

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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For Immediate Release:

Trevor Paglen

March 5 – May 2, 2015

Opening reception March 5, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Altman Siegel is pleased to present Trevor Paglen's third solo exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition is comprised of recent photographs, videos, and a major new sculptural work entitled *Autonomy Cube*.

"The metaphors we use to understand mass surveillance and the Internet tend to be very abstract, and often mystifying. Words like "cyberspace", the cloud, the information superhighway perpetrate an image of the Internet as something placeless yet ubiquitous, immaterial yet omnipresent. These metaphors are deeply misleading." - Trevor Paglen

Trevor Paglen's new work focuses on the everyday material reality of the Internet and mass data surveillance. An inconspicuously elegant photograph of the nearby Point Arena coastline depicts one of dozens of sites around the world where sub-oceanic fiber optic lines meet the land and are tapped by the National Security Agency (NSA). Paired with the photo is a maritime map indicating the location of the undersea cables to prevent ships from interfering with the lines. Internal NSA documents from the Snowden archive, corporate documents, and additional images of the site are collaged on top of the map. The photographs continue themes consistent with Paglen's earlier work in which pictures of sublime landscapes document covert and ominous military operations. On the surface these photographs appear as straightforward images of the sea, while in fact, Paglen points to the vast infrastructure of the surveillance state.

The video *Circles*, installed in the second gallery space, shows the Government Communication Headquarters (GCHQ), the United Kingdom's equivalent of the NSA. In this single-take landscape film, the camera circles around the campus from an aerial view, occasionally zooming in to scrutinize the fanning parking lots, shipping hubs, and specks of human activity. The gesture emphasizes the distinctive circular architecture of the headquarters while reversing the gaze out from this panopticon-like building. The size of the headquarters is itself evidence of the enormous scale of the surveillance apparatus, but the film points to the prosaic nature of these organizations as well, requiring as they do, physical buildings, staff and material resources. While the organizing logic of the surveillance apparatus is secrecy and apparent invisibility, the film highlights the fact that these organizations inhabit the physical world, hidden in plain view.

A new sculpture, *Autonomy Cube*, houses several internet-connected computers that create an open Wi-Fi hotspot, "Autonomy Cube" that visitors to the exhibition can join. While the cubic form of the sculpture references the contained logic of minimalist sculpture, the work in fact reaches out as part of a networked system. The sculpture routes all traffic over the Tor network, a global network of thousands of volunteer-run servers, or relays, designed to help anonymize data. *Autonomy Cube* offers visitors use of a privacy-oriented, volunteer run Internet, while also functioning as a Tor relay, receiving traffic from users around the world and passing it along, while maintaining their privacy. In contrast to the photographs and videos, which quietly document the infrastructure of surveillance, with *Autonomy Cube*, Paglen presents an opportunity to actively engage in a functional alternative.

Trevor Paglen (born 1974) is an artist, geographer, and author. He has exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Tate Modern, London; The Walker Arts Center, Minneapolis; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; the 2012 Liverpool Biennial; the 2009 Istanbul Biennial; the 2008 Taipei Biennial, and many other solo and group exhibitions. He is the author of five books and numerous articles on subjects including experimental geography, state secrecy, military symbology, photography, and visuality. His most recent book, *The Last Pictures* is a meditation on the intersections of deep-time, politics, and art. Paglen has received grants and awards from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the Smithsonian, Art Matters, Artadia, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the LUMA foundation, the Eyebeam Center for Art and Technology, and the Aperture Foundation. Paglen holds an MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago, and a Ph.D. in Geography from U.C. Berkeley.

Paglen recently contributed cinematography to the Oscar winning documentary *CITIZENFOUR*.

For more information please contact the gallery at 415-576-9300 or info@altmansiegel.com.