ŠKUC Gallery
10 March - 1 April 2016

Curated by:
Eva & Franco Mattes, Bani Brusadin

1_James Bridle

*Citizen Ex Flags*, 2015
each 152.4 x 91.44 cm
Courtesy of the artist
James Bridle’s Citizen Ex flag series are full scale flags based on data from the Citizen Ex project. “Every time you connect to the internet, you pass through time, space, and law,” says Bridle: this information is stored and tracked in multiple locations, and used to make decisions about you, and determine your rights. These decisions are made by people, companies, countries, and machines, in many countries and legal jurisdictions. Citizen Ex shows you where those places are, defining a tentatively new form of “algorithmic citizenship.” A form of citizenship that is formed at the speed of light and which is nomadic by nature, yet revealing the nature of an underlying structure of data, protocols, and rules.

James Bridle is a British artist and writer based in Athens, Greece. His artworks have been commissioned by galleries and institutions and exhibited worldwide and on the internet. His writing on literature, culture, and networks has appeared in magazines and newspapers including Wired, Domus, Cabinet, The Atlantic, The New Statesman, The Guardian, The Observer, and many others, in print and online. He lectures regularly at conferences, universities, and other events. More info at http://shorttermmemoryloss.com/

2_Jill Magid

Article 12 / I Can Burn Your Face: Miranda V, 2008
7mm neon light, transformers and wires, 25 pieces, dimensions variable

Article 12 / The man was a fool, 2007
four color Silkscreen on Reeves BKF paper, 69.9 x 111.8 cm

Article 12 / Hummingbird, 2007
four color Silkscreen on Reeves BKF paper, 69.9 x 111.8 cm
Article 12 / I pick a life, 2007
four color Silkscreen on Reeves BKF paper, 69.9 x 111.8 cm

Courtesy of the artist and RaebervonStenglin, Zürich

In 2005 Jill Magid was commissioned by the Dutch secret service (AIVD) to make a work for its new headquarters to help improve its public persona by providing “the AIVD with a human face.” So for the next three years Magid met with willing employees in non-descript public places and, since she had been restricted from using any recording equipment, collected secret service workers’ personal data in handwritten notes. Those notes later informed the project Article 12, part of which, in spite of being previously reviewed, was immediately censored, its content redacted, and its visibility restricted by the secret service itself.

Jill Magid is a US artist whose performance-based practices are meant to initiate intimate relationships with a number of organizations and structures of authority. She explores the emotional, philosophical, and legal tensions between the individual and “protective” institutions, such as intelligence agencies or the police. To work alongside or within large organizations, Magid makes use of institutional quirks, systemic loopholes that allow her to make contact with people “on the inside.” Her work tends to be characterized by the dynamics of seduction, the resulting narratives often taking the form of a love story. Magid’s work has been exhibited at several museums and galleries all over the world, including Tate Modern (London) and Whitney Museum of American Art (New York). More info at http://www.jillmagid.net/

3_Metahaven

Home, 2014
HD video, 6:15 min
Holly Herndon, directed by Metahaven, camera Mat Dryhurst
Courtesy of the artists and RVNG Intl.

Fundraising t-shirts for Chelsea Manning, 2015

In the age of massive and ubiquitous connection, intimacy, as well as the possibility of real political agency, are paradoxically mediated by “personal” technologies. That is why Edward Snowden’s revelations made apparent government betrayal, but also fundamentally altered our relationship with the network, its devices, and its imagery. Developed in collaboration between singer and artist Holly Herndon and Metahaven, Home heavily relies on a “data veil” made of logos and symbols from Snowden’s leaked documents. As Metahaven said, “WikiLeaks and Snowden used ‘information’ as the raw material for political change, leaving the ball in the court of ‘imagination’ to make the next move.”

In 2015 Metahaven designed a “Free Chelsea Manning” T-shirt whose proceeds were entirely given to the Chelsea Manning Support Network. “We’re working on a lot of big issues in my case, which has the potential to become landmark precedent in the American jurisprudence system,” Chelsea Manning said. “Paying the legal bills is the biggest logistical hurdle to that at this point. Ultimately though, keeping me motivated - because sometimes it can get pretty tough emotionally - and ensuring that people haven’t forgotten just how important this case is for our ensuring that our rights are protected in our society, will certainly work toward that end as well.”

Metahaven is an Amsterdam-based strategic design studio operating at the intersection of communication, aesthetics, and politics. Founded by Vinca Kruk and Daniel van der Velden, Metahaven ingeniously creates odd assemblages into a variety of art forms ranging from installation work to apparel. Their work, both commissioned and self-directed, approaches branding and identity in such a way as to depict contemporary forms of power, in an age where power is especially designed to exclude as many
people as possible from its operating system, its code. Their riotous mixture of satirical, conceptualist expressions and folk internet imagery is paired with their interest in collective political and design objects. The dissolution of the societal middle ground institutions and the welfare state has triggered the demise of the politically and socially meaningful role of the designer. “It is with the internet as an amplifier that this perspective can be suddenly liberating,” says Metahaven. More info at http://metahaven.net/

Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion

*Satoshi Nakamoto (The Proof), 2014*
A4 digital print, A4 electroluminescent sheet, electric transformer, paper double clip
Courtesy 22,48 m², Paris

Satoshi Nakamoto is the creator of Bitcoin, a revolutionary and unfalsifiable payment system for performing online transactions anonymously. This virtual currency is widely
used on darknets, networks guaranteeing anonymity which have a bad reputation, especially because of the cybercriminal activities they facilitate (drug trade, counterfeiting, etc.). From his first public message until his disappearance on December 12, 2010, Nakamoto made every effort to preserve his identity. To this date nobody knows for sure if he is one person or a collective avatar or both. Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion decided to produce the evidence of the existence of Satoshi Nakamoto using the same technology and opaque social sphere he contributed to create.

Since 2008 Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion (France) have been appropriating or manipulating collections of documents (vernacular photography, cinematographic excerpts, dynamic
maps...) that they create or find online. Exploring the concept of commons, they examine in a sensitive way the modalities of production, the means of dissemination, and the history of data inside networks. Their work has been exhibited internationally at the Seongnam Arts Center (South Korea) and Palais de Tokyo (France), among many others. More info at http://www.eb-mm.net/

5_Evan Roth

n57.680235e11.668160.se (Internet Landscape: Sweden), 2016
Networked video, 19:49
http://n57.680235e11.668160.se/

Recently commissioned by the international project Masters & Servers, Evan Roth’s new work Internet Landscapes: Sweden is a series of web based artworks that will allow one to experience the internet’s physical, digital and cultural infrastructure as a landscape depicted by an unusual set-up of infra-red photos, radio frequencies scan, and packet data. Visiting the internet physically is an attempt to repair a relationship that has changed dramatically as the internet has become more centralized and monetized, as well as a mechanism for global government spying.

Evan Roth is a US artist based in Paris whose practice visualizes and archives culture through unintended uses of technologies. Creating prints, sculptures, videos, and websites, his work explores the relationship between misuse and empowerment and the effect that philosophies from hacker communities can have when applied to digital and non-digital systems. His work is in the public collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Israel Museum, and has been exhibited at the Centre Pompidou, the Kunsthalle Wien and the Tate. He co-founded the arts organizations Graffiti Research Lab and the Free Art & Technology Lab (F.A.T.). Awards in recognition of his work include the Golden Nica from Prix Ars Electronica, Rhizome/The New Museum commissions and the Smithsonian’s Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award. More info at http://www.evan-roth.com/
**6_Ai Weiwei & Jacob Appelbaum**

Ai Weiwei and Jacob Appelbaum

**Panda-to-Panda, 2015**

Mixed media including shredded classified documents, 45 x 25 x 20 cm

Project commissioned by Rhizome and the New Museum in New York.

Jacob Appelbaum

**Ai Weiwei (Beijing), 2015**

Cibachrome print, 101.6 x 76.2 cm

Courtesy of the artists and NOME Gallery

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*Panda-to-Panda* is a joint project by Chinese artist Ai Weiwei and US hacktivist Jacob Appelbaum, both living in exile as political dissidents because of their activities. *Panda-to-Panda* appears as nothing but a sweet-looking stuffed panda bear toy, when in fact it is a condensed version of collective resistance strategies adopted by millions of people. In China “panda” is a popular, yet unspoken code word to talk about censorship and bypass it. The pandas are stuffed with shredded US National Security Agency documents that were originally given to film-maker Laura Poitras and investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald three years ago in Hong Kong by the whistleblower Edward Snowden. Yet, *Panda-to-Panda* is not only about mass surveillance, but also most importantly about secrecy and social technologies such as cryptography or decentralized peer-to-peer networks. *Panda-to-Panda* is a homage to resistance and invention meant to remind us that while absolute transparency should be for everyone exercising public power, privacy should be for everyone else. Unfortunately, the reality of governments and network corporations reveals that the contrary is actually true.

Jacob Appelbaum is an independent computer security researcher and hacktivist, and core member of the Tor Project. He represented WikiLeaks at the 2010 Hope conference, and, as a confidant of the former NSA contractor Edward Snowden, was among those who
gained access to documents for public release during the 2013 global surveillance disclosure.

Ai Weiwei is an artist and activist whose work encompasses sculpture, installation, photography, film, architecture, curation, and social criticism. His art has been featured in major solo exhibitions at venues including the Mori Art Museum, Tate Modern, and the New Museum. He was the recipient of the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent from the Human Rights Foundation in 2012. http://www.aiweiwei.com/

Laura Poitras

The Art of Dissent, 2015
video, 10 min

The Oscar-awarded filmmaker Laura Poitras caught the making of Panda-to-Panda on film in The Art of Dissent, a short film that shows the personal and political empathy and commitment of three persons who had to flee their countries and were or still are targets of indiscriminate and opaque surveillance because of their activities.

Laura Poitras (US/DE) is a filmmaker, journalist, and artist. CITIZENFOUR, the third installment of her post-9/11 Trilogy, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary, along with awards from the British Film Academy, Independent Spirit Awards, Director’s Guild of America, Cinema Eye Honors, and others. Part one of the trilogy, MY COUNTRY, about the U.S. occupation of Iraq, was nominated for an Academy Award. Part two, THE OATH, focused on Guantanamo and the war on terror, and was nominated for two Emmy Awards. In 2006 the U.S. government placed her on a secret watch list, and, through 2012, she was detained and interrogated at the U.S. border each time she traveled internationally. To protect her footage from being seized at the U.S. border, she relocated to Berlin in 2012. In 2016 she will have her first solo museum exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where she will create a new work
of immersive installations that build on the themes she has been exploring in her filmmaking. More info at http://www.praxisfilms.org/

8_Simon Denny

The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom, 2013
UV print and graffiti marker pen on POWER-SOL SI 453 Premium Artist Canvas Polycotton Semi-Matt Weiß 350g
110 canvases, each 80 x 55cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Buchholz Berlin/Cologne/NewYork

The legal issues around Kim Dotcom’s file-sharing site Megaupload, once one of the most popular platforms for data exchange on the internet, has had unprecedented consequences for international data exchange, international law, and the local media landscape in New Zealand. Following investigations by the FBI and a suit by a US court, Megaupload and Megavideo were closed down in January 2012 and Dotcom’s home raided by New Zealand police, according to the indictment “to stop a globally operating criminal organization.” The Personal Effects of Kim Dotcom is a collection of “copies, rip-offs, and limitations” of the entire inventory of confiscated items, seeking to engage what Denny calls, “the most important legal discussions of the moment,” entangled with the relationships between intellectual property and creative copyright, consumer products and consumers’ rights, access to information and the individual’s right to privacy. In The Black Chamber, 110 stretched canvases are shown featuring Denny’s graphic representations, conceived in conversation with David Bennewith, of the seized goods.

Simon Denny was born in New Zealand and is currently based in Berlin. Combining sculptures, graphics, and moving images, Denny’s complex and layered installations translate often problematic governance technologies into visual form. As a result, his work challenges several themes which are rooted in modern society’s globalized cultures of technology, consumerism, organization, and the dissemination of information. Denny’s solo exhibitions include MoMA PS1, New York (2015) and Kunstverein Munich
(2013), among others. His work gained critical acclaim with his double installation at the 56th Venice Biennale 2015 in representation of New Zealand.

9_Zach Blas

Facial Weaponization Suite: Fag Face Mask, 2012
vacuum formed, painted plastic, 21.5 x 19 x 10.5 cm

Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face, 2012
HD video, 8:10 min

Courtesy of the artist

The neon pink Fag Face Mask is one of five masks in Zach Blas’ collection, Facial Weaponization Suite. By aggregating biometric facial scans from a multitude of queer men, Blas created a single facial composite, which he manipulated to create something excessive and shapeless. If gaining visibility in network society means contributing to opaque and private database intelligence, or just being subjected to state surveillance, then Fag Face Mask is an example of what Blas calls “queer technologies,” an experimental form of public, grassroots reverse engineering that challenges the notion of technology as objective, especially when it is used as an instrument of automatic control over the people.

Zach Blas is an artist and writer whose work engages technology, queerness, and politics. Currently he is a Lecturer in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. Blas has exhibited and lectured internationally, most recently at Whitechapel Gallery (London), e-flux (New York) and the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane), among many others. He has two forthcoming books: Escaping the Face (Sternberg Press, 2016), and Informatic Opacity: The Art of Defacement in Biometric Times, a theoretical study of biometric facial recognition and refusals of
recognition. In 2016 he received a Creative Capital grant in Emerging Fields. More info at http://zachblas.info/

_Credits_

**Production:** Aksioma - Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana; Drugo more, Rijeka, 2016

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**Coproduction:** d-i-n-a/The Influencers, Škuc Gallery, Kino Šiška

**Partner:** Link Art Center

The Black Chamber is realized in the framework of **Masters & Servers**, a joint project by Aksioma (SI), Drugo more (HR), AND (UK), Link Art Center (IT) and d-i-n-a / The Influencers (ES).

*MASTERS & SERVERS*

**Supported by:** the Creative Europe programme of the European Union, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Municipality of Ljubljana, Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Slovenia.

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.