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## Deconstructing [in]securities

By Zoe Case '18

Huge installation art pieces and dynamic photographs now fill Buchwald-Wright Gallery in the Gund Gallery. Their subject matter? Surveillance.

The first week of classes this semester brought on-campus art back into the spotlight when the gallery opened its doors to three new exhibitions; the works of Roxy Paine, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, Harun Farocki and Trevor Paglen are shown in evocative yet minimalist fashion. The opening reception Friday attracted about 100 attendees, including students, faculty and Gambier residents.

The first piece one sees walking into the exhibition space is Paine's *Checkpoint*, a large-scale diorama focused on the kind of invasive surveillance that is an everyday occurrence in the modern world. The diorama contains an immediately recognizable Transportation Security Administration, or TSA, checkpoint, as one would encounter in an airport. Harsh fluorescents cast light on carved wooden X-ray machines and security checkpoints.

The diorama format is an essential feature of Paine's work, according to Christopher Yates, assistant director of the gallery. "If you think about a diorama in a natural history museum, it is preserving a moment

in the past, like cavemen or something,” Yates said. “But what is this? What does this say about us?”

The subject of the room is arresting in itself, yet also contains an added layer of interest. When observing *Checkpoint*, the viewer immediately recognizes the architectural impossibility of the room. The medium of the diorama is maple, hand- and machine-hewn to mathematical scale, but the perspective is off: Every piece is arranged and crafted in such a way that the room appears largest toward the viewer while seeming smaller in the back, creating the illusion of a greater space. As the viewer walks behind the piece, he or she is able to understand the trick as the architecture makes itself known.

Paine’s other works fill the gallery, providing political satire and provoking thought. *Revolution* is a wooden, full-scale model of a speaker’s podium with a subway-esque turnstile attached to the back. The piece implies an ever-revolving political machine within the government, controlled by an omniscient political figure.

*Revolution* was Zoe Chrissos’s ’18 favorite. “The speakers of *Revolution* — are they controlling what they are saying, or are they being controlled by outside forces?” she said.

Paine’s ideas of observation lend themselves well to another exhibit in the Buchwald-Wright space. Photographers Farocki and Paglen’s *Visibility Machines* provide a more militaristic perspective to surveillance in America. Paglen’s work comments on the secrecy of American war-making. His photographs depict military bases from vantage points miles away, taken from a distance so he would not be caught photographing them illegally. His other work depicts huge blue skies or beautiful sunsets within which lie the small dots of military raptor drones. “How do we then think about how you observe, or are being observed?” Yates said. After all, Paglen’s method of photography is itself a kind of surveillance, even while the photographer himself is being surveilled.

Farocki’s pieces incorporate both print and video work. One of his works, *Serious Games IV: A Sun With No Shadow*, is especially arresting: the piece explores the newest interactions between virtual reality and war. It depicts both new soldiers preparing for war and former soldiers viewing virtual reality scenes of traumatizing war. These scenes are designed to incite a reaction in them as a kind of psychological treatment. Much of Farocki’s work deals with the intense relationship between traumatizing images and the psyche of the soldier.

Finally, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s *Level of Confidence* is quietly tucked around a corner on the Gund Gallery’s first floor, away from the upstairs gallery. It contains a computerized screen setup that detects the viewer’s face and tries to match their facial features to one of 43 missing students from Iguala, Mexico, who disappeared in 2014 while studying at a teacher’s college. “The software is trying to find them in you,” Yates said. “How do we make them present?” One of the most heart-breaking pieces in the exhibition, *Level of Confidence* brings the viewer closer than ever before to those people whose tragedies are aired nightly in the news.

These artists’ works on display in the gallery are evocative, aesthetically beautiful and, perhaps most importantly, timely.

“The work is very powerful,” Yates said. “It raises questions. Disturbing questions.”

Farocki and Paglen’s works are on view in the gallery through April 10; Paine and Lozano-Hemmer’s, through May 30.