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BLASTRADIUS
No. 4 in a Series of Data Humanization Performances

Adriene Jenik



Adriene Jenik, BLAST RADIUS, April 2018. Images courtesy of the artist.¹

At around 7:30 p.m. on April 13, 2017, the US government dropped the Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) bomb near the Moman Dara village in the Asad Khel area in the Achin district of Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan. Nicknamed the “Mother of All Bombs,” the weapon is the largest nonnuclear weapon in the US arsenal, with a blast radius, meaning the area in which serious effects to people and structures can be felt, of a mile. While the MOAB was the largest weapon released, it was but one of 4,361 air weapons that targeted Afghanistan during 2017, according to US Air Forces Central Command declassified airpower summaries.

At 7:30 a.m. on April 13, 2018, the anniversary of this event, I walked a path equivalent to the blast radius of MOAB on land in Arizona. This walk memorialized the civilians killed, the villages terrorized, the populations forced to migrate, and the lands scarred as a result of the endless wars being carried out in the name of protecting US citizens.

People who were interested followed a live stream via the Museum of Walking social media account. Approximate time: six hours. I walked barefoot.

This performance is part of my Data Humanization Series, which emerges from the field of data visualization and big data analytics. Within this field, large and complex data sets are presented through visual effects that render them “readable.” In contrast to this trend toward distilling huge data sets, each of my “data humanization” performances seeks to physically “translate” a single data point so that it can be more fully comprehended by myself and others. Chosen data points are numbers that trouble or baffle me. As US culture and power are increasingly militarized, I have observed that much real data is increasingly hidden. Even when visible, such data are hard to take in—for example, the over 120,000 Iraqi civilian deaths as the result of the (now widely disparaged) Iraq War, the enormity of the destruction wreaked by a bomb with a blast radius that runs a mile in each direction, or the eighty-plus hours of sleep deprivation detailed in CIA documents that came to light in the declassified summary of the US Senate torture report.

I seek to imprint these data points within my body, and I invite my audiences to serve as witnesses and aids.

* * *

Adriene Jenik is an artist and educator who resides in the desert. Her computer and media art spans 3 decades, including pioneering work in interactive cinema and live telematic performance. Jenik’s current creative research projects include “data humanization” performances, immersive learning experiments and

street performances reading “climate futures” with her ECOTarot deck. At Arizona State University, she serves as Professor of Intermedia in the School of Art.

Notes

¹ *BLAST RADIUS* (2018) is available for viewing at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3rb6n5q7#supplemental>.