Even facts don’t tell the truth anymore – or so it would seem in a media climate in which even the most objective, evidence-based reporting must defend itself against the label “fake news.” But perhaps this is because there is a deeper truth in play: that the rational world as we have long understood it may no
longer represent the deep mind of the masses, which, shaped through big data and echo-chambered feeds, is increasingly organizing the space of the “real.”

Sketching one path through the post-Y2K blur of ever more surreal mediation that gave us President Trump and a Europe minus the U.K, artist Daniel Keller offers, here, his timeline of the events and images that have served as substrate to the rise of the alt-fact.

May 1999 Texan right-wing conspiracy-theorist radio host and huckster of fluoride-free toothpaste and dietary supplements (including Anthroplex, Super Male Vitality, and Brain Force Plus), Alex Jones, registers the domain name infowars.com.

Apr. 13, 2005 “Loose Change,” a YouTube video by Dylan Avery, goes viral as one of the first popular cultural documents to “coherently” argue 9/11 to be a false flag. Widespread proliferation of conspiracy theories ensues along with a massive increase in mistrust of the US government.

Late 2005 Pepe the Frog is unleashed from the Bay Area by comic artist Matt Furie, first on Furie’s MySpace, then published in 2006 in the comic zine Boy’s Club. Pepe gets picked up as a meme, and everyone knows what happens next.

Oct. 4, 2006 WikiLeaks is founded.

Apr. 2007 Silicon Valley venture capitalist Curtis Yarvin, aka Mencius Moldbug, launches his blog Unqualified Reservations, describing it as an “outlet for [his] deranged, extremist rants.” The site becomes a foundational trove for the Neoreactionary movement (NRx), the outrageously geeky, German Idealism-inspired cosplay-monarchist philosophical forbearer of the alt-right. It is later revealed that Trump advisor Steve Bannon is an avid reader of Moldbug.
Jan. 2009 In the immediate wake of the 2008 financial crisis, a group of editors – acting collectively under the pseudonym “Tyler Durden” (main protagonist/antagonist of “Fight Club”) – launches the conspiracy-minded economics news blog ZeroHedge. Some years later, one of the editors quits, claiming that he could no longer work within the constraints dictated to them by the site’s Kremlin-linked financial backers.

Jul. 20, 2012 At the Century 16 movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, James Holmes, clad in tactical gear, murders twelve people and injures 70. The mass shooting takes place during a midnight screening of the “The Dark Knight Rises.”

Aug. 2012 Julian Assange is granted asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he remains under house arrest. Bitter and vengeful for having been forced into inceldom (involuntary celibacy), Assange is determined to strike back at the US establishment.

2013: Cambridge Analytica is created. A UK-based data mining/analysis and global election management agency funded by billionaire Robert Mercer, CA provides “psychographic analysis” and “behavioral microtargeting” for various conservative initiatives and politicians, including the pro-Brexit campaign, Ted Cruz, and Donald Trump. Steve Bannon serves on the board of directors.

Apr. 15, 2013 Boston Marathon is bombed. Directly presaged by the 2010 black comedy by Chris Morris, “Four Lions,” the event inspires Reddit and 4chan to crowdsourced a massive investigation into the attack. The hivemind effort (obviously) fails, but the community generates a huge number of “alternate narratives,” which gain popularity.

Jun. 2013 Edward Snowden leaks classified documents about the digital capabilities of the “Five Eyes” intelligence community. He is granted asylum by Russia.
Mar. 8, 2014 Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, a Boeing 777 heading from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, deviates from its flight path and disappears over the Indian Ocean. Once again, a spontaneous crowdsourced investigation erupts on social media, and conspiracy theories proliferate. For a brief moment it seems that Courtney Love has identified debris in a satellite image, but it ends up being regular trash. The mystery remains unsolved; some speculate about Russian involvement.

May 23, 2014 Isla Vista killings: Releasing his manifesto, “My Twisted World,” Elliot Rodger – the self-styled “Supreme Gentleman” and 22-year-old kissless virgin incel son of a Hollywood producer – goes on a rampage, fatally shooting six of his UC Santa Barbara classmates (in an effort to kill normie sorority girls and “Chads,” he said) before killing himself. The /r9k/ 4chan board celebrates this event as the first victory of the Beta Uprising; circulation of Pepe and Wojak (the ego to Pepe’s id, aka Feels Guy; popularized by German-language Krautchan) intensifies.

Aug. 2014 GamerGate: Red-pilled misogynist gamer trolls, including Milo Yiannopoulos, harass a bunch of women who work in the video game industry. Playing out over social media (posts tagged #gamergate), the incident is a precursor to the alt-right Meme Wars to come.

Mar. 18, 2016 Bollea v. Gawker: Peter Thiel, angry about being outed as gay by Gawker years earlier, finances a lawsuit against the media platform filed by Terry Gene Bollea (aka Hulk Hogan) regarding a leaked sex-tape. Commenting on his motives for getting involved, Thiel explained: “If you’re a single-digit millionaire like Hulk Hogan, you have no effective access to our legal system.” On March 18, Bollea wins the case and Gawker, forced into bankruptcy, shuts down, its parts sold off to Univision.

May 2, 2016 The small UK football team Leicester City F.C. wins the Premier League championship, beating 5000 to 1 odds. It is described as the greatest upset in sporting history.

May 3, 2016 Donald Trump secures Republican party nomination, winning enough delegates in the US primaries to defeat his 16 rivals.

May 31, 2016 Elon Musk, on stage at the elite Californian tech community’s Code Conference, argues that the universe is a simulation, claiming there to be a billion-to-one chance that we are not characters living in a simulated reality.
Jun. 2016 The Cult of Kek emerges as Trump supporters on 4chan begin a semi-facetious religion based on a number of synchronicities surrounding Pepe the Frog who, recently transitioned from his #dankmeme identity, had become a symbol of white supremacy. Some 4channers connect Pepe with KEK, an alternate spelling of LOL (and coincidentally the same name as the frog-headed Egyptian god of chaos and darkness). One believer wrote a prediction: “Trump will win,” which was, by chance, the 77777777th post on the imageboard.

Jun. 6th, 2016 The Anti-Defamation League identifies ((Echos)) as a symbol of hate speech. The meme emerged from the influential alt-right podcast the Daily Shoah in 2014 as a way of targeting Jews online. It became widely reported when a chrome extension was created that automatically added the ((echos))
to known Jewish names. Subsequently, Jewish journalists and intellectuals on Twitter start ironically adding ((()')s to their user handles themselves. The Kekists are overjoyed; their memes are infecting mainstream metapolitics.

**Jun. 23, 2016** Brexit: in which 51.89% of UK voters choose to leave the EU in a totally unnecessary public referendum held by David Cameron as a gambit in an intraparty Tory political dispute. Journalists and financiers are totally blindsided.

**Jul. 6, 2016** Pokémon Go is launched by Niantic, a startup company spun off from Google, with connections to the US intelligence community. The crazily popular augmented reality app serves as a demo of Niantic’s newly developed ability to direct and coordinate the geospatial movements of millennials through gamification and nostalgia.

**Jul. 19, 2016** Professional troll and alt-right media personality Milo Yiannopoulos is permanently banned from Twitter for harassment. His fame grows immensely.

**Jul. 22, 2016** DNC Hack: WikiLeaks publishes a set of 20,000 private e-mails stolen from the Democratic National Committee. The hacker is identified as Guccifer 2.0, and taken to be a front for Russian intelligence. The leaked e-mails are seen to show a concerted effort by institutional Democrats to stave off a Berniebro insurgency, undermining confidence of Hillary Clinton even further.

**Aug. 2016** Facebook’s human team of “Trending News” curators replaced by an algorithm: “We do not want to be arbiters of truth ourselves,” Mark Zuckerberg explains, “but instead rely on our community and trusted third parties.” The change leads to a proliferation of misleading news items and the rise of “fake news” as both a hugely profitable industry and a hackneyed buzzword.

**Sep. 2016** For months, rumors about Hillary Clinton’s health had been circulating, many promulgated by RedPill Manosphere celebrity and author of “Gorilla Mindset” Mike Cernovich using the hashtag #sickhillary. On September 11th, Hillary collapses at a 9/11 memorial event; she is sick with pneumonia. Kekist shitposters immediately claim responsibility.
Sep. 27, 2016 The Anti-Defamation League declares Pepe a hate symbol: The hapless ADL, clearly unaware of the Streisand Effect, causes public awareness of Pepe and his fanbase’s esoteric neonazi ideology to reach an all time high. Kek cultists rejoice – it seems like they’ve begun to actually troll reality.

Sep. 30, 2016 Vice interviews a man with a Pepe hand tattoo. The man claims that inspiration for the image came from a stash of 420 Pepe and Wojak memes I had posted on Ello, the failed Facebook competitor, in 2014 (when Pepe and Wojak were not yet specifically alt-right symbols).

Oct. 3, 2016 Ello bans my account. When I appeal, Ello CEO Todd Berger writes to me via his assistant: “Daniel can take his fucking ignorant, abhorrent nazism elsewhere.”

Oct. 4, 2016 TzK asks me to cover WikiLeaks’s 10 Year Anniversary press conference, which is held at Berlin’s Volksbühne. In the days preceding, there is fevered chatter among the alt-right that their newly minted hero Julian Assange is set to unveil a bombshell “October Surprise,” dooming Hillary Clinton’s candidacy in one fell swoop. Infowars airs an all-night live special. In the morning, Assange appears via live-feed projected in the theater’s Roter Salon; he is wearing a t-shirt printed with the word TRUTH (it’s scrunched up and looks like it says RUTH, he apologizes for this). The media attention is used to announce that WikiLeaks will release a new leak every week until the election; less spectacularly, Assange advertises a 40% off anniversary sale for all WikiLeaks publications at Verso Books. Infowars host Alex Jones, realizing he’s been cucked by a coy Assange, grows irate and starts aggressively chanting, live on the air, the refrain from Ludacris’s “Move Bitch,” directed at Assange. You can see me tweeting in the front row of the press conference on the Infowars feed – I can die happy.

One hour after the Access Hollywood tape is released, WikiLeaks dumps the first set of Podesta E-mails, comprising 20,000 pages stolen from the Gmail account of 2016 Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta. It’s determined that the Russian intelligence-affiliated entity “Fancy Bear” is responsible for the hack. Besides proof that CNN anchor Donna Brazile shared debate questions with the campaign team in advance of the debate, little else of note emerges. At first the e-mails are heavily overshadowed by the Access Hollywood Tapes.
**Oct. 17, 2016** WikiLeaks posts to its Twitter account several “pre-commitment hashes,” a form of cryptographic proof-of-identity related to the 349 gigabyte “WikiLeaks Insurance” dossier. It is speculated that, were anything to happen to Assange, the key to these files would be triggered by a “dead man’s switch,” automatically releasing the information. Because of the suspicious tweets, Julian Assange death rumors circulate suggesting he’s been disappeared, killed, or somehow “compromised” by the CIA. Online, people demand #proofoflife from WikiLeaks, which it is reluctant to give. Meanwhile, Pamela Anderson, who is presumed to be dating Assange (because we live in a simulation), confirms via Twitter that he is alive and well.

**Oct. 28, 2016** One week before the US election, an unrelated investigation into Anthony Weiner – the living meme, disgraced Congressman, and husband of Clinton advisor Huma Abedin – for allegedly sexting an underage girl, yields previously undiscovered Clinton e-mails. Breaking with protocol, FBI director James Comey announces the reopening of the investigation into Clinton’s private e-mail server. This reinvigorates the Trump campaign, which, up to this point, had been utterly demoralized by the Access Hollywood tapes.

**Oct. 30, 2016** Pizzagate: At the behest of Mike Cernovich (of #sickhillary fame) and other alt-right ringleaders, the “weaponized autists” of 4chan’s /pol/ and Reddit’s r/TheDonald message boards begin obsessively combing through the Podesta e-mails. Finding a number of mentions of pizza therein (“cheese pizza” being slang for child porn), an unsubstantiated and outright deranged conspiracy theory emerges connecting the Washington, DC Pizza restaurant “Comet Ping Pong,” owned by John Podesta’s brother, to an elite satanic child sex abuse ring. Like most things on 4chan, this probably started as trolly shitposting, leading to gullible and paranoid readers taking it seriously. (On December 4th, a 28-year-old man named Edgar Welch is arrested for “self-investigating” the restaurant, threatening employees with an assault rifle.)
Nov. 2, 2016 The Chicago Cubs win the World Series for the first time in 108 years.

Nov. 2, 2016 The Chicago Cubs win the World Series for the first time in 108 years.

Marina Abramovic
@AbramovicM666

I'm not satanist! Stop it!

Nov. 4, 2016 Mistaking a relational aesthetics event for a twisted satanic ritual, the alt-right hivemind develops a conspiracy theory out of another find in the Podesta leaked e-mails: his invitation to Marina Abramovic’s “Spirit Cooking” event. The concern-trolling Pepe bros work themselves into a frenzy over this. The saga reaches its crescendo when RedPill pro-rape activist blogger Roosh V tweets his critical analysis of a performance art document. It is around now that, like Elon Musk, I also become convinced that we live in a simulation.

Nov. 8, 2016 Donald Trump actually fucking wins the US presidency, defying the predictions of every single poll, pundit, and the betting markets.

The Deep State blames Russia: In the immediate wake of the election, several leaks from the US intelligence community indicate their belief that Putin personally ordered the “hacking” of the American election, citing the DNC and Podesta leaks and the proliferation of fake news online.
Dec. 11th, 2016 “Guys. It’s time for some game theory,” tweeted the relatively obscure self-described “strategic analyst” Eric Garland, who went on to post an epically manic 120-tweet long conspiracy theory alleging Russian interference in a wide variety of American scandals. Liberals still in shock over the results of the 2016 election go crazy for it. Clara Jefferey, editor of Mother Jones, proclaims it to be a “Federalist Paper for 2016.” The Twitterstorm is relentlessly mocked and derided as “manthreading.”

Dec. 19, 2016 Merriam-Webster declares “surreal” the 2016 Word of the Year.

Dec. 21, 2016 I meet with TZK chief editor, Caroline Busta, at the Starbucks in Trump Tower. After posting some tweets about my visit, I am DM’ed by the managing director of Peter Thiel’s venture fund Mithril Capital, who I’d met at the 2012 DLD conference but hadn’t seen since. He invites me to dinner at Momofuku and explains to me that he is in town (secretly) to interview with the Trump transition team to be the head of the FDA. I’m convinced that I’ve summoned this encounter via the magick of FB algorithms. I ask him, “What drugs are you going to legalize?” and he responds “What drugs do you think I should legalize?” – I’m sold.

Dec. 25, 2016 Writer and singer of “Last Christmas,” George Michael dies on Christmas, because it’s 2016 and hyperreality has become unhinged.

Jan. 10, 2017 Peegate: 10 days before the inauguration, BuzzFeed leaks a 35-page dossier, containing unverified allegations that the Trump campaign had actively cooperated with Russia to tilt the election. The dossier is the result of an investigation, conducted on the behalf of a rival Republican campaign, by a former MI6 agent named Christopher Steele (which certainly sounds like a fictional name). It claims that Putin is blackmailing Trump with a video recording of the president-elect engaging in piss play with group of prostitutes. Many jokes about golden showers and leaking ensue. Trump calls this “fake news.”
Jan. 20, 2017 Donald Trump is inaugurated as the 45th president of the United States. His speech, presumably penned by his political advisor and Breitbart chairman, Steve Bannon, is relatively short and extremely dark. The phrase “American carnage” is spoken. Crowds are significantly smaller than Obama’s two inaugurations.
Alt-right leader Richard Spencer is punched in the face by a black bloc inauguration protester at the exact moment Spencer starts explaining the Pepe pin he sports on his lapel. The event is caught on video which gets remixed to music and goes viral; the left turns to Twitter to debate the ethics of punching Nazis.

National Park Service goes rogue. After retweeting an image comparing Obama’s inaugural crowd to Trump’s, the new administration orders the NPS to cease all online communications. In response to this order, an unofficial Twitter account, @AltUSNatParkService, is created by rogue park rangers. @POTUS account is meanwhile transferred to Trump, who begins retweeting @realDonaldTrump, which remains his main account (it has more followers).
Jan. 21, 2017 Protesting the Trump administration and GOP policy toward women, a massive Women’s March takes place in cities around the world. It’s unprecedentedly huge, completely eclipsing Trump’s inaugural crowd. “Pussy Grabs Back” is the prevailing tagline, leading self-defeating detractors on the left to call it (not inaccurately) a “meme parade.” It is nevertheless the first positive-seeming political development in a very long time.

Newly minted press secretary Sean Spicer, who famously admits to chewing and swallowing 50 pieces of cinnamon flavored gum a day, is directed by an obviously butthurt President Trump to combat the “fake news” about his inaugural crowd size. Widely panned as stammering, surreal, and deranged, Sean Spicer’s first press briefing gives us the now-famous, easily refuted lie that Trump received the “largest audience to witness an inauguration. Period.”

Breitbart announces it will expand to Berlin and Paris. The move is seen to be part of a concerted effort among an emerging international axis of ethnonationalists to undermine the liberal world order.

Jan. 22, 2017 In defense of the Spicer performance, Trump spokesperson Kellyanne Conway audaciously coins the poststructuralist-worthy neologism “alternative facts” during an impressively delusory exchange with Chuck Todd on MSNBC’s Meet the Press.

Feb. 2, 2017 During an interview with MSNBC’s Chris Matthews, Kellyanne Conway one-ups herself by justifying Trump’s anti-immigration “Muslim Ban,” citing a totally fictional terror attack that she calls the “Bowling Green Massacre”; she goes on to blame the swift backlash to this lie on “haters” within the Lügenpresse.
Feb. 5, 2017 The New England Patriots win the Super Bowl, beating the Atlanta Falcons 34 to 28, despite the Falcons being favored at 98% during halftime.