

Trevor Paglen Protislovja skritih pokrajin

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Trevor Paglen bo zaznamoval odprtje nove galerije Aksioma | Projektni prostor z zelo prodorno razstavo štirih projektov iz svojega obsežnega umetniškega raziskovanja pokrajin in pojavov, ki so skriti pred pogledom publike in delujejo v okviru heterogenih interesov državnega aparata. Predstavil bo izbor iz dela *Simbologija* (2005), v katerem je zbiral širok razpon nenavadnih simbolov in znakov, ki označujejo tajne vojaške operacije, različne enote, komandne povezave in programe, s katerimi se člani teh programov med seboj identificirajo. Našitki kažejo posebno vojaško kulturo, ki jo predstavlja izrazita križca estetika, s katerim je nasičen Pentagonov »črni svet« z bogatim simbolnim jezikom, ki označuje nejasne vojaške aktivnosti. Drugo delo na razstavi z naslovom *Pogrešane osebe* (2006) bo predstavljalo še en stranski produkt tajnih aktivnosti, ki zgolj namiguje na hudo sumljive aktivnosti obveščevalne službe CIA, za katere so si izmislili dolg seznam lažnih imen, s katerimi brišejo sledi za svojimi agenti. Od sredine devetdesetih je bila CIA po vsem svetu divje aktivna z ugrabitvami, pridržanji in mučenjem ljudi, ki so jih sumili terorizma in jih zaprli v enega izmed v široko mrežo povezanih tajnih zaporov, imenovanih »črna območja«. CIA je za svoje aktivnosti uporabljala neoznačena letala, ki so v lasti zapletene mreže pročnih podjetij, v katerih so upravni odbori v celoti sestavljeni iz neobstoječih oseb. Projekt *Pogrešane osebe* je zbirka njihovih podpisov, ki jih je avtor izločil iz poslovnih izpisov, registracij letal in korporativnih dokumentov. Z obema omenjenima deloma je tesno povezano delo *Zakdirana imena*, v katerem so zbrani besede, izreki in termini, ki označujejo aktivne vojaške programe, katerih obstoj in namen sta zaupne narave in obsegata vse od obveščevalnih programov in vojaških operacij do tajnih identitet in lažnih podjetij. Četrti projekt, ki bo predstavljen na razstavi, bo izbor iz projekta *Omejena Telefotografija*, ki razkriva geografijo zaupnih vojaških baz in objektov, ki niso dostopni splošni publiki. V tem kosu avtor uporablja izredno povečevalno fotografsko tehnologijo, ki je zelo

podobna astrofotografiji, da bi z izredno zrnatim in zameglenim posnetkom razkril podobo tajnih geografij, ki se zdijo tako daleč, kot da pripadajo povsem drugi dimenziji.

IH: V akademskem delu se ukvarjaš s specifično geografsko metodologijo, a mene bolj zanima pomen forme v tvojih vizualnih umetniških projektih. Ali igra v tvojem delu forma isto vlogo kot metodologija v znanosti in kako pomembna je pri njem estetika?

TP: Estetika je zelo pomembna. Umetnik sem bil dolgo prej, preden sem se začel ukvarjati z družbenimi znanostmi. Zame je *videz stvari* izredno pomemben in to mislim zelo dobesedno. V svojih umetniških raziskavah sem izjemno pozoren na trenutke, v katerih najdem podobe, dokumente ali pojave, ki mi predstavljajo metaforični izviv.

IH: Ali lahko to orišeš s primerom, da bi bolje razumeli to izjavo?

TP: Na primer, eden od kosov na razstavi je delo, ki predstavlja podpise lažnih ljudi, ki so bili povezani s tajnimi operacijami obveščevalne službe CIA. Obsesivno sem začel zbirati podpise, ker so bili zame ekstremno izpovedni. Za politologa ali novinarja podoba podpisov nima nikakršne vrednosti, ker bistveno ne prispevajo k poglobitvi analize, a zame so podpisi kot podobe izrazito prepričljivi. In mislim, zaradi svojega ozadja, da se zelo podrobno ukvarjam s temi trenutki razkrivanja vidnega polja.

IH: Ali bi rekel, da videti pomeni tudi verjeti?

TP: V mojem delu me veliko bolj zanima zbujanje vprašanja o videnju. Igram se z idejo, da videti pomeni verjeti, vendar hkrati se stalno trudim pokazati, kako hrhek je odnos med dvema.

IH: Zlasti v polju umetnosti zelo težko zaupamo temu, kar vidimo. Dokumenti so pogosto predstavljeni kot mimikrija, ponovna uprizoritev,

reinterpretacija ali preprosto manipulacija, ki nam zastavlja vprašanje o prepričljivosti. Ko sem pregledovala tvojo zbirko našitkov, se mi je zazdelo izredno neverjetno, da bi kdorkoli, ki sebe razume z vso resnostjo, naredil nekaj tako strašno neokusnega.

TP: Očitno nisi oseba iz ameriške vojske.

IH: Misliš, da bi vojska morala imeti umetnostno vzgojo?

TP: Ne. Meni je dejansko všeč, da imajo svojo čudaško avtsajdersko umetnost.

IH: Resno, ta zbirka našitkov deluje, kot da pripada obskurni bandi, zato se mi zdijo rahlo neprepričljivi. Odkrito te bom vprašala: ali so avtentični?

TP: Da, absolutno. Nisem dovolj kreativen, da bi si izmislil vse te stvari.

IH: Dejansko vprašanje je: kako je možno, da bi ljudje, ki so skoncentrirali toliko moči, da bi skrili svoje aktivnosti pred pogledom javnosti, dopustili, da jih raziskuješ?

TP: Infrastruktura vojaških obveščevalnih služb sploh ni enostavna. Država nikakor ni enotna tvorba, ampak struktura, v kateri vladajo divja protislovja. Metodološko se v svojem raziskovalnem postopku ukvarjam z iskanjem teh protislovij v tajnih plasteh države, ker so to pogosto trenutki, ko se razkrijejo skrivnosti in lahko v njih za moment pokukamo. Našitki so en takšen primer.

IH: Pri tvojem delu je zelo zanimivo, da poudarjaš idejo o protislovljih, ki nam preprečuje, da bi razmišljali o teorijah zarote, ki se zdijo precej otročje v primerjavi s temi projekti.

TP: Ideja protislovja je osrednjega pomena pri mojem teoretskem delu kot tudi pri vizualnih ali

estetskih kosih, ki sem jih naredil. Zelo me zanimajo prostori, kjer se metanarativi ne skladajo. Zanimajo me prostori, kjer neotipljivost postane nemogoča, zaradi pomanjkanja dokazov. Hkrati se v svoji analizi ne želim spuščati nič dlje, kot mi dopuščajo dokazi. Pogosto to pomeni, da pravzaprav nekako reproduciram neoprijemljivost. To je ravno nasprotno kot pri teorijah zarote, ki skušajo oblikovati enotno pripoved na podlagi številnih dokazov, ki so neskladni. Špekulirajo o tem, da je za dokazi nekaj velikega struktura ali namen ali nevidna roka, ki poskuša združiti razdrobljene kose z dokazi v enotno pripoved. Seveda, ko gledamo posamezne programe, obstaja agenda, vendar ne v splošnem pomenu. Jaz ne grem tako daleč. Zame je bolj zanimivo, če fragmente pustim takšne kot so, da govorijo sami zase, oziroma, da opazujem, kako ne morejo spregovoriti.

IH: Ali so konspiratorji prevzeli kakšne dele tvojih raziskav za svoje velike načrte?

TP: Ne mnogo. Na splošno se držim stran od vsega tega, čeprav me pogosto vabijo v radijske in televizijske oddaje, ki se ukvarjajo s teorijami zarote. Na splošno se s tem raje ne ukvarjam, čeprav sem se jih nekajkrat udeležil in to je bila zelo čudna izkušnja. Oddaja z naslovom *Od obale do obale* je ena glavnih oddaj o zarotah v Združenih državah, ki razkriva zelo nenavadno idejo o ameriški liberalni politiki. Pri njih sem bil gost že večkrat, in se nisem odrezal prav dobro. Ob eni taki priložnosti sem govoril o *»programu izredne izročitve«* in nekaterih stvarih, ki jih počne CIA, ki, kakor veš, ljudi ugrablja in muči in jih skriva v svojih tajnih zaporih. Ko sem o tem govoril v oddaji, so bili poslušalci name naravnost besni, rekoč, da sem izdajalec. Najbolj ironično je to, da mislim, da bi bili poslušalci naravnost navdušeni, če bi rekel, da CIA sodeluje z vesoljci, ki ugrabljajo in mučijo naše otroke v tajnih oporiščih v puščavi.

IH: Ravno nasprotno menim, da je veliko politično usmerjene umetnosti premalo pozorne na formalne vidike vizualnega jezika. Za tvoja fotografska dela je značilna estetika zrnate in nejasne podobe, ki temelji na tvoji odločitvi, da boš uporabljal poseben medij telefotografije, ki je ne uporablja prav dosti ljudi. Zdi se, da je to zelo formalni vidik tvojega dela, in ne pripovedni.

TP: Nedvomno je formalni vidik dela tisto izrazoslovje, ki ga uporabljam. Če govorim posebej o vesoljci, me bolj zanima osvetliti negotovost fotografije in negotovost videnja, zato sem toliko bolj pozoren na formalni jezik vizualnih del ali fotografije, ki se lahko navezuje na številne primere

IH: Umetniški projekti pogosto obstajajo v zelo

hermetičnem prostoru, vendar se zdi, da tvoja dela komunicirajo s precej širšo publiko. Seveda je ta komunikacija problematična na več načinov, ker še vedno govorimo različne jezike. Kljub temu se zdi, da imaš v svojem delu določeno politično agendo.

TP: V delih je nekaj političnega. Zanimajo me ameriška politična kultura, mehanizmi države in mehanizmi tega, kar imenujemo globoka država. Napisal sem napisal nekaj knjig, ki govorijo o strukturah globoke države in kako to vpliva na državo na splošno, kakšne posledice ima na idejo demokracije. Takšni argumenti so zelo drugačni od teh, ki jih lahko naredim na razstavi. V svojih vizualnih delih ne poskušam sestavljati linearnih pripovedi. Nikoli nisem mogel narediti česa podobnega in mislim, da je zelo malo ljudi sposobnih to napraviti dobro, ker po sami obliki razstave niso prav primerne za takšno izjavljanje. Menim, da je področje umetnosti zelo primerno za postavljanje vprašanj o epistemologiji in dvoumnosti. Sam mislim, da sem kot umetnik precej konservativen v tem smislu, da nisem avantgardist, ker me ne zanima nujno razvijanje novih formalnih strategij.

Mislim pa, da številni politično usmerjeni umetniki vidijo vzajemnost med radikalno obliko umetnosti in radikalno obliko politike, a sam je ne.

IH: To se mi je zdelo relevantno vprašanje, ker si moral kar veliko potovati za projekte, kot je bila na primer knjiga *Mučilni taxi*, in dela, ki so nastala ob njej. Mapiranje in sledenje aktivnostim obveščevalne službe CIA lahko začrta zelo drago sled. Umetnost se ponavadi niti približno ne približa tem proračunom.

TP: To drži. Financiram se s kapitalizmom, bolj kot s čimerkoli drugim. Kapitalizem, vsaj v ZDA, financira precej bolj radikalna dela kot svet neprofitnih organizacij. Prejel sem zelo malo razpisnih sredstev, in še to le v zadnjem času. Če bi pred šestimi leti prišel do umetniške organizacije in vprašal, ali me lahko financirajo, da bom letal gor in dol po svetu in iskal tajne mučilne zapore, bi me gladko

umetnosti iz preteklosti. To je absolutno odločilno, vendar hkrati težim k temu, da bi bilo moje delo razumljivo. Želim biti formalno tog, ne želim znižati nivoja svojega dela, a hkrati me zanima komunikacija s čim večjo množico ljudi.

IH: Ko sva govorila o političnem kontekstu, si večinoma govoril o ameriški politični agendi, čeprav predvidevam, da tako imenovana geografija »črnega sveta« vpliva na ljudi po vsem svetu. Katere geografske predele si doslej raziskoval?

TP: Ko govorimo o črnih operacijah in skritih geografijah, sta dve stvari, ki ju moram izpostaviti. Razširjenost teh aktivnosti v Združenih državah je mnogo večja od česarkoli kar kdorkoli drug. Druga plat skritih geografij pa je, da nikakor niso omejene na Združene države, temveč so po vsem svetu. Ameriška tajna geografija me je popeljala povsod v Afganistan, Evropo, Srednjo Ameriko in drugam.

IH: Kako financiraš svoje delo?

TP: To je dobro vprašanje. Nekaj del financiram s prodajo, nekaj z avtorskimi honorarji od pisanja, veliko predavam.

IH: To se mi je zdelo relevantno vprašanje, ker si moral kar veliko potovati za projekte, kot je bila na primer knjiga *Mučilni taxi*, in dela, ki so nastala ob njej. Mapiranje in sledenje aktivnostim obveščevalne službe CIA lahko začrta zelo drago sled. Umetnost se ponavadi niti približno ne približa tem proračunom.

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zavrnili. Lahko pa sem šel do mecenov, založnikov in galeristov, ki so bili dosti bolj odprti za takšne predloge.

IH: V svoji zadnji knjigi *Nevidno* nisi objavil raziskave. Zakaj si se odločil, da natisneš fotografski album?

TP: Imam veliko fotografij in zdelo se mi je, da bi jih ljudje mogoče radi videli. (smeh) To je knjiga umetnika, to je velik del tega, kar počnem, in mislim, da so vse moje knjige nekako v dialogu druga z drugo. Napisane knjige pokažejo en način, kako lahko vidimo stvari, fotografija pa razkrije drugačen način, kako vidimo stvari.

IH: Bilo bi se zanimivo pogovarjati tudi o tvoji ideji eksperimentalne geografije in tvoji vlogi geografa v povezavi z akademskim delom na Univerzi v Berkeleyju.

TP: Eksperimentalna geografija je bila argument, ki sem ga prvotno razvil za akademske namene, začeli pa so si jo prisvajati številni umetniki, kar me je pravzaprav precej presenetilo. Pogovarjal sem se z ljudmi, ki delujejo v polju družbenih znanosti in akademij, in zagovarjal mnenje, da je ena od logičnih posledic velikega segmenta dela, ki ga opravljamo, povezana z vprašanjem forme in reprezentacije in politike forme. V argumentu o eksperimentalni geografiji sem pripravil akademike na področju družbenih znanosti, da bi bili bolj samorefleksivni o vprašanju oblike. Na primer, akademske recenzije so ena izmed najbolj rigidnih oblik pisanja, ki jo sprejemajo brez vprašanja. Zdi se neverjetno, da je lahko v današnji dobi v uporabi takšna grozljivo anahronistična forma. To ni le vprašanje vsebin, ki jih raziskujemo, ampak vprašanje politike oblike, s katero predstavljamo naše raziskave. Če pogledamo na zasnovo akademskih revij, lahko vidimo, da so njihove lastnice multimilijonske korporacije. Od akademika se pričakuje, da se odpove avtorskim pravicam brez denarnega nadomestila. Od nas se

pričakuje, da generiramo zastonske vsebine za korporacije.

IH: Ali lahko v akademskem polju predstavljaš nekatera dognanja iz umetniškega dela?

TP: To me niti ne zanima toliko. V Los Angelesu na primer izdajajo elektronsko revijo *Vectors Journal*, ki se trudi proizvajati recenzentske izdaje, ki so lahko napisane poljubno, v katerikoli obliki želiš. Prejel sem eno od njihovih štipendij in predstavil eno od dveh sledilnih aplikacij, aplikacijo, ki sledi gibanjem letal, ki vzletajo in pristajajo na »črnih območjih« v Združenih državah. Sčasoma sem zbral bazo podatkov, ki sem jo generalal s sledenjem različnim registrskim številkam letal. Prispevek sem oddal v obliki baze podatkov, en del je bil pisan, drugi pa vizualan.

IH: Kako je možno, da pridobivaš podatke o nečem, kar naj bi bilo tajno?

TP: Ponovno, to je vprašanje protislovja. Ta skrita država mora prečkati meje vidnega sveta na najrazličnejših krajih, ker ne more obstajati kot popolnoma samozadostna tvorba. Križanje med tajno državo in preostalim delom države, ki se materializira na površju zemlje, je trenutek protislovja, ki ga je mogoče izslediti.



Trevor Paglen Skrita pokrajina / A Hidden Landscape www.aksioma.org/hidden-landscape

Aksioma Projektni prostor / <i>Project Space</i> Komenskega 18, Ljubljana, Slovenija 4. - 23. april 2011 / <i>April 4 - 23, 2011</i>

V sodelovanju z Galerijo Thomas Zander iz Kölna / In collaboration with Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne.
Umetniški vodja / Artistic director: Janez Janša Izvršna producentka / Executive producer: Marcela Okretič Odnosi z javnostmi / Public relations: Mojca Zupanič Tehnični vodja / Technician: Valter Udovičič
Vse slike / All images © Trevor Paglen Z dovoljenjem / Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne and Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco

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Trevor Paglen Contradictions of the Hidden Landscapes

Trevor Paglen is going to mark the opening of the new Aksioma | Project Space with a very concise exhibition of four projects from his wide-spread artistic research on landscapes and phenomena that are hidden from the public view and operate in the heterogeneous interests of the state apparatus. He is going to show a selection from his work *Symbolology* (2006), in which he has collected a wide range of perplexing symbols and insignia that signify secret military operations, various units, command affiliations, and programmes, by which members of these programmes are able to identify one another. The patches represent a distinguished military culture, marked by an explicitly gaudy taste, in which the "Pentagon's 'black world' is replete with the rich symbolic language that characterises other, less obscure, military activities". The second work at the exhibition, *Missing Persons* (2006), is going to present another by-product of secret activities, which only insinuates the highly dubious activities of the CIA, for which it has created a wide-spread list of fake names to cover up the trail of their agents. Since the mid-nineties, the CIA has been wildly active in kidnapping, detaining and torturing people who were suspected of terrorism all around the world and it has brought them to a network of secret prisons referred to as 'black sited'. For their activities, the CIA has used unmarked aeroplanes, which are owned by intricate networks of front companies whose boards of directors are composed of non-existent people. The *Missing Persons* project is a collection of their signatures culled from business records, aircraft registrations, and corporate filings. Connected to both of these works is the project *Code Names*, which lists words, phrases, and terms that designate active military programs whose existence or purpose is classified ranging from intelligence programmes to military operations, and secret identities and fake companies. The forth project is going to present selected works from the *Limit Telephotography* project, which unveil the geographies of classified military bases and facilities that are off-limits to

the general public. In this piece, in which the artist uses highly magnified photographic technology that closely resembles astrophotography, the artist reveals highly grained blurred images of secret geographies, which seem so far as if they did not belong to the same dimension.

IH: In your academic work, you deal with specific geographical methodology, but I would like to understand the meaning of form in your visual arts projects. Would the form adopt the same status as the methodology in science? How important is the aesthetics of the work that you are doing?

TP: It's very important. I've been an artist for much longer than I've been a social scientist. Paying attention to what the world *looks like* (and I mean this very literally) is extremely important to me. In research, I pay a lot of attention to the moments where I find an image or document or phenomena that seems to be metaphorically charged.

IH: Could you give us an example, so we would better understand this statement?

TP: One of the pieces in the exhibition at Aksioma is a collection of signatures of fake people, who have been involved with the CIA covert operations. I began to collect those signatures obsessively, because to me they were extremely telling. To a political scientist or a journalist, these false signatures have zero value – they don't really tell you anything or further any sort of analysis – but for me they are very compelling as an image. And I think, because of my background, I pay very close attention to this moment of seeing.

IH: Would you say that seeing is believing?

TP: I'm much more interested in raising questions about seeing. I like to play with the notion that seeing is believing, but I always try to point out how frangible that relationship is.

IH: Especially in the context of art, one can never trust what one sees. Documents are often presented as mimicry, re-enactment, reinterpretation or just simple manipulation, which is posing a question about believability. When going through your collection of patches, I found it hard to believe that any person who takes herself seriously would do something of such gaudy taste.

TP: You are obviously not an American military person.

IH: Would you say that the military should get some art education?

TP: No. I like the fact that they have their own weird outsider art.

IH: Seriously, these patches look like they belong to some underground gang movement, that's why they are a little bit unconvincing. The blunt question would be: Are they authentic?

TP: Yes, absolutely, I'm not creative enough to make up all those things.

IH: The real question is: How is it possible that people who would collect so much power and take so much effort to conceal themselves from the public view allow you to research them?

TP: Military and intelligence infrastructures are not simple at all. The state is not at all a unitary thing, but a wildly self-contradictory structure. Methodologically, my overall approach involves trying to find the contradictions within the secret parts of the state, because those are often the moments where you get a glimpse of it. Those patches are an example.

IH: It is really interesting with your work, that you emphasise the idea about contradictions, which prevents us from thinking about conspiracy

theories, which are quite childish in comparison to your work.

TP: The notion of contradiction is at the core of both the theoretical work as well as the visual and aesthetic work that I've done. I'm very much interested in the places where meta-narratives do not cohere. I'm interested in the places where intelligibility becomes impossible based on a lack of evidence. I don't want to go further in my analysis than the evidence I have allows. A lot of the time, this somehow means actually reproducing that unintelligibility. This is exactly the opposite of conspiracy theory, because a conspiracy theory is an attempt to form a narrative out of a lot of evidence that doesn't cohere. Conspiracy theorists speculate that there is a greater order, or purpose, or invisible hand trying to put together seemingly fragmented pieces of evidence into an underlying narrative. But I don't want to go that far. For myself, I think it's more interesting to let the fragments be – to let them speak for themselves, and to watch them fail to speak.

IH: Had any of the conspiracy theorists adopted any of your research as a part of their grand scheme?

TP: Not so much. I generally tend to stay away from all of that. I am often invited to radio or television shows that have to do with conspiracy theories. I tend not to do it, but there were a couple of times when I participated and it was a very strange thing. There is a show called *Coast to Coast* and it is the biggest conspiracy show in the United States. I have been on it a couple of times and I haven't done well. On one occasion I was speaking about the "extraordinary rendition programme", and some of the things CIA was doing. The CIA, as you know, was kidnapping and torturing people, and hiding them as ghost prisoners in a network of secret prisons. When I talked about this on the show, people got absolutely furious with me, saying that I was a traitor and so forth. The irony was that if I

had said that the CIA was working with aliens to kidnap and torture children at secret bases in the desert, I think all the listeners to the show would have loved it.

IH: Art projects are often kept in a very hermetic space, but your projects seem to communicate with a wider public. Of course, this communication is problematic in all kinds of ways, because we still speak different languages. Nevertheless, it seems that, in your work, you do have a sort of unveiling political agenda.

TP: There is a politics to it. I'm interested in the American political culture, the mechanics of the state, and the mechanics of what we may call the "deep state". I've written some books that deal with this question; they talk about the structure of the deep state and the tension between it and notions of democracy. I can make a very different argument in a book than with an art work. I don't try to construct linear narratives in my visual work. I've never been able to do that and I think very few people can do that well, because, as a form, art is not very well suited to linearity. I think art is very well suited to asking questions about epistemology or ambiguity. I think of myself as quite conservative as an artist in a sense that I'm not an avantgardist. I'm not necessarily interested in developing new formal strategies. I think many politically oriented artists see a homology between radical forms of art and radical forms of politics, but I don't see it.

IH: Quite the contrary, I believe a lot of politically oriented art does not take enough care of the formal aspects of visual language. In your photographic works, there is a distinguished aesthetics of grained, unclear pictures, which is based on your decision to use particular media of telephotography that is not used by very many people. This seems to be a very formalist aspect of your work rather than a narrative.

TP: Surely, the formal aspects of the work are the vocabulary that I use. Talking specifically about photography, I am more interested in highlighting the uncertainty of photography and the uncertainty of seeing. I pay very close attention to the formal language of visual work or photography and there are lots of references to different forms of art from the past. This is absolutely crucial, but at the same time, I want to do work that is understandable. I want to be rigorous in form, I don't want to degrade the work, but I am also interested in communicating to as many people as I can.

IH: When we were speaking about political context, you were mostly addressing the American political agenda, but I presume the so-called "black world geography" affects people all around the globe? Which geographies have you explored thus far?

TP: When we are talking about these black operations or secret geographies, there are two things that need to be pointed out. The scale of these activities within the United States is much greater than in any other country. The other point is that American geographies of secrecy are not confined to the US at all; they are all over the world. I've done work on the American geography of secrecy, but this has taken me all over the world to Afghanistan, Europe, Central America, and elsewhere.

IH: How is your work funded?

TP: This is a good question. Some of it is funded from sales, some of it by getting advances for writing, I also lecture a lot.

IH: This seemed a relevant question for you had to do quite substantial travelling for projects like the book *Torture Taxi* and the work that was done for that piece. Mapping out and following the activities of the CIA can prove to be quite an expensive trail. Art usually doesn't come anywhere near those budgets.

TP: This is true. It's funded through capitalism more than anything else. Capitalism will fund much more radical work than the non-profit world, at least in the US. I've received only very few grants, and even those only very recently. If, six years ago, you had gone to some art organisation and told them you would like them to fund your running around the world looking for secret prisons of torture, they would have flatly refused. But you could go to patrons, publishers or gallery owners, who would be a lot more open to your suggestions.

IH: In your last book *Invisible*, you didn't publish research. Why have you decided to print a photographic album?

TP: I have a lot of photographs and I thought people might want to see them. (smile) It's an art book, a big part of what I do and actually all my books are in conversation with one another. Writing a book is a particular way of seeing, but with photographs it's another way of seeing.

IH: It would be interesting to talk a bit about your idea of experimental geography and your role as a geographer in connection to your academic work at the Berkeley University.

TP: Experimental geography was an argument that I was initially developing for the academics, but a lot of artists started to adopt it, which is actually quite surprising to me. I was talking to people in social sciences and the academia, arguing that one of the logical consequences of a lot of the work that we are doing has to do with questions of form and representation and the politics of form. The experimental geography argument was asking social scientists to be self-reflexive about the questions of why the form of, for example, peer-reviewed articles is so rigorously accepted without any questions, and how the form can be so appallingly anachronistic in this day and age. It is not only about what we present in research, but also about what the politics

of the forms in which we present research is. If you look at how a lot of academic journals are set up, you would see that they are owned by multi-million dollars corporations. A scholar is expected to give up copyrights completely without getting paid. We are essentially generating free content for corporations.

IH: Are you able to present some of your findings from the art field in the academic context?

TP: I don't really care that much to do this. There was one electronic journal called *Vectors Journal* from Los Angeles. They were trying to produce peer-reviewed publications that could be in whichever form you chose. I participated in one of their fellowships and produced one of the two tracking applications, which tracks air-craft movements arriving to and departing from black sites in the United States. Over time, a data base was created by tracking different registration numbers of the planes. It was basically a database, part of it was written, and another part of it was visual.

IH: How is it possible that you were able to obtain all this information about something that is supposed to be secret?

TP: Again, this is the question of contradiction. This secret state has to intersect the visible world in all sorts of different places, because it can't be a completely self-contained thing, and those intersections between the secret state and the rest of the state in the materiality of the surface of the earth are moments of contradiction and it is possible to find them.



TREVOR PAGLEN

SKRITA POKRAJINA A HIDDEN LANDSCAPE