Crisis Vision

Race and
the Cultural
Production
of Surveillance

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RACE AND THE CULTURAL PRODUCTION OF SURVEILLANCE

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For Mom

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As the refrain goes, this book has been a long time coming. From my early exploratory interviews with artist-activists as I transitioned from graduate school to my first academic position nearly two decades ago and throughout the many research projects since, I have been drawn to artistic forms of resistance to surveillance. Perhaps owing to my humanities roots, I felt a need to grasp the resonances and potency of artworks beyond their surface provocations, to approach them as vibrant forms of life. Many colleagues generously pushed me forward in this inquiry. I have had enriching discussions with scholars and artists, have received countless suggestions for artworks to consider, and have been granted many forums to present and develop this work. In short, I have had a genuine scholarly community and encouraging friends within it; for that, I am both lucky and grateful.

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Sending a book out into the world is always an unsettling experience, at least for me. It is a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made and the time invested, a moment to question one's choices and to hope that others will find the work valuable. On a personal level, publishing this book is especially bittersweet because it was something I looked forward to sharing with my mother, from whom I acquired, at a very young age, my love for books and my activist streak. She passed away in the weeks before I submitted the final manuscript, leaving both an immeasurable void and an abundance of

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INTRODUCTION

Let us start with two visual scenes. The first is of a street-art mural spray-painted on the side of a London building (see figure I.1). In large font, the piece proclaims, "ONE NATION UNDER CCTV," with drips of white paint running underneath the letters, a testament to the work's hasty production. A stenciled figure on a ladder, a boy raising a paint roller to one of the letters, simulates the act of creation; his red hoodie covers most of his face, but he is nonetheless watched. Below and to the left of him stand additional painted figures: a gray-attired policeman holding what appears to be a camera and a Doberman pinscher police dog sitting at the man's feet, mouth open and ears up. Both man and dog assess the scene, the authority and implied threat of their attention nudging the interpretive frame toward one of judgment. Above them all, to the right, an actual video surveillance camera clings to the wall, potentially documenting the scene as evidence for unknown observers in an unknown location. A final unrepresented viewer is the person absorbing this entire panorama, either someone physically present, such as the photographer, or distantly removed, such as you or me. Notably, the CCTV video camera—which is obviously an intentional, appropriated prop for this artwork—points outward, directed toward those who might be consuming this scene, as if to demonstrate the veracity of the textual claim of ubiquitous surveillance.

The second scene is of museumgoers playfully flowing through the darkened rooms of an art space in New York City. As they run, dance, or lie on the grid-lined charcoal-colored floor, discreet video surveillance cameras and drones capture their images and project them back onto the grid (see figure I.2). Thus, participants' digital ghosts follow them and echo their movements, evidently encouraging interaction as groups of people flirt with their feedback loops and take selfies with their digital doubles. The

underlying algorithm further communicates its tracking and processing ability by drawing red boxes around represented faces, arms, legs, and torsos. Participants watch one another and their ephemeral traces; they watch themselves in the act of being watched. In this work the ominous police threats of the first artwork fade into the background, lost in the hum of ambient monitoring and the thrill of technological capability. Watching is pervasive but diluted, totalizing but fleeting, at least in its representation. Near the exit, the museum gift shop plies visitors with various privacy-enhancing paraphernalia, such as radio-frequency-blocking mobile phone cases, suggesting consumption as a viable means of reducing exposure.

The first scene was staged in 2007 by renowned street artist Banksy. The second, provocatively titled *Hansel & Gretel*, was an installation created in 2017 by artist Ai Weiwei and architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron. Both of these art projects engage with surveillance themes but in different ways and with different messages. Spaced ten years apart, what might they reveal about changing perceptions of surveillance and its threats? What different problematics are they addressing, and what

FIGURE 1.1. Banksy, *One Nation Under CCTV* (2008). Courtesy of Pest Control Office, Banksy, London, 2008.

gets left out of each? Appearing during the height of the War on Terror, the Banksy mural followed in the wake of revelations of widespread state surveillance by the US government. These revelations included information that telecommunications companies and allied countries such as the United Kingdom were collaborating with the National Security Agency (NSA) to illegally monitor phone calls, emails, web browsing, and text messages of citizens.[1] Banksy's mural critiques this culture of generalized suspicion, where multiple sources routinely amass evidence on individuals and pass it on to state agents for possible investigation. The threat is one of a totalitarian state operating in relative obscurity while it stifles creative expression, civil liberties, and sociality.

By the time that the installation by Weiwei and colleagues materialized, social media and smartphones had become commonplace, Edward Snowden's disclosures of even more pervasive, illegal NSA surveillance had come and gone, and critical public attention about technology was routed toward areas like social media's threat to democratic processes. The emphasis had shifted away from the state and unambiguous surveillance devices, moving instead toward private digital platform companies and the compromising—but seemingly unavoidable—data trails produced by

FIGURE I.2. Ai Weiwei, Jacques Herzog, and Pierre de Meuron, *Hansel & Gretel* (2017). Photograph by Agaton Strom for the *New York Times*.

websites, personal devices, and ambient sensors. *Hansel & Gretel* illuminates some of these usually hidden data trails to cultivate awareness in museumgoers.[2] Unlike Banksy's work, which symbolically pointed toward an Orwellian dystopia of repressive state control, thereby painting a clear target for progressive intervention, *Hansel & Gretel* offers no external object for denunciation. Instead, the piece enjoins participants to take responsibility for their digital exposure and mitigate it through practices of personal privacy hygiene. Viewed through the lens of the Hansel and Gretel fairy tale, the confection-like allure of technological products represents a danger that individual ingenuity may be poorly equipped to counteract.

Themes of visibility animate both of these works. With *One Nation Under* CCTV, visibility represents vulnerability, on one hand, converting all observable acts into evidence for possible correction, and empowerment, on the other hand, serving as the mechanism by which one can draw attention to and undermine these repressive logics. Banksy's own conscientiously guarded identity operates as a subtext to this critique, whereby his anonymity grants his works mystique and him relative safety: he relies on a robust network of supportive artist and activist colleagues who know his identity and keep it hidden. With *Hansel & Gretel*, largely concealed conditions of ubiquitous exposure are represented, haunting participants with their own digital ghosts while encouraging interaction and play. For all its ostentatious technological mediation, though, the underlying code remains as opaque as the external parties who routinely capitalize upon digital exhaust.[3] The individual, conversely, lifts to the surface, rendered hypervisible against the dark backdrop of technological mystery. *Hansel & Gretel* performs the seeming inevitability of individual exposure and subjection to the interests of remote others.

Something crucial, however, remains invisible in both of these works. For different reasons, neither successfully engages with the differential ramifications of state and corporate surveillance. Banksy's piece draws its power from the universal: everyone in the nation is under surveillance, and society as a whole is imperiled by latent totalitarianism. Weiwei and colleagues distill exposure to the individual who may move with others but must confront privacy threats alone, if at all. This is not to discount how these works resonate with and educate viewers, but the reasons for their appeal notably blunt their radical potential. As I will show, these works, like many others in this vein, illustrate broader societal constraints in contending with surveillance problems. By embracing the symbolism

of universal threats or individual responsibility, such interventions can create blind spots to social inequality, racialization, and violence, to the ways that liberal social orders depend on and propagate exclusions, often through visibility regimes. Nonetheless, art offers a profoundly generative and enticing way to apprehend surveillance dynamics, as well as to better understand the challenges of activating change.

The Trappings of Visibility

The past decade has witnessed an explosion in surveillance-themed artworks. Whereas previously there may have been dozens of art projects grouped together in infrequent exhibits or in the rare academic book,[4] today there are hundreds of works presented at major and minor museum exhibits, implemented in activist movements, staged in theaters, published in books, circulated across social media, and marketed as anti-surveillance consumables. What is it about this particular conjuncture that catalyzes such artwork? What does it signify? And what are its potentials?

Although Snowden's 2013 leaks about the NSA's massive telecommunications surveillance apparatus proved, again, that government security agencies were committed to collecting every data element, no matter how small, relevant, or legally protected,[5] this was only one important galvanizing force for artists and activists. This renewed awareness merged with growing concern, more generally, about concealed yet consequential vulnerabilities emerging from data circulation and use. Police agencies routinely deploy drones, cell-phone tracking systems, and social media surveillance to monitor and interrupt Black Lives Matter and other activist movements.[6] Algorithms are programmed to assess the worthiness of individuals for jobs, housing, university admission, or reduced criminal sentencing, among many other obscure code-based determinations affecting people's lives.[7] Smart devices such as virtual assistants, televisions, and other appliances infiltrate homes, silently amassing and acting on personal data.[8] Facebook and other social media sites continue to be harnessed by foreign actors to manipulate election processes and fuel hate groups.[9] The list can and does go on, but what it reveals is a move toward relatively invisible, ubiquitous surveillance systems that rely on data to alter social systems in fundamental ways. Most of the recent surveillance-themed art projects attempt to render this invisibility visible and subject it to critique.

Surveillance implies much more than just watching: it is focused observation infused with judgment and yoked to a purpose.[10] Surveillance is a key mechanism of influencing, directing, and regulating the behavior of individuals and groups in society. In short, it is a principal mode of governance deployed by institutions and individuals, through both technical and nontechnical means, to assert control over domains and the bodies within them. As recent scholarship in the field of surveillance studies has argued, surveillance activities—regardless of intention—are perforce ideological exercises that support systems of oppression and domination, whether symbolically or directly.[11] The judgment implied in surveillance normalizes hierarchical relations and enforces unequal treatment of populations based on their perceived value or threat (e.g., the tourist or refugee, the consumer or criminal). As such, surveillance is hegemonic in that it can appear rational and reasonable even while it reproduces undemocratic and discriminatory social orders shot through with gender, racial, class, and other inequalities.

Although many artists may be committed to visibilizing the hidden worlds and effects of surveillance, visibility projects are far from neutral endeavors. If one thinks of visibility not as a representation of reality but instead as a complex social process that orders the world and establishes relationships,[12] then efforts to change—or maintain—visibility regimes are always political and contextually dependent. What is perceptible and knowable at any given moment is a product of dominant aesthetic arrangements, or what Jacques Rancière calls "the distribution of the sensible,"[13] so efforts to disrupt those arrangements can never simply be about unveiling the truth of their partiality or unjustness.[14] Redistributions of the sensible rely on alternative-visibility projects that undermine the legitimacy of the dominant while manufacturing possibilities outside or beyond the trammels of political authority and the status quo. Experimental creative practices hold great promise for destabilizing prevailing forms of visibility, but they are also inseparably woven into existing social structures and orders, making degrees of complicity unavoidable. Interventions emerge from and are dependent upon dominant distributions of the sensible, which constrain potentials for fundamental change.[15] When artists take the politics of visibility *as* the subject of art, frames for difference become even more fraught because typical visual grammars and metaphors—such as "shedding light" on abuses—mobilize, and reinforce, scientific registers that undergird the aesthetic order being critiqued.

Modern forms of visibility are ultimately violent, reductive, and exclusionary. This orientation finds its roots in the Enlightenment and subsequent scientific revolution, where depictions of a more organismic, female conception of nature that should be safeguarded gave way to a mechanistic view of nature that should be conquered and exploited. This new culture of science rested on visibility—both in the method of inquiry and the political order granting science a privileged position. As Carolyn Merchant graphically recounts, proponents of science such as Francis Bacon invoked analogies of women being tortured, raped, and enslaved to explain how one should harness nature's secrets.[16] Rather than a demonstrable shift from values of subjectivity to those of objectivity, social stratification infused scientific knowledge production over the course of the seventeenth century, ushering in a period where aristocratic white gentlemen trusted the honor of their colleagues and served as "modest witnesses" to their discoveries.[17] European women, who previously ran science-themed "salons," were excluded from these professional viewing practices by the eighteenth century.[18] Early scientific vision was therefore founded on themes of violent subjugation and social exclusion, which gradually acquired the trappings of objectivity and placeless, unmarked knowledge. Such knowledge, as Donna Haraway explicates, disavows its responsibility for the sordid outcomes of its visualizations—"militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and [white] male supremacy"—while executing "the god-trick of seeing everything from nowhere."[19] Objective vision is a violent parsing of the world that constructs elements as separate from context and subject to manipulation.[20] Even if its modalities shift over time,[21] objective vision is a political achievement masquerading as a disinterested scientific posture.

Because visibility is a way of ordering the world, it has symbiotically developed with and infused many state and colonial governance projects. Modern state efforts to police and administer societies strive to make people and their activities legible, simplifying social and ecological complexity in the process. As James C. Scott explains, even when grand state projects fail, they nevertheless succeed at imposing reductive frames and remaking the world, at least partially, in the image of bureaucratic and imperial apparatuses.[22] The impact of such state projects is especially apparent in urban planning, as with the grid structure imposed upon cities like Chicago or with the cold, rational design of cities like Brasília, where material infrastructures reflect the models of city planners and force people to adapt.[23] In the contemporary context one can trace related logics with, for instance,

state-industry schemes to implement global supply chains, facilitate the flow of goods across national territories, and criminalize any impediments to those imperatives.[24] Visibility is integral to rationalization efforts, whether of states, corporations, or institutions more generally.

These processes of "governing through visibility" have deep roots in social systems founded on white supremacy and antiblack violence. As recent black studies scholarship in the Afro-pessimism tradition has productively insisted, slavery and colonization should not be dismissed as exceptional, if shameful, events in the histories of modern liberal societies but should be viewed instead as constitutive features of such societies, as foundational racial hierarchies and violences that continue to shape the present. Thus, for scholars such as Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton, full incorporation and inclusion of marginalized groups into civil society is a definitional impossibility because civil society is predicated on the erasure and disavowal of black subjecthood.[25] Black and brown bodies were—and are—subjugated and controlled through visualization and containment processes that deny their personhood and reduce them to malleable "flesh." Hortense Spillers characterizes this dynamic as one of "pornotroping," where nonwhite bodies are presented as objects for dehumanized manipulation and possession while white subjecthood is simultaneously centered as the position from which one could perpetrate such violence.[26] To this conversation, Amber Jamilla Musser adds an important focus on the sexual dimensions of such exercises of racial domination: "The pornotrope allows us to see that violence toward black and brown people is inextricable from theorizations of sexuality. The violence and projection that produce the pornotrope require at their core a subject who desires and who thereby objectifies and possesses others through this desire."[27] Put differently, there is a profound and troubling intimacy involved in exercises of racialized power that can be detected in visceral form, for example, in graphic scenes of white police officers grappling with, dominating, and killing black men—with the knee on the neck, the chokehold, the hood placed over one's head.[28] In these embodied performances of racial domination, visibility regimes informed by white supremacy position nonwhite bodies as out of place, as unruly, as dehumanized targets for masculine police aggression.

In sum, schemes to make people legible have ignoble racial histories that permeate the present and continue to shape contemporary politics. As surveillance studies scholar Simone Browne puts it, "Racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain the intersecting surveillances of our present

order."[29] Whether with the management of enslaved people on plantations, the arbitrary segregation of populations by racial markers, or the fabrication of photographic archives of supposed criminal types, scientific or bureaucratic visualizations of human difference have served to justify and normalize violent, discriminatory practices.[30] Today, racial profiling and neighborhood "hot-spot" policing reproduce some of these dynamics, where for some, being visible is synonymous with being in danger. If one is perceived as a threat, one's visible presence can be interpreted as an invitation for correction, potentially with fatal results. If these are the valences of modern visibility, then appeals to visibility to correct social problems run the risk of shoring up visual economies that have decidedly harmful encodings even if—or perhaps because—they present themselves as impartial or objective.[31]

Critical Surveillance Art

The current preponderance of surveillance-themed art indexes growing concerns with power and visibility in a technologically mediated, data-dominated world, one marked by ambiguity, vulnerability, and violence. Though acknowledging the pitfalls and double binds of using creative visual media to contest deleterious state-corporate visibility regimes, inspiring and emotionally powerful art projects nevertheless suggest ways to sidestep or work differently within the constraints of modern visibility. Typically, the term *surveillance art* refers to art or performance projects that either focus on surveillance problematics or incorporate surveillance technologies into their aesthetic production.[32] By adding the word *critical*, as in *critical surveillance art*, I signal that the works in question also tackle issues of domination, oppression, and inequality. As my analysis will make clear, not all surveillance art aspires to or achieves this standard, but the works in question still provide ample opportunities to reflect on aesthetic limitations and their implications for other modes of engagement.

What can art teach us about visibility and surveillance today? Art theorists have long observed that technologies, art forms, and modes of perception codevelop, allowing one to read societal mutations through art.[33] For example, Jonathan Crary relates the emergence of "subjective vision" during the nineteenth century, where increasing mechanization coincided with scientific understandings of the body as a technical apparatus that actively produced perception, as opposed to simply receiving visual stimuli

passively.[34] Artistic forms echoed these ideas, such as Muybridge's motion slides of horses or Seurat's pointillism paintings, both of which referenced the *process* of perception by making explicit the mechanistic links between discrete visual components and the whole. More than that, such art forms referenced the formation of new subjectivities aligned with capitalist logics, as people strove to focus their attention to be productive and disciplined. Similarly, by engaging with contemporary surveillance art, one can discover new problem areas, such as new articulations of state violence, while also detecting emergent subjectivities, sociopolitical formations, and methods of interruption.

Accordingly, critical surveillance art can reveal and challenge current configurations of visibility and violence. By resisting the impulse to reduce art to its practical application, the aleatory opens up, allowing the imagination to run and emotional connections to form. As Néstor García Canclini poetically writes, "Art is the place of imminence—the place where we catch sight of things that are just at the point of occurring. Art gains its attraction in part from the fact that it proclaims something that could happen, promising meaning or modifying meaning through insinuations. It makes no unbreakable commitment to hard facts. It leaves what it says hanging."[35] Art can tease apart relationships to contemporary visual economies and present them for contemplation.[36] It conjures the demons of the political present, refracted through their past incarnations and future potentialities. As Ronak Kapadia relates in his incisive work on creative responses to imperial warfare, "Attention to art and aesthetics as forms of sensuous knowledge and critique can make available alternate ways of knowing and feeling the social world."[37] Particularly for the task of tracing the outlines and implications of the invisible worlds of surveillance, such creative expression may be uniquely equipped to communicate threats and shape political sensibilities because the point is not to identify a single problem but to describe a pervasive assemblage with significant, if uneven, consequences for entire populations and ways of life.[38] Elise Morrison therefore describes surveillance art as inviting "critical spectatorship" and encouraging audiences "to interact with surveillance technologies in new and different ways and to examine anew their habitual relationships with the matrix of discipline and desire in contemporary surveillance society."[39]

In a sense, this is a book about invisibility. It follows artists who strive to render visible the hidden vectors of social, political, and economic power,

particularly those vectors that are technologically mediated and instantiated. Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty, Andrea Brighenti portrays the invisible as "not simply something visible that happens to be contingently away from sight. Rather, the invisible is what is *here without being an object*. The invisible is *intrinsic* to the visible, is what makes it possible."[40] The cultural logics of surveillance, those of pervasive, unassailable assessment and control, function as such intrinsic scripts that order worlds and destabilize subjects. Thus, artists endeavor to depict the invisible operations that govern contemporary life. Rather than posit solutions, per se, critical surveillance art seeks to agitate, to fashion situations that expose visibility regimes and challenge audiences to reflect on their places within them. In keeping with a general shift toward performance-based approaches to art over the past few decades,[41] many of the works I discuss in this book can be read as creating *situations* that enfold audiences into scenes. Whereas individual artistic artifacts or installations are still central, they often operate in the service of the experiences they catalyze and subjectivities they engender.[42] From this perspective, then, consumption gives way to subject transformation as the most potent desired outcome of artistic encounters.

There are dangers in emphasizing the visual, though. The primary danger is succumbing to the escapist allure of transparency, with its attendant traps of objectivity, impartiality, and truth. Transparency infuses state and corporate efforts to make populations governable and profitable; it is a cornerstone of modern scientific rationality, which valorizes legibility and the production of empirical evidence as the basis for decision making. Transparency is a weapon that affords the objectification and control of others, so it is an agonistic method at best and a means of domination and destruction at worst. As such, many of the surveillance abuses contested by artists and activists are motivated in the first place by logics of transparency. If all one does is unearth and shine a light on such abuses, one risks reproducing their underlying logics. Appropriation of transparency, in other words, reaffirms the value and importance of making others visible and controllable when, instead, perhaps such conceptual tools of domination should themselves be discarded to make way for alternative, more ethical arrangements.[43] At the very least, by deconstructing transparency one can stress the partiality and politics of institutional vision that—while well insulated and assiduously maintained—is nonetheless vulnerable to competing representations and collective action.

Crisis Vision

Reading art as a lens into the problematics of visibility today reveals increasing apprehension about loss of control over the conditions of one's life, where even legal and technical frameworks—contemporary governmentalities—are blurred and volatile.[44] From discourses of big data disclosing counterintuitive facts, to fears about living in post-truth and fake-news informational ecosystems, to resurgent nationalisms and authoritarianisms, to conditions of radical economic precarity, to growing awareness of police violence against people of color, a sense of insecurity characterizes contemporary social worlds. A dominant *subjective vision* remains, responsibilizing individuals for their plights as they actively labor to achieve security, but it has mutated into a *crisis vision* that perceives the overwhelming menace of supposedly extrinsic forces (economic, environmental, technological) as filtered through racialized visibility regimes.

Crisis vision is a destructive way of seeing that amplifies differences among individuals and inspires the scapegoating of those marked as Other (the refugee, the undocumented immigrant, the racial minority). It is a type of transference whereby blame for economic and environmental instability and unpredictability, and for the illegibility of the grounds for those conditions, is redirected to the marginalized. This results in demands for increased surveillance, punishment, and exclusion of the marginalized and abject, leaving intact and obscure the underlying systems of crisis.[45]

Crisis vision also signifies an entire field of operation where visual logics structure social and cultural life. It is revealed as much in low-level worries about routine surveillance as in moral panics about immigrants or the poor, as much in bourgeois white uneasiness about privacy infringements as in discriminatory police targeting of minority neighborhoods. In all cases, crisis vision works to position subjects along a *continuum of threat* and, by extension, position others along that same continuum. It solidifies a worldview predicated on threat mitigation through exposure, where one's selective and voluntary self-exposure may perversely normalize the violent, involuntary exposure of others. Crisis vision continuously resecures conditions of privilege—particularly white, male, straight, affluent privilege—through the subjugation and disenfranchisement of others. Therefore, inequality underwrites a pervasive system of crisis vision and is materialized through it.

Crisis vision is racialized vision. It thrives on the pornotrope to reduce racialized bodies to flesh—or to nonsubjects—whose domination occurs

increasingly, disturbingly, without apparent compunction on the part of police or other authorities. As Rachel Hall relates in her work on the cultural politics of airport security, racialized bodies can never be sufficiently transparent for authorities because they can never sufficiently achieve white subjecthood.[46] This relative lack of transparency is perforce coded as threat "merely by daring to show something that is not totally visually accessible and immediately comprehendible to the viewer or monitor."[47] In response, Hall continues, nonwhites are disproportionally subjected to performances of "forcible transparency"—strip searches, imprisonment, torture—in attempts to uncover and decipher what are presumed to be hidden truths or at least to discipline the bodies that contain them.[48]

The component terms of the concept—"crisis" and "vision"—each speak to the rationalities of the present. Crisis implies a temporary rupture of normality, an unsettling that motivates emergency measures and extreme actions. It is a condition that compels triage, not a fundamental rethinking of social norms and structures. Vision suggests a neutral mechanism by which one can parse crises and perform the triage necessary to reestablish normality. Vision, in this sense, is a powerful fiction that equates seeing with understanding, and understanding with control. Vision hides more than it reveals, though, particularly with respect to its role in maintaining the racial order through the consistent construction of racialized subjects as threats and white subjects as victims. Putting the terms together, this visibility regime appeals to exceptional circumstances while obscuring the history and obduracy of racialized response. Crisis vision, as a concept, describes a cultural formation that positions people in the world and structures their relationships. The emphasis here is not on specific agents but instead on modes of activation, on the ways that insecurity and uncertainty find expression in vision.

By approaching surveillance in this way, crisis vision focuses attention on the racializing and hierarchy-building effects of contemporary visual economies. It underscores the violent, dehumanizing, and unequal implications of surveillance apparatuses that reify white supremacist and patriarchal normative structures. It affords recognition of the tight historical entwinement of scientific rationality, gender exclusion, and racial subjugation within liberal social orders. Therefore, grappling with the crisis-vision concept may compel scholars to be skeptical about present-day reformist appeals to the rule of law or to institutional transparency as antidotes for surveillance abuses, particularly given that legal structures and scientific

rationalities have historically been—and still are—tools of domination.[49] Although likewise enmeshed in the expansive cultural context of crisis vision, art may offer a way to think and feel its dynamics differently. To the extent that art denaturalizes crisis vision by calling into question its terms or truth claims, it holds the promise of fostering different ways of being—and being seen—with others.

Potentials of Opacity

The fusion of crisis vision with contemporary transparency imperatives presents a seemingly unassailable force that resists redirection. In response, many artists present—or perform—*opacity* as a countermove to ubiquitous surveillance. Opacity entails the maintenance of relative illegibility and blurred boundaries to preserve individual potentiality within collective existence. Crucially, opacity in this sense is *not* about invisibility or privacy but is instead an assertion of ethical relations among nonreducible subjects.[50] As Édouard Glissant articulates, opacity represents "a world in which one exists, or agrees to exist, with and among others." In contradistinction to the control logics of transparency, "the right to opacity . . . is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity."[51] Opacity revels in the entanglement of diverse subjects and knowledges without striving to uncover their essences or impose order upon them.[52]

For Glissant, mandates for transparency—as with the policing of language use—are part of a rearguard action by former colonial powers, such as France, to maintain control over minoritized subjects and protect civilization "against the rash actions of an excessive collectivization of identity."[53] Such state-driven mandates are efforts to contain and purify the potentials of opacity. In the contemporary context of pervasive surveillance systems predicated upon datafication, hyper-classification, and differential treatment of subjects, transparency serves as the master protocol, such that opacity is anathema to digitally mediated existence.[54] Hence, claims to opacity—for instance, on the part of transgender individuals—can be self-affirming but also construed as subversive actions that invite exclusion or aggressive reassertions of hierarchical power on the part of institutional authorities or others.[55] Consequently, opacity possesses both "liberating and oppressive"[56] modalities: it can be liberating when affording conditions of coexistence within multiplicity, but oppressive if taken as an invi-

tation for retaliation or if deployed by institutions to mask dehumanizing violence and abuse.

Opacity also emerges from crisis vision and its enactments. Whereas the racial animus of crisis vision may provoke distress at the supposed unknowability of black and brown bodies, which are read as possessing a kind of ominous opacity, crisis vision also *produces* opacity by dehumanizing subjects and positioning them as Other, and subsequently as illegible and unrelatable by definition. Significantly, such racial opacity resides not only in the realm of the interior, as in the inability to know someone's thoughts or feelings, but also on the exterior, on the unreadable surfaces of wounded skin and flesh. Musser writes about this as "what violence produces and cannot incorporate . . . excess flesh actually hides in plain sight—opacity is found in the inability to take it all in and produce coherence."[57] Such failures to incorporate the excess of violence also signal places of possibility, places where systems of racial subjugation and capital extraction encounter glitches and where liberating articulations of opacity can manifest in survivability, creativity, and sociality.[58]

As I deploy the term in this book, opacity does not stand in direct opposition to transparency.[59] Rather, it is that which cannot be contained by transparency, that which exceeds purification or eradication: (co)existence alongside, within, in spite of modern liberal orders that would deny life beyond their legal and technical parameters. The opaque persists and survives, suggesting both rich meaning beyond hierarchical systems and avenues for activist intervention to nourish its growth. Furthermore, I seek to move beyond a recognition or celebration of opaque subjects to question the ways that *contexts* and *structures* could be transformed to support liberating opacity as a deeper ethical relation. Said differently, the opaque points to conditions of ambiguity, uncertainty, and possibility that foster the emergence of noninstitutionally defined formations of identity, collectivity, and praxis. Thus, in my exploration of artworks I push for readings of the opaque on the level of relations, and I explore the potentials of opacity to serve as an aesthetic counter to the destructive patterns and dynamics of crisis vision.

Practicing Cultural Critique

The creative outputs of artists offer vital projects to think with. Therefore, my focus is not on the intentions or political commitments of artists per se, but rather on the cultural work enacted by their efforts. Creative projects

tend to spill over with an excess of signification and affect, pointing toward alterity even when they are stunted, making them especially generative resources with which to engage problematics of visibility and power. This book explores the surveillance vocabularies such works generate, the subjectivities and relationships they represent and catalyze, their assumptions and omissions, and their participation in the cultural production of surveillance as a social category. Following from theorist Terry Eagleton, I understand art to reside in the realm of the aesthetic, which serves as an "amphibious concept" that can both normalize and challenge dominant capitalist forms.[60] Consequently, it is necessary to trace the ideological foundations and resonances of art, or its conservative overtones, even as one explores its progressive possibilities or productive disruptions. Much scholarly writing on surveillance-themed art has simplistically viewed it as laudable resistance, a useful representation of current or future surveillance problems, or a resource for advancing social science arguments—that is, as captivating images justifying the importance of one's area of study.[61] I instead advocate for a more critical posture. *I assert that artworks function as political performances that contribute, for better or worse, to discourses on surveillance, inflecting cultural understandings of crisis vision*. The task is not to valorize or demonize the works in question but instead to carefully *interpret* their layers of meaning and situate them in larger symbolic economies and sociopolitical contexts.[62] This necessitates, of course, approaching artworks both as individual efforts and as part of a broader field of aesthetic activity grouped by aligned concerns with surveillance and its ramifications.

The materials for my analysis come predominantly from discrete creative products and installations that highlight relations of visibility and power. These are works that in different ways explore the ramifications of relatively hidden surveillance systems, practices, and conditions, most with attention to subjectivities engendered by technologically mediated forms of control. I also selectively include performances, such as dance or street protests, that unearth—and trouble—visibility dynamics that link bodies to larger systems of violence and oppression. That said, because performance studies scholars have made major contributions recently investigating performance-based critiques of surveillance,[63] I direct my focus mostly to the work of visual artists. I embrace here a cultural studies approach that engages artworks as political performances that contribute to the cultural production of visibility regimes even while they offer critical perspectives for change.

Art projects can either obscure or highlight relationships of power, privilege, and violence. Especially for those works that take watching or visibility as their subjects, they have the potential to confront the relative invisibility of privilege, especially the white, affluent privilege of many art consumers. They can uncomfortably call into question differential experiences of exposure to and complicity with the systems in question, including, perhaps, the complicity and status positions of artists. Not discounting the productive capacity of artistically provoked discomfort, such moments may also serve as interventions in watching. According to artist and theorist Adrian Piper, "Artwork that draws one into a relationship with the other in the indexical present trades easy classification—and hence xenophobia—for a direct and immediate experience of the complexity of the other, and of one's own responses to her. Experiencing the other in the indexical present teaches one how to see."[64] From this position, the question becomes how to stage conditions for seeing and acknowledging the unpalatable (injustice, complicity, racism, sexism). Important as this question is, it is surprising how few artworks about surveillance begin to confront these issues in any depth, let alone explore the nuances of activating change. The reasons for this lie in the conventional framing apparatuses that present themselves for activist and artistic use. Even for projects that do address larger systems of violence, artists and others may be reluctant to explore relationships of complicity and may inadvertently reproduce racialized or gendered hierarchies of value in their attempt to activate empathy or change in viewers.

For example, as I discuss in chapter 4, Hanne Nielsen and Birgit Johnsen's video art project *Drifting* draws attention to the refugee crisis in Europe but does so in ways that reproduce tropes of heroic, masculine individualism. The artists create a scene of a lone figure floating at sea on a makeshift raft: a handsome light-skinned man pitted against the unforgiving elements in his quest for a better life. As the camera follows the man through the bureaucratic process of determining his identity and rights, he may be moving closer to his goal, but viewers see the ways that state apparatuses slowly erode opacity. State systems reduce the man to data and thereby diminish his potential, which was so abundant initially when he was adrift and his situation most dire. Thus, this work tackles a pressing social problem and subtly critiques the bureaucratic systems tasked with managing refugees, but it does so by maintaining a shroud over the historical and contemporary determinants of refugee crises and fabricating a simplified story that ignores the magnitude and racial dimensions of the situation.

Likely unintentionally, it affirms narratives of worthy and unworthy refugees, where those who are the most deserving happen to look white and fit conventional rescue narratives (for example, of the lone castaway or the helpless woman or child). The amphibious qualities of this piece can be detected in these cultural tropes of worthiness, which normalize a form of value-based sorting of populations even as the piece seeks to educate viewers and support humanitarian actions. By critiquing the art project in this way, one can begin to grasp the tenacity of crisis vision—which constrains social awareness and action more broadly—and identify areas where more, or different, work needs to be done.

From this standpoint, critical art projects can be seen as offering a way to organize collective attention to cartographies of state and corporate violence that percolate through social systems and material infrastructures. Surveillance, as a privileged mechanism for regulating the identities and mobilities of individuals, provides a generative starting point for tracing systems of domination as they materialize in a specific application, such as in state-run refugee screening systems. If interpreted beyond their initial surface meanings, such aesthetic projects can carve out space for reflection on the differential ramifications of visibility for different groups. Even when artists ignore their own privileged standpoints or invoke a universal subject whose privacy or autonomy is at risk, in so doing they enact omissions that can be discerned by critics and flagged as sticking points in ideological edifices. Through their creative acts, they constitute problem areas (privacy loss, police violence, automated discrimination), and they script roles for characters (victims, villains, heroes, witnesses). The structure of these dramas reveals and reifies the nature of crisis-vision problematics. It is the critic's responsibility, as I see it, to connect the dots and show how and where these creative works support or undermine the systems or rationalities in question, or how they do both simultaneously.

To summarize, surveillance-themed artworks emerge to critique increasingly pervasive yet obscure visibility regimes that undemocratically structure the conditions of life. Such works provide partial glimpses of control systems and their politics, presenting targets for intervention, but many of them have difficulty unpacking crisis vision's corrosive tendency to amplify social difference and violence. That is to say, the artworks possess their own blind spots, which reveal something about the broader difficulties of addressing surveillance problems while depending upon limiting but alluring frames. For instance, notions of universal threats and indi-

vidual responsibility, in particular, eclipse the racial violence inherent in liberal social orders; likewise, tropes of transparency and accountability allow artists, scholars, and others to conveniently ignore the logics of domination and exclusion encoded in those historically contingent constructs. These are not insignificant quibbles with art or activism or scholarship. By participating in these conversations, through creative expression or otherwise, one delimits the problem area and contributes to the fabrication of common sense (the distribution of the sensible), effectively diminishing or delegitimizing more radical, as in "root," critiques. In short, the stakes are high.

Artistic Frames

This book explores the operations of crisis vision through critical surveillance art. I illustrate the ways that crisis vision manifests in various economies of surveillance and how artists engage with, capitulate to, or push back on crisis-vision formulations with their work. Through interpretation of artworks, I bring into focus the tenacious ideological underpinnings of crisis vision, which often normalize structural racism and violence through dominant cultural narratives or discriminatory surveillance apparatuses. I develop the concept of opacity across the chapters and assess its potential to destabilize crisis vision, especially through creative means. Importantly, this project enters into conversation with art as a way to generate perspective on *collective constraints* in dealing with surveillance problems, not just artistic constraints alone.

Each of the book's chapters explores a different artistic frame for critiquing contemporary surveillance. The frame of "avoidance" constructs notions of universal threats that can be mitigated through private consumptive acts, which is an approach that consolidates white privilege while ignoring how crisis vision unequally affects marginalized groups. "Transparency" focuses attention on the dangers of institutional archives in an era of crisis vision, where inaccessible archives are often deployed to segment populations and maintain racial hierarchies. "Complicity" highlights the illegibility and ambiguity of surveillance situations under crisis vision to cultivate a sense of shared ethical responsibility among viewing subjects. The frame of "violence" productively recasts surveillance as discriminatory, inflected by both economic forces and cultural prejudices, but it also demonstrates the resilience of crisis vision in valorizing evidentiary modes of inquiry and

viewer agency, not the agency of those most harmed by violence. Finally, "disruption" rejects, rather than recuperates, crisis vision's destructive mythology of liberal personhood, opting instead for defiance, resilience, and faith in community that survives despite it. Across these chapters, *I argue that the most productive interventions are those that destabilize the crisis-vision framework by tracing its inherent exclusions and carving out space for collective opacity.*

The book's general arc moves from specific surveillance devices or systems to broader social problems that are reproduced by surveillance logics. Thus, if critical surveillance art aspires to disrupt crisis vision's conditions of domination or oppression, then decentering the technologies appears to allow artists to refocus attention on such deeper concerns. Surveillance logics are woven throughout modern states and their institutions, so starting a critique with technology, while certainly practical and generative, may occlude deep-seated relations of power that are fused to conceptions of objectivity, transparency, and accountability. In a time of perceived ontological insecurity, crisis vision flourishes, motivating further surveillance efforts to reestablish control through means that mask their politics, through visibility projects that marginalize and exclude, once again. The visibility imperative must itself be questioned, explored, and critiqued. It must be felt differently and anew.[65] This is the realm of the arts, not the sciences. It is the motivation that drives this book.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Monahan, "Surveillance and Terrorism."

2. Roberta Smith, "Watch Out: You're in Ai Weiwei's Surveillance Zone," *New York Times*, June 8, 2017, accessed January 5, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2017/06/08/arts/design/watch-out-youre-in-ai-weiweis-surveillance-zone.html.

3. A portion of the *Hansel & Gretel* installation does allow visitors to scan for their own faces in the automatically generated photo archive. This does not reveal underlying code so much as demonstrate biometric capability, or lack thereof, as the failure rate is high. Smith, "Watch Out."

4. For example, Levin, Frohne, and Weibel, *Ctrl [Space]*.

5. Greenwald, *No Place to Hide*; Lyon, *Surveillance after Snowden*.

6. Grinberg, "Tracking Movements"; Monahan, "Built to Lie"; Parks and Kaplan, *Life in the Age of Drone Warfare*.

7. Benjamin, *Race after Technology*; Eubanks, *Automating Inequality*; Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression*.

8. Harcourt, *Exposed*; Lewis, *Under Surveillance*; Monahan, "Built to Lie"; Woods, "Asking More of Siri and Alexa."

9. Kreiss and Mcgregor, "'Arbiters of What Our Voters See'"; Marwick, "Why Do People Share Fake News?"

10. Lyon, *Surveillance Society*; Monahan and Murakami Wood, *Surveillance Studies*.

11. For a comprehensive overview of the origins and development of the transdisciplinary field of surveillance studies, see Monahan and Murakami Wood, "Introduction." For a few recent works that tackle issues of domination and oppression directly, see Beauchamp, *Going Stealth*; Browne, *Dark Matters*; Hall, *Transparent Traveler*; Harding, *Performance, Transparency, and the Cultures of Surveillance*; Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics*; and Monahan, "Regulating Belonging."

12. Brighenti, "Visibility"; Fyfe and Law, "Introduction"; Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*.

13. Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*.

14. Mirzoeff employs the term *visuality* to signal Rancière's "distribution of the sensible." In this book I use the term *visibility* instead: (1) to underscore the relationship between

how one is seen and treated, and (2) to tackle more directly the social construction and constraints of visual apparatuses (surveillance systems, archives, infrastructures) that enfold artists and activists (and scholars) in complicit arrangements with that which they critique. Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*.

15. As will be discussed in later chapters, the frame of "the distribution of the sensible," while provocative, is overdetermined and does not adequately explain the process by which new or different social or cultural formations could emerge. Victor Turner, in a different register, reminds us that symbols also have the capacity to point toward or generate different (idealized) social orders, not merely reinforce current ones: "Symbols may well reflect not structure, but anti-structure, and not only reflect it but contribute to creating it." Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors*, 270.

16. Merchant, *Death of Nature*, 169–72.

17. Shapin, *Social History of Truth*.

18. Terrall, "Gendered Spaces, Gendered Audiences."

19. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, 188–89.

20. On a parallel track, feminist science studies scholarship has likewise problematized the ways that medical imaging devices reduce bodies to visible representations of data, such that performances of scientific transparency often efface context, embodiment, and experience. As Paula Treichler, Lisa Cartwright, and Constance Penley caution, "Visibility is itself a claim that must be carefully examined: in acknowledging what is seen, and newly seen, we need to be equally vigilant about what is not seen, or no longer seen." Medical imaging technologies, as with other tools of visibility, draw upon and operate within cultural and media contexts to produce instrumental, but necessarily partial, meaning and value. Treichler, Cartwright, and Penley, "Introduction," 3. See also Cartwright, *Screening the Body*; Dumit, *Picturing Personhood*; Joyce, *Magnetic Appeal*; Saunders, *CT Suite*; and Van Dijck, *Transparent Body*.

21. Daston and Galison, "Image of Objectivity."

22. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

23. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

24. Cowen, *Deadly Life of Logistics*.

25. Frank Wilderson asserts that "the position of the Black is . . . a paradigmatic impossibility in the Western Hemisphere, indeed, in the world . . . [because] a Black is the very antithesis of a Human subject." Wilderson, *Red, White & Black*, 9. See also Sexton, *Amalgamation Schemes*; Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; and Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*.

On a related note, there is ample debate and hand-wringing by authors and editors about whether to capitalize the word *black* or keep it lowercase. The dominant convention at the moment is to raise "Black" to uppercase while keeping "white" as lowercase, which grammatically flags the presence and importance of nonwhite groups. However, I worry that this convention risks normalizing whiteness, once again, as the absence of race, as that which does not need capitalization because it is assumed. I am also uncomfortable by the implied collapse of racial difference into a single proper-noun signifier, be it "Black," "Brown," or something else. Although my decision not to capitalize *black* is provisional, and I may have changed my mind by the time this book is

in print, I find myself further persuaded by the eloquent treatment of this topic by La Marr Jurelle Bruce:

> I do not typically capitalize *black* because I do not regard it as a *proper* noun. Grammatically, the proper noun corresponds to a formal name or title assigned to an individual, closed, fixed entity. I use a lowercase *b* because I want to emphasize an *improper* blackness: a blackness that is a "critique of the proper"; a blackness that is collectivist rather than individualistic; a blackness that is "never closed and always under contestation"; a blackness that is ever-unfurling rather than rigidly fixed; a blackness that is neither capitalized nor propertized via the protocols of Western grammar; a blackness that centers those who are typically regarded as lesser and *lower cases*, as it were; a blackness that amplifies those who are treated as "minor figures," in Western modernity. I appreciate that some use the big *B* to confer respect, signal gravitas, and indicate specificity. However, the impropriety of lowercase blackness suits me, and this mad black project, just fine. Besides, my minor *b* is replete with respect, gravitas, and specificity-in-collectivity, too; its smallness does not limit the infinite care it contains. (Bruce, *How to Go Mad without Losing Your Mind*, 6)

26. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe."

27. Musser, *Sensual Excess*, 7.

28. I am referencing here the police killing of George Floyd in 2020, Eric Garner in 2014, and Daniel Prude in 2020, respectively.

29. Browne, *Dark Matters*, 9.

30. Browne, *Dark Matters*; Cole, *Suspect Identities*; Mirzoeff, *Right to Look*.

31. Whereas the emphasis here is on scientific and state institutions, feminist scholars have also illustrated the destructive ramifications of a normalized male gaze, which differentially positions women as passive objects to be scrutinized (or self-scrutinized) and controlled. See, for example, Dubrofsky and Magnet, *Feminist Surveillance Studies*; hooks, "Oppositional Gaze"; Monahan, "Dreams of Control at a Distance"; and Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

32. For example, Andrea Mubi Brighenti uses the term *surveillance art* to describe aesthetic works that engage with "topics, concerns and procedures" relevant to the study of surveillance in society. Brighenti, "Artveillance," 175. For Elise Morrison, surveillance art includes a range of art and performance projects "in which surveillance technologies are central to their production, design, content, aesthetics, and/or reception." Morrison, *Discipline and Desire*, 7.

33. Berger, *Ways of Seeing*; Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*; Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

34. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*.

35. Canclini, *Art beyond Itself*, xiii.

36. I borrow the term *visual economy* from Deborah Poole and adapt it throughout this book to frame crisis-vision economies of surveillance. For Poole, the term is better suited than other terms, such as *visual culture*, for "thinking about visual images as part of a comprehensive organization of people, ideas, and objects." Whereas *visual culture* might better reference "shared meanings and community," *visual economy*

stresses "social relationships, inequality, and power." Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 8.

37. Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics*, 39.

38. This orientation harmonizes with J. Macgregor Wise's development of the concept of the "surveillant imaginary" to analyze the performative effects of surveillance themes in popular films: "The surveillant imaginary is a regime of representation, an attempt at a coherent and seamless narrative about how the world is. . . . The tension in film is between the ways it papers over the contradictions and antagonisms of the social and the ways it can reveal those antagonisms." Wise, *Surveillance and Film*, 6. See also Fang, *Arresting Cinema*; Lefait, *Surveillance on Screen*; Pallitto, *Bargaining with the Machine*; and Zimmer, *Surveillance Cinema*.

39. Morrison, *Discipline and Desire*, 11.

40. Brighenti, "Visibility," 328.

41. Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

42. See China Medel for an account of how artworks might catalyze "ethical spectatorship" on the part of viewers by activating feeling and the corporeal components of seeing. Medel, "Transactional Seeing and Becoming Flesh."

43. Monahan, "Reckoning with Covid, Racial Violence, and the Perilous Pursuit of Transparency."

44. Andrejevic, *Infoglut*.

45. Monahan, "Regulating Belonging."

46. Hall, *Transparent Traveler*.

47. Hall, *Transparent Traveler*, 7.

48. Hall, *Transparent Traveler*.

49. In keeping with my previous critical scholarship in surveillance studies, I see this book as contributing to feminist and antiracist surveillance studies. As Rachel Hall writes, "Feminist scholars of surveillance . . . shift critical surveillance studies away from matters of privacy, security, and efficiency to a consideration of the political problem of combating new forms of discrimination that are practiced in relation to categories of privilege, access, and risk." Hall, *Transparent Traveler*, 19. See also Beauchamp, *Going Stealth*; Benjamin, *Race after Technology*; Browne, *Dark Matters*; Dubrofsky and Magnet, *Feminist Surveillance Studies*; Fischer, *Terrorizing Gender*; Koskela, "'You Shouldn't Wear That Body'"; Magnet, *When Biometrics Fail*; Monahan, "Surveillance and Inequality"; Monahan, "Dreams of Control at a Distance"; Monahan, "Regulating Belonging"; and van der Meulen and Heynen, *Expanding the Gaze*.

50. The concept of opacity should not be conflated with privacy, for the two operate in completely different registers and in many ways are at odds. Whereas opacity emphasizes collectives and the irreducibility of subjects, privacy emphasizes individuals and their representative data elements. Whereas opacity underscores violent exclusions, erasures, and incommensurabilities at the heart of liberal social orders, privacy invokes discourses of universality and shared fundamental rights within those orders. The different orientations of these concepts can also be mapped onto modes of activist or artistic resistance to surveillance, in which those seeking ways of rejecting categori-

zation schemes may be working toward opacity, whereas those striving to "obfuscate" data are more likely embracing privacy.

51. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 114, 190.

52. This is consonant with what Rachel Hall describes as critical "antirealist" approaches to surveillance studies, which assume "that surveillance data is impoverished by comparison to the rich, inexhaustible, and unpredictable quality of lived experience, which includes the interior life of the imagination, creativity, memory, and desire." Hall, *Transparent Traveler*, 15.

53. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 113.

54. Birchall, *Radical Secrecy*; Birchall, *Shareveillance*.

55. Beauchamp, *Going Stealth*; Blas, "Informatic Opacity"; Hall, *Transparent Traveler*.

56. Blas, "Informatic Opacity," 199.

57. Musser, *Sensual Excess*, 9–10.

58. Ruha Benjamin writes: "Glitches are generally considered a fleeting interruption of an otherwise benign system, not an enduring and constitutive feature of social life. But what if we understand glitches instead to be a slippery place . . . between fleeting and durable, micro-interactions and macro-structures, individual hate and institutional indifference? Perhaps in that case glitches are not spurious, but rather a kind of signal of how the system operates. Not an aberration but a form of evidence, illuminating underlying flaws in a corrupted system." Benjamin, *Race after Technology*, 80. In my discussion of opacity, glitches reveal the dehumanizing logic of crisis vision, which is a logic that undergirds its violence but also indicates its weakness.

59. As queer studies scholar Nicholas de Villiers posits, "Opaque and transparent—taken to their limits—don't work as opposites, since for something to be fully transparent it would be invisible, and for something to be completely opaque would mean complete blockage of vision altogether, another invisibility. So *opacity* is visible only outside of the purity of the opposition opaque/transparent itself." De Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, 22.

60. Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 9.

61. Portions of Stephen Graham's work stand as early exceptions to this scholarly trend of deploying art merely as a resource for advancing social science arguments (Graham, *Cities under Siege*; Graham, *Vertical*). Andrea Brighenti also performed some foundational conceptual mapping of surveillance art projects ("Artveillance"). The field of surveillance studies is now growing rapidly, with more sustained and nuanced treatments of art. See, for example, the impressive critical work of James Harding, *Performance, Transparency, and the Cultures of Surveillance*; Elise Morrison, *Discipline and Desire*; Ronak Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics*; Katherine Barnard-Wills and David Barnard-Wills, "Invisible Surveillance in Visual Art"; Simone Browne, *Dark Matters*; Susan Cahill, "Visual Art, Corporeal Economies, and the 'New Normal' of Surveillant Policing in the War on Terror"; Claudio Celis, "Critical Surveillance Art in the Age of Machine Vision and Algorithmic Governmentality"; Karen Louise Grova Søilen, "Safe Is a Wonderful Feeling"; and Agostinho et al., "Uncertain Archives: Approaching the Unknowns, Errors, and Vulnerabilities of Big Data through Cultural Theories of the Archive."

62. In this regard I share with Mark Andrejevic an approach to critique that does not stop with an investigation of symbols and their use but instead (also) analyzes the "social systems that generated [such symbols] and which they helped reproduce." Andrejevic, "Whither-Ing Critique," 222.

63. The primary performance studies books have been Elise Morrison's *Discipline and Desire* and James Harding's *Performance, Transparency, and the Cultures of Surveillance*. There are important differences between *Crisis Vision* and these other books. Whereas Morrison places faith in the potential of creative interventions and Harding agitates for artistically inspired activism, my theorization of opacity embraces art that uncovers slippages or glitches in surveillance regimes and that shows routes toward survival and escape. Rather than valorize acts of resistance, which might suggest a social order that could be reformed and recuperated, I place value on works that strive for opacity and destabilize liberal orders in the service of antiracism and ethical coexistence. At the same time, I also add to this scholarly domain by explicitly analyzing how artworks contribute to the cultural production of surveillance in ways that can unwittingly solidify liberal orders founded on white privilege and racial exclusion. See Harding, *Performance, Transparency, and the Cultures of Surveillance*; and Morrison, *Discipline and Desire*.

64. Piper, *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, 1:248.

65. Feeling operates as a form of knowledge, as an alternative epistemology that can mold a sense of shared opacity. With respect to technological surveillance in particular, Randolph Lewis writes: "*Feeling surveillance* is a complex experience with real implications for individual emotional lives as well as our collective political lives. . . . Instead of rendering ourselves frozen with fear, apathetic, or hyper-alert in response to the scrutiny of the powerful, we could think about the alternatives, the other ways of being in our bodies in this country right now." Lewis, *Under Surveillance*, 51.

CHAPTER ONE. **Avoidance**

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