N O M E

O V E R E X P O S E D
PAOLO CIRIO
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With his public intervention Overexposed, artist Paolo Cirio disseminates unauthorized pictures of high-ranking U.S. intelligence officials throughout major cities. Cirio obtained snapshots of NSA, CIA, and FBI officers through social media hacks. Then, using his HD Stencils graffiti technique, he spray-paints high-resolution reproductions of the misappropriated photos onto public walls.

New modes of circulation, appropriation, contextualization, and technical reproduction of images are integrated into this artwork.

The project considers the aftermath of Edward Snowden's revelations and targets some of the officials responsible for programs of mass surveillance or for misleading the public about them. The dissemination of their candid portraits as graffiti on public walls is a modern commentary on public accountability at a time of greater demand for transparency with regard to the over-classified apparatuses of surveillance that are threatening civil rights worldwide.

The officials targeted in the Overexposed series are Keith Alexander (NSA), John Brennan (CIA), Michael Hayden (NSA), Michael Rogers (NSA), James Comey (FBI), James Clapper (NSA), David Petraeus (CIA), Caitlin Hayden (NSC), and Avril Haines (NSA).

In this exhibition, NOME presents the nine subjects of the Overexposed series painted on canvas and photographic paper.

As a form of creative espionage, and utilizing common search engines, social engineering, as well as hacks on social media, Cirio tracked down photographs and selfies of government officials taken in informal situations. All of the photos were taken by individuals external to the intelligence agencies, by civilians or lower ranking officers.

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Indeed, the omnipresence of cameras and the constant upload of data onto social media greatly facilitate the covert gathering of intelligence that can potentially be used in a work of art. Cirio's open-source intelligence (OSINT) utilizes intelligence collected from publicly available sources to satirize both an era of ubiquitous mass surveillance and overly mediated political personas.

Cirio's political satire reverses the contemporary means of propaganda, exposing the extent to which a public image can be captured on camera and exploited by the very same systems that intelligence officials seek to control. Overexposed derides the watchers with embarrassing pictures over which they have lost control, effectively turning the tables on them and their advocacy of mass surveillance and lax privacy practices.

As they are assimilated into street art culture and the world of art, the government officials who have been 'victimized' in Overexposed are transformed into pop icons. Political roles aside, their faces appear familiar to us because they remind us that, ultimately, we are all victims of social media corporations, and surveillance in general. In essence, the portraits of Overexposed represent the historical moment of a loss of privacy as well as a cultural shift in the norms of social appearance.

High Definition Stencils is a graffiti technique invented by Paolo Cirio. The technique digitally creates special stencils for high definition full color graffiti using spray paint for the reproduction of pictures and graphics.

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BIOGRAPHY

Known worldwide for his provocative work, Paolo Cirio (*1979) conceptually explores issues in economics, democracy, privacy, transparency, and copyright with an innovative aesthetic. His artworks are active agents: they engage power structures, global mass media and the general public voluntarily and involuntarily in current social and critical debates. He is particularly interested in how media and specific arrangements of information can influence the creation and perception of cultural, political, and economic reality as well as personal emotional states, interpersonal relationships and instinctive human behavior.

Cirio presents performative media interventions and conceptual paradigms as fine art. Within the space of an art gallery, these offline installations materially translate and document sophisticated concepts, ethereal time-based performances, and their affect on both their targets and their audiences. The artist works with systems of distribution, organization, and control of information that affect the flow of social, economic, and cognitive structures, reconfiguring these to create subversive and empowering works of art.

As a result of his artistic provocations and media performances, Cirio has not infrequently been the subject of investigations and the recipient of threats both legal and personal from government, corporate and military authorities, as well as from ordinary people. At the same time, his works have gained mass attention and have been featured by global media including CNN, Fox News, Washington Post, Global Village, O Globo, Der Spiegel, Daily Mail, Toronto Standard, El Pais, Libration, and Global Village.

The artist has received numerous awards, most recently a Golden Nica at Ars Electronica 2014 for Loophole4All.com, a project that focuses on the obscure side of current networked economy: offshore finance. For the three projects comprising the Hacking Monopolism Trilogy, Face to Facebook (2011), Amazon Noir (2006) and Google Will Eat Itself (2005), created in collaboration with Alessandro Ludovico, the artist used custom programmed software to exploit the security vulnerabilities of the Internet giants platforms and to generate media attention about their abuse of power.

Paolo Cirio has exhibited at major international institutions including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Utah MoCA; MoCA Sydney; ZKM, Karlsruhe; CCCB, Barcelona; CCC Strozzina, Florence; MoCA Denver; MAK, Vienna; Architectural Association, London; National Fine Arts Museum, Taichung; Wywyższeni National Museum, Warsaw; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; PAN, Naples; MoCA Tapei; Sydney Biennial; and NTT ICC, Tokyo.