

T's World: The Over-identification of Terry Thompson / Ramon Bloomberg. 2014. Vimeo, 29 mins 30 secs. <https://vimeo.com/70174419> (Accessed 19 Feb 2020)

Winner of Honorable Mention award in two categories: animidoc and Short Doc Dok Leipzig 2014

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20141114125000/http://www.dok-leipzig.de/festival/preistraeger-2014/lobende-erwaehnung-kurzmetrage>).

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Over-identification: Taking the system more seriously than the system takes itself seriously

Over the course of 15 years Terry Thompson collected tigers, lions, bears, wolves, and other carnivorous animals, accumulating a menagerie of 60 or so creatures on his private ranch. Normally these animals could be purchased at the amish auction up at Mt. Hope. According to the Ohio regulations the authorities had no right to inspect or otherwise cast an eye upon Mr. Thompson's private menagerie. Thompson was known in the county as a dare devil Vietnam vet pilot, a collector of guns, motorcycles, cars, and carnivorous animals up at his 90 acre ranch known to the Police as T's World. Over the years an adversarial relationship developed between Thompson and the county police due to the perception that Thompson did not properly care for his animals, and the fear that they might escape exacerbated by the fact that the authorities could not legally inspect the cages. Years of regular complaints from neighbours culminated in Thompson's arrest and imprisonment for one year on weapons charges due to an expired permit for a machine gun. Upon returning from prison, the restrictions imposed upon Thompson by the judicial regime were severe enough to render him unable to care for the animals. On the evening of October 11 2011, Terry Thompson cut open his cages and made holes in the fences surrounding his 90 acre property. He laced his body with chicken parts and shot himself in the head allegedly expecting the animals to consume him, which they partially did. The sheriff was alerted to the animal release by a Woman who had seen a lion bounding near the highway. With two hours until nightfall, and without any means to control the animals the sheriff ordered his deputies to kill all of the animals. The subsequent hunt lasted for 24 hours and this event became an international media sensation for a few days.

This project unpacks themes that Terry Thompson had begun to open up through his dare devilry, collecting / accumulation, and ultimately his suicide. The project asserts that Thompson's practices were not abhorrent to the prevailing logic of anarcho-liberalism in the United States, if anything he has over identified with a radical liberal ideology that asserts the individual as an entrepreneur of himself and where the notions of governance are immediately connected to expectations of freedom that crystallise as "custom" and are often opposed to "law".

When has accumulation reached its permitted limit once all of life falls under an economic calculus? How can the "rules of the game" be understood when the custom admires and

permits liberties that the law finally does not allow? Was Terry Thompson's alleged over identification a political strategy?

The film, presents an introduction to these themes and concerns. The narrative elements of the film are strictly confined to the 300 pages of police reports from 2004 - 2011. Material from the documentation is narrated in voice over. The police interventions are visually recreated using state of the art 3D game technology. Production of the sequences was achieved within the game world by "playing" the game and capturing the "play". Within the game world the characters including humans, animals, vehicles, were scripted artificially intelligent "bots" that inhabit T's World, a digital recreation of Terry Thompson's property and areas of Zanesville Ohio. These automated "bots" are set loose in the world with only the rudimentary rules of the script to determine their behaviour. Other elements of the film were filmed in Zanesville Ohio in October 2012. The interviews and scenes are framed by a "theatrical" discourse that references Brecht's learning plays, in particular the work "He Said Yes / He Said No" with its concern with the idea of the custom.

The game world began from the intersection of the desire to stage re-enactions of the police reports for the film, and the awareness of a paradoxical "game" in the unpacking of these themes. The contradictions inherent in the anarcho-liberal regime are embedded in the "rules of the game". Each entrepreneur / enterprise operates within a game arena that asserts a free-play of interactions governed by points of control that attempt to police the inevitable frictions that arise from a free market. Funnily enough the creation of a game world and the need to code "rules of the game" seems fitting and suggests a performativity in form. This part of the project presents game world scenarios in which the spectator / participant has free play within the world and according to the "rules of the game". As a collaborative project the rules of the game in T's World are continuously changing. T's world is the site of experimentation in game world governance.