

Using at least 3 examples, consider how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore one of the following: Conflict, Identity, the Surveillance State, the Technological World?

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Fig 1 Wellerstein, A.(2010) Postcard of an American panopticon: "Interior view of cell house, new Illinois State Penitentiary at Stateville, near Joliet, Ill."[image] Available at: <https://prisonphotography.org/2010/08/21/stateville-prison-joliet-il-art-object/>

Fig 2 Calle,S.(1980) Suite Vénitienne.[image] Available at: <https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/7349/sophie-calle-suite-venitienne>

Fig 3 & 4 Stanza (2013) A Look Inside. [instillation] Surveillance Art expo De Markten. Brussels Belgium. Available at:https://www.stanza.co.uk/cctv_web/

Fig 5 & 6 Hemmer,R & Wodiczko,K (2015) Zoom pavilion. [instillation] Musée d'Art Contemporain de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Available at: https://www.lozano-hemmer.com/zoom_pavilion.php

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Using at least 3 examples, consider how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore one of the following: Conflict, Identity, the Surveillance State, the Technological World?

Since the mid-20th century, the evolution of digital technology has created the rise of digital authoritarianism, allowing the state to control society virtually through data collection, surveillance and monetisation. Ironically being watched makes us feel both safe and protected as well as acting as a form of intrusion to our privacy, artists have explored this in a range of contemporary ways that question, is it surveillance or is it voyeurism? Through their work they explore the omnipresence of CCTV and cameras, as well as the ethics and ideologies of knowing versus not knowing you are being watched. Image makers over time have also utilised the new development of technology in making, editing and selling their work, both through using installations, social media, quantitative data, projections and further technical developments to the camera itself. Brighenti in 2010 refers to the relationship between art and surveillance as 'artveillance' where he suggests we 'regard surveillance not as a merely technical process focused exclusively on recording images, tracking data flows and processing stored data- but also as a 'artful' set of techniques' (Andrea Mubi Brighenti et al., 2010). This concept will be discussed further. This essay will explore the perspective of state surveillance through both the position of the image makers as well as the boundaries it steps over into voyeurism. This will be done through the analysis of how digital technologies have been used by image makers such as Sophie Calle, Stanza, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Krzysztof Wodiczko, Michael Wolf and Hasan Elahi.

Mass surveillance is used by the state as a form of control, Karl Marx during the 1800s explores these relations with capitalism through societies power hierarchy and the factory system. China, a communist country based on Marxist principles has 'at least 200 million cameras installed' (Desk,2019) the most in the world. This shows that in both eastern and western cultures we live in 'the age of surveillance capitalism' (Naughton,2019). Collectively everything we do is turned into data with our thoughts, feelings and identity being monetized and captured to be profited unknowingly by the state and image makers themselves. Foucault describes this here as 'He is seen but he does not see, he is the object of information' (Foucault, 1975, pg.201). Conceptually this reinstates hegemony where our value is placed in the data we create, in the same way artists create 'artveillance' without consent and profit from other individuals identities and publicises them globally using digital forms which in itself is a form of state surveillance.

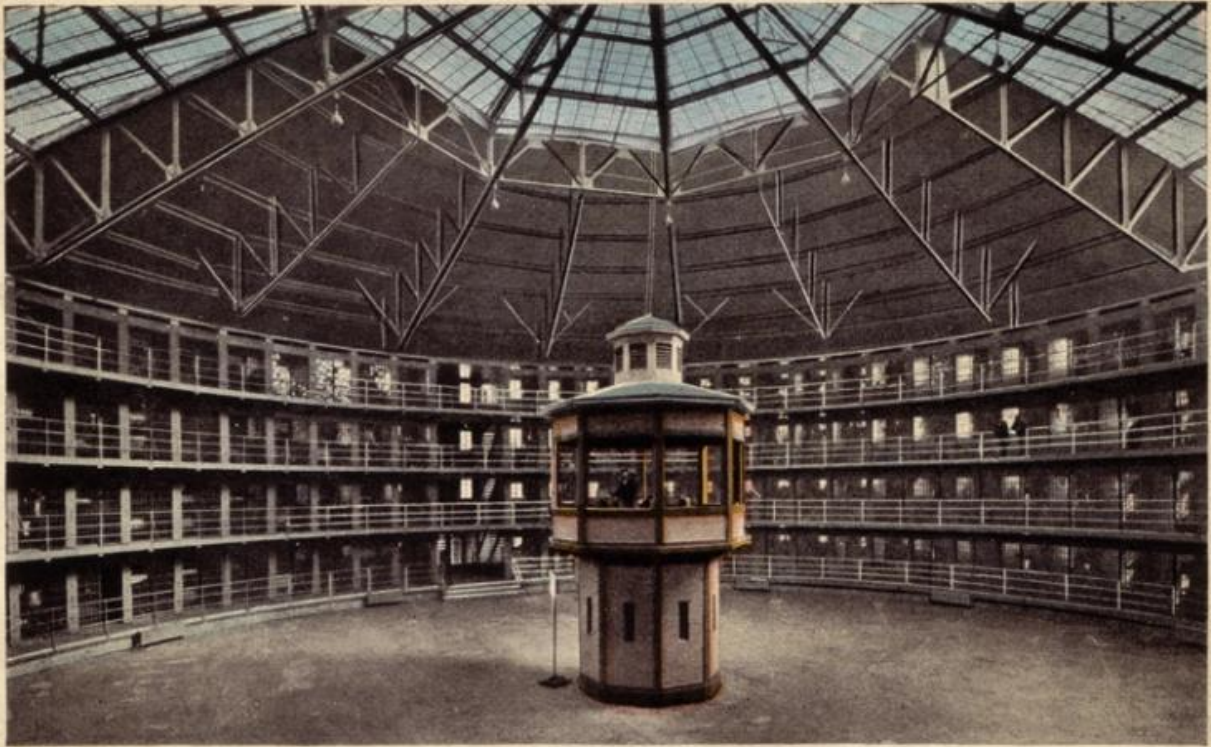


Figure 1

Foucault created the 'panopticon' as a social theory based on Jeremy Bentham's 18th century systemic prison structure, where the watch man would observe (opticon) all (pan) prisoners without them knowing if or not they were being watched. In theory this would reduce crime in which Bentham believed would work in other elements of the ideological state apparatus. Although it is argued the panopticon 'was never a state apparatus in Althusser's sense of the term. For all it claimed to model a utilitarian utopia, the Panopticon was an assemblage' (Tagg,J, 2010). Suggesting that it developed without considering classism and morality but to enforce state power and capitalism, where surveillance is a perfect example of this. Foucault responded to this idea saying, 'the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action' (Foucault 1975 pg. 201). Suggesting this model integrated into all aspects of society.

Sophie Calle expands on this in 1980 (Pre digitalisation) where she documented this methodology physically through stalking, journaling and documenting images of her subject, Henri B. Her body of work 'Suite Vénitienne' shows Henri B was unaware he was being followed suggesting the panopticon has evolved into voyeurism. Collectively our curiosity means we naturally surveil each other, 'you exist only in the trace of the other, but without his being aware of it; in fact, you follow your own tracks almost without knowing it yourself' (Calle and Baudrillard, 1983, pg.76-77). This suggests that image maker's perception of surveillance does not always correspond with the state however their method in documentation and publication enforces state surveillance. Calle utilises digital technology later in her career by turning this work digital (into an e book), in which the data is held under the state generating access through the image maker to store the data. Curatorially, her images shown in Fig 2 resemble a CCTV screen creating the narrative of always being watched.



Figure 2

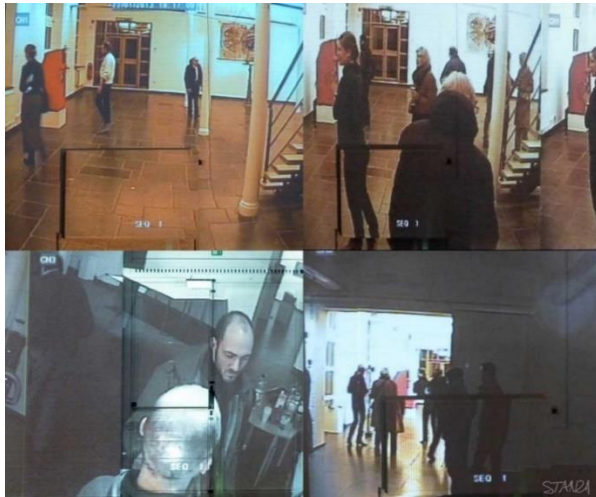


Figure 3



Figure 4

Moreover, Stanza in 2013 played on Calle's initial preliminary ideas around physical surveillance and adapted it to the advancement of digital technology through a CCTV themed installation. Here the exhibition titled 'A look inside' monitors visitors in which 'the audience are units of data, moving around the giant database, which is the gallery' (Stanza, 2013) suggesting a replica of state surveillance. These images are then displayed large scale over the walls where visitors use electronics and ultrasound sensors to control the feed creating a performative approach, they also embed the viewers into the artwork itself. This advancement in technology with the use of ultrasound sensors relays data about the distance and location of the viewer in the room, bringing new forms and senses into surveillance. Overall, this exhibition is the embodiment of a contemporary panopticon where the mediated, responsive architecture means anyone in the gallery at any time can be displayed. Systematically, this exhibition shows the scale of surveillance that citizens fail to acknowledge, with 'CCTV in the UK is reaching 5.2 million, with 1 camera for every 13 people as the popularity of public surveillance, home CCTV and doorbell camera use increases' (Ratcliff, 2020). Ethically, this installation controls individuals' behaviour also known as the Hawthorne effect which 'occurs when people behave differently because they

know they are being watched' (Spencer and Mahtani, 2017). Additionally, without their control the footage is uploaded for the world to see. Systematically this method is used by the state to prevent crime, as seen by Newcastle university conducting a study on bike theft over two years where it 'reduced thefts from the racks with the eye pictures, combined with a short anti-theft message, by 62%'(Newcastle University, 2017). Showing that state surveillance does have many positives in preventing and documenting crime but it comes at the cost of constantly being watched. Also, the 'bike theft went up by 63%' (Newcastle University, 2017) in other locations meaning that it is displaced, having continual CCTV everywhere would be needed to prevent crime long term. Stanza utilises digital technology in this way as the viewers ability to watch themselves digitally in the form of state surveillance allows them to reflect on their behaviours when knowing and not knowing they are being watched, and the mirroring this exhibition has to society and the scale of surveillance.



Figure 5



Figure 6

Digital advances in 2015 by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Krzysztof Wodiczko show the immersive ability that facial recognition uses to extend on Stanza's very similar CCTV exhibition. Zoom Pavilion 'uses face recognition algorithms to detect the presence of participants and record their spatial relationship within the exhibition space' (Hemmer, 2015). Using independent robotic cameras, changing the sequence and landscape itself to locate viewers faces, it is evident that voyeurism has become prevalent through digital advancement now analysing our individual identities. A feature in this installation works to pair people's faces next to one another (as seen in figure 5) that share similar features, this shows that technology has been used by image makers and the state not only to watch us but to data analyse our identity. Human rights activists have said that facial recognition 'the kind that scans, identifies, and profiles people en masse – is not compatible with international human rights law, as it amounts to mass surveillance' (Bacciarelli, 2023). It argues an important question about the use of power and control of the state, Zoom Pavilion highlights the exponential growth in technology and surveillance and how civilians can visualise the algorithm they are part of everyday. However, this software that analyses the CCTV can be used to 'alert the police to sudden, unusual, or antisocial human behaviour' (Russon, 2023). This creates purpose and protection that validates individuals' perspectives on facial recognition. Although 'researchers develop "minimum ethical and legal standards" for the governance of facial recognition technology and test them on three British police deployments – with all three failing' (Minderoo, 2022). Showing that the state is not reliable and truthful about what they do with data collated from surveillance meaning there are a lot of questions about the usage of the data. Additionally, viewers of Zoom Pavilion may have controversial beliefs about this and

how the exhibition itself is monetized and if the state have control over the footage, altering their perception and experience.

Everyone is an image maker in this digital era and is guilty of voyeurism through social media where millions of data and images are shared everyday and stored by the state. Festinger's social comparison theory states 'why people rely on other people to evaluate their own attitudes and abilities' (Oxford dictionary, 2024). Showing how social media is a platform to present an idyllic life and a different form of reality, making it a competitive platform of comparisons. Additionally, this means users post what they are doing in their everyday lives and their followers are their form of surveillance. Due to technological advances our society have access to surveil anybody we like, just like the state as we can the store this information.



Figure 7

Transparent City is a body of work created by Michael Wolf in 2009 where architectural abstraction meets voyeurism. Here he uses imagery of modern-day life in the concrete jungle of Chicago through human vulnerability, capturing narratives of different lives in each window. He himself has become the surveyor of the citizens which asks the question 'Does the fact that we don't know we are being watched mean we are being normalised in the way the panopticon was intended to correct behaviour?' (The Guardian, 2015). Suggesting that voyeurism has become a social norm and as a society we have been led by the state into a form of digital control in how we behave. Wolf expands on this further as his images show that even in the privacy of your home you can still be under surveillance which penultimately alters our constant behaviour. Wolf positions himself on roof tops and opposing windows where he often intrudes into homes and creates a level of voyeurism in his positioning. Additionally, his 'large format camera with a 112-megapixel digital back captures and reveals exquisite details' (Lense culture, n.d). Suggesting digital advancements such as a long focus lens allows image makers and the state to use surveillance from a distance where they can be kept unknown to the subject. Ironically as a society we frown upon this level of intrusion into others lives, yet we buy the work and support the artist making it. Arguably 'taking a photo of a person where they can expect privacy, such as inside their home or garden, is likely to cause a breach of privacy laws' (Avon and Somerset police, 2023). Furthermore, he uses voyeurism to such extreme that it renegotiates his position as a photographer as 'the photographs are a means of making 'real(or more real) matters that the privileged- might prefer to ignore' (Sontag,2003 pg 6) suggesting that his imagery of mundane office jobs and nine to five that he hasn't experienced himself could be touching on the hardships of the working class, similar to the states attitudes and exploitation. Overall, Transparent City utilises digital technology to explore

intimacy and independent lives of people who are often overlooked or referred to as a numerical form of data.



Figure 8

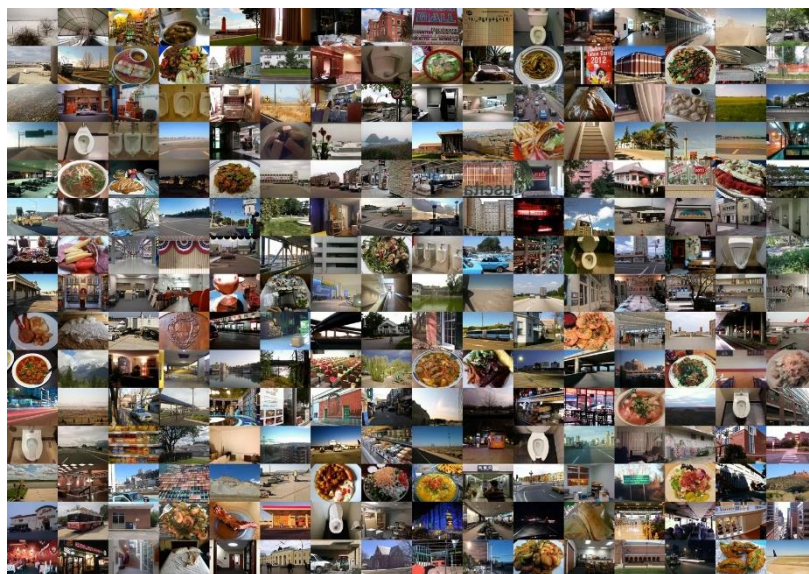


Figure 9

Expanding on this 'Watching you watch me' by Hasan Elahi in 2011 shows his own response to state surveillance after he was detained by the FBI in 2002 under an alleged terrorist bomb plot. Once charges were dropped, he had to inform the FBI of everywhere he wished to travel, which started a decade of self-surveillance. Here he documented his everyday movements of where he slept, what he ate and the hotels he stayed in, as well as continuing to update the FBI on his movements. Interestingly the juxtaposition of Elahi's hyper self-surveillance is shown through the quantity of images and information, parallel to the government's failure in state surveillance when detaining him. This suggests that his own experience with state surveillance allowed him to realize the scale of information and images used to follow their subjects. Using digital advancements in camera technology, it has become more accessible with ability to turn the lens on yourself and document your own life. This has been favourable in contemporary practices where you become both the image maker and the watcher. For example modern technological advances have meant the FUJIFILM XT-4 Digital Camera with a flip out screen is designed to rotate to take images of yourself.

This essay has addressed how image makers have utilised digital technology over time, showing how they, themselves are a form of state surveillance within the methods of their practices. Foucault introduced the Panopticon which as a theory is current in all image makers work, where knowing versus not knowing you are being watched can alter your behaviour. Furthermore, CCTV and facial recognition have been the focal advances in digital surveillance with Zoom Pavilion showing the extent of digital modernisation. Interestingly the criticisms of human rights activists against state

surveillance generated a powerful argument, where it was acknowledged that we are completely unaware of how it is used. As well as this there are advantages and disadvantages such as the police using surveillance as a form of protection and yet failing minimum ethical and legal standards test, making citizens doubt the state and its intentions. Moreover, social media has a large role in both state surveillance and surveillance of each other, where we have all become image makers posting and sharing our lives digitally. Allowing us to manipulate the appearance of our lives however we want to. Whilst there are advantages to surveillance such as capturing the identity of people committing crimes and keeping us safe, there is a fine line between surveillance and voyeurism, in which 'new visual and digital technologies cannot fail to have a profound impact on contemporary art' (Brighenti p.175,2010).

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