



Excerpt from “Letters to a Young Selector” in *A Survival Guide for Living Under Total Surveillance* edited by Laura Poitras (Whitney Museum of American Art, 2016).

Your generation is the first to be raised in an environment of total surveillance. But surveillance has not yet become total for everyone everywhere and if we work together you might still create another outcome [...] Will you accept this as the only reality possible?

Over the last forty years, a revolution has swept the planet. It happened quietly and those who noticed it were ridiculed at best. It is a revolution where nearly all of our data is devoured in an automated fashion—machine to machine, person to person, voice, text. Communications, movements, all of life is consumed, quantified, searched, and catalogued. First every international telephone call, now every call. First so-called legitimate targets, now nearly every action performed over the internet by anyone or anything [...] Everyone is guilty and subject to monitoring, to be punished for transgressions at a later time. There is always the data to construct any narrative, always evidence with which to harass, prosecute, or persecute. This data is washed and passed along, legally and illegally all the same. This process is called parallel construction and when you are effective and unlucky, you will feel this tactic impact your life [...]

Resistance in an age of mass surveillance requires the ability to see as surveillance states do. It requires understanding different methods of surveillance, from the intimately physical to the abstract and electronic. It requires that we consider all possibilities even if they seem remote, to understand the realms of what is possible and of what may be unlikely. It is up to us to understand these systems and to ensure that we work together in solidarity to build new infrastructures that encode the liberties we hold dearly. Things seen as possible by some will be seen as inevitable but this is a lie: there is no inevitable system.



But you must understand: ours is a world of control and not a world of liberty. There is no wanting for those who wish to be your master and their failure begins with your refusal to bow your head. The state of the world is at odds with your refusal. Everything is uniquely identifiable: Your voice is unique. Your typing is unique. The websites you visit and the systems you use to interface with the world are unique. The pattern of travel you take through the city, the consumption of electrical power tied to your daily routines: those paying attention to you as an element of a larger picture and to you specifically will try to predict everything from the patterns of data you leave behind [...]

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Excerpt from “The Right to Look” by Nicholas Mirzoeff (2011).

I want to claim the right to look. This claim is, neither for the first nor the last time, for a right to the real. It might seem an odd request after all that we have seen in the first decade of the twenty-first century on old media and new, from the falling of the towers, to the drowning of cities, and to violence without end. The right to look is not about merely seeing. It begins at a personal level with the look into someone else’s eyes to express friendship, solidarity, or love. That look must be mutual, each inventing the other, or it fails. As such, it is unrepresentable. The right to look claims autonomy, not individualism or voyeurism, but the claim to a political subjectivity and collectivity [...]

This invention is common; it may be the common, even communist [...] You, or your group, allow another to find you, and, in so doing, you find both the other and yourself. It means requiring the recognition of the other in order to have a place from which to claim a right and to determine what is right. It is the claim to a subjectivity that has the autonomy to arrange the relations of the visible and the sayable. The right to look confronts the police who say to us, “move on, there’s nothing to see here.” Only there is; we know it, and so do they [...]