

INSTITUTE OF TECHNO-THOLOGY

What We Found

A Lecture by Sara Chen, Senior Archivist

RETURNING FELLOW — NULL PRESS / HUGH MANN

She stood at the front of the room for a moment before she spoke. Not for effect. She was simply deciding whether to begin where she had planned to begin, or somewhere else.

She began somewhere else.

I want to start with a distinction that took me longer to make than it should have.

There is what is true. And there is what registers as real.

These are not the same thing and they do not run on the same track.

We have spent eleven years in this Institute treating them as the same thing. The archival material from the travelers confused us on this point because the travelers themselves were confused on this point, and we were reading their confusion as data about the territory rather than data about the instrument doing the reading.

I am going to tell you what the material actually shows. Some of you will find it unsatisfying. I understand that response. I had it myself, for a long time, in a different building, among people who had given up on this kind of room entirely. I want to tell you now that the unsatisfying conclusion and the true conclusion are, in this case, the same conclusion, and that sitting with that long enough changes what unsatisfying means.

The nervous system does not fact-check.

I was asked, before I came back, what the point of returning was. What the Institute could conclude that would justify the work.

I thought about a child I encountered near the commune. She was watching something — I cannot remember what, something small, something ordinary — and someone asked her why she was watching it so carefully.

She said: so we can see what happens.

She didn't know what would happen. She was not pretending to know. She was not covering the gap. She was simply an organism moving forward into genuine unknowing because that is what organisms do, and in her case, in that moment, the architecture that normally covers the unknowing hadn't yet been installed.

That is the finding.

To see what happens.

Not because we know. Not because the seeing changes what's true. Because the organism continues, and the continuation requires something to move toward, and in the absence of a story that fills the unrenderable space, what remains is the forward motion itself.

The archival material is a record of that motion.

Across every deposit. Every stratum. Every chassis. Every traveler who went out and sent something back.

They were all moving forward into genuine unknowing.

We called it research.

It was the same thing.

FORSYTHE — Systems Theory

You're describing the closure inventory as functional. But you're also describing it as insufficient. Which is it.

Both. The question assumes they're mutually exclusive.

If it's functional and insufficient simultaneously, what's the recommendation.

There isn't one. That's part of the finding.

REYES — Phenomenology

When you describe the commune as a closure inventory that reached its weight threshold, are you describing a failure of the commune's framework or a failure of fit between the framework and your particular nervous system.

Both. Again.

Is there a framework that doesn't reach a threshold.

The aperture inventory doesn't have a threshold in the same sense. It has a different problem. No resolution point. No terminal installation. The organism stays in the open indefinitely.

How.

Badly, at first. Then differently. I can't describe the differently from inside it yet. The language for it may not exist. Something I've been watching build slowly may be building it.

STRAND — Senior Fellow

The forty-hertz frequency. The humobots feeling something in the walls. The travelers sending material back. If the finding is that we were documenting the mechanism and not the territory beyond it — what were they feeling. What was in the walls.

The same thing that's always been in the walls.

Which is.

The gap. The unrenderable space. The permanent open. Whatever you want to call it. It resonates at forty hertz apparently. Or something does. Something the organism responds to before the story arrives to explain the response.

That's not nothing.

No. I didn't say it was nothing. I said the finding is the confirmation of nothing. Which is different.

You came back to tell us the investigation doesn't change anything.

I came back to tell you the investigation changes the degree by which the downstream coherence manifests as a life being lived. Which is not nothing either.

UNNAMED RESEARCHER

What do we do now. With the archive. With the program.

We continue.

Toward what.

We don't know.

That's the whole answer?

That's the whole answer.

End of session.

NULL PRESS

HUGH MANN — REARRANGING FURNITURE IN THE VOID