Article

Visual Art, Corporeal Economies, and the “New Normal” of Surveillant Policing in the War on Terror

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Abstract

This paper is about the racial and colonial inequalities of visibility within surveillance structures that seek to monitor and regulate bodies within the contemporary Canadian context. Specifically, it addresses what and how creative projects can contribute to this discussion by focusing on a particular artwork, Thomas Kneubühler’s *Access Denied* (2007). This work engages surveillance through the personification of the security apparatus by centralizing the bodies of those who are positioned to enforce the policies of this structure. Using Kneubühler’s artwork as the central case study, this paper thinks through what questions this project can ask of visibilities, corporeal economies, and the racialized politics of Canadian surveillance in the context of the War on Terror.

Introduction

In 2007, Swiss-Canadian artist Thomas Kneubühler hung a series of five large-size banners on the external walls of buildings in the neighbourhood of St-Henri, a historically working-class neighbourhood in Montreal that has become increasingly gentrified over the last fifteen years. The images in this site-specific installation, called *Access Denied*, display full-body photographs of male security guards staring out of the frame and directly at the viewer (see Figures 1 and 2). Each banner depicts a different person wearing a variation of a security guard uniform standing in various fluorescent-lit hallways of office buildings. While there is a certain anonymity of person and location, the familiarity of the visual vocabulary deployed in the banners—stance, clothing, context—provides Kneubühler’s project an identifiable association with the rhetoric of security and surveillance and the policing of spaces. Mounted in heavily trafficked areas around Metro stations and busy roads, the depictions of security guards look over people as they go about their business and everyday life—a not-so-subtle reminder of the role and bodies of the personnel tasked with supervising and controlling the behaviours of particular publics in particular ways. In this work, Kneubühler attempts to make visible the bodies of those who surveil—in larger-than-life forms—to those who are surveilled, in order to complicate the relationship of watcher–watched in a contemporary moment defined by the War on Terror and the widespread application of surveillance systems in the name of security.

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Figure 1: Thomas Kneubühler, *Access Denied: Le Black Jack Resto Bar (Guard #7)*, 2007. Inkjet prints on banner. Dimensions variable. Montreal, Quebec. Image courtesy of the artist. © Thomas Kneubühler.

Figure 2: Thomas Kneubühler, *Access Denied: Artery (Guard #5)*, 2007. Inkjet prints on banner. Dimensions variable. Montreal, Quebec. Image courtesy of the artist. © Thomas Kneubühler.

This piece is actually a bit of an anomaly within the oeuvre of other contemporary works addressing surveillance structures in Canada, mainly because it includes images of people placed within the surveillance structures rather than focusing on surveillance technologies or angles of viewing produced by surveillance structures. Since 2015, I have curated an online database that catalogues Canadian artists, artworks, and exhibitions that engage with contemporary systems of surveillance at <http://www.artandsurveillance.com> (Cahill 2015). As part of a larger and ongoing effort entitled *The Art & Surveillance Project*, this website circulates the wide variety of works currently being produced in the Canadian context and highlights their

participation in academic and public conversations of contemporary relevance.¹ With this online component, I am interested in emphasizing and bringing together creative works that had previously been disconnected from each other, or, at the very least, understudied as contributions within the field of surveillance studies. The majority of other artworks that I have encountered and included in this virtual catalogue often repurpose the tools of surveillance through replicating the surveillant gaze. That is, many of these works often reproduce an image that imitates recognizable surveillance representations or technologies, or they replicate an angle of viewing that enables the audience to enact surveillant viewing, or they construct an archetypal space within which surveillance structures are expected.² In most, the only bodies present are those captured through surveillant viewing or those of the audience members, because the artworks leave absent or non-represented the human presence behind and within the surveillance apparatus.³

Kneubühler’s piece, however, is different from many of these other works because it centralizes the human body as part of the structures of surveillance and security. In *Access Denied*, surveillance is addressed through the personification of the security apparatus—through the bodies of those who are positioned to enact the policies of this structure. Using this work as my case study, I want to think about what types of questions this representational form can ask in relation to visibilities, corporeal economies, and the racialized politics of Canadian surveillance within the context of the War on Terror. In Kneubühler’s piece, the majority of the security guards are Black men or Men of Colour, which creates relationships of racialized men to the surveillance structure that are unexpected in a consideration of mainstream, White-settler expectations of how and for whom the structure operates. Kneubühler presents the bodies of these men to imagine and characterize the securing and policing of bodies within the public realm and to question whose bodies inhabit and control the security apparatus and whose are watched by it.

To my mind, interpretations of *Access Denied* are inextricably linked to recent histories of anti-Muslim, anti-Black, and Islamoracist sentiments in the name of what bodies become—even embody—the enemy in the war on “terror.”⁴ So too, these contemporary contexts cannot be distinct from longer histories of which

¹ Scholarly work on art and creative practice in its intersection with the field of surveillance studies is a developing research area, and there is still much work to be done. While I focus on the contemporary Canadian context in my own work, other scholars have studied the art of surveillance in different national and international contexts. For recent scholarly and mainstream works that focus on art and cultural practices in relation to contexts of surveillance, see for example Morrison (2015), Bräunert and Malone (2016), and O’Grady (2017). For some examples rooted in the field of surveillance studies, see Brighenti (2010), Barnard-Wills and Barnard-Wills (2012), Hall, Monahan, and Reeves (2016), and Monahan (2018).

² To be sure, these three categorizations here are simplifications of the complexities and breadth of creative works that comprise Canadian art practices addressing surveillance. With these broad categories, I am highlighting the more common ways in which artworks often mobilize specific and identifiable characteristics of surveillant technologies and forms as part of a critique. To my mind, Kneubühler’s piece approaches surveillance in a way that is unique in relation to many other works within the Canadian context.

³ There are notable Canadian exceptions to this statement, including Kate McQuillen’s *X-Ray Series* (2013), which features scanned prints, reminiscent of security body scans, of various feminine undergarments concealing what appear to be weapons, and Donna Szoke and Ricarda McDonald’s *and all watched over by machines of loving grace* (2012), which is composed of two large monitors, each displaying a disembodied eye that stares out at the audience. Yet most of these works use the presence of the represented body in its deconstructed form, revealing only segments of the body through a focus on the leg or the eyes, for example. And while a painting like Michael Lewis’s *Some Will Take More Prodding, Some Will Be More Difficult* (2008) does indeed show groups of people (i.e., the full bodily form), the focus of this work is on the context of the space and the fact that the eyes of each person have been masked by a black stripe. And to be sure in the international context, there are multiple artists who use bodily representations in their creative address of surveillance, including American artist Julia Scher and Iraqi-American artist Wafaa Bilal. A key element in Kneubühler’s work, in my analysis, is the forefronted use and representation of the figure as a personification of the security and surveillance apparatus. The Canadian works mentioned here are available for viewing at <https://artandsurveillance.com>.

⁴ I use the term “Islamoracism” rather than the more commonly circulated “Islamophobia” because I think it is important not to pathologize (i.e., -phobia) systematic and ongoing racisms. I was introduced to this important

bodies have been marginalized and expelled from the national imaginary of the White-settler, colonial context of Canada. Canada, in particular, self-identifies and promotes itself as a multicultural, inclusive nation, which often masks its ongoing and violent histories of colonial expansion and oppressions.⁵ I want to think about how Kneubühler’s work engages with this dominant perception of Canadianness as benevolent and asks broader questions of the corporeal economy within the dominant logic of security and fear of the War on Terror, wherein Whiteness is often treated with safe invisibility, while Black and Indigenous folks and People of Colour (BIPOC) become the presumed and uncertain subjects made visible with the surveillant gaze.

As a note here, I am aware of the dangers of using “racialization” to gesture toward non-Whiteness as a blank, unifying, and flattening categorization that denies the inequalities and differentiated experiences of Black and Indigenous people, and People of Colour within the Canadian context. In this, I follow Simone Browne’s lead in her discussion of “racializing surveillance” to signal “those moments when enactments of surveillance reify boundaries and borders along racial lines, and where the outcome is often discriminatory treatment” (2012: 72). What I intend with this discussion of racialization and its representation within Kneubühler’s artwork is to critically highlight Whiteness and non-Whiteness (with various forms of in/visibilities, regulations, and accesses) in their relation to the structures of power that create and maintain systems of inequality and White supremacy within ongoing histories of Canadian state and non-state power.⁶ Specifically, the BIPOC subjects in *Access Denied* attend to pressing notions of unequal visibilities and vigilance—who is being watched in order to protect whom—within the contemporary moment, often defined and perceived as a historical period where surveillance structures are escalating and increasingly necessary to ensure the safety and security of national and global citizens.

As such, this paper is about the racial and colonial inequalities of surveillant visibilities that seek to monitor, regulate, and contain bodies in spaces of the contemporary Canadian context. Specifically, I want to think through what and how art and creative practice contribute to this discussion.⁷ Artworks are a political practice with the capacity to explore the contours and contestations of a moment’s perception and therefore to contribute to its social, cultural, and political configurations. There is a generative potential to creative engagements, whereby the practice of art does not simply re-present or re-confirm that which one already knows, but also constitutes an encounter as an opportunity to think and feel otherwise.⁸

distinction through attending a conference session at the Canadian Sociological Association in May 2017. In the panel “Racialized Muslim Women: Resisting, Organizing, and Raising the Roof,” Lucy El-Sherif, Nadiya Ali, and Hawa Y. Mire presented a paper entitled “Not My Islamoracism: Beyond the Brown Oriental Subject Imaginary” and rightly argued that Islamoracism, rather than Islamophobia, was a much more specific way to understand anti-Muslim and anti-Black sentiments. Other writers and scholars have written about the need to think through Islamoracism, including Singh (2016).

⁵ I discuss in more detail Canada’s self-promotion as a peaceful, multicultural nation-state and how art can challenge such perceptions in a previous article, see Cahill (2017).

⁶ Michel Foucault’s series of lectures “Society Must Be Defended” (1976) provides an early critical foundation for discussions of the intersection of disciplinary power, social order, and war. For discussions of Foucault’s work and its influence on the field of surveillance studies, see for instance Wood (2003), Cameron (2004), and Simon (2005).

⁷ In this paper, I use the terms creative practice and art interchangeably to refer to the self-conscious, and often critical, shaping of artistic mediums. While creativity and creative engagements can be applied more broadly in different contexts and cultural representations, I focus on fine art practices, rather than visual culture objects more broadly (such as films or theatre performances). Fine art, or creative practice, here refers to works that have been produced by those who self-identify as artists or who claim a certain artistic intent with their works and are circulated in particular contexts—galleries, museums, artist-run centres, and public art sites.

⁸ I am referring here to the Deleuzian concept of “otherwise,” which seeks to push the possibility of critique beyond known and established limits of one’s self and history (Deleuze 1995). To me, also following Simon O’Sullivan (2006), this idea of the “otherwise” signifies the expansive possibilities of critique, thought, and being that can be provoked by alterative forms of address, such as those proposed by creative practices.

To look at art in these terms is to think about the production of meanings that move beyond the visual. Visibility is not just about seeing or being seen, or looking, or the gaze; it is also about the production of subjectivities tied to bodies, being, and belonging. I use the term “bodies” throughout the paper as an attempt to think through the multiple ways in which the body-as-site functions in relation to political and subject formation. Specifically, I want to highlight the disembodying and uneven violence inflicted through surveillance systems, wherein particular people and communities are reduced to bodies, and tracked and targeted unequally, within the context of contemporary Canadian practices and the dominant and ongoing logic of the War on Terror. Using Thomas Kneubühler’s artwork *Access Denied* as my central case study, I want to explore how creative practices participate in conversations and debates on surveillance, visibilities, policing of (certain/safe and uncertain/dangerous) bodies, and the racialized politics of contemporary Canadian surveillance.

Access Denied and the “New Normal” of Surveillant Policing

While improved technologies, their expansion, and the collusion between state and non-state surveillant actors may be more contemporary characteristics of surveillance systems (Bennett et al. 2014),⁹ surveillance and its attendant logics connected to policing, laws, and criminality were well formed before 2001. In this section, I historicize the logic of surveillance in relation to the War on Terror and think about the implications of race and colonial histories to this logic. I am refining Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson’s assertion that “Hierarchies of visibility are being levelled, as people from all social backgrounds are now under surveillance. While surveillance has not eliminated social inequalities, certain groups no longer stand outside the practice of routine monitoring” (2006: 6). While I agree with them that the surveillance net casted is much larger, I lean more toward Torin Monahan’s assertion that “it must be recognized that a host of surveillance functions are reserved for those who threaten the status quo, principally those classified as poor or marked as Other” (2015: 160). In the Canadian context and beyond, there continue to be vast disparities in how certain individuals and groups are targeted and policed through surveillance. Surveillance, here, is a term I apply broadly to reference a wide number of monitoring activities that intend to make visible, govern, regulate, and police individuals and populations in order to create and maintain specific national, corporate, and institutional goals. Surveillance is not just the technologies (such as cameras, sensors, phones, antennas, Wi-Fi, geotrackers) that activate forms of viewing, but is also the rhetoric and logic that surround and underlie the reasonings for its implementations; surveillance, in this sense, is a belief system tied to producing visibilities in order to maintain the public good.

In Kneubühler’s piece, the visual presentation of portraits of security guards attends to questions regarding who is visible and who is invisible within systems of policing, surveillance, and control, as well as who is responsible for governing those visibilities. Importantly, it also asks what knowledge—and ultimately power and control—can be accessed depending on where one falls on the visibility spectrum of security apparatuses. However, for a work that can provoke such large and complex questions, it uses very lo-fi and simplistic representations of security-surveillance systems. In *Access Denied*, the depiction of “security” is the relatively harmless, if not ubiquitous, mall/office security guard, rather than a more aggressive, high-intensity figure, such as a combat soldier or militarized police officer.¹⁰ Kneubühler does, however, make the presumably innocuous figures of low-intensity security guards especially menacing in their larger-than-

⁹ See Bennett et al. (2014) for a thorough analysis of the various trends and patterns in contemporary Canadian surveillance systems. Also, for more frequently updated analyses that continue from the book, see the website for this research group at <http://www.surveillanceincanada.org/>.

¹⁰ For an example of an artist who uses representations of high-intensity security figures, see Australian artist Zanny Begg’s work. In 2004, Begg developed a project that confronted people within the Australian context with the militarized forms of the security-surveillance systems. This work, called *Checkpoint*, was a series of ten life-size cutouts of American soldiers wearing standard-coloured camouflage uniforms holding large guns accompanied by the slogan “Checkpoint for Weapons of Mass Distraction.” There was much political controversy over this work in Blacktown, Australia, where it was originally exhibited, which resulted in her project being censored and removed. For more information on this artwork and subsequent debate, see Gerber (2006).

life size and all-powerful placement looking down from the sides of large buildings. The security guards depicted in the piece are all actual security guards who he hired to pose in their uniforms for a previous art project, entitled *Private Property* (2006). In this earlier work, Kneubühler juxtaposed images of security guards with the unpeopled spaces of commerce each was tasked with patrolling, such as parking lots and industrial areas. He repurposed those images for this later piece, *Access Denied*, which I think brings an interesting, if unintended, correlation between the monitoring of corporate, capitalist spaces and the surveillance of bodies in the public sphere.

In many ways, who was included and depicted in *Access Denied* was happenstance. While many of the guards depicted are visible minorities, I am not sure if Kneubühler himself explicitly considered the relationships between race and security in the production of this work. Who is represented as the security guard figures in his work is an unintended by-product of how Kneubühler found his subjects, which he describes as essentially "blind dates": he contacted a series of security companies in the Montreal area, and while the companies themselves denied him access to their staff, he managed to find individuals who were willing to participate (Kneubühler, quoted in Tousignant 2007).¹¹ Yet although Kneubühler himself perhaps did not initially intend an interpretation that lends itself to racialized politics of control, policing, and visibilities, to me, the question of how these bodies and their representations operate within the larger structures of race, surveillance, and contemporary Canadian histories is key to understanding the larger implications of his artwork.

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the rhetoric and policies of terror, which Euro-American states heavily manage through surveillance structures, are central to the War on Terror and to how its logic justifies monitoring, policing, controlling, and visualizing bodies. Exhibited six years after the attacks on the World Trade Center towers in New York City, Kneubühler's work grounds the globalizing rhetoric of security, surveillance, and privacy of the War on Terror in the local history and context of Montreal. *Access Denied* provides insights into the specific circumstances of St-Henri, which was already heavily surveyed before Kneubühler mounted his banners. Indeed, St-Henri as a site raises interesting questions about the intersections between class and control;¹² historically working-class, this neighbourhood has become increasingly gentrified over the past decade, with a number of residents resisting the construction of new businesses and condo developments, and the subsequent rise in rental prices.¹³ Not unrelated to these conflicts, the area has seen a marked rise in the number of private and public security cameras to monitor different spaces. Kneubühler himself noted the irony of having to request permission from the city in order to mount his banners, when no permission is needed to set up a security camera to monitor and record people in public spaces (Kneubühler, quoted in Tousignant 2007).

While this piece raises questions about local issues around the site of Kneubühler's 2007 installation, *Access Denied* is also attending to national and global trends, which involves using the rhetoric of a "war on terror" to justify the increased use of surveillance technologies as part of the public and private landscape in many countries, including Canada. These forms of elevated vigilance, which impose military surveillance tactics to monitor everyday behaviours, spaces of consumption, and civilian life, have been normalized as essential to conditions of national and global security, a state of being that former US Vice-President Dick Cheney

¹¹ There are questions to be asked here regarding the intersectionalities of race and class, for instance, such as who is applying for and being hired to fill low-level security jobs in public places such as malls and airports.

¹² To be sure, Kneubühler's project has much to offer in the way of class analysis and intersects broadly with the aesthetics and content of international projects, such as French photographer JR's *Portrait of a Generation* (2004-2006), which plastered large-scale photographs of the inhabitants of working-class suburbs on the walls of Paris's city centre. While I think class is a significant and important issue in *Access Denied*, and certainly intersects with other vectors such as race and patriarchy, I focus my analysis more in this paper on how Kneubühler's project brings forward ongoing histories of colonialism and racism within the Canadian context.

¹³ St-Henri has also been a subject of a number of well-known Canadian documentaries that record the life and activities of its residents: *À St-Henri le cinq septembre* (Aquino 1962) and *St-Henri, the 26th of August* (Walsh 2011).

identified in October 2001 as “the new normal” (Conner 2008: 12). For Cheney and those people and states who have widely embraced this logic of the “new normal,” surveillance technologies legitimate particular modes of vision and visibility that become widely recognized as a form of visibility (Jay 2002a, b), referring to the historical and social construction of vision as a scopic regime. The visibility of surveillance, which includes the surveillance gaze, asserts surveillant viewing as a recognizable and authoritative mode of looking and is inextricably linked to who and what should be made visible, and why.

Yet, Cheney’s “new normal” of state surveillance is indeed not truly new at all, because certain bodies—individuals and communities of colour, in particular—have always been heavily targeted and surveilled by the state. Further to this, the construction and circulation of surveillant forms as a recognizable visibility is not truly a new phenomenon. Yet, in public, government, mainstream media, and much scholarship, there has been a tendency—perhaps desire would be a more accurate term in certain spheres—to continually frame the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, as so unprecedented and unforeseen that these acts of violence warranted global restructuring. The dominant logic and discourse of “9/11” and the subsequent start of the wide and mutable War on Terror globalizes and universalizes the experiences of the period after the terror attacks in the US in 2001.¹⁴ Further to this, “9/11” has been promoted as a recognizably and widely applicable moment that historicizes a before and after as particular and distinct epochs. In this way, “after-9/11” or “post-9/11” has become a shorthand justification to affirm expanding forms of neoliberal development and imperialist expansion and to assert the belief that this moment began a new, historically unique era, which denies the continuities of the pre- and post-War-on-Terror-period.

In this context, the events of “9/11” are often treated as a historical watershed, a moment that defines the expansive logic of the War on Terror, and it is the corporeal economy—an us-versus-them logic—that has become a central characteristic of this historical moment. In particular, the logic of the War on Terror has produced increased screening and surveillance around homogenized and racialized perceptions of Muslim bodies as the marker of increased terror—based on the backgrounds of the men who carried out the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Yet, this contemporary racial profiling actually brings to light many of the historical and ongoing racisms present within Canada, as well as in other national contexts.¹⁵ In relation to the corporeal politics of the War on Terror that seeks to profile, target, police, and in many cases, contain the “enemy body,” Shaista Patel rightly argues, in her introduction with Ghaida Moussa and Nishant Upadhyay, “this labeling of Muslim bodies as terrorists was the legacy of a White supremacist settler-colonial governmentality that continues to label Indigenous peoples of this land as terrorists and then targets them for disappearance and death” (2015: 9). As Jodi Byrd highlights, while there is a focus on “rhetorics of grief, homeland, pain, terrorism, and security” in the “post-9/11” period, these processes have in fact “been functioning in Atlantic and Pacific ‘New Worlds’ since 1492” (2011: xviii).

In other words, “9/11” and its aftermath are not exceptional but are in fact the legacy and continuation of the historical violence of the settler-colonial nation-state. As Ahmad H. Sa’di (2012) articulates, the use of surveillance to visualize and manage racial boundaries has long been a powerful tool implemented by colonial states. Within the Canadian context, the logic of this contemporary period as a cultural, historical,

¹⁴ I use quotations around the term “9/11” or “post-9/11” to highlight that this moment is not simply the date of a historical event, but also a stand-in for a series of a conceptual, cultural, and rhetorical systems tied to practices, procedures, beliefs, and legislations. I want to recognize both the historical nature of the September 11, 2001, attacks in the US and to emphasize the ways in which these events are interpreted and used in a number of evolving and problematic ways to serve a variety of political ends.

¹⁵ In an article published in *Medium*, جہانزیب tells his story of growing up Pakistani Muslim in the US and highlights how much of the racism he experienced in his life occurred prior to the events of September 11, 2001. Explaining how Muslim, Sikhs, and other communities impacted by Islamoracism have been encouraged to share their “9/11 stories,” he situates this moment within larger and longer histories of racism and white supremacy, and highlights that “anti-Black racism, slavery, and genocide being foundational to the US, I began to connect these realities with the racism I experienced and witnessed prior to 9/11. In other words, Islamophobia was always here because white supremacy has always been here” (2017 جہانزیب).

or political watershed masks the ongoing forms of White settlerhood, White supremacy, and colonialism, that have been continuous, albeit in multiple forms, since the occupation of Northern North America by Europeans beginning in the fifteenth century. While “9/11” is being mobilized in particularly explicit and public ways to define the terms of inclusion and belonging in relation to nation-states and specific notions of global citizenship, these surveillance and political systems of social sortings along racial and cultural lines have deep and persistent historical roots that extend far earlier than 2001.

These surveillant forms have been used historically and continue to be used in the contemporary moment in the same or similar ways, because the underlying logic is consistent: the desire to police and make visible certain individuals and communities in order to maintain the order of White supremacy and settlerhood of the Canadian colonial nation-state. Some of these surveillant forms include the 1885 passing of a law that required all First Nations people to acquire travel permits from government-appointed Indian Agents in order to regulate and track Indigenous bodies (Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples 1996); the high-level of surveillance on participants in Idle No More, a national Indigenous movement that saw the Department of Aboriginal Affairs share confidential information with the Canadian Security Intelligence Agency and forward details about meetings between government officials and First Nations leaders to Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre, which includes Canada Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and police services across the country (Barrera 2015, 2018); and official policies of enslavement of Black people for over two hundred years, followed by informal—yet violent and purposeful—devaluation and regulation of Black life through school segregation, additional immigration screening, and increased scrutiny by the police (Maynard 2017).

These ongoing policies enable a number of Canadian municipal police agencies to “randomly” stop people on the street and demand personal information, a practice that targets young Black men at exponentially higher rates. As Robyn Maynard highlights, “Black existence in public spaces is itself seen as criminal and thus subject to scrutiny, surveillance, frequent interruption and police intervention” (2017: 88). In 2017, the province of Quebec passed Bill 62, heralded as a new religious neutrality law, that unequally targets Muslim women wearing niqabs or burkas by forbidding people from covering their faces while accessing public services. These laws and policies are but a few historical and contemporary examples that are reflective of the larger cultural belief systems that unequally target certain BIPOC individuals and communities—rendered bodies—for regulation and monitoring in the public space, and that uphold hegemonic White supremacy and White settlerhood within the Canadian nation-state.

The reality of this so-called “Age of Terror” that began in 2001 is that it becomes activated as internal and external colonialism by a new name, a way in which “settler colonialism enacts itself as settler imperialism” (Byrd 2011: xix). And so too the structures of surveillance that are mobilized to govern and secure the neo-imperialism of the War on Terror have been normalized as newly necessary to national security yet enact a disembodied violence that unequally targets and tracks certain racialized bodies (as simplistic reductions of people and communities). As Monahan writes, “state surveillance was not born out of the ashes of the collapsed World Trade Center towers, the smouldering Pentagon, or the burned wreckage of the hijacked airplane that crashed in Pennsylvania” (2012: 285). And while Monahan highlights the continuities of contemporary security structures to earlier programs of surveillance—such as ECHELON and COINTELPRO—so too these contemporary systems and their representations must be anchored in broader and violent histories of colonialism, White supremacy, and the uneven policing of BIPOC that established the tone for contemporary surveillance, even if the justifications have changed. In other words, contemporary forms of surveillance and containment of bodies and populations in the War on Terror function within a longer genealogy of classifying and confining humanity and enabling extraction under colonialism and imperialism.

In the case of Kneubühler’s *Access Denied*, his representation and characterization of security guards as simplified versions of the larger military-surveillance-industrial complex cannot be situated outside this ongoing historical framework. In the larger-than-life photographs, Kneubühler alters the mainstream conventions of who is surveilling versus who is surveilled. In particular, I think Kneubühler’s work is

highlighting conventional expectations that it is Brown and Black bodies that become the surveillant focus—what Simone Browne (2015) argues as the historical hypervisibility of Blackness—within the corporeal economy and Islamoracism of the War on Terror, by shifting them into positions of the surveillers and thereby granting them the power of looking, albeit limited to the mall-cop variety; Kneubühler shifts the mainstream, White-settler expectations—both historically and contemporarily—of the subjects and objects of the surveillant gaze.

For Kneubühler, his work participates to disrupt the organizational framework of the agents and targets of surveillance and the hypervisibility of Blackness and Brownness as markers of the surveilled body. In this way, *Access Denied* functions to ask meaningful questions of national inclusion and belonging and forces discomfiting reflections on how ongoing histories of anti-Muslim, anti-Blackness Islamoracism related to the War on Terror intersect with larger histories of White supremacy and Canadianness.¹⁶ Kneubühler’s creative address of surveillance, then, directly participates and engages a critical recuperation of the racialized politics and corporeal economy of surveillance within the contemporary context.

Significantly, this racialized politics is not just present or represented in the work itself but also in the bodies involved in its production and interpretation. In thinking through Kneubühler’s intent here, I do need to question the dynamics of a White, Swiss-Canadian artist who uses large-scale photographs of racialized men displayed in a historically working-class neighbourhood to address the so-called “new normal” of surveillance practices. To be sure, for Kneubühler, the relationship of his body and those of the guards within *Access Denied*—as well as my own as a White-settler scholar studying this work—was outside the intended frame of the photograph. However, in the corporeal economy of contemporary surveillance, it is not solely the representations of the practices—creative or otherwise—but also those which may be rendered absent, invisible, or outside the focused lens.

In an interview about this work and his intent to disrupt the status quo, Kneubühler states, “Surveillance happens every day but we’re not really aware of it” (Kneubühler, quoted in Tousignant 2007). His intent is to use the presence of the surveillant form—represented by the larger-than-life figure of the security guard—to confront viewers with the expansive reality of surveillant looking and to disrupt wilful ignorance about these expansions. Yet, it is significant to think about which “we” here is not truly aware of widespread surveillance in an everyday, embodied sense. I highlight within this analysis what bodies are protected, in many ways, by who passes through versus who is aware of having to pass through; whose visibilities are protected from the everyday reminders of presumed criminality monitored and uncovered through security and surveillance forms. That is, I need to question whose reality needs to be disrupted and reminded and whose every day is mired in the sense of being watched and regulated by a multitude of surveillant forms. And I seek to challenge my own limits as a White, cisgender researcher whose body often moves freely and unsurveilled while studying the limits of other racialized and queered bodies who are often denied this freedom.

While *Access Denied* was produced and exhibited a decade ago, its relevance persists. In both its representations and the context through which those representations circulate, Kneubühler’s work elucidates the bodies, spaces, and power imbricated in contemporary and historical surveillance structures, involving both those often rendered invisible and anonymous and those made markedly visible. This work has the potential to historicize the rhetoric of surveillance in relation to the War on Terror and raise the implications

¹⁶ To highlight the ongoing politics of white supremacy and the boundaries of inclusion within the Canadian nation-state, I need only point to an incident that happened recently in Lethbridge, Alberta. A white woman unleashed a racist tirade against four men—all of whom are originally from Afghanistan but have resided in Canada for over half their lives. The entire event was caught on video and depicts the woman demanding the men “go back to your fucking country.” While much of the media coverage of this event attempts to marginalize the views shared by this woman as racist and anathema to Canadian values, I would argue that such racism is quite prevalent throughout the Canadian context and in fact underlies the claim to Canada as nation itself. For more information on this incident, see for example Joseph (2018).

of race and colonial histories to this rhetoric. It enables viewers to think through surveillance technologies, policies, agents, and targets in the contemporary moment not as a historical exception but as a continuation of the rule that governs and polices the parameters of national inclusion. So too this work asks questions of particular expectations and resonances on the body that are inherent to the very logic of the War on Terror itself. Kneubühler’s work highlights how in the security systems central to the logic of the continued War on Terror, it is the corporeal economy—bodies displaced, bodies monitored, bodies criminalized, bodies marginalized, and bodies privileged—that mark the contested terrains of being, belonging, and survival.

Contemporary Policing and Surveillant In/Visibilities in Canada

Here, I turn to a recent example in the Canadian context that extends my points regarding the historical and contemporary uneven policing of Black and Indigenous people and People of Colour. Specifically, I explore now the ways in which White settlers function with presumed safe invisibility within surveillant systems, even as these structures are promoted as at an all-time high for national and global security. I am constantly reminded of and confronted with the reports of whose bodies need to be carefully monitored, controlled, regulated, and contained (and what a privilege I embody that I can disengage, only to be reminded). In the past two years, the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States has been getting a lot of global attention as a moment when anti-BIPOC, anti-im/migration, anti-women, and anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric are becoming mainstream. However, Trump’s election and the rhetoric surrounding it are not actually new; while there are real and dangerous practical implications to his election, the beliefs and logics upon which his presidency is built are in fact the continuation and within the logic of the colonial and imperial project of White-settler nationhood inside the US, but also within the Canadian context.

As an extension and shift to who occupies the “enemy” body within the historical and ongoing violence of settler colonialisms within North America, the policies and events currently underway in the United States are not unique. The diffuse and mutable rhetoric of the War on Terror has heavily influenced, justified, and guided a wide number of social, cultural, economic, and political actions within Canada since 2001. One of the more recent violent events occurred on January 29, 2017, in Quebec City, when a White man walked into a mosque during prayer and opened fire, killing six people and injuring nineteen.¹⁷ The White terrorist who shot and killed these six men was known to many immigration and refugee lawyers and activists in the province because of his consistent trolling of online forums, where he spouted xenophobic, White nationalist views and asserted his support of Trump and far-right French politician Marine Le Pen.

Yet despite his online notoriety and consistent public use of racist hate-speech, the shooter was completely unknown to police, Communications and Security Establishment Canada (CSEC), and CSIS in a moment when online surveillance of “anti-terror” operations are at an all-time high in Canada. Additionally, immediately after the shooting the police insisted on labelling the shooter as a “‘non-classic’ terrorist” and a “criminal extremist” (LeBlanc 2017) and were unsure whether to charge him with terrorism-related offences.¹⁸ Yet according to news reports that summarize his police interview following his arrest, “His act

¹⁷ The six men who were killed in this mosque shooting are Azzeddine Soufiane, Khaled Belkacemi, Aboubaker Thabti, Mamadou Tanou Barry, Ibrahima Barry and Abdelkrim Hassane. At the one-year anniversary of this shooting, a number of vigils were held to mark their deaths. As part of these vigils and the larger media discussions surrounding the shootings, the photographs of the men have been circulated widely. I pause here to note that I struggled with displaying photos of the men who were killed in the mosque as part of my own discussion. To be sure, the public circulation of their portraits is very much part of the visual culture of surveillance, but I feel unsure about my using their images as part of this discussion here, not least of all because it can play into the problematic binary of Brown bodies as victims or villains within the War on Terror and enters uncomfortably for me into the arena of whose lives are grievable and when. Because I haven’t resolved my thoughts on this use, I have decided to not use their images here.

¹⁸ The differentiation of types of violent aspects—either criminal or terrorist—is occurring in the international context as well. Within days of taking office in January 2017, US President Trump altered a long-standing counter-terrorist program, Countering Violent Extremism, to Countering Islamic Extremism, which therefore would no longer include white supremacist terrorism within its purview. Another predominant example includes Trump’s hesitancy to

was born of fear of Muslims and involved violence with a political motive (in this case opposition to immigration), which is the dictionary definition of terrorism. However, prosecutors declined to charge him with that crime, opting instead for a simpler murder prosecution” (Perreux 2018). The unwillingness to pursue terrorism charges, even though the act itself legally fits such a definition, again demonstrates how the state—and the military, surveillance, and legal branches that act in its name—define and decide how bodies can be identified and categorized, beyond the actions they undertake. The lack of surveillance knowledge and desire to frame him as a “non-classic” terrorist elucidates what bodies are policed and presumed dangerous (that is, the “classic” terrorist) and how these bodies are presented and framed after committing horrific acts of violence in the name of extremist political aims.¹⁹

Indeed, the public framing of this event begs many questions and reveals many of the racist ideologies that have underscored the mainstream discussions of the War on Terror and the fear of “terrorists.” For instance, in its reporting of this tragedy, conservative US media organization Fox News reported and tweeted that the shooter was a Moroccan immigrant (misrepresenting the person who made the 9-1-1 call), although no such report was released by the Quebec police. Fox News refused to correct this report, until the Prime Minister of Canada wrote a letter directly addressing this issue. The desire of this media organization to skew the perpetrator of this crime attends to the belief of how terror functions within the logic of the so-called “post-9/11” period, which asserts it is the bodies of Muslim immigrants and refugees that represent the most danger and uncertainty to the neoliberal, democratic order of Western nations, those who are allied as the “good guys” within the ongoing War on Terror.

The violence of the shooting and of the police framing it as a “non-classic” terrorist action is anchored in—rather than distinct from—the everyday White supremacist and Islamoracist beliefs, which circulate widely at a variety of levels in mainstream media and government conversations. For instance, one of the candidates for the 2017 leadership elections for the Conservative Party of Canada, Kellie Leitch, espoused a far-right rhetoric of anti-immigration policies and more in-depth screening procedures and gathered a strong national fan base from a xenophobic populous that agrees with her platform of additional assessments for certain newcomers to ensure they complement “Canadian values.” While Leitch never defined her idea of “Canadian values,” the very suggestion of Canada and Canadianness as peaceful and cohesive denies the reality that Canada-as-nation is itself built and sustained on the internal and ongoing violence inherent to the settler state. Her desire to include additional monitoring procedures for certain immigrants and refugees to prove their capacity to integrate into a particular sense of Canadianness follows a series of federal bills passed over the past four years amending or introducing legislation that targets how information is gathered and shared in Canada, increases monitoring of Canadian inhabitants, and greatly expands the powers of the police and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, including Bill S-4, *Digital Privacy Act* (June 2014); Bill C-13, *Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act* (December 2014); and Bill C-44, *Protecting Canada from Terrorists Act* (April 2015); Bill C-51, *The Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015* (May 2015); and Bill S-7, *Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act* (June 2015).

All of these bills, among others passed previously and since, legislate changes as to who can be monitored, in what ways, and for what reasons. To be sure, while the impetus for many of these acts is framed as necessary protective measures for the expanding security state in the War on Terror, many of the materials contained within these acts use diminished individual privacy and state surveillance to legally surveil Indigenous-, environmental-, and animal-rights groups; to increase policing and monitoring of certain communities; and to expand the capacity of the state to define “terror” and pre-emptively arrest and detain those who embody such a “terrorist” threat. Indeed, these security and surveillance measures target certain bodies and communities more than others, which is why a White man espousing racist hatred and violence

condemn and name as terrorism the white nationalist rally that involved a white man running over a group of counter-protestors and killing one person.

¹⁹ The man responsible for these murders, Alexandre Bissonnette, is currently undergoing legal proceedings for this shooting. Based on what has been reported in the mainstream media, Bissonnette has a long history of violence, aggression, and Islamoracism (Marin 2018; Perreux 2018).

against immigrants and refugees online as signs and evidence that he could be violent was not caught in the complex net of web algorithms and surveillance measures in place to stop terror: he did not correspond to the presumed figure of the “classic terrorist” in the Islamoracist and colonial, White supremacist logic of the War on Terror.

A week after the shooting in Quebec City, nation-wide demonstrations took place to challenge the culture of Islamoracism, another large-scale protest that marked the first few weeks of 2017 as a challenge to anti-BIPOC, anti-im/migration, anti-women, and anti-LGBTQ+ policies and rhetoric.²⁰ In the face of the necessity for direct action and political responses to resist and critique a world order defined by the classification, marginalization, criminalization, and assault on certain bodies in the name of global public safety, it is also important to understand the contribution that art can make to these conversations as not simply window dressing on an issue, but as vital to shaping and reshaping political subjectivities and resisting forms of power and violence. Like many other contemporary artists, Kneubühler is responding to and engaging with modes of surveillant looking and the social realities they engender. As works that are attentive to vision and visibility and practised (intentionally or not) as critical investigations of social processes, exhibitions and art objects that thematize surveillance constitute unique sites in which to question the technologies themselves, the actors who use them, and the nationalist policies that govern them. However, *Access Denied* is not simply an aesthetic replication of recognizable modes of viewing. While vision and visibility are key elements of Kneubühler’s piece, the banners generated meaning not solely with the images, but also by placing bodies in relation—literally embodying the security apparatus through which people in the vicinity of the installation site (and beyond, as the images of this work circulate more broadly) have been normally surveilled because they are perceived to represent risk or uncertainty. His work highlights the heightened forms of surveillance for particular bodies and communities and provides a way for a neighbourhood accustomed to surveillance to encounter surveillance as a critique. The real art of Kneubühler’s work here is not the representations or materials themselves; rather it is the creation of a site of contact and encounter between bodies that are most often disconnected and separated—making a spectacle of the obscured bodies that surveil to those who are surveilled.

While using visual representations to address surveillance—two areas that have both been conventionally addressed as regimes of vision, Kneubühler’s work is not simply about the politics of viewing; it is also about the politics of belonging, of being deemed a risk based on indicators and their attached meanings, and of occupying a body that is presumed unregulated and therefore necessitating policing and monitoring for the public good. By highlighting the spaces of increased surveillance, his work clarifies how bodies—in particular certain bodies—become unevenly implicated in the politics of security and control. With *Access Denied*, Kneubühler provokes questions regarding whose bodies operate as figures of the uncertain or unknown, the perceived danger and fears over that uncertainty, and how the affective, technological, and bodily forms of security are positioned as the necessary antidote to such fears. The questions generated by Kneubühler’s work then, do not only revolve around what it means to be visible but also how it feels to be rendered as one who needs to be watched.

Placed aside and within this larger context, *Access Denied* speaks to the corporeal economy of surveillance in the contemporary period, attempting to provoke questions regarding in/visibilities, the “new normal” of surveillant policing, and the racialized politics of Canadian surveillance within the context of the War on Terror. There is a technique within astronomy whereby to bring faint objects into focus, you often have to

²⁰ Certainly, I am not suggesting that recent protests are confined solely to the early weeks of 2017. Public outcries and protests have been consistently occurring through a number of movements, such as Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and the Standing Rock opposition to the Dakota Pipeline Access. The mainstream discussions and police responses to these different types of protests and the bodies who compose the protests also highlight the inequities of policing over certain bodies. Many of the recent protests I mention in the main text have been defined as “peaceful” and “democratic,” and without “clashes” with the police, and in fact have included widely circulated photographs showing protestors high-fiving law enforcement officers responsible for monitoring the protests. The goodwill of law enforcement has not been granted to other similarly peaceful protests by Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and Standing Rock.

look slightly to the side of the object and use your peripheral vision. Scientists call this phenomenon “averted vision,” a way to make sense and see more detail of an object by looking slightly to the side. I think this is a good way to imagine the generative potential of art; a way of engaging with socio-political context through alternative and creative modes of politics. Thinking through art and creative practices in these terms asserts their capacity to activate, rather than simply respond to, socio-political contexts and issues. This, to me, is art’s work. In this configuration, art is not an object or singular event, but a dynamic practice that makes meanings at the intersections of form/materiality, subject matter, subjectivities of audiences, and relationships to the socio-political logic of the present historical moment. The practice of art, then, is an action, not a thing, a manner of doing that can reimagine the political ground in which particular ideas—such as those tied to visibilities, nationhood, belonging, citizenship, uncertainty, terror, security, policing, and privacy—are invested.

By highlighting the spaces of increased surveillance, Kneubühler’s project is working to question how bodies—in particular bodies of Black and Indigenous people, and People of Colour—become unevenly implicated in the politics of security and control. It challenges the commonplace perception that widespread surveillance systems are new forms of policing that make visible, govern, regulate, and monitor all individuals and communities equally and evenly. And while Kneubühler’s piece is well situated within the violence of the contemporary surveillance state, it also attends to historicizing this present moment not as a distinct or exceptional moment, but as a continuation of the violence upon certain (and often shifting) bodies that enabled the foundation and continuation of the colonial and imperial trajectories of Canada as a settler state. To read through a work like Kneubühler’s in a consideration of the corporeal economy of surveillance—historically and presently—is to ask imperative and necessary questions as part of the dismantling of stories that become policies that become histories that become embodied or disembodied; that become law, become violence, become death.

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