

Goldsmiths Research Online

*Goldsmiths Research Online (GRO)
is the institutional research repository for
Goldsmiths, University of London*

Citation

Fisher, Andrew. 2014. Photo-surveillance and the emplaced déraciné. *Photographies*, 7(1), pp. 53-65. ISSN 1754-0763 [Article]

Persistent URL

<http://research.gold.ac.uk/10495/>

Versions

The version presented here may differ from the published, performed or presented work. Please go to the persistent GRO record above for more information.

If you believe that any material held in the repository infringes copyright law, please contact the Repository Team at Goldsmiths, University of London via the following email address: gro@gold.ac.uk.

The item will be removed from the repository while any claim is being investigated. For more information, please contact the GRO team: gro@gold.ac.uk

Photo-surveillance and the *emplaced déraciné*

Andrew Fisher, Goldsmiths, University of London

Abstract

This article examines a defining tension between the meanings and values imposed on the production of place in photo-surveillance, which stems from its operation as a mode of deracinating emplacement. Photo-surveillance imbues specific places with significance, yet in doing so it subjects depicted individuals and events to processes of displacement. In light of this, the article takes as its starting point the following claims: the ‘place character’ of photo-surveillance is defined operatively as a mode of subjection, and the subjects it produces are *emplaced déraciné*. Significantly, I argue, this is true of both the normative forms and uses of photo-surveillance and artistic and critical practices that seek to intervene in these forms and uses. In order to understand photo-surveillance as a production of place, then, the article examines two art practices that intervene in surveillance culture and analyses the ways in which they foreground different modes of photo-surveillance’s deracinating emplacement.

Introduction

This article examines the relationship between the category of place and photographic surveillance, as mediated by artistic practices that seek to intervene in surveillance culture. Specifically, on the basis of an attempt to theorize the place-character of photo-surveillance, it explores the intertwined registers of subjectivity, place and surveillance in Manu Luksch’s film *Faceless* and Hasan Elahi’s *Tracking Transience* project.¹ That is, respectively, a narrative film made using only footage derived from existing CCTV systems and a web-based, self-imposed surveillance project documenting the life of its author. Both of these works take photographically produced images, broadly construed, as a significant point of purchase on surveillance culture. Whilst the manner in which they do this differs, they both also focus attention

on the intimate and structuring relationship between photographic surveillance as a production of place and its configuration of subjectivities.

The pervasive character of surveillance in contemporary social life is all too obvious, finding registers at vastly differing scales and constituting a globally extended, politically charged web of relations between technologies, the bodies they operate upon and the spaces these move within. As is often remarked, contemporary surveillance has developed to include forms of biometric identification, observable traces of behaviour and desire left in the wake of networked computer use, commercial and state monitoring of financial transactions and communications, the increasing capacities of networked mobile devices to inform as well as to locate their users' movements and the technical realization of the 'god's-eye' viewpoint offered by satellite systems that survey the globe's surface to monitor and/or guide events taking place upon it.²

In this context, I use the compound term photo-surveillance to denote that broad range of photographic technologies and practices of surveillance, the forms and uses of which entwine with other technologies to frame and act upon the behaviours and bodies of those caught in its web. In the process, interlinked horizons of visibility and action are spatialized and temporalized. For instance, the street level proliferation of mobile imaging devices, the fixed elevation of CCTV cameras and the vertical modes of visualization facilitated by manned and unmanned aircraft, combine to indicate that modes of photo-surveillance contribute to the configuration of social space and that they do so in ways which are intimately entwined with the imposition of social norms and expectations, the exercise of power and its projection or curtailment of identities and freedoms. Anyone might be caught in this web of relations, meaning that all stand as possibilities of being imaged. Whether actually captured in an image or not, all thus are at least partially configured in their subjectivity insofar as they are locatable on the sliding scale from propriety to impropriety according to which such surveillance stands to measure their appearance.

Recent developments in surveillance and in the critical discourses that follow these have tended to dissolve the once dominant role photography played in surveillance culture into the informational form and networked flows of data, relegating the photographically produced image to just one amongst other modulations of such data.³ Thus, it might seem anachronistic to examine contemporary surveillance culture from the point of view of its photographic forms.

The aim here is not to force the untimely assertion that photography remains a defining characteristic of surveillance. However, in very many artistic interventions into contemporary cultures of surveillance, photographic images still tend to stand out as a point of purchase, as something that it is practically possible for artistic appropriation to take hold of and re-function.⁴ Insofar as they act upon photographic images such interventions have an inherently critical horizon that derives from the operations of intervention and re-figuration to which the already instrumental surveillance image might be further subjected. As such, they echo photo-surveillance's modes of subjection. These factors speak of a technical-historical and practical asymmetry, which is ultimately an effect of unevenly distributed power. I take this to suggest that artistic interventions into surveillance culture are contained within this culture's constitution as a sphere of possibilities. Interventions into this sphere tend to take up the images of subjection produced by surveillance's normative use so as to re-subject them to some process or treatment intended to subvert or redeem the fate of those subjects framed by the surveillance apparatus, a tendency that sets the scope of artistic critique in this context. This article deals with the persistence of the photographic in artistic mediations of surveillance in light of this uneven distribution of power and as a specifically contemporary aspect of its critique in the age of digital information. If, in this context, networked digital data has more or less dissolved the photographic as the dominant form of surveillance then this - the moment of a certain idea of photography's obsolescence - might bear its own critically productive novelties.

Photo-surveillance as a mode of deracinating emplacement

There exists a marked tension in the meanings and values imposed on the production of place by photo-surveillance, signaled by its distinctive spatio-temporal operation as a mode of *deracinating emplacement*. It configures place as that arena which can be occupied by some identifiable body, or trace of a body's located significance, whilst also denuding any place that is thus put in question of the values of belonging, identification, community and sense that are conventionally associated with this spatial category, for instance, in contrast to the more abstract and generalized seeming notion of space as such.⁵ Place, in this context, is held out as a promise of sense and belonging oriented towards one or other viewpoint or value,

which is inherently abstract and generalized. Different modes of photo-surveillance share a very basic function in asserting a strong claim on place, whether, for example, through the location of equipment or in the use of images produced. But they do so by distending the emplacement of that which finds itself so emplaced. The place-character of photo-surveillance has the characteristic of abstracting some-body; of tearing it out of place in the very process of articulating it's arrival in the image as the fulfillment of a concern for the particular place in which it is seen to be located. Here, as is more or less obvious in most other forms of photography, what allows for the particular values, attachments and meanings associated with the experience of place are those inherently generic, impersonal, abstracted and dispersed operations of the apparatus which ground the surveillance image's - as much as other photograph's - undoubtedly powerful place-oriented possibilities in a spatially and temporally articulated process of deracination.

This suggests that one might strategically situate the present discussion in relation to Marc Augé's influential account of 'non-place' and the conceptually unresolved relation this has to more conventional conceptions of place. Augé famously periodizes the present as 'super-modernity': a culture that denudes the category of place of its relational and historical concern for identity and that dissolves the 'circumscribed and specific' expectation of emplaced belonging within a 'culture located in time and space' (Augé' 77-78). Non-place, for Augé', appears as space:

[I]n which neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense; spaces in which solitude is experienced as an overabundance or emptying of individuality, in which only the movement of fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the past and glimpse the possibility of a future. (87)

Many have noted the resonance of this conception of non-place with the particularity of an expanding range of distinctive contemporary spaces, but also that non-place's negative determination - never really being totalized with regard to place which is 'never completely erased' (79) - means that such non-places retain a place-like sense of particularity and value.⁶ Thus, readings of Augé's conception of non-place have often sought to inflect it critically by revealing this concept's dialectical relationship to the meanings and values otherwise attributed to place. It should be noted that this reference to Augé is not intended to project his conception of non-

place as being an adequate model for theorizing photo-surveillance, though it remains suggestive in this context. Rather, bearing in mind criticisms of Augé's problematic articulation of the relationship between place/non-place, this reference is useful in projecting the antagonistic aspects of place that are highlighted when one thinks of the processes of subjection towards which photo-surveillance is oriented. The unresolved character of this relationship between place and non-place enables one to project the character of place that is in question in photo-surveillance. However, it is only in developing a better understanding of the implied subject position at stake in passages such as the one quoted above, that one will begin to understand the contemporary condition and critical horizons of photo-surveillance in its specificity as a process of place-production.

It is uncontroversial to remark that photo-surveillance is deeply informed by a concern for place. The production and use of its images are premised on the potential they bear to indicate what might or does take place in one or other location and perhaps also to pre-empt it. This general function exploits the familiar manner in which space and time are bound together by photographic apparatuses to produce an image of something in some-place. But whilst photo-surveillance might be said to be structured by such a concern for place this is not explainable in terms of any straightforward claim on the way that photographic images are often supposed to be unable to avoid depicting specific things in particular places. Photo-surveillance exaggerates this key feature of emplacement through the ways in which its apparatuses are dispersed as imaging operations over various vehicles of pre-emption, production, storage and use. Its operation is temporally extended, being structured by modes of anticipation and retrospection, redundancy and repetition that further serve to characterize photo-surveillance as a dislocated and dislocating form. But, to repeat, these dispersed and dislocated modes of spatio-temporalization are nonetheless deeply concerned to configure place.

On this basis one might make the following claims: the place-character of photo-surveillance is defined operatively as a mode of subjection and the general form of the subjects it produces might thus be called *emplaced déraciné*. In coining this term I mean to denote that dispersed figure towards which photo-surveillance, as a configuration of space and a mode of subjection is oriented. It is in being oriented towards this figure that photo-surveillance's antagonistic production of place finds its meaning. Its place-producing function specifies particular events, actions and bodies

in instrumentally circumscribed arenas through processes that are spatially dislocated and temporally distended. The subject position of the emplaced *déraciné* - as anticipated, for instance, by the fixed CCTV camera, produced as a claim on the meaning of its surveillance image and subjected to the interests that control the image's production or use - is as close as one might get to the consolatory values often desired of place in photo-surveillance and in its criticism alike.

The coinage of new terms bears the risk of appearing artificial or otiose. The risk is worth taking here because what is in question is not a relation between pre-existing notions of place and subjectivity and how these are mediated by discreet forms of image. These three terms turn out to be intertwined functions of each other in photo-surveillance, which is what the paradoxical notion of emplaced *déraciné* aims to conceptualize. The place-character of photo-surveillance is exhausted by its function of subjecting, or standing ready to subject, those who fall within its purview to the interests that govern its presence and use. The place-character of photo-surveillance is, in short, harboured within its interest in subjection.

By extension, I argue, these claims as to the place-character of photo-surveillance are true of both its normative forms and uses and those art practices that seek to intervene in, appropriate and re-function these forms and uses. A significant aspect of such practices is the way they define themselves as challenges to photo-surveillance's processes of subjection in order to gain critical purchase on its production of place. Art practices that seek to subvert it seem also to mirror the instability and the dislocated character of place integral to photo-surveillance, albeit in ways that are not always intentional, explicit or desired. And such artistic interventions appear more or less self-consciously to be harboured within photo-surveillance as variations on its own possibility. However strong or acute they manage to appear as critical appropriations of surveillance images they tend, fatefully, to carry its determining frameworks over into the artwork. However, this apparent shortcoming is also their promise.

Faceless and the collective mode of the emplaced *déraciné*

Faceless (2007) is a film made by Manu Luksch over a period of four years using only footage culled from surveillance systems around London and according to a six-point 'Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers', the first item of which rules out the

introduction of cameras or lighting into the filming process.⁷ Performances were staged in locations covered by CCTV then retrieved exploiting data protection legislation that enables those pictured by surveillance systems to apply for images that ‘reveal personal or sensitive data’ concerning themselves, a process which leads Luksch to describe the images she retrieved as ‘legal ready-mades’ (10). Adherence to this process effectively makes it necessary that a film’s protagonist is the same legal subject who is able to retrieve these images, in this case Luksch herself. Anyone else featured in them, by definition outside the terms of identity set by the legal structure allowing the image’s retrieval, is rendered unidentifiable - their face is obscured - before the video is released. To extend Luksch’s art historical reference, as anonymized and perhaps unintentional ‘extras’ to the action these others become ‘found subjects’, generic spin-offs from the appropriation of the filmmaker/protagonist's own image as legal ready-made.

The successfully retrieved footage was edited on the basis of a scenario arising from the marks of identity and anonymity inscribed by this legally necessitated erasure or non-erasure of faces. Luksch describes this as follows:

Faceless is a CCTV science fiction fairy tale set in London [...] images are obtained from existing CCTV systems by the director/protagonist exercising her/his rights as a surveilled person under the DPA [Data Protection Act]. Obviously the protagonist has to be present in every frame. To comply with privacy legislation, CCTV operators are obliged to render other people in the recordings unidentifiable – typically by erasing their faces, hence the faceless world depicted in the film. The scenario of Faceless thus derives from the legal properties of CCTV images (10).

Luksch’s own account of this work and much of its critical reception has concentrated on the interesting ways in which it undercuts the idea of an all-pervasive and smoothly operating surveillance culture: ‘the non-functionality of the system was only revealed to its operators when a subject access request was made’ (10). Some requests were refused on the grounds that the surveillance system in question was not operative at the time of a performance. Some tapes were found to have been prematurely erased in contravention of system operator’s protocols. Other footage presented problems of identification due to very poor image quality (10-11). But

whilst these demonstrations of material resistances and institutional limitations are interesting, it is a tension between the manifesto-led system for generating this imagery as artistic material and its consolidation into a particular narrative that is of importance here.

This narrative centres on a woman living in a world ordered by a system of surveillance that has been invented to dissolve the uncertain temporal form of social life, namely, that the lived present entails a shared and unpredictable accommodation between past and future. In the film, these temporal registers of the existential are dissolved into 'Real-Time'; the reduction of phenomenological time's extended and intersubjective form into a singularized and eternal present secured by the apparatus of photo-surveillance. Any deviation from this imposition of Real-Time is monitored and corrected by a sinister cadre of 'observers'.⁸ Luksch describes the crux of the narrative that unfolds within this context as follows.

In a society under the reformed 'Real-Time' Calendar, without history or future, everybody is faceless. A woman panics when she wakes up one day with a face. With the help of the Spectral Children she slowly finds out more about the lost power and history of the human face and begins the search for its future. (ambienttv.net)

At first the grey masks that cover everyone's faces might be read in light of what one knows of the film's production, but as the narrative progresses and the central character attains self-consciousness, the mask obscuring her face disappears and things change. The visible sign of the process of its production is subsumed into the fictional narrative as one realizes that the attainment of a visible face is an individuating shock, the irruption of phenomenological time into the fiction of Real-Time. After recovering her face, the protagonist goes through a process of anamnesis that ends in the discovery of a former partner and the revelation that they share a forgotten child. This promises to shatter the artificial world of Real-Time returning its subjects to the anxious, but by implication authentic, situation of having to cope with this recuperated past, its effects on the present and the contingency of their shared future. Thus, a normative figure of heterosexual love ends up saving the day with its consolatory ambiguities. But, however disappointing it may be, this dénouement also highlights an interesting tension in the project as a whole, which arises between the

published film, its system of production and its critical relation to legal-bureaucratic and spatial contexts of surveillance.

What appears first as the determining aspect of *Faceless* – its plot - might be thought of as being contingent in relation to its system of production. The dispersed but insistently material character of the surveillance images that emerge from the process of production shines through this narrative to exert a marked torsion on what they show, a torsion deriving originally from the surveillance apparatus that is only increased by the image's reconfiguration within the filmic narrative. The visible register of this torsion implies but undercuts an openness to yet further disaggregation and reconfiguration as the horizon of possibility held out by these images and their mode of production. The project's generative condition sets up the production of such differentiations as a demand to narrate and a system to facilitate this. The promise held out by this relationship survives in the resulting film, albeit in adumbrated and latent form.⁹

One might think of this as a critical mythopoesis of surveillance culture; a determined setting out to create the conditions for an alternative to this culture's own systematic and ideologically determined narrative constructions (of identity and concern for control over its representation and meaning, for instance). The web of laws, cameras, spaces, behaviours, concerns, outrages and possible sanctions that inform this process of production and the narrative it generates are revealed to be elements of an existing, overarching and thinly disguised mythical narrative, namely, the apparatus of photo-surveillance and the culture of surveillance to which it contributes. The production of an alter-narrative works by turning this apparatus into a dimly reflective mirror system, a palimpsest that promises to set surveillance and its ability to impose narrative form on the world free, at least symbolically. This is a bureaucratic reconfiguration of photo-surveillance, which includes the legislation surrounding its images and which centres on concerns of being subjected to the modes of emplacement performed by and structuring of the apparatus of photo-surveillance. If, in this, *Faceless* resonates with the projected figure of an emplaced *déraciné*, it does so in a doubled and problematic fashion. It promises to enable the generation of alternative narratives from out of surveillance. But its final form forecloses on this promise insofar as the protagonist's redemption is framed by her ability to resolve the antagonistic character of her place in things. Yet, the project's system, insofar as it is set up to generate alternative myths out of existing ones, nonetheless retains a further

promise of the mythopoetically reconfigured surveillance image. Reading *Faceless* in this way suggests that it might be understood as a mythpoetic critique of surveillance harboured by photo-surveillance as one its own possibilities.

The wider project sets in train a play between place and non-place that registers in the sometimes recognizable, sometimes named but more often than not generic locations seen in the retrieved images and the ways in which they give context to a range of either anonymous or identifiable subjects. Here, to return to Augé, the attempt to make historical sense of social relations in the context of surveillance appears to have to pass through a moment in which ‘neither identity, nor relations, nor history really make any sense’. The material images concerned are situated as non-places or registers of attenuated place in which time’s ongoing stoppage means that ‘solitude is experienced as an overabundance or emptying of individuality’; a situation the film sets out to resolve. However, its attempt to do so produces a further tension that is describable by the dialectic between place and non-place and that emerges from this film’s very attempt to resolve the antagonisms of photo-surveillance. The highly attenuated subject positions from which mobile and fleeting images of deadened time might offer some observer the chance to ‘hypothesize the past and glimpse the possibility of a future’ (87) persist, but they do so in an obscure and displaced form.

Whilst concretely acting in and on specified places, photo-surveillance inscribes these with features of non-place and place. *Faceless* appears to reassert this characteristic of photo-surveillance in attenuated form, not in the reconfigured image of the protagonist as legal ready-made but, rather, in giving place to the constitutively displaced and irredeemable others on the verge of her image.

What of those extras whose faces remain digitally concealed in *Faceless*? They are, as ‘found subjects’, impoverished figures occupying both ‘real time’ and ‘Real-Time’. Insofar as one remains within the terms of the film’s narrative, they are constitutively irredeemable because it allows of no subject position from which they might stake a claim on their place in things. Their only chance - in both worlds - lies in the hands and in the interests of someone else. They are, it seems, a mute but telling figure of both photo-surveillance and its critical mediation in *Faceless*. They suggest themselves as being weak in agency but powerful as signs of contingency and of photo-surveillance’s production of place. Their doubled and unfulfillable emplacement serves to populate the space around the protagonist’s actions with a

sedimented and collective image of emplaced *déraciné*. These spatially distributed, anonymous and contingent quasi-subjects perform as multiple embodiments of subjection not, or not yet, thematized by the gaze of the surveillance apparatus and also refused redemption by the film's critique of this. Maybe between the two forms of subjection, Luksch's and theirs', one might catch a glimpse of a spatially dislocated and temporally distended subject being emplaced as it is deracinated? If this is the case, *Faceless* at least projects the collective condition of emplaced *déraciné*: but what of the fact that this collective condition bears also on questions of individuation?

Tracking Transience and the individualized mode of the emplaced *déraciné*

Hasan Elahi is a Bangladeshi born American citizen who works as a media artist and academic in the American university system, a career that entails frequent travel to conferences, exhibitions and other events associated with his professional activities. On returning from just such a trip in the period after September 11th 2001, Elahi was stopped at U.S. customs having been flagged up mistakenly as a suspicious person. He was able, on that occasion, to mollify his interrogators by provided them with details of his itinerary as stored in a Palm PDA device. But for the next six months or so he was called and recalled for interview by the FBI. He responded by beginning to develop a mode of self-surveillance, starting out by implanting a GPS device in his mobile phone that enabled details of his location to be communicated voluntarily to his questioners. This fed into the creation of a website devoted to his self-surveillance in 2003, which was later supplemented by the addition of photographs documenting the places he visited and things encountered *en route* to them. Over time this activity has become increasingly automated so that his mobile phone now uploads images on its own, though according to pre-programmed editorial criteria. Visiting this website one encounters many such images supplemented by cartographic satellite imagery and numerical and textual forms of data that ostensibly pinpoint Elahi's location at specific times on given days.¹⁰

The site now contains more than 45,000 images, each of which is linked to yet more images and other forms of information. These photographs invariably point outwards, showing meals about to be eaten, train platforms, urinals he has faced, petrol pumps and various premises visited, but never Elahi himself. They are dated and timed. Flight numbers and destinations are superimposed on those relating to air

travel. They are linked to information drawn from his bank accounts and pertaining to transactions made in the places photographed. All of this information promises the ability to cross-reference and thus to pin his activities down to particular times and places. But, partly due to the blank mode of their presentation and the mass of information they open onto, the photographs and this other information only actually lead one into an unending circuit of rootless reference.

Despite the manner in which all elements of this project tend to dissolve into abstracted information, at least sooner or later, its photographic elements stand out. They straddle two temporal and spatial axes, one informing the photograph as documentary visual record and the other foregrounding the openness to reconfiguration that is characteristic of networked digital images. The photographs in this project are figured and reconfigured as the latter but in ways that serve to foreground the bare and mute form of evidence characteristic of the former. And the tension between these two tendencies is constrained, at least relatively, by the bounded, emphatically authored and singular focus of the project as a whole.

Elhai's project has come to take on an increasingly less 'current' seeming appearance. Instagram has overtaken the idea of photographing one's dinner before it is eaten and has done so on a massive scale. Life-blogging has similarly overtaken any novelty Elahi's self-surveillance might once have had. Facebook has further accelerated and massively expanded our familiarity with self-published and frequently updated personal information. Yet, in amongst all these signs of its rapid ageing, *Tracking Transience* retains a degree of critical purchase on surveillance and what it might lead to.

Whilst one cannot sensibly describe *Tracking Transience* as a photographic work, its photographs do function as a pivot for the rest of the information one encounters in it. They serve as contingent indexes of just *these* places insofar as they are framed by Elahi's function as the project's author and the real fiction of his self-surveillance in producing whilst occupying them. They stand as a paradoxical guarantee of such occupation, acting on the visual axis of the document to ensure its claim on place as simultaneously particular and generic location, whilst also deferring any sense of actual emplacement onto the axis of the networked digital image, its visually ambivalent status as information and the propensity that its meaning has to dissolve into something else.

Tracking Transience is saturated with reference to the detail and actuality of particular places. But whilst these details might be supposed to be exhausted by the reasons informing his project the subject at their core is never seen, is always displaced and this displacement interpolates others to take Elahi's place, even if only imaginatively. This project is manifestly concerned with a specific instance of threatened but deferred subjection to surveillance and its strategic response to this possibility is to effect a process that concentrates upon photographically mediated and ambiguously specified places, the subject's literal and figurative place in the world and his invisibility or visibility within a series of displacements that combine to constitute a symbolic response to his subjection. The tension between anonymity and identification characterizing the photographic images involved in all of this suggests that they act as multiple, dispersed and yet combinatory stand-ins for the subject position of their author. They trace him as the named yet anonymous subject just as they are set within processes that enable others to take up this position as an outlook framed by a mode of subjection to surveillance.

In oblique parallel to *Faceless*, *Tracking Transience* acts as a palimpsest of photo-surveillance's modes of emplacement and deracination. Fictionally, and in a self-consciously weak manner, *Tracking Transience* sets out to pre-empt the spectre of an actual surveillance, the possible effects of which impinge on Elahi as a named individual. However, his project enacts a doubling of this possible surveillance that serves to elide its subject, reproducing him as a phantasm of circulating information. But this is a phantasm constructed around an outlook that others might share and do so in a way that is secured by the photographic elements of the project. One might say, then, that *Tracking Transience* establishes a corollary to the collective form of the emplaced *déraciné* that was read out of *Faceless* above. Here, however, the torsion between individual and collective serves to outline an emplaced *déraciné* from the perspective of its individuation and the ability others might have to take a symbolic share in this.

In this, one might say, *Tracking Transience* literalizes deracination as a core characteristic of surveillance by making photo-surveillance into the pivot of its critical process of self-subjection. Its subject is an emplaced *déraciné* with an identity but no underpinning markers of presence that might fill out the meaning of its location. Elahi's photographic proxies offer a shareable outlook, which reminds one that

subjectivity is in part at least configured by the fact of standing as a possibility of being surveilled.

By way of brief conclusion, one can note that critical exploration of *Faceless* and *Tracking Transience* enables articulation of two modalities of the concept of emplaced *déraciné*, the former foregrounding its ambiguous collective character – as this is oriented towards individual agency and meaning - and the latter towards its individuating force – with a compromised but critical destination in making the reconfiguration of surveillance shareable as a collective horizon. The different challenges to photo-surveillance offered by these works seek to gain critical purchase on surveillance culture by refiguring its production of place and revealing this as a generalized form of subjection. Whilst the concern for place central to both of these works is not straightforwardly redeemable, as interventions into its production they temper, redispense and so foreground the place-character of photo-surveillance's subject, an emplaced *déraciné* possessed of intertwined but distinguishable collective and individuated modes.

Biography:

Andrew Fisher is a Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College, University of London and a founding editor of the journal *Philosophy of Photography*. His recent publications include the anthology *On the Verge of Photography: Imaging Beyond Representation* (co-edited with Daniel Rubinstein & Johnny Golding, Article Press, Birmingham, 2013). He is currently writing a book about the social ontology of photography, which addresses this topic through analysis of the inter-related technical, phenomenological, geographical and political senses of photographic scale.

References

- Augé, Marc. *Non-place: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London & New York. Verso. 1995. Print.
- Bauman, Zygmunt, and David Lyon. *Liquid Surveillance: A Conversation*, Cambridge: Polity Press. 2013. Print.
- Cunningham, David. "The Spectres of Abstraction and the Place of Photography." *Philosophy of Photography*. 3.1. (2012): 195-210.
- Elahi, Hasan. *Tracking Transience*, Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
<<http://trackingtransience.net/>>.
- Finn, Jonathan. *Capturing the Criminal Image; From Mug Shot to Surveillance Society*. Minneapolis. Minnesota University Press. 2009. Print.
- Luksch Manu. Mukul Patel. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
<<http://www.ambienttv.net/content/?q=>>

- Luksch Manu. Mukul Patel. "Faceless: Chasing the Data Shadow." Variant. 31. (2008): 10-12. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
<<http://www.ambienttv.net/content/?q=dpamanifesto>>.
- Osborne, Peter. *Anywhere or Not at All. The Philosophy of Contemporary Art*. London & New York. Verso. 2013. 133-174. Print.
- Rafman, Jon. *Nine Eyes of Google Street View*. Paris. Jean Boîte editions. 2011. Print.
- Roberts, John. "Photography, Landscape and the Production of Space." *Philosophy of Photography*. 1.2. (2010): 135-56. Print.
- Schwartz, Joan and James Ryan. *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*. London & New York. I. B. Taurus. 2003. Print.
- Sinclair, Ian. *Lights out for the territory*. London. Granta. 1998.
- Smith, Neil. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capitalism and the Production of Space* (1984). 3rd ed. London & New York. Verso. 2010. Print.
- Surveillance and Society*. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
<<http://library.queensu.ca/ojs/index.php/surveillance-and-society/index>>
- Tagg, John. "In the Valley of the Blind." *The Meaning of Photography*. Eds. Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson. Williamstown Massachusetts. Clark Institute of Art. 2009. 118-29. Print.
- The Surveillance Camera Players*. Web. 14 Dec. 2013.
<<http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html>>
- Van Gelder, Hilde and Helen Westgeest. "Place and Space in Photography: Positioning Toward Virtual Places in Spatial Objects." *Photography Theory in Historical Perspective: Case Studies from Contemporary Art*. Chichester. Wiley-Blackwell. 2011. 112-51. Print.
- Wolf, Michael. *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Berlin. Pepperoni Books. 2010. Print.

Notes

¹ For details of *Faceless* see; <http://www.ambienttv.net/content/?q=>. *Tracking Transience* can be found at: <http://trackingtransience.net/>.

² Bauman and Lyon's *Liquid Surveillance* offers a critical overview of recent debates in this field. Issues of surveillance have become of great critical concern since 2001 and academic study of these has recently been codified by establishment of the discipline of 'surveillance studies', which has found its major organ in the online journal *Surveillance and Society*. Perhaps unsurprisingly when this journal does feature discussion of artworks they are generally dealt with as being illustrative of the forms and results of empirical research or, more often, being delimited as popularly framed mechanisms of consciousness-raising.

³ A study that charts the pre-history of this process in terms of photographic forms of surveillance is Finn's *Capturing the Criminal Image*. Recent work by John Tagg also marks a shift in theoretical response to the contemporary intensification of surveillance as in his recent essay "In the Valley of the Blind."

⁴ Some significant artistic precedents are to be found Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* of 1969, and Sophie Calle's *Suite Vénitienne* and *Detective* of 1980 and with the New York collective *The Surveillance Camera Players*. In the wake of such precedents a sub-genre of contemporary art grown up around issues of surveillance. One might note, in this vein, both Jon Rafman's and Michael Wolf's appropriation of images from Google Streetview.

⁵ Though Neil Smith's articulation of a political geography of scale from out of the contrast between abstract space and the values of place dates from 1984, it retains critical purchase on later attempts to privilege place over space insofar as they tend to posit place as being a more natural, phenomenologically prior form that is somehow external to Capitalism's social production of space as an abstract generality: "With the development of social economies based on commodity exchange, a second nature emerges and with it a crack in the unity of place and nature. [...] But the development of a second nature leads not just to a conceptual development, but to the development of a socially produced space out of (and every bit as real as) natural space." (Smith: 107-8). The understanding of place developed in this article sets out to explore photo-surveillance as a form of place-production that is firmly lodged in the relationship between both such first and second natures.

With regard to the relationship between scale and place as spatial categories of photography and discourse on landscape see: Van Gelder and Westgeest (112–51) and many of the essays collected by Schwartz and Ryan (2003). For a critical alternative to these see Roberts (135–56).

⁶ For prime examples of the critique of Augé's negative development of this concept, see Osborne's articulation of 'art space' as a specifically urban, globalized and networked form in *Anywhere or Not at All* (133-174). For an account of photography in terms of space and landscape with an emphasis on the critique the category of place see Cunningham (195-210).

⁷ The *Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers*, 'declares a set of rules, establishes effective procedures, and identifies issues for filmmakers using pre-existing CCTV (surveillance) systems as a medium in the UK', Luksch and Patel frame this practice and describe the production of *Faceless* in their article for *Variant* magazine (10-12).

⁸ Luksch and Patel acknowledge that the notion of 'real time' is indebted to a striking passage from Ian Sinclair's *Lights Out For the Territory*: "Vague spectres of menace caught on time-coded surveillance cameras justify an entire network of peeping vulture lenses. A web of indifferent watching devices, sweeping every street, every building, to eliminate the possibility of a past tense, the freedom to forget. There can be no highlights, no special moments: a discreet tyranny of now has been established. Real time in its most pedantic form." (Sinclair: 91. Quoted in Luksch and Patel: 12).

⁹ In this respect, the extra features that accompany the film on the published DVD, stand as fragmentary indications of other possibilities, one involving the young dance group who performed Busby Barclay influenced routines in corporate lobby, street and car park for the film, the other comprising in footage of Luksch being interviewed by police whilst writing notes about the position and coverage of surveillance cameras in central London.

¹⁰ Elahi's own account of the genesis of this project can be found at:

www.ted.com/talks/hasan_elahi.html.