



Published on the occasion of the exhibition *Alternative 23* with Steve Aylett, David Blandy & Daniel Locke, Let Me Feel Your Finger First, Laura Oldfield Ford, Plastique Fantastique and Henrik Schrat at IMT Gallery, London, curated by Mark Jackson.

Published by IMT Press

IMT Gallery, London  
www.imtgallery.com

Image: *Myth Science Communiqué: Evolution of Neuropatheme 2.0 – Time-Stretch-Tool* (2014) by Plastique Fantastique

Text: Mark Jackson

© Plastique Fantastique, Mark Jackson and IMT Gallery 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission in writing by the publishers.

ISBN 978-0-9551449-6-7

Printed in the United Kingdom

Supported by



## Alternative 23

In 1985 DC Comics in the US had taken the commercial decision to unify the complex and contradictory character story arcs from its various strips such as Superman, Batman and Green Lantern. The resultant crossover series, *Crisis on Infinite Earths*, saw the heroes attempting to align all of the surviving Earths into one single reality that would then make DC Comics continuity more straightforward so as not to confuse potential new readers.

In 1987 Grant Morrison and Steve Yeowell's *Zenith*, a politically-engaged superhero comic strip originally published in British weekly 2000 AD, brought together a group of superheroes from across multiple realities to battle a mysterious Lovecraftian threat. This threat is intent on aligning all the universes, or 'Alternatives', into one, simple universe. Rather than reduce the complex and the inconsistent into the singular, the heroes of *Zenith* attempt to defend and maintain multiplicities. They meet on a world in Alternative 23.

Exhibition text from *Alternative 23* at IMT Gallery

## Alternative 13: Of Doughnut Forms and Meat Patty Forms

We might imagine the realities of the comic book as having some relation to an external reality, like William S. Burroughs' concept of reality as a film in a studio that, if you have access to it, can be cut and edited and moved back and forth into new and malleable universes. It might appear to be a simpler universe with the emotive limitations of all-uppercase and the structural economy of word balloons and thought clouds. It might appear to be more egalitarian than other Alternatives, and full of hope.

Who are we who are doing the imagining? We are representatives of Alternative 13. When imagining Alternatives other than our own we can only suggest how they seem to us, not how they are. We are aware of Alternative 23 as a different Alternative. This is Alternative 13, an Alternative familiar to you as the *Friday 13th* film franchise, and which appears to you mainly in the form of movies, comics and other such things. Alternative 13 moves alongside both your Alternative and Alternative 23, each fluctuating and reforming. And so, using the world we see around us to describe another to you, this is the story of a movie franchise watched out of sequence and cut in with Alternative 23.

Alternative 13 does not need to conform to the conventions of other Alternatives. It is the creation of old futures from new capital. An advert for *Friday 13th* (1980) appeared in your Variety Magazine on Independence Day 1979. Then it was merely a title, words bursting through glass, an ad for a movie which at that point had no film, no story, no plan; a conduit for summoning need-without-content. Like your conceptual arts in which the idea takes precedence over more material concerns, here in Alternative 13 matter only exists to carry ideas.

The final sequence of *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday* (1993) sees the glove of Freddy Kruger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) reach up from Hell to grasp Jason’s mask. There is no need to prefigure this new narrative. Here ideas are more real than time. Ideas are property.

Here the physical geography alters to accommodate ideas: In *Friday 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* (1989) there is no attempt to describe a feasible geography from Crystal Lake to New York. Here in Alternative 13 ideas are more real than matter. In Alternative 13 characters don’t develop in any traditional sense because ideas are more real than human beings.

So what of this Alternative of ideas? What are its slasher-physics and slasher-politics? Here lifecycles are both short and infinite: we die and return in a perpetual loop. Like the labour-saving animation loops of cartoon characters in hand-drawn animated features, we loop and acts and loop again. Where you have art in galleries we have an axe in the forehead, piles of corpses, a severed finger on a dresser, a gun held to the back of the head popping brains out over the page.

Yet although Alternatives appear autonomous we all fluctuate with other Alternatives, ecologically collecting new behaviours and traits. So Jason does this, adopting arbitrary sociocultural narratives each time he respawns: paraphysical impacts of domestic violence in *Friday 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (1988); nano technology, cryogenic suspension and androids as immortality for a new millennium in *Jason X* (2001); wrestling moves, the spectre of Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* as a post-911 signifier of Justice in *Freddy vs Jason* (2003).

On Alternative 13 films end and begin and end and begin, playing out as channels for the overflow of psychocultural waste, full of swallowed meanings.

What must we look like to you? You think about your freedom, your plenty and your gifts but you are so obsessed with time. Time holds little meaning here. When the franchise began we were process, stock characters brought into being and slaughtered with the efficiency of industrial farming. Each of us is systematically culled, and preferably before we reach maturity. We are then routinely hung for display. In *Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday*, bounty hunter Creighton Duke describes us as “doughnuts”: which in your Alternative is a high-energy food with little depth or nutrition; processed, captured, coded, commodified, and made into food. Jason himself is also processed but retains a fleshy consistency: his familiar hockey mask is sold in a diner deal as a meat patty with French fries as fingers, with a new patty made out of the empty eye sockets of the old.

Time holds little meaning here. Meat lumps wrapped in cloth, dripping juices over boxes of doughnuts. The doughnuts are soft machines respawning, the meat patty is a soft machine respawning. Jam oozes out of the doughnuts onto the cameras of your Alternative. Meat juices spraying and spurting from skewer holes in the patty body. Each ooze is an advertisement for new doughnuts. Each new batch is eager to be delivered, they never stop coming. Each spray and spurt adds to the consistency and continuity of the meat, so that when in the final sequence the patty is, once more, whole and reconstituted you are not shocked. It is meat minced back into a burger: killed, cut into pieces, minced and yet new; beheading, disembowelling, freezing and shattering, skewering through genitals, snapping in half and concussing into mulch. Here in Alternative 13 these scenes are not punishment but creative play. We have been granted immortality and access to the reality studio, jumping through the Manhattan of our Alternative with no interference from the requirements of time. Time seems so important in your Alternative. Here, it doesn’t matter how we travel, only that travel is necessary for new ideas.

Finally we do not understand your Good and Evil. In the Hell of Alternative 13 we are in Heaven, we are allowed to indulge in our compulsions as punishment. Jason is good *and* evil, cop *and* robber. No system can contain him because he is the system, he is Alternative 13. This is a conflict loop repeated like a disaster reel on rolling news but spawning new reactions at every pass. Although perhaps this is something you understand, for you cheer for the meat patty.

We on Alternative 13 are aware of Alternative 23, but we can’t describe it because we don’t have the language and we don’t develop theory properly. So these pulp forms are merely an old world mapped onto the new one.

Alternative 13

