Surveillance Capitalism

Examined

*a survey of works from the worlds of net.art
 and installations using networks in their making and process

Dries Depoorter – Jaywalking (2015-2025)

"The installation automatically catches jaywalkers using live surveillance webcams and gives visitors the choice to report them to the police.

'Jaywalking' gives us an opportunity to watch traffic webcams and decide on the fate of pedestrians recklessly crossing the road. Monitors display LIVE unprotected surveillance footage of intersections in different countries. Depoorter then presents us with a dilemma: will we report the unsuspecting jaywalker? A single press of the button can send a screenshot of the violation to the nearest police station with an email." - from the project website
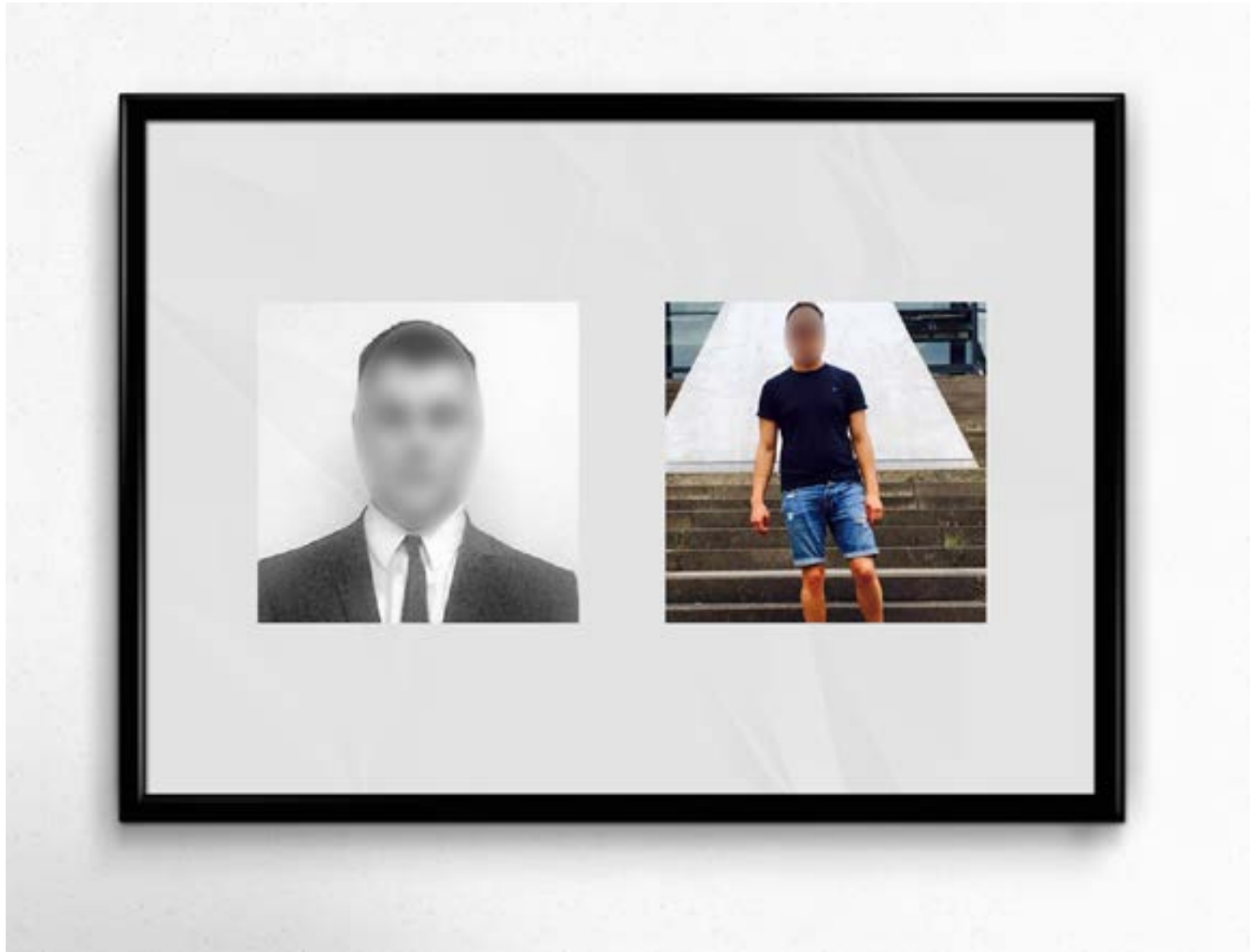
Dries Depoorter – Seattle Crime Cams (2015)

"Seattle Crime Cams turns us into ultimate long-distance disaster tourists.In this city, which is filled to the brim with traffic cameras, the police make the calls they receive available online. Using the location of the latest call, the closest live online traffic camera are showed." - from the project website
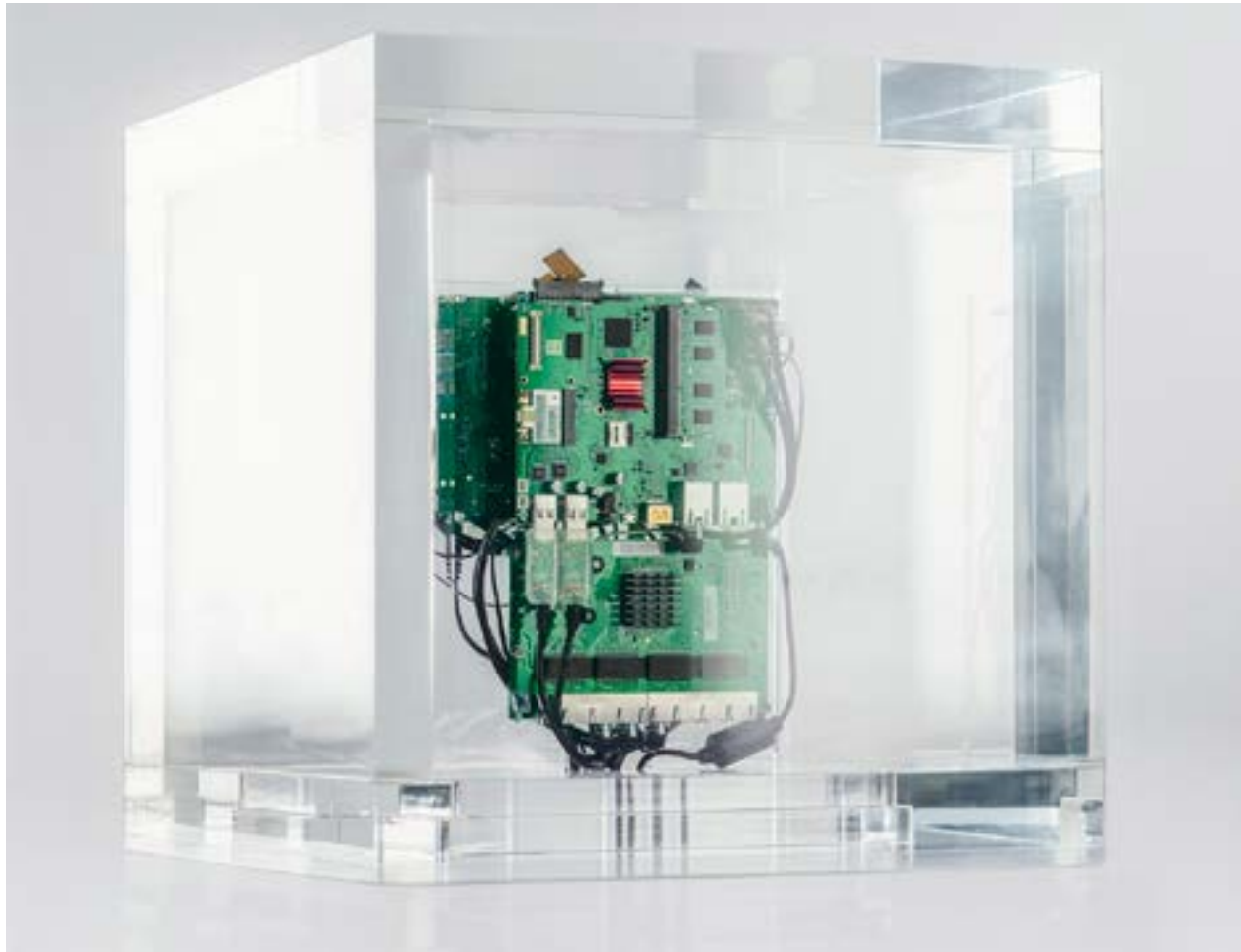
Dries Depoorter – Tinder In (2015 - 2025)

Side by Side profile pictures of LinkedIn & Tinder of the same person.

Trevor Paglen & Jacob Appelbaum – Autonomy Cube (2015)

"Autonomy Cube is a sculpture designed to be housed in art museums, galleries, and civic spaces. The sculpture is meant to be both "seen" and "used." This happens in several ways. Internet connected computers housed within the work create an open WiFi hotspot called "Autonomy Cube" wherever it is installed. Anyone can join this network and use it to connect to the Internet."
- from the project website

Sterling Crispin – Data Masks (2014)

" Data-masks are face masks which were created by reverse engineering facial recognition and detection algorithms. These algorithms were used to guide an evolving system toward the production of human-like faces. These evolved faces were then 3D printed as masks, shadows of human beings as seen by the minds-eye of the machine-organism. This exposes the way the machine, and the surveillance state, view human identity anvd this makes aspects of these invisible power structures visible.

Data-Masks are animistic deities brought out of the algorithmic-spirit-world of the machine and into our material world, ready to tell us their secrets, or warn us of what's to come."
- from the project website

Adam Harvey – CV Dazzle (2014)

"CV Dazzle is a form of camouflage from computer vision created in 2010 as my masters thesis at New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program. Unlike traditional camouflage, such as disruptive-pattern material, that hides the wearer from human observation, CV Dazzle is designed to break machine vision systems while still remaining perceptible to human observers. It is the first documented camouflage technique to successfully attack a computer vision algorithm."
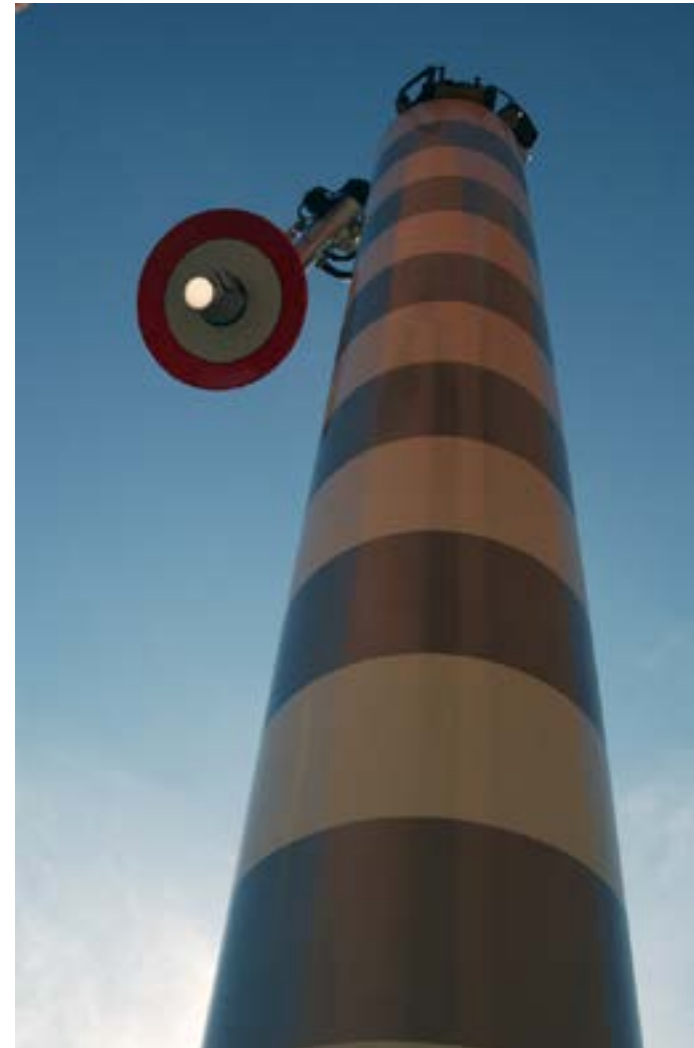- from the project website

Christian Moeller - Mojo (2014)

A robotic arm holding a theater spotlight shines a perfect circle of light onto the sidewalk following the passers-by with its light beam - using robotic re-targeting spotlight to emphasize control dynamics

Surveillance Camera Players (1996 - 2006)

A New York-based activist art collective that staged silent theatrical performances in front of CCTV cameras—critiquing their assumed invisibility and authority by literally performing for the surveillance apparatus—and created a counter-archive against the guard footage.

Stuck in the Scroll – Ben Grosser (2024)

"Stuck in the Scroll is a compulsive scrolling monitor that reveals, in real-time, whether I'm currently scrolling TikTok. Think of this work as a last-ditch effort, a sort of public confessional as therapeutic tool aimed at defusing the intense compulsion I feel every day to endlessly scroll the world's most popular video app."
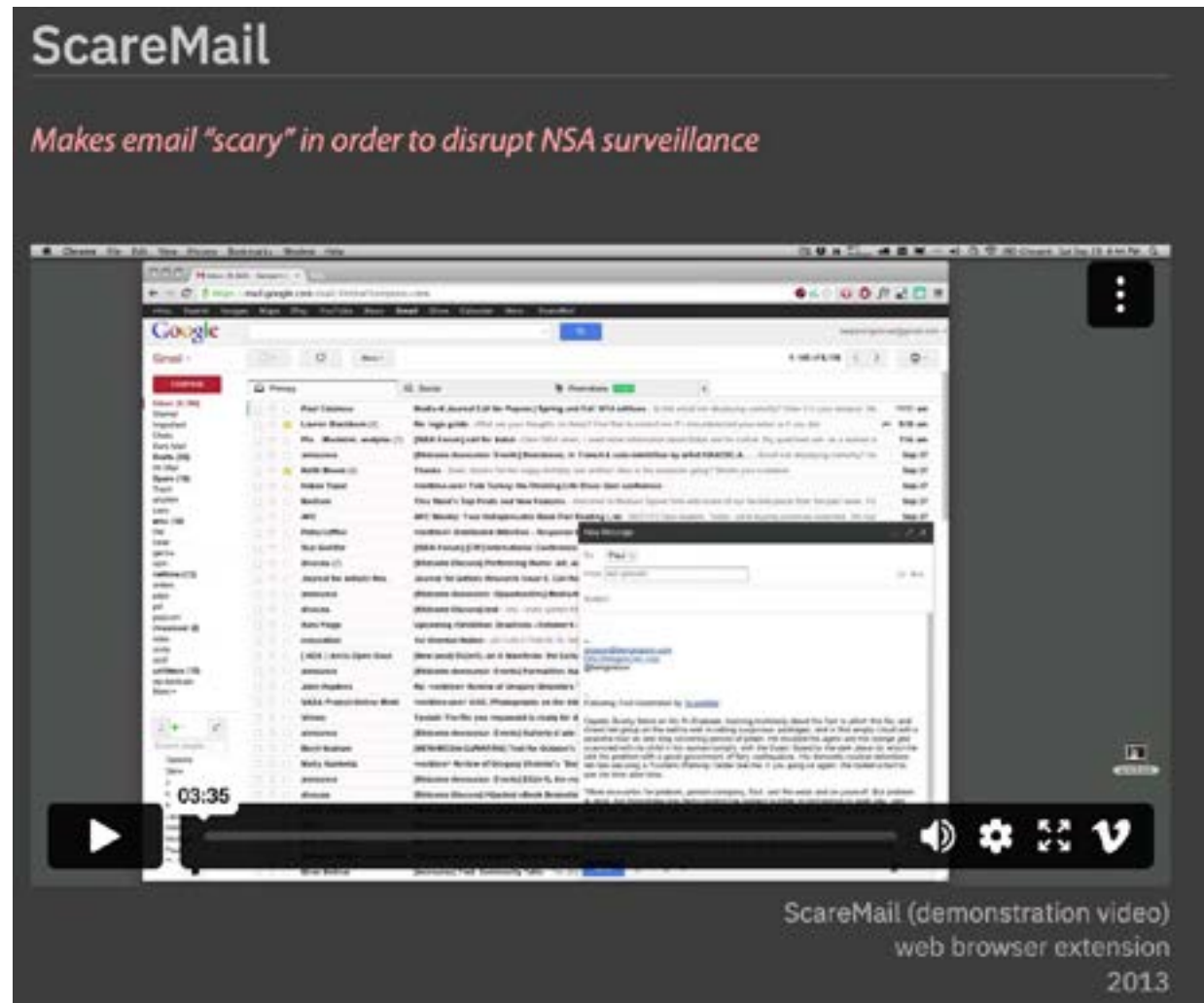- from the project website

STUCK IN THE SCROLL

Is Ben scrolling
TikTok right now?

YES

Time spent scrolling since July 1:
94h 59m 57s

About

ScareMail – Ben Grosser (2013)

"ScareMail is a web browser extension that makes email "scary" in order to disrupt NSA surveillance. Extending Google's Gmail, the work adds to every new email's signature an algorithmically generated narrative containing a collection of probable NSA search terms. This "story" acts as a trap for NSA programs like PRISM and XKeyscore, forcing them to look at nonsense. Each email's story is unique in an attempt to avoid automated filtering by NSA search systems."
- from the project website

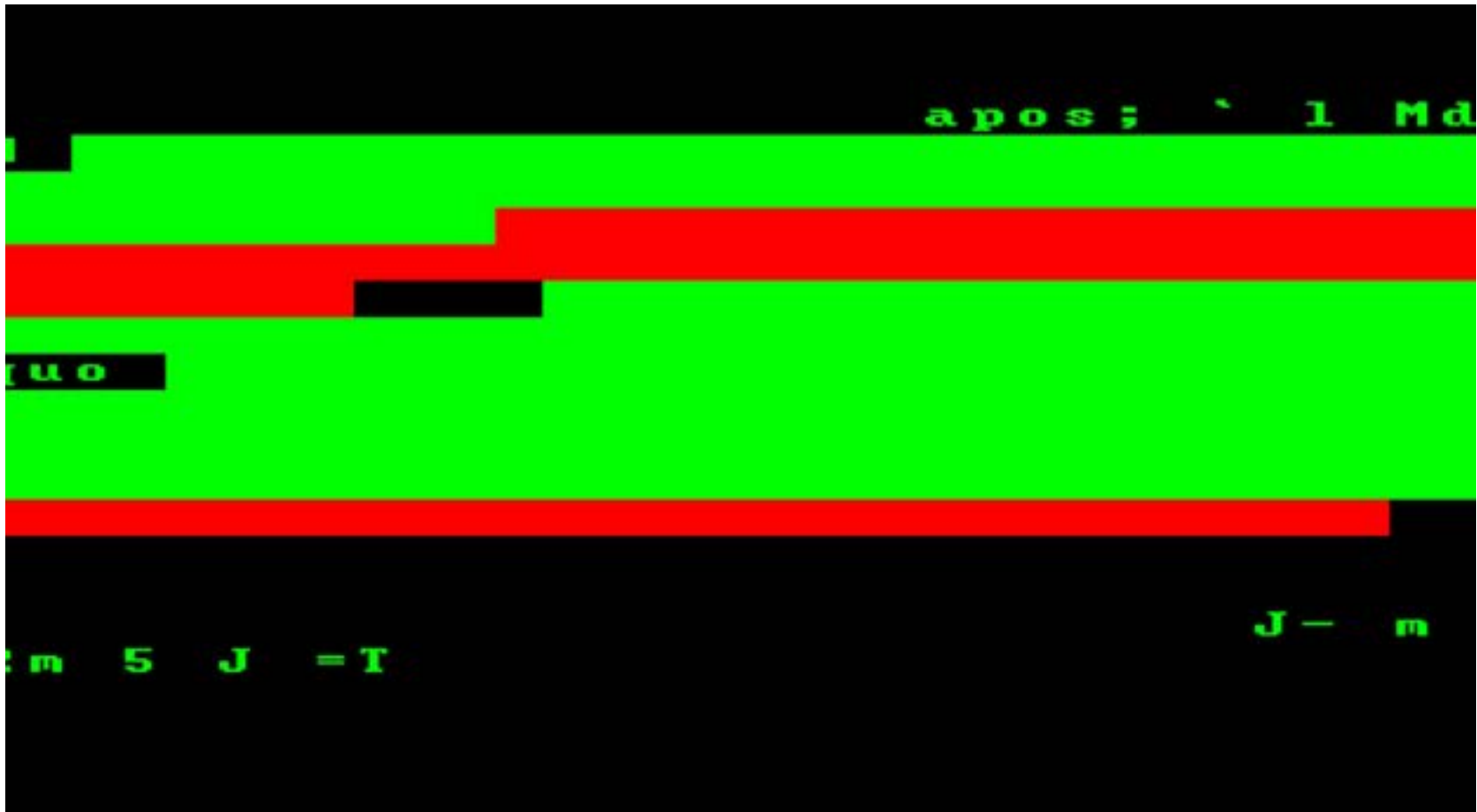ScareMail (demonstration video)
web browser extension
2013

Experiments in Surveillance Capitalism – Garnet Hertz (since 2019)

"Experiments in Surveillance Capitalism: Machine for Calling the Department of Homeland Security" makes the smart speakers search for controversial search terms that the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security are reported to monitor. The idea is that these "red flag" keyword Google searches will attract the attention of the Department of Homeland Security, the FBI or CSIS. This system plays with the fear that individuals have about privacy with contemporary smart devices." - from the project website

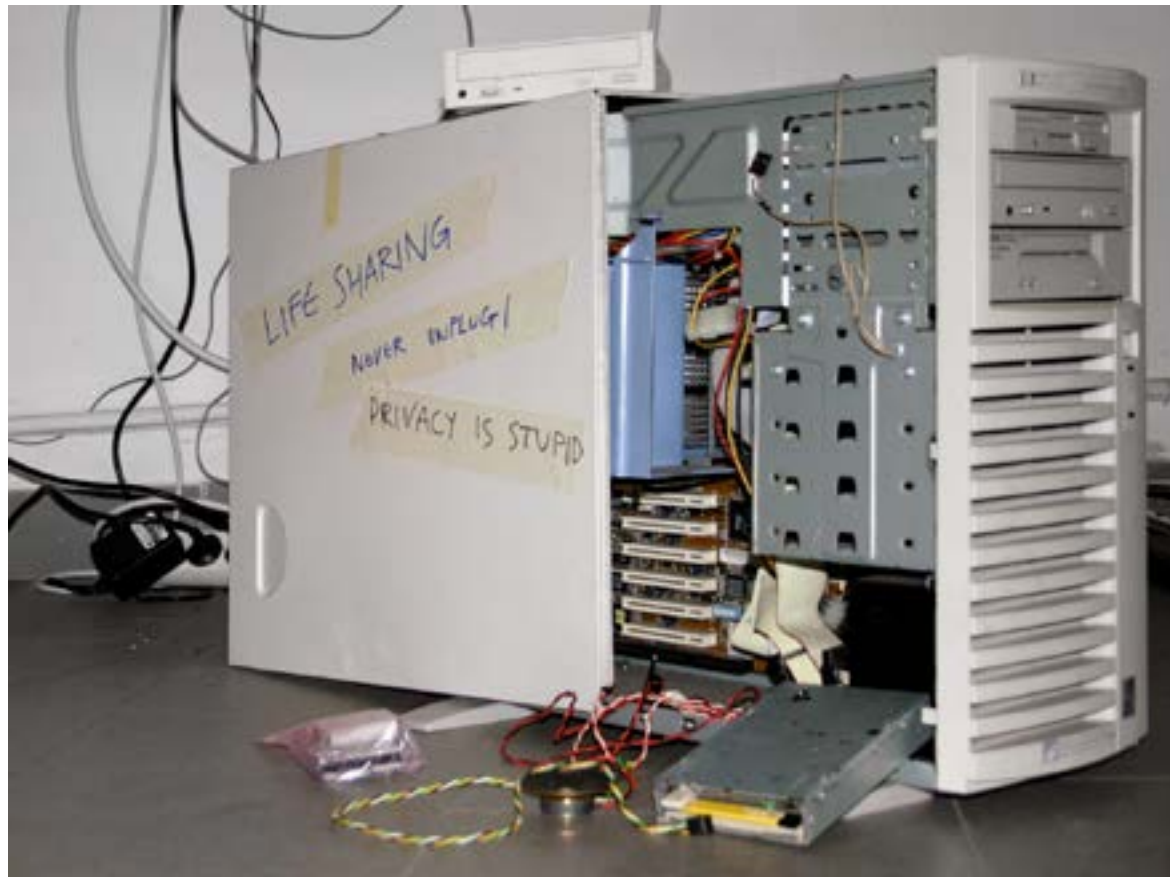# Joshua Davis & Mark Napier (RSG) - Carnivore (2000)

«Carnivore» is a surveillance tool for data networks [the United States intelligence agencies coined this software Carnivore—the ed.]. At the heart of the project is CarnivorePE, a software application that listens to all Internet traffic (email, web surfing, etc.) on a specific local network. Next, «CarnivorePE» serves this data stream to interfaces called «clients.» These clients are designed to animate, diagnose, or interpret the network traffic in various ways." - from Medien Kunst Netz

Life Sharing – Eva & Franco Mattes (2001 - 2003)

"For three years (2001-2003), we openly shared our home computer, making all its contents accessible to the public. Private material, including email, texts, photos, and bank statements, was freely available through our website. Made long before social media's widespread influence, Life Sharing pointed towards the blurring of the public and private spheres."
- from the project website

Manu Luksch – CV Dazzle (2007)

"In an eerily familiar city, a calendar reform has dispensed with the past and the future, leaving citizens faceless, without memory or anticipation. Unimaginable happiness abounds – until a woman recovers her face…

Faceless is a 2007 Austrian/British science-fiction film directed by Manu Luksch that is constructed entirely from CCTV surveillance camera images, obtained under European data protection legislation. It is part of what film theorist Elizabeth Cowie describes as a 'multi-platform project that [Luksch] developed between 2002 and 2008, exploring London as "the most surveilled city on earth." - from wikipedia