

apexart

2014-15 Unsolicited Program Proposal by
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In May 2013, Edward Snowden, a former CIA employee and adept computer hacker released classified details of the U.S.'s active surveillance programs to the press. The sudden realization that national security data could be accessed and re-distributed by almost any insider who so desired buttressed the ongoing debates surrounding privacy concerns on Facebook, the weighing of personal privacy against governmental surveillance by drones, and more recently the U.S. government's tapping of phone records and text messages.

In spite of the significant opposition to the post-Patriot Act tone adopted by government agencies or corporations who retain their user's information, our very acceptance, even desire to share anything and everything about our lives is continuously re-enforced by our decisions to use social media.

At the heart of photo sharing or the status update allows the individual to tap into what Isabelle Graw has termed the cult of celebrity—the ability to have one's image communicated to a network of hundreds of peers and potential admirers but ultimately set loose into the wide world of the Internet. Arne Svenson activates these conflicting desires in *The Neighbors* (2012), a series of photographs that candidly capture the quotidian activities of apartment dwellers in a modern-day Rear Window. Underscoring the ease with which we all can be watched (by forces more sinister than the New York-based artist), Svenson reflects on the contemporary culture of overexposure, reminding us that privacy is no longer a right to expect even in our own homes.

Also in New York, Jens Sundheim filmed himself by way of 400 live stream security cameras throughout the city. Documenting himself indirectly, through cameras operated by organizations unaware, or even in opposition to his practice, Sundheim at once commented on the prevalence of live security cams in New York alone even as he subverted their function.

The overexposure of our private lives—and the more sinister potentials of this are explored by Palo Cirio. At once acting as the feared "big brother" and the critical informant, Cirio's work, such as sorting millions of Americans by their 212 voting registration activates our fears of having one governmental, corporate or social group gain authoritative control over "private" information.

On the other side of the coin to contemporary over exposure is a development of Foucaultian theories of invisibility. Trevor Paglen photographs the otherwise hidden domains of governmental surveillance, drones over the isolated southwestern deserts or the U.S.'s invisible radar shield given form through color field painting's sublime. Similarly, Miska Henner's photographs of "censored" locations on Google Maps, give these invisible spaces visual identity, calling attention to their presence. James Bridle utilizes the popular photo-sharing app Instagram to distribute aerial shots of recent drone strikes. By displacing these politically weighty images through the channels more often used to share birthday celebrations or "selfies" Bridle brings to the fore the paradox of our culture of sharing everything and our suspicion of those looking.

Profiled features six artists: James Bridle, Palo Cirico, Miska Henner, Trevor Paglen, Jens Sundheim and Arne Svenson.