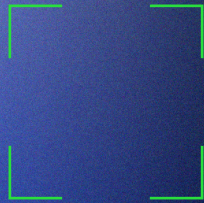


BLANK

TAPE



LENA

HANSEN



Brew House Arts Staff:

Natalie Sweet, *Executive Director*

Stephanie Garrison, *Operations Director*

Brent Nakamoto, *Program/Marketing Coordinator*

Helen Trompeteler, *Program Mentor*

About Brew House Arts:

Brew House Arts (BHA) is a non-profit art center that provides creative space and support for people to connect and expand their relationship with the arts. Founded in the early 1990s in the former Duquesne Brewing Company facility by a community of artists committed to social awareness, BHA carries these ideals forward in its programming today. BHA helps artists grow professionally and creatively by connecting them to audiences, professional resources, and other arts organizations throughout the region and beyond. Housed in a 14,000 sq. ft. facility, BHA has the space, elements, and tools to support the imaginative work of a wide spectrum of creatives.

Brewhousearts.org

Blank Tape was produced through the Prospectus program of BHA, which provides emerging curators with the support necessary to bring their curatorial visions to life. To learn more visit brewhousearts.org/prospectus

Brew House Arts is supported in part by the taxpayers of Allegheny County through a public grant from the Allegheny Regional Asset District (RAD), Arts, Equity, & Education Fund, Fine Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, Hillman Foundation, Opportunity Fund, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation, and PNC Charitable Trusts.

Gallery guide edited and designed by Point Line Projects.

Pictured on page 1

Tooraj Khamenehzadeh

I'm Not a Song to Be Sung, 2023

Video installation

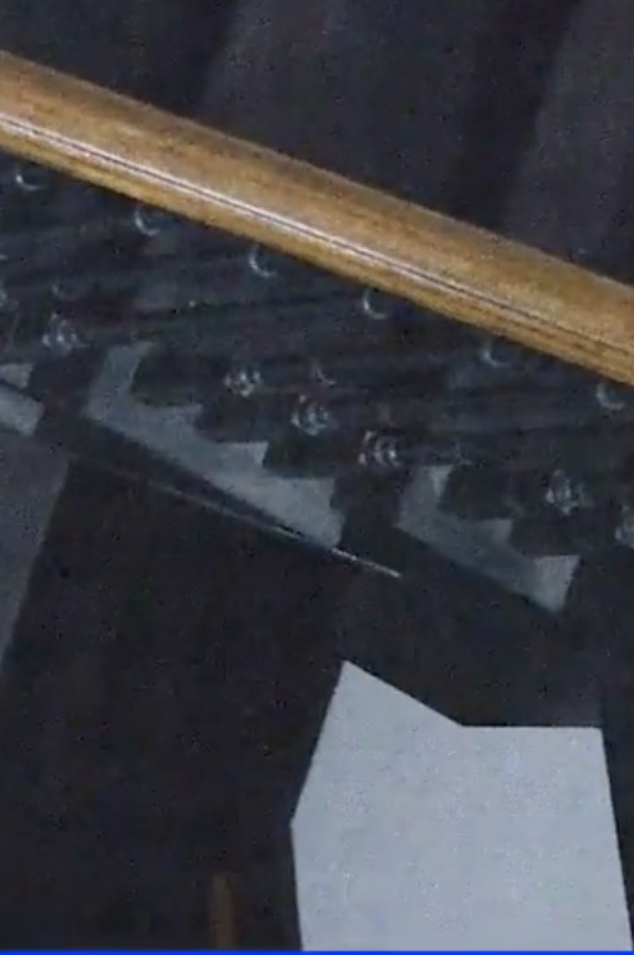
Pictured on page 2

Shori Sims

ULTRAVIOLET LED GHOST HUNTING LAMP (da waves), 2023

Video installation





BLANK TAPE

lena hansen

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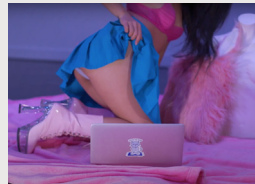


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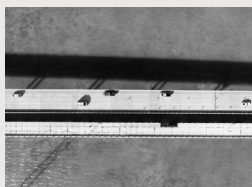
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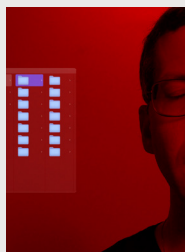


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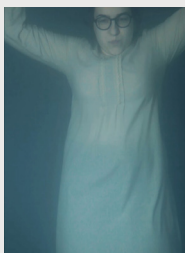


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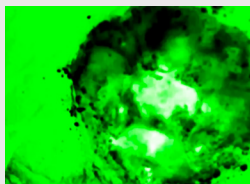
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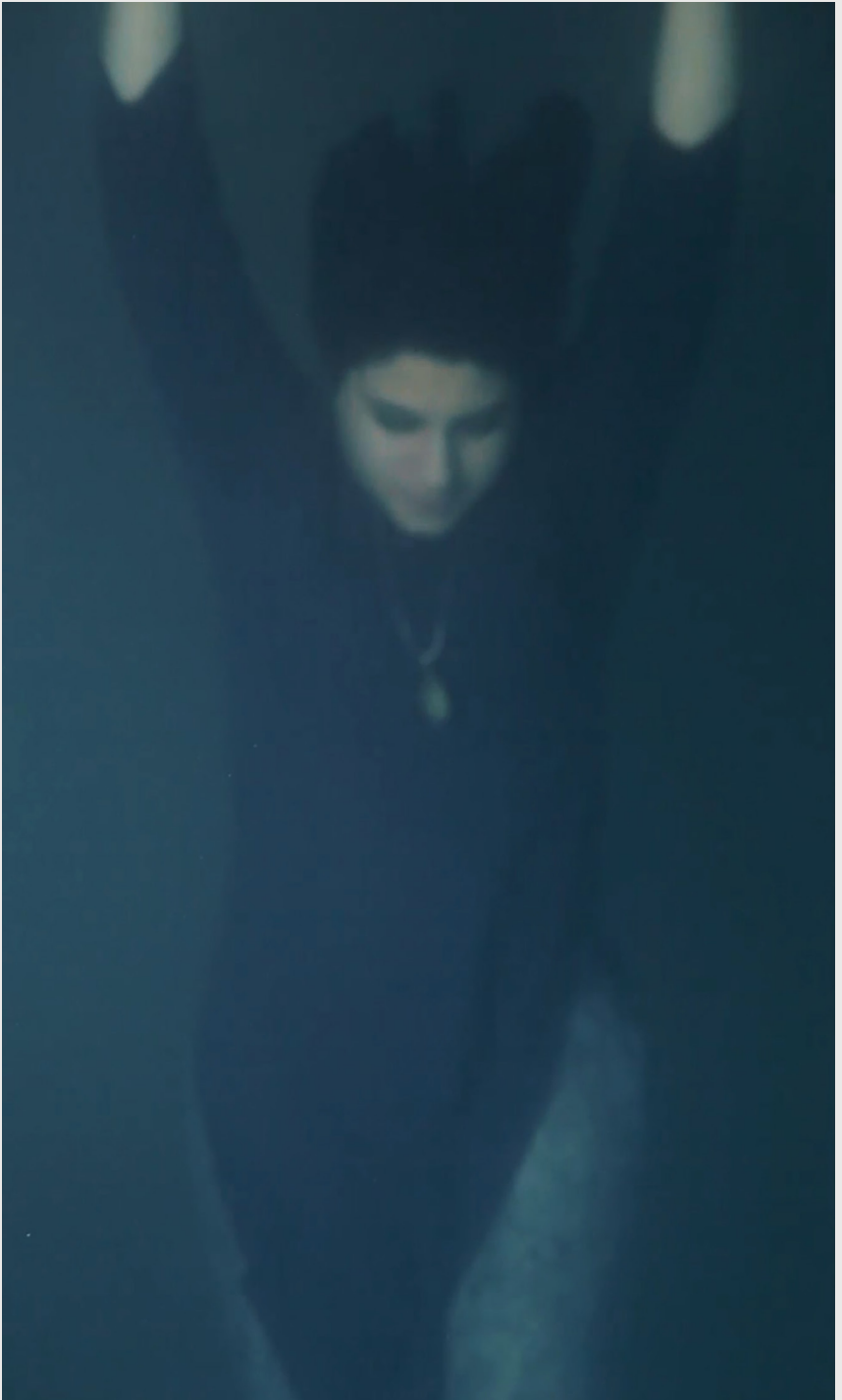
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Tooraj Khamenchzadeh
I'm Not a Song to Be Sung, 2023
Video installation

lena hansen

blank tape



Jonathan Ellis
Heartland Studies_Miami Shores, FL, 2019
Archival inkjet print
30 x 22 in

IN LATE OCTOBER, A FAMILY MEMBER
SHOWED ME A NEW ACCESSIBILITY
DEVICE HE GOT TO HELP HIM READ
AND SEE THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM.



He attached a flash drive-sized gadget to his glasses, pointed them at me, and pressed a button, causing a little camera shutter to go off several times. “Lena,” he said, creating a profile for me. He looked away, then looked back at me. “Lena,” the device repeated as he trained it in my direction. The voice was robotic, much like the virtual assistants on smartphones. **It was recognisably female, but with the unnatural cadence and tone of a machine.**

Or Zubalsky
Decentered, 2023
Digital video

This tool helps people who are blind or with low vision to read, communicate with others, and move through the world. Encountering this device, I was left in awe but also feeling uneasy—a feeling I often have when learning about the latest advancements in AI technology. In the past, this device, manufactured by an Israeli AI tech company, would have felt like something out of a science fiction novel or spy movie, but now it is available to the masses. Around the same time I encountered what felt like a piece of dangerously sophisticated facial recognition technology here in Pittsburgh, London’s Metropolitan Police began to employ similar facial recognition technology to identify and arrest people at pro-Palestinian rallies.

It requires little imagination to consider what a device like this is capable of in different contexts; facial recognition technology is already used across police departments in the US. While technology has made incredible strides in its ability to help us, my amazement at its capabilities is quickly followed by dread, skepticism, and paranoia. The artist Hito Steyerl writes, “within a fully immersive media landscape, pictorial representation—which

was seen as a prerogative and a political privilege for a long time—feels more like a threat.” Every piece of technology we come into contact with has a second purpose to which we may not always be privy. Through phones, email, and social media we are able to communicate with loved ones, form new relationships, and remain connected to our communities. We are also, however, feeding information about ourselves to various tech entities, turning ourselves into data points to be exploited.

Although many of us are morally and ethically opposed to this breach of privacy, we largely remain complacent as these apps, services, and interactions have become integral to our daily lives. Through the exhibition, *Blank Tape*, I hope to channel this collective technophobia by embracing the fact that we can no longer be separated from mass surveillance and, in many ways, have become the surveillants ourselves.

The exhibition’s title refers to the analog method of recording security camera footage, which required one to load physical film into a recording device. The surveillance cameras we see mounted on lamp posts, nestled



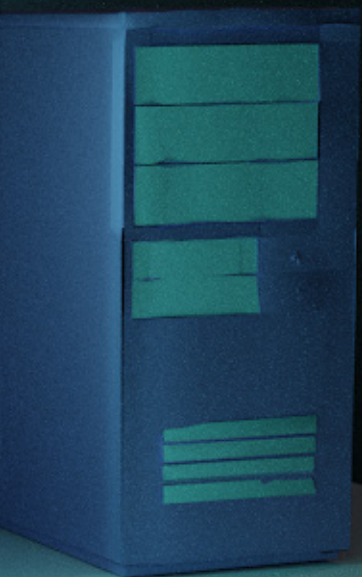
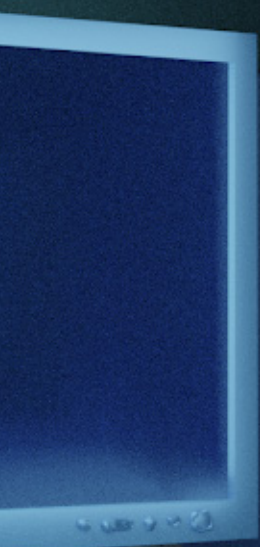
Arzah Sultan
The Fabrication of Memory, 2022
Video installation



Ajunie Virk

*Do You Reckon That My Fingernails Are
Touching Right Now or Do You Also See
That Gap Between Them, 2023*

Video



in the corners of buildings, and installed in our homes are meant to make us feel safe and protected by keeping an eye out for potential threats and enemies. Surveillance cameras were first developed by the military to test weapons from a distance. Much of the prevalent technology today—GPS, drones, facial recognition—have similar roots in the military-industrial complex. How do we navigate a world where the devices and technology that allow us to remain connected also pose a threat through constant surveillance and a lack of privacy?

Through video, animation, projection, photography, installation, and game art, the artists in *Blank Tape* explore the ways surveillance is present in our everyday interactions. Jonathan Ellis, Jamie McArthur, and Caroline Yoo put the viewer in the role of the surveillant, asking us to consider the power that comes with the birds-eye view that technology has afforded us. Lena Chen, Negin Mahzoun, and Shori Sims comment on the ever-present influence of surveillance and its impact on how we present ourselves. Tooraj Khamenehzadeh and Or Zubalsky use surveillance as a lens to parse out the

generational and individual consequences of political and cultural histories. Azzah Sultan and Ajunie Virk manipulate video through animation and green-screen technology, playing with time and perspective to investigate the idea of privacy in the digital age.

The pervasiveness of surveillance in our everyday lives can make us feel hopeless. The artists in this exhibition bring out the complexities of living with surveillance, drawing up new perspectives and ways of thinking. Instead of allowing the anxiety that arises from surveillance to be crippling, *Blank Tape* prompts us to be critical and make sense of this reality.



Negin Mahzoun
Destruction, 2023
Linen fabric, thread
5 x 5 in





Jonathan Ellis
Hearland Studies_McLean, TX, 2019
Archival inkjet print
30 x 22 in

LENA HANSEN IS A CURATOR AND ARCHIVIST
CURRENTLY BASED IN PITTSBURGH.



Jamie McArthur
Dalhousie: Meat, 2023
Wood, clay, and soft fibers (fabric, thread, wool)
29 x 29 x 30 in

- During her time as the Associate Director at Aicon Contemporary, New York, she cultivated a robust roster of artists, putting emphasis on artists typically underrepresented in the New York art scene. She has curated multiple exhibitions, such as *Judith Has Arrived* (2021), *Notes from the Motherland* (2021), *I Shouted My Laughter to the Stars* (2022), and *Feast of the Gods* (2022). Lena's curatorial practice has focused on contemporary art by South/Southeast Asian artists both from within and outside the United States.
- Prior to her work as a gallery professional, Lena received her Masters in Anthropology from The New School for Social Research. Her research focused on institutional critique and labor practices in the art world. She graduated with honors for her thesis project *On Guard*, a paper and accompanying short documentary that featured interviews with former museum guards at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The project looked at the history of policing and surveillance in museums. Lena was the curatorial assistant for The New School's Art Collection and the archival assistant at The New School's Archives and Special Collections.

After several years working in the commercial art world, Lena is now pursuing a Masters in Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Lena Hansen was born and raised in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.





Lena Chen
OnlyFans
Digital Game/Installation
2023

BLANK TAPE ARTISTS

Tooraj Khamenehzadeh's *I'm Not a Song to Be Sung* draws from his background in theater to depict the struggle faced by a younger generation of Iranians following the many years of war and societal unrest after the 1979 Iranian Revolution. The viewer comes face-to-face with various people underwater, struggling to speak and keep their eyes open, trying and failing to communicate with us. The frustration these figures exhibit while fighting against inhospitable waters calls attention to the determination and relentlessness one must have to protest and resist oppressive forces.

Azzah Sultan's video series *The Fabrication of Memory* takes us to a nostalgic yet timeless place. Using her family's archival home videos, Sultan explores how memories get warped and remade over time. She employs green-screen technology to place her present self among her family members of the past. Taking inspiration from the reality of living far away from family, Sultan superimposes herself into family videos, among unaware and unsuspecting family members, to simulate physical proximity for herself while leaving her family members of the past undisturbed.

Using absurd and uncanny imagery, **Ajunie Virk's** animation *Do You Reckon That My Fingernails Are Touching Right*

Now or Do You Also See That Gap Between Them plays into our feelings of paranoia about being watched through our devices or other hidden cameras in our surroundings. In our contemporary lives, where privacy is no longer a given and mass surveillance has been accepted as a norm, Virk asks us to question what it means to be constantly watched and monitored.

In *Dance Dance Reversion Re-version Re-vision*, **Caroline Yoo** evokes militaristic images of bodies under control that are easily accessed through media cycles, social media platforms, and advertisements. The two images in Yoo's undulating lenticular print were created using the Axis Q-19 thermal camera. The first image shows Yoo laying down on the soil; the second image depicts the soil with Yoo's body absent, only the heat imprint of her figure remaining. The lenticular print mimics a TikTok or Instagram reel on repeat—a kind of cursed loop—only in this case, the loop is created through the movement of the viewer's body.

Lena Chen and Maggie Oates' *OnlyBans* installation invites viewers to enter the physical and digital workspace of an online sex worker facing discriminatory content moderation policies, shadow-banning, and deplatforming. Through an interactive web game created with a team of collaborators, the installation offers insight into the kinds of surveillance online sex workers face and the world of challenges it can bring to one's livelihood.

In *Decentered*, **Or Zubalsky** uses the digital filing system, with its ability to create an endless rabbit hole of folders and sub-folders, as a metaphor to explore their history and psyche. By digging deeper into various folders, Zubalsky performs a surveillance of the self, interrogating how political and cultural histories impact their understanding of identity and place.

Negin Mahzoun performs a kind of self-surveillance, using self-portraiture to unpack the trauma caused by a lack of agency over one's body and how it is presented to the world. Mahzoun's work consists of images of herself printed onto fabric. This fabric is then stitched and re-stitched to distort, conceal, and expose certain parts of her body. Her use of fabric and sewing pays homage to a tradition of women's work, while also using it as a form of meditation and self-healing.

Photographer **Jonathan Ellis** uses aerial photography to examine the politics of place. By using commercially available drones, Ellis is able to look without being seen or caught. Historian Achille Mbembe and artist Hito Steyerl have described how the sky and in particular the aerial view are tools of war and colonial occupation. The sky becomes another site of occupation, giving those in power a safe vantage point from which to cause destruction. During his roadtrips, Ellis takes this technology and the safety of the airspace to infiltrate neighborhoods and areas that have historically been inaccessible and dangerous to Black people. This

Heartland Studies series spans Texas and Florida.

Jamie McArthur's *Dollhouse: Meat* puts the viewer in the position of voyeur. Rather than feeling the need to hide or keep our presence a secret, we are given full reign to peer into the house and get up close, from any angle we'd like. While dollhouses are typically childhood objects of play, McArthur's dollhouse, with its unfinished walls and skeletal structure, gives us an immersive look into the home. As security cameras become commonplace in households around the country, here they are superfluous. We tower over the house and assume an omniscient presence.

Shori Sims' multi-channel video installation *ULTRAVIOLET LED GHOST HUNTING LAMP (da waves)* puts us in the position of the surveillant. We stand before two screens, each split into four channels, themselves each monitoring a different area of a dimly-lit stairwell. A ghostly figure occupies one stairway, another figure occupies the other. The scholar Soyoung Yoon writes, "the very technology of color photography had been developed with white skin as norm, blowing out the varying tones and textures of darker skin, rendering it at times inseparable from the background, as if the illegibility of blackness was but a technical error." Sims' use of chroma-key blue merges the real and the virtual, evoking the work of artist Sondra Perry, who uses this color to comment on how Black identity is represented through technology and media.

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Shori Sims
*ULTRAVIOLET LED GHOST
HUNTING LAMP (da waves)*, 2023
Video installation



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C4

I would like to thank all the artists in the exhibition for trusting me with their work. Thank you for sharing your practice and stories with me. I would also like to thank Natalie Sweet and Helen Trompeteler for their support and advice during the curation of this exhibition. Lastly, *Blank Tape* is inspired by the work of Adrian Piper, Harun Farocki, Hito Steyerl, Laura Poitras, Lauren Lee McCarthy, Sondra Perry, and Trevor Paglen.

• *Lena Hansen*

