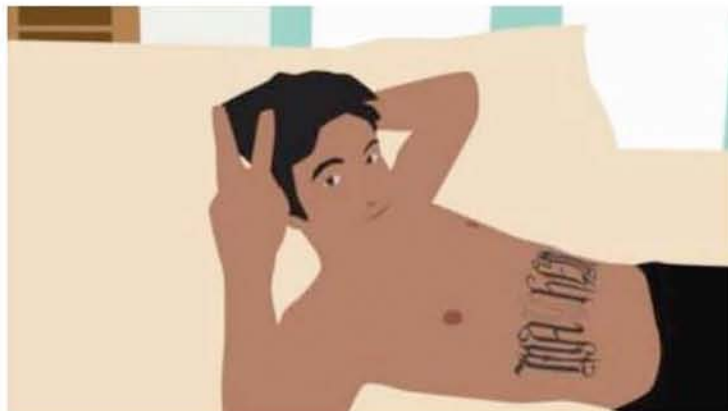


ART C A L

April 15, 2008



Curated by Michael Connor, Co-organized with iCI (Independent Curators International)

With works by: Sophie Calle, Mohamed Camara, Hasan Elahi, Eyebeam R & D/Jonah Peretti & Michael Frumin, Kota Ezawa, Miranda July & Harrell Fletcher, Guthrie Lonergan, Jill Magid, Jennifer & Kevin McCoy, Trevor Paglen, Corinna Schnitt, Thomson & Craighead, Sharif Waked

The New Normal brings together thirteen recent artworks that use private information as raw material and subject matter. The concept of privacy, though widely invoked, is difficult to define. The private sphere encompasses domestic spaces, bodies, thoughts, communications, and behaviors—contexts that are usually rendered inaccessible to the public eye by legal, social, and physical boundaries. The practices that demarcate the private sphere are so much a part of the fabric of everyday life—wearing clothing, politely pretending not to overhear a cell-phone conversation— that they only become noticeable when they shift, making the private sphere visible to the public eye. Privacy, to put it bluntly, captures our attention only when it is under threat.

In the wake of 9/11, the specter of terrorism was used to justify increased collection and sharing of personal data by governments around the world. This time of heightened surveillance, characterized by luggage searches, Internet monitoring, and wiretaps, was dubbed "the new normal" by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney.

The spread of social technology has affected privacy no less profoundly. With the rise of online commerce, many banks and retailers have developed sophisticated methods of tracking and studying the behavior of consumers, while increased use of the Internet has created new platforms for voluntary self-disclosure, from blogs to MySpace. Private information has never been less private, as evinced by Kota Ezawa's Home Video II, made from "leaked" video files of Pamela Anderson and Tommy Lee's honeymoon, widely available on the Web. Each of the works in The New Normal—video, Web sites, sculpture, artist's books, found objects, and photographs—grants access to the private sphere of the artists themselves, of strangers, and of public officials. Overall, the exhibition creates a sense that access to private information is a kind of currency, the exchange of which is growing and evolving in bewildering ways. We may find it frightening or fascinating, but we are all inescapably complicit in it.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue co-published with Independent Curators International, with essays by Michael Connor, Clay Shirky and Marisa Olson.