

## ‘Suzanne Treister: Hexen 2.0’ at P.P.O.W

By Will Heinrich  
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Suzanne Treister makes ink drawings of charts and oversized Tarot cards. The Tarot cards picture people, companies, agencies, concepts, and things, like H.G. Wells, Google, DARPA, LSD, and cyberwar (Ace of Swords). They bring to mind a 2002 review in *The New Yorker*, in which Cynthia Ozick quotes Saul Lieberman introducing a lecture by the eminent Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem with the subsequently famous but possibly apocryphal epigram, “Nonsense is nonsense, but the history of nonsense is scholarship.” Ms. Treister’s cards are scanned, printed, and individually painted with watercolor in editions of six. One of the charts, titled *From Diogenes of Sinope to Anarcho-Primitivism and the Unabomber via Science-Fiction*, looks like an allegorical etching from a late alchemical treatise, or like something William Blake (Five of Wands) might have produced if he’d been looking over his shoulder instead of into his own soul. The Macy Conferences, the show’s central obsession, were a series of interdisciplinary conferences, held from 1946 to 1953, which brought together leading scientists from various fields and spawned advances in computer science and CIA mind control experiments. In addition to appearances in the charts and cards, a number of the conference’s attendees appear in a series of black and white portraits. *From Diogenes of Sinope* shows a mountain comprised of multiple clouds filled with densely-written bios of figures and schools from the eponymous Cynic at the top to Crypto Anarchism at the bottom. The sun shines down on the anarchic Danish commune of Christiania, to the left, and a flight of steps leads from the Unabomber’s cabin in Montana to a mystical doorway under an all-seeing eye. There are some inspired assignments among the cards of the Major Arcana—especially Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary as the Fool and the Magician, respectively—and *The World*, which shows only a sequence of hollow, graphite-colored acronyms (WWI, WWII, WWW). But the real correspondence is between whole systems: two mystical corpuses of suggestive images used to create illusions of robust structure. The story goes that when Alexander the Great, standing over a sunbathing Diogenes, asked what gift he could offer, the philosopher replied, “Get out of my light.”