

CURRENTS

JENNIFER MARMAN

& DANIEL BORINS

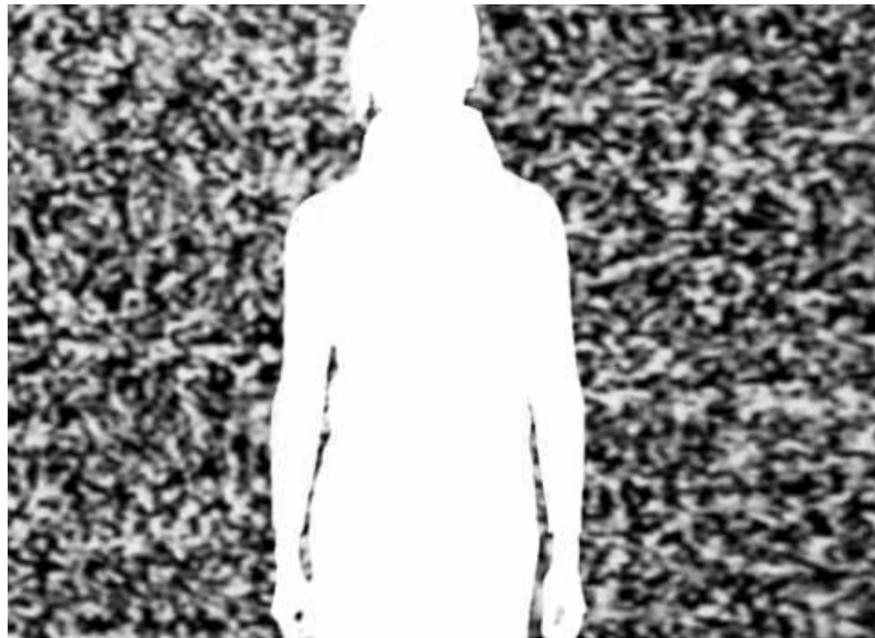
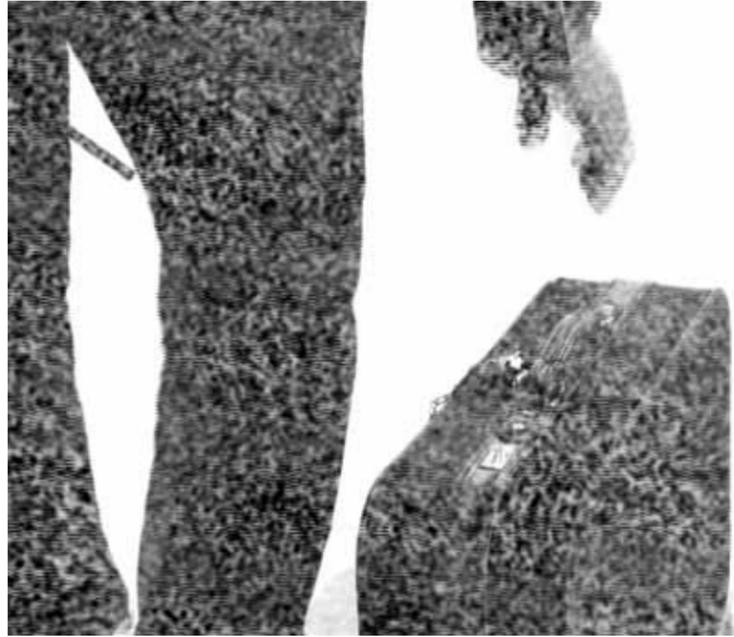
2011

**TOTAL DISINFORMATION
AWARENESS**

UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS

FORMULATION

ARTICULATION PIXELATION



FROM THE CURATORS

by Scott McGovern

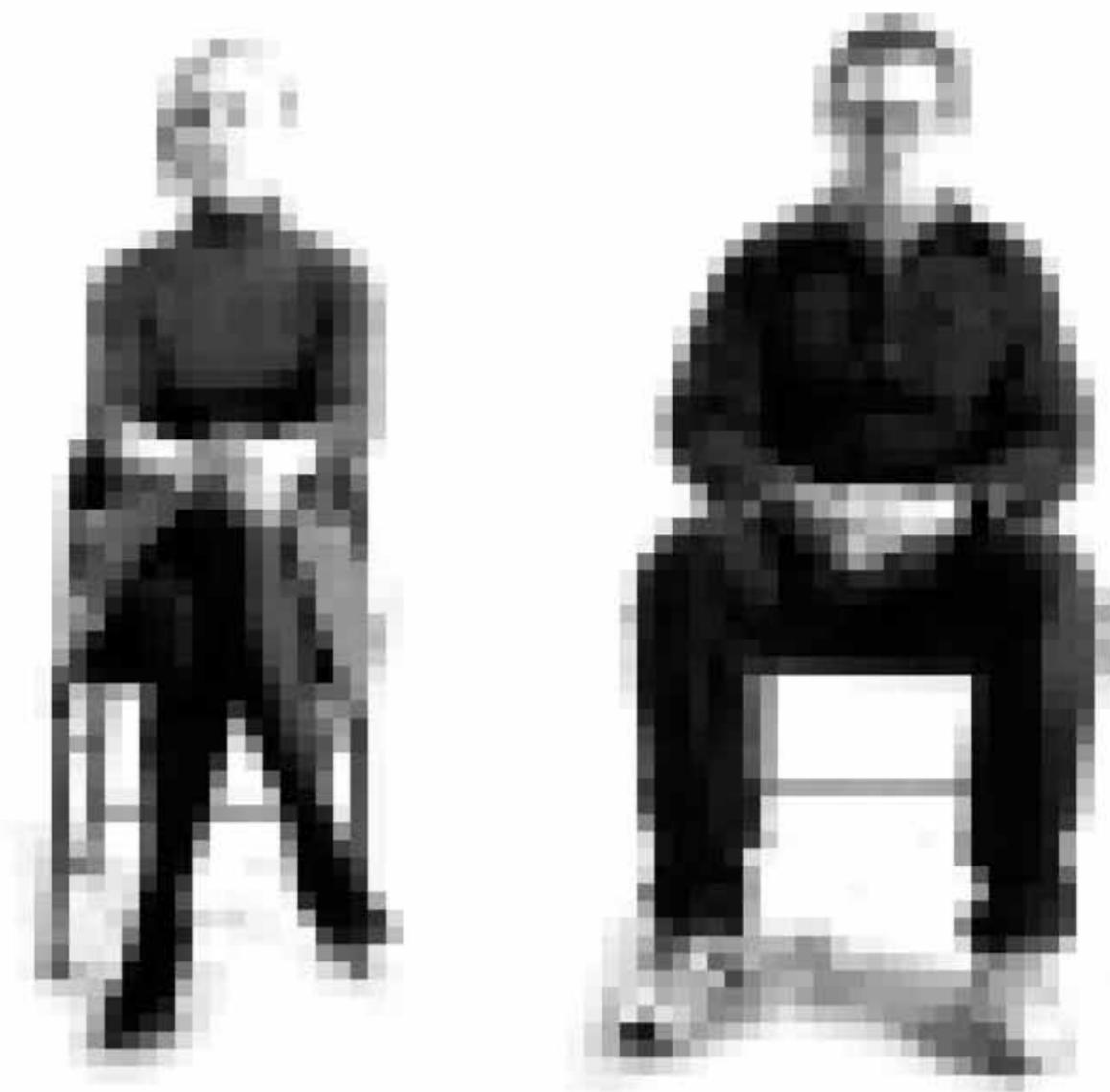
Imagine what abstract information looks like. As an abstract concept, it is difficult to visualize information in its unknown form without resorting to exemplification. *Unknown Unknowns* suggests a physical form in which to deposit abstract ideas, in order to find a visual cohesion with them.

An oversized sculpture of a specious security camera is focused on the entrance of a room, built inside the gallery from wood studs, drywall and a drop ceiling. The viewer enters through aluminum-framed, glass doors into a banal, carpeted room. A wall made of steel mesh typically used to secure money, prisoners or animals, now protects four black computer servers. The function of the servers is ambiguous, for they are not real - they are abstract black sculptures. Ambiguous too is the jurisdiction of an imaginary and anonymous superintendent - the holder of passwords and encryption keys. The motivation of this imaginary authority remains enigmatic, yet this is where the creation of meaning occurs in the exhibition, abstractly reinforced by the video camera that watches the viewer leave the room.

Two videos commissioned for this exhibition further develop the ideas suggested by the server room: the visualization of data storage and the paranoid effects of systems of power and control. One video depicts gestures of clandestine information exchange with figures and objects obscured by television static and snow. The other video features an interview with a computer expert, his face and identity have been obscured as digital blocks of colours. He talks about hacking, encryption, and the best practices for information control.

Ed Video is pleased to present Marman and Borins in this technically and conceptually ambitious exhibition during such an apposite political juncture. Information control has recently become overwhelmingly complex and consequential, and few artists can find a voice to comment on the subject with such comprehension and eloquence. Creating an atmosphere of power, illusion, and suspicion, *Unknown Unknowns* gives shape to a pervasive concept that normally defies physical representation, urging viewers to contemplate how systems of information collection, control, and security may effect them personally, and in what ways they are typical and atypical.

At the Elora Centre for the Arts, the other part of *Unknown Unknowns* reveals tangible examples of data control, redaction and disclosure as art exhibition. Dominating the centre of the gallery is an industrial and architecturally charged compendium of abstract gestures. The gallery's brightly lit centre, contrasted by its shadowy perimeter, suggest a clandestine gathering of forms. Here the visual expression, through reference to art making strategies is more overt than at Guelph. The hard-edge, cool, austere surfaces in Elora prop up painterly and expressive canvases alongside shredded and blob-like shapes, all together suggesting a vocabulary of negation, covering up, or censorship. Paradoxically as an act of disclosure, the non-representational aspects of abstraction are co-opted and repurposed as a visual representation of the strategies for withholding information. The two exhibitions exist together simultaneously and seek to find visual form for our complex and evolving understanding of information control. At Ed Video, this form is accomplished overtly and confrontationally, but in Elora is expressed darkly yet revealingly.



FOREWORD

by Earl Miller

One is unlikely to mention Julian Assange and Kasimir Malevich in the same sentence. Likewise, it is bizarre they both are referenced in a gallery exhibition. Yet such kinds of unexpected associations regularly arise in Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins' recent art. This seemingly absurd link between post-9-11 disinformation debunking and Malevich parodically mimics the logical jumps that fuel conspiracy theories, many of which 9-11 has, of course, spawned. Accordingly, Marman and Borins fill the void of Malevich's Black Square - and that of much of the other twentieth-century Modernism that they sample retroactively - with the cryptic content of black boxes, surveillance videos and redacted documents.

Certainly, millions have found it a viable possibility that the Bush administration perpetrated 9-11 by associating that government's quest for votes and oil with a need to justify war in the Middle East. When WikiLeaks reveals a lengthy trail of incriminating censored documents, however, the gap between paranoid jumping to conclusions and reasonable suspicion closes considerably. It becomes harder to discern between what is virtually possible and what is real. As Gilles Deleuze says, "The virtual is fully real insofar as it is virtual."¹

If the virtual is indeed indistinguishable from reality, or what is true, then Marman and Borins' political content puts under scrutiny the notion of truth, or Greenbergian essence, that is integral to the Modernist art the artists reference. However, their analysis differs from the Postmodern fin de siècle critique of formalism's failure to arrive at truth in that such a critique must acknowledge truth's significance for its assertion that the inability to achieve it has led to artistic end games. Art, therefore, should be about truth - the real. Marman and Borins avoid this prescriptive.

Instead, their art raises the question of whether it matters if truth in art exists. An extrapolation of their title for a recent exhibition series is that truth is an "unknown unknown" - a phrase coined by Donald Rumsfeld to describe the absence of information indicating that weapons of mass destruction might exist in Iraq. Consequently, Marman and Borins imply that art, just like the digital information and imagery that defines this age, which they depict respectively by 'Google Eyes' and Op Art digital graphics, could be a lie. This state of uncertainty over the real in art is analogous to the uncertainty currently beleaguering the real in the socio-political sphere.

The placement of today's political milieu in a formal Modernist frame succeeds resoundingly because the artists retain Modernism's visual strength while reminding viewers that Modernist utopias have, of course, failed to prevent the duplicity of corporations, of governments, and of terrorists. They remind us that in this Google-centred virtual world, information is ubiquitous but truth is elusive. While information-based technology does allow sites such as WikiLeaks to increase transparency, this openness simultaneously renders once-hidden disinformation glaringly visible. Technologies of revelation begat concealment, leading to uncertainty as to what is virtual and what is real. This tension between knowing and not knowing, which connects Marman and Borins' recent exhibitions chronicled in *Currents*, is precisely why this writer believes no other Canadian artists of this generation have better captured the information age zeitgeist.

¹François Dosse, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari: *Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York, Columbia University Press, 2010) 151.

TOTAL DISINFORMATION AWARENESS

by Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins

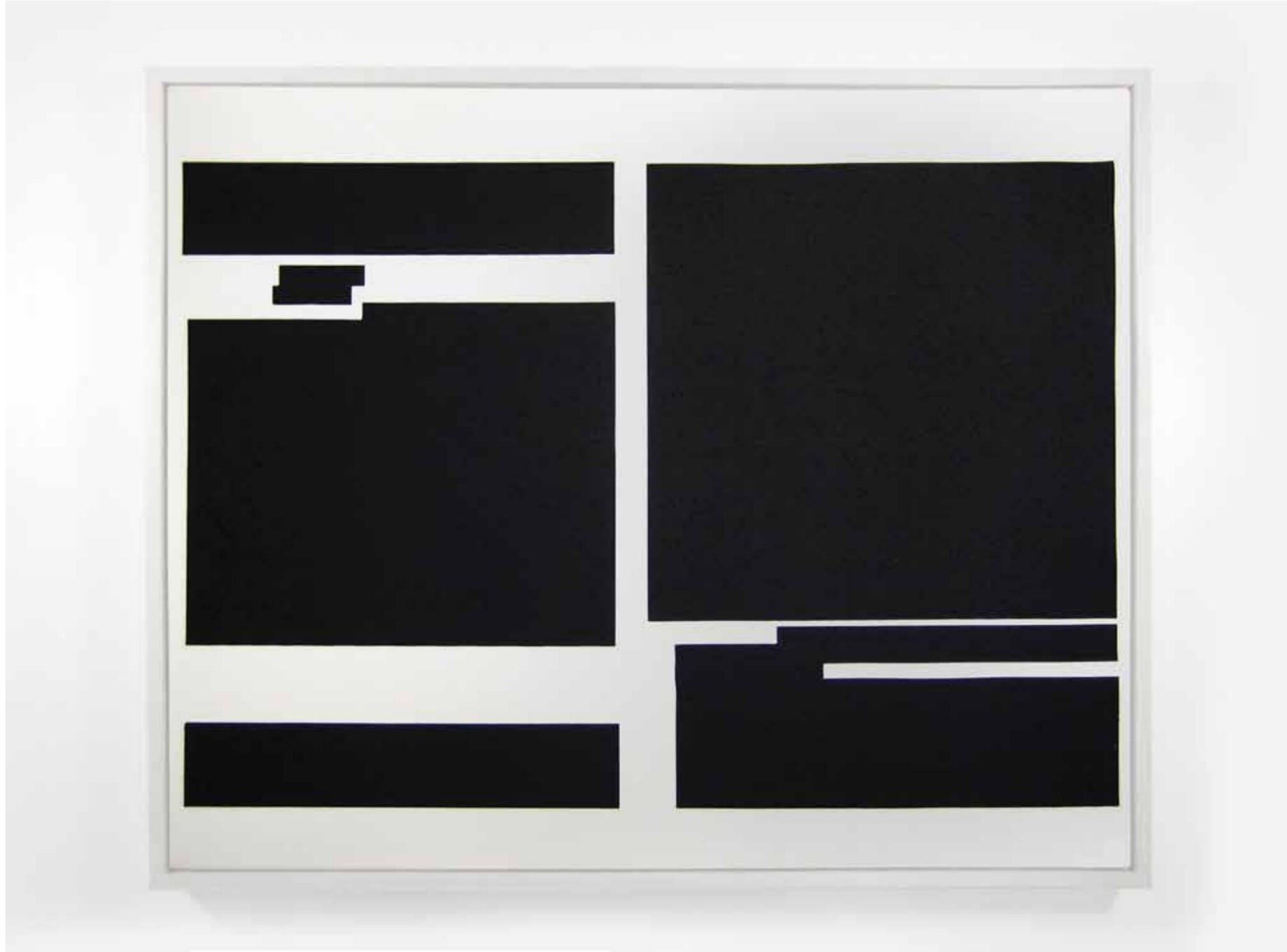
Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins are currently working on a series of exhibitions entitled *Total Disinformation Awareness*. Their thoughts and art projects on this theme are a work in progress. Their exhibitions at Ed Video and the Elora Centre for the Arts fall under the umbrella of *Total Disinformation Awareness* and are entitled *Unknown Unknowns*.

In examples of their work relating to these recent shows, Marman and Borins critique superstructures of imperial hegemony by reflecting on just what the visual artistic form of unknown unknowns is. In 2002 Donald Rumsfeld referred to what we “don’t know we don’t know” as “unknown unknowns”. This possibility of unknowns formed the basis for Rumsfeld’s response to the lack of evidence for linking Iraq to the production of weapons of mass destruction. He justified invading Iraq based only on the possibility that an unknown was a threat. In war game theory, commanders must consider that unawareness of what they do not know ultimately plays the greatest role in deciding how a war game will play out. Artistically, the concept of imagining such a state of knowledge or non-knowledge is an area of visual interest to Marman and Borins and a pathway to a critique of these aforementioned superstructures. Notably, a paradox arises, as in the case of Rumsfeld’s unknown unknowns, where there were, in fact, many known knowns claimed as reasons for invading Iraq. Marman and Borins present artworks that express the residue, the condition of amnesia, and the cultural climate of what unknown unknowns might look like in a formal and aesthetic context.

But why accumulate known knowns? Let us instead first become informed about Total Disinformation Awareness.



George H. W. Bush, George W. Bush, Bin Laden, Khalid bin Mahfouz, Bilderberg, Bill White, Pearl Harbor, Mujahadeen, North American Aerospace Defense Command, Arbusto Energy, The Carlyle Group, Alfred Dreyfus, Joe Valachi, MK-ULTRA, Operation Mockingbird, Manhattan Project, Watergate, The Tuskegee Syphilis Study, Operation Northwoods, Fidel Castro, Nayirah al-Sabah, COINTELPRO, Main Core, NSA, FBI, CIA, FEMA, NSD, NSDD, Enduring National Leadership, Rex 84, CONUS, Garden Plot, Lantern Spike, Oliver North, The Iran-Contra Affair, John Poindexter, Manuel Noriega, Michael Palmer, Floyd Carlton, The Bank of Credit and Commerce International, Michael Ruppert, Gary Webb, Gulf of Tonkin, Lyndon B. Johnson, Vo Nguyen Giap, S. Eugene Potat, Chase Bank, GM, Goodyear, Standard Oil, The DuPont Family, Senator Prescott Bush, FDR, Smedley Butler, McCormack-Dickstein Committee, Herbert Hoover, Operation Ajax, The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, Mohammed Mossadegh, Shah of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, U.S. Embassy Workers, Kermit Roosevelt, Operation Snow White, Church of Scientology, L. Ron Hubbard, Hamming von Tresckow, Claus von Stauffenberg, Operation Gladio, Black Operations, Xe, Raven Development Group, Greystone Limited, Church Committee, Salvador Allende, Mossadegh, The Federal Reserve System, Council on Foreign Relations, Pat Robertson, Henry Kissinger, HSCA, JFK, George de Mohrenschildt, Dangle, Double Agent, Defector, David Perrie, Operation Mongoose, E. Howard Hunt, Chicago Black Sox, Karen Silkwood, Little Rock, Mens Operation, Barry Sea, DEA, Bohemian Grove, Operation Paperclip, Werner von Braun, Arthur Rudolph, Hubertus Strughold, Cecil Rhodes, The Round Table Movement, The Trilateral Commission, Deep State, The Report from Iron Mountain, John Kenneth Galbraith, Project Blue Beam, Knickerbocker Trust, ECHELON, The Bojinka Plot, Khalid Shaykh Mohammed, The Hamburg Cell, The USS Cole, Noam Chomsky, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, Fred Hampton, Black Bag Jobs, Rubber-hose Cryptanalysis, Social Engineering, Pretexting, Diversion Theft, Phishing, Baiting, The Badir Brothers, Agent Provocateur, Weather Underground, Haymarket Affair, Dr. David Kelly, Stalinist Show Trials, Senator McCarthy, Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy, Henry Kissinger, Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, G20, Black Block, The Clinton Body Count, Willy Ley, HAARP, ADD, AMHD, HSV, HPV, Fluoridation, Peak Oil, AIDS, Lyndon LaRouche, Swine Flu, John Wilkes Booth, Aspartame, Hugo Chavez, CDC, Cambodia, The Philippines, El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Department of Homeland Security, National Continuity Government, The USA Patriot Act, Operation CHAOS, Domestic Operations Division, Project RESISTANCE, Management Advisory Group, The Pentagon Papers, Jasper Maskelyne, Monsanto, The Club of Rome, Project SHAD, Gleiwitz, Reichstag, MATRIX, Infracard, Unit 731, Opium, Cocaine, Chatter, Donald Rumsfeld, Dick Cheney, Abu Ghraib, Mandel al-Jamadi, Military-Industrial Complex, Gough Whitlam, Alexander Litvinenko, Torrijos-Carter Treaties, Die Glocke, Operation Pantomime, Chiemsee Cauldron, ELP, PROMIS, Colin Wallace, The Zagreb Operation, The Bojinka Plot, Enron, LBJ, Taos Hum, Hubert von Elcher, Operation Octopus, Ronald Reagan, Operations and Policy Research, Copely News Service, Christie Institute, October Surprise, Industrial Biotest Laboratories,

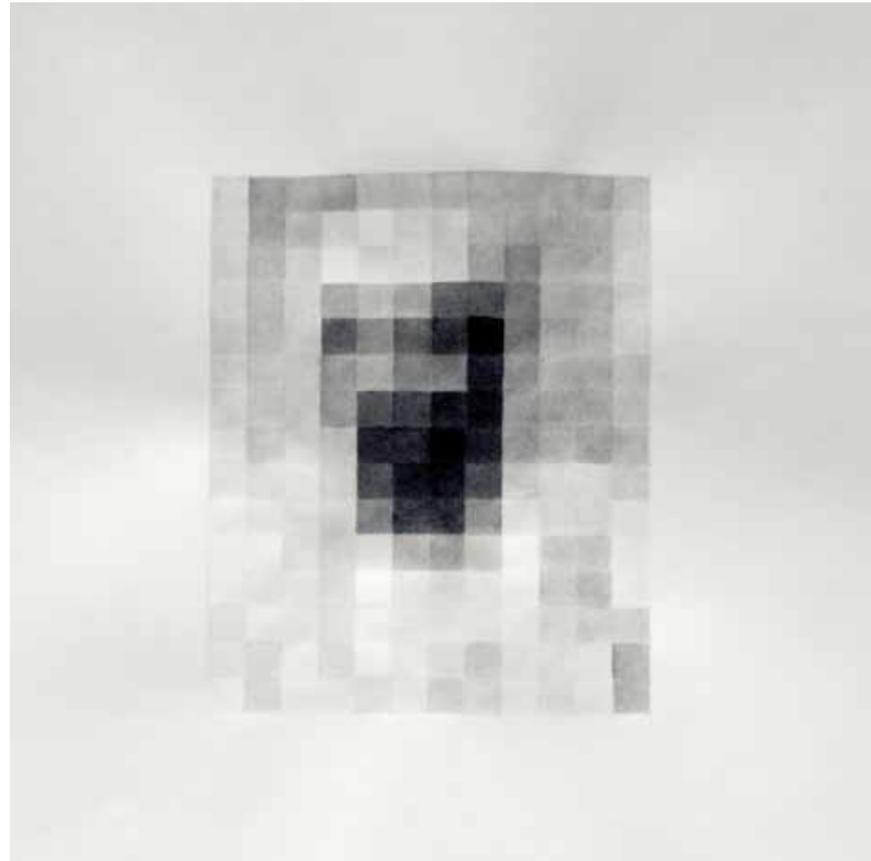


Total Disinformation Awareness represents an opportunity for Marman and Borins to experiment further with ideas about authenticity as a strategy for the critique of institutional power while shedding light on the tenuous nature of the historical political avant-garde movement in art and its role as a critical vehicle.

The notion that democratic governments are involved in nefarious activities and that they lie to their citizens is not a new concept. That they can lie, that it can be found out that they are lying, and that nothing is done about it are new concepts. Total disinformation functions metaphorically for art-making as a depiction of mass culture and its insouciant attitude toward erased evidence and tapes; sexed up and redacted documents; as well as coalitions of the willing and coalitions that act inconsistently. By holding up a mirror to society, Marman and Borins have found they can manipulate abstraction; and that its formal tonality can be portrayed as a system of the visual organization of ideas that can reflect the aesthetics of powerful imperial governments and the secrets they keep from their citizens. Marman and Borins use a mirror to express this scenario because it is a much more accurate description of our times than engaging in critique. The problem with Rumsfeld's stance is that he was lying; it has been proven many times since the speech in which he coined "unknown unknowns". The mirror the artists hold up is one that reflects on a society the very norms of complacency and non-activism that hegemonies want civil society to accept as its own culture.

It was only a matter of time before a new form of fight arose against the misleading of the global public by imperial free market democracies. WikiLeaks is the asymmetrical response to forms of hegemony that seek to control access to information, therefore, enforcing the concept that unknown unknowns can exist. Imagined as a crusader practicing a utopian form of cyber justice, the WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, was placed into a disinformation mirror where instead of being a hero, his likeness was reflected as that of a sex criminal. More mirrors are held up: the International Monetary Fund is overrun by sex criminals, and Osama Bin Laden was reported to possess a large stash of pornography in his "cave". The new form of

fight, that of attempting to present primary source information - the thoughts and information of governments as released by whistle-blowers - can now easily be discredited by a distortion filter that turns everything into pornography, where the individual is reduced to a rutting animal. Simultaneously, the mass media peddles stories that discourage individuals from adopting reality filters of alternative

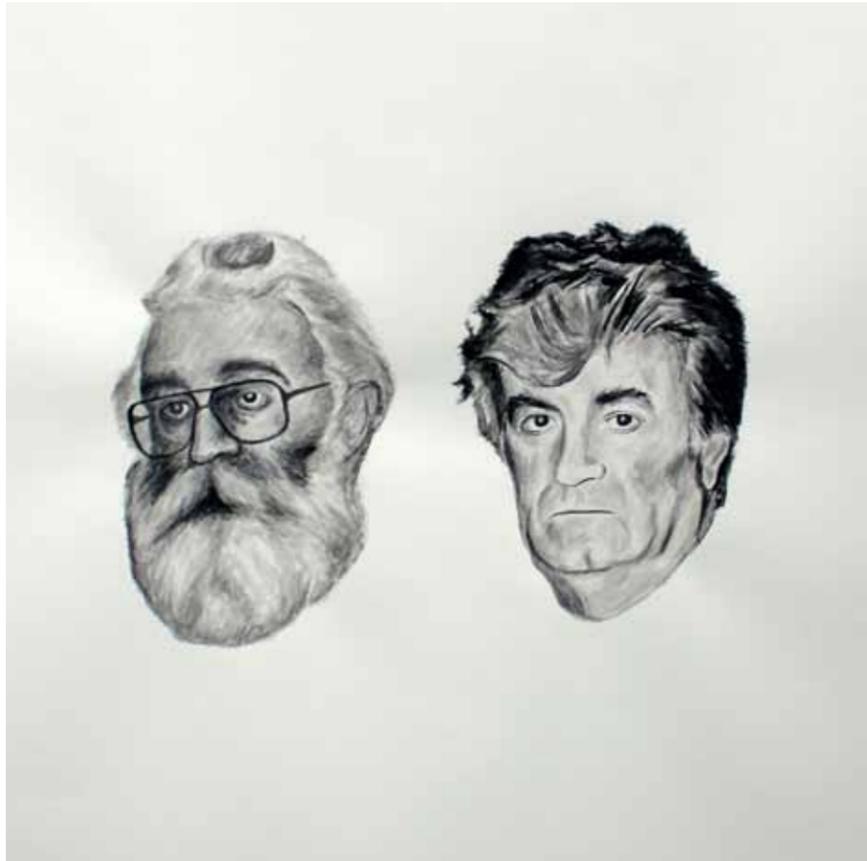


news sources by deriding these sources as conspiracy sites. The questioning of whether Osama is dead, whether Elvis is dead, whether Obama is American - how do these streams of distortion flow into rivers of information and into pools of disinformation?



Total Disinformation Awareness refers to the concept of Total Information Awareness, the surveillance and information technology network used to prevent terror threats by creating enormous computer databases to gather and store the personal information of everyone, including personal e-mails, social network analysis, credit card records, phone calls, medical records and data from numerous other sources - all without a search warrant. Disinformation, however, is intended to mislead; it can be understood as a form of misinformation that has been packaged to appear factual. For Marman and Borins, the concept of what is officially real, or of how facts (or lack thereof) can be used for the purposes of bolstering the power of one individual or group over another individual or group, has been the focus of their disinformation exhibitions.

The artists do not engage this theme by presenting a series of binarisms of the powerful versus the oppressed, but rather by tracing and compiling an inventory of ideas and residues, resulting in an exhibition with an outcome of evidence and effect rather than of critical judgment. Certainly, activist art is a strategy used by artists of various movements as far back as Honoré Daumier in the mid-nineteenth century. However, unlike most activist artists, Marman and Borins are not specifically interested in an input-output, or problem and solution, form of art-making. Rather, they are pursuing the aesthetics and form of subterfuge, shadow governments, and



political corporatist cartels. In fact, the artists are more interested in a black box way of thinking where aesthetics and form are processed through contemporary socio-economic and political filters to arrive at art as an output or byproduct. Strangely though, a sort of blow-back occurs when venturing into conceptual voids such as that of the unknown unknown: a new type of abstraction-through-negation, where the referent of reality and representation - what abstraction is supposed to be the opposite of - has been negated. Marman and Borins ruminate on this paradox. Ultimately, they do not think that the answer to the issue of negation is to make nothing; indeed, negation has changed since the modernist void of Malevich's *Black Square*.

Marman and Borins stage multiple installations and interventions in their recent *Total Disinformation Awareness* exhibitions to investigate the negation of truth, history and authenticity not only as a strategy for art-making, but also as a way of shedding light on the aesthetics that can exist within such a scenario. Marman and Borins' work extends the boundaries of the mirror plane. When the artists originally held up this mirror, they thought that the Internet search engine Google was somehow having an effect on the ever-diminishing market for physical books and that a correlation could be found between its role in pushing books to obsolescence and the fascist zeal for book burning. However, the mirror of the present

day distorted things even more, and it instead reflected a wave of book burning mania that has recently swept the United States. This time it is Qu'rans that are being burned. Book burning through history is the wilful history of the destruction of history. No wonder unknown unknowns arise in a déjà vu of persistent tedium where a concept such as a burnt book no longer reflects the history of book burning, but simply reflects the latest book burning in the mass media stream.

This style of thought by association, corollary and extrapolation is what informs the artworks in *Total Disinformation Awareness*. The aesthetic of this series of exhibitions bases itself on a kind of bizarre fissure in reality, through which the real is lost to a mirror world that can instantly conjure up an example of anything through instantaneous search engines.

These exhibitions obscure: they hide things in caves; shred things to pieces; cover up things and then erase them; build facades - that hide things behind them; lower the visual resolution of other things - so that the original is distanced from the copy; sometimes depict things even if they are misleading, which sometimes are relevant and other times not; and finally, burn things. But what was the question being answered? Well... that is the answer to the question: If everything is already being recorded, and everything is known, it might be better to mislead. And would such a misapprehension not take the form of an unknown unknown?







Google

Google implicates viewers and passersby, whether they agree to participate or not. Reflecting the way that the search engine company of the same name watches users and records their behaviours for unclear purposes, these giant, childlike, “googley” eyes use hidden surveillance technology to watch people - its mechanical eyes moving and following - as they walk in front of them.

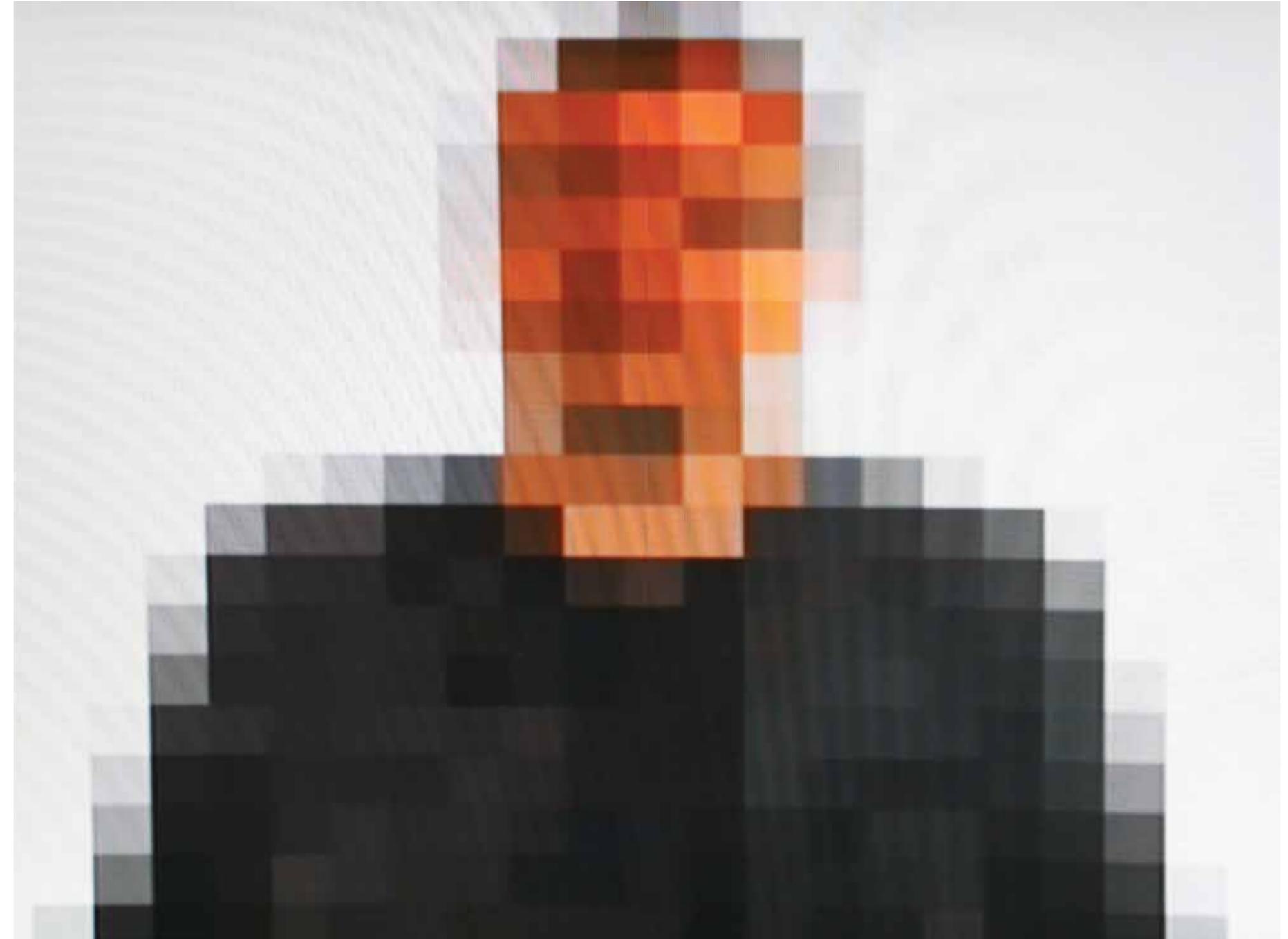
The implementation of this kind of constant surveillance in both the physical and the virtual worlds of the Internet is on the rise. Security cameras are so pervasive in many cosmopolitan cities that they watch practically every public and commercial space. Comedic in

its play on words and cute physical appearance, *Google* suggests passersby consider the ambiguous reasons for the omnipresent surveillance and data collection they are subjected to every day. Metaphorically, the artists establish a scenario where their project echoes how its namesake Google, the search engine, presents its corporate identity: a friendly logo and virtual brand that could use its powers toward nefarious purposes.

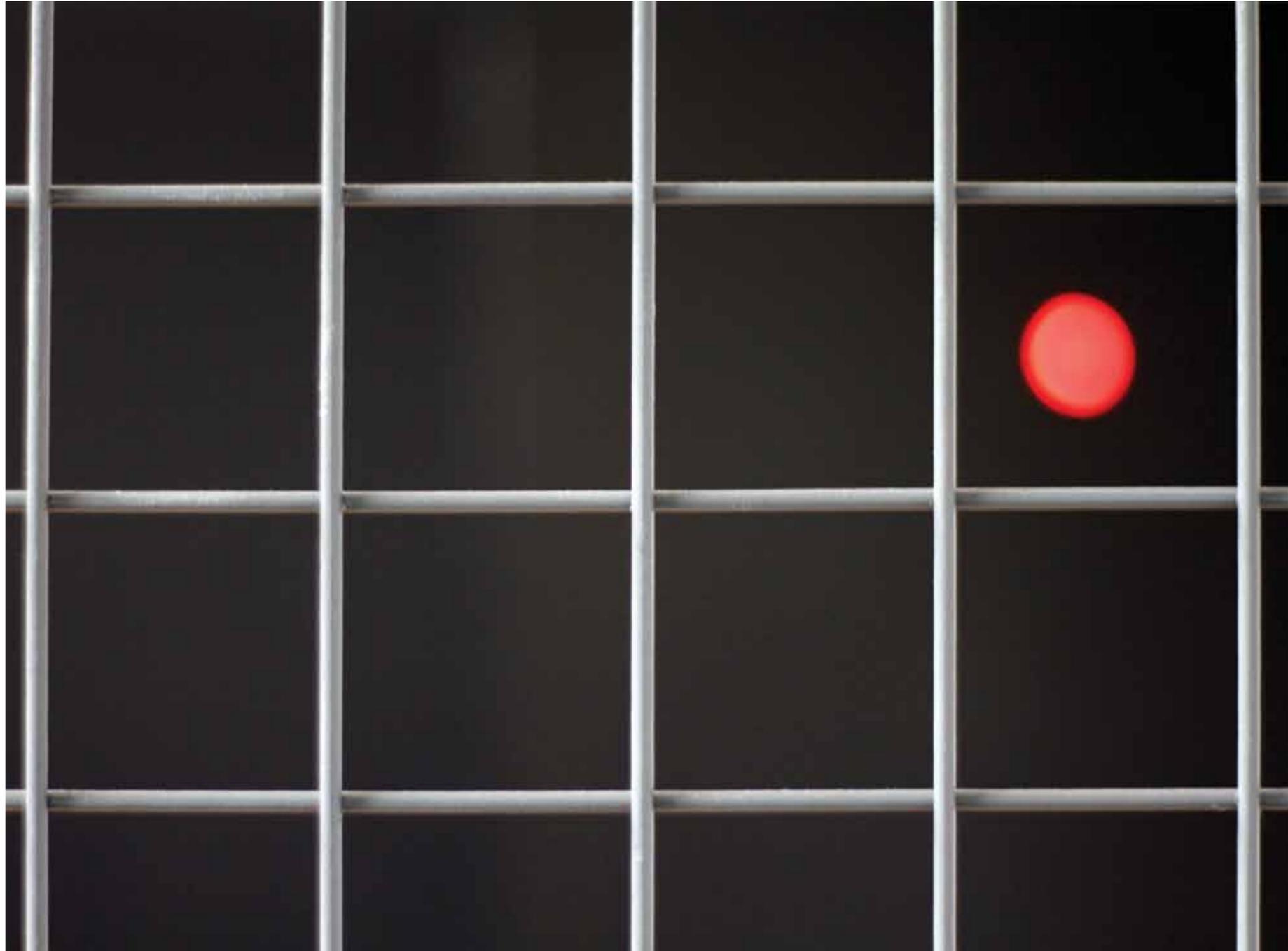
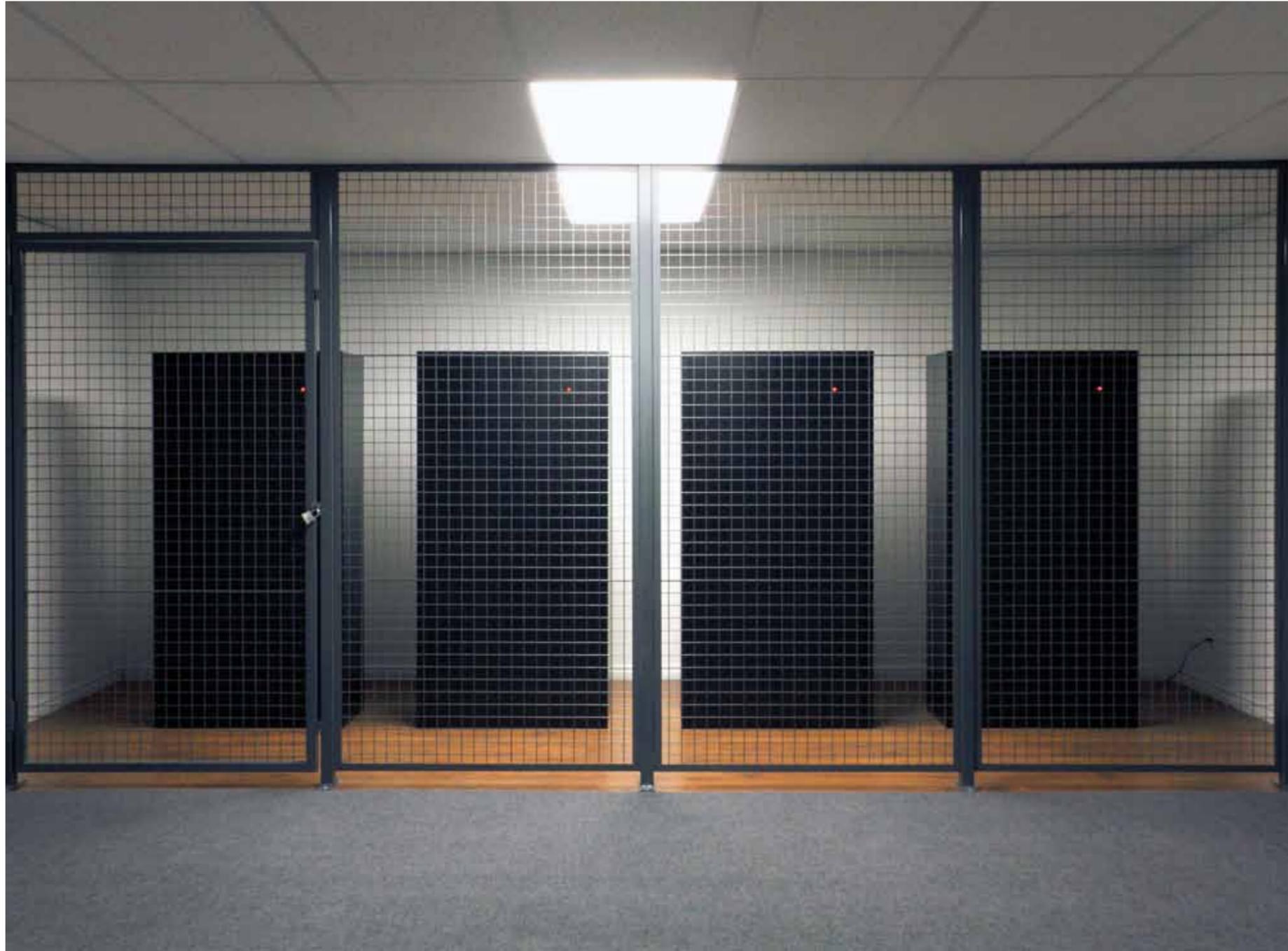
The question is asked: is Google a benevolent corporate entity that allows us to find information with ease, or is it a total information system that watches our every move?



UNKNOWN UNKNOWNNS







BLACK BOXES

by Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins

Formally, the sculpture, *Black Boxes*, comprises a series of interconnected monochrome cuboid shapes installed on an integrated white base. The boxes are lacquer painted to a satin sheen, which delicately diffuses and reflects the light. Each box has a flashing red light emitting diode (LED). Connecting the boxes is a continuous coiled wire entering each box and exiting. The topography of the sculpture consists of boxes of different heights and volumes.

Black Boxes rests somewhere between the extreme reductions of form in minimalist art of the 60s and the post-minimalist impetus to utilize minimalism for conceptual and critical purposes. Simultaneously, the sculpture refers to the tendency of mass consumer electronics manufacturers to reduce their designs to black bricks, blocks, and panels, consequently, showing the influence of minimalism on product design. On a formal level, the electronic nature of *Black Boxes* is a pared down, distilled, essentially minimalist expression of a multimedia artwork.

For critical and theoretical purposes, *Black Boxes* takes historical minimalist forms and injects them with currently relevant narratives. This sculpture alludes to an increasingly computerized world and the looming weight of the unphysical virtual elements of cyberspace. The concept of servers and an allusion to networks in abstracted form are attributes of the suggestiveness of *Black Boxes*.

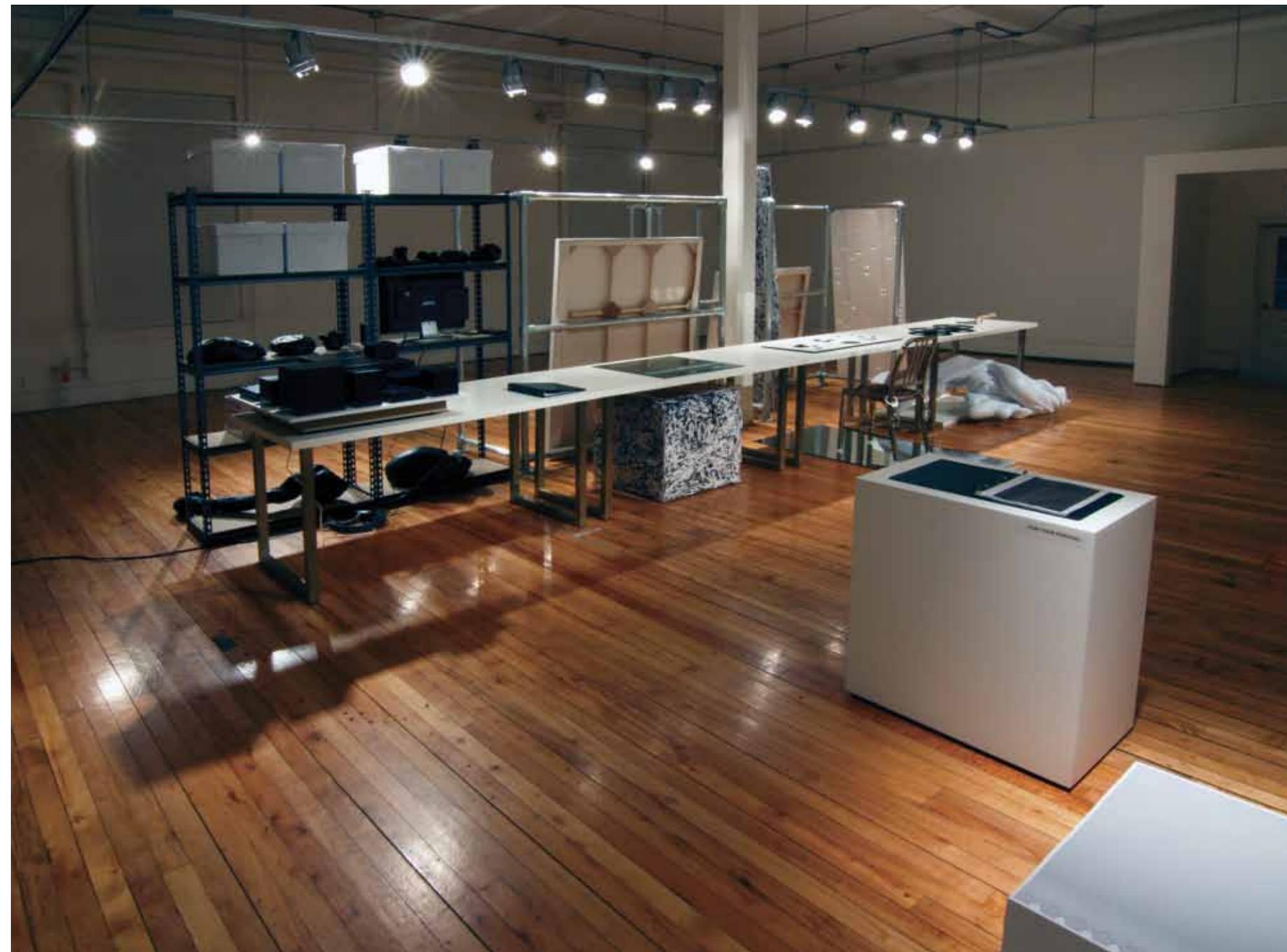


Still, there is more to the work, for on an emotional level its blackness and abstractness suggest an impenetrability and an ominous autonomy. Overall, *Black Boxes* conveys a sense of hermeticism. It is elusive to the viewer: first, it expresses the sense that the sculpture's wholeness and its ability to be beheld are autonomous from the viewer; secondly, it conceals meaning from the viewer. Flashing red lights are symbolic evidence of an action occurring. What we cannot see or hear of the activities going on within this network fills us with desire. This desire might evince other ideas that are fearful. Ideas such as secret black box operations on a military intelligence level come to mind. Images of suspicious packages arise.

Furthermore, if one moves beyond knee-jerk panic responses over the replacement of the psychoanalytic conception of human neural networks as consciousness, memory and desire by cold but infinitely interconnected server networks, the mind's processing of the outside world recalls the experience of beholding *Black Boxes*. Self-contained and autonomous, like a computing device that takes the place of the mind, *Black Boxes* symbolizes a processing system in abstraction. This conclusion aesthetically intermeshes with the concepts that arise in the abstract ruminations of unknowns that allow for a viewer to imagine massive amounts of knowledge as data in an abstract and impenetrable form.

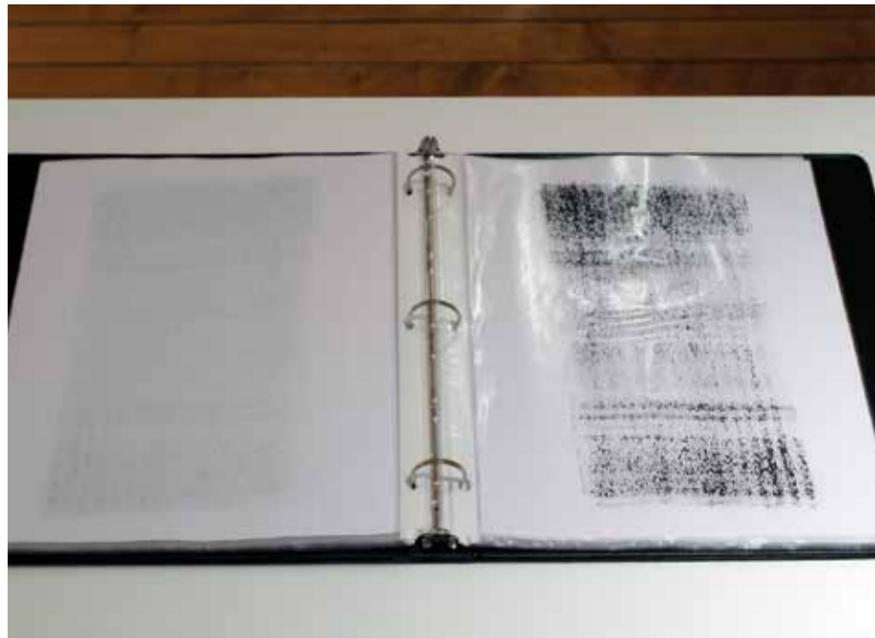
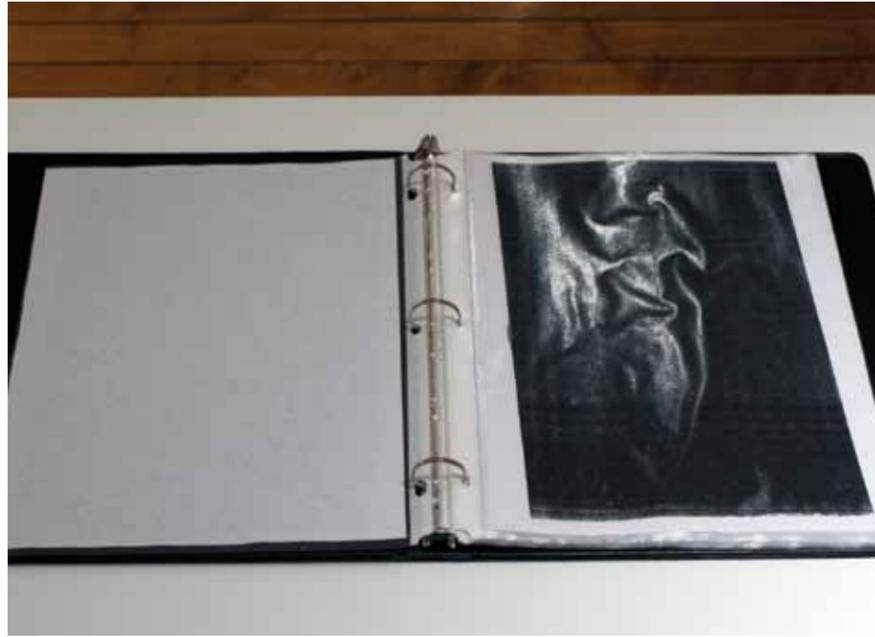


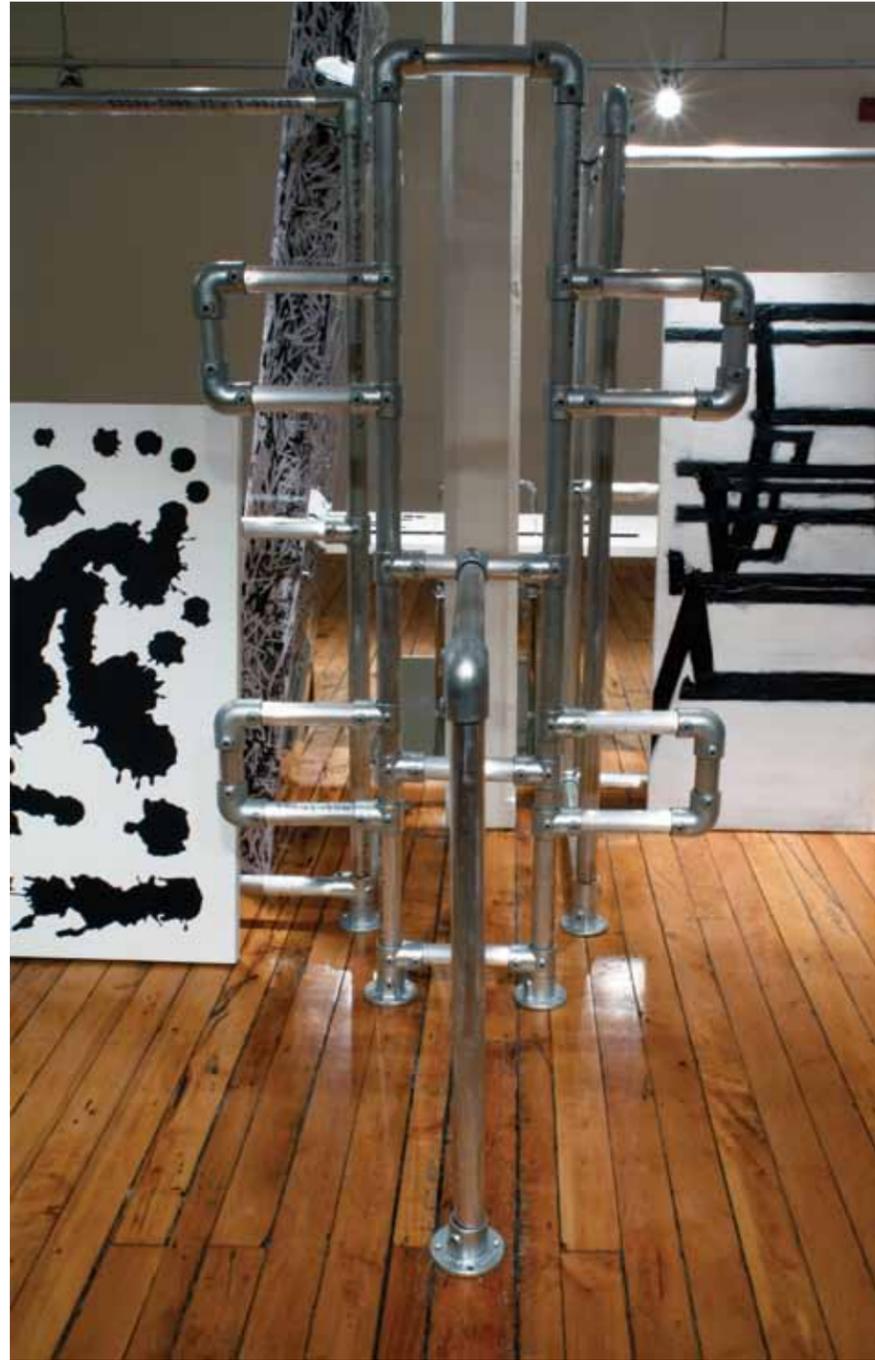
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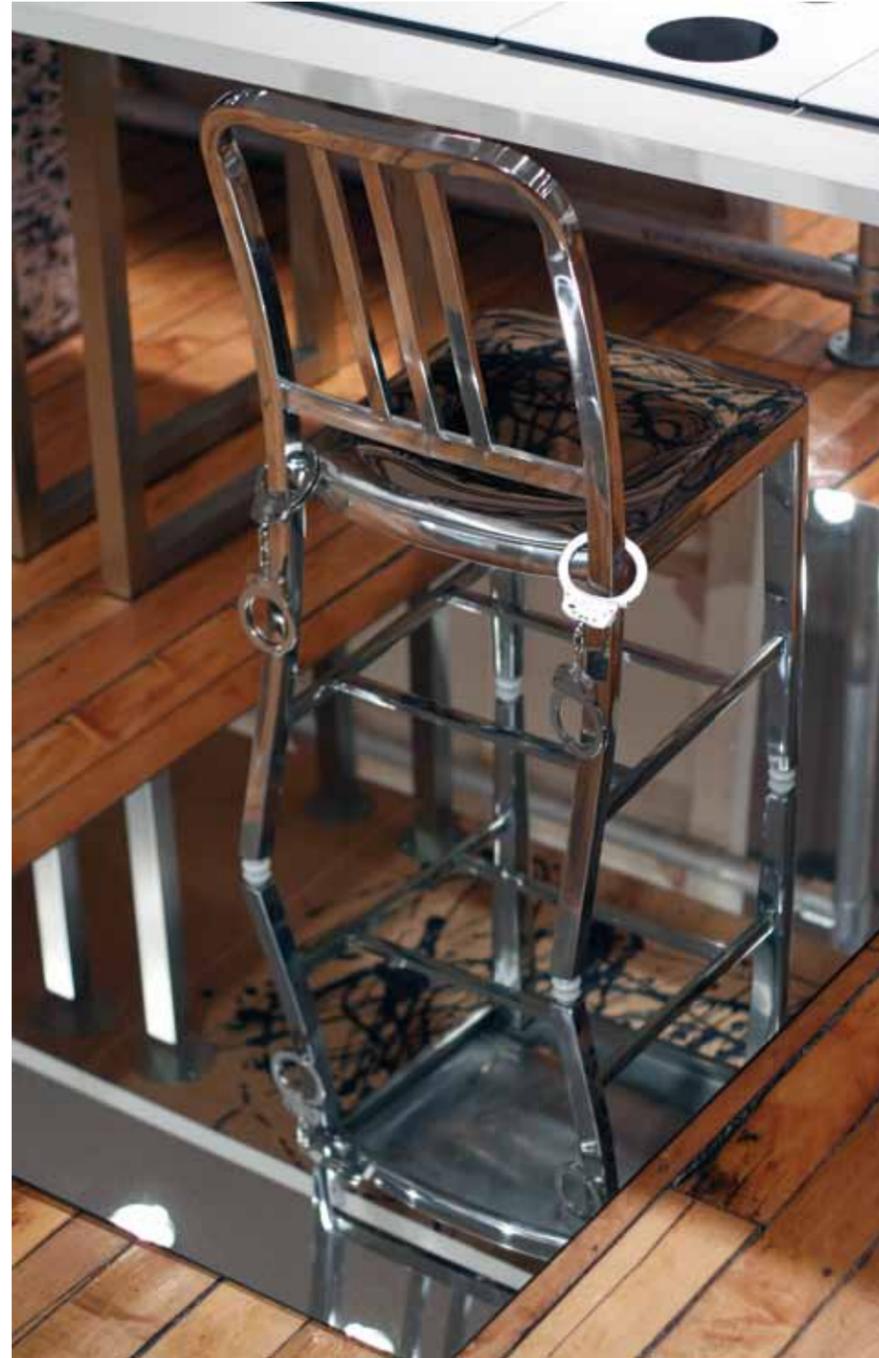












FORMULATION ARTICULATION PIXELATION

by Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins

The exhibition *Formulation Articulation Pixelation* consists of three words that arise on an etymological level from the Latin suffix, 'tio,' translated as action, which alters the meaning of a word into an action-word. The exhibition (at its root meaning) implies that a series of successive actions have occurred. The words 'formulation' and 'articulation' come from the historically well-known limited edition Josef Albers prints first released in 1972 under the title *Formulation: Articulation*. This suite of prints represented Albers' cumulative knowledge from his Bauhaus days, to his Black Mountain teachings, and finally, to his tenure at Yale University. Albers was by far the most influential art educator of the second half of the twentieth century, a role allowing him to publish his widely disseminated text, *Interaction of Colour* (1963). This book has had a significant effect on abstract expressionists, colour field painters, and hard edge painters from its publication to the present day.

Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins are known for producing installations that combine sculpture, painting, and architectural space. They devise new formal and aesthetic points of origin for their paintings in each exhibition. By combining historical references to the role of modernism in painting with critiques of modernism's ideologies and commentary on contemporary society, Marman and Borins have found new approaches to aesthetics. *Formulation Articulation Pixelation* takes these ideas a step further, combining architectural space and design to produce an aesthetic that integrates with the paintings in the exhibition.

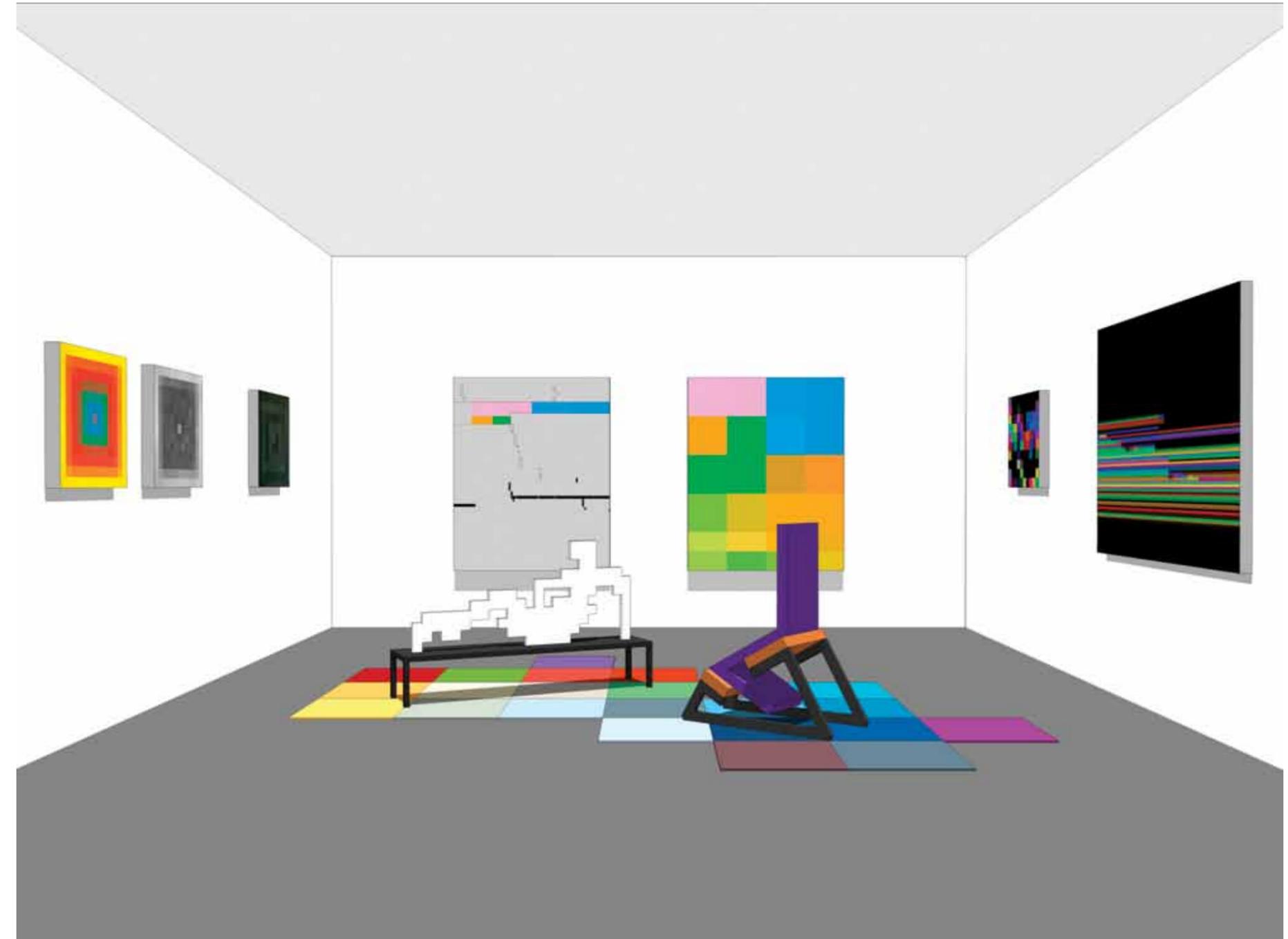
Formulation Articulation Pixelation refers to the objectivity of Bauhaus colour theory, to the now historical ubiquity of Josef Albers' pedagogical teachings on colour, and to the propositional stance that

objectified colour, form, and aesthetics now function as 'data' in the digital age. The aura of modernist painting is displaced but not removed by that of the digital age. Accordingly, at play in the exhibition is an interaction of sculpture and painting that forms a suggestive psychological subtext on the presence of exalted aesthetics in a virtual world.

In *Formulation Articulation Pixelation*, Marman and Borins include a painting diptych, *Pixelated RGB* and *Pixelated Gray Scale*, from a previous show to establish new extrapolation points to attain a mutability in the meaning and form of their work. This idea of achieving a mutability in their formalism and a continuity in their work by addressing the possibility of changing the context of their previous works occurs often in their practice. If one views *Formulation Articulation Pixelation* as a set of theoretical vantage points to find meaning, this painting diptych is an entry point into this current exhibition.

In their first iteration, as part of *Total Disinformation Awareness*, the paintings were imagined as an objective means to reproduce and alter the concept of transcendence in modernist abstraction within the context of a contemporary way of seeing. Marman and Borins proposed that their interactive sculpture *Google* as a type of visual grammar, is the formal modifier for a type of seeing relating to how the artificial intelligence of the search engine Google understands images. When a search for an image is performed, Google chooses what is most popular - implying that popularity is the most accurate criterion for optimal search results.

Search 'dog' or 'grass', and the results are accurate. Search 'Stella', and girls, beer, and Stella McCartney appear excessively;





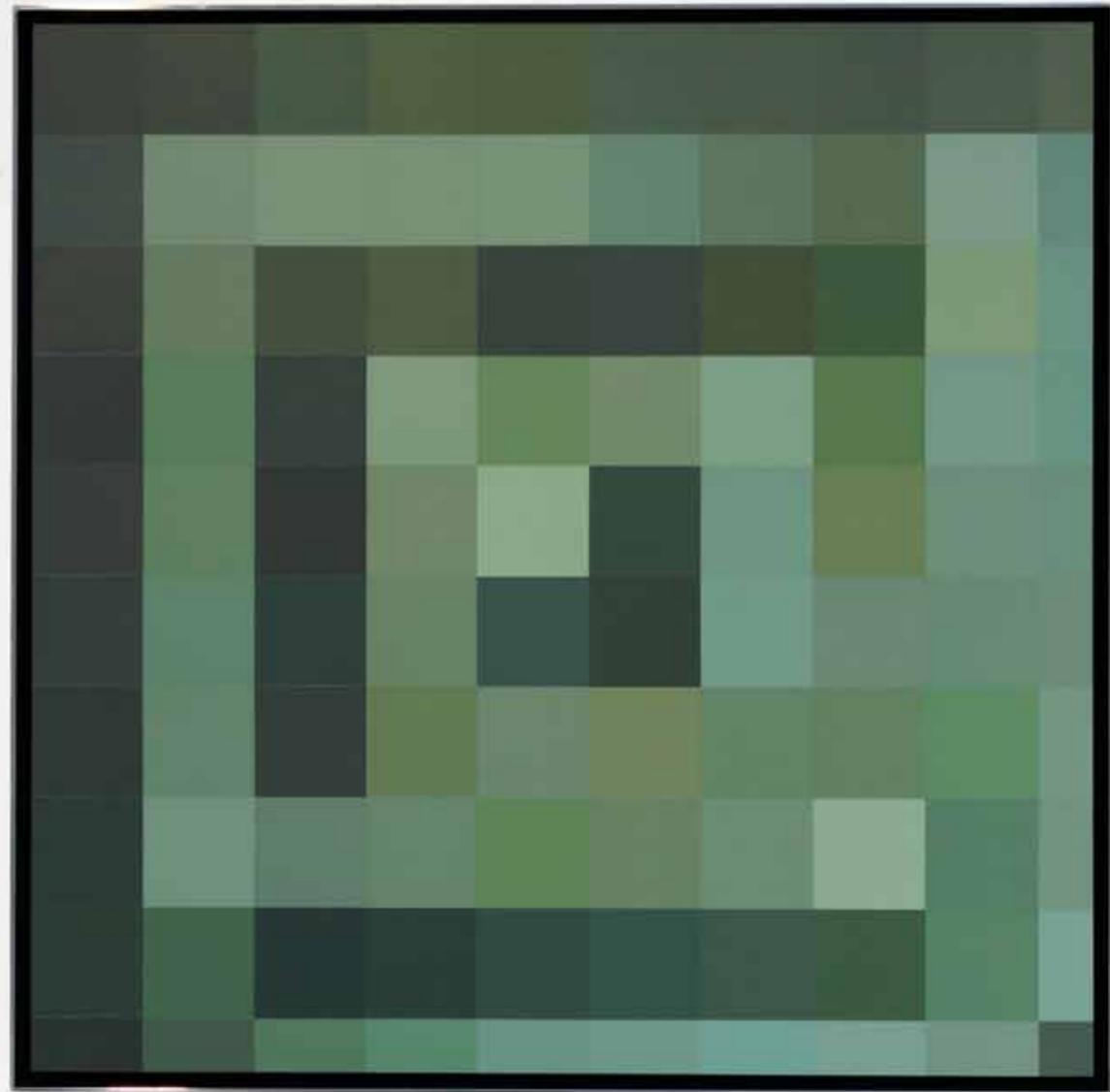
however, Frank Stella appears rarely. Therefore, if *Google*, the sculpture, and *Google*, the search engine, are performing the seeing, then how would they see, and how would Marman and Borins reproduce this form of seeing as a painting or an exhibition?

The artists answer this question by imagining aesthetics that express seeing without human context (i.e., the context of *Google*), a form of seeing through search engines and data searches that is, nevertheless, highly principled and structured. The non-human eyes of *Google* interpreting form as data echo this sentiment. Simultaneously, Marman and Borins reference art historical works with the intention of forming critical and theoretical stances on how history and its persistent narratives shape our understanding of art. A sequence of thoughts occurs: despite *Google*'s imperfect way of seeing images, there still exists a classically ideal form of knowledge, despite artificial intelligence, that will maintain transcendent truths even if those truths are presently only contained in or electronically transcribed as data. Marman and Borins present this chain of thoughts as a series of paintings surrounding two sculptures in dialogue with each other. The paintings are formal expressions of the above-mentioned concepts of historical quotation combined with the structured but non-transcendent order of digital communication and databases. This is where Marman and Borins' thoughts on transliteration come into play. One could argue that they have designed an installation that is visually correct in that it presents transcendent paintings. However, these paintings are meanwhile made objective because artificial, or digital-based, intelligence cannot discern what is transcendent. For example, *Pixelated RGB* and *Pixelated Gray Scale* symbolize the treatment of an original Frank Stella painting as colour data and colour space within the virtual world of digital image manipulation and electronic liquid crystal displays. Critically, one could argue that what you see is what you see; that is, the artists did not present transcendent paintings. This conclusion would be a good outcome, for it would either confirm one's desire for the transcendent in painting, or it could confirm that the transcendent is increasingly encroached upon by the data streams of a virtual world.

If *Google* is the starting point for *Pixelated RGB* and *Pixelated Gray Scale* to be presented as a way of seeing, then *Formulation Articulation Pixelation* takes these concepts a step further. The idea of envisioning a space along with a series of works wholly, within an all-encompassing tonal range of form and theme, is what differentiates the paintings' new context from how they were



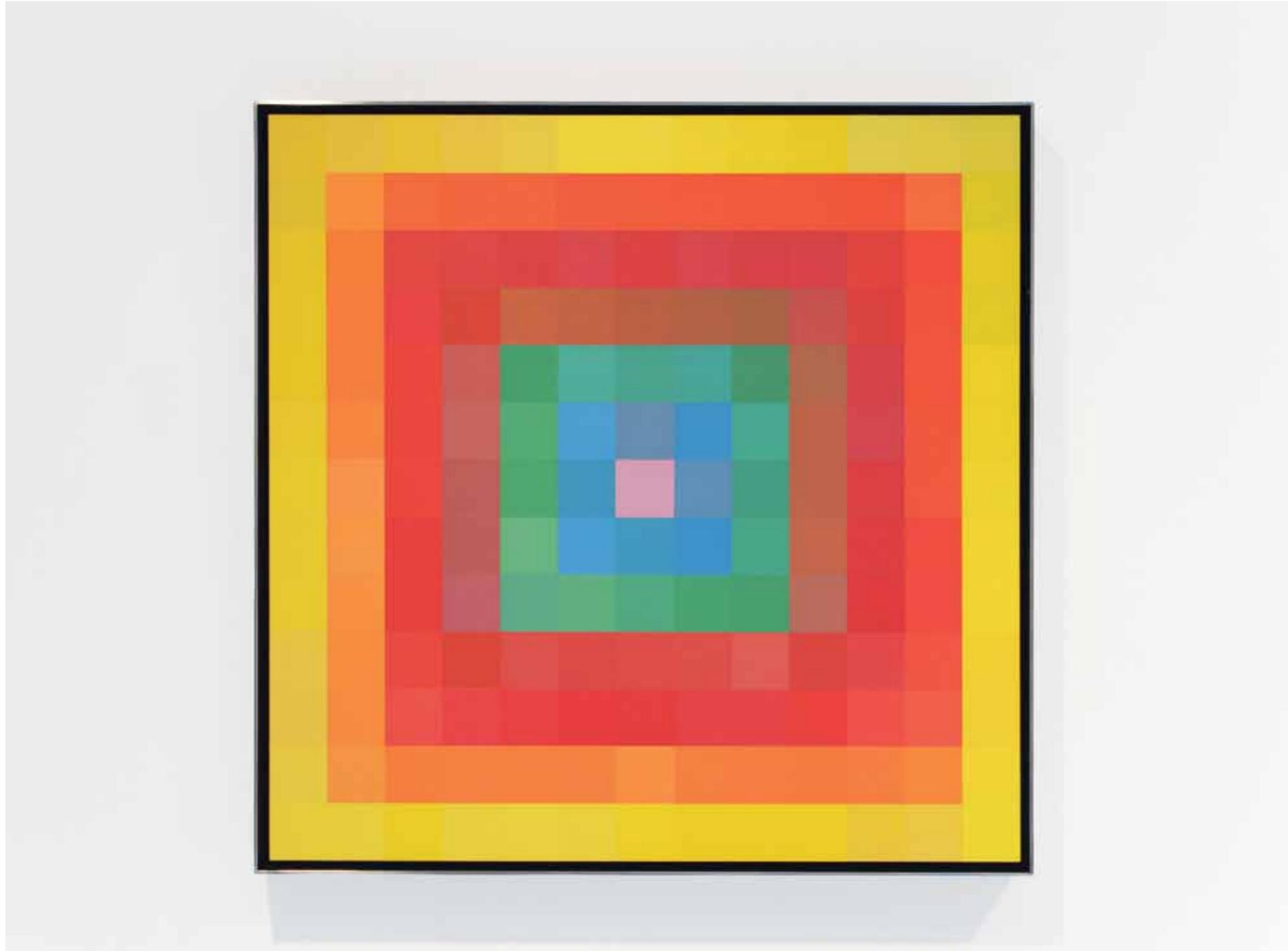
previously exhibited. This new space is a painting exhibition with sculpture and aesthetics reminiscent of modernist forms - but with a twist. It contains a consideration of colour, perception and abstraction; however, it does so in a contemporary manner with

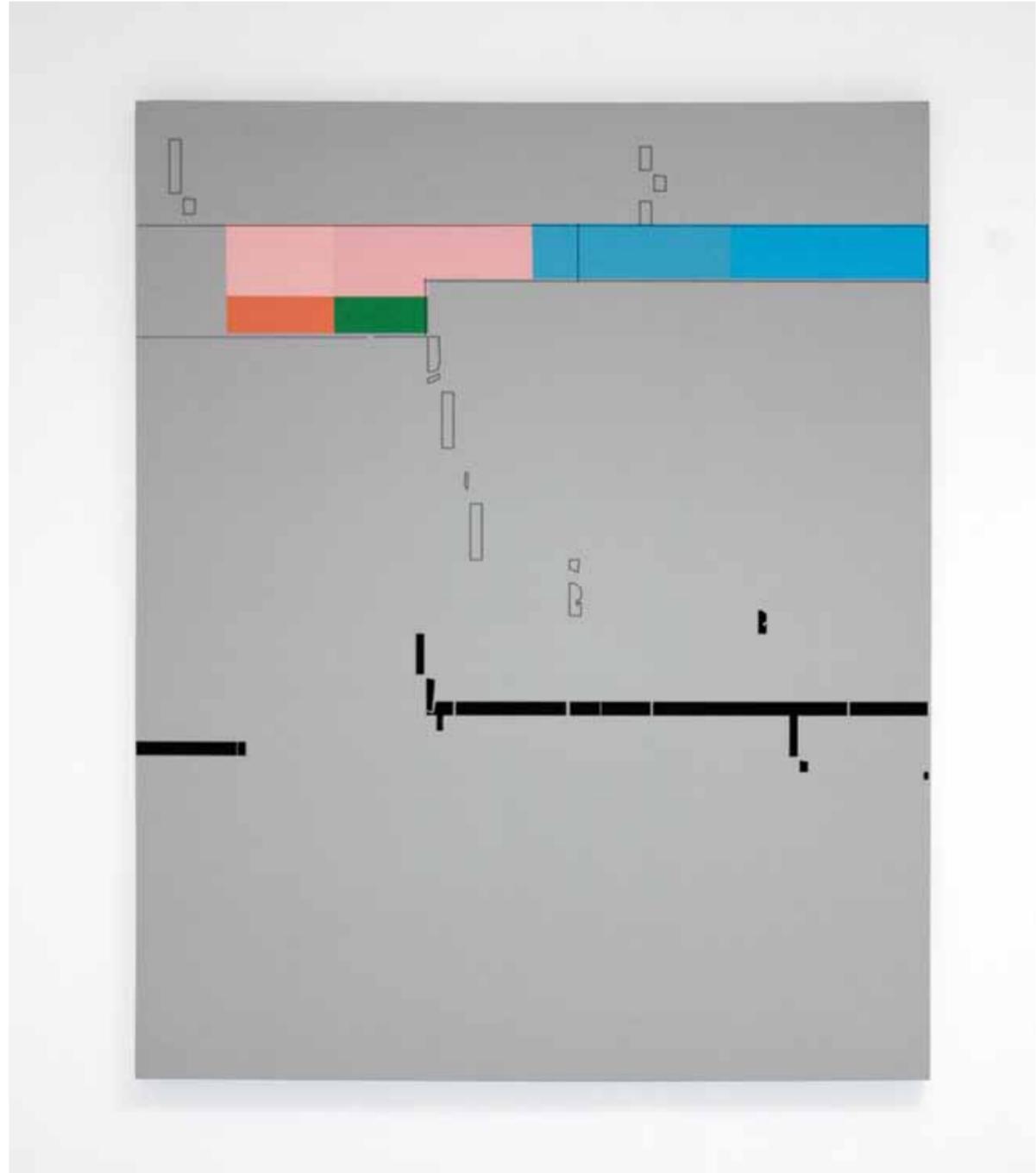


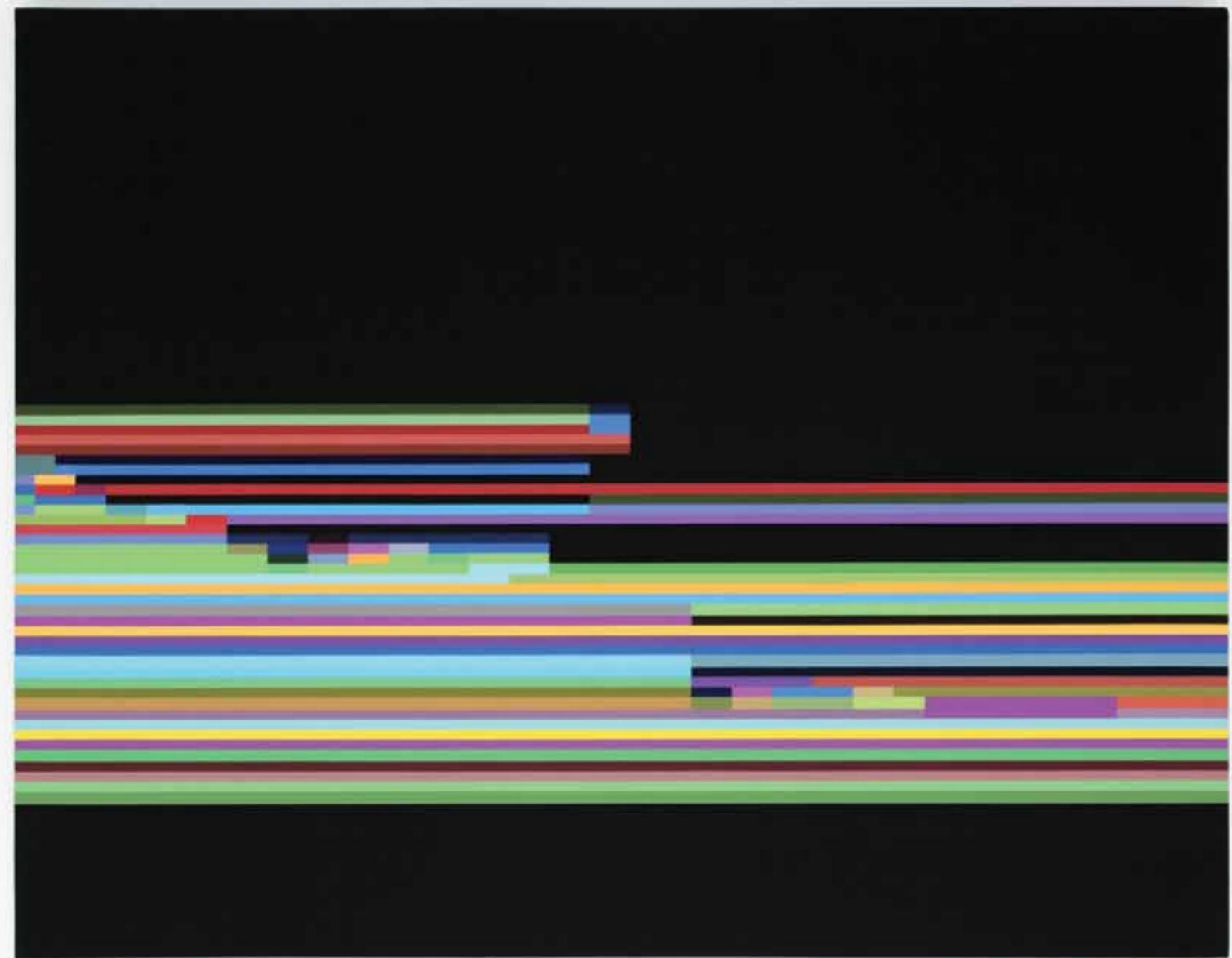
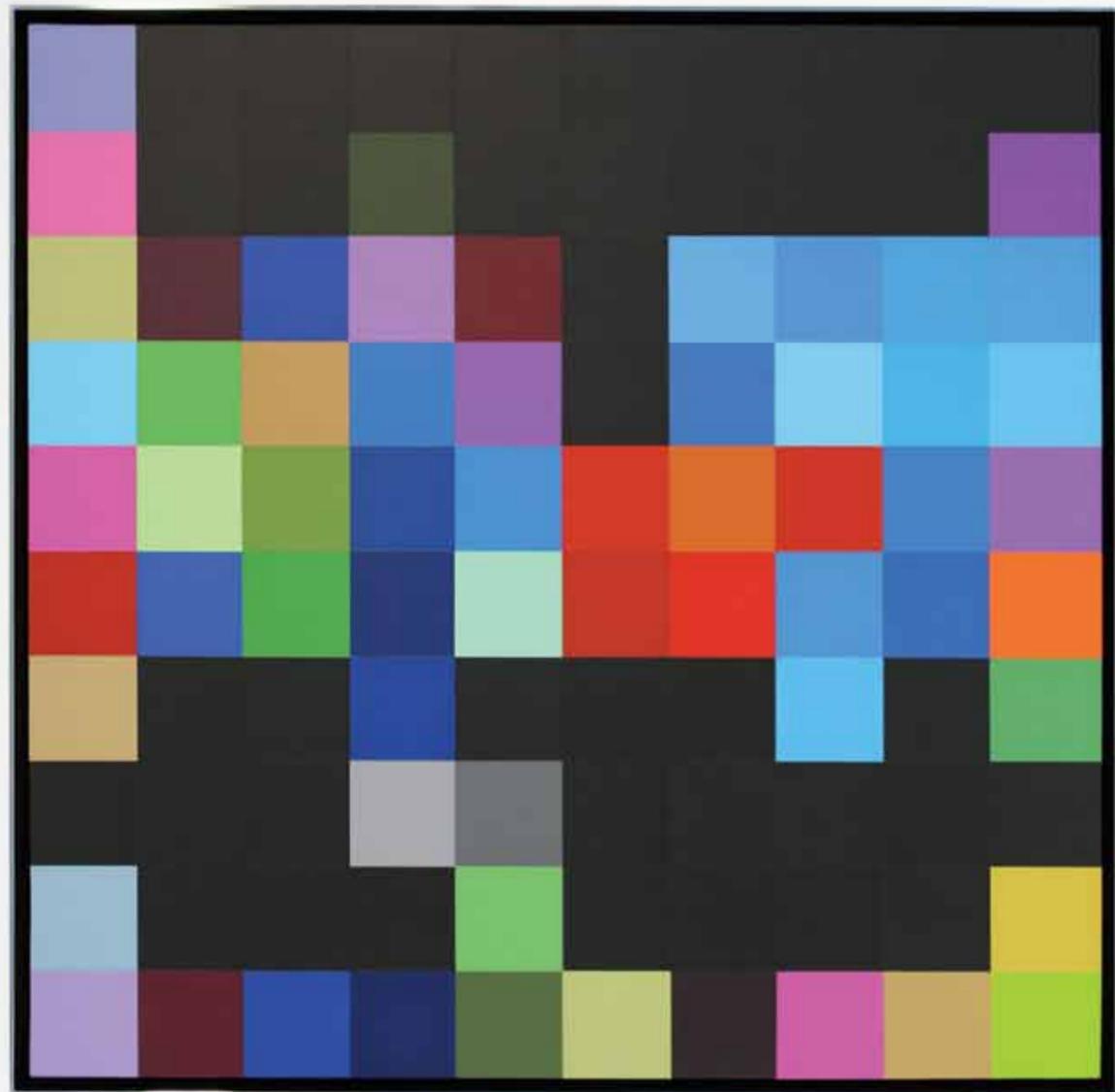
humour and irony. The exhibition proposes a situation where pop culture mimics the exalted status of high modernism and its claims to transcendence. Utilizing colour intensities and formal composition, the paintings provide serious viewing experiences, yet their formal references come from the popular sources of low resolution digital images, the fragmentation inherent in corrupted digital data, and both the colour space of electronic screens playing back video and video games.

Set in the foreground of the installation, where one stands surrounded by the paintings on the walls, a low-resolution pixelated reclining nude interacts with a kneeling chair/figurative sculpture, with the kitschy figure taking on the pleather form of the kitschy chair itself. This sculpture has the effect of setting off a series of visual and psychological concepts. First, the installation's visuality is significant. The paintings are vibrant: they oscillate in the eye with contrasting colours that create the illusion of form receding and intensifying. Their colouration, chroma, depth and shifting focal planes allow for an opening to occur in the traditional boundaries of the painting; this is to say, the story goes beyond the frame. The visual balance and robust aesthetics of *Formulation Articulation Pixelation* portray a scene where a visual drama surrounds the two sculptural figures. Are the paintings an accompaniment of form, a pattern that matches the tension between the sculptures? Or are they the dialogue occurring between the figures, as if the thoughts and discussion of the sculptures are being illustrated on the walls? Furthermore, is this dialogue overt, or is it a subconscious psychological, desirous story unfolding as a totalized art installation?











STATEMENT

Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins have been making large-format sculpture, mixed media, installation and electronic art since 2000. Intervening upon institutional and public spaces, their work often contextualizes visual art squarely within everyday life while simultaneously referring to and reassessing twentieth century art history: its utopias, polemics, and formal one-upmanship. Concurrently, their work discusses contemporary museum modalities within the context of ideological stances levelled by globalized market forces. In doing so, Marman and Borins expose the tensions arising between the historicity, formalism and politicization of the artwork to produce new meanings from them.

Marman and Borins express these concepts not only through art historical references, but also through popular design strategies and industrial-based materials. Their works' aesthetics and style often conflates mass communications with references that deconstruct the history of ideological movements in twentieth

century art. Marman and Borins also pursue a strategy of formal mutability, in which they define form by subject matter rather than by self-expression. This mutability illustrates the problem the artists have with contemporary visual art and meaning-making: the art world cannot keep up with the pace of the world, and the contemporary artist is then a minor grammarian in a sea of visual culture. In turn, the artists posit strategies of visual resistance. They use paradox and authorial de-centering to mirror a homogeneous political landscape in an attempt to resist the ubiquity that overshadows all critique of it. They achieve this through such strategies as pairing styles of post-minimalism and electronic art, and by means of high-art formalism and abstraction, transliterated into popular aesthetics. Marman and Borins often express these ideas with ironical, cynical humour and attendant ambiguity. It is, indeed, a formidable challenge to perform all of this deftly within a coherent chain of paradoxical stances, but it is this very challenge that drives the artists to push their inquiries further.

LIST OF WORKS

All images courtesy of Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto.

2	Snow on Snow (Video stills) 2011 Video 7'25 minutes	12	Radovan Radovan 2010 Ink on paper 18 x 24 inches	21	Unknown Interview (video still) 2011 Digitized video 18'51 minutes	29	Unknown Unknowns (Installation view, Elora Centre for the Arts, Elora) 2011	36	Klamp Structure 2011 Kee-klamps, aluminum pipe 72 x 36 x 36 inches	39	Hanging Chads 2011 Acrylic 72 x 30 inches	45	Kneeling Sculpture 2011 Acrylic, MDF, vinyl fabric 38 x 34 x 15 inches	49	Pixelated Painting 2011 Acrylic on canvas 60 x 48 inches
4	Snow on Snow (Composite image) 2011	14	Shredded Square 2010 Clear acrylic, shredded paper 24 x 24 x 3 inches	22	Surveillance Camera 2011 Acrylic, MDF, enamel paint 29.5 x 27.5 x 12 inches	30	Unknown Unknowns (Installation view, Elora Centre for the Arts, Elora) 2011	37	Reel to Reel 2011 Acrylic 12 x 25 x 1.5 inches	41	Formulation Articulation Pixelation (Rendering for Volta7, Basel) 2011	46	Pixelated RGB 2010 Acrylic on archival gesso board 25 x 25 inches, framed	50	Frag 2011 Acrylic on archival gesso board 25 x 25 inches, framed
6	Burning Books 2010 Plastic, acrylic-coated burnt books, kinetic components 20 x 18 x 26 inches	15	Blackout 2010 Graphite on paper Series of 2 (each unique) 24 x 24 inches	23	Unknown Unknowns Server Room 2011 Drywall, stud, glass doors, wire guarding, powder coated steel, electronics, drop ceiling, lights 20 x 20 x 8 feet	31	Klamp 2011 Acrylic on canvas 60 x 48 inches	38	Black Blob 2011 Plastic, tar 5 x 13 x 7 inches	42	Pixelated Nude and Kneeling Sculpture (Installation view) 2011	47	Pixelated Grayscale 2010 Acrylic on archival gesso board 25 x 25 inches, framed	51	Defrag 2011 Acrylic on canvas 48 x 60 inches
7	Shredded Search Terms 2010 Type-written ink on archival paper Series of 2 (each unique) 11.5 x 9.25 inches	16	Cave (after Magritte) with Evildoer 2010 Polystyrene foam, acrylic paint, sand. 33 x 26 x 25 inches	24	Unknown Unknowns Server Room (Interior room detail) 2011	32	Tar Splatter 2011 Acrylic on canvas 48 x 48 inches	39	Navy Chair and Cuffs (Detail) 2011 Found chair and handcuffs 37 x 16.75 x 19.5 inches	43	Pixelated Nude 2011 Acrylic, powder coated metal 32 x 54 x 12 inches	48	Pixelated Corruption 2011 Acrylic on canvas 60 x 48 inches	52	Redacted Newspaper 2010 Printed newsprint 22 x 11 inches
8	Redacted Painting 2010 Acrylic on canvas 18 x 22 inches	17	Evildoer 2010 polyurethane foam, acrylic paint, electronics 15 x 7 x 6 inches	25	Unknown Unknowns Server Room (Wire guarding and light detail) 2011	33	Unknown Unknowns (Installation view, Elora Centre for the Arts, Elora) 2011	34	Tarred Tools 2011 Found objects, tar 9 x 12 x 1.5 inches	44	Pixelated Greenscale 2011 Acrylic on archival gesso board 25 x 25 inches, framed				
9	Redacted Expressionist Painting 2010 Acrylic on canvas 48 x 48 inches	18	Google 2010 Acrylic, powder coated steel, electronic and kinetic compo- nents, custom software Edition of 5 12 x 24 x 3.5 inches	26	Unknown Unknowns Server Room (Lock detail) 2011	35	Unknown Unknowns Binder 2011 Found binder, photocopies 11.5 x 10 x 1.5 inches								
10	Bit Laden 2010 Ink on paper 18 x 24 inches			27	Black Boxes 2010 MDF, lacquer, electronics 15 x 30 x 30 inches	36	Shredded Slab 2011 Clear acrylic, shredded paper 84 x 16 x 6 inches								
11	Burnt Books Stack 2010 Inkjet print on archival paper Edition of 5 33 x 24.5 inches	20	Unknown Unknowns (Installation view, Ed Video, Guelph) 2011	28	Shredded Slab (Detail) 2011 Clear acrylic, shredded paper 84 x 16 x 6 inches										

GEORGIA SCHERMAN PROJECTS

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Established in 2006, in a large industrial space, Georgia Scherman Projects utilizes a three-pronged approach. The first project represents established contemporary artists such as Spring Hurlbut, John Massey and Tony Scherman, as well as emerging talents such as Marman & Borins and Fraser Stables. A second project attempts to contextualize the gallery artists within a broad and idiosyncratic cultural field. It draws from the historical and the contemporary, from North America and abroad. The third project collaborates with outside curators and artists to encourage spontaneous discourse. GSP exhibitions have included: Putting Figures on Paper, 2007; Lifting - Theft in Art (curated: Atopia Projects), 2008; Hank Willis Thomas, Visionary Delusions (curated: Olivier Fuller), 2009; A Subject Full of Suggestion: Works from the Latner Family Collection, 2009; and Shaun Gladwell, Portrait of a man...(curated by Ihor Holubizky), 2010.



Since 1976, we have helped members create video-based projects that represent the diversity, spirit and viewpoints of the people in our region. Ed Video creates lasting links between artists, audiences, and organizations in our role as an established cultural centre in a city renowned for being vibrant with creativity. Above all, Ed Video is committed to the EDucational potential that video has for creators and viewers, young and old, and promoting the control and comprehension of contemporary video-based art. Our 1,150 square-foot gallery boasts an ongoing schedule of screenings, exhibitions, and events to showcase the best thought-provoking media art and cultural activities from Guelph and around the world.



The Elora Centre for the Arts is located in a restored, limestone school in Elora, Ontario. Consisting of ten large classrooms converted into 10,000 square feet dedicated to the creation and appreciation of art, the ECA is a cultural resource for the public and home to the Minarovich Gallery. Our role is to foster an appreciation of art and artists through exhibitions, gallery events, artist residencies, workshops, performances, public lectures and talks. We offer educational programming to stimulate interest and knowledge in the arts. We strive to instigate critical dialogue, to increase public exposure to creative processes and to promote individual and institutional collaboration.

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