

ARTISTS SPACE

PRESS RELEASE

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The New Normal

A traveling exhibition of contemporary artworks that reflect the state of privacy in the world today
<http://the-new-normal.net/>

Premiering at Artists Space April 26-June 21, 2008
Opening Reception April 25th, 6-8pm

Artists:

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



Kota Ezawa, *Home Video II*, 2007 (video still)

The New Normal is a traveling exhibition organized by iCI (Independent Curators International), New York, and Artists Space, New York, and circulated by iCI. The guest curator for the exhibition is Michael Connor. Touring April 2008 through June 2010.

The New Normal brings together 13 artists who use private information as raw material and subject matter. Each of the works in the exhibition offers access to the private sphere of the artists themselves, of strangers, and of public officials. The works take diverse forms—video, websites, novellas, found objects, and photographs—to question the forced and voluntary confessions that make the private sphere visible to the public eye.

The concept of privacy is widely invoked, but difficult to define. The private sphere, encompassing domestic spaces, bodies, thoughts, and behaviors, is rendered inaccessible to the public eye by legal, social and physical boundaries. The boundaries that separate public from private—like wearing clothing—are so much a part of the fabric of everyday life that they only become visible when they shift. Privacy, to put it bluntly, captures our attention only when it is under threat.

Today, privacy faces a wide range of threats. In the wake of 9/11, the specter of terrorism was used to justify an expansion of law enforcement powers in the US and around the world. This time of heightened surveillance, characterized by luggage searches and wiretaps, was dubbed 'the new normalcy' by United States Vice President Dick Cheney.

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Alongside these political changes, changing technologies and social attitudes have had a no less profound impact on the private sphere. The most shocking images of criminal behavior this decade were captured not on official surveillance cameras, but on the camera phone of a soldier stationed in Abu Ghraib. Likewise, much of the personal information that is collected online is offered voluntarily. Users of websites like Amazon.com sacrifice personal information for the sake of convenience, while users of websites like MySpace offer tidbits about themselves as a way of expressing their identity. The artists in *The New Normal* make visible the conditions behind this new social reality. In a changing political and technological environment, the private sphere has never been less private. But the news is not all bad.

The New Normal creates a sense that access to private information is a kind of currency. The exchange of this currency is growing and evolving in bewildering ways. We all have a stake in this exchange: we may find it frightening or fascinating, but we are inescapably complicit.

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue co-published by Artists Space and iCI, and distributed by D.A.P. It includes essays by curator Michael Connor, Clay Shirky and Marisa Olson.

Website

A comprehensive web component is currently in development to accompany the tour and will launch with the premiere of the exhibition at Artists Space. *The New Normal* site will enable viewers to access images from the exhibition, browse links to artists' and other related sites, watch videos pertaining to the show, read curator Michael Connor's blog, and even add the show to a social network via MySpace or Facebook. Please check www.artistsspace.org and <http://the-new-normal.net/>

About Artists Space

One of the first alternative spaces in New York, Artists Space was founded in 1972 to support contemporary artists working in the visual arts, new media, performance, architecture and design. The mission of Artists Space is to support artistic experimentation and dialog in contemporary culture.

About iCI

Founded in 1975, iCI is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the understanding and appreciation of contemporary art through traveling exhibitions and other activities that reach a diverse national and international audience. Collaborating with a wide range of eminent curators, iCI develops innovative traveling exhibitions, accompanied by catalogues and other educational materials, to introduce and document challenging new work in all mediums by younger as well as more established artists from the United States and abroad.

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