

We live in a hyper-mediated moment. The most extreme media theories of the twentieth century could hardly account for the most commonplace rituals of everyday life today. Truth is stranger than science fiction. The spectre of ‘fake news’ is only the most obvious example of the construction of contemporary reality, but the category of ‘post-truth’ is itself a dangerous dissimulation, because it wrongly suggests that we once had surer ontological grounds upon which to stand. As may or may not have been written in the Book of Ecclesiastes, ‘the simulacrum is never what hides the truth — it is truth that hides the fact that there is none’.

Metahaven tackle the subjectivity of mediation head-on, but also bring state actors and geopolitical forces back into the frame. Wars of position are today played out with the logic of channel surfing, their protagonists making infrathin appearances on CNN, 4chan and countless new Silk Roads. The precession of simulacra represented a lesser political problem when structures of power were still arborescent: you can’t packet-trace the subcultural significance of a pair of New Balance sneakers, and digital libraries are hard to burn. If literacy was a liberating force in the nineteenth century, and media literacy in the twentieth, surely platform literacy stands among our most urgent imperatives in the twenty-first. This is, as Metahaven well know, a new cinematic regime, not least because the lead actors of our time will never be seen in Hollywood. We are gasping for air.

Brad Haylock, 2020.

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***Field Report* was conceived and designed by Metahaven, Netherlands.**

Guest exhibition curators: Brad Haylock (RMIT) and Megan Patty (NGV).

<https://designhub.rmit.edu.au/exhibitions-programs/metahaven-field-report/>