Reclaiming Self-Sovereignty in an Age of Perpetual Surveillance

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INTRODUCTION

My senior thesis project in Digital Studies aims to explore how surveillance culture influences authenticity and changes notions of the Self and privacy in the Digital Age. The goal of the exhibition is to make everyday forms of surveillance, which are often hidden or discreet, visible and salient to the public. I created an intentionally overwhelming space to express the weight of the gaze we feel every day but don't always see. This paper will elaborate on the scholarly work and theory supporting each piece in the exhibition. For the purposes of constructing a precise argument, I will focus primarily on visual modes of surveillance and young people in America as the main subject group. To provide context for this paper, I will offer a description of authenticity in relation to the Self along with a brief history of surveillance. This will lead into a section on four types of modern surveillance that I expose in my exhibition. Then, I will give an explanation of each art piece in the installation and its intended impact. Lastly, I will conclude with a brief reflection on the exhibit and any remaining final thoughts.

THE AUTHENTIC SELF

The understanding of selfhood throughout human history has undergone significant evolution. Language allowed us to construct a symbolic self. Societal progress contributed to leisure and specialization which allowed notions of selfhood to shift from the collective to the individual. The advent of the internet allowed individuals unlimited access to information, which further facilitates personality formation. I argue that under the current infrastructure of the digital age, identity is becoming more about what you consume than what you create. I also argue that the construction of an online self is a way for one to *actualize* the Self. Colloquial phrases such as "pics or it didn't happen" and "phone eats first" attest to the fact that in order to prove reality,

you must capture and share it.

The “Self” is a complex subject of interest with varying definitions and interpretations in many fields, notably psychology and philosophy. A non-essentialist perspective would say that there is no “essence” or “one true Self,” but for the purpose of this paper, we will focus on the definitions of the existential self and the Self as a source of creative energy aided by consumption. For Donald Winnicott, the “True Self” is best seen in a baby’s unthinking spontaneity (2018) which is supported by a mother's gratifying actions and emotions. In the rest of life, the “True Self” is presented as the source of one’s creative energies, which occur spontaneously and do not require thought but must be affirmed by others to continue. Similar thought connects creativity to consumption. According to Wang (1999), consumption elicits creative and cathartic emotions, allowing individuals to feel more authentic and expressive. These experiences are perceived as genuine or “real” by consumers. Existential authenticity, thus, is felt when a “consumer feels that his or her true self is experientially connected to the real world” (Kwon and Kwon 2015, 303).

In today’s world, this feeling of “being real” can come from creative expression and consumption online. For example, buying a pair of jeans that fit one’s “aesthetic” can make that person feel comfortable in their self-expression via fashion. Belk’s (1988) theory of extended-self conceptualizes the relationship between the consumer and the object, which claims that “our possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities.” So while creation is a valid way of self-expression, so is its somewhat counterpart: consumption. The problem is that consumption as a form of gratifying the authentic self should come from an independent desire or resonance with the consumed object—but it doesn’t always.

As digital platforms advance with more sophisticated algorithms, it is difficult to distinguish what truly resonates with an individual from the ads and media content that has conditioned and influenced them. Kathryn Norwalk (2018) explains the "ludic loops of reward-seeking behavior" (2) in gamification as a threat to autonomous decisions. Similarly, I argue that people may not have as much free will as they think because their autonomy is being threatened by influential media which is determined by algorithms. Today more than ever, there is a vast amount of subliminal and covert messaging influencing people and shaping their desires with respect to consumption. With regards to self-expression, the digital world is entering an age of meta-authenticity where the focus on presentation and perception is prioritized before the cathartic feeling of existential authenticity. In other words, the preference to appear a certain way overshadows inward self-exploration, creating an individualist culture focused on visuality.

Many members of Gen-Z consider online profiles as extensions of the Self, just as a personal possession can be considered a part of the Self. I argue that the possibility of an online authentic self is a fantasy capitalized on by digital platforms (such as the French app BeReal). This is because authenticity necessitates unawareness of a gaze. The Hawthorne Effect is a concept in psychology used to describe the change in an individual's behavior that occurs as soon as they are aware that they are being observed (Sedgwick and Greenwood 2015). Since posting on social media requires awareness of an observant audience, users inherently "change behavior" or alter self-expression when projecting online. Of course there are degrees to how much one alters behavior in the presence of a gaze. For example, behavior may be drastically modified in the presence of a heteropatriarchal male gaze, but only slightly modified in the presence of the gaze of close friends. This is why features like "private stories" or "finstas" (fake instagrams) have grown in popularity over the past decade or so. They help users behave in a

way that is relatively more authentic with the knowledge that only people they trust will judge them.

Another major reason young people post so much in the first place is because of a need to actualize themselves. If a tree falls in a forest, does it make a noise? If one is experiencing life and all its lessons without capturing it, does that life actually exist? For some reason, things feel more real when we immortalize them through image. Philosopher Susan Sontag attributes this to a need for power over inevitable mortality via the ability to look at a moment in time that has already passed (or "died"). In her book On Photography (2001), she says, "All photographs are memento mori. To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability" (15). The combined weight of algorithmic influence, ubiquitous gaze, and a need to actualize acts as a major obstacle towards authentic self-exploration in young individuals today.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SURVEILLANCE

The concept of surveillance can be traced back as early as the Bible, where it is written, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3). Under the Swedish Crown, churches were constructed on high ground overlooking the streets, as noted by Ylimaunu et al. (2014). Benedict Anderson further posits that monarch-controlled states favored "high centers" in town plans, creating a central point of observation that linked the power of the king with the all-seeing power of God (1991).

Since the beginning, maintaining control has necessitated the ability to watch from a vantage point. Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon was an "ideal prison" which takes a circular form with cells lined up along the circumference. In the middle stands a watchtower enabling the

surveillance of all the inmates. However, because of the design, the inmates cannot know exactly when they are being surveilled and therefore monitor themselves and others to reduce any risk. With regards to civil society, Michel Foucault built off of Bentham's concept of the panopticon, claiming that in the "ideal model of a citizen-subject-based society everyone takes responsibility for the behaviour of others" (Ylimaunu et al. 2014, 147). In other words, the perfect civic power balance comes from keeping an eye on each other. Foucault, intrigued by this prison, applied the idea to monarchies which enforced this sort of top-down control which pressured citizens to do the work of behaving and monitoring themselves, creating "obedient" and "docile bodies."

Another major facet of surveillance is the technology utilized. In the case of visual surveillance, that would be the camera. French inventor Nicephore Niepce invented photography in 1816 via camera obscura. Never had an image been immortalized through the camera obscura itself until Louis Daguerre built on the camera obscura and created the daguerreotype in 1839, which used silver iodide and required a long exposure time to eventually create a permanent, positive image. In 1888, George Eastman created the first roll film camera, "the Kodak," which captured sharper images and newer iterations continued from there (Gregory 2022).

Video is just a sequence of images. In the late 1800s, the chronophotographic gun and the kinetograph were invented and captured multiple pictures in a small amount of time. These photo "frames" could be arranged together to create the illusion of motion (Gregory 2022). The invention of video set the 20th century up to be an era of photo and film. The 1900s saw the boom of cinema and photo technology became available on a mass market scale. The same year as the miniature portable camera was invented, George Orwell released his book 1984, which is about a world in which we are perpetually captured and surveilled (Chown 2017). The first time video was used for the purpose of monitoring by law enforcement is said to be in 1913 in order

to capture photos of prisoners in the Holloway prison for juvenile delinquents and women in London (Weber 2020). Photography and video also became a useful tool for wartime surveillance and reconnaissance, with cameras being used to monitor V-2 missile launches from a safe distance. The American company Vericon produced the earliest publicly available CCTV cameras in 1949 (Chown 2017).

Over the past 200 years or so, capturing image has seeped into many parts of human life and today, we as individuals take and consume photos every day. The surveillance camera is ubiquitous and it is estimated that Americans specifically are "caught on camera an average of 238 times a week" (34 times a day) (Melore 2020), with the number being higher for those who live in big cities. Thus, surveillance has gone from being a primarily human mode of surveilling to control to a technologically assisted mode of surveilling to control. And in the digital age, the amount of information that can be surveilled and captured has only increased and become more normalized.

Members of society are encouraged to watch each other and themselves. This is seen in how many homes and businesses have their own security cameras installed. In the case of urban and political surveillance via cameras, people brush off privacy concerns by claiming "no one is really watching on the other end." But if we draw from Foucault, the *potential* that someone could be watching is all that matters. It is enough to feel like you are being observed to submit to control or change behavior in correspondence, and this further adds to the weight of gaze. The increase in urban surveillance also impacts our law. The Fourth Amendment cites a right to "reasonable expectation of privacy,"[1] but what does that mean in a world where every nook and cranny is in range of a camera? Where do Americans feel a true sense of privacy? An individual who seeks a private moment in an alleyway may not be aware of the security camera located in

[1] U.S. Const. amend. IV.

the corner. Even in situations where there is no technology watching over, people may not feel completely in privacy. I attribute this to the variety of ubiquitous surveillance in our world today.

Beyond physical surveillance is digital surveillance—which creates a "surveillance culture" that forms new modes of surveillance. These modes will be described in the following section, but it is important to know that this surveillance culture acts as an obstacle to authenticity. Duffy and Chan (2019) write: "The ever-looming threat of imagined surveillance has instigated a variety of preemptive social media practices—from the use of privacy settings to judicious self-monitoring to conscious efforts to sever the ties between one's 'real' identity and their digital persona" (132). Not only is surveillance a relationship between the controller and the controlled, but it is also an active agent in severing the individual's connection to their spontaneous authentic desires.

4 DIMENSIONS OF SURVEILLANCE

For this thesis, I define 4 main dimensions of surveillance: data, social, political, and self. Data surveillance, or "dataveillance," is the harvesting of data and metadata on digital devices and platforms. It is most often deployed by corporations and affects individuals as well as collective populations. This form of surveillance expands beyond what is visual by quantifying every behavior that can be performed or recorded online. The goal of this form of surveillance is to generate data that can be fed back into research and development, advertising, and social networking algorithms. Professor Shoshana Zuboff explains how dataveillance is critical to surveillance capitalism, which relies on the extraction and quantification of human experience as material resource for prediction products. Other scholarly work on the ethics of datafication explains it as being a threat to autonomy and free will. Today's form of data collection is

different from what advertisers and marketers used to influence people decades before because it operates on a much more massive scale. Savirimuthu writes, “data driven decision-making processes create [challenges] for individuals as the boundaries between nudging and exercise autonomy become difficult to distinguish.” This is especially interruptive for younger people who are still “becoming” themselves and are more open to influence. Savirimuthu also cites a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) that highlights “specific concerns about data driven advertising and practices violating children's reasonable expectations of privacy, autonomy and agency.” He writes, “It was found that many children were monitored without their knowledge by trackers and their digital footprints were transformed into data to be used to create profiles, and target them with marketing content and services” (2020). As new generations grow up with advanced technology and algorithms, they will have less awareness of what a world without incessant influential content once was.

The second form of surveillance is social surveillance, not just in public spaces but in online spaces. This form of observation can take place on social media and is perpetuated by the users themselves. Social surveillance can seem harmless at first, for it is only normal for individuals to look at one another when exposed in a social setting. But the digital realm doesn’t distinguish between a glance and a stare. When going through the views on a post, one cannot tell who swiped past the post quickly versus who zoomed in on the picture, perhaps judging it. This leads users to play it safe and assume that everyone who sees their online posts is paying attention to those posts, even if that might not be the case. Thus, a young person may criticize every pixel before posting a picture. This parallels the Foucault example from earlier, where the *potential* for social surveillance or close watching is all that matters in order to modify behavior and submit to the gaze of the given social circle. In a paper titled “You Never Really Know

Who's Looking: Imagined surveillance across social media platforms," Duffy and Chan explain "Across an expansive social media ecology, we are prodded to carefully craft and maintain a self for public consumption—a production that entails incessant invisible labor: cultivating social relationships as "followers," "friends," and "connections," producing and sharing online content, and curating a consistent digital persona that will withstand public scrutiny" (134). The inverted pentopticon sculpture, which will be described in length later, explores this public facing craft of identity. Around the bottom of the sculpture is written "THIS IS A PUBLIC SPACE," which highlights that the anxiety and labor that goes into producing a Self for consumption is held within a public gaze. Just as the title of the paper suggests, once inside the sculpture, you don't really know who is looking.

The third form of surveillance is political and urban surveillance. This is the most salient form of surveillance most people think of. This form of surveillance is facilitated by security cameras, biometric data, facial recognition, and consumption culture. Typically, cameras are installed by corporations or governments to keep an eye on the physical public and private spaces. A paper titled "Political Economy and Surveillance Theory" by Christian Fuchs (2013) explains how the security measures following 9/11 reduced "citizens to the status of potential terrorists that need to be kept under permanent supervision and control" (684). Many of the country's institutions have adopted this ideal, treating everyone as a potential offender to be watched preemptively, whether that be through security cameras in grocery stores or full body pat-downs at concert venues. A more covert facet of this surveillance is how the political economy encourages mindless consumption, where that be of material items or media content. The more you watch (consume), the more you are influenced. The more you spend, the more instant gratification you receive, the more you are trapped in a cycle of influence and

consumption. Fuchs talks about the interconnectedness of surveillance and contemporary capitalism, building on Zuboff's work on surveillance capitalism, and says, "individuals are threatened by the violence of the market that wants to force them to buy or produce certain commodities and helps reproduce capitalist relations by gathering and using information on their economic behaviour" (677).

Finally, there is self surveillance. This is a form in which both the observer and the victim is oneself. It is a form of self-monitoring, where an individual is consciously aware of their own behavior and presence and how it impacts others and themselves. Advances in biometric technology, such as fitness trackers, have made it easier for people to track their health and productivity. But these same technologies also reinforce the quantified self, which assumes that human behavior can and should be abstracted into numbers for optimization. Aside from self-optimization, another more prevalent motive for self surveillance is to control how one is perceived by others. Sucking in the stomach, for example, is something the male gaze has conditioned people to do in order to be perceived as thin. Though initially one may self-monitor for the gaze of another, the gazes of others can become internalized, such that even when no one is around, one feels pressured to suck in the stomach to *feel* thin. These "internalizations" of gaze occur frequently and affect the way people behave or think about privacy when they are "alone." Some people, for example, claim to "romanticize their life," making themselves the subject of a film, submitting to the cinematic gaze even in the absence of cameras. This mode of self-surveillance can cause negative repercussions such as loss of privacy, increased self-consciousness, and a focus on self-optimization that can lead to anxiety and burnout. Gorea (2021) claims that "authenticity work surrounding the pressure to perform an authentic self in narrowly accepted ways is a major source of anxiety for youth" (3). The subjection to gaze isn't

always a passive process and often requires unrecognized labor. The ways in which young people change behavior when they are alone can be seen as laborious practices to make performance smoother and seamless.

ANIMATION EXPLAINED

This animation is about digital surveillance and datafication. The algorithm, the trends, the stuff that influences our culture, and thereby us, is a product of data that comes from every behavior being tracked and monitored. This interestingly ties into free will. I argue that people are being given an illusion of choice which leads them to consume and consume, all so they can regurgitate those products back into curating an image or personality for themselves.

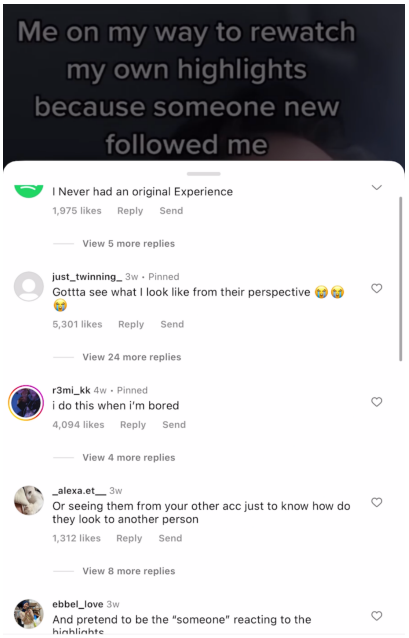
The piece heavily plays with the theme of extraction and abstraction that Shoshana Zuboff explains is integral to surveillance capitalism. The girl's form is abstracted as the video progresses. She begins with a sophisticated outline that is reduced to a single stroke outline that is reduced to a jumble of lines that needs to be organized into data. This abstraction parallels that of datafication and also speaks to the extractive nature of quantifying us. The ominous Eye transforms the girl into a block of data used for profit. Suddenly, it is unclear who the subject is anymore, as the screen starts to flash and display the hypnotizing relationship between screen and human. A computer's job is to know you. The computer head scans the characters for information as it hypnotizes them with content to consume. At a certain point, the sound of notifications and visual flashing gets overwhelming in order to emphasize the spellbounding relationship between the consumer and the content. Two figures, one red and one static, walk as if they are reflections of each other. Here, I intend to pose the question: which one of them is "the real one?" In other words, which parts of you are independent and which parts are

influenced by algorithms and digital content? At the end, we return to the main girl sitting on a toilet on her phone– a mundane albeit amusing image to return to after the chaos that was taking up the screen moments before. She gets a notification prompting her to buy some new makeup she might like— all of which is the product of close digital surveillance that happens as a result of participating in the consumerist attention economy.

SCULPTURE EXPLAINED

This sculpture was inspired by primarily visual forms of social media with features that emphasize social engagement. It is a pentagon composed of 5 one-way mirrors. The viewer can step inside the apparatus and see only themselves, while any viewers outside will be able to see the person inside. This creates a hyper-watchful experience in which visitors are watching others watch themselves. The act of seeing and being seen constantly, in addition to optimizing for aesthetic and authenticity, puts pressure on the younger generation and is not something they meaningfully consent to when choosing to sign-up for a social media platform (Norwalk 2018).

A significant source of evidence for this was Internet memes describing users' attempts to inhabit the mind of an "Other" to predict how others might perceive them. The memes below reflect this sentiment as users describe looking at their own social media content through the lens of one of their followers.



In psychology, Theory of Mind is described as an important cognitive function that allows us to understand the mental states of others. For example, if we see someone turn their back causing a thief to steal their wallet, we use theory of mind to understand that the back-turned person did not see the thief stealing and therefore does not know their wallet is gone. But in the case of social media, where you cannot see a person's real-time reaction and behavior, it's impossible to actually know what someone is thinking inside. Instead, you are just viewing yourself from a million possible gazes, similar to how one could see a million versions of their reflection in the Pentopticon. This is why no matter how many times one tries to perceive themself from another person's mind, their anxiety will never be resolved because they will never be sure.

This, in combination with the information surplus that users consume every day, leads to a surveillance culture reminiscent of George Orwell's *1984*, in which people are not only watching others, but themselves. To represent the oppressiveness of seeing and being seen, I created an interactive pentagon-shaped sculpture made of one-way mirrors. The sculpture can be seen as a sort of inverted panopticon, with the inside being mirrored and the outside being glass that observers can see through.

Viewers can step into the pentagon and be forced to see themselves at all angles. The viewer can only see themself, and observers outside the mirror can see them too. For the person inside, this experience will create a sense of anxiety, in which they are forced to look at their mirrored self and self-analyze while being aware that the audience outside can see them as well. What does it feel like to be "caught" self-perceiving? What does it feel like to be an observer? The act of watching can feel fetishizing to an extent, and this discomfort may reveal to viewers their own watchfulness.

The Inverted Pentopticon drew a lot of attention in the exhibition. Some visitors were eager to jump inside while others feared it. After the initial shock of not being able to see outside disappeared, I asked the viewers inside how they felt knowing that we could all see them even though they can't see us. Though responses varied, all of them shared a negative connotation. People expressed anxiety, discomfort, eeriness, and even fear. Some viewers expressed how they had never seen themselves from so many angles before. This made them uncomfortable because they are used to being able to control how they see themselves, whether it's in the mirror facing straight or in a phone from an angle. But the ability to see their body from the back or from the side and to realize that they aren't aware of (or in control of) how those parts are being perceived made them feel a sense of anxiety. This was interesting to me because we don't always intentionally "hide" the raw, true, authentic parts of us. Sometimes, we convince ourselves that those parts don't exist because they aren't in our field of vision. We are always surveilling ourselves and have convinced ourselves that the angles in which we can see ourselves are the only angles that exist or matter. In other words, we project our own gaze onto others, assuming they are seeing the same thing we see.

POSTERS EXPLAINED

Four posters were created for the portion of the exhibition concerning political and urban surveillance. Two of them addressed consumption as a form of control and the other two addressed physical cameras and footage as a form of control. All posters were composed of black and red ink only in order to maintain the aesthetic coherence of the exhibition. The first poster was composed of geometric black and red shapes assembled to represent a surveillance camera. This was done in the style of Russian Constructivism, which is known for its anti-establishment

nature for it rejected traditional artistic norms and institutions. At the bottom of the poster was a bit of morse code that read “sousveillance.” “Sous” is the French prefix for “under” while “sur” means from “above.” By reversing the power dynamic, sousveillance is a form of resistance and retaliation in which the oppressed group watches the authoritative group. Between black and white lines, the poster reads “look back at them.” Together, this poster carries a message for individuals who want to join the movement of subversive surveillance. I wanted to say “Don’t just watch what they tell you to watch. Watch them instead. Keep your eyes on what’s really important.”

On the other side of the wall was an anti-consumption poster that read “consume less, create more.” This is a philosophy I’ve had for a while in general, but it also serves as a reminder that consumption is the goal of surveillance capitalism—a form of top-down control. On the other hand, creativity comes from some inner essence, making it integral to authentic self-expression. Consumption sucks people into a cycle of passivity, making them more susceptible to control, whereas creation is an active process that encourages individuals to break boundaries of thought and control. On the same wall, there was also a projection of a red arrow going down, resembling a decline in the stock market. I intended this to communicate the implied result of resistance to consumerism: “take them down!”

The other anti-consumption poster read “I want you to keep watching” with an image of Uncle Sam. Straightforwardly, this poster represents U.S. ambitions to maintain a consumerist economy. The original image of Uncle Sam pointing comes from an effort to recruit men for the military during World War I. I draw a parallel, indicating how people are being recruited for overconsumption to maintain their country’s ideals. Lastly, the fourth poster looked like a barcode with text superimposed on top reading “Eye saw that.” Of course, I could have written “I

saw that," but the "I" pronoun singled out an observer that I could not name. So instead, I used a symbolic homophone that reinforces the visuality at the core of surveillance: eye. I was inspired by the surveillance in physical stores, and how, once again, the individual is treated as a potential thief before a customer. The numbers and letters on the side of the barcode read "consume less" in Leetspeak. Leet (1337) is a method of writing words using computer symbols that look similar to English letters. Our brains are pretty good at processing leetspeak but machines are not. It can be interpreted as a way of using technology's own features against it. In conclusion, the posters had heavily subversive messages that condemned surveillance for the sake of the political economy.

WEBSITE EXPLAINED

We are active participants in surveillance culture; it has trained us to live under a constant gaze, and nowhere is this more prominent than on social media. When in a coffee shop, our fingers twitch to pull out our phones and capture the foam on our latte. Capturing our life has become a way to actualize it. We want to perform for this gaze—make sure it likes what it sees. The pressure to be seen by social media followers as a curated being leads to a never-ending performance, even when no one is around. Are we ever alone? And when we are alone, are we romanticizing our life or performing for an invisible consumer?

Even if we know we're being watched, we become complacent, ignorant, hopeless. This art is meant to illustrate that we have internalized surveillance. It is not only something happening to us, but also what we do to ourselves. You are becoming your own surveillor and in doing so, priming yourself for reward systems and behavioral manipulation tactics that shape you

into the perfect product. You are being ripped away from your authentic self and being reduced into a data point. A return to the Self begins with awareness of your own watchfulness.

This piece is composed of surveillance videos. Each video transitions from seemingly aesthetic scenes of me living my life into invasive surveillance by an unknown Eye. The eye is also meant to resemble a red dot, signaling that a camera is recording. This transition is intentionally produced through cinematographic techniques and atmospheric sound. The scenes begin with gentle music and pleasant shots. Close-ups of me playing with my ring or nervously shaking my leg are there to convey anxiety. Anxiety that comes from being watched and from wanting to be a desired curation. Slowly, the shots become more invasive, close-up, and eerie. What was once aesthetic is now too close and too loud. The music slowly transitions into a dark or cacophonous sound. In three of the scenes, I am in the presence of a technological gadget, be it a laptop, smartphone, or tablet. In the last scene, I am immersed in nature, with no technology to be found. Yet the Eye is still present. The gaze still exists. While watching these videos, some may question “Who is the Eye?” The home screen of the website shows someone watching the surveillance monitor, presumably the person associated with the Eye. When you tap their shoulder, it is revealed that the surveillor is, in fact, me.

ZINE EXPLAINED

The significance of the zine ties back to the reason I wanted to do a creative thesis in the first place: to have an impact on young people and peers through art. The purpose of the zine was to give them something they could take home with them to serve as a reminder of the exhibit. The pieces in the exhibition did enough to overwhelm audiences into caring about privacy, but what solutions could I offer? Simply knowing about a problem could lead to desensitization or

avoidance if people don't know how to deal with it. This is why, in the zine, I offer helpful tips for taking back some privacy online. The zine was also a way for me to approach my peers more informally, a persuasive technique capitalizing on relatability. It was filled with poems, memes, and images that are palatable and a writing style that relieved them from the pressure of academic reading. I also end with a note encouraging my peers to put critical thought into technological issues because we have the power to change them. In conclusion, the zine felt like a one on one conversation between me and the viewer, simply talking about these issues as we would in an informal setting yet still giving them the weight and importance they deserve.

CONCLUSION

Today's youth navigates a social world like no other, with platforms that give us an incredible opportunity to connect while also drawing users away from private life and autonomy. The fantasy of an authentic online self encourages users to capture more images and post more content with the expectation that they'll eventually "get the balance right" between authenticity and performance. In order to understand why this does not work, young people should be educated about digital technologies from a young age and be given plenty of offline opportunities to connect. Corporations also have a responsibility to be transparent about surveillance tactics and initiate efforts to increase user privacy. As we navigate the challenges of a surveillance-dominated world, it is critical to recognize the value of self-sovereignty and take steps to reclaim control over our digital and physical lives, promoting privacy, autonomy, and human dignity.

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