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'ZOOM PAVILION' AT UNLIMITED GIVES ART BASEL A REAL-TIME LOOK AT SURVEILLANCE

BY *Nate Freeman*   06/17/16

Installation view of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Zoom Pavilion*, 2015, at Unlimited at Art Basel.
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When I finally got wifi Friday morning at a hotel in the middle of the Black Forest in Germany, I opened my Instagram account and saw that I was now being followed by an account by the name "l.poitras." Now, I don't actually know if it is Laura Poitras, the Oscar-winning documentary filmmaker and artist who makes work about government surveillance operations. The account follows over 500 accounts, but it is protected, and

hasn't yet given anyone approval to follow her back, resulting in 0 followers. A few in-depth Google searches didn't provide any more details as to whether or not Poitras has an account with the app. But, regardless of whether or not it's really her, it got me thinking about what it might mean that one of the world's best-known anti-surveillance advocates was peering into my world via Instagram, and not letting me peer back at hers.

Poitras and likeminded colleagues (http://www.artnews.com/2016/02/09/a-tsunami-of-data-laura-poitras-trevor-paglen-hito-steyerl-and-more-discuss-surveillance-technology-at-the-whitney/) such as Simon Denny, Trevor Paglen, and Hito Steyerl all make work that directly references our Age of Constant Surveillance, but there's scant evidence of their work at Art Basel, where, more often than not, the shiny and expensive takes precedence over work with a political bent. Which is why it was so refreshing to discover a work by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Krzysztof Wodiczko that goes at surveillance head-on, during a second pass at Unlimited (http://www.artnews.com/2016/06/13/flying-suitcases-mimes-and-a-collectors-house-a-quick-spin-through-the-unlimited-section-at-basel/) Friday afternoon. The work, originally staged last year at the Museo Universitario Arte Contemporaneo in Mexico City, is called *Zoom Pavilion*.

Enter the *Zoom Pavilion*, and there's a moment of complete disorientation, as on the walls there's big, blown-up grainy security footage displaying images of people in a room, and then you see a figure that you recognize—you see yourself. On the screen, you are moving the same way you're currently moving. And then you notice there cameras—there are 12 of them. The blown-up footage is a feed of the room in real time.

Installation view of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Zoom Pavilion*, 2015, at Unlimited at Art Basel. The person on the screen is the author.
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Soon enough, there's a red square that pops up around your head, similar to the square that pops up around a subject when you're taking a picture on an iPhone. The cameras are using facial recognition technology to figure out where the heads are in the room, and then zooms in on the face when the image is put up on the wall.

And while the screens on the main wall alternate between people every few seconds, on the screens in the back of the pavilion is a compete grid of faces—what colleges might have once called a face book—of everyone in the room, with a running time stamp. Above the screens showing faces is another row of screens, these showing the scene inside from a bird's-eye view, with lines indicating how far each person is from one another, a physical vector that seems to alienate more than connect, emphasizing the distance between visitors. It's our always-watching world in microcosm, displayed before us to see.

And while this is pretty spectacular evidence that sharing tons of pictures of yourself on the internet is a bad idea, of course every person in the crowded room was snapping a ton of pictures, myself included. Plenty of them have already landed on Instagram. Maybe Laura Poitras happened to scroll over an image of *Zoom Pavilion* in her feed, and liked it.