



Video still from - *In the Name of the Public* (2022)
Image courtesy of the artist

The Horse is happy to announce the forthcoming exhibition by Justin Serulneck: a research-based artist and educator based in Los Angeles. *Libertine Logics* invites a contemplation of political and ideological instabilities which threaten the viability of the American democratic project.

Over the last decade, instability has become the dominant characteristic of Western democracy's political systems. Extremist beliefs, conspiracy theories, disingenuous communications and an intentional falsification of science and truth inform the territory upon which democratic processes now take place. This recent evacuation from the real suggests significant fractures in America's political infrastructure.

Considering America as a site of ideological and material conflict, Justin Serulneck's *Libertine Logics* asks us to contemplate a constellation of instabilities: an exploration of the digital commons of Twitter on the 2020 Election Day, elements of liberty as a system of logic articulated by philosopher John Stuart Mill, a meme-as-artwork where the Ghostbusters inform social needs and two catastrophic events motivated by conspiracy and religion.

Through a process which includes fieldwork and collection, Serulneck manifests material connections between phenomena and events which are most often considered in isolation. His practice includes installation, video, diagrams, sculpture, pedagogical construction and collage. Serulneck's earlier installation *Ash* considered the relations between wildfire-prone landscapes, real estate development and homelessness in Southern California and was reviewed on [Artforum.com](https://www.artforum.com/picks/economies-80498).¹

¹ *Economies* at Ltd. Los Angeles, <https://www.artforum.com/picks/economies-80498>

*We Need A Symbol*²

In late May 2020, anti-mask protesters rally in front of Los Angeles City Hall to protest the Covid lockdown. In *Ghostbusters 2* (1989), the Ghostbusters are unable to enter the Metropolitan Museum of Art as it has been shielded with red ectoplasm. Working to solve the problem, Dr. Egon Spengler³ concludes "We need... [elongated pause] a symbol." The Ghostbusters then use their ectoplasmic weapons to animate the Statue of Liberty. Accompanied by the tones of Harold Huntsberry, the Statue of Liberty carries them from Liberty Island through Manhattan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Liberty's torch smashes through the glass ceiling of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and enables the Ghostbusters to enter. The challenge with symbols is their propensity for misuse.

*In the Name of the Public*⁴

This video artwork seeks to raise questions around notions of liberty, democracy, a public commons and algorithmically powered media propagations. The work portrays a stream of media and tweets collected from Twitter for 5 minutes across the mean time of noon in the continental United States on the 2020 Election Day. This deluge of information scrolls in front of a fictional three-hour sixteen-minute day composed of Internet sourced live-stream footage of the Statue of Liberty, also captured on the 2020 Election Day. The video additionally acts as a cultural artefact of material that has been partially erased from history: many of those accounts, media, and tweets from which the original data acquisition took place on Twitter have been suspended, banned, or otherwise removed.⁵

*Liberty*⁶

John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* prescribes a set of ideals of governmental and individual conduct that would presumably lead to social progress and development. The principles he outlines, as a cohesive whole, broadly articulate a system of human behaviour where argumentation, debate, and individuality cohere to lead humanity to better conception of the truth. The artworks invite the viewer to contemplate the tenability of Mill's liberty as weighed against America's present.

*Derivation, Republic for the United States of America*⁷

Forrest Gordon Clark is accused and likely guilty of starting the Holy Fire on August 6, 2018 in Cleveland National Forest. He was a part of a fringe conspiracy group called the Republic for the United States of America whose goal is to "rebuild our Republic in the image that our Founding Fathers first established." The evidentiary artwork combines images and texts from his Facebook posts with satellite imagery of the fire he most likely started. The left side images allocate one post per year, 2012-2017, while the right side includes only material from 2018 leading up to the fire being set.

² 2022, Video still and quotation from *Ghostbusters 2*, with video still in negative from anti-mask rally in front of Los Angeles City Hall from May 2020, transparency on acrylic over digital print

³ Played by Harold Ramis

⁴ 2022, 3 hours 16 minutes, UHD video, 59.94 fps

⁵ 2,607 media were referenced in 11,955 of 20,886 tweets, quotes, or retweets that appeared in the 5-minute live-stream data capture of all tweets which tagged either presidential candidate's personal user account, or hashtags having to do with the 2020 Election Day. The total set of tags included in the data capture include:

@JoeBiden @realDonaldTrump #joebiden #donaldtrump #2020election #electionday

⁶ 2022, book pages, wood plates, permanent ink

⁷ 2022, acquired images and text from the Facebook account of Forrest Gordon Clark, satellite imagery of the Holy Fire on August 13, 2018, transparency on acrylic over digital print

Derivation, Crabapple First Baptist Church, Milton, GA⁸

Robert Aaron Long is the suspect in the 2021 spa shootings in Atlanta, GA who pleaded guilty to four of the eight deaths that occurred. He was, for many years, a member of the Crabapple First Baptist Church in Milton, GA. The artwork brings together a set of verses cited in the “What We Believe” section of the 2017 and 2021 versions of the church’s website. This is coupled with directions from Google Maps that proposes a potential path taken on March 16th 2021: from the location where the gun used was purchased to where the shootings occurred. An image of the church’s exterior taken from Google street view is pasted at the church’s map location, while “X3 Watch” is a cell phone application cited by the 2017 version of the church website which members can use to observe each others’ internet-pornography viewing habits. Simultaneously: Long’s parents provided his location to police using a cell phone application they used to track their son’s location as they had kicked him out of their house for sexual addiction.⁹ According to its present website, the church voted to merge with another church in June 2022 to become Milton Community Church.

Flag¹⁰

An exact scale representation of the official United States of America Flag without its stars made of corroded and rusted metal. If allegorical relations can be found between the Statue of Liberty and the American Flag, are our present conditions inscribed within the foundations of the past?

I BELIEVE / I PRETEND TO BELIEVE¹¹

In this participatory work, through activating the sculpture by pushing it and repeating the phrases “I believe” and “I pretend to believe” the audience is invited to inhabit the position of a conflicted, unspecified subject, who has no purported agency aside from either believing or pretending to believe. A question of sincerity emerges when elected politicians and voters alike align their support behind dubitable propositions.¹²

Justin Serulneck holds an Interschool Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography & Media and Film & Video from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, CA and has had residencies at Hauser & Wirth in Somerset, UK and at the Drake Arts Centre in Kokkola, FI. He also holds a Master of Information Systems in Public Policy and Management and a Bachelor of Science in Electrical and Computer Engineering with an additional major in Computer Science from Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA.

Founded in 2021 The Horse is a contemporary art space in Dublin 1 that seeks to provide a platform for emerging, experimental and underrepresented art practitioners. For more information on this show and programming at The Horse please email Matthew Wilkinson: mw@thehorsedublin.xyz

⁸ 2022, traced Google Maps directions, Google maps imagery, acquired logo, collaged prints, transparency on acrylic over digital print

⁹ According to CNN - <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/03/18/us/metro-atlanta-shootings-thursday/index.html>
According to police press conference - <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/atlanta-shooter-parents-police/>

¹⁰ 2022, corroded copper, rusted steel, 5.7' x 3'

¹¹ 2022, Interactive sculpture, text on corroded copper box, fishing wire, instructions for use in vinyl. Printed instructions, “Spin and repeat out loud”

¹² On the evening of January 6, in which Joe Biden was to be certified as president, eight senators and 139 representatives refused to certify the results of 2020 Election citing allegations of voter fraud of which there was no substantial evidence. See - <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/01/07/us/elections/electoral-college-biden-objectors.html>