

## BRANDON BANDY / RACHEL JACKSON

*MYSTIC CACHET*

JUNE 21 - AUGUST 9, 2025

*Mystic Cachet* marks the 5 year return of Brandon Bandy and Rachel Jackson to St. Louis, Missouri, and the reemergence of their collaborative practice. Grounded in their shared Midwestern and Rust Belt origins, the exhibition considers the recent phenomenon of “Schuylkill Notes”: small conspiratorial texts folded and placed in public spaces across Eastern and Central Pennsylvania. This is one example of Jackson and Bandy’s broader interests in vernacular public art and its relation to a history of “Conceptual Art.”

In the wake of a decade of art that has largely functioned as affirmational, many have become averse to addressing conspiracy within contemporary practice. However, if our post-industrialization, post-readymade framework for artistic production is oriented around a reconsideration of meaning or a fracturing of communication, what better territory to explore? Conceptual art (in its purest [most disputed] form), as it asserts agency through alternative modes of distribution and eschews conventions, exists parallel to conspiracy, and especially to the ideology of the sovereign citizen, whose entire project is predicated upon asserting autonomy, often through the retooling of language (i.e. quantum grammar) as a means of reclaiming its inherent power. Sovereign citizens, who may very well be the most rigorous conceptualists of our time, aim to dictate their own reality, challenging conceptions of legality and social convention, whether through the construction of personally designed drivers licenses, license plates, or attempts to create optimized, perfectly objective methods of communication. Within this realm, a genre of public vernacular art has emerged.

Public vernacular art adheres to many of the precedents established by conceptualism, particularly in its production and distribution outside of standardized frameworks and insistence upon site-specific or situationally-derived works. Though their work is contingent upon mass-dissemination and public visibility, the creators of public vernacular art often deny access to their visionary personas, choosing instead to work anonymously; a decision that only serves to enhance the intrigue of their practice. If conceptual art sought to dematerialize the art object, public vernacular art dematerializes the artist itself—leaving viewers to ruminate upon cryptic traces of legibility and open-ended assertions. The Schuylkill note and its spiritual predecessor, the Toynbee tile (a series of asphalt-embedded linoleum tiles that originated in Philadelphia and featured cryptic messages such as “*TOYNBEE IDEA IN MOVIE ‘2001 RESURRECT DEAD ON PLANET JUPITER’*”), have both spawned robust online communities devoted to deciphering their text and speculating about their makers. Like conceptual art, with its intent to spur a specialized, practitioner-based field of discourse akin to the sciences, public vernacular art has forged a niche following, with affiliates highly attuned to tracking its transmission and intent.

The Schuylkill note, named for its initial dissemination within the eponymous Schuylkill county in northeast Pennsylvania, manifests itself as an index card-sized piece of copy paper, filled edge-to-edge with conspiratorial musings. Typically folded into six quadrants and pinned behind leaves with colored thumbtacks or enclosed in a protective layer of clear plastic secured by a paperclip, the notes have been planted across Pennsylvania and are most commonly found in state parks or tucked into food packaging at grocery stores. Their contents, written in abbreviated syntax and

marked with irregularly underlined phrases, insist upon the existence of secret societies (and shapeshifting reptilian extraterrestrials) that reveal themselves through the visual signifiers that surround us.

Within *Mystic Cachet* Bandy and Jackson use community generated suggestions for tracking the Schuylkill Note creator as formal cues for the production of this work. A recurring motif of sporadically shifting holes unites works in the exhibition, derived from Machine Identification Codes—imperceptible dot matrices of code unbeknownst to most, printed in yellow ink on nearly any printed document. Both a formal choice and a practical one, these codes provide a timestamp for when and how these artworks were produced. Likewise trailcam photographs line architectural features of the gallery, documenting an anonymous individual pinning notes on trees. Outside the gallery a decoy parcel containing a trailcam is activated during open hours or appointments, indexing visitors' presence at the gallery. Additionally, a boot print stamping device—devised by the artists—considers the idea of tracing the note-distributor through footprints they might leave behind.

In December of 2024 Bandy and Jackson ventured to several state parks throughout central Pennsylvania, finding notes themselves and creating photogrammetric scans of foliage that have been translated into 3D-printed wood infused PLA sculptures. These sculptures, titled after their locations, are then submerged in a photographic hydrographic film, camouflaging them with images of the gallery's woodpaneled walls.

*Mystic Cachet* attempts to translate the aura and modality of public vernacular art into a series of works that channel its enigmatic nature, providing viewers with subtle clues that point towards meaning, yet evade its resolution. Truth remains elusive, perhaps ever fruitless, but the quest for interpretation continues.

Brandon Bandy and Rachel Jackson are artists and publishers in Long Beach California. They co-operate Special Effects, a publishing studio producing art books and ephemera, and co-run cooperative gallery Timeshare in Los Angeles. Both projects prioritize artists whose practices consider the intertwine of information technology, economy, conspiracy, and visual culture within postindustrial society.

Brandon Bandy received an MFA from University of California Riverside in 2023 and BA from Webster University in 2017.

Rachel Jackson is presently a MFA candidate at University of California Riverside and received a BFA from Washington University in 2019.

Recent solo and group exhibitions include Weatherproof, Chicago IL, The Fulcrum Press, Los Angeles, CA.