

ENG

# YOUR PHONE IS A COP



FABRA i COATS  
CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORANI  
BARCELONA

Ajuntament de  
Barcelona



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## RAÛL REFREE – ISAKI LACUESTA



*Your Phone is a Cop* is a project by musician Raül Refree and film-maker Isaki Lacuesta. It is based on the concert that Refree gave at Sónar 2018, for which the director of *La leyenda del tiempo* and *Los pasos dobles* was commissioned to illustrate the sound with images. The artists have previously worked together on the soundtrack for Lacuesta's latest film *Entre dos aguas* and the director has also created videoclips for Refree in the past.

They now join forces once again to shape this multi-disciplinary project that revolves around the control to which we are subjected as a society in a secret, inexplicit way. Without making a pamphlet or an explicit accusation, the intention of this artistic proposal is to raise a subject that is often concealed behind the addictive dynamics of social networks and the false freedom that internet grants to the population as a whole.

The exhibition project consists of an interactive installation, where the visitors can interpret, recreate, make and unmake sounds and images of the performance created for Sónar by Refree and Lacuesta. It comprises various computers equipped with a specifically-designed software. This software, which is very intuitive, allows the user to interpret, first hand, music based on samplers chosen and developed for this project and then activate the sequential projection of images. Visitors are invited to compose images and to edit the sound live, just like musicians and video-jockeys do today, and their creations will then be projected onto the surrounding multi-screen.

In a second area, the live performance from the Sónar 2018 festival is projected on a screen. It's not so much a video of the concert but a screening of the images from the live performance and the music that was created on the spot.

In collaboration with Zentralmedia, Eve Audio, BITBEAT and Ableton.

Exhibition project created in collaboration with Bòlit, Centre d'Art Contemporani. Girona.

# AESTHETICS OF SURVEILLANCE

## ELOY FERNÁNDEZ

### PORTA

“Correcting the virtualities of behaviour” is, according to Michel Foucault, the principle of modern legalism. This programme has been fulfilled in the overall panoptic of the internet. We stopped using the expression *virtual reality*, in reference to digital phenomena, some time ago, because on the internet the adjective has been substantivised: even though, strictly speaking, online activities are still virtual, we perceive in this consolidated guise more rigour and veracity than in our contributions to the analogue world, which are increasingly less decisive. This leads to a sort of preventive and anticipatory vigilance, in which the fable of Philip K. Dick, *The Minority Report*, played out. Future crime police, detective of the future, the cybernaut picks up on the sins of thought – because thinking out loud is the communicative principle of digital sociability – and reports them before they become actual sins..., that is if the definitive overlap hasn’t already occurred between the two forms of misconduct: he who thinks, commits an offence.

**Cinema: Neil Jordan, *The Brave One* (2007).** This film revives one of the most problematic sub-genres of *noir*, that of urban avenger. The *retro* homage to the vigilante films of the 1980s (“If the police won’t protect us, what are we to do?”) is combined with criteria of gender (the imaginaries of empowered femininity) and of sensology (the vindication of the desire for vengeance as a moral sentiment). In the character played by Jodie Foster, who pursues her husband’s killers, the vigilantism policies of law and order generated during Reagan’s era are revived in relation to the most proactive and armed vein of feminist movements.

Traditionally, critical theory has described surveillance as an asymmetric relationship between conceptual personalities. On one hand, the spectral figures of the so-called ‘System’, ‘Technology’ and ‘Power’. On the other, society, with its alleged desire for intimacy and innocent victim of the indexed and indiscreet observation of cameras and algorithms. However, this theory has gradually been reversed as the universalisation of *Do-It-Yourself* media and metamedia has reconfigured citizens as guardians and informers. As *Peeping Toms* licensed to expose, their films, recordings and images, even the most casual, have the potential status as proof of a crime and trials *in nuce*. The use of smartphone cameras for contemporary purposes is simply the first step in an *occurrence-allegation* of the image.

**Media: Julian Assange, *Wikileaks* (2007).** To become a single-person media outlet is a political utopia created by the internet. The plethora of metamedia on the internet can be read as a deconstruction of the classic format of daily newspaper, where each of the journalists’ assignments is redistributed on a specific metamedia. The opinions column is transferred to Facebook; photographic journalism to Instagram and Snapchat; Twitter is the gibberish of an editorial meeting when closing an edition, and the mobile telephone is the director’s office. At the beginning, users of the internet, inspired by a techno-anarchist ano-

nymity and as budding journalists, offered counter-information and institutional critique. But this role radically changed when Wikileaks came on the scene. More than just a metamedia, the website created by Assange is a sign that guides the behaviour of everyone else. Thanks to him, the journalism of information leaks definitively loses the battle to information leaking practices. This phenomenon coincides with the new status of post-photography, in which the decisive moment is no longer the scene captured by the careful observer, but the instant in which the image is made public. This is how the paradigm of the depiction is replaced by another: that of the leak.

Create yourself, in collusion with every other citizen – with the complicity of the whistle-blowers –, your own rules, your own original censorship, the most creative beatings, entrapments and arrests. Everyone wants to be Zapruder. Everyone wants to be a cop. A desire to control that no longer emanates from the de facto powers but from the street and pervades every daily experience, analysing the habitual as a suspicious activity; pursuing verbal impropriety; exposing, with *gifs*, an over-reading of body language. Every form of personal relationship – every connection – is conceived as dysfunctional by default. Reciprocal vigilance configures an aesthetic regime where the divine eye of video surveillance systems is updated in the human view, the human mass. Nokia and Samsung: brands of weapons.

**Architecture: Frederic Amat & Isern Associats, *Mur d’ulls* (façade of the Ohla Hotel, 2011).** The cognitive ambivalence that characterises hotel architecture – *locus amoenus* and watchtower, space for privacy and exhibition – becomes evident, in times of assumed video surveillance, in this arrangement which, formed by a hundred or so ceramic sculptures shaped like eyes covering the entire building – even the outdoor swimming pool on the roof –, transforms the guests into a promiscuous community of 5-star *voyeurs* and prisoners.

Of all the virtual sins, those that generate the most interest – even more than the organised banditry on the deep Web – are the ones that insinuate, prefigure or imply the capacities of a body. Defined as *carnal potential* or *erotic capital*, this possibility, latent in the anatomy, is the object of scrutiny, not for what it does but for what it reveals as capable of doing. The form of vigilance is that of a suspicious adult watching the development process of an adolescent.

**Music: Psychic Ills, *FBI* (*One Track Mind, Sacred Bones*, 2013).** ‘I did what I could, / you know I tried, / but I was working for the FBI / I did what I could, / you tried to stay, / but I was working for the CIA.’ It’s the song of impossible love in times of vigilantism. The emotional troubles of a secret agent, who has a job that is incompatible with a stable relationship, is presented, in a melancholic tone with a predominance of the bass, as everyone’s problem: of the person who, like a spy, watchful of the clues, secrets and conspiracies of others, is no longer capable of concentrating on the connection that should structure their life.

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### ROUND TABLES

But pornography also changes the status. Who wants to tire themselves watching videos of predictable coitus, of routine fellatio..., when they can watch and record real offences, the perpetrator caught *in flagrante*? The collapse of the porn industry, the *amateur dérive* of the genre and its feminisation have recoded the depiction of what is erotic as just another form of self-portrait. They have also contributed to the discrediting of the *truth of sexuality*. Nude is the new dress, and the hidden truths, the dirty Freudian secrets, must be searched for in other expressions of carnal potential. The eye that looks at arousing images is no longer a mainly objectifying and male chauvinist one, as described by Laura Mulvey. The prosumers of images, armed to the hilt with their arsenal of mobiles and metamedia, watch, every now and then, like a *voyeur*, but above all they observe as a member of the popular tribunal, like an undercover cop, like a reporter from the tabloids, more interested nowadays in the relational embezzlements and wrongdoings than in spasms and orgasms.

**Design: Ostalgia of the Stasi.** The historic-aesthetic reappraisal of Soviet imaginary, coined *ostalgia* by Iván de la Nuez, could also be interpreted as a strange form of melancholy: memories of times past when control of the population was carried out, obligatorily, by means of *lo-tech* devices, cassette recorders and bugged telephones. This technical device, which was in its day the most insightful image of crypto-communist totalitarianism, appears today, in an era where institutionalised whistle-blowing is voluntary and *high-tech*, to be rather more like a primitive, simplistic and naïve predecessor of the contemporary condition: the iStasi.

Eloy Fernández Porta has a PhD in Humanities from the Pompeu Fabra University (UPF). He is a professor of contemporary art on UPF's Hispanic and European Studies Programme and at the Barcelona School of Management. He is also an essayist.

30/1

**CAPITALIST (SUR)REALISM:  
SURVIVING ONLINE:** Sergi Jordà,  
Ethel Baraona and Ingrid Guardiola

12/2

**YOUR PHONE IS A COP.**  
Isaki Lacuesta and Raül Refree

13/3

**BIG DATA VS BIG BANG: FUTURE CREATIONS  
AND DESTRUCTIONS:**  
José Luís de Vicente, Olga Subirós  
and Simona Levi

### RELATED ACTIVITIES

8/1 to 23/1

Filmoteca de Catalunya:  
Isaki vs. Lacuesta

22/1

Raül Refree concert *La otra mitad*,  
Sa Pobla, Mallorca

26/1 to 28/4 Bòlit. Centre d'Art  
Contemporani. Girona:  
*Les imatges eco* exhibition,  
by Isaki Lacuesta

9/2

Guided visit to the exhibition at Bòlit.  
Centre d'Art Contemporani. Girona,  
by Isaki Lacuesta, at 11.00

15/3

Bòlit. Centre d'Art Contemporani. Girona:  
round table and presentation of the  
exhibition's catalogue *Les imatges eco*,  
with Isaki Lacuesta, at 19.00

22/3

La Mercè Cultural Centre. Girona:  
*Your Phone is a Cop*, by Raül Refree and live  
projections by Isaki Lacuesta, at 21.00

30/03

Raül Refree concert *La otra mitad*,  
Ciclo de la Raíz (Zaragoza)

7/4

Raül Refree concert. *La otra mitad*,  
BRDCST festival (Brussels)

20/6

Museu del Cinema, Girona: conversation  
between Isaki Lacuesta and Ingrid Guardiola

11/2019

LOOP Festival, Barcelona- Arts Santa Mònica,  
première of Isaki Lacuesta's *La v(n)ostra  
veu* (5th Edition of the Award for Video  
Creation Xarxa de Centres d'Arts Visuals  
de Catalunya, Arts Santa Mònica, the  
Generalitat de Catalunya's Department for  
Culture and LOOP Barcelona)

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EXHIBITION

# RAÜL REFREE ISAKI LACUESTA

18.01 —  
17.03.2019

**CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORANI  
DE BARCELONA  
FABRA I COATS**

Sant Adrià, 20  
08030 Barcelona  
+34 932 566 155  
centredart@bcn.cat  
centredart.bcn.cat

**Opening times**

Tuesdays to Saturdays, 12.00 to 20.00  
Sundays and Holidays, 11.00 to 15.00  
Guided tours every Saturday at 18.00  
and on Sundays at 12.30