

apexart

2014-15 Unsolicited Program Proposal by
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Who would have thought that George Clooney will be the person who leads one of the most influential and controversial socio-spatial transformations of the present? The news about the Hollywood star spending his paycheck from Nespresso's campaign on a satellite that will spy Sudan's dictator Omar al-Bashir came as a surprise to many. Justified concerns were raised regarding the blurring of military technologies of surveillance, private money and good intentions. However, as the project "As Below, So Above" * suggests, Clooney's action isn't so unexpected if we look at it as part of the radical change in the means through which we perceive, understand and act in the world.

The use of private owned satellites, unmanned aerial vehicle (known as drones) and other remotely piloted aircraft has grown exponentially in recent years - both for military and civil use - watching over an ever-expanding geography and people. Consequently, an increasing number of activists, artists and theoreticians are now dedicating their practice to understand the ethical, social and spatial implication of the process that became to be known as the democratization of the view from above.

As Henri Lefebvre noticed, the aerial point of view is a "space of state control", historically owned by the authorities and the military, and connected with colonization and national security. At the age of GPS or Google Earth, these technologies mediate almost every aspect of our life, while simultaneously becoming nation's preferable weapon for destruction, especially in conflict areas such as Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine or Somalia.

How can we free ourselves from the weaponized-authoritarian view that is associated with aerial perspective? Under what conditions, and by whom, these voyeur images are produced and used? And how these new viewpoints provoke our political imagination and encourage us to actively reclaiming the sky? These are the main questions the exhibition 'As Below, So Above' wish to raise. The exhibition brings together five artists that explore the ramification of the democratization of the view from above on the ways in which our vision is transforming.

However, the exhibition seeks not only to critically reflect on this socio-spatial shift, but also to give prominence to the potential for de-colonizing the aerial space itself, and hence, the aerial point of view. Through a series of workshops and talks, hosted by activists and thinkers, the project will offer practical DIY skills and proposals of how to re-conceptualize the air space as 'commons' and to reclaim the sky through social and collaborative practices.

* Inspired by Bik van der Pol's 'Elements of composition'.

Participating artists and art works:

Bik van der Pol - Elements of composition (2011)
Jannane El-Ani - Shadow Sites II (2011)
Omer Fast - 5,000 Feet is the Best (2011)
Trevor Paglen - The Other Night Sky (2010-2011)
Ruti Sela and Maayan Amir - Exterritory Project (2009-ongoing)

Workshops and talks by:

Center for the Study of the Drone (Bard College)
Center for Land Use Interpretation
James Bridle (One Visible Future)
Grassroots Mapping Project
Laura Kurgan
Eyal weizman

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