

An aerial, top-down view of a dense forest at night. The trees are mostly in deep shadow, appearing as dark, textured shapes. Interspersed among the dark trees are several bright, glowing patches of yellow and light green, which appear to be illuminated from below, possibly by streetlights or spotlights. The overall mood is mysterious and somewhat unsettling.

KAYLA DI SCHIAVO

SURVEILLANCE + VOYEURISM



# SURVEILLANCE + VOYEURISM

*Promoting Human Agency Through  
Contemporary Panoptic Issues  
as a Form of Resistance*

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I wish to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis studio advisor, Professor Christoph Ibele, who has the intelligence of a genius. Without his persistent help and calm nature, the goal of this thesis would not have been realized.

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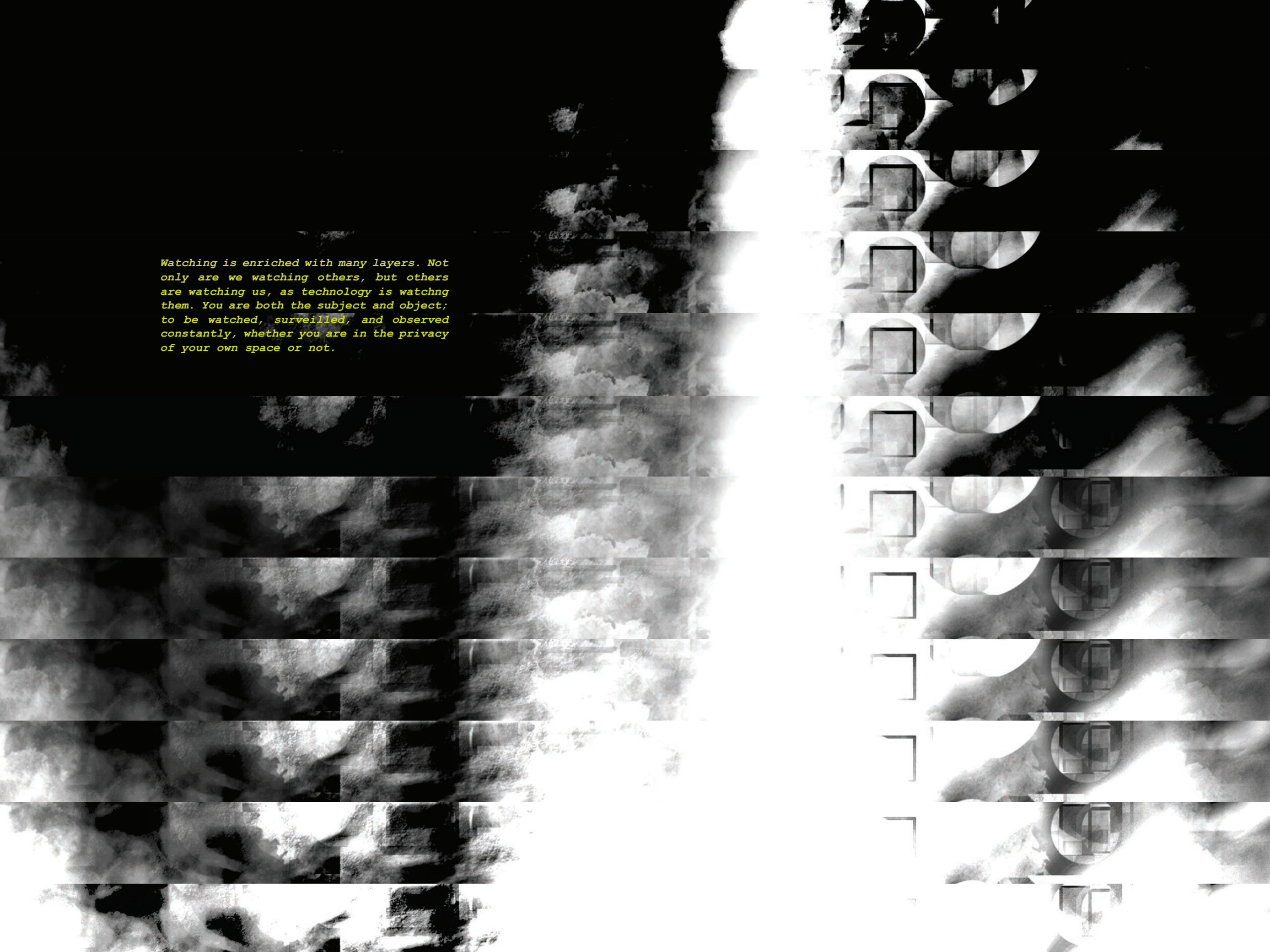
A thank you to the staff and students at the University of Detroit Mercy, School of Architecture, without your pressure and competition, this thesis would not have reached its goal.

Finally, to the seeing and being seen, it's ok... we'll figure it out.

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*Watching is enriched with many layers. Not only are we watching others, but others are watching us, as technology is watching them. You are both the subject and object; to be watched, surveilled, and observed constantly, whether you are in the privacy of your own space or not.*



001. ABSTRACT

## ABSTRACT

*"While no sense is able to perceive something a thousand feet away, the force of the eyes perception reaches even to the stars."*

- David Fredrick, 2002<sup>1</sup>

This thesis exploits the surveillant paradigm by promoting human agency through contemporary panoptic issues. Surveillance currently has a powerful, yet negative connotation behind it, leaving unnerving questions regarding civil liberty and privacy unanswered. Society has become a contemporary rendition of the Panopticon, with new and evolving ways of seeing and being seen. What once was regarded as a techno dystopian way of life has become a reality. While these concerns may persist, the population is left to comply as a result of the rapid growth and dependence on surveillant technology and artificial intelligence. It is nearly impossible to escape the technological gaze, where privacy is compromised.

This thesis offers a speculative design proposal as a potential solution to combat the existing stigma that surrounds surveillance technology. The aim is to subvert the surveillant paradigm by altering existing surveillance infrastructure. Project Green Light Detroit can be reconstructed into a voyeuristic tool to promote human agency through active participation and interaction by community members. Permitting both the public and authority to access the data, information, and real-time footage collected will facilitate cohesion between both parties.

002. THESIS STATEMENT



## THESIS STATEMENT

What does it mean to be constantly watched? This ambiguous idea of seeing and being seen, and how people have come to understand its obscurity has dramatically changed over the past several years. From Jane Jacob's Eyes on the Street theory to current surveillant technologies such as facial recognition and data collection systems, humans are subject to the gaze in ways once thought to be unimaginable.

Initially, surveillance was interpreted as an aid to enforce security and prevent criminal behaviour from occurring; nothing more than a camera monitoring a business, or a wire-tapped phone. While that remains true, it has grown to encompass an entirely new and immeasurable meaning. Big Brother and panoptic dystopic theories of mass surveillance and control exist in the contemporary world. Now, surveillance is obscure and virtually invisible due to its omnipresence. It is no longer a question of if or when someone is watching, rather a question of who is watching, and what they are doing with the data collected. Society is controlled by technology to the extent that it can exploit our daily lives. Humans now manifest themselves as both real and digital.

Crucial concerns for humanity regarding the negative implications of surveillance practices have dominated research and conversation thus far. These concerns include the effects on human liberties and civil rights, lack of privacy and freedom, and behavioural and psychological

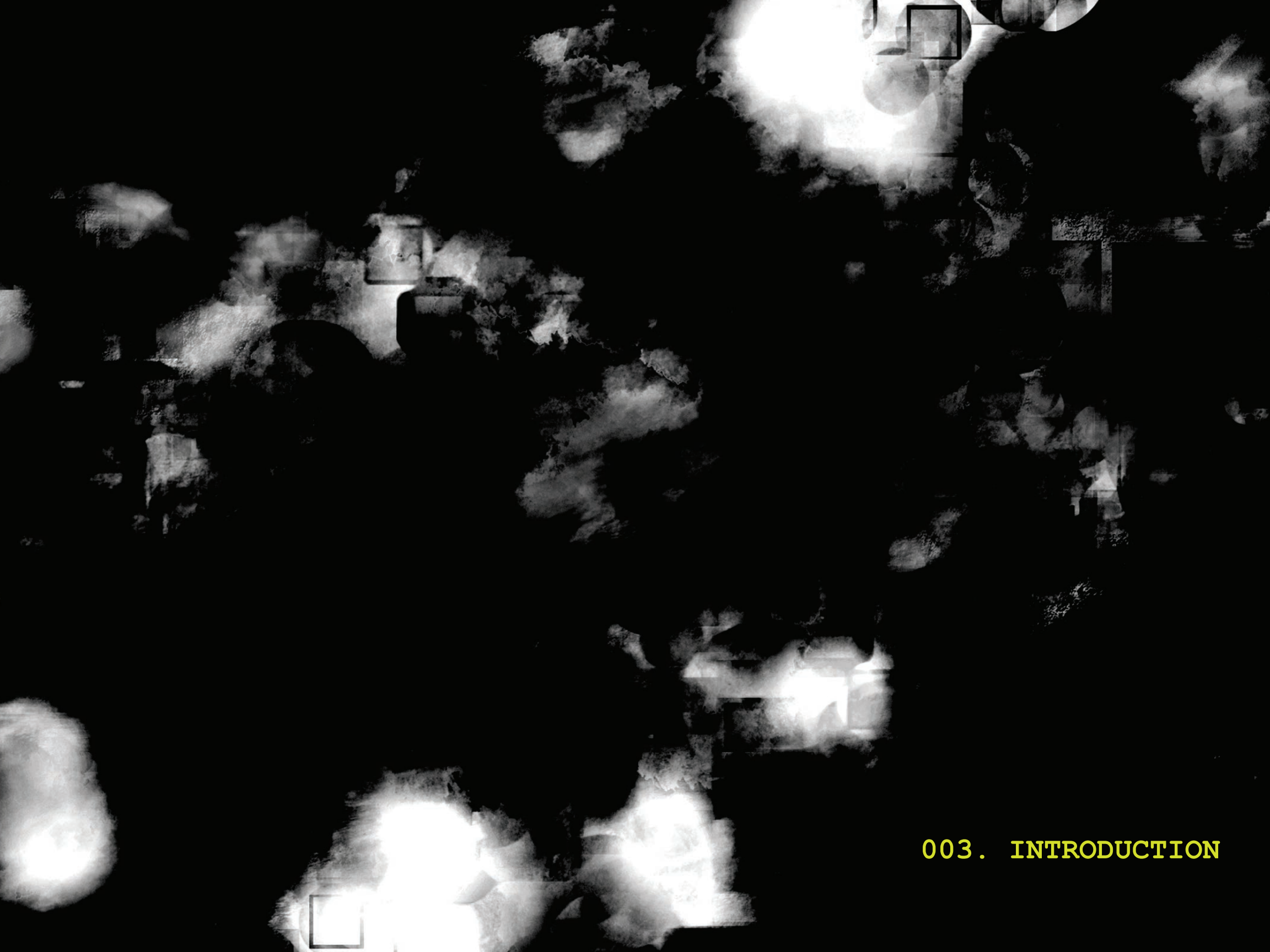


Figure 2.1: Project Green Light Detroit, 2019, Riverwise Magazine | Special Surveillance Issue

implications. While these variables of concern continue to remain important and relevant, this thesis will combat the narrow idea of watching and being watched by considering opportunities for resistance. How we, as humans can subvert the one-sided surveillance paradigm to promote human agency and allow those with less power to make choices and participate. By offering people within the community the ability to use surveillant technology for their purpose; it relieves stigma about the inevitable while continuing to allow local governments to patrol streets.

Project Green Light (PGL) Detroit is a public-private-community partnership between local businesses and the Detroit Police Department (DPD) that aims to promote safety and prevent crime in Detroit [Figure 2.1]. Currently, the DPD monitors roughly six hundred local businesses across the city through real-time camera connections. By utilizing PGL's existing infrastructure as a tool to activate urban space, it can aid in the revitalization of Detroit while mitigating the controversies that concern Detroiters (or any city). A signal that once labelled areas as 'high crime', can be transformed into a beacon of hope.

People must understand the dampening impact technology has already brought to society, and how it will continue to shape us well into the future. Therefore, rather than work against it and try to prevent the inevitable, we must work with it and make the best out of the current panoptic situation we live in.



003. INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

People fall victim to the constant stare of the gaze, both technologically through surveillance and physically through voyeurism. While surveillance technology maintains a critical component in the order and control of everyday life, voyeurism speaks to the personal gratification of seeing and being seen. Both understandings of watching raise concerns of privacy, freedom, control, and power for the victim of the gaze. What surveillance and voyeurism have in common is the ability to penetrate the lives of unsuspecting participants and violate their privacy, once assumed to be a fundamental right for living.

*"[Surveillance and voyeurism] bare a family resemblance, as all embody characteristics of the covert or the taboo. Such photographs generally imply that the person making the picture was unseen; that what he (or she) and ultimately we are looking at represents a transgression of accepted rules of privacy; and that there is ambivalence on the part of the viewer about what is seen, or how."*

- Sandra Phillips, 2010<sup>2</sup>

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon theory and design can be applied to fit into our current understandings of surveillance and voyeurism. The dynamics of power, order, and control become evident, bridging the ideas together. The Panopticon uses architecture to psychologically and physically control inmates or participants of any institution. Likewise, George Orwell's Big Brother addresses similar dynamics; however, solely through a technological lens. Alternatively, many artists, architects, and scholars have experimented

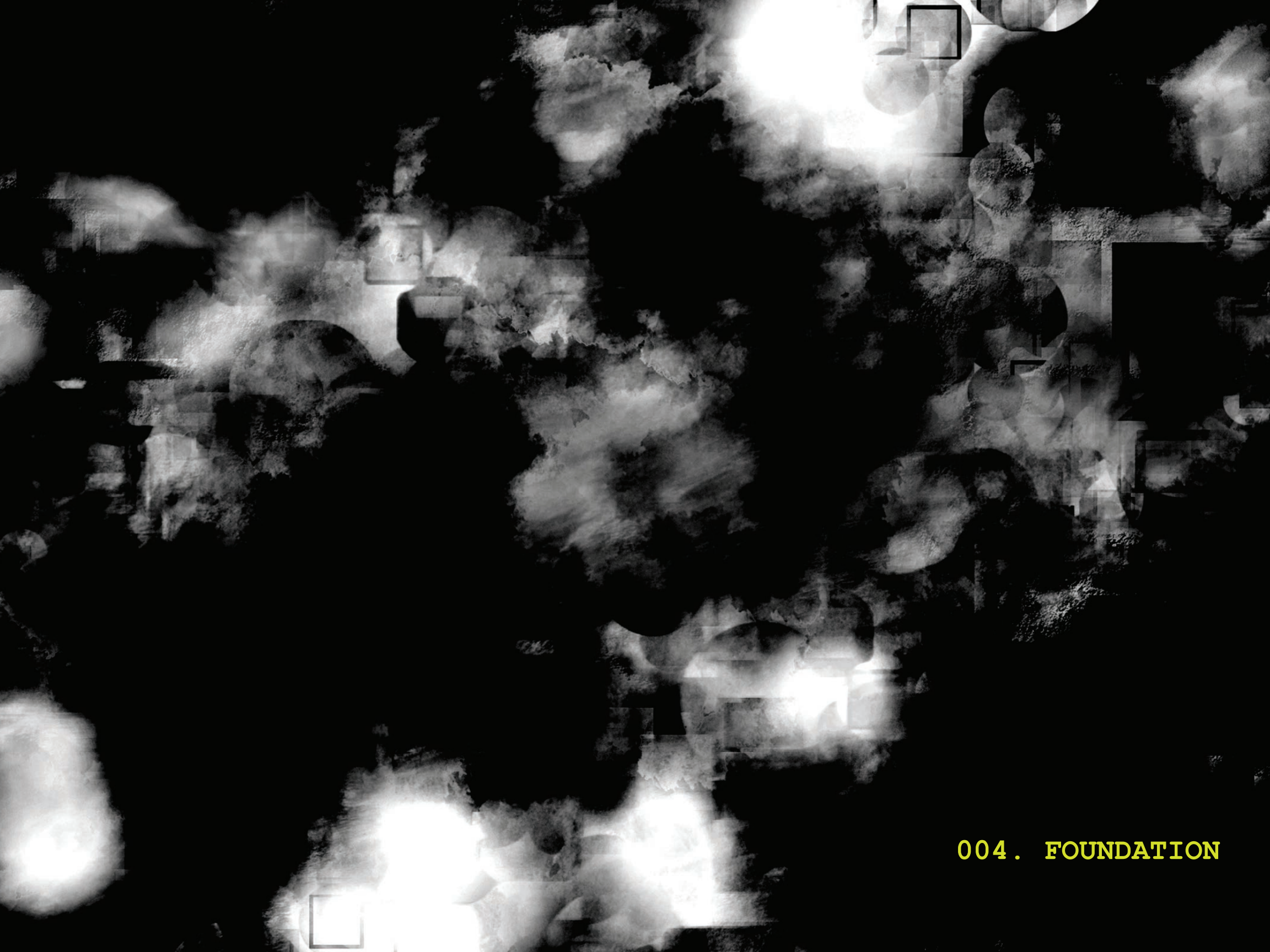
with dystopic perceptions about the 'future' and how the Information Age can revolutionize civilization. What becomes clear through case study research is that at every instance modern civilization exists as a contemporary dystopia, once thought to be unimaginable.

The advancement of surveillant technologies has afforded governments, corporations, employers, business owners, and homeowners the ability to keep a close eye on their structure. This warrants an invasive, unsolicited, and voyeuristic dive into the individual lives that are involved. Unfortunately, the entire population falls victim to surveillance because it is people that set the foundation for modern life to function. Collectively, we are citizens of some society, that pass time pursuing social media platforms, educate ourselves through the world wide web, sustain employment to contribute to the economy, purchase food, clothing, and other goods to survive, and take ownership of our possessions.

Resistance strategies have been devised to combat the advancement of surveillant technologies. Protests, facial applications, jewelry, clothing and academic research to date have been effective visible forms of resistance in asserting concerns of civil liberty. See Detroit, a speculative design proposal that utilizes the existing surveillant technology of Project Green Light Detroit to exploit the surveillance paradigm, is also an attempt at resistance. Rather than resist in a way that could lead to consequence

or danger, See Detroit resists by subverting the surveillant paradigm, allowing for human interaction. By offering people a tool to promote human agency and allow those without power to make choices and participate will relieve the stigma that surrounds both Project Green Light Detroit and emerging surveillant technologies.

Privacy is profoundly limited if any privacy remains. The advancement and production of technology will not curtail; privacy will no longer be optional or of concern. As individuals attempt to rage against these systems, technology continues to develop, becoming more brilliant than ever imagined.



004. FOUNDATION

## SURVEILLANCE

*sur- (over) + veiller (to watch)*

Surveillance is omnipresent because it is found everywhere. It is obscure because its intelligence far surpasses the knowledge of everyday people. It is ubiquitous because its location is never defined. It is ubiquitous because its timing and motive remain unclear.

*"Something strange has happened to our way of thinking - and as a result, even stranger things are happening to the world. We have come to believe that everything is computable and can be resolved by the application of new technologies. But these technologies are not neutral facilitators: they embody our politics and biases, they extend beyond the boundaries of nations and legal jurisdictions and increasingly exceeds the understandings of even their creators. As a result, we understand less and less about the world as these powerful technologies assume more control over our everyday lives"*

- James Brindle, 2018<sup>3</sup>

The idea of surveillance and how people have come to understand it has drastically changed over the past few years. Initially, surveillance was interpreted simply as "visual monitoring"<sup>4</sup>, an aid to enforce security and prevent criminal behaviour from occurring. To many, it was nothing more than a tangible object, whether it be a security camera at your local convenience store or university, or a voice recording when calling a public service that explains "this call may be recorded for training purposes." While that remains true, surveillance has grown to encompass an entirely new and immeasurable meaning. Surveillance is now understood as "acts of strategic inspection and supervision designed to gather information with an eye to social control and domination."<sup>5</sup> This definition highlights the extent to which surveillance is thought to achieve, to promote safety within public and private life. Given the extensive amount of artificial intelligence and pervasiveness of technology, the scope of surveillance now surpasses the bare minimum.

Throughout this thesis, the concept of surveillance extends beyond "visual monitoring"

to include "all forms of control utilizing socially organized techniques and visual technologies - hence to the 'policing' of the family, of public space, interpersonal life and the networks of electronic communication that pervade modern life."<sup>6</sup> What was originally an aid to prevent criminal behaviour from developing, has turned into a necessary evil, spread worldwide. Governments, corporations, employers and individuals all practice surveillance. Not only are phone conversations being recorded, but technology has allowed personal location, cell phone usage, internet searches, downloads, receipts, health records, video chats, and physical whereabouts to be recorded, collected, and stored as well.<sup>7</sup> Following the 9/11 attacks in 2001 and London Bombings in 2006, surveillance technology for government and policing use dramatically skyrocketed.<sup>8</sup> Several acts, laws and programs such as the PATRIOT Act and PRISM were seamlessly passed, as well as existing documents revised due to the sudden urgency and terror felt by civilians.

*"Nineteen-Eighty-Four is an important book, but we should not bind ourselves to the limits of the author's imagination. Time has shown that the world is much more unpredictable and dangerous than that."*

- Edward Snowden, 2014<sup>9</sup>

In 2013, whistleblower and former CIA contractor Edward Joseph Snowden revealed details of highly classified information from the National Security Agency (NSA). Snowden contacted Laura Poitras, a director and producer to release sensitive



Figure 4.1: Surveillance graphic collage

information. The release revealed the existence of many global surveillance programs where civilians are vigorously watched and their data recorded. It prompted discussions about civil liberty, privacy and motives behind national security worldwide. Laura explains, "Our lives will never be the same... I don't know if I'll ever be able to live someplace and feel like I have my privacy. That might be just completely gone."<sup>10</sup>



## VOYEURISM

*voir (to view)*

"Definitions of voyeurism are as broad as psychiatric definitions are narrow"<sup>11</sup> as MD, Ph.D. Jonathan M. Metzl illustrates it. Unfortunately, there is little research done regarding voyeurism and voyeuristic behaviour; however, it is regarded as a mental disorder, specifically a paraphilia disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5). According to the DSM-5, voyeurism is clinically defined as "a recurrent and intense sexual arousal from observing an unsuspecting person who is naked, in the process of disrobing, or engaging in sexual activity, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviours."<sup>12</sup> For this thesis, voyeurism will simply be understood as the practice of observing something private. This definition aims to highlight the criteria that defines voyeurism while maintaining a fun, yet less provocative connotation [Figure 4.2].

To some degree, we are all voyeurs. Voyeurism, when interpreted in its most general sense, is a universal human tendency. We all take some pleasure in observing others, whether to be nosy or simply interested in learning about and understanding others. "Stare. It is the way to educate your eye, and more. Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You are not here long."<sup>13</sup> Popular culture has also allowed for many types of voyeuristic watching through reality television or "voyeurism TV".<sup>14</sup> Reality

television shows such as Big Brother, Survivor, and Keeping up with the Kardashians and films such as Rear Window and The Truman Show continue to entertain the population, young and old. Clay Calvert suggests this type of voyeurism is nothing more than a guilty pleasure, rather than a deviant psychologic disorder.<sup>15</sup>

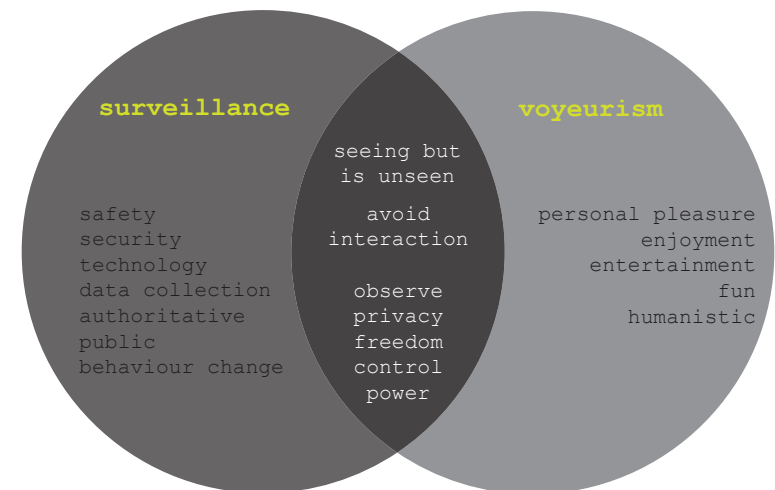


Figure 4.2: This diagram shows the similarities and differences between surveillance and voyeurism

## THE PANOPTICON

*pan-* (universal/total) + *optikon* (of sight) - 'total vision'

To bridge surveillance and voyeurism together, Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon developed in the 18th century, becomes apparent. The word panopticon translates to "total vision"<sup>16</sup>, which captures the fundamental nature of this model. It is a design of a prison that can be applied to any institution, in which a watchtower sits central to surrounding confinement cells [Figure 4.3]. The concept is that guards can surveil inmates easily, and effectively without them knowing if they are being watched or not, a principal motivation in voyeuristic behaviour. This inherently forces inmates to police their behaviour to avoid punishment. Outspoken critic Michel Foucault argued the Panopticon design presents a "cruel, ingenious cage" for prisoners.<sup>17</sup> He went on to suggest prisoners of the Panopticon are seen and are "objects of information", rather than "subjects of communication."<sup>18</sup>

Bentham explains the panopticon as "a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example."<sup>19</sup> However, unlike the panopticon, the targeted voyee assumes they are not being watched and therefore does not police their behaviour. In contrast, surveillance can affect people in both ways. For example, Project Green Light Detroit places surveillance cameras in public areas and is marked with a bright green light that has proven to reduce violent crime by 23% at all sites, and 48% at the original 8 sites compared to 2015.<sup>20</sup> This data emphasizes

the point that if surveillance is marked and made known, people will alter their behaviour. Without the implementation or at a minimum threat of surveillance technology, crime will remain the same in these areas.

The Panopticon expresses its surveillant characteristics in many ways. The design and structure allow for the safety and security of inmates, guards, and citizens of the surrounding community. The architecture allows for effective and efficient observation of participants in the institution. Furthermore, the Panopticon also expresses its voyeuristic characteristics as well. Inmates are supposedly under complete surveillance, constantly, whether rules are broken or not. Guards can also observe inmates without being seen. Each inmate is situated in a cell designed to easily be seen by those standing in the watchtower. Therefore, inmates are on display not only for guards but for other inmates as well.<sup>21</sup>

The closest implementation of Bentham's design was in 1926, called Presidio Modelo, located in Nueva Gerona, Cuba.<sup>22</sup> It closed in 1967, due to overcrowding resulting in hunger strikes and various riots.<sup>23</sup>

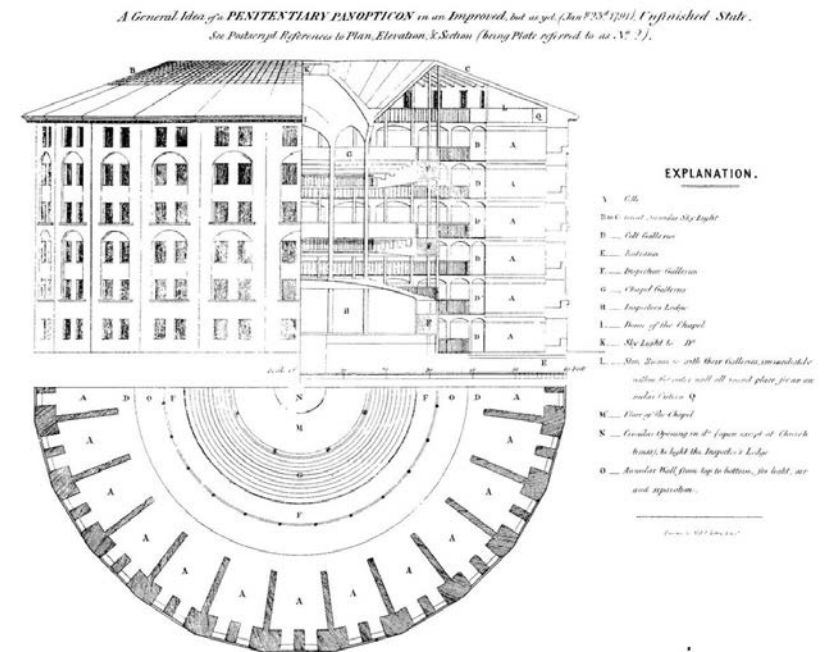


Figure 4.3: Elevation, section and plan of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon penitentiary, 1791, Drawn by Willey Reveley

**THE CONTEMPORARY PANOPTICON**

We, collectively, are living in a contemporary version of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon. The Information Age has permitted everyone to be under constant observation, mimicking Orwellian dystopic theories of Big Brother and the Panopticon. The Contemporary Panopticon warrants hardly-restricted access to a wealth of data through surveillance programs worldwide. The unnerving part is that society is naive to the amount of information collected through everyday tasks. We are now visible in ways those of the 18th century could never have imagined.<sup>24</sup> Figure 4.2 compares Bentham's Panopticon to the Contemporary Panopticon.

The Contemporary Panopticon was realized following the 9/11 attacks, the London Bombings, and Edward Snowden's release of troves of personal data collected on citizens across the world. Everyone became a target of surveillance, with or without something to hide, including criminals and terrorists. Its motive is to prevent deviance, crime, and terrorism, with a strong emphasis on data collection for profit, bringing society into a mass surveillance state. The advancement of technology accelerated the capability to collect and store an absurd amount of data and has also brought surveillance technology to homeowners and local businesses for a reasonable price. It has far surpassed physical imaging of suspicious individuals and physical observation to include the digital self. This data has become invaluable because it can be interpreted and shared for profit between the government and

larger corporations. Our digital self holds a myriad of information. This includes all web searches, phone calls, e-mails, social media profiles and activity, online purchases, finances, and many more. Each of these tasks provides information to further improve the quality of technology, inspire new technology, and target the user with personalized advertisements.

Similar to the original Panopticon, there are psychological components involved in the Contemporary Panopticon. As a result of the terrorist attacks that have tragically occurred worldwide, many people accept mass surveillance out of necessity for safety. Many take the approach of 'what society doesn't know, won't hurt them.' Others feel this digital age surveillance is unacceptable, and the government is infringing on civil liberty and privacy rights.<sup>25</sup> Surveillance has been designed to be obscure and restricted from citizens, leaving people feeling uncomfortable and suspicious of this type of technology.

An important factor in both the Panopticon and Contemporary Panopticon is the watchtower.<sup>26</sup> The original watchtower has been dismantled and is spread thin across the world. It is no longer central, identifiable, or visible.<sup>27</sup> Rather it is background noise, blending into everyday tasks and context. It no longer holds the premise of physical architecture paired with a physical guard. Instead, it takes the form of screens, cameras, algorithms, and data

trawlers. It becomes exceptionally easy to forget surveillance is occurring because it is difficult to recognize due to its omnipresence, ubiquity, and continuous observation. Rarely are there visible flashing lights, signs, or bulky cameras identifying surveillance. Despite oftentimes containing concerning language, fine print that accompanies technology, platforms, and applications is ignored.

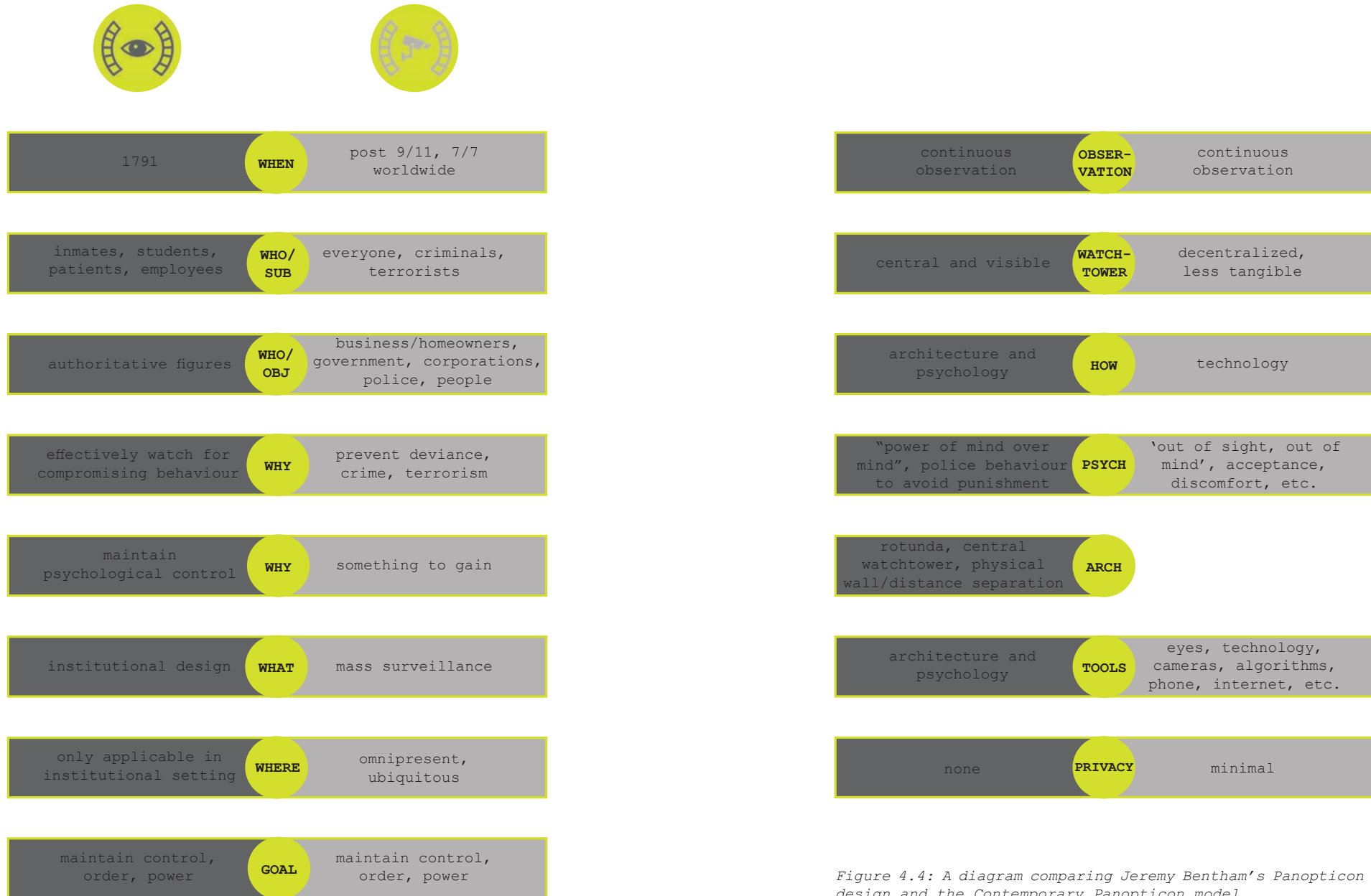


Figure 4.4: A diagram comparing Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon design and the Contemporary Panopticon model

## PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

There is a psychological component that cannot go unnoticed. Watching and being watched whether it be through voyeurism or surveillance, has its psychological implications on people and the greater society. To many, the idea of being watched is unsettling and intrusive. Evidence suggests that decreased trust in authority or the public, increased stress and anxiety levels, relationship issues, and concerns of conformity are all psychological implications reinforced by being watched constantly.<sup>28</sup> This additional layer of constantly begins to spark questions of privacy and freedom. It seems impossible to remain private with the level of intelligence and the amount of technology in society today. It also seems impossible to live freely in a society without some form of authority watching over its civilians for potential threat or danger. This is the give-and-take of being watched constantly.

Contrarily, a report published by the Surveillance Studies Centre at Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, explains that camera surveillance has not been proven as a deterrent of crime despite popular belief and claims done by police, private security, and camera technology companies.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, in a 2003 study conducted by Welsh and Farrington in North America and the UK, surveillance only had a 4 percent reduction in crime.<sup>30</sup> These statistics contradict the popular belief of surveillance cameras to citizens.

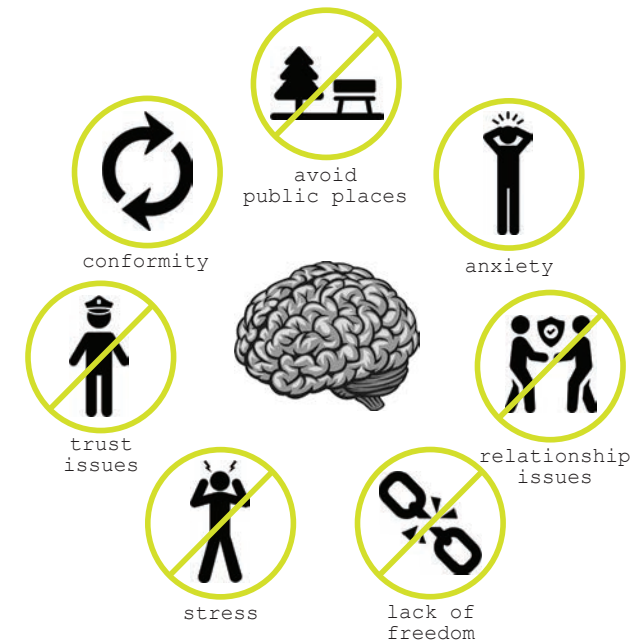


Figure 4.5: A diagram showing the psychological implications of being under observation, whether through surveillance or voyeurism

## THE SCREEN



Figure 4.6: A diagram showing different types of screens those seeing and being seen can use to maintain anonymity

Parallels of control and power begin to manifest when comparing surveillance and voyeurism. In either case, the viewer is observing others, but remains unseen.

Typically, voyeurs do not confront those they are watching, rather they remain hidden or at a distance. This advantage enables the voyeur to view anonymously and provides criteria to understand how voyeurism maintains control and power. Similarly, surveillance acts in this way as well. Someone, or a group of people with authority are disguised by technology to watch for potential threat or danger.

The 'screen' provides an advantage that allows the voyeur to observe while re-maining unseen. It can be architectural, such as a column, wall, material type, or perforated screen. The screen can also be spatial conditions, such as looking from above on a balcony or atria, or the physical distance between persons. Lighting can also act as a screen, allowing for better sight into a well-lit space, and provides anonymity when viewing from a darker space. The lighting was especially beneficial for Jeffries in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*. It allowed Jeffries to peer into his neighbour's apartments without being seen. Other types of screens may be seating in a public space, topography, vegetation, or a piece of technology such as cameras, screens, or monitors.



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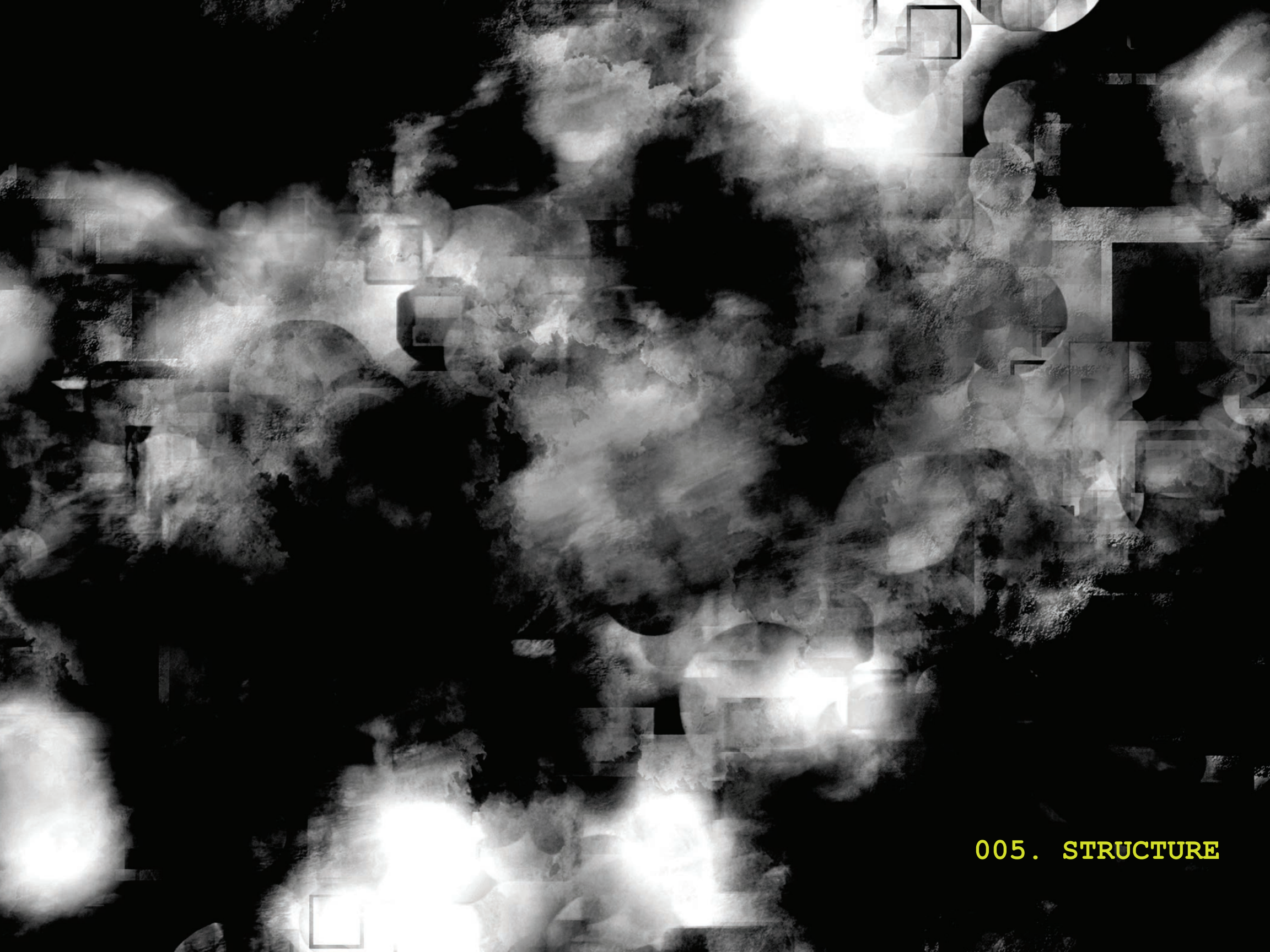
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005. STRUCTURE

## CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

For years now, many artists, architects, and academics have examined, experimented, and exploited surveillance and voyeurism in different ways for people to interpret on their terms. Work from artists Ai Weiwei and Julia Scher, architects Jacques Herzog, Pierre de Meuron, Elizabeth Diller, and Ricardo Scofidio, academics Jeremy Bentham and Michael Foucault, and movie director Alfred Hitchcock, among many others, have brought themes of the gaze and seeing and being seen into the spotlight.

Alfred Hitchcock's film "Rear Window", 1954, is primarily an example of voyeurism.<sup>31</sup> [Figure 5.1] In this film, a prominent photographer, by the name of L.B. Jeffries is wheelchair-bound in his New York apartment. He spends his days spying on his neighbours through his rear window in adjacent apartments across the courtyard, between visits from his famous girlfriend Lisa and nurse Stella. Jeffries becomes deeply infatuated with observing his neighbours, that he delegates false names and fictitious narratives to accompany his



Figure 5.1: Still from Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*, 1954. L.B. Jeffries, his girlfriend Lisa, and detective Tom Doyle looking into the courtyard

voyeuristic behaviour. One evening, he fabricates a narrative that his neighbour's suspicious behaviour warranted the murder of his nagging wife.

Similarly, *Overexposed*, a 1995 art installation by Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio toys with a similar context [Figure 5.2]. *Overexposed* is a 24-minute pre-recorded video pan across the facade of the Pepsi-Cola World Headquarters building in New York City. The video stops at each room to recount a flashback witnessed by a viewer from a neighbouring building.<sup>32</sup> Just as the viewer was able to sit alongside Jeffries and observe scenes of his neighbours, *Overexposed* allows the viewer to recount flashbacks with the narrator. Although one a classic film, and the



Figure 5.2: Facade still from Diller Scofidio's *Overexposed*, 1995

other an art installation done by prominent architects several years later, each express a similar voyeuristic and surveillant elements.

In their early days, Diller and Scofidio experimented with surveillance and elements of voyeurism, which include art installations: Para-site (1989), Loophole (1992), Case# 00-17164/003841983(1993), and Refresh (1998). The person and the human body were central to their work, in that the viewer was both the active participant and viewer.<sup>33</sup> This was common in most forms of art that depicted variations of surveillance and voyeurism. Ai Weiwei, Jacques Herzog, and Pierre de Meuron created an installation titled Hansel & Gretel in 2017 [Figure 5.3]. This installation highly reflects the contemporary panoptic model because it explored what it meant to be consistently watched through surveillant and voyeuristic technology. They highlighted the effects of surveillance through people's digital 'crumbs' using drones, cameras, projections, tablets, and lighting. This installation stressed to its participants that we all create a digital drawing or path, that leaves traces.<sup>34</sup> The artists "have created a thought-provoking, immersive experience that explores how surveillance transforms public space into a controlled environment where individuals forfeit their anonymity."<sup>35</sup> Here, similar to rear Window, Overexposed, and many other projects created by Diller Scofidio, the participants made the installation not only possible but informative and thought-provoking as well.

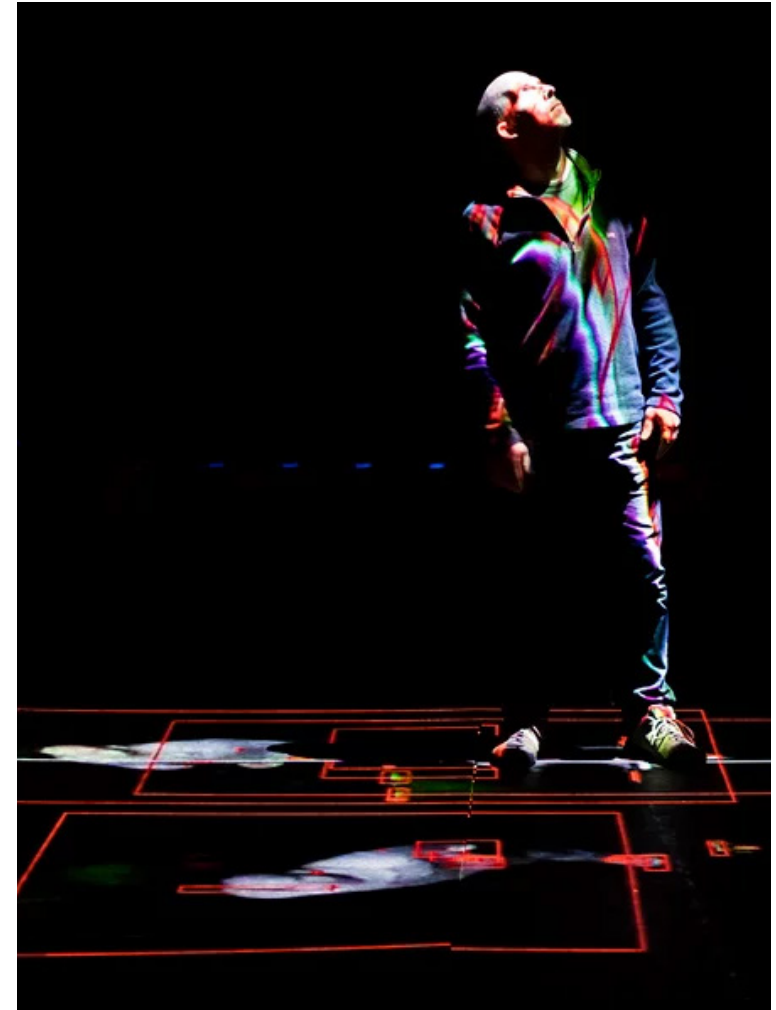


Figure 5.3: Interior scene from Ai Weiwei, Herzog and de Meuron's art installation Hansel & Gretel, 2017



Figure 5.4:  
Julia  
Scher's art  
installation  
*Predictive  
Engineering²*,  
1993-present

Julia Scher, a prominent artist that creates surveillance and electronic security-based work, is also relevant to discuss. In a recurring piece titled *Predictive Engineering*, Scher "combines pre-recorded footage with real-time surveillance to explore mechanisms for social control."<sup>36</sup> [Figure 5.4] This art installation relates to the other installations mentioned because it projects concepts and provokes similar thought as the work done by Hitchcock, Diller Scofidio, Weiwei, Herzog and de Meuron. Resembling *Hansel + Gretel*, both installations focus on the psychology of surveillance in public spaces, and how individuals react in situations. *Predictive Engineering* also has a voyeuristic theme throughout, as Scher is selective in the material she projects. Recordings of naked individuals running throughout the museum, or an aggressive fight are played because of the spectacle they produce, and tendency to grab the attention of

unsuspecting citizens. This emphasizes is the voyeuristic trend within Scher's work.

A second contemporary panoptic example is *Citizen Rotation Office* which is a speculative design proposal by Luke Sturgeon.<sup>37</sup> [Figure 5.5] The project used a fictional government service to place participants within a possible future.<sup>38</sup> This project was made possible by "extrapolating existing trends and applying online behaviours to the urban environment. A speculative government service was designed to highlight the results of a technocratic policy designed with data. The everyday experience of the city is explored in-context, through an immersive experience prototype, combining mobile technologies, audio guides, digital props, improvisation actors, rented accommodation, food and transport services."<sup>39</sup> Specifically, *Citizen Rotation office* and *Hansel & Gretel* reinforced *See Detroit*, the final design proposal for this thesis. Figure 5.6 depicts the case study analysis completed.



Figure 5.5: Luke Sturgeon's *Citizen Rotation Office*, 2016

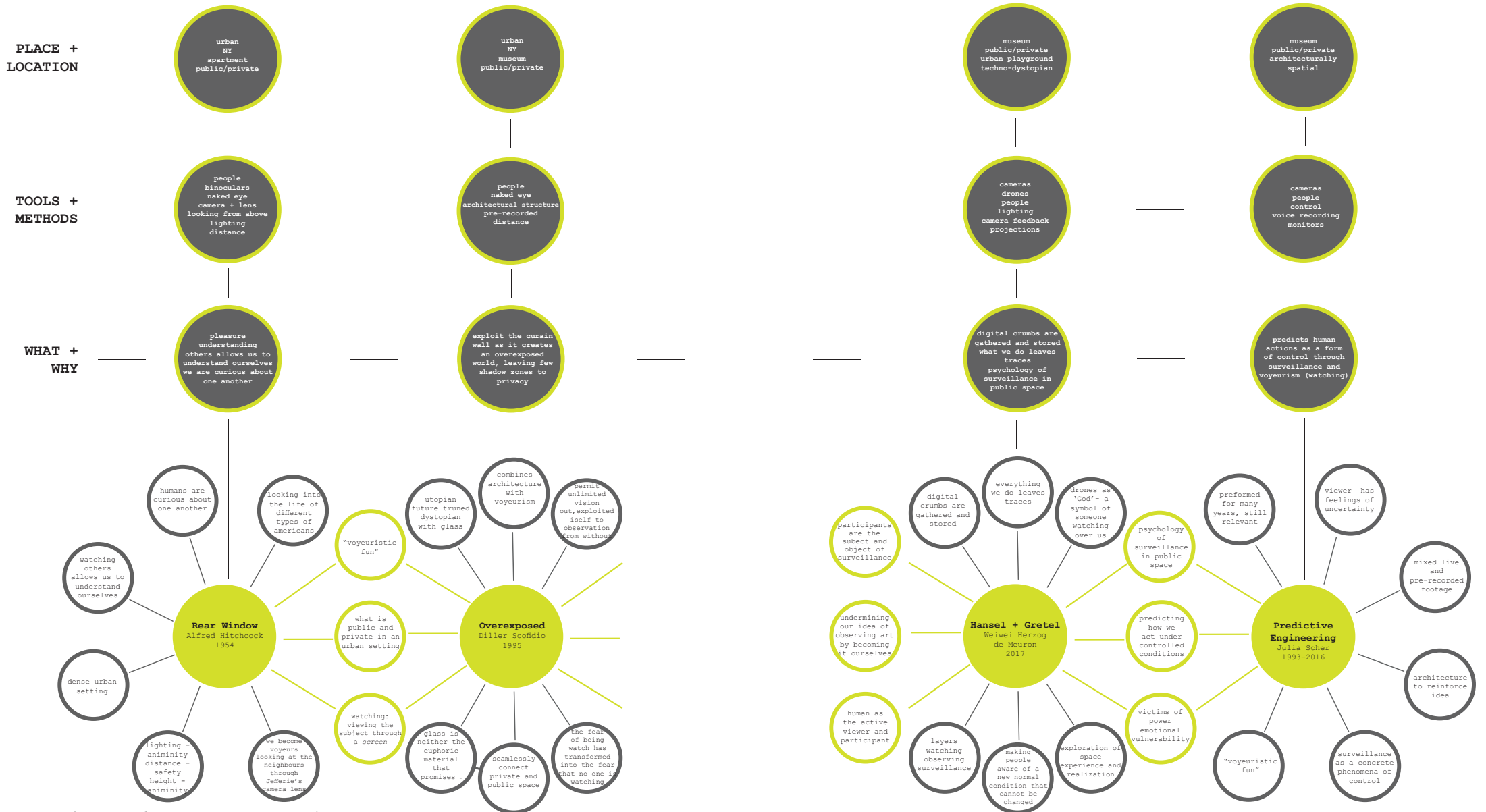
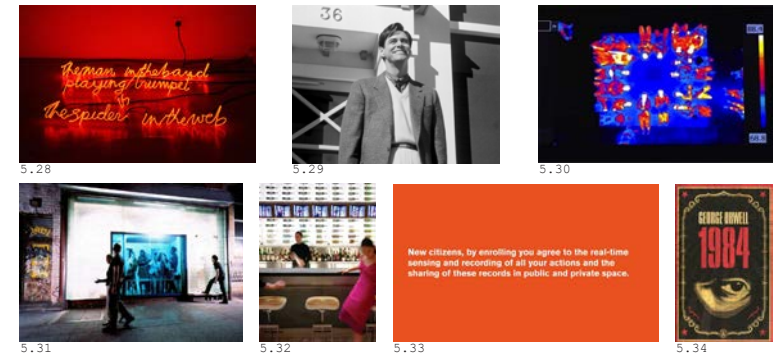
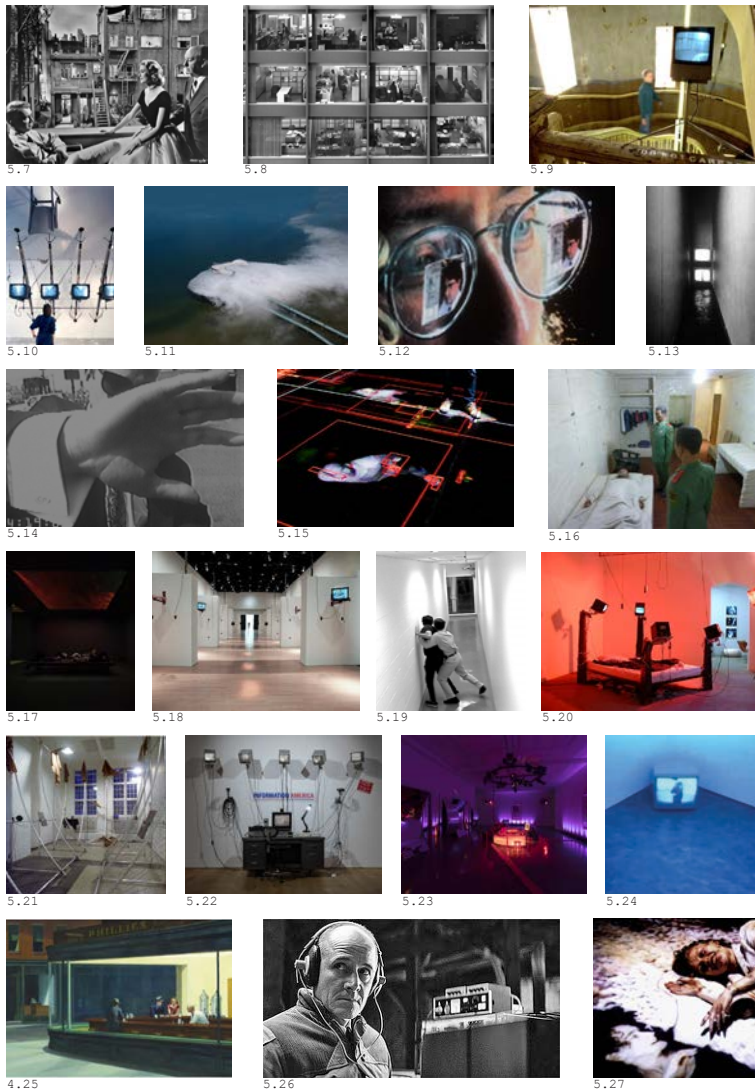


Figure 5.6: Case study analysis



- 5.7 Rear Window, 1954, Alfred Hitchcock
- 5.8 Overexposed, 1995, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.9 Loophole, 1992, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.10 Para-site, 1989, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.11 Blur Building, 2002, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.12 Refresh, 1998, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.13 Live - Taped Video Corridor, 1970, Bruce Nauman
- 5.14 Case # 00-17164/003841983, 1993, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.15 Hansel + Gretel, 2017, Ai Weiwei, Herzon and de Meuron
- 5.16 S.A.C.R.E.D, 2013, Ai Weiwei
- 5.17 Astro Noise, 2016, Lisa Poitras
- 5.18 Predictive Engineering, 1993-2006, Julia Scher
- 5.19 Predictive Engineering, 1993-2006, Julia Scher
- 5.20 Always There, 1994, Julia Scher
- 5.21 Securirty by Julia XLVI, 2002, Julia Scher
- 5.22 Information America, 1995, Julia Scher
- 5.23 Wonderland, 1998-2018, Julia Scher
- 5.24 Public Room Private Room, 1969, Bruce Nauman
- 5.25 Nighthawks, 1942, Edward Hopper
- 5.26 The Lives of Others, 2006, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck
- 5.27 Telematic Dreaming, 1992, Paul Sermon
- 5.28 The Spy Project, 2008, Jill Magid
- 5.29 The Truman Show, 1998, Peter Wier
- 5.30 Astro Noise, 2016, Lisa Poitras
- 5.31 Glass Bar, 2002, Leeser Architecture
- 5.32 Brasserie, 2000, Diller Scofidio + Renfro
- 5.33 Citizen Rotation Office, 2016, Luke Sturgeon
- 5.34 1984, 1949, George Orwell



## SURVEILLANCE THEATRE

A sketch problem was conducted to examine an aspect of this thesis. For this sketch problem, an initial installation proposal was idealized, that explored what it meant to be constantly watched. [Figures 5.35 - 5.37] Taking inspiration from artists and installations on this topic, this installation reflected both voyeurism and surveillance in the current age of technology.

Later, the second iteration of this sketch problem was created and built to explore similar concepts. The second iteration was imperative because surveillance and voyeurism are both ubiquitous and obscure. The initial iteration was presented to students and faculty; therefore, several initial elements needed to change to remain ambiguous; especially surveillance location and signage.

Utilizing the information gathered from the case study analysis, precedent research, and feedback from the initial proposal, a two-part installation titled Surveillance Theatre, was curated at the University of Detroit Mercy, School of Architecture. Using concepts, characteristics and overlaps between different projects, I was able to develop an installation of my own. Each of the projects studied (and there were several), had elements of voyeurism and/or surveillance.

Common characteristics that emerged and became important elements to move forward included: 'voyeuristic fun', privacy within the urban

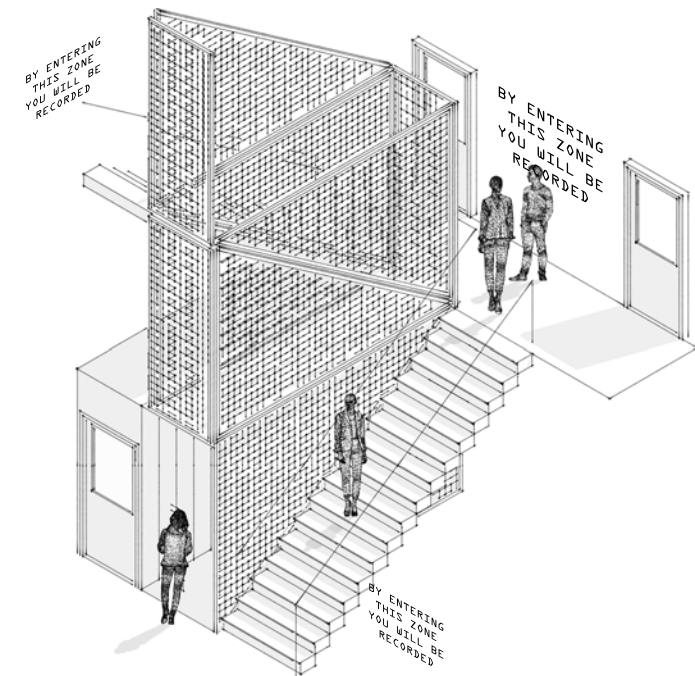


Figure 5.35: Initial installation proposal perspective

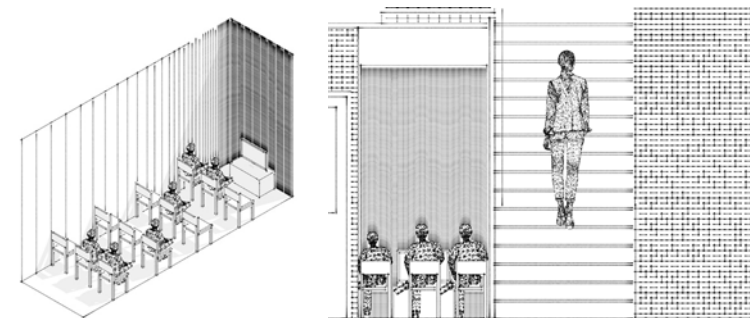


Figure 5.36 Left: Initial installation proposal perspective  
Figure 5.37 Right: Initial installation proposal elevation



Figure 5.38: Surveillance Theatre interior view

context, watching and observing others through a screen or an element that allowed the viewer to remain anonymous, people became both the subject and object of viewing meaning they became both the active viewer and participant, undermining our idea of observing art by becoming it ourselves, psychological implications of seeing and being seen in public and private space, understanding, interpreting and predicting how people act under certain conditions, and finally, people are victims of power and emotional vulnerability.

Surveillance Theatre highlighted several of these concepts while serving as a visceral experience to the viewer/participant. It was left to the viewer to discover the installation without prompt, reinforcing the obscurity of being watched. The intention behind the installation was to exploit a public space that students of the SOA feel comfortable and private in while creating awareness of surveillance invasion.

Over 72 hours, a surveillance camera captured footage, both audio and visual of students within the School of Architecture in various locations. The camera was placed in areas with frequent traffic and gathering spaces while trying to target students from several cohorts. The locations included a stairwell (that connected the second and main floor), a studio classroom, a view into the parking lot and main entrance to the building from the second floor, the second-floor hallway, 'the pit' (a collective gathering space for students), a gathering seating space

branched off the main floor hallway, and the basement hallway. [Figures 5.41 - 5.54] The footage was edited into short clips and pieced together to create a video that included two audio sources, an overlay of instrumental music and actual audio obtained from the camera. During the time of the recordings, small signs were placed on all exterior doors into the building, at the request of school executives. The sign read "ATTENTION: Public areas of the SOA will be under surveillance beginning October 27 through October 29th". [Figure 5.40] Although it was not desirable to make students and faculty of the SOA aware of the recordings, I was hopeful that the signs would be forgotten and fade into the background or ignored altogether. The installation was successful in this sense.

Several features highlighted different intentions of the installation. [Figure 5.38] The video was presented the following week for students and faculty of the SOA to observe. The footage was projected onto a white screen in a deep, dark, narrow space. This space was located on the basement floor, under the stairs of the School of Architecture. The installation space was enclosed with plywood and painted black to begin suggesting tones of unsettlement and obscurity. Viewers were prohibited from entering the installation, rather they had to view it through a narrow opening. [Figure 5.39] Denying viewers from entering the space while restricting views inside represented peoples lack of control or ability to change this surveillance dominated



Figure 5.39: Surveillance Theatre outside looking in

culture. The deep length of the space represented the void within our inability to change or reach those watching us. This ensures the artist has complete control over the process. Six chairs were placed into the installation with mannequin heads attached to them. This feature was intended to reinforce the notion that someone, somewhere is watching. Presenting the installation to the students and faculty that were recorded days earlier allowed them to be both the participant and the active viewer. This reinforces our idea of observing art by becoming it ourselves.

There were several takeaways following the completion of Surveillance Theatre, multiple that mimicked notions of the Contemporary Panopticon. Many participants were shocked to see themselves projected on footage due to the hidden and continuously changing location of the camera, resembling the decentralization of the watchtower. Many staff and students forgot about the warning signs and some did not even notice them; therefore, they did not alter their behaviour. Many staff and students felt unsettlement or unsure with initial contact of warning signs, indicating how few people realize surveillant technology is extensively part of our society. Many participants enjoyed seeing themselves and their friends projected and lingered around for several minutes for personal enjoyment. Others felt apprehensive and uncomfortable while watching the footage, in anticipation to see themselves projected. Finally, some staff and students had mixed feelings of whether their privacy had been infringed upon.

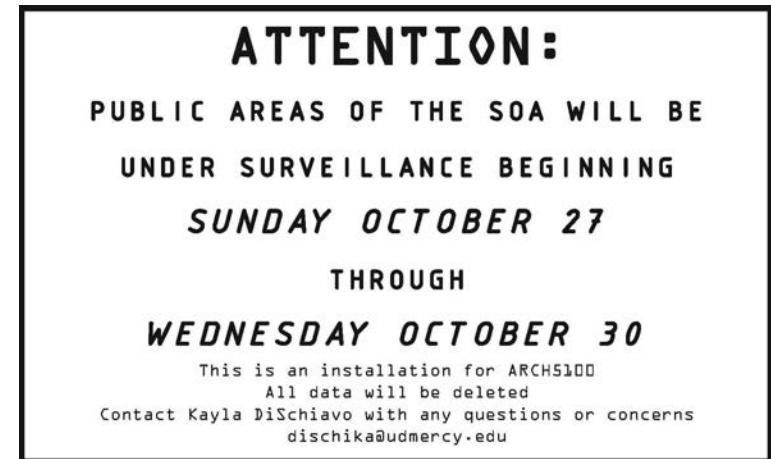
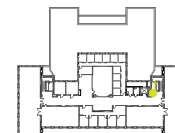


Figure 5.40: Surveillance Theatre warning sign

The following images are stills taken from the installation video, with an icon of the School of Architecture showing the location and direction of the camera.

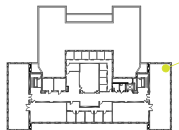


Figures 5.41 & 5.42: East Staircase

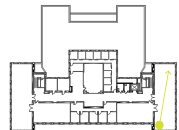




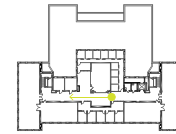
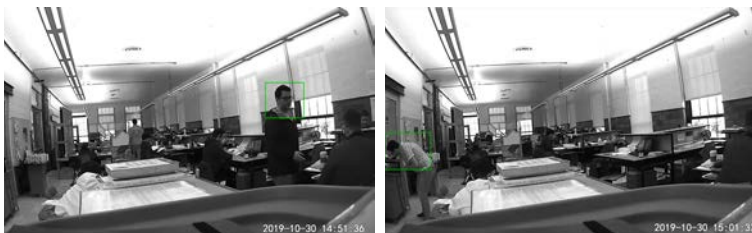
Figures 5.43 & 5.44: Basement Corridor Facing West



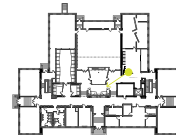
Figures 5.45 & 5.46: 2nd Floor Studio Facing into Parking Lot



Figures 5.47 & 5.48: 2nd Floor Masters Studio



Figures 5.49 & 5.50: 2nd Floor Corridor Facing West



Figures 5.51 & 5.52: DCDC viewing into The Pit

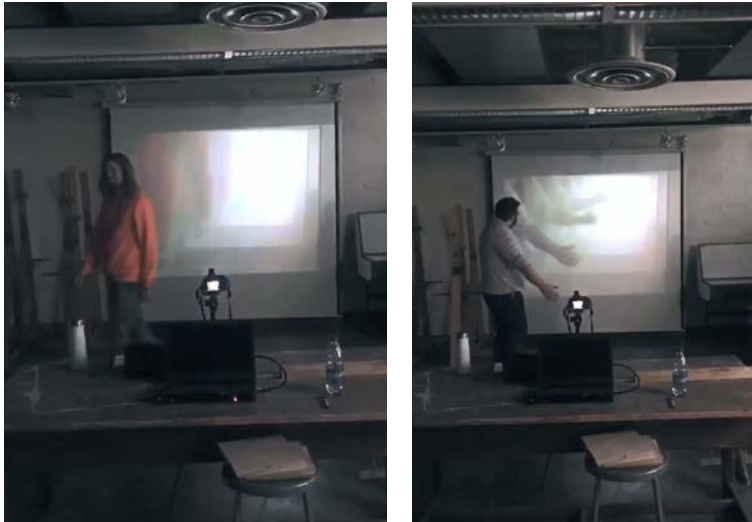


Figures 5.53 & 5.54: Main Floor Corridor Facing East



## DIGITAL FEEDBACK

Digital Feedback is an abstract representation of the layering of information that our 'digital self' and 'real self' experiences. It facilitated interaction with students, prompting a conversation between the participant as their real self and the camera/screen as their digital self. [Figure 5.55-5.57] Our digital self has a life of its own and is a version of who we are, which includes a comprehensive profile. Digital feedback expressed the fact that whatever we do, online, offline or in person leaves traces, and will be tracked by something, somewhere, somehow. This is not all bad however, some things that our self (both real and digital) do, will decay while others will leave lasting impressions and stand out.



Figures 5.55 & 5.56: Students interact with Digital Feedback

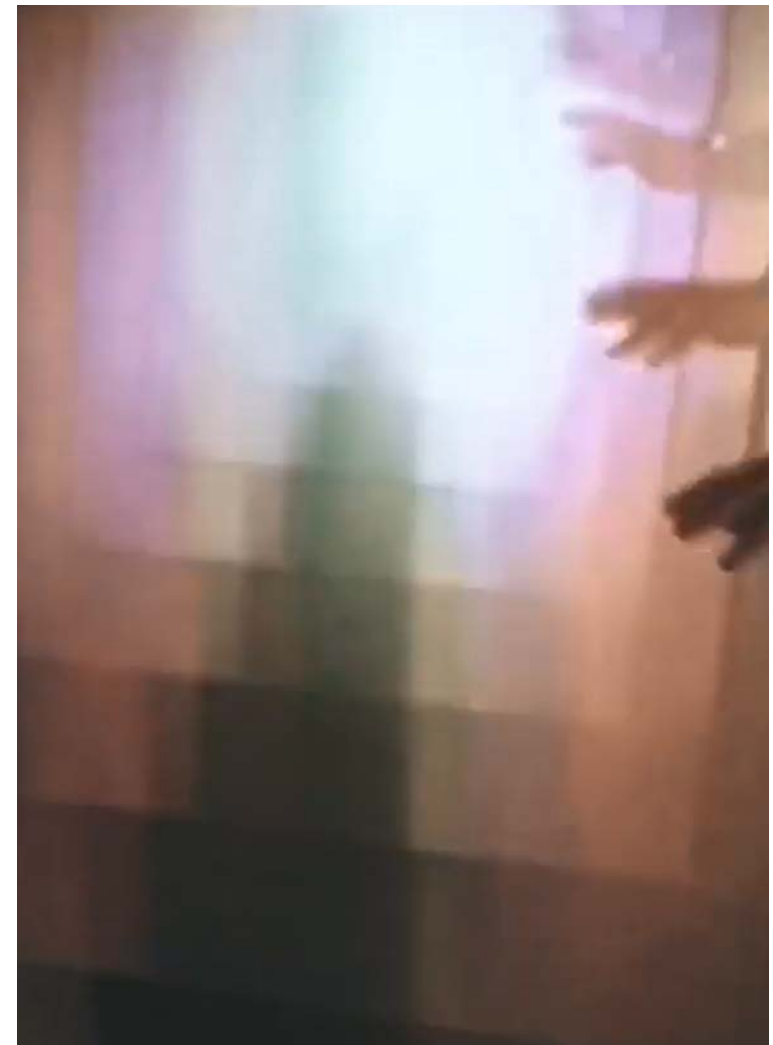


Figure 5.57: Students interact with Digital Feedback

SHORT FILM TRIPTYCH



*The world has an issue but there is no fixing,  
only accepting.*

*Built into the urban fabric of life, goes  
unnoticed, but always notices you.*

*With nothing to hide, there is nothing hidden  
anymore.*

*Now visible in ways unimaginable.*

*Our privacy; lost,  
Our freedom; threatened,  
Our diary; exposed.*

*A necessary evil?*

*Fighting terrorism.*

*Preventing crime and social unrest.*

*Promoting safety and enriching security.*

*Prohibiting theft while minimizing loss.*

*Protecting civilians.*

*Is it time to embrace our techno dystopian world?*

*Surveillance...*

# WATCHING

*"While no sense is able to perceive something a thousand feet away, the force of the eyes perception reaches even to the stars."*

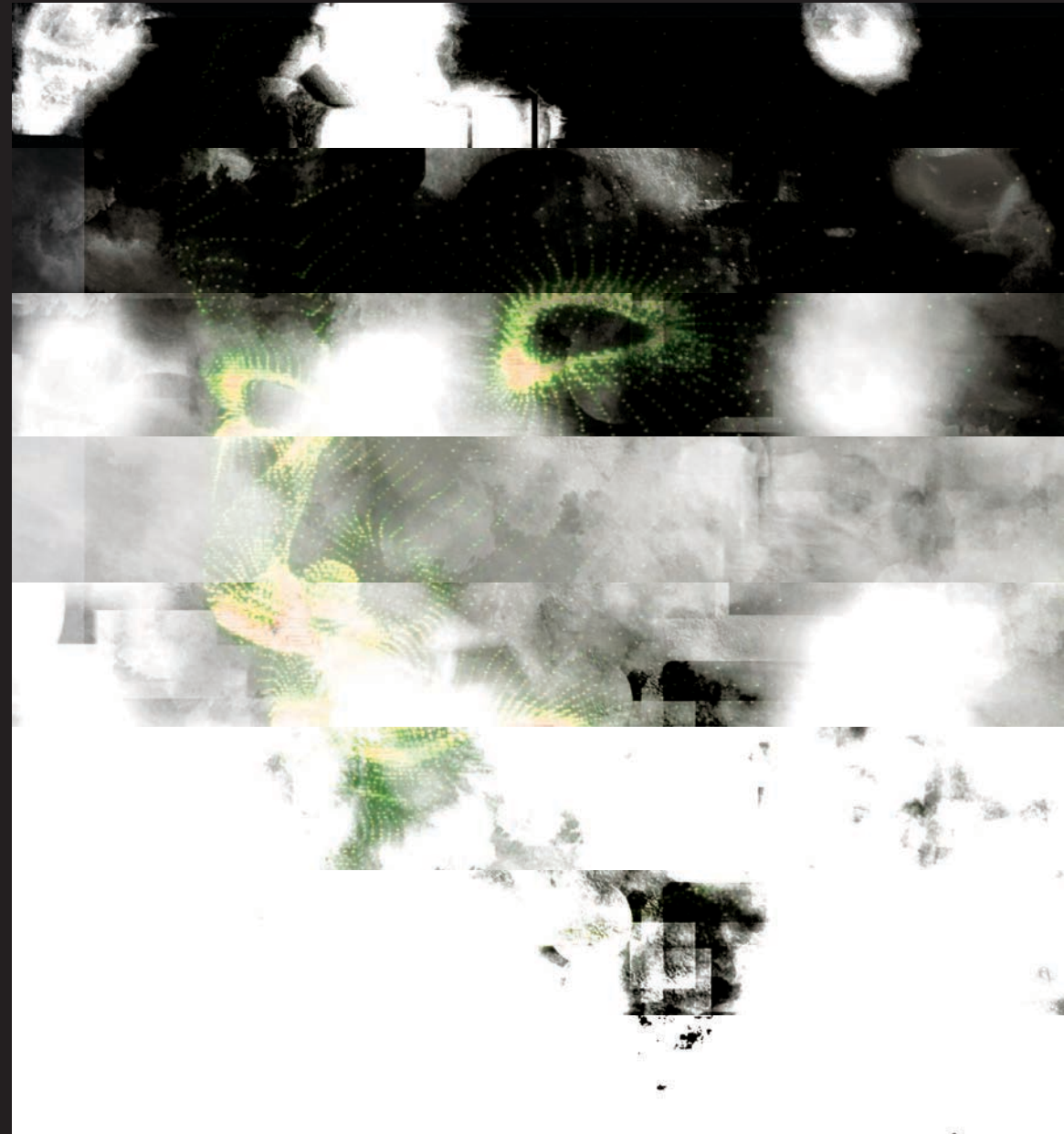
- David Fredrick  
The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body, 2002

*Watching is enriched with many layers.*

*Not only are we watching others, but others are watching us, as technology is watching them.*

*You are both the subject and object;  
to be watched,  
to be surveilled,  
and to be observed constantly,  
whether you are in the privacy of your own space  
or not.*

*The all-seeing lens is reaching limitless depths,  
leaving no layer untouched.*





# still human



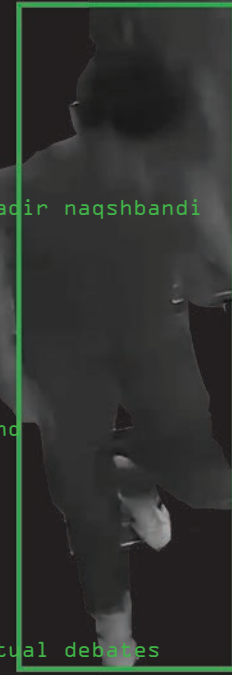
logan flowers  
september 8 1996  
age 24  
6'1"

new center, detroit

editor: dichotomy  
b.arch udm  
m.arch udm

sweater  
t-shirt  
blue jeans  
sneakers

loves vanilla latte's  
from new order +  
shopping on amazon



muhamad abdulqadir naqshbandi  
may 19 1997  
age 23  
6'0"

detroit, mi  
irbil, iraq

studio libeskind  
b.arch udm  
m.arch udm

black t shirt  
black jeans  
sneakers

loves intellectual debates

## NOTES

<sup>31</sup> Hitchcock, A. (Producer), & Hitchcock, A. (1954) Rear window. United States of America: Paramount Pictures.

<sup>32</sup> Scofidio D, Scofidio E., & Scofidio R. (1995). Overexposed. DillerScofidio+Renfro. DSRNY. dsrny.com/project/overexposed.

<sup>33</sup> Diller E. & Scofidio R. (1989). Projects 17: Elizabeth Diller, Ricardo Scofidio. The Museum of Modern Art.

<sup>34</sup> Herzog, J., & de Meuron, P. (n.d.). Hansel & Gretel. Herzogdemeuron. <https://www.herzogdemeuron.com/index/projects/complete-works/451-475/455-hansel-and-gretel.html>

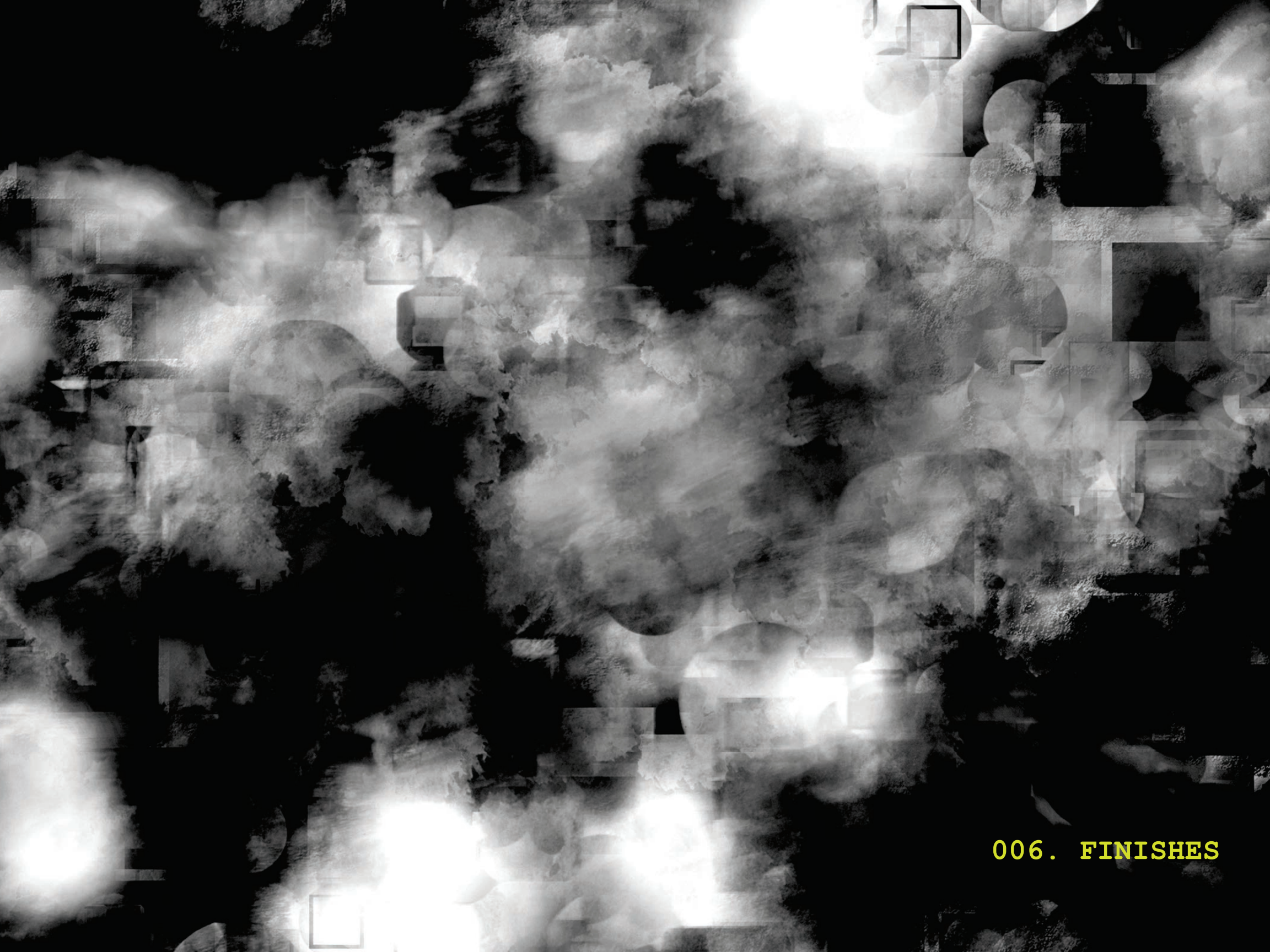
<sup>35</sup> Philip, S. (2017). Herzog & De Meuron and Ai Weiwei 'Surveil' exhibition visitors at NY's Park Avenue Armory. Designboom. [www.designboom.com/art/herzog-de-meuron-ai-weiwei-hansel-gretel-park-avenue-armory-new-york-06-07-2017/](http://www.designboom.com/art/herzog-de-meuron-ai-weiwei-hansel-gretel-park-avenue-armory-new-york-06-07-2017/).

<sup>36</sup> Scher, J. (2017). Society for contemporary art. Society for Contemporary Art at the Art Institute of Chicago. Retrieved from: [scaaic.org/event/julia-scher/](http://scaaic.org/event/julia-scher/).

<sup>37</sup> Sturgeon, L. (2016). HM Citizen rotation office. HMCRO. <http://hmcro.org/>

<sup>38</sup> Sturgeon, L. (2016). HM Citizen rotation office. HMCRO. <http://hmcro.org/>

<sup>39</sup> Sturgeon, L. (2016). HM Citizen rotation office. LukeSturgeon. <https://lukeSturgeon.co.uk/Citizen-Rotation-Office>



006. FINISHES

## RESISTANCE

Collectively, we have far surpassed the opportunity to prevent the surveillant panoptic state from becoming a reality and are left only with accepting it. By subverting the one-sided surveillance paradigm as a form of resistance, it will promote human agency and relieve the stigma that surrounds it.

It is difficult to define resistance because it covers a substantial projection of opposing human action, and is highly contextual and situational.<sup>40</sup> Resistance, in its general sense, is understood as the "opposition or insubordination that issues from relationships of power and domination".<sup>41</sup> For this thesis, "resistance is not to be thought of as a reversal the order of high and low, of power and its absence,"<sup>42</sup> rather take an active role and steer the ship to benefit both those in power and the subordinate; resistance as a form of subversion.

There are several different actors of surveillance because there are many different levels of it. Possible actors include state or government including police, employers of various institutions (both public and private), corporations in the collection of data on clients, or individual and interpersonal actors such as spouses, lovers neighbours, and so on.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the possible actors engaged in resistance include individuals, groups of various backgrounds, institutions, networks and possibly the state itself.<sup>44</sup> Given that this thesis suggests integrating into the existing

infrastructure of Project Green Light Detroit, the primary actor of surveillance is the state, which includes the Detroit Police Department and the City of Detroit. The primary actors of resistance would then include Detroiters of various backgrounds across the city.

There are two overarching forms of resistance, the visible and the invisible. Actors that choose to take an invisible role in the resistance of surveillance choose to remain hidden and remove themselves from the digital to escape data collection. This becomes exceptionally difficult to do because technology is rapidly developing into new ways to surveil and dissect the population. Actors of resistance who chose to take a visible role, implement physical methods of resistance. This may include published academic research, protesting, and subversion.

This thesis promotes resistance through subversion. Academics on the topic have suggested subverting the surveillant paradigm by promoting its use as a playful form of entertainment. For example, David Bell speaks to the sexualization of surveillance as a mode of resistance, exploring ways in which "voyeurism and exhibitionism are mobilized within an emerging 'surveillance aesthetic.'"<sup>45</sup> Similarly, Anders Albrechtslund and Lynsey Dubbele suggest there are aspects of surveillance that are not explored and can be used for entertainment purposes.<sup>46</sup> Finally, Hillie Koskela suggests an increase in surveillance and access to these technologies allows individuals

under observation a level of empowerment. She argues that mobile phones, webcams and reality television allow people to reveal themselves, implying that surveillance has the potential to "reclaim the copyright of [peoples] lives".<sup>47</sup> See Detroit carries forward these ideas that surveillance can be more than a tool that is one-sided by authoritative observers.

## PROJECT GREEN LIGHT DETROIT

Project Green Light Detroit (PGL) is an example of a contemporary panoptic issue actively happening in Detroit, Michigan. It was conceived as an initiative to improve neighbourhood safety, promote the revitalization and growth of local businesses and strengthen the DPD's ability to solve crime, by installing real-time camera connections directly to DPD headquarters.<sup>48</sup> In 2016, the DPD realized 25% of violent crime was occurring near gas stations, and after further research found that late-night businesses were at greatest risk for violent crime.<sup>49</sup> Initially starting with eight gas stations, PGL has spread to over 700 local businesses and is rapidly growing.<sup>50</sup> [Figure 6.1] This is currently generating a lot of controversy across Detroit, with many individuals claiming their civil rights are jeopardized.

PGL partners can be identified by a bright green flashing light located outside various businesses, accompanied by PGL signage and high-definition surveillance cameras. [Figure 6.3] Not only are people aware that the area is under surveillance, but PGL infrastructure and signage are clear signals of high crime, rendering the area unsafe. Those who choose to join the program are required to pay an entry fee, monthly data storage fees, and the initial purchase of surveillant technology. Exterior cameras generally cover any area accessible to the public, and at least one interior camera to face the main entrance. Partnered businesses include gas stations, fast-food restaurants, parks,

schools, health clinics, hotels, residential complexes, and places of worship, as well as many others. [Figure 6.2]

Footage collected is sent directly to the Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC), consisting of both sworn officers and unsworn individuals. The RTCC has a variety of surveillance technology at its disposal, including facial recognition software, license plate readers and access to GPS data.<sup>51</sup> They also partner with government agencies such as the FBI and Department of Homeland Security, and private partners including DTE, Rock Financial, Downtown Detroit Partnership and the Ilitchs.<sup>52</sup>

Facial recognition is an important advancement in surveillant technology and is also stirring



Figure 6.1: Project Green Light partners across Detroit

up substantial controversy worldwide regarding privacy and bias concerns. San Fransisco became the first US city to ban the use of facial recognition technology, followed by Somerville Massachusetts, and Oakland California.<sup>53</sup> The majority of facial recognition technologies have a significantly high error rate, misidentifying African-American and Asian faces 10 times to 100 times more than Caucasian faces according to the National Institute of Standards and Technology.<sup>54</sup> This statistic becomes exceptionally worrisome for a predominantly black city such as Detroit. Nonetheless, in 2017, the City of Detroit adopted the software entitled Face Plus. Face Plus has the capability of automatically searching all faces that enter the camera's view against existing photos in the entity's database. The database is populated through SNAP, which collects images from mug shots, sex offender registry photos, driver's license photos, and state ID photos.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, all Detroiters that hold identification cards are preprogrammed into the system, and as of March 2019, nearly every Michigan resident has a photo in the database.<sup>56</sup>

Furthermore, PGL plans to expand according to Mayor Mike Duggan's proposed Capital Agenda 2020-2024. PGL has already begun expanding into a variety of non-commercial and commercial use entities and plans to include educational facilities, transit stops, transportation, and traffic lights.<sup>57</sup> Duggan also suggests it be mandatory for all retail businesses that operate past 10:00 pm to become part of the program.<sup>58</sup> With this in mind, PGL will light up the city

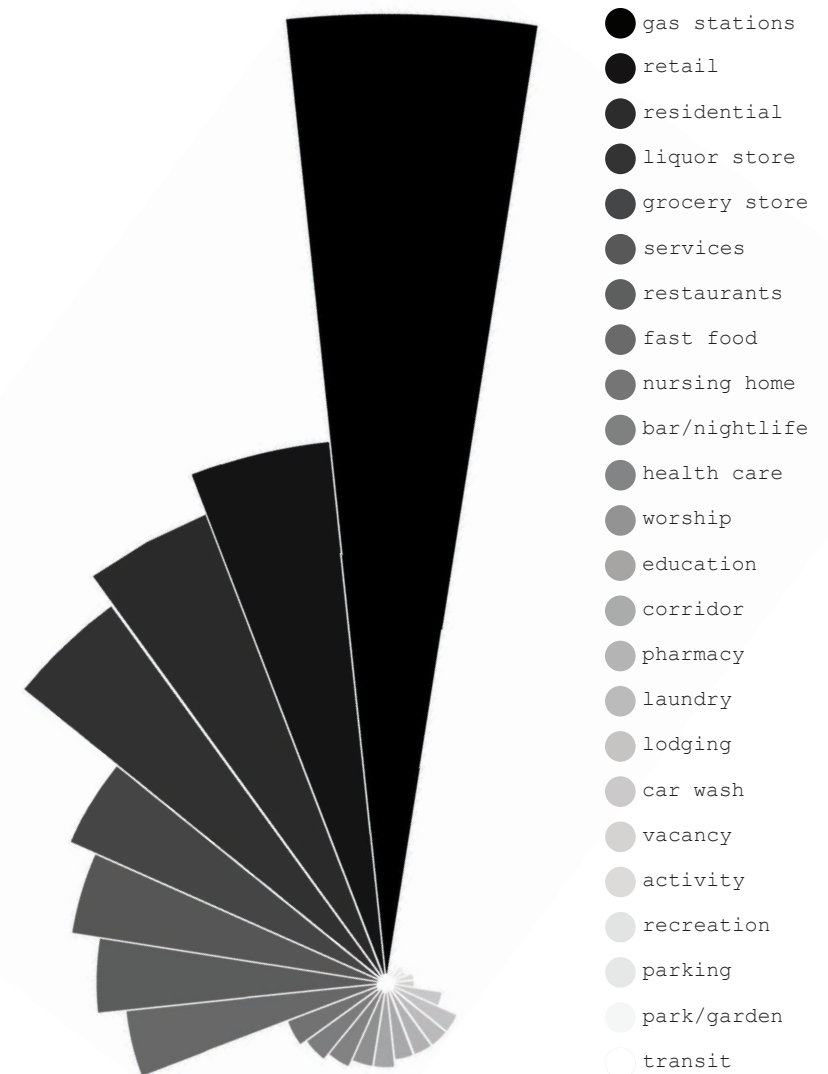


Figure 6.2: Project Green Light Detroit business typologies

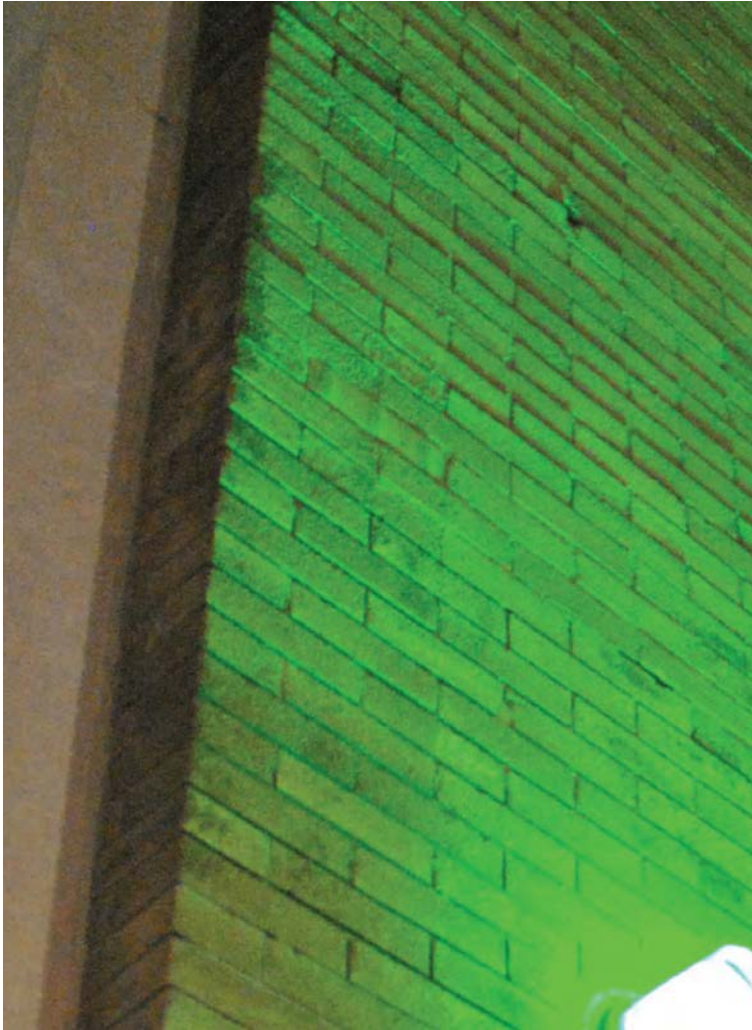


Figure 6.3: Project Green Light Detroit, Riverwise Magazine | Special Surveillance Issue, 2019

green with the technological gaze constantly observing Detroiters.

PGL has garnered a lot of controversy across the city. From protest signs to entire magazine issues, Detroiters are not impressed with the City of Detroit and their PGL initiatives. Concerns regarding effectiveness, policies, results, future and costs of PGL are the most prominent.<sup>59</sup>

In general, PGL's effectiveness in reducing, deterring, and solving crime has not been directly related to PGL, rather, the decrease can be traced back to existing trends. Also, an increase in PGL locations may result in a decrease in visual monitoring by the RTCC, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of the program.<sup>60</sup> PGL's policies also raise important concerns. Although PGL cameras are not permitted for immigration enforcement purposes, there is no policy in place prohibiting the Department of Homeland Security from using and accessing the footage obtained from PGL cameras. Images of suspected criminals will remain in the system until cleared or removed, potentially tagging misidentified suspects as criminals.<sup>61</sup> PGL costs an absurd amount of money, so many local business owners cannot afford the service. They argue the program essentially permits paying for policing because the program ensures priority DPD attention over other calls, not including emergencies.<sup>62</sup> Finally, facial recognition software used at public events including protesting will inevitably lead to watchlists, infringing on the right to protest.<sup>63</sup>



**SEE DETROIT**

See Detroit is a speculative design proposal expanding ongoing surveillant practices within the city of Detroit. [Figure 6.4] See Detroit acts as a form of resistance through subverting the surveillant paradigm. This project is a platform that promotes human agency by affording subjects of surveillance the ability to make choices and actively participate. Using existing PGL infrastructure in Detroit, See Detroit offers residents and visitors the opportunity to promote and find events happening throughout the city. It also provides social, cultural, and economic value to Detroit while allowing PGL to be used for its intended purpose by the DPD.

Four key components set the foundation for this proposal that underline important characteristics throughout the research of this thesis. [Figure 6.5] First, the design proposal must involve a contemporary panoptic issue that deals primarily with digital technique and application. Project Green Light Detroit was designated for this component because it has the infrastructure and substantial plans to quickly expand despite significant concerns raised by Detroiters. Second, the proposal must be based within the urban context because surveillance is a collective concern that affects everyone differently. By incorporating the urban context, subjects of surveillance can combat the issue together and represent a diverse set of needs and wants. Third, a voyeuristic component was to be incorporated because voyeurism is an inevitable byproduct of surveillant technology and can be



Figure 6.4: See Detroit platform and application logo

powerful and fun. Finally, human interaction and participation needed to be incorporated into the design to emphasize the active role the community can take. Granting people access to this technology invites transparency between both users. Together, these four components will promote human agency.

As mentioned above, flashing green lights are cropping up at businesses across the city. PGL is becoming so populated that the DPD has eyes across Detroit, leaving no area unseen. While this is very disconcerting, we can use this premise to benefit citizens, rather than cause civil unrest. See Detroit is a real-time voyeuristic tool to promote human agency for the community. It aims to reactivate urban space and landscape, connect people and neighbourhoods across Detroit, and promote active engagement within the community. Moreover, it promotes PGL initiatives to stimulate the growth of local businesses, improve neighbourhood safety and strengthen efforts to deter, identify, and solve crime. See Detroit was designed and created with victims of surveillance in mind, therefore, it is a tool that everyone can use including groups, organizations, individuals, families, and the City of Detroit.

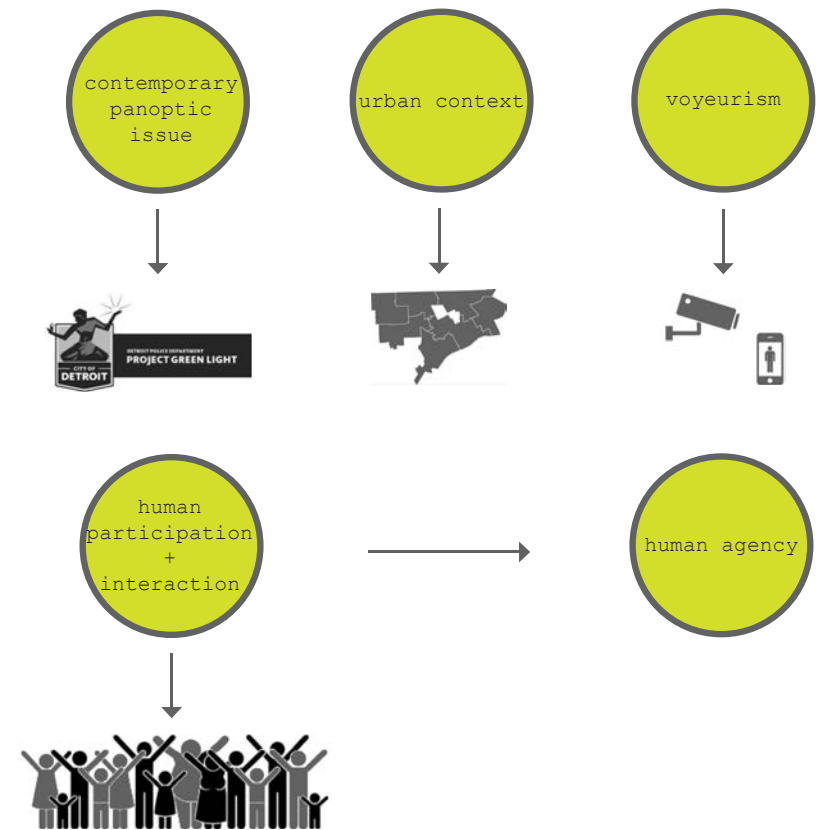


Figure 6.5: See Detroit components diagram

... as surveillance  
the existing

as voyeurism  
the new



Figure 6.6: See Detroit and PGL diagram



Figure 6.7: See Detroit emphasizes the above objectives:

Although facial recognition technology is highly undesirable by subjects of surveillance, it is not going anywhere; in fact, it is just the opposite. Therefore, opportunities are arising to use this growing technology. See Detroit uses real-time facial recognition software already equipped in PGL infrastructure to locate friends and family or determine if an event is right for you. It can also be used as a tool to determine wait times at local restaurants or events, determine parking availability throughout the city at parking meters, parking lots, or in parking structures, and determine gas prices and local traffic. See Detroit provides people with the ability to promote their event, whether that be a yard sale, lemonade stand, or neighbourhood block party. PGL cameras are located among diverse business typologies, many of which are underutilized traditional spaces including gas stations, residential facilities, worship facilities, retail and transit services. See Detroit provides underutilized spaces with the opportunity to become something more than their intended use. [Figure 6.7]



Figure 6.8: Opportunity for gas stations

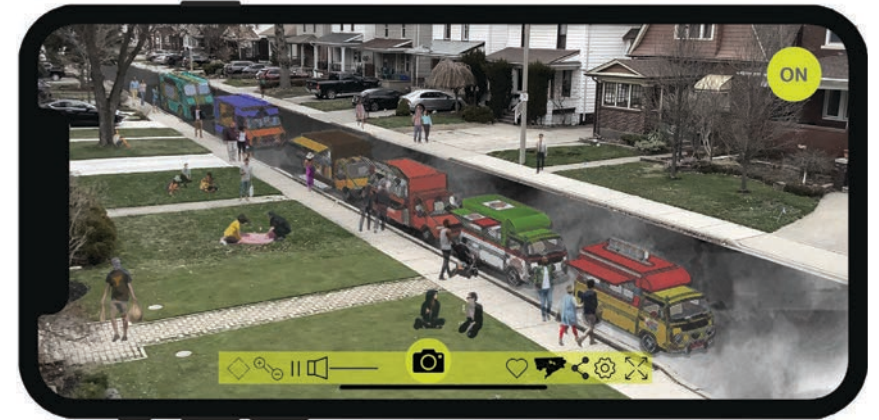


Figure 6.10: Opportunity for residential neighbourhoods



Figure 6.9: PGL business typology graph, gas stations

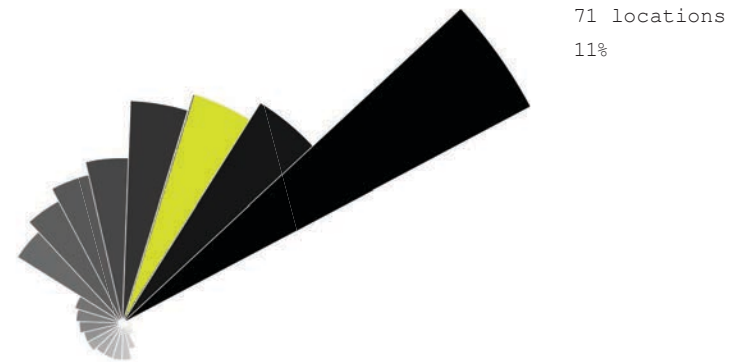


Figure 6.11: PGL business typology graph, residential



Figure 6.12: Opportunity for places of worship

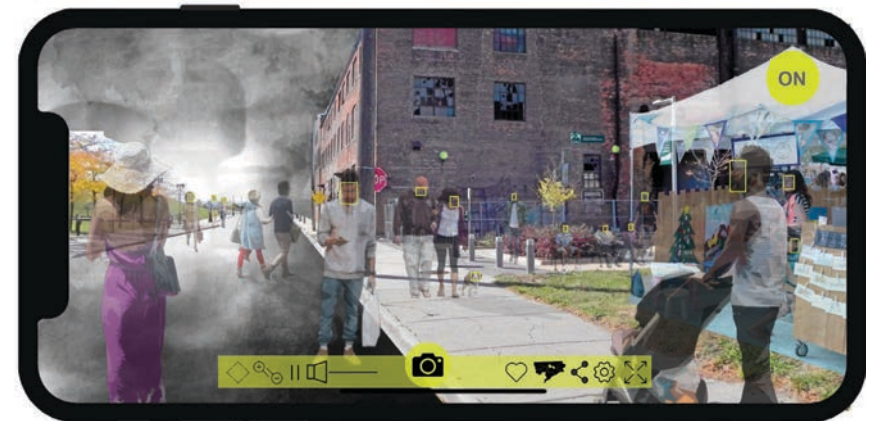


Figure 6.14: Opportunity for vacant property

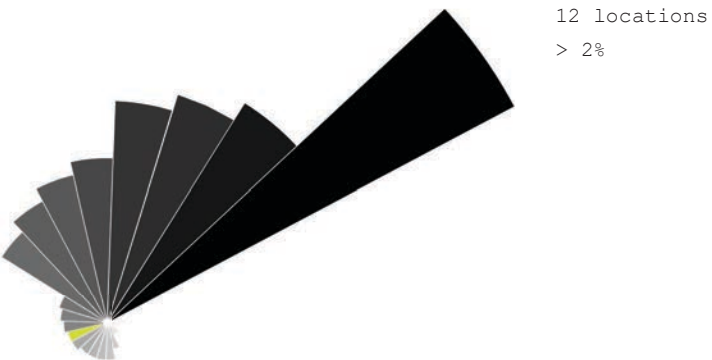


Figure 6.13: PGL business typology graph, worship

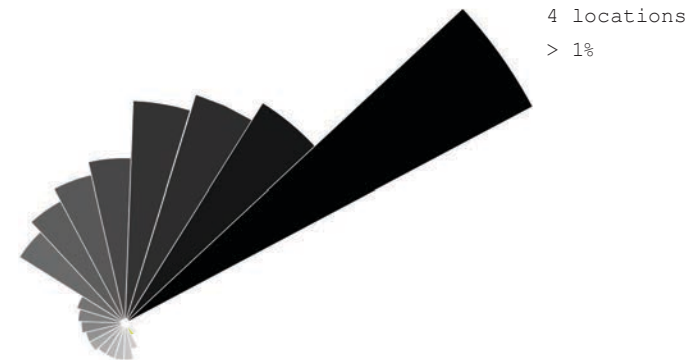
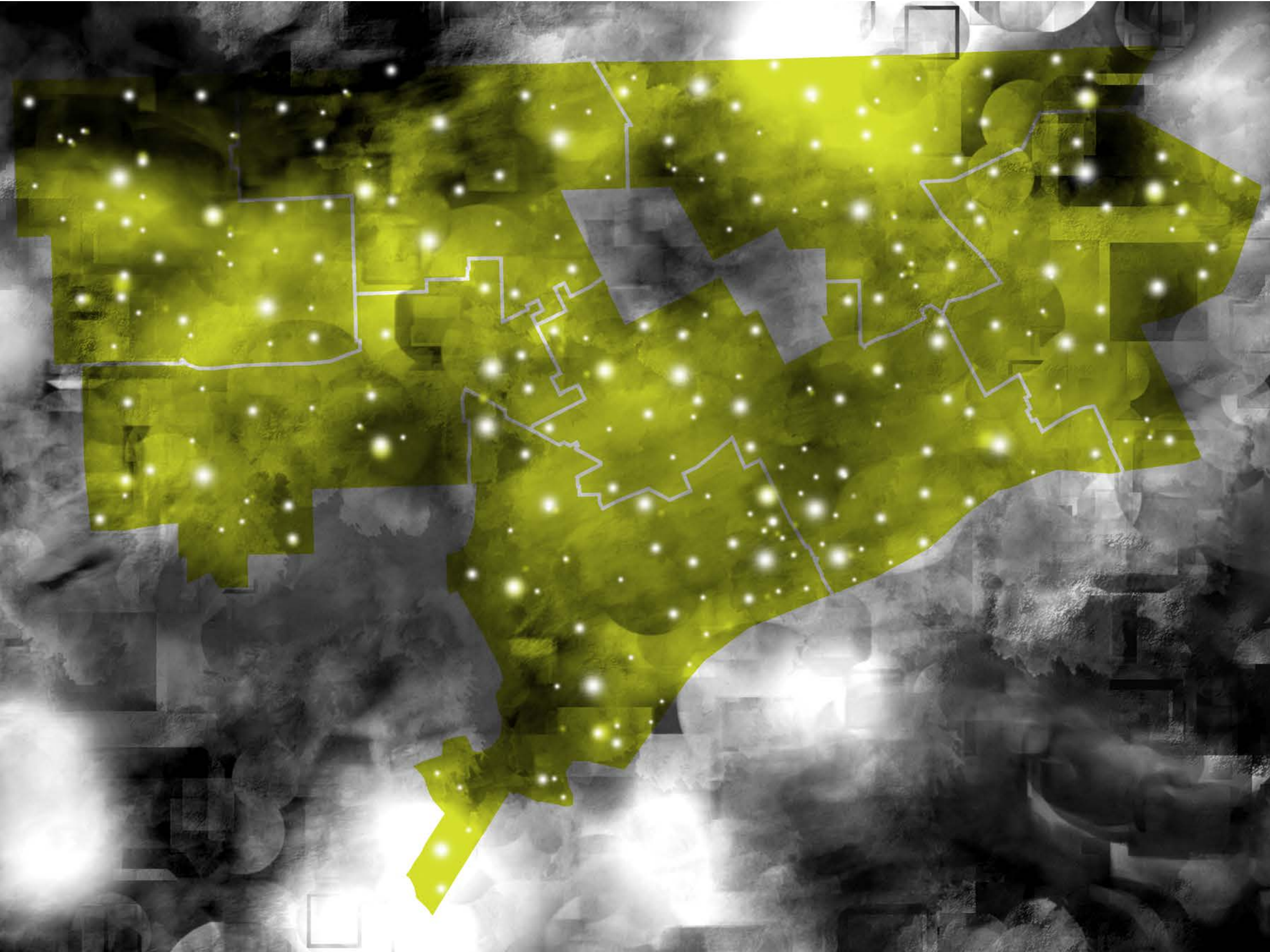


Figure 6.15: PGL business typology graph, vacancy



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007. CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

Seeing and being seen are not new concepts to humanity. What is new, is the method for observation and depth of detail that can be seen. We are now visible in ways unimaginable. Our society is rapidly turning into a technodystopic playground where humans are subjects violated by technology. Surveillance technology is becoming more intelligent as humans are understanding less and less about what is happening in the world around us.

In an effort for humanity to regain power through resistance, a speculative design proposal was created. Through voyeuristic fun and entertainment, people can subvert the surveillant paradigm to promote human agency.

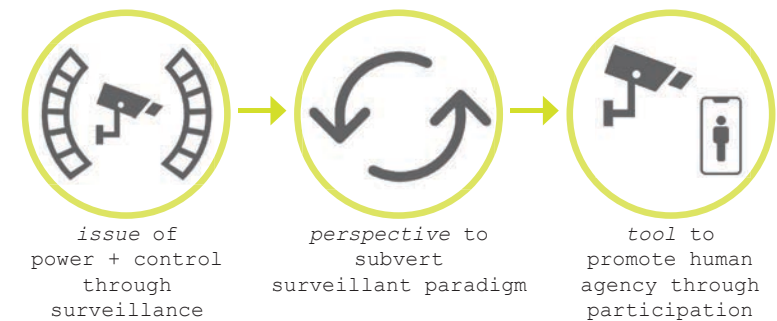
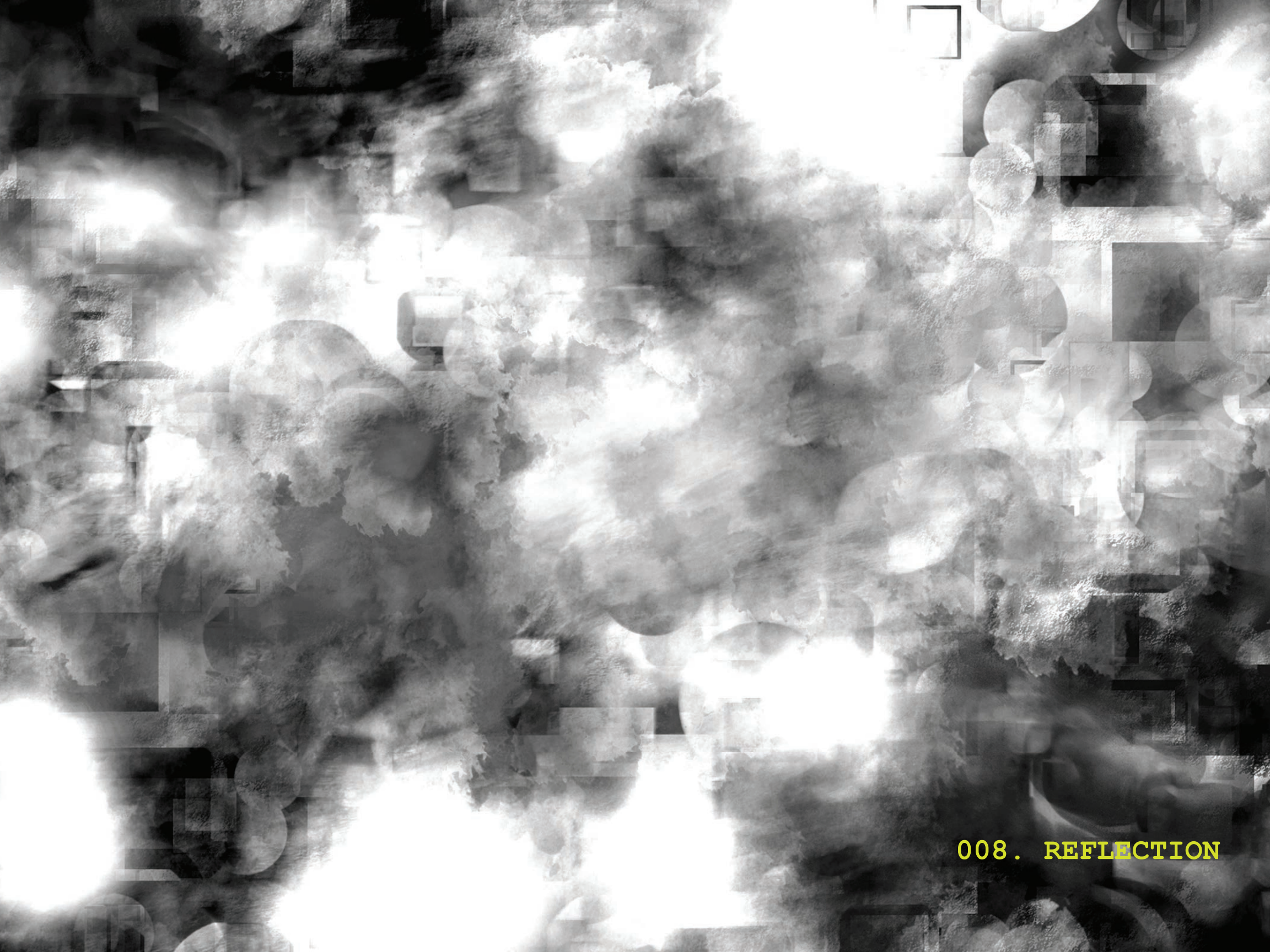


Figure 7.1: Issue, perspective, & tool conclusion diagram



008. REFLECTION

## REFLECTION

Surveillance + Voyeurism has encouraged me to challenge the possibilities of architecture, by diverting me on a path of exploring a variety of art and architectural work. This thesis allowed me to expand my knowledge about the architectural field, realizing there is architecture in everything. It does not only exist as walls and spaces; rather, architecture can be applied in several different ways.

This thesis has also allowed me to dive into uncharted territory by many, taking on a completely obscure and pervasive topic. Over the last year, I have read, watched, and come to understand the depths of surveillance and voyeurism, yet there is still much I do not know. Aspects of these practices continue to make me feel apprehensive; however, it is comforting to know that it is not all pessimistic.

Concluding my thesis from home for the past several weeks as COVID-19 takes over, I have come to realize how fascinating people are. I have learned explicit details about my neighbours' lives gathered purely through observation. I have come to truly understand voyeurism by becoming a voyeur myself. The unnerving part is that my victims do not even know what I know.



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011. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
DPD	Detroit Police Department
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
NSA	National Security Agency
PGL	Project Green Light Detroit
RTCC	Real Time Crime Centre



