



notes on a yellow manifesto, version 1.3 (February 2015)

I recently began assembling a collection of NOAA emergency weather radios. The first: a plastic silver rectangle with a crank that never seems to give it enough power, the dynamo spinning without any sense of generation. The second: bright, yellow, rugged plastic with a solar panel on the back, which I have yet to test. The third: a hand held, battery operated Midland device from Cabela's off the I-94. The fourth: a fragile square box with a sticker on the side reading "imitation rosewood," a Realistic crystal radio, sensitive to even the most minor fluctuations and disruptions of the 160.165 mHz frequency.

It's oddly pleasant, reassuring and disturbing, to listen to the automated male and female voices reading (transmitting?) information about the direction of the winds over Lake Michigan, the temperature at O'Hare and the "extended outlooks" as I work in my studio. I feel located as I flip on a switch, allowing the stream of current conditions and forecasts to wash over me in a low, automated murmur. Taking stock of the weather each morning is an attempt at inoculation; a barricade against the rising waves of anxiety that I am not prepared — we are not prepared — for the changes ahead.

In their manifesto *Six Theses on Anxiety and Why It is Effectively Preventing Militancy, and One Possible Strategy for Overcoming It*, Plan C and the Institute for Precarious Consciousness — an anonymous coalition of U.K. artists and activists — outline cultural anxiety to be the dominant affect of our time. The manifesto points to anxiety as a public secret and asserts that in systems of capital public secrets are typically personalized: "Today's public secret is that everyone is anxious. Anxiety has spread from its previous localized locations ... to the whole of the social field." In a lecture she delivered on "Anxiety, Whitman, Sympathy" last fall, political philosopher and feminist theorist Jane Bennett drew the conclusion from *Six Theses* that: "Indeed, we might think of anxiety as a narrowing or constriction of the conduits between inside and outside. In anxiety, it becomes harder to discern what's out there, and this straining and squinting distorts our reception of the scene. Anxiety, in other words, is not conducive to the subtle readings of the political landscape required for effective forms of intervention into it."

I have been secretly wanting to write a manifesto, like they did in 1968 and 1969 and 1972.

Arising at times of perceived urgency, manifestos assert a desire for — if not a direct call to — action. They congeal in relation to a set of concerns that need airing, emerging when cultural actors feel an irreconcilable need to do something, say something, *anything*. Manifestos attempt to serve as utopic guidebooks, mapping the dystopic conditions of the present to shepherd in a new way forward.

But I have no roadmap.

In a world of global capital, rowing on the ocean of the technological sublime, I feel adrift.

But I know I am not alone on this raft, listening, observing, recording, grieving, desiring, caring. I am not alone in my anxieties, in my desire for survival, persistence, resistance and change.

And so a manifesto has bubbled up.

A little over a year ago I began collecting color-coded emergency preparedness charts. Although individually differentiating in hue and saturation, the charts invariably gradate from yellow to orange to red with varying levels of severity. The U.K. Met Office's "Weather Warning Guide" has outlined four, clear, chromatic, responsive steps in case of emergency: red for "take action," orange for "be prepared," yellow for "be aware," and green for "there is no severe weather at this time."

As *Six Theses* point out, the public secret that we are all very anxious isolates and prevents us from reaching the red of "take action." And for all the family pack emergency preparedness totes and backpacks I have seen in Walmart and REI, I remain unfortified by the orange security of "be prepared." Yet I think few would agree that we occupy the calming green that signals "there is no severe weather at this time."

So yellow. The color signaling: "Be Aware." A provocation; an inoculation; a "yellow alert."

