MIND MGMT: PARANOID NIGHTMARES OF A FUGITIVE REALITY

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Abstract

From 2012 to 2015, Matt Kindt created Mind MGMT, an ultra-paranoid world filled with mental hermaphrodites, children books and pop records that cause riots and revolutions and psychic snipers, all woven together through the elusive Mind Management program. Kindt re-creates fictionally both the breakdown of coherence and the fragmented narratives that make up life in the globalized 21st. century, where permanent crisis seems to be the current state of affairs. Kindt uses several devices to achieve this: fragmented and parallel narrative sequences, scaffolded and nested plot turns, fake ads and field guides. At the same time, Kindt draws on several genres and formats that use the search/production of both truth and reality as their dramatic engine: crime/espionage novels, conspiracy theories, investigative journalism and procedure manuals. This experimental comic/essay focuses on how the radical devices Kindt uses in creating Mind MGMT tap into the paranoid desire and fear of finding out how reality is produced, at the same time playing with the materiality and self-reference of the quotes it uses, drawing on scanned images of the comic itself.

Keywords: media, mind mgmt, matt kindt, reality, genres.

References

All images were taken from Matt Kindt’s Mind MGMT, published in six volumes by Dark Horse Books (2012-2015). All artwork is Matt Kindt’s.
PARANOID NIGHTMARES OF A FUGITIVE REALITY

From 2012 to 2015, Matt Kindt created Mind MGMT, a series published by Image. An ultra-paranoid water-coloured world filled with mental, hermaphrodites, psychic spies, dream couriers, children books and pop records that cause riots and revolutions over the whole world. All woven together through the elusive Mind Management program that gives title to the series.

On the roof of a building in Zanzibar, a man strangles a woman. They fall over the balcony with their corpses as background. A man throws a Molotov cocktail into a bookstore. Light by the door, a man shoots another. He walks closer, shots again. A woman touches the man's shoulder and slits his throat. Black.

Ever have a dream that was like a story...

And at the end of the dream there's a twist ending?

Some kind of shocking surprise?

How can you make that go on?

You're creating the dream.

How can you surprise yourself?

"In twenty-first-century Zanzibar, the city slumbered itself."

"Like a dream with a twist ending."

Lime is narrating the story to Meru, a "true crime" writer who just cannot concentrate enough to write her second book. Meru was the sole survivor of Zanzibar, Lyme leaves clues that allow her to talk to him and then erase her memory. Meru starts her quest again. Her life is a loop: She is oblivious to...

Imagine every horrible and paranoid thing you've ever read or imagined about a secret government organization.

The organization is Mind MGMT!

The first issue opens with this sequence of images:

Harry Lime's train of thought guides us over the images. He was Mind MGMT's most powerful agent, capable of controlling the thoughts of the people around him. One day, he snapped. And he made the citizens of Zanzibar murder themselves.

After the Zanzibar tragedy, Mind MGMT was dismantled. But someone is recruiting ex-agents. Meru finds her power is canceling other agent's powers. Lime trying to reform himself and Meru trying to understand start looking for agents, hoping to stop Mind MGMT from reforming.
Page 1

Background: Mind MGMT #28 (2014), Cover.

Panel 2: Mind MGMT #27 (2014), Cover.


Panel 6: Mind MGMT #5 (2012), Cover.

Panel 7: Mind MGMT #31 (2014), Cover.


Panel 9: Mind MGMT #1 (2012), Cover.

Panel 10: Mind MGMT #3 (2012), Cover.


Julianne Verve, a.k.a. The Fraser, wants Mind MGMT back together again. A sociopath with the power of erasing memories, Julianne is also the subject of Meru's first book, accused of murdering her husband and children. She is partially innocent. Her husband, P.R. Verve, Mind Mgmt agent and science fiction writer, had been both training and abusing her to the point of madness.

All of the comic's main characters find a turning point through love relationships. Meru's love story has been erased, so her romantic, doubts raised in a city. Duncan always knew what his partner feels and thinks. Juliane was sadistically abused in the name of love.

The modulation of subjectivities obliterates both the private and the public. The political and the personal are irrevocably blurred. Only confusion, numbness and violence remain.

If minds can be managed, how can you really love anyone? How can anyone really love you? If persuasion has been so methodologically developed, affective relationships cannot truly exist.

At the end of the day, all of those who have mind managed are irrevocably mind damaged.

Therapy Session 018: Subject is increasingly delusional. Fantasy scenarios are typical. Believes she is a "superagent."
Page 2


Panel 4: http://yeslab.org/un-celebrates-420


Panel 1: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com.mx/entry/comet-pizza-conspiracy-theory-fake-news_us_5844a17de4b09e21702f486c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com.mx/entry/comet-pizza-conspiracy-theory-fake-news_us_5844a17de4b09e21702f486c)


In MIND MGMT’s world, a worldwide network of monks records history. “A completely objective history. No color. No spins.”

The psychic network focuses back to MIND MGMT’s hidden headquarters: Shangri-La, where history is written by the Archivist.

Matt Kindt said, “the monks are my idea of what heaven is, heaven would be the monastery with the library,” where one could find “the truth about everything… the answer.”

So, a form of bliss is knowledge.

Knowing what actually happened.

Lyme cannot trust anything. His training includes unconsciously affecting people.

Meru’s memory is constantly erased. She is not able to build a coherent narrative about herself.

Bliss can be knowing what actually happened.

Because, actually, it’s really hard to understand what is going on with our lives. Our screens allow the world to flow in. We see tiny bits of every corner of the globe. We communicate with a swarm of people. Even the device with which we communicate has screens inside its screen.

If an average adult’s daily media consumption is nearly ten hours, if an average adult receives 100 messages a day,

How do we make sense of our lives?

How do we create a coherent narrative of our reality?

How do we unite all the pieces of our global lives?

Such is the way of reality, is it not?
Page 4

Background: *Mind MGMT* #24 (2014), Back cover.


Kindt recreates this condition by complexifying the comics page.

We get the regular “comic book” story inside a box marked by open letters and lines which indicate the borders of a “standard non-bleed field report.”

This is usually in print culture to indicate marks and corrections that won’t be printed but organize the page.

Outside the print area marked by open letters, we also find narratives, small drawings at the bottom, which usually depict Mind MGMT’s activities.

On the left side of the page, Kindt includes more complex narratives: interviews with agents, Navy’s first novel, psychiatric reports and most importantly, the MINI MGMT FIELD GUIDE.

The Field Guide is a fascinating text by itself, communicating to agents how to proceed in different situations.

IMMEDIATELY SEEK THE HELP OF A METAPHYSICIAN SO THAT NON-PHYSICAL WOUNDS DO NOT BECOME INFECTED.

The parallel and apparently divergent narratives offer different ways of reading the series, because keeping the three scaffolds together can be difficult and disorienting.

It was like watching two movies simultaneously—one with the left eye and a different one with the right.

But sometimes, the three divergent narratives melt together and make sense.

And that’s where paranoia kicks in.
Page 5

Background: Mind MGMT #24 (2014), Cover.


Panel 3: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/02/facebook-fake-news-flag-techcrunch-bs-detector

Panel 5: Mind MGMT #22 (2014), Cover.


But isn’t fiction the best way to become paranoid? That’s what we demand from it, isn’t it? We want to be able to get involved in a world with no “true threads.” Something coherent, where everything is tied up tightly. Where we have the author to blame.

Fiction is the place where a coherent reality does exist. Immersing oneself in a fictional world resembles a paranoid delirium, but one we can get out from.

At the same time, Rintl draws on several genres and formats that use the search/production of both truth and reality as their dramatic engine: crime/espionage novels, conspiracy theories, science fiction, investigative journalism, and procedure manuals.

A ghost or a shadow history that is right in front of you but that you can’t quite see.

Conspiracy theories assert that the evidence is hidden, there is a plan, and we are being led to. They are trying to control us. How can you get a hold of reality in a world that obeys espionage genre rules?

Who can you trust? NO ONE.

All of this genres take a strong position towards reality. Reality is something to doubt about, but the TRUTH, complete and absolute, is somewhere out there.

At the end of the series, Meru writes a MIND MGMT Field Guide: U.S. Agents are encouraged to adopt dogs on their free time and dispose the disks around them.

The “floppee” itself is packaged as a paranoid device: the back covers are filled with MIND MGMT ads, of and book covers, psychological profiles and questionnaires. Every detail has to be taken into account.

ADOPTION: Group home will provide unconditional love. Expenses paid. Please call!

Rintl takes advantage of the paranoid aspect of fiction. The comic is filled with references and case files, scaffolded narratives with nested implications.

NEW MGMT FIELD GUIDE: U.S. Agents are encouraged to adopt dogs on their free time and dispose the disks around them.

GET DIVORCED FROM REALITY!

TOO BROKE?

555-555-7734

The choice of a therapist is an important decision and should not be based solely on advertising.
Page 6


Panel 4:  [Fact-Check-Did-Obama-Create-ISIS](http://www.realtruenews.org/single-post/2016/08/11/FACT-CHECK-Did-Obama-Create-ISIS)


Panel 7, 8: *Mind MGMT* #14 (2013), Back cover.


Panel 3: *Mind MGMT* #16 (2013), Cover.

Panel 4: http://yeslab.org/pharmagreed


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