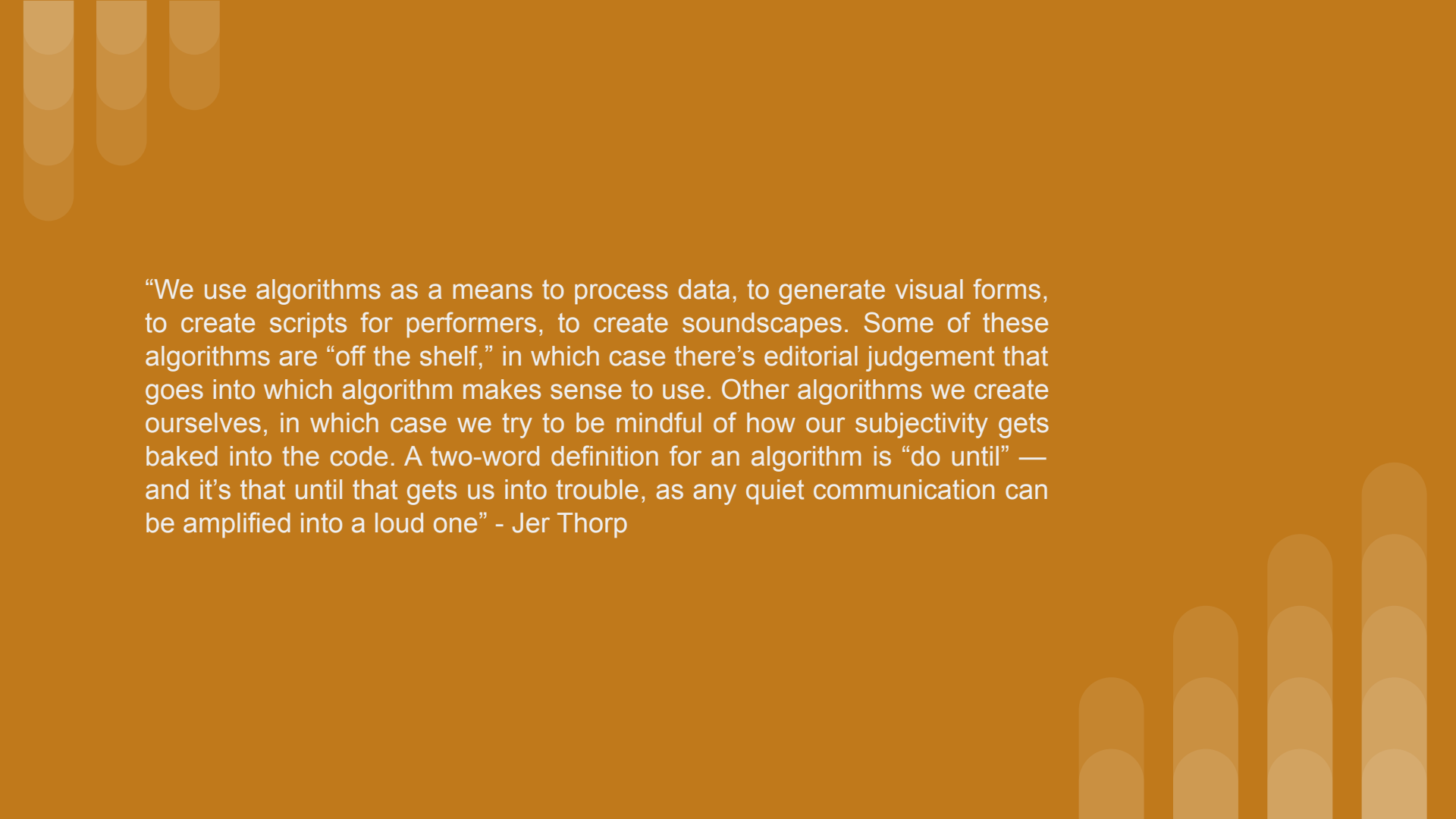# Jer Thorp / O. C. R.

Shirley Chen

About

- An artist, writer, and teacher in New York City - cofounder of The Office of Creative Research (2013-2017)
- Best known for designing the algorithm to place nearly 3000 names on the 9/11 memorial in Manhattan
- One of the world's foremost data artists and is a leading voice for ethical use of big data
- Works appeared at MoMA, Ars Electronica Center in Austria, National Seoul Museum in Korea, and a wide variety of publications: The New Yorker, Popular Science, Business Week, The Harvard Business Review, etc.
- Spoke at TEDTalk, PopTech, and The Aspens Idea Festival

"We use algorithms as a means to process data, to generate visual forms, to create scripts for performers, to create soundscapes. Some of these algorithms are "off the shelf," in which case there's editorial judgement that goes into which algorithm makes sense to use. Other algorithms we create ourselves, in which case we try to be mindful of how our subjectivity gets baked into the code. A two-word definition for an algorithm is "do until" — and it's that until that gets us into trouble, as any quiet communication can be amplified into a loud one" - Jer Thorp

"Tree. growth" (2006)

- Simple forms in capturing the inherent "treeness" of an actual tree
- Developed a customized software engine to produce vector renderings of imaginary tree species

"Glocal Image Breeder" (2007)

- Submissions from more than 2000 participants around the world
- Using image analysis technology, each image is assigned a "signature" - colors, composition, and symmetry
- Pairs of images are "bred" to produce offspring resulting in a "family tree"
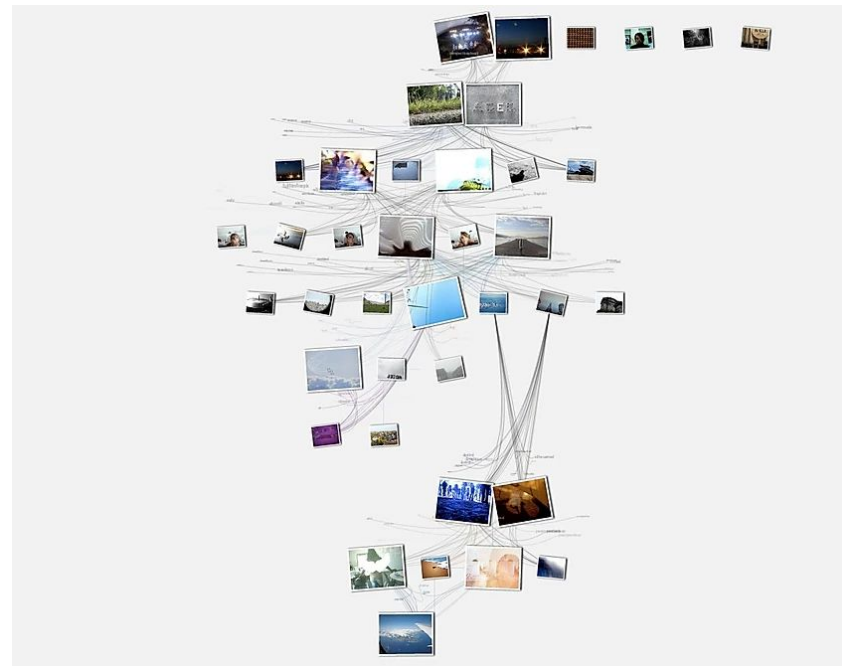
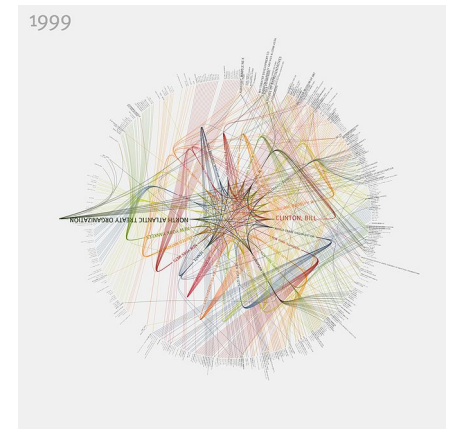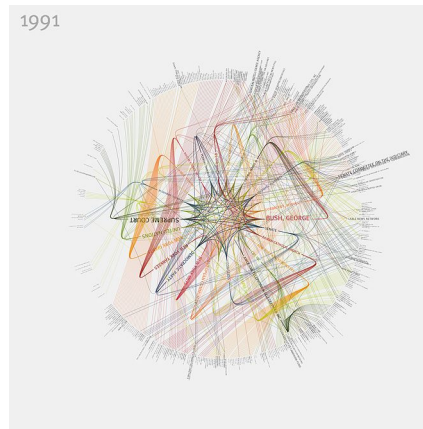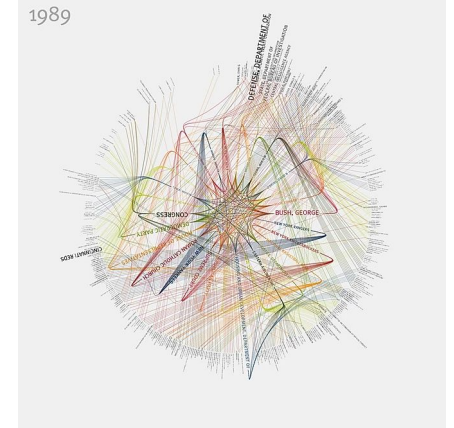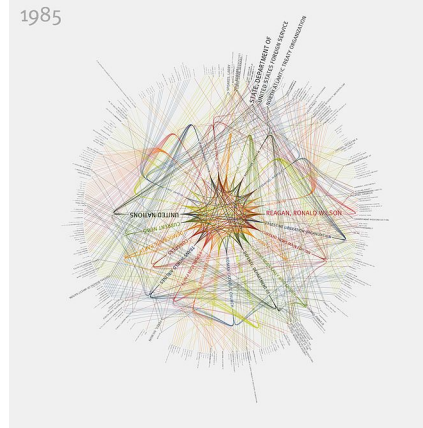# 9/11 Memorial Names Placement Algorithm (2009)

- Aid in the placement of nearly 3000 names of the victims
- Satisfy the nearly 1500 meaningful adjacency requests made by family members of the victims
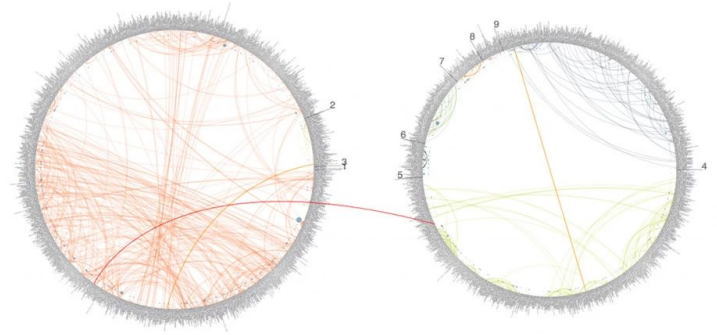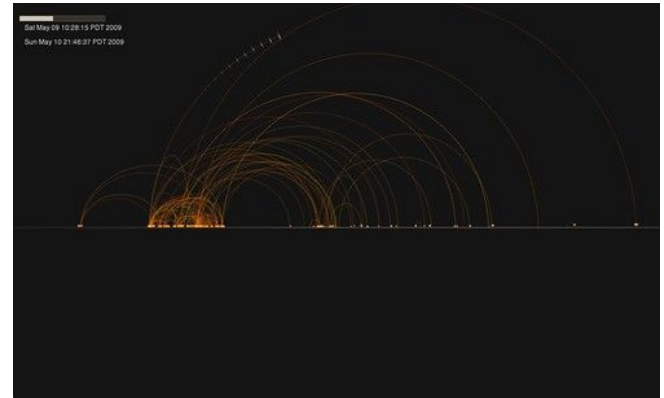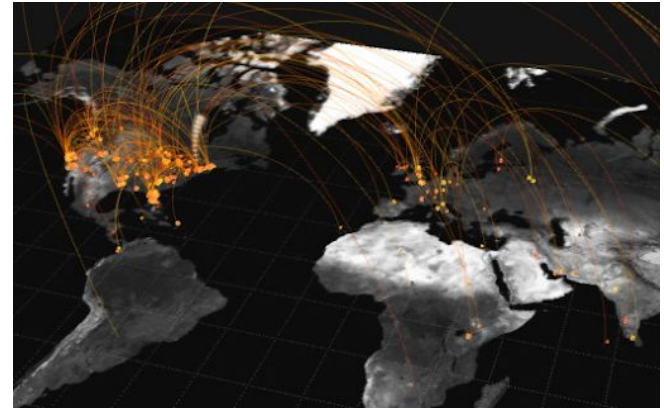
"365 / 360" (2009)

- Show connections between top organizations and personalities every year from 1985 - 2001
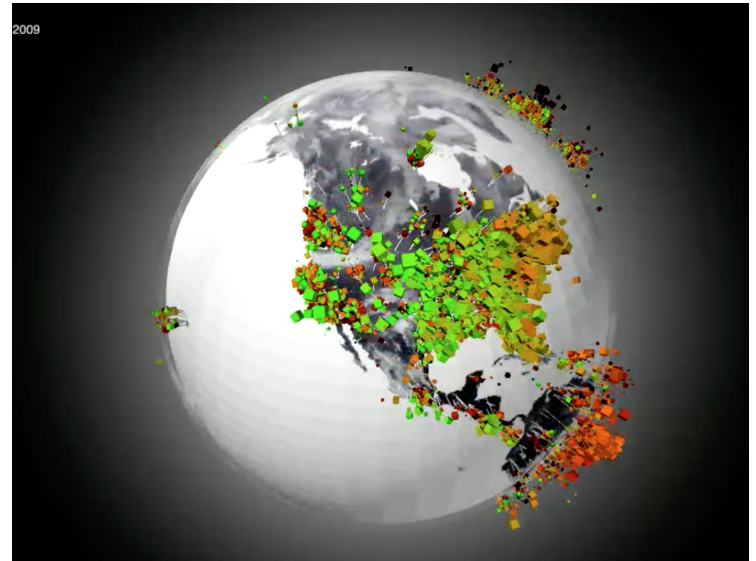
"Just Landed - 36 Hours" (2009)

- Plots travels over time by looking for Tweets with phrases "just landed in…" or "just arrived in…" and pinpointing home location and destination
- https://vimeo.com/4587178

"Good Morning!" (2009)

- 11,000 Tweets collected over 24 hours of people saying "Good Morning"
- Color of blocks represent time of day: green = early, orange = around 9am, red = later in the morning, black = "out of time"
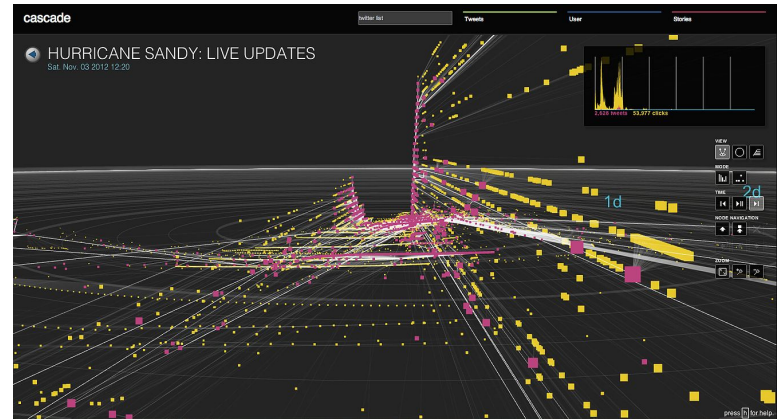- https://vimeo.com/6239027

"138 Years of Popular Science" (2011)

- Molecular chain to visualize the publication archive and the technical/cultural terms in and out of use from the magazines
  - Each atom equals number of issues
  - Color from each issues' cover
  - Size is the number of words
  - Word frequency histogram

"Cascade" (2011)

- Visualizes the sharing activity of New York Times content over social networks
- https://www.jerthorp.com/cascade
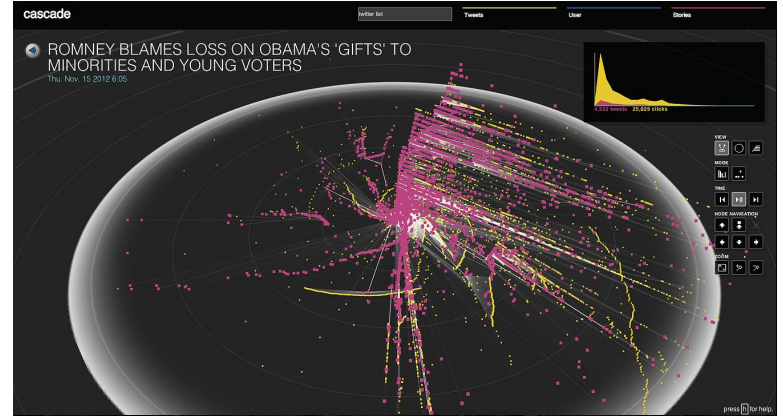
Data Humanism:

1. Design data systems for the well-being of the people from whom the data is taken
2. Wherever possible, provide mechanisms for feedback
3. Honor the complexities of individual and community realities
4. Create real and functioning data publics

Question:
What is the reason that data often become "dehumanized" even though it's often collected from human?