

WATCHED!

SURVEILLANCE, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Participating Artists

Meriç Algün Ringborg

Jason E. Bowman

James Bridle

Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin

Tina Enghoff

Alberto Frigo

Mishka Henner

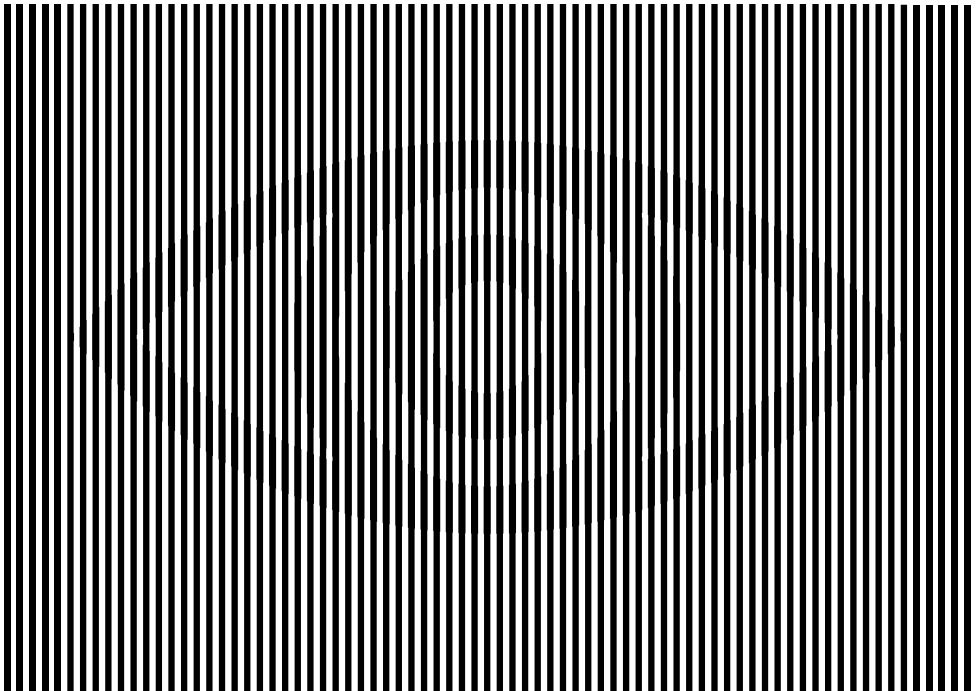
Marco Poloni

Ann-Sofi Sidén

Hito Steyerl

May 28 – Oct 2, 2016

ENGLISH



PROGRAM

May 28 at 1 p.m.

Guided tour of the exhibition
by the curators and artists

Sundays at 1 p.m.

Public guided tours
Except July 3–Aug 14

August 24 at 6 p.m.

Book launch at Konst-ig,
Åsögatan 124, Stockholm

September 12–16

Artist talks and film screenings
at Valand Academy,
Vasagatan 50, Göteborg

Information about the film program
and artist talks will be published
on www.hasselbladfoundation.se
and www.akademinvaland.gu.se

Upcoming exhibition venues and dates

Kunsthal Aarhus
October 14–December 31, 2016

In collaboration with
Galleri Image and ARoS
October 14–December 18, 2016

C/O Berlin
February 17–May 21, 2017

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Watched! reflects the multilayered complexities of surveillance with a specific attention to photography and visibility. The works in the exhibition are from the last ten years, and they convey a range of different approaches to surveillance: from technologies implemented by state and authorities to more everyday monitoring practices that have become an integrated part of social life; from historical perspectives to recent machine-made images; and from issues of voyeurism and public exposure to monitoring as care and empowerment.

Since its invention, photography has played a major role in various surveillance practices. It has been employed in the identification and administration of people in the bureaucracy of state archives, as well as in colonial and anthropological classifications. Aerial photographs have continuously served as scientific mappings and overviews – from balloons, planes, drones, and satellites. Cameras have been used in covert recordings by detectives, journalists, and paparazzi, as well as in voluntary voyeurism, exhibitionism, and self-narration – most recently several of these features are united in digital social media.

Even though contemporary surveillance or “dataveillance” is far from limited to visual monitoring, it is still necessary to address the photographic when trying to understand surveillance. The digitalization of cameras, photographs, and image distribution play a big part in the implementation of everyday surveillance, as well as in surveillance technologies that are kept out of the public eye. Our reality is arguably made up of images and our entire existence is being photographed to an unprecedented degree, which not only raises new questions, but also reactivates issues of watching and being watched from the history of photography and visual culture.

Security

The expansion of surveillance is predominantly based on security measurements to prevent crimes ranging from theft to terror. An additional argument is that if you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear from a prying eye.

However, many forms of surveillance and privacy restrictions are targeted at minorities and other vulnerable people, who most often experience exposing, harassing, and potentially violating surveillance – whether criminalized or not.

Other arguments for upholding national security are addressed in James Bridle's work *Homo Sacer* (2014) – a term for a person stripped of rights and legal protection. Upon entering the exhibition, visitors encounter the hologram in Bridle's work, which lists the subtle shifts from citizenship and human rights agreements to state proclaimed exceptions when the citizen rights no longer apply.

Machine-made portraits created using the latest Facial Recognition Technology without the consent of those portrayed can also be said to reflect a shift in privacy rights due to demands for preemptive surveillance. This is the subject of Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin's work *Spirit is a Bone* (2013), which is based on software developed by Russian engineers that can create 3D renderings of a face without the knowledge of the person depicted. Broomberg and Chanarin have grouped the portrayed individuals into categories based on their occupation, referencing August Sander's photographic survey of social types in 1920s Weimar Germany, and photography's historical role in the categorization of people.

Another example of how the call for increased security pushes the limits between militarization and the everyday is Hito Steyerl's video installation *Guards* (2012). The work is inspired by a proposal that museum guards should wear guns, and it features two museum guards with police and military background. Their simulated protection of the artworks shows how a gallery space is turned into a potential zone of conflict and violence when any visitor becomes a suspect.

Mapping and Tracking

Today, surveillance does not only signify a *Big Brother*, watching subjects from an elevated, and often unseen position – like a God's eye in the sky. Surveillance and social control work on multiple levels, through a web of overlapping registrations, as well as internalized monitoring. Some use the term *multiveillance* to describe overall surveillance, not solely from a top-down perspective, but also as the horizontal, participatory monitoring conducted by and between people. This is largely made possible through the digitalization of images and their dissemination. One example of everyday surveillance is the mapping by Google Maps and Street Views, which is stored and circulated beyond the

application's original scope. Mishka Henner's Google Street View appropriations in the series *No Man's Land* (2011), are partly based on Internet forums where men share the locations of alleged sex workers on the roads of Southern Europe. Henner's work addresses the inequality in viewer positions in a technology that is ideal for some users, but potentially problematic for the isolated women on the roadside who are being photographed, registered, stored, and made localizable.

In a different approach, Alberto Frigo conducts self-surveillance in the mapping, tracking, and life-logging project *2004–2040*, a fraction of which is the work *Images of the Artefacts Used by the Main Hand* (2004–), shown in the exhibition. In this extensive photographic series, that will go on until 2040, the artist photographs every object he touches with his right hand. The images are stored in an online archive and exemplify the application of monitoring technologies as active engagement with the world.

Surveillant Stories

Contrary to the idea that surveillance renders us passive or powerless, artists are using surveillance technologies and practices in playful, poetic, constructive, and subversive ways. One example is Ann-Sofi Sidén, a pioneer in the appropriation of CCTV cameras, monitors, and multi-channel narratives. Her work *Sticky Floors (Lunch to Last Call)*, (2015), takes place in a pub in a small town in Ireland. Sidén uses already existing CCTV footage and adds extra cameras to cover a range of angles and spaces of the pub. She constructs a cycle from early morning to late night in a carefully edited nine-channel, black-and-white film, without sound.

Cinematographic surveillance is also explored in Meriç Algün Ringborg's multimedia installation *Which No One Will Ever See* (2012). The work revolves around two iconic films about surveillance and voyeurism – *Blow-Up* (1966) and *The Conversation* (1974). Algün Ringborg reverses the voyeuristic gaze and spying practices in both films by tracking the two fictional, male characters. She creates an unsettling installation about the subtle shifts between transparency and non-visibility.

Staying out of Sight

The ethical considerations related to the ability to increasingly see, photograph, expose, and store, are addressed by Tina Enghoff in her work with undocumented, homeless migrants in Copenhagen. They mostly live under

the radar and revealing their identity could put them at risk of arrest and deportation. However, in order to visually document their situation the project involves various modes of monitoring and registration: from the blood tests taken by the Red Cross Clinic, which is the only place where undocumented migrants can get treatment without having their identity revealed, to surveillance footage from the park where they often sleep, even in winter. Thus the project represents a caring sort of monitoring.

Marco Poloni is another artist in the exhibition who has worked consistently with issues of migrants in Europe. The series *Displacement Island* (2006), deals with the displacement of refugees and asylum seekers in the Mediterranean. It explores the modes of observation and representation surrounding the various groups of people; tourists, fishermen, immigrants, and the border police, whose paths cross on and around the Italian island Lampedusa. Through a web of representations, including tourist pictures, aerial photographs, navigation monitors, and surveillance imagery, Poloni addresses voluntary and involuntary visualizations. In his work, migrants are only represented through traces left behind, such as life vests and the confiscated small fishing boats they arrived in.

(II) Legal Exposures

Involuntary surveillance and exposure is addressed by Jason E. Bowman in the work *Untitled (On a day unknown...)*, (2009–2010). The work is based on a criminal trial against a group of men charged with homosexuality in 1936. Bowman conducted a reenactment of the trial with members of the present-day LGBTQ community, in a courtroom without an audience. Included in the exhibition is the documentation of the performance in the form of drawings and photographs taken with a pinhole camera. A gay pulp novel, which was actually used as evidence in the trial, is made into a pinhole camera in the exhibition. Whereas legal surveillance takes different forms today, gender and sexual minorities continue to experience exposure, shaming, and harassment.

The power of authorities to demand surveillance of some subjects, while keeping other elements out of public sight, is counteracted in James Bridle's work *Seamless Transitions* (2015). He reveals locations and structures of power, which are otherwise kept out of the public eye. Bridle researched the classified sites in the UK where the sentencing, detention, and deportation of immigrants take place and where photography is strictly forbidden. He created a virtual animation of these sites based on methods of investigative journalism, eye-witness accounts, and a collaboration with an architectural visualizer. In similar

ways, artists and activists often use the strategy of sous-veillance, meaning looking back, from below, at those conducting surveillance from a position of power.

Ways of Watching

In spite of recent revelations of global mass surveillance, famously made public by Edward Snowden, studies have shown that Northern Europeans, and Scandinavians in particular, have a high level of trust in social surveillance – be it for security, crime prevention, administrative, commercial, medical, or other purposes. Surveillance scholars suggest that the positive attitude is due to people focusing less on the right to privacy, and more on welfare, transparency, and social equality. However, more and more cases manifest how surveillance discriminates; that negative, invasive, and harassing forms of surveillance target minorities and the most vulnerable subjects. As the artists in this exhibition show, we might all be watched, but we are not all exposed to surveillance on equal terms.

Artistic practices can function as valuable contributions to the general debate and research being conducted in the field of surveillance. Photography and video art are able to offer new perspectives and question dominating ideas about the authoritative gaze of power, as well as pointing to forms of resistance by using mimicry, performance, satire, play, fiction, invisibility, and enabling forms of multiveillance.

The exhibition *Watched!* is part of a research project on surveillance, art, and photography in Europe after 2000, initiated by Louise Wolthers, Head of Research at the Hasselblad Foundation. The accompanying book, published by Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, includes a selection of artworks by forty artists, as well as in-depth essays on surveillance by Peter Weibel, Tom Holert, Hille Koskela, Liisa Mäkinen, Shoshana Magnet, James Bridle, Alberto Frigo, Ann-Christine Bertrand, Niclas Östlind, and Louise Wolthers. The viewer and reader is invited to think about how we can live in a society of multiple surveillance networks without contributing to the inequalities that surveillance produces, and instead engage in inclusive and empowering viewing practices.

Curators: Louise Wolthers, Dragana Vujanovic and Niclas Östlind

Hasselblad Center

Götaplatsen
412 56 Gothenburg

Opening hours

Tuesday & Thursday 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

Wednesday 11 a.m.–8 p.m.

Friday–Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m.



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Photography encouraged
at the Hasselblad Center,
without flash

hasselbladfoundation.se



Hasselblad Foundation



GALLERIE
IMAGE

ARoS C/O Berlin

The exhibition and the book are collaborations between the Hasselblad Foundation,
Valand Academy, Kunsthal Aarhus, Galleri Image, ARoS and C/O Berlin.