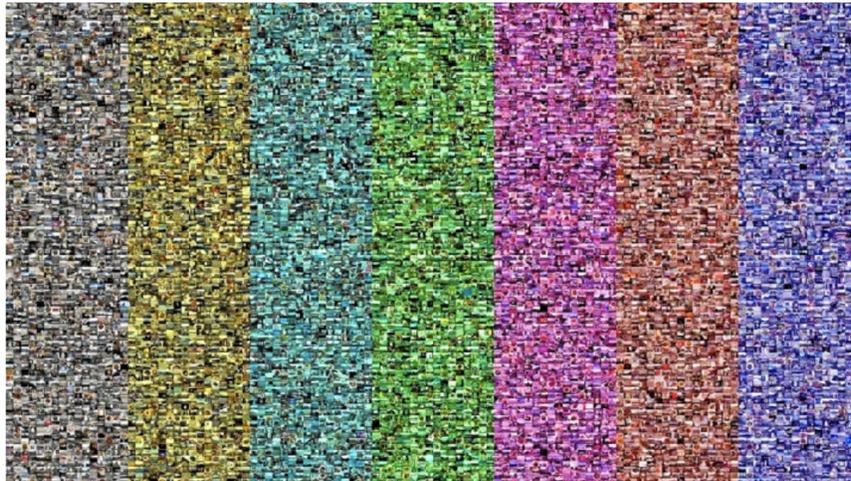**Hartford Courant**

Real Art Ways' 'Nothing To Hide?' Examines Surveillance

Hasan Elahi voluntarily monitored his whereabouts 24/7 and posted his photos online. The resulting art piece —
titled "10,000 Little Brothers," a twist on the "Big Brother" character in George Orwell's "1984" — is seven multicolored
pillars made up of tiny photographs of where Elahi has been: restaurants, shops, streets, even toilet stalls. (Courtesy Real Art Ways)

When the subject of government surveillance of private citizens comes up, supporters of the practice often reflexively respond "I've got nothing to hide."

Edward Shanken, like others in the forefront of surveillance protests, is having none of that. "It's not about having anything to hide. It's about things being nobody's business," Shanken said. He added "If you have nothing to hide, give me your laptop and passwords."

Shanken, an art professor at University of California at Santa Cruz, co-curated a new exhibit at Real Art Ways in Hartford, "Nothing to Hide?" The thought-provoking, creepy exhibit uses artworks to examine the ease of gathering detailed personal information about people without their knowledge and how that information can be distorted, abused and misappropriated. The exhibit is made up of video screens, drones, hidden cameras, a phony cellphone tower, photos of spy headquarters, jpegs swiped off the internet and computer printouts that focus on different aspects of everyday peering into the lives of private citizens.

"The impact of surveillance techniques on privacy is significant and the laws can't keep up with it," Shanken said. "These artists are revealing our vulnerabilities to surveillance techniques imposed upon us."

Shanken said these vulnerabilities can be self-imposed. "Privacy is something that people have become acculturated into not caring about and giving up," he said. "That's the ethos of social media: I'm going to put stuff out there.

"A lot of inferences can be made," he added. "Highly granular information can be cross-referenced. The potential for exploitation is really scary."

The other curator of "Nothing to Hide?" is Jessica Hodin.

WikiLeaks fallout: Should you worry about alleged CIA hacks?

The title of the exhibit was inspired by Daniel J. Solove, author of "Nothing to Hide: The False Tradeoff Between Privacy and Security." In the book, Solove states "the problem with the nothing-to-hide argument is the underlying assumption that privacy is about hiding bad things" and asserts that an accumulation of information collected about a citizen paints an unfair and inaccurate picture that could be intentionally or unintentionally distorted to hurt that person, even if he or she has "nothing to hide."

People active on social media are the focus of an installation by Michelle Teran. Teran's intentions are benign, the creation of an art piece. Still, several people in Berlin, Germany, don't know they are the focus of an art exhibit in Hartford because they surrendered their privacy to YouTube.

Teran went online and watched videos that have been geotagged, then she biked around the city to locations tagged in the videos, to follow the paths taken by the video-makers on those days. Using data-mining systems, she rounded out each person's daily life to present a profile of who these people are and how they "perform" their daily lives.

"That is what social media is, a performing of the personal in public, making videos of themselves," Teran said. "Even if it's something as banal as a birthday party, it's a staging of the personal."

Shanken said Berlin is an epicenter for artworks commenting on erosion of privacy. He speculated that the city's former placement straddling the Soviet bloc may be a reason for its citizens' interest in government overreach. "It's so rich in that culture, which is so close in memory," he said.

Hasan Elahi's life is scrutinized, too. At first it was against his will. "He kept being detained on flights by Homeland Security," Shanken said. Elahi asked interrogators what he could do so he wouldn't be detained anymore. His solution was to voluntarily monitor his own whereabouts 24/7 and post his photos online. His piece — titled "10,000 Little Brothers," a twist on the "Big Brother" character in George Orwell's "1984" — is seven multicolored pillars made up of tiny photographs of where Elahi has been: restaurants, shops, streets, even toilet stalls. "There's this ludicrous amount of frivolous information," Shanken said. "There's so much information it doesn't even matter. It's totally useless."

Lynn Hershman Leeson's eerie "Tillie the Telerobotic Doll" is a doll with a camera installed in her head, the lenses being Tillie's eyes. Visitors will be surveilled and their presence streamed on a screen. Another spy-bot, Björn Schülke's "Spider Drone," hovers over the front gallery, swiveling around when it senses movement, aiming its lens in the faces of visitors. Eric Corriel's "Targeted" has a similar theme. Visitors who stop in front of Corriel's screen will find themselves on the screen, with a red bullet target on their chest, while they listen to police-scanner recordings.

Julian Oliver's "Stealth Cell Tower" appears to be a common office printer. It is actually a phony cell-phone tower, similar to those used by law enforcement and governmental agencies. The little tower intercepts visitors' communications networks by replacing a real tower with a false one and sending SMS messages to visitors' cell numbers. Those who respond to those messages will see them printed out on the printer.

Paolo Cirio's "CityGhosts" uses Google Street View to find photos of people, faces fuzzed out as Google Street View tends to do. Cirio prints out the images and hangs them in the gallery. "Ghostly human bodies appear as casualties of the information war in the city," Cirio writes in his statement. Cirio will conduct a teen workshop in April to bring this artwork into public in Hartford. Street View photos of people in Hartford locations will be printed out and hung in the locations where they were

photographed.

In the back gallery, a few more ghosts appear. Eva and Franco Mattes' video installation "The Others" is a slide show of 10,000 photos of strangers, appropriated from personal computers as a result of a software glitch. Who are these people? The Matteses and the gallery visitors don't know. The Matteses intend their work to veer into legal and ethical gray areas as a means of examining them.