

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.



MIND MGMT PARANOID NIGHTMARES OF @ FUGITIVE REALITY

From 2012 to 2015, Matt Kindt created *Mind MGMT* (comic, 36+ issues, published by Dark Horse), an ultra-paranoid water-coloured world filled with mental, hermaphrodites, psychic snipers, 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.



MIND MGMT
matt kindt

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:

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. Right by the door a man shoots another. He walks closer, shoots 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 your mind do that to you?

You're creating the dream.

How can you surprise yourself?



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.

"In twenty-four hours the city slaughtered itself."

"Like a dream with a twist ending."

Lyme 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 find him and then erases her memory. Meru starts her quest again. Her life's a loop she is oblivious to.



After the Zanzibar tragedy, Mind Management was dismantled. But someone is recruiting ex-agents. Meru finds her power is canceling other agent's powers. Lyme (trying to redeem himself) and Meru (trying to understand) start looking for agents, hoping to stop MIND MGMT from reforming.

MIND MGMT FIELD GUIDE: 1-17. Use of air and found objects is ideal for embedding messages and leaving precursors if an agent is unable to surface.

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PAGE 1

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

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

Panel 3: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/the-secret-agenda-of-a-facebook-quiz.html?_r=1

Panel 5: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), pp. 11-14.

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

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

Panel 8: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 129.

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

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

Panel 12: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/us/fake-news-partisan-republican-democrat.html>

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Immortals* (2013), p. 26.

WHEN FILING REPORT ALL ESSENTIAL DETAILS MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON-BLEED FIELD REPORT

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.

I can grab the thoughts from anything within a fifteen mile (approximate) radius of me.

Aggregate all those thoughts and predict the future.

And then there's Duncan.

I get bored really easily.

er. A disguise. A mask. My husband is a mole. A spy. And he's slowly erasing my mind."

All of the comic's main characters find a turning point through Love relationships.

Meru's love story has been erased. Lyme's romantic doubts razed a city. Duncan always knows what his partner feels and thinks. Julianne was sadistically abused in the name of Love.

"Was hee... Love real?"

"Or... was I manufacturing it?"

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.

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

Isn't this what we all do, though? Try to predict a reaction? To get the response we want?

IS ANYTHING EVER TRULY REAL?

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

MIND MGMT FIELD GUIDE: 3:21. As a rule of thumb, if you cannot psychically determine whether a situation is a trap...it IS a trap.

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

PAGE 2

Background: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 5: *The Eraser* (2015), p. 18.

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 92.

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT* #9 (2013), p. 22.

Panel 3: Background: *Mind MGMT* #23 (2014), Cover.

Subpanels: *Mind MGMT* #10 (2013), pp. 4-5.

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

Panel 5: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 108.

Panel 8: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), Back cover.

Dialogue: *Mind MGMT* #10 (2013), p. 9.

Panel 9: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), p. 169.

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 14.

Footer: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), p. 12.



PAGE 3

Background: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 5: *The Eraser* (2015), p.19.

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

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), pp. 109-110.

Panel 4: First paragraph, red font: James Kaplan, «*Mind MGMT* by Matt Kindt», *Panel Patter*, October 27, 2014. <http://www.panelpatter.com/2014/10/Mind-mgmt-by-matt-kindt-series-review.html>

Panel 7: <http://boingboing.net/2016/08/25/scarfolk-win-your-human-right.html>

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 106.

Footer: *Mind MGMT*, Vol 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 15.

WHEN FLING REPORT ALL ESSENTIAL DETAILS MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON-BLEED FIELD REPORT

<p>In MIND MGMT's world, a worldwide network of monks record history: "A completely objective history. No color. No spins".</p> <p>The psychic network focuses back to MIND MGMT's hidden headquarters: Shangri-La, where history is written by the Archivist.</p>	<p>I see it flicker in front of me.</p> <p>My expectations of what it would be.</p> <p>What I want it to be.</p> <p>And finally...what it actually is.</p> <p>Shangri-La</p>	<p>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".</p>
<p>So, a form of bliss is knowledge.</p> <p>Knowing what actually happened.</p> <p>Lyme cannot trust anything. His training includes unconsciously affecting people.</p>	<p>Meru's memory is constantly erased. She is not able to build a coherent narrative about herself.</p>	<p>Bliss can be knowing what actually happened.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>REASON WE'RE HERE.</p> <p>OMED LIFE</p>	<p>If an average adult's daily media consumption is nearly ten hours, if an average adult receives 10k messages a day.</p> <p>How do we make sense of our lives?</p> <p>How do we create a coherent narrative of our reality?</p> <p>How do we unite all the pieces of our global lives?</p>

MATRYOSHKAS FIELD GUIDE: 13.2. Strict attention must be paid to surrounding personalities. Greed and materialism will be your greatest weapons.

So you're saying the only thing that's going to hold this building together is the shared belief of the agency?

Such is the way of reality, is it not?

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

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT* #11 (2013), p. 19.

Panel 3: Abraham Riesman, «Talking to *Mind MGMT* Creator Matt Kindt About Spies and Hard-core Pornography», *Vulture: Devouring Culture*, November 21, 2014.

<http://www.vulture.com/2014/11/Mind-mgmt-matt-kindt-comics.html>

Panel 4, 5, 6: *Mind MGMT* #12 (2013), p. 12.

Panel 7: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-real-paranoia-inducing-purpose-of-russian-hacks>

Panel 8: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), pp. 158-159.

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 14.

Footer: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 145.

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Kindt recreates this condition by complexifying the comics page.

We get the regular "comic book" story inside a box marked by cyan letters and lines which indicate the borders of a "standard non-bleedfield report."

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

Outside the print area marked by cyan lines, 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, Meru's first novel, psychiatric reports and most importantly, the MIND MGMT Field Guide.

FIELD GUIDE: 3.14. Remember that when you are "alone with your thoughts", you are NEVER alone with your thoughts.

Hit the only underground Julianne's numbers. I had to go back as far as I could. To New York. Where some of her family still resides.

I'm home for business.

Go on in.

Who?

Melina. You sent me a letter.

How the hell did you get up here? I've got this place walled-off with protection and it's easier to get into Fort Knox.

Yeah, cute. Definitely let me in.

Could have sworn I had my gun with me.

Even touching the letter was a risk.

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.

This is a pipe.

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

And that's where paranoia kicks in.

There are still a few of the early assassination letters floating around out there somewhere.

PAGE 5

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

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT* #7 (2012), p. 7.

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

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

Panel 6: <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/11/23/503146770/npr-finds-the-head-of-a-covert-fake-news-operation-in-the-suburbs>

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 76.

Footer: *Mind MGMT* #7 (2012), p. 9.

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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 "loose threads" Something coherent, where everything is tied up tightly. Where we have the author to blame...

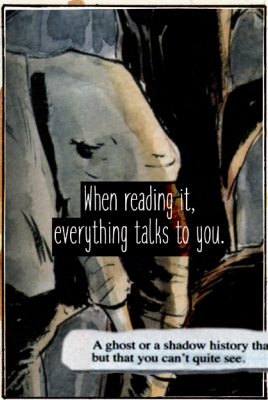
Fiction is the place where a coherent reality does exist. Immersing oneself in a fictional world resembles a paranoid delirium, but one we can get out from.



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

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

The "floppie" itself is packaged as a paranoid device: the back covers are filled with MIND MGMT ads, cd and book covers, psychological profiles and questionnaires, every detail has to be taken into account.



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, science fiction, investigative journalism and procedure manuals.

I think you should go.



Conspiracy theories assert that the evidence is hidden, there is a plan, and we are being lied 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 these genres take a strong position towards reality. Reality is something to doubt about, but the TRUTH, complete and absolute, is somewhere out there.

We know.



GET DIVORCED FROM REALITY!
TOO BROKE?
CALL NOW IF YOU'RE MORALLY BANKRUPT!
555-555-7734

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

At the end of the series, Meru writes a NEW mental health should be put above all other than two corruption can't help but grow. One

NEW MGMT FIELD GUIDE: 1:15. Agents are encouraged to simply focus on those near them and improve the lives around them.

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Background: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 170.

Panel 2: *Mind MGMT* #7 (2012), p. 12.

Panel 3: *Mind MGMT* #14 (2013), Back cover.

Panel 4: <http://www.realtruenews.org/single-post/2016/08/11/FACT-CHECK-Did-Obama-Create-ISIS>


Panel 5: *Mind MGMT* #8 (2012), p. 17.

Panel 6: *Mind MGMT* #26 (2014), Cover.

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

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 172.

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Don't you see? I can't trust anyone! Any feeling! Anything!

But...

Certainty and madness go well together. Lyme's radical certainty turned into Zanzibar's tragedy. MIND MGMT's radical certainty and secrecy turns human lives into cannon fodder.

The business of doubting reality carries with itself the danger of paranoia. The whole world revolves around the paranoid. Everything is there just for him/her. Only the paranoid is real.

Absolute knowledge demands absolute control.




KNIFE SKILLS
16 New Ways to Slice, Dice, Chop, and Butcher

SCRAPBOOKING
Preserve the Memories You Want Most

VACATION
From Reality

But doubting reality is also the seed of spirituality. The quest for truth and reality is not only scientific, but also spiritual. Mount Meru is the center of all universes in Hindu, Jainist and Buddhist cosmologies. Meru is dangerous because her power cancels other agents' powers. The center is a lonely place. How can the center understand itself? Only through others. Uncertainty can also beget trust which is a form of love.

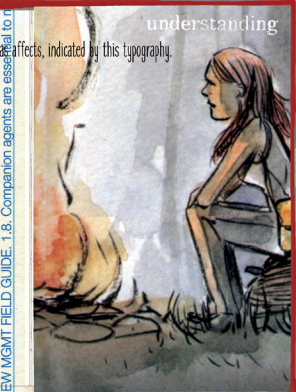


But what's interesting... is the next move isn't an obvious one.

Someone asked kindt if he was paranoid. His answer was simple: "No, but I think my reader's are"

MIND MGMT is designed to induce a paranoid state in the reader; everything can be read as a sign.

Do you know how long it's been since I've felt... doubt?



understanding

When we stare at our screens, we are alone, but everything talks to us, at the center of a very lonely reality. *Pokemon Go* has already shown how corporations and technology manage our movements and our bodies.

Who is managing your mind?

Reality always escapes us.



But we may yet learn how to manage it.

MIND MGMT Field Guide: Communication and concerns. When any organization becomes larger agent alone invites insanity. But two...

maintaining an agent's physical and mental health.
 world effects, indicated by this typography.
 NEW MGMT FIELD GUIDE: 1.8. Companion agents are essential to

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Background: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 3: *The Home Maker* (2014), p. 171.

Panel 1: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 120.

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

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

Panel 5: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 5: *The Eraser* (2015), p. 25.

Panel 6: Abraham Riesman, «Talking to *Mind MGMT* Creator Matt Kindt About Spies and Hard-core Pornography», *Vulture: Devouring Culture*, November 21, 2014. <http://www.vulture.com/2014/11/Mind-mgmt-matt-kindt-comics.html>

Panel 9: *Mind MGMT*: Sorteo para aparecer dibujado en uno de los numeros de la serie de Matt Kindt, *Play Reactor*, August 12, 2013. <https://play-reactor.com/2013/08/12/Mind-mgmt-aparezcan-dibujados-en-uno-de-los-numeros-de-la-serie-de-matt-kindt/>

Field guide: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 166.

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Anuncio original: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), p. 182

Panel 1 a 3: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 1: *The Manager* (2013), p. 128.

Subtext: *Mind MGMT* #10 (2013), p. 15.

Panel 4: *Mind MGMT* #8 (2012), p. 15.

Subtext: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 150.

Panel 5: *Mind MGMT* #10 (2013), p. 14.

Subtext: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 150.

Panel 6: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 151.

Panel 7: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 4: *The Magician* (2014), p. 127.

Subtext: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 5: *The Eraser* (2015), p. 43.

Panel 8, Subtext: *Mind MGMT*, Vol. 6: *The Immortals* (2016), p. 88.