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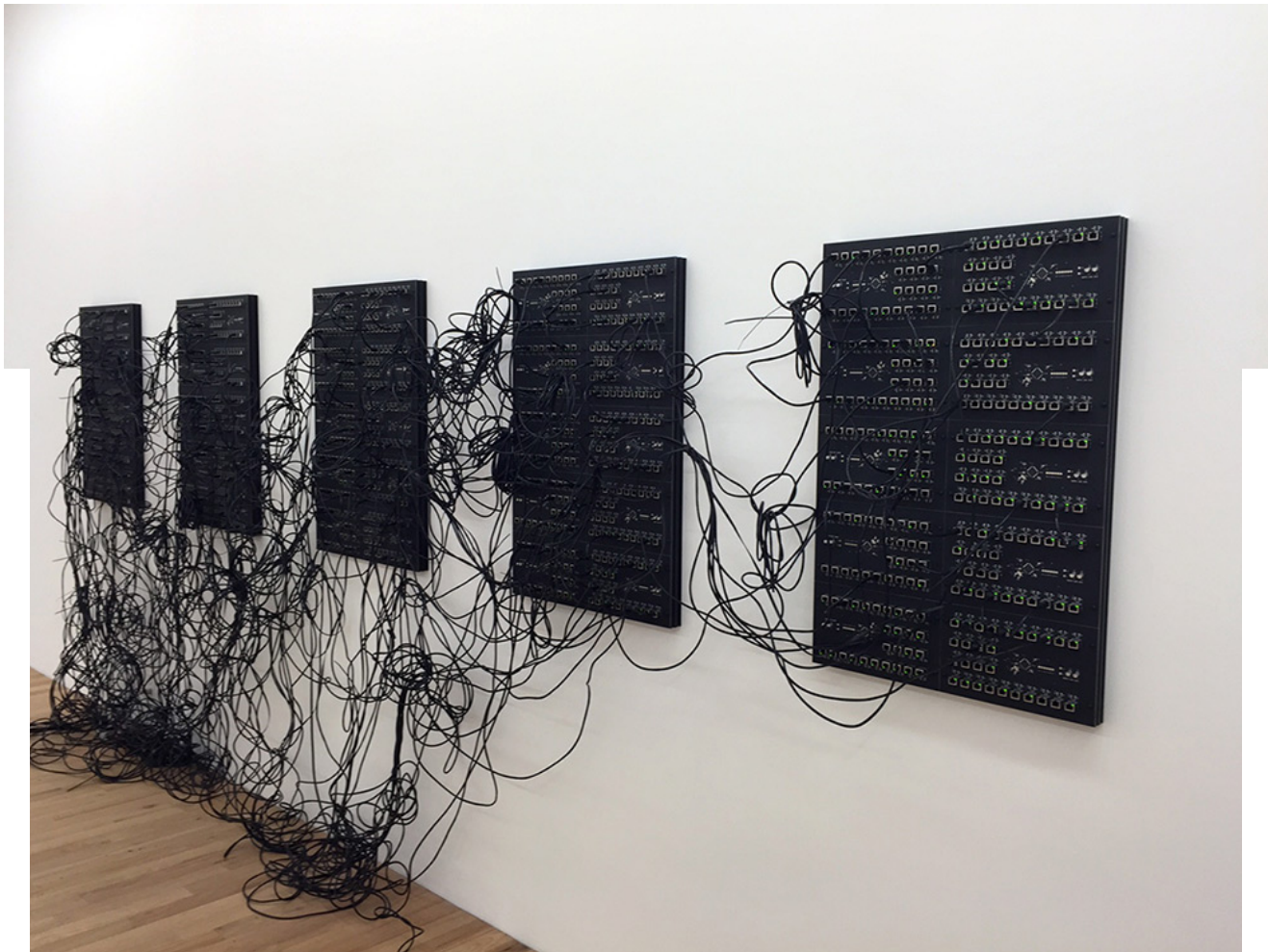
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: her first New York solo show, *Shellshock*, Addie Wagenknecht has turned our society's most ominous objects of technology into art tools and metaphors. *Photos courtesy of bitfor gallery*

DDIE WAGENKNECHT: CLOUD QUEEN, DRONE MISTRESS

IARINA GALPERINA | MON. NOVEMBER 3, 2014 | 2:00 PM | ART TALKS

ark circuit-board sculpture hangs at the entrance to bitforms gallery in the Lower East Side. It blinks atically as it picks up surrounding WiFi signals. Inside, there's a series of circuit-board wall mounts outing hundreds of wires, tall abstract paintings in neon pigments painted by tamed drones and d-plated surveillance cameras aimed at each other.

iculous, vibrant, playfully mysterious—Addie Wagenknecht has turned our society's most ominous ects of technology into art tools and metaphors for her first New York solo show, *Shellshock*, open v through December 7.

e American, Austria-based artist, is a member of the Free Art and Technology Lab ("F.A.T. Lab") and ont runner in the open source hardware movement. For her previous projects, from the meme sh-ups in *Pussy Drones* to the baroque CCTV chandelier *Asymmetric Love Number 2*, Wagenknecht has

tamed some of the more disturbing and controversial aspects of modern technology. In *Webcam Venus*, a collaborative piece with Pablo Garcia, Wagenknecht directed adult webcam performers to reenact classical paintings by Modigliani, Botticelli, and Schiele, challenging our contemporary notion of "mediated sex objects" by placing them in the narrative arc of art history.

Shellshock plays on our collective real and fabricated anxieties toward technology in a post-Snowden world. As we expect government surveillance and dread personal data leaks, we can find some comfort, reassurance, and levity in Wagenknecht's body of work.

We spoke to the artist about the Cloud, privacy, and technological fluency as means of survival.

MARINA GALPERINA: Since 2007, your drone paintings have evolved from monochrome black to vibrant, from minimalist to Rothko-esque. How have your materials and technique changed?
ADDIE WAGENKNECHT: With the newer pieces, I was interested in making a work that was interactive without using computers. The paintings behave more like traditional sculptures, but if you take a picture of one or change the light or the angle from which you are viewing one, the action presents the work in a new form.

In *rxrxrx*, two gold-leafed, closed-circuit surveillance cameras are staring at each other. They feel a little lonely—those two particular surveillance paths, so exclusive in their permissions to monitor society, and they're left at looking at each other. How do you think surveillance culture is affecting us and the authority's relationship with us? How are your current and previous projects subverting this authority?
It's not even about relating to surveillance anymore or having a relationship with it; it is now becoming more about fluency and the navigation of technology as a means of survival. If you don't have the fluency to modify or overwrite a system, it owns you.

The issue, which draws me back to technology recently in my creative works, is the gap between the literate and illiterate. Fluency in programming is becoming an important requirement to survive in a read-only society, and it is not an immediately attainable standard. At the same time, privacy has become a luxury only for the initiated. In parallel terms, surveillance indirectly forms part of the larger system of exclusion, so we have to find ways to include all. The CCTV cams were really about making irresistible objects that hint a sort of romantic tragedy, a form of practical fiction.

Cloud Farming blinks as it processes surrounding WiFi signals. I like the metaphor of it as a "passively interactive" installation for our relationship with "the Cloud" and other hovering, ever-present networks. As a coder and experienced technologist, what is your personal relationship with and view of "the Cloud" and similar routinely mystified networks?
I use whatever makes sense for what it is I am trying to interpret. It just happens that more often than not, those methods are interrelated with technology in some way. I grew up with the Internet. I made my first website in 1996 while in high school, teaching myself basic html. I went to school for computer science, then to NYU/ITP for grad school, so technology has always been a method of self-liberation. When I discovered the web in the early '90s, it was at a time when the world around me had little to do with what was interesting in my life. I started looking for ways to use the Internet against its intended function, writing viruses or worms that functioned as art. I managed to subvert going to traditional art school because it felt too constraining. We are now reaching a point where those who use the Internet as a medium, the networked management systems and "the cloud," have become constrained. We must play with it in ways it was not always intended to make it more interesting again.

Recently, you self-published the book *Technological Selection of Fate*, featuring fragments of your very personal LiveJournal entries. How does the Internet archive our past lives and how have you chosen to respond to and work with those systems?
The Internet has replaced our paper journals with electronic ones. I don't see the response being more or less than the other. It's really just an evolution of our tools along with our culture-technology. And like our memories, it is fragmented and spotty. Images are overlapped and text and entries are cropped out, like people that we forget or remember in parts.

How do you see technology moving deeper into our everyday existence, and will artists like yourself

continue to respond to it in the future?

What I see happening is people either fully embrace or reject it as part of their own evolution. As an artist, I see a similar pattern—we either utilize it and make it part of our tools or abandon it completely.

FILED UNDER: ART, CULTURE, BITFORMS GALLERY, ADDIE WAGENKNECHT, MARINA GALPERINA

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