

# The New York Times

June 13, 2008

## THE NEW NORMAL

*Artists Space*

*38 Greene Street, SoHo*

*Through June 21*

Privacy, violated by aggressive surveillance and voluntarily relinquished on social networking sites, is the subject and substance of this group show organized by Independent Curators International. Most of the work in the exhibition is digital or photographic, but the artists Jennifer and Kevin McCoy have created a theatrical installation based on Vice President [Dick Cheney](#)'s hospitality requirements (as reported on the Web site [The Smoking Gun](#)). It includes a queen-size bed, cans of caffeine-free Diet Sprite and televisions tuned to Fox News.

The show, which has a component at [the-new-normal.net](#) and a [Facebook](#) page, includes several Web-based projects. The most pertinent is Hasan Elahi's "Tracking Transience," a "digital alibi" created after the artist was repeatedly questioned by the [F.B.I.](#) Viewers can peruse up-to-date records of Mr. Elahi's transactions and telephone calls and locate him on a map in real time. Several artists hypothesize that surveillance can be a kind of seduction. Jill Magid documents her extended flirtation with a [Metropolitan Transportation Authority](#) police officer. Sharif Waked designs provocative clothing for men who are often strip-searched at security checkpoints.

The most engaging work uses surveillance technology as only a starting point. In "Unfinished" (2005), Sophie Calle documents her unsuccessful attempts to make art from bank security-camera footage. She interviews bank employees, asks strangers about their salaries and commissions a perfumer to create "the scent of money." After years of frustration, she gives up. The faces of people using A.T.M.'s appear in the video, but for Ms. Calle this footage does not, on its own, amount to art.

Ms. Calle's experience suggests that the "normalcy" of intrusive technology, the sheer ubiquity of data, makes it hard for artists to create something rare and profound. This point is emphasized, perhaps unintentionally, in a work by [Miranda July](#) and Harrell Fletcher. On [learningtoloveyoumore.com](#), Ms. July and Mr. Fletcher asked readers to submit photographs of the spaces underneath their beds. The result, on display at the gallery, is a thoroughly prosaic archive of cats and dirty socks.

**KAREN ROSENBERG**