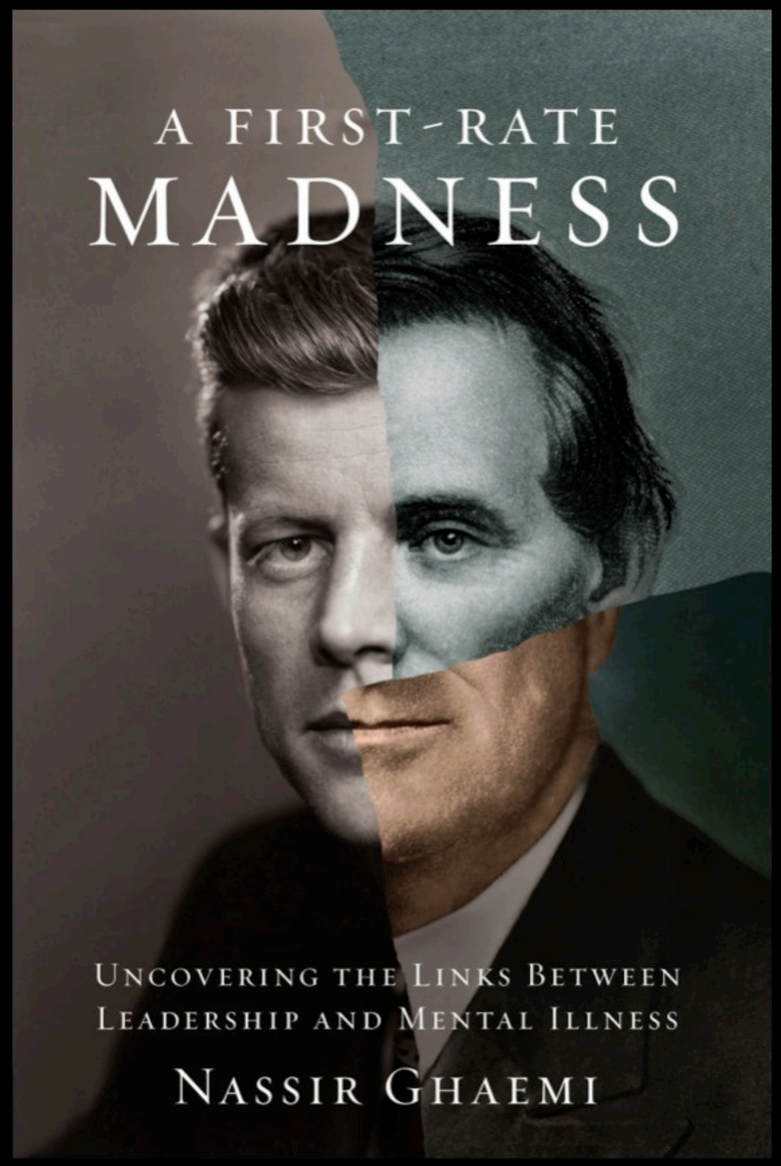
Vladimir Putin,
The President of Russia

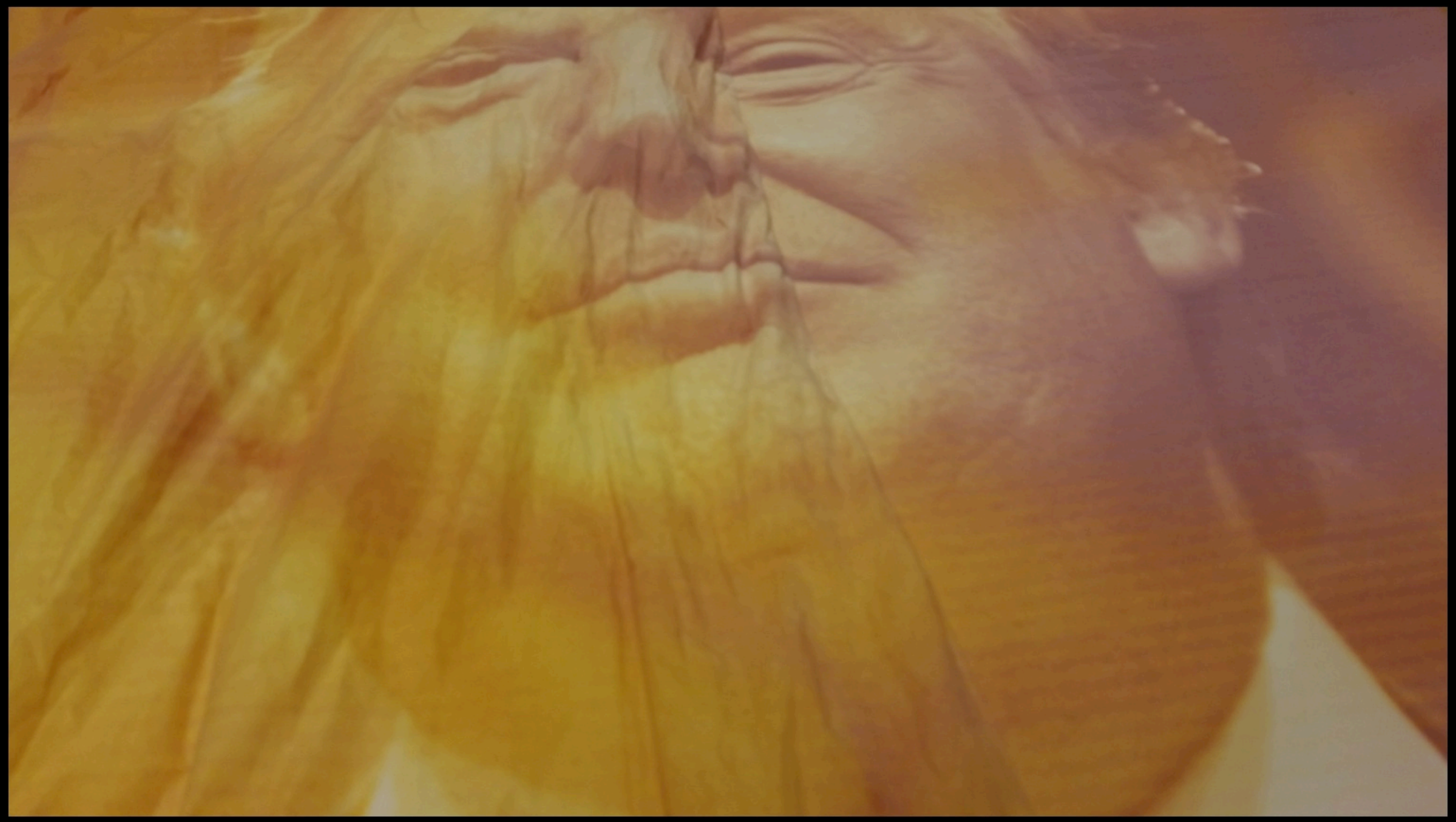
For helping us understand ……

Prepared by Brenda Connors,
For the Office of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense
January 2008

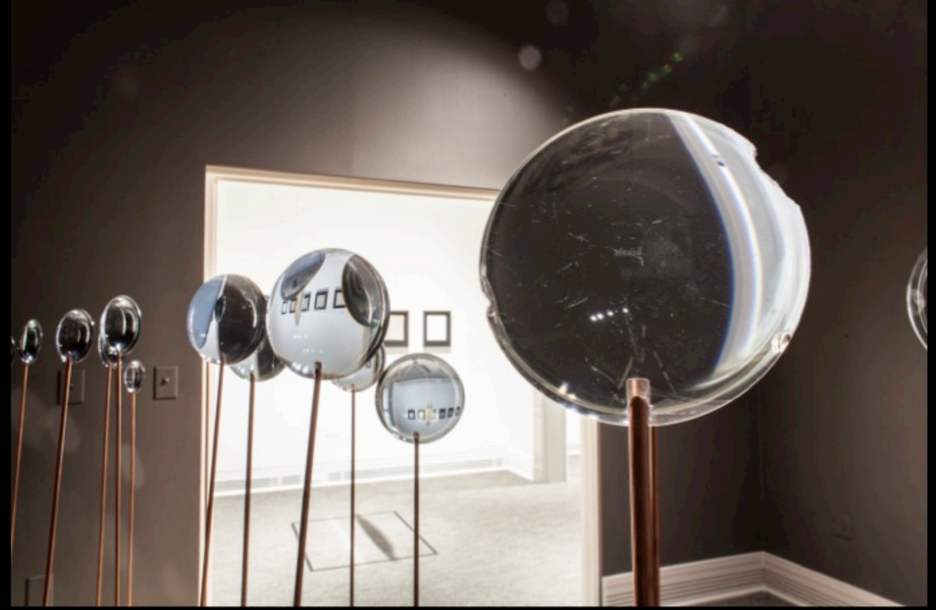
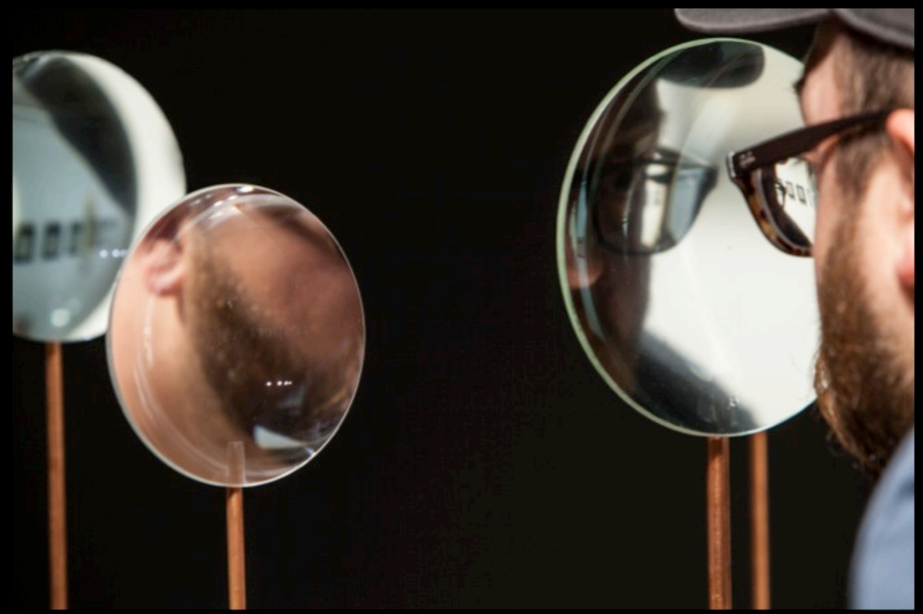
The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not reflect the official view, policy, or position of the Department of Defense or the United States Government.

2008 report on Putin, prepared for the Office of the Secretary of Defense


A FIRST-RATE
MADNESS
Uncovering the Links Between
Leadership and Mental Illness
Nassir Ghaemi



Engraving test where emulsion is half separated from its paper backing.

Skin-like emulsion

Snake Skin, 2016