

Equality and Erasure: Responses to Subject Negation in the Art of Jill Magid

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Representations of, and engagements with, surveillance in art and literature have exhibited trends in keeping with what Kirstie Ball and Kevin D. Haggerty identify as a dystopian current in the scholarship of the field, when they describe academics and researchers across a range of disciplinary orientations as having “embrace[d] a metanarrative of ever more surveillance becoming more discriminating and intrusive” (2005, p. 136). Meditations on surveillance by writers and artists have tended to articulate the anxieties of popular culture: from Orwell and Zamyatin to Le Carré and the twentieth-century rise of the spy novel to China Miéville’s *The City and the City* (2009) and even E. L. James’s *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011)—surveillance has been inextricably bound up with the delineation of power relations and the dialectics of agency that underpin them. The contemporary art world, too, has provided rich commentary and conceptual mapping of the modern surveillance state, from the *noir*-esque performance pieces of Sophie Calle (*Suite Venitienne*, 1980; *The Shadow*, 1981) to the iconoclastic street art of Banksy (*What Are You Looking At?*, 2004; *One Nation Under CCTV*, 2008) to more recent developments in the “artveillance” (Brighenti 2010)

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field which traverse a range of media (cf. *sousveillant* lifelogging in the works of Steve Mann and Hasan Elahi; bio-hacking in Heather Dewey-Hagborg's *Stranger Visions*, 2012–2014; street theatre by the Surveillance Camera Players, 1996–2006). Despite such diverse methods and dispositions, from the playful to the politically-charged, one of the engrained ideas that is persistently reiterated regarding surveillance is our passivity in its face; this no doubt stemming from the Foucauldian figuration of docile bodies (1977, p. 136), which goes some way to explaining our cultural complacency regarding the ubiquity of surveillance as a structural feature of our late modernity (Giddens 1990, p. 59).

Two lasting figurations of surveillance have dominated the trajectory of critical thought on the subject in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: George Orwell's Big Brother (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949) and Michel Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's panopticon (*Discipline and Punish*, 1975), both of which have encouraged the propensity to perceive the spaces of surveillance as essentially oppressive and deindividuating. Furthermore, their frequent reiteration in contemporary cultural production has provided both popular and academic discourses with iconic references through which experiences of surveillance societies can be readily articulated. Orwell, by employing surveillance as the right arm of totalitarianism, firmly situated the modern socio-political subject—embodied in the novel by the privately anarchic civilian Winston Smith—within an “us versus them” dichotomy that continues to resonate sharply with present-day responses to surveillant technologies and practices. Foucault, in his scrutiny of the “panopticism” generated by the social applications of these technologies and practices, initiated a profound discussion—one which continues to underpin most scholarship in the field of surveillance studies today—concerning the effects of institutionalised surveillance upon subjectivity and the nature of the identity work that may be enacted within surveillant spaces. That these two powerful metaphors have gained so much traction in both civic and scholarly discourses implies a consensus that the self is suffering in the surveillance society. As much can be inferred from the conclusions drawn, not only by philosophers, but also the artistic and literary practitioners who, more and more, are choosing to implement surveillant themes in their work. How, then, might we circumvent traditional dichotomies of power that have come to characterise this dystopian metanarrative bolstering the surveillance state, these sketches of passively docile subjects that so greatly impinge upon our constructions of self in the contemporary era?

Jill Magid, an American multimedia artist, works almost exclusively with systems. Her oeuvre to date includes projects concerning institutions ranging from the NYPD and the Dutch Secret Service to criminal forensics teams, the US military and war correspondents. The various institutions depicted in these projects have in common the feature of being closed systems: difficult to penetrate, to come to know. Magid sees the location of points of entry to such systems as an integral component of her artistic practice, which ultimately shapes the technique and tone of the resulting works. Magid's early-career (1999–2004) pieces have experimented with surveillance systems from numerous angles, and while Magid is clearly by no means the first artist to look critically at surveillance and incorporate it thematically into her process, she remains one of the few who have engaged with surveillant technologies and practices in such a way that conventional perspectives are challenged and refreshed, and many positive implications of surveillance emerge. This chapter will take several of Magid's performance pieces and consider the identity work that is taking place within the scopic region of surveillance systems and the institutions they signify. Of her process, Magid writes:

The systems I choose to work with function at a distance, with a wide-angle perspective, equalizing everyone and erasing the individual. I seek the potential softness and intimacy of their technologies, the fallacy of their omniscient point of view, the ways in which they hold memory (yet often cease to remember), their engrained position in society (the cause of their invisibility), their authority, their apparent intangibility – and, with all of this, their potential reversibility. (2007, p. 1)

David Rosen and Aaron Santesso stress that “any account of surveillance must also consider the ultimate target of all surveillance activity: the individual self” (2013, p. 3). Magid's work with surveillance technologies necessarily interpolates the subject into the system, and in doing so, explores the conditions of the system even as identity is being exercised. As Magid identifies, one of the main functions of surveillance is to forget—those who are remembered are usually those recorded in connection with crime, or perceived antisocial conduct, and the rest are indiscriminately ignored. Surveillance's selective memory negatively constructs identities, while what Robert Knifton has termed the “amnesia of the archive” (2010, p. 93) negates them entirely. Where Magid's work produces a particular cultural resonance is in its capacity to revisualise subjectification in

surveillance societies, and, in resisting the equality and erasure of surveillant practices, uncovers the “potential reversibility” of surveillance technologies themselves. This study seeks to investigate the alternative responses present in Magid’s thought provoking art in a way that directly engages with the subject’s experience of surveillance, rather than surveillance’s experience (and dominance) of the individual.

SURVEILLANT ASSEMBLAGES AND DIVIDUAL SUBJECTS

When articulating the effects of surveillance upon subjects, Kevin D. Haggerty and Richard V. Ericson’s more recent notion of the *surveillant assemblage* may be added to the established metaphors of Big Brother and the panopticon, which they “draw from a different set of analytical tools” in order to move beyond the limitations of both Orwellian and Foucauldian delineations of surveillance environments, so as to avoid reproducing a “general tendency in the literature to offer more and more examples of total or creeping surveillance” (2000, pp. 607–608). Taking the notion of the “assemblage” as conceptualised by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987)—which describes “a multiplicity of heterogeneous objects, whose unity comes solely from the fact that these items function together, that they ‘work’ together as a functional entity” (Patton, 1994 cited in Haggerty and Ericson 2000, p. 608)—Haggerty and Ericson propose its application to surveillance culture in order to express the “convergence of what were once discrete surveillance systems” (p. 606). Their Deleuzian surveillant assemblage, they continue:

... operates by abstracting human bodies from their territorial settings and separating them into a series of discrete flows. These flows are then reassembled into distinct ‘data doubles’ which can be scrutinized and targeted for intervention. In the process, we are witnessing a rhizomatic leveling of the hierarchy of surveillance, such that groups which were previously exempt from routine surveillance are now increasingly being monitored. (p. 606)

These data doubles are constructed for the specific purposes of peopling particular narratives driven by particular agendas; their abstraction here denotes removal of context, while separation indicates the disassembly of individuals into various and quantifiable categories, the reconstructed sum of which does not necessarily account for all of those parts.

For instance, when considering the ways in which surveillance technologies are implemented to facilitate social profiling, we are reminded that such practices require the observer to categorise and compartmentalise aspects of individuals in order to make control of them manageable. Didier Bigo repurposes Foucault's panopticon as the 'Ban-opticon' to this end, demonstrating how modern policing employs this *dispositif* as a means of social sorting: "A skin colour, an accent, an attitude and one is slotted, extracted from the unmarked masses and, if necessary, evacuated" (2006, p. 46). David Lyon concurs with, and extends, the "panoptic sort" when he notes that surveillance "classifies and categorizes relentlessly, on the basis of various—clear or occluded—criteria. It is often, but not always, accomplished by means of remote networked databases of whose algorithms enable digital discrimination to take place" (2003, p. 8). Within the judicial sphere, the criteria for sorting, surveilling and thus separating an individual may include, but may not be limited to: fingerprints; DNA samples; facial recognition and other biometrics; ethnicity; language/dialect/accents; behaviour; and so on. Such taxonomies of persons are not restricted to the prevention or investigation of criminal activity: with the rise of the Web, surveillance has also flourished in the commercial sector, as Jason Pridmore and Detlev Zwick affirm: "The shift to digitized information [...] is perhaps the most important aspect for understanding the monitoring and measuring of consumers and their consumption practices" (2011, p. 270). In the online marketing sector, individuals are further reduced to specific data flows based on their consumer habits and preferences, customer profiles, even "presumed economic or political value" (Gandy 1993, p. 2). The extent to which social sorting and profiling takes place via the frame of surveillance points to a fundamental shift in how individuals are treated by today's "post-panoptical" (Bauman 2006, p. 11) society, as surveillant assemblages conspire to systematically dismantle identities into manageable, quantifiable, marketable strands of information. The ways that these informational fragments are interpreted, and then restored, in order to create a composite identity—criminal, client, or consumer—are informed by specific agendas and are consequently subject to a high degree of institutional bias.

The phenomenon of the dis- and reassembled subject is also treated by Deleuze when he posits the notion of the individual refigured as *dividual* through its reduction to data flows in the post-panoptic era. In "Postscript on the Societies of Control", he writes that "the numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. We

no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become ‘dividuals’, and masses, samples, data, markets, or ‘banks’” (1992, p. 6). The Deleuzian outlook for the subject is bleak, and feeds back into the dystopian myth anchoring the surveillance state at both macro- and micro-levels of experience. In spite of this, one can observe contrary depictions of identities presented in surveillant spaces that turn out to be not only deindividuating, but also divduating.

In their article, Haggerty and Ericson examine the way that the body-as-assemblage “is comprised of myriad component parts and processes which are broken-down for purposes of observation” (2000, p. 613) through the encounter with the surveillant assemblage. Briefly acknowledging the paradigmatic work of Donna Haraway (1991), they recognise that “the monitored body is increasingly a cyborg: a flesh-technology-information amalgam” (2000, p. 611), yet their cursory handling of this critical link between the body-as-assemblage and cyborgian subjectivity overlooks a key opportunity for readdressing identity work in surveillance environments. Haraway’s ontological cyborg is as rich a metaphor for postmodern subjectivities as Foucault’s panopticon is for the society which impacts upon those subjectivities; by introducing the surveillant assemblage at this juncture, significant conceptual connections can be drawn between the two.

In her “Manifesto for Cyborgs”, Haraway insists on the utility of “cyborg imagery” for expressing our postmodern conceptions of technological self by “taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology” and “refusing an antiscience metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and [...] embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts” (1991, p. 181). Refusing to be disciplined into modes of being by demonized technologies, in fact, refusing to contribute to the demonization of technology at all, the cyborg haunts the peripheries of the surveillant assemblage, mimicking its qualities. The cyborg is “a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self” which recognises that our contemporary identities are “contradictory, partial, and strategic” (pp. 163, 155). This resonance with the subject-as-assemblage—as produced by surveillance practices: the surveillant subject—is striking. The cyborg and the surveillant subject occupy two sides of the same coin, the coin in question being the dividual identity that emerges in opposition to, or perhaps as successor to, individualism. What differentiates Haraway’s cyborg from Deleuze’s subject-as-assemblage is the way

each responds to its own dividual nature: Deleuze sees the dividual subject as a casualty of the control society; Haraway, by contrast, indicates that not only does the cyborg emerge concomitantly with the late-twentieth-century technoscientific shifts in society, it also stands in resistance against “the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet” (1991, p. 154).

Jill Magid invokes the image of the cyborg in her thesis “Monitoring Desire”, seizing upon Haraway’s configuration of cyborgian subjectivities as “strategic” (Magid 2000, p. 20). Magid’s understanding of the way surveillance technologies work to shape, or define, the individual hinges upon two fundamental factors: equality and erasure. Both underpin the traditional dichotomy familiar to our contemporary cultural consciousness, that is, that the Observer (and the various institutions he or she represents) actively monitors the populace, while we remain passively constructed according to their criteria. Magid draws attention to the ways in which equal treatment of persons within surveillance systems—specifically CCTV—effectively works against individualism, that unless a crime is committed, CCTV equalizes and obscures individuals, erasing them from memory. Furthermore, where a crime is committed and individuals are more selectively remembered, or when profiling or social sorting takes place, they are reconstructed from objective “memories”—highly discriminatory data flows—to fit particular narratives and agendas. Subjects are interpreted, outside of their agential control, and are cast as either criminals or victims. Any chance of positive, or indeed, self-determined subject-construction is likely to be fully negated. Jill Magid’s responses to this negation have been presented in several of her artworks and writings, in which she employs a strategic form of dividual identity work to navigate surveillant spaces and practices. Magid’s surveillant subject is deployed in order to explore and challenge the representation of bodies and identities by surveillance technologies through the appropriation of techniques normally allied with those technologies themselves. The surveillant subject is inherently dividual, in the Deleuzian sense, but essentially cyborgian, following Haraway, who proclaims that “we could hardly hope for more potent myths [than cyborgs] for resistance and recoupling” (1991, p. 154). Emerging from inchoate spaces rendered unexpectedly fertile in terms of their capacity to support viable identity work, Magid’s subject resists by recoupling and restructuring itself from its disassembled components. In this way, it is newly able to reclaim agency and mitigates the negation of identity by circumventing the effects of equality and erasure.

ACTS OF APPROPRIATION: *LOBBY 7* (1999) & *MONITORING DESIRE* (2000)

In her MSc thesis, submitted to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Magid stresses that “there is both a psychological and political value in reconstructing one’s representation with the aid of technological systems” (2000, p. 5). Her attempt to reconstruct representation using CCTV challenges the way that identity, for which the body is an increasingly contingent element, is typically conveyed by surveillance cameras, and thus the way that the subjects under surveillance may reclaim agency. That reconstruction is necessary implies a consensus that identity is already deconstructed by surveillance environments, and that identity work must take place in order to re-establish the subject from those parts which have been undone. Magid writes:

Within this system that begins with the surveillance camera and ends with the monitor, the body stands in the centre as both object and subject. Anybody stepping into this intermediary position goes through the same morphology – is subject to the same disorienting vision. In this system, the body becomes something unfamiliar, is represented by an alien perspective, and plays with a new set of spatial laws. (2000, p. 5)

Attempts to harness the creative potential of surveillance cameras in order to defamiliarize, alienate, or re-present the body are not new to contemporary or performance art. Both *Monitoring Desire* and a prototypical piece entitled *Lobby 7* draw heavily from the installation *Corps étranger* (1994) by British-Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum. In this earlier work, endoscopy and colonoscopy footage of the artist’s body are projected onto the floor of a circular booth, while a “soundtrack recorded from the artist’s internal organs” (Budgett 2001) provides audio to the viewing experience. *Corps étranger* depicts the artist’s body made unfamiliar to her: fragmented and compartmentalized in line with the surveillant assemblage’s perceptual impact upon bodies and subjects. Hatoum’s piece makes for uncomfortable viewing, not solely for its “distressing pictorial effects” (Russell 1996, p. 1) but also due to the way it unsettles the traditional narrative that supports the self-as-known, therefore complicating the subject–object binary. This internal portraiture depicts aspects of the subject’s body normally inaccessible to her; the new perspective offered by this self-surveillant technique reminds us just how much of ourselves remains unseen and thus

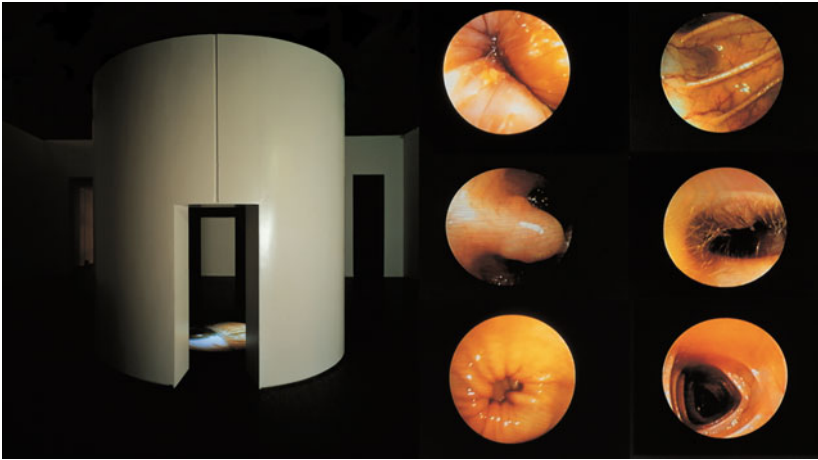


Fig. 2.1 (left) Mona Hatoum. *Corps étranger*. 1994. Video installation with cylindrical wooden structure, video projector, video player, amplifier and four speakers. 137 13/16 x 118 1/8 x 118 1/8 in. (350 x 300 x 300 cm). © Mona Hatoum. Photo © Philippe Migeat. Courtesy Centre Pompidou, Paris. (right) Mona Hatoum. *Corps étranger* (detail: film stills). 1994. Video installation with cylindrical wooden structure, video projector, video player, amplifier and four speakers. 137 13/16 x 118 1/8 x 118 1/8 in. (350 x 300 x 300 cm). © Mona Hatoum. Courtesy White Cube

unknowable, and further illustrates the dissolution of the body. The medically-surveilled subject is reduced to data flows which constitute situated knowledges that can only be truly parsed and made meaningful by authorised specialists. Hatoum is dislocated from her body, presented here as a fusion of viscera and information (Fig. 2.1).

Magid cites *Corps étranger* as one of her primary inspirations for *Monitoring Desire*, but where she most significantly diverges from Hatoum's approach is by combining the self-surveillant aesthetic with the methodologically significant appropriation of viewing techniques more normally regarded as unique to surveillance. *Monitoring Desire* was a performance piece enacted by Magid and fellow MIT student Orit Halpern at Harvard University's Science Centre, in which, "through a guerrilla act of appropriation" (2000, p. 2), recorded footage of the women was broadcast in real-time on the Centre's public informational monitor. Magid describes the captured footage as "produced by the camera on the

shoe” that was worn by the performers in turn, and which “assimilated an abstracted view up the wearer’s skirt with the surrounding architecture” (2000, p. 2). She continues:

In the course of this performance, our bodies, as reconfigured through our surveillance apparatus, came to effect [*sic*] our subjectivities as they were presented in public space. Through the act of hijacking the informational monitor, we performed our power to publicly re-present ourselves back into the space in which we were occupying. (2000, p. 2)

The emphasis on the performance as a “hijacking” and a “guerrilla act” clearly points to Magid’s appropriation of the surveillant space as an act of resistance, but this resistance is enacted in a perhaps unexpected manner. Rather than challenge the dissection that the surveillant assemblage performs upon subjects beneath its gaze, the challenge instead comes later, from within the system after having gained access. Magid appropriates the surveillant method by deconstructing herself using the same technologies, thereby mimicking the conditions of the system.

In an essay entitled “Theology of Mirrors”, Magid insists that “if I can assimilate myself to a space, erase the boundary between space and my body, I will know what it is like to be imperceptible”, claiming that “in Mimesis the environment is not an external feature but rather a definition of one’s identity” (2002, p. 1). Jacques Lacan defines mimicry as “camouflage, in the strictly technical sense [...] not a question of harmonizing with the background but, against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practised in human warfare” (1998, p. 99). Mimicry in these terms constitutes a mode of active resistance; the guerrilla act of appropriation signals an intervention by which the system may be surreptitiously breached, entered, and occupied. The combative form of mimicry encouraged by Lacan implies that erasure must first be embraced before it can be defied, and that from a concealed position the subject may then revisualise and reappropriate the surveillant space as a potent site from which to conduct identity work. In both *Monitoring Desire* and its prototype *Lobby 7*—a 1999 solo performance by Magid staged in the main lobby of MIT—the regular CCTV live feed was hijacked by the artist and her own footage broadcast in its place. Magid describes *Lobby 7* as an “exploration of my body and the surrounding architecture as seen through the natural openings of my clothes, via a lipstick surveillance camera that I held in my hand”, a performance

that lasted “one half hour—the time needed to capture every part of my body I that I could reach” (2005). The lipstick camera is small enough to be palmed, discreet enough to slip “inside” the subject and record its findings from within, mirroring the process of the artist herself, who has entered the surveillant assemblage and documents from a covert viewpoint.

The footage captured by the lipstick camera that comprises the video element of *Lobby 7* resembles the dislocated anatomical perspectives of *Corps étranger*, but in its exploration of the outer topography of the body the resulting imagery moves quickly beyond the biological or indeed the voyeuristic, instead taking on a surreal and faintly uncanny quality. The challenge of *Lobby 7* is the occupation and subsequent undermining of the subject-object relation, challenging not only to the conventions of the surveillant space, but also to the one experiencing the “disorienting vision” generated by the simultaneity of watching/being watched and the subversion of these long-established binaries that have conditioned self-perception. Once embedded within the system, having deconstructed herself in order to gain access and while simulating the system’s conditions to remain camouflaged, the second act of Magid’s performance was staged. While conducting a sweep of her body beneath her clothes, the artist stood directly in front of the monitor, observing the transmission of her exploration through this intermediary frame in real time and in full view of the public. That the performance lasted thirty minutes without interruption from MIT security—who no doubt were watching the same monitor—is evidence of Magid’s capacity to dupe the system. In the footage, the dimensions of her body are so distorted by the camera’s angle and proximity that one would assume that some time would have elapsed before passing spectators understood what they were seeing, despite the fact that the artist herself was conspicuously delivering the performance not twenty feet away from the compromised screen. Furthermore, in keeping with surveillant methods, the body itself was doubly abstracted from its contexts—as a body belonging to a subject, in the first instance, and as the series of images broadcast on a university CCTV transmission—which likely made it initially unclear that a breach in the system had occurred (Fig. 2.2).

Magid’s second act of appropriation, this time at Harvard, employed a similar strategy of deconstructing and decontextualising bodies in order to gain access to a closed viewing system. In *Monitoring Desire*, the two female performers took turns to don the “surveillance shoe”—a high-heeled black leather sandal modified with a charge coupled device camera and wireless transmitter. While the wearer moved around the space



Fig. 2.2 Magid (background, partially obscured) conducts her self-exploration in *Lobby 7* (1999) while watching the image-capture in real time on the monitor

of the lower-level lobby, her partner remained on the first floor, watching the interrupting images transmitted from the shoe on a large CCTV monitor prominently situated for the benefit of the university community. Halfway through the performance, the wearer and the watcher exchanged the shoe, before retracing their movements in the opposite roles. While in *Lobby 7* the observer and the observed—and thus subject and object—are uniquely combined in the solo performer, in *Monitoring Desire* the introduction of a second agent, coupled with the location of the performers in relation to the monitor, limits the perspectives of the performers but also introduces new subjective positions that complicate the relationship between spectator and spectacle. Magid describes how:

Our bodies as transmitted through our surveillance system become reconfigured in space. Because the wearer of the shoe is always downstairs, out of the monitor's view, her 'reconfigured' bodily construction is always invisible to her. In the Science Centre, the video image of my body and my physical presence are displaced from one another. The spectators have a choice: they

can either watch me unmediated by the surveillance camera downstairs or can view my virtual image in the monitor upstairs. The closest connection to seeing both positions at once is to look at my performance partner watching the monitor and imagine that she is a kind of stand-in for me. Or, later, that I am a stand in for her. (2000, p. 12)

In contrast to *Lobby 7*, where the act of appropriation, rather than the imagery itself, provides the central dynamic by which the piece's impact may be appreciated, the visual narrative of *Monitoring Desire* provides a second commentary on the nature of representation as it unfolds within the surveillant frame. Magid informs us that she is "specifically interested in the reconfiguration of women's bodies", noting that these bodies have "long been associated with concealment and issues of privacy" (2000, p. 15). The alignment of the female with the private, and the passive position in the viewing relationship, begins to reveal the ontological implications of these subversions in unseating the fundamentally dichotomous nature of viewing practices.

Binary categories—such as Observer/observed, authority/controlled, public/private, active/passive, desirer/desired, subject/object—are inherently supported by the surveillant space as it is traditionally conceived. To these pairs, male/female may be added in order to ameliorate our understanding of surveillant viewing practices and spaces by borrowing from feminist film studies' notion of the gaze (Mulvey 1999). In her writings, Magid repeatedly returns to these dialectical interplays which are inscribed upon, and ultimately reinforced, by the gendered bodies of surveillant subjects. If the male gaze dictates how we, as spectators, regard women when they are framed by cameras, then Magid responds by gendering the surveillant space as female; with women in the roles of both performer and observer, they regain control of how they are being represented. The initial destabilisation of the male/female dichotomy triggers the rapid breakdown of all other binary relations as the project exposes the overwhelming extent to which the male gaze is aligned with the authoritative Observer, the active subject desiring the one framed in the publicly surveillant space. As Magid concludes, "the reading of the performance as being potentially for two women, between two women [...] problematizes the spectator's possibly conventional notions of gender relations" (2000, p. 12), but it also problematizes the nature of the surveillant space as conforming to the accepted power-play symbolised by surveillance in general. With the elimination of the masculine viewpoint (the hijacking of

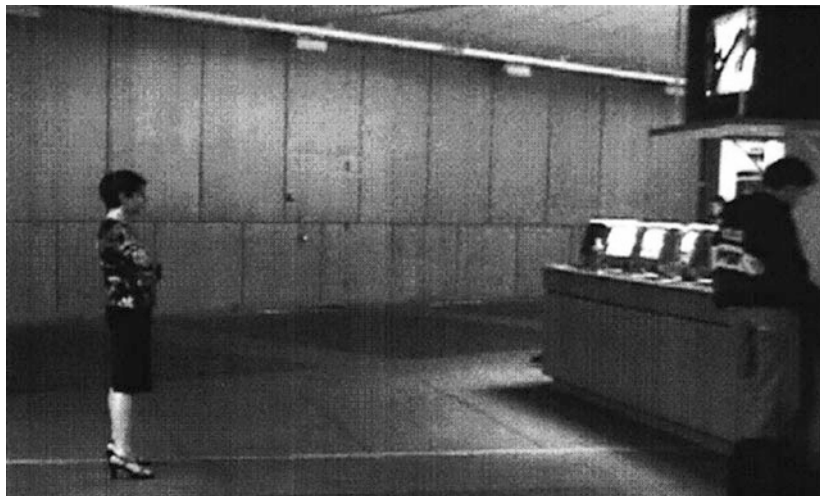


Fig. 2.3 The watcher observes the wearer in the neutralised space of *Monitoring Desire* (2000)

the monitor) and the substitution of the female perspective, the oppressive nature of the surveillant space is neutralised, and it becomes a space for the reconstruction of previously passive subjects and, as a result, a space of potential empowerment (Fig. 2.3).

In both *Monitoring Desire* and *Lobby 7*, Magid undermines the authority of surveillant technologies and practices by imitating their conditions in order to breach the spaces that they govern. In unsettling dichotomous relations that maintain this power, and by deconstructing her own identity to become a dividual subject composed of various data flows that enable her to embed herself within informational systems, the artist compromises the most fundamental dualism informing surveillance—the subject/object relation. The elusion of this dualism, upon which traditional constructions of identity have so long been dependent, invites a radical new form of dividual identity which is maintained through the resistant occupation of surveillant spaces. No longer constrained to defining their identities as one thing in opposition to another, a variety of new subjective positions are made available to the performers in the appropriated space—as Magid writes: “the system of our performance enables us [...] to try on different identities and to share aspects of our identities with one another [...] Our

system is not one of constituting or validating a singular identity” (2000, p. 23).

In these performances, the subject is portrayed as reclaiming space in two fundamental ways. In the first instance, the guerrilla act of appropriation interpolates the subject into a closed system from which she would normally be excluded and erased. Secondly, once inside the system, the dividual subject draws her strength from imitating the conditions of the system which aims to contain her, and after voluntarily deconstructing herself into myriad flows of identifying information, proceeds to rebuild herself on her own terms. Using technological apparatus—cameras, monitors, screens—to express and enact this identity work renders the performers cyborgian, both in their resistant occupation of the technocratic control space and in the resulting compossibility of an identity woven from disparate strands of organic and technological information.

DIVERTING THE GAZE: *SURVEILLANCE SHOE/LEGOLAND* (2000)

The particular technique of image-capture used by Magid in *Monitoring Desire* and redeployed in her second self-surveillance project, *Legoland*, carries a powerful message regarding the reclamation of gendered identity in surveillant spaces. The upskirt camera shot is deliberately composed in order to further destabilise the voyeuristic power plays inscribed upon subjects by surveillance practices. Appropriating this angle, as well as the space itself, denotes an acerbic challenge to the conventions of the gaze as it draws attention to the distinctions drawn between power and empowerment (Fig. 2.4).

Significant research has been carried out on the upskirt shot, particularly in photography, by which means this voyeuristic image of the female subject is normally configured. Anne Allison has argued that such shots serve as a reinforcement of the gaze, and that this “position, particularly of males, as lookers, splits between one that is permitted and controlling and one that is illicit and immobilizing” (2000, p. 43). Allison draws her ideas from research into the upskirt or *appu-sukaato* image that is heavily fetishized in Japanese manga and anime—not only in adult and erotic publications, but also highly prevalent in animation aimed at children. The glimpse upskirt, she claims, enables the gaze to immobilise the subject, and this is supported by the medium itself—*appu-sukaato* images in manga



Fig. 2.4 The exchange of the surveillance shoe in *Monitoring Desire* (2000)

typically depict female characters held static and compliant in the frame of the panel, extradiegetically gesturing to the constraints of the male gaze. David Murakami Wood also acknowledges the trend of upskirt photography in Japan, claiming that such voyeurism, newly enabled by personal surveillance technologies (devices such as smartphones or webcams), has become “almost a cultural norm” (2005, p. 475). Noting the “climate of fear of such covert surveillance amongst women”, he argues that “there is nothing one could regard as being positive about this particular form of ‘people watching people’” (2005, p. 475).

It would appear that as institutional surveillance methods are rapidly democratised by the widespread use of camera-ready devices—which Zygmunt Bauman has labelled “personal panopticons” (2013, p. 59)—and previously stigmatised voyeuristic tendencies find new validation in popular culture, surveillant spaces generated by the immobilising gaze are becoming increasingly prevalent (but no less toxic) locations for the production of identity. In the upskirt image, female agency is erased even as her appearance is foregrounded—she occupies a paradoxical position of both amplified and silenced, emphasised and ignored. Magid’s video projects with the surveillance shoe work to neutralise the voyeuristic bent of surveillant practices by re-empowering the subject of the gaze. By appropriating the static image of the upskirt shot and reinstating it in a kinetic medium, Magid inhibits the gaze and forces a new conception of the surveillant space by calling into question the nature of the bodies and subjects enframed within in.

Of the surveillance shoe as it functions in *Monitoring Desire*, Magid writes that “capturing the view up my skirt, one would expect a series of erotic images. Yet, much of the images’ titillating effect is dampened by the disturbing sensations produced through their distortions” (2000, p. 16). As with the covert anatomical sweep of *Lobby 7*, the angle and proximity of the camera produces a sequence of discomfiting bodily images, dislocated as they are from the spectator’s expectations of an erotically-posed upskirt shot. Magid notes that what unseats such expectations is the leg to which the camera is affixed, which “appears to be lame, making the body handicapped” (2000, p. 16). This tactic of distortion extends from the body as communicated by the camera to affect the status of the relationship between observer and observed in voyeuristic spectatorship; their previously stable roles are distorted, and in that moment of uncertainty the power is transferred to the actor in the frame. Moreover, as the artist so insightfully reminds us, “the camera, as we know, is not an objective eye but an eye with its own distorting practices” (2000, p. 16), which explicitly refers us back to the way that surveillance technologies work to erase the individual by breaking her down into data flows. Again, Magid is communing with the idea of the subject as intrinsically dividual, and she exerts control over the way she is represented by engaging in that process of deconstruction herself. Robert Knifton, in an essay situating Magid’s work within the wider, real-world applications of surveillance, explains that “CCTV is generally highly open to interpretative narratives” (2010, p. 84). This is so because of the variety of flows that circulate throughout the frame: the restoration of a coherent narrative composed from a selective choice of available flows necessarily results in the final image being more or less distorted to suit the purpose for which it was initially generated. Magid mimics this method, and in doing so reveals the latent power in dividuality: that the space opened up by its interpretive potential provides a chance for the subject to reclaim her hold on that space, and thereby her own position within it, turning the situation to her subjective advantage.

Hille Koskela, writing about the sexualisation of surveillance, argues that in webcam culture, the shift from voyeurism to exhibitionism can be seen as “a form of resistance to the dominant gendered dynamics of monitoring”, explaining that:

While the operator of a webcam cannot control who will see these images or how they will be interpreted, she or he is still able to control what, how and when these images are presented. Such revealing can be a form of political act which rejects the traditional understanding of objectification. (2012, p. 55)

David Bell, researching along similar lines, proposes an “erotics of resistance” by which the “radical potential of sexualized looking and being-looked-at” (2009, p. 210) enables the re-embodiment of surveillance. Framed by such statements, Magid’s surveillance shoe becomes an instrument of resistance, a way to reinstate agency in the surveillant space and simultaneously upset the dialectics of power that normally underpin and maintain the structuring of such spaces. Koskela (2004) encourages subjective emancipation via the desexualisation of surveillance; Bell (2009) claims that the same resistant ends can be achieved through the re-emphasising of surveillance’s inherent and creative support for sexual expression. Magid, channelling the cyborgian ethos of “holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary or true” (1991, p. 149), manages to do both, and furthermore invites new readings of the relationship between subjectivity and spatiality enacted beneath the surveillant gaze.

The space itself, as the stage for the performance taking place, informs the changing nature of the surveillant subject. Where surveillance often abstracts the body from its surroundings in order to more effectively reduce it to decontextualized data flows, Magid reemphasises the relationship between self and environment by confusing the boundaries between, and characteristics of, the two (Fig. 2.5).

In *Legoland*, a 6-min video recorded as Magid walked through an unnamed city at night, the surveillance shoe captures the synchronised distortion of “the interior space beneath my skirt and the exterior space around the skirt’s circumference” (2000, p. 30). Magid describes how:

The transgressive gaze up the skirt is difficult at first to get beyond. The space outside of the skirt becomes active to the viewer only after the voyeuristic novelty of this perspective passes. Because the image’s distortion and the body’s appearance of being crippled, it does not take long for the image to lose its overtly sexual quality. Emphasis gets passed to the strangeness of the space surrounding the body. The space appears to be tied to the body, even as a victim of it [...] One leg is always bound within the frame. This is the leg to which the camera is attached. Because of its placement, the camera seems to anchor my body in place. While this appendage appears as fixed,

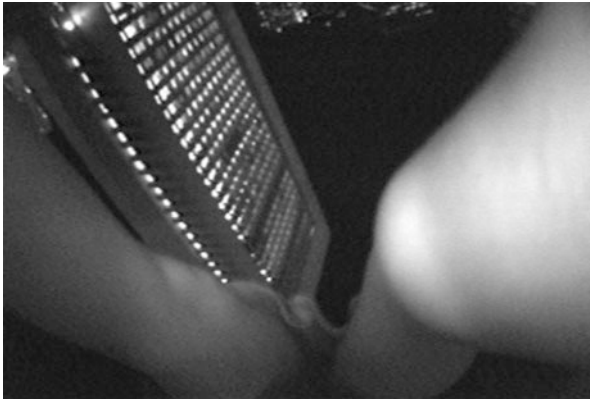


Fig. 2.5 Upskirt shot of the subject blending with the surrounding architecture in *Legoland* (2000)

everything else – including my other leg – is in motion. There is a strong inversion in that while the one leg appears to be stable like architecture, the actual architecture becomes mobile. It is as if the space in which I move is on a scroll, and with the kick of my “free” leg, I am able to unroll it. (2000, pp. 30–31)

Here, not only is the subject foregrounded within her environment, but the boundaries between body and architecture become less clear. The body acts as architecture, while the architecture is “activated and warped” (2000, p. 32) by the lens and thereby becomes far more flexible, almost organic in its elasticity. The surveillant space, tied to the leg of the subject, is directed by her, forced to follow, and the gaze is not only inhibited, but diverted, as the erotic sensation produced by the images quickly subsides. What remains is a performative interaction between a subject and the space in which she is newly reinstated, on her own terms. The data flows of the dividual subject circulate throughout the body and its surroundings in such a manner that mimicry and camouflage are exchanged for empowerment and presence.

Cyborgs take great pleasure in transgressing boundaries, embracing erasure in order to become “ether, quintessence” (Haraway 1991, p. 153), to dissolve into data flows and disappear into the bowels of the system, from which point they may initiate the process of dividual reconstruction

that ultimately enables them to reinstate their claim to agency. Magid's projects, in unambiguous response to cyborg theory, repurpose surveillant practices to present the deconstructed, compartmentalised subject as liberated in her dividualisation. This subject has traditionally been the victim of the equalising and erasing procedures encouraged by surveillant viewing, forcibly taken apart and taxonomised and finally re-presented via the male gaze as an object or indeed collection of depersonalised objects to be watched on-screen. Magid reaches out to the disempowered subject and offers her a way to reconstruct that representation, and in doing so to neutralise the gaze that pins her within the frame. This empowerment is achieved through the strategy of appropriating the very technologies and techniques that have been used to oppress, contain and negate subjects of the spectacle, for whom ubiquitous surveillance has significantly reinforced the limitation on spaces in which to enact viable identity work.

CONCLUSION

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault outlines the effect that panoptic control exerts over the subject—a force which Gary Marx later termed “soul training” (2009, p. 378). Marx meditates upon the efficacy of artistic representation for the social scientific scholarship of surveillance, posing several incisive questions:

Artistic creations can significantly inform us about surveillance and society [...] Artistic statements, unlike scientific statements, do not have to be defended verbally. But the social scientist can ask about their social antecedents and impacts. Do they move the individual? Do they convey the experience of being watched or of being a watcher? Do they create indignation or a desire for the product? Do they make the invisible visible?” (2009, pp. 389–390)

Magid's work goes some way to providing answers to Marx's queries, and in doing so, treats the Foucauldian concept of panoptic soul-training by offering radical new perspectives on the ways in which bodies, behaviours and subjectivities are affected by surveillant practices of domination, self-governance, and control.

Magid sees her own art practice as a series of “social engagements that propose new relations, and thus new meanings, within existing social and public systems of authority. This includes their subversion” (2007). Her

work bridges the gap between the art world and technoscientific disciplines, between academia and popular culture, and such subversive, unique and yet relevant approaches to surveillant systems continue to be developed in her later pieces. Scholars from a range of disciplinary orientations have, following Foucault, focused on the shifts in the modification and self-governance of behaviour and identity enforced by panoptic control, but the question has prevailed as to whether, within the close dialectical confines of the surveillance society, any opportunities arise to reconfigure surveillant spaces as spaces of empowerment. Magid's work responds to this concern in the affirmative.

Haraway maintains that her cyborg, above all, "can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves" (1991, p. 181), which in the context of Magid's work offers a way to revisualise the dichotomies of power and control underpinning post-Orwellian, post-Foucauldian understanding of surveillant spaces and the institutions and tools that construct them. Moreover, the cyborg destabilises the grand Western metanarratives of self, through its dividuality and its close kinship with both organism and machine. Its subversive potential for appropriating technologies of domination draws attention to the fact that, historically, "myth and tool mutually constitute each other" (Haraway 1991, p. 164). Magid sees new subjective potential in the harnessing of technologies previously used to monitor, separate, and sort individuals. She writes that:

To be human today is to be totally intertwined with technology, specifically with the technology of image-capture. I am exploring this captured space under the eye of surveillance as a platform for the formation of new identities. In the performance, we as performers realize the potential of our appropriated surveillance technology to function as a vehicle for our empowerment. We chose to step into the line of this appropriated vision in order to frame ourselves differently. (2000, p. 21).

What might we see, if we manage to see ourselves differently via surveillance? Ontologically speaking, perhaps what surveillant spaces and practices allow us to re-present to ourselves is the dividual nature of our identities that was always already emerging in resistance to the negation of the contemporary subject.

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