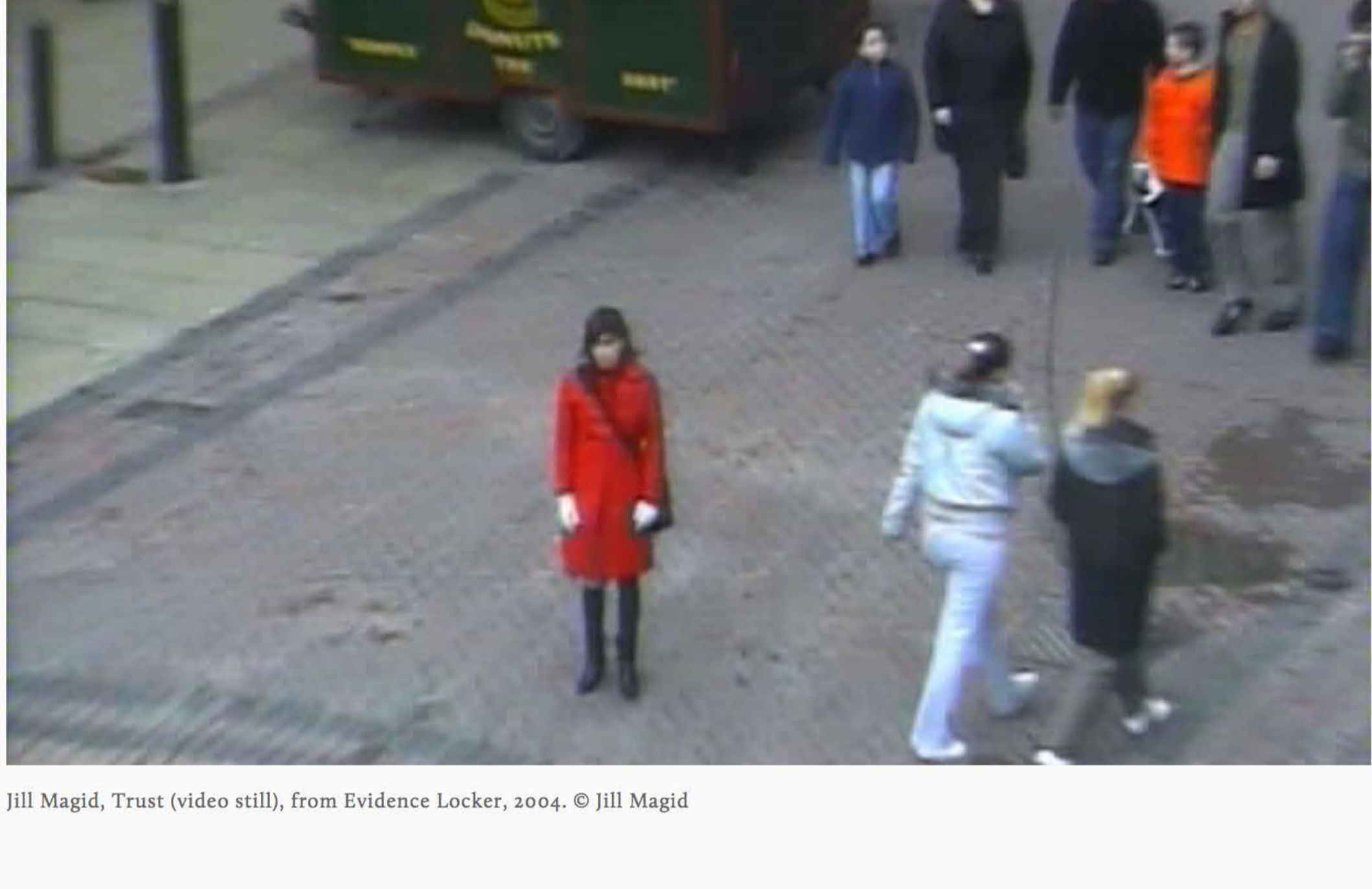


Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *The Revolutionary*, from *Spirit Is a Bone*, 2013. Courtesy the artists. © Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

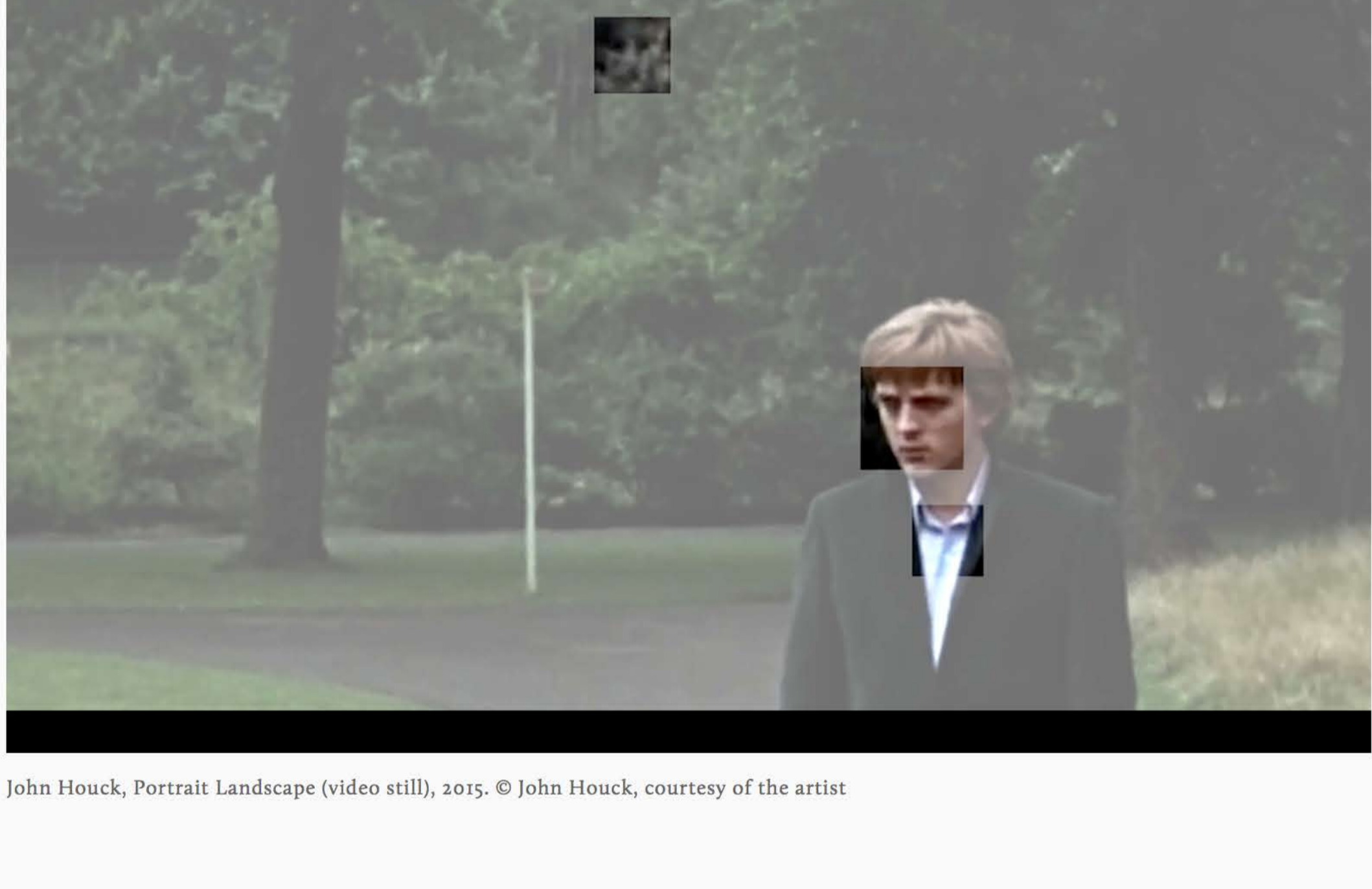
**Written by Matt Fink**

A cursory glance through “Public, Private, Secret: On Photography & the Configuration of the Self,” a slender volume rich with erudite social commentary - and characterized largely by a tone of austerity - revealed therein a more playful side, one best exemplified by the word “dildo-tectonics.”

A tantalizing phrase which quickly caught the eye mid- perusal - actually a question in large, bold font put to one of the book’s several interview subjects - “dildo-tectonics” is inherently comic, splicing as it does frank, crass sexuality on the one hand, and poker-faced geoscience on the other. However, the interviewee, artist Zach Blas, responds to this strange interrogative neologism not with levity, but rather a stream of sexual-sociological argot that runs a good half page.



Jill Magid, *Trust* (video still), from *Evidence Locker*, 2004. © Jill Magid



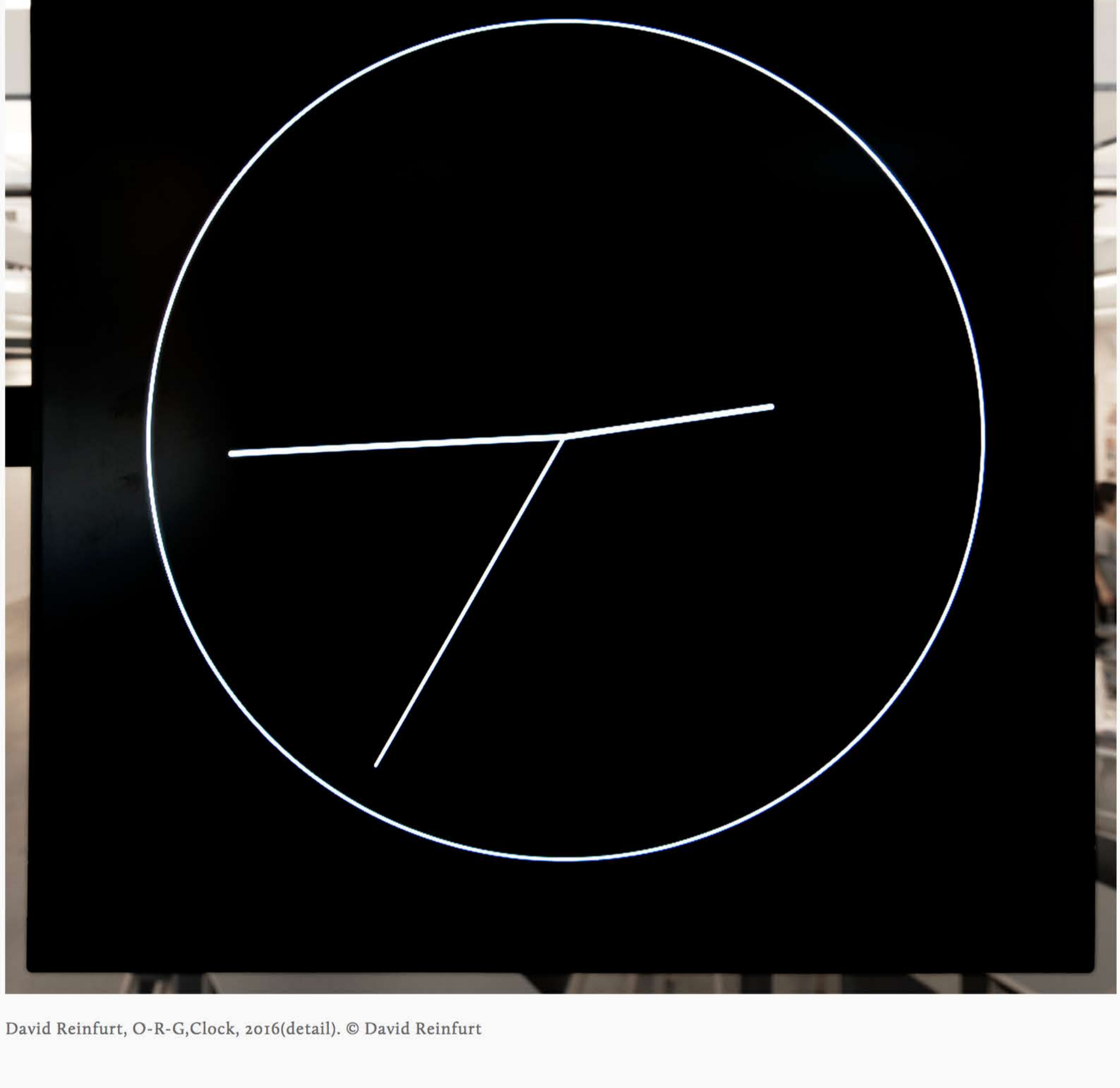
John Houck, *Portrait Landscape* (video still), 2015. © John Houck, courtesy of the artist

But then, the cerebral nature of the volume, compiled and edited by photographer and International Center of Photography (ICP) curator Charlotte Cotton, isn't terribly surprising, being essentially the ICP exhibit of the same name (together with its more text-heavy online component at [publicprivatesecret.org](http://publicprivatesecret.org)) in book form.

“We’ve seen over the last twenty years how our increased connectedness and the ubiquity of handheld cameras have brought image making and language closer and closer together, with the constant exchange of pictures becoming a surrogate for other forms of conversation,” says ICP executive director Marc Lubell in the book’s forward. “The social and psychological ramifications of being so connected, even remotely, are yet to be seen.”



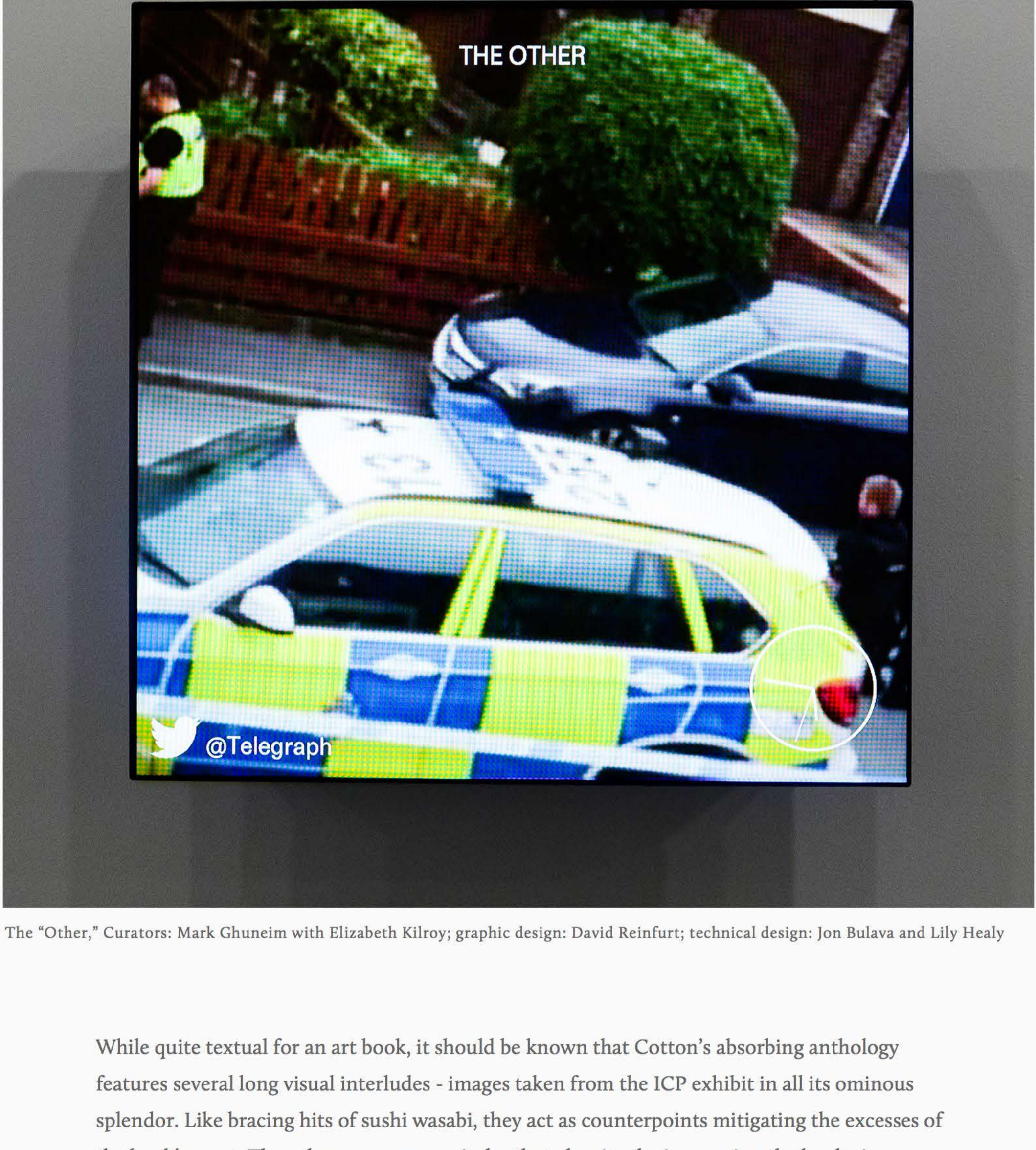
Merry Alpern, *Dirty Windows Series #19*, 1994, International Center of Photography, Gift of David and Kim Schrader, 2010. © Merry Alpern



David Reinfurt, *O-R-G, Clock*, 2016(detail). © David Reinfurt

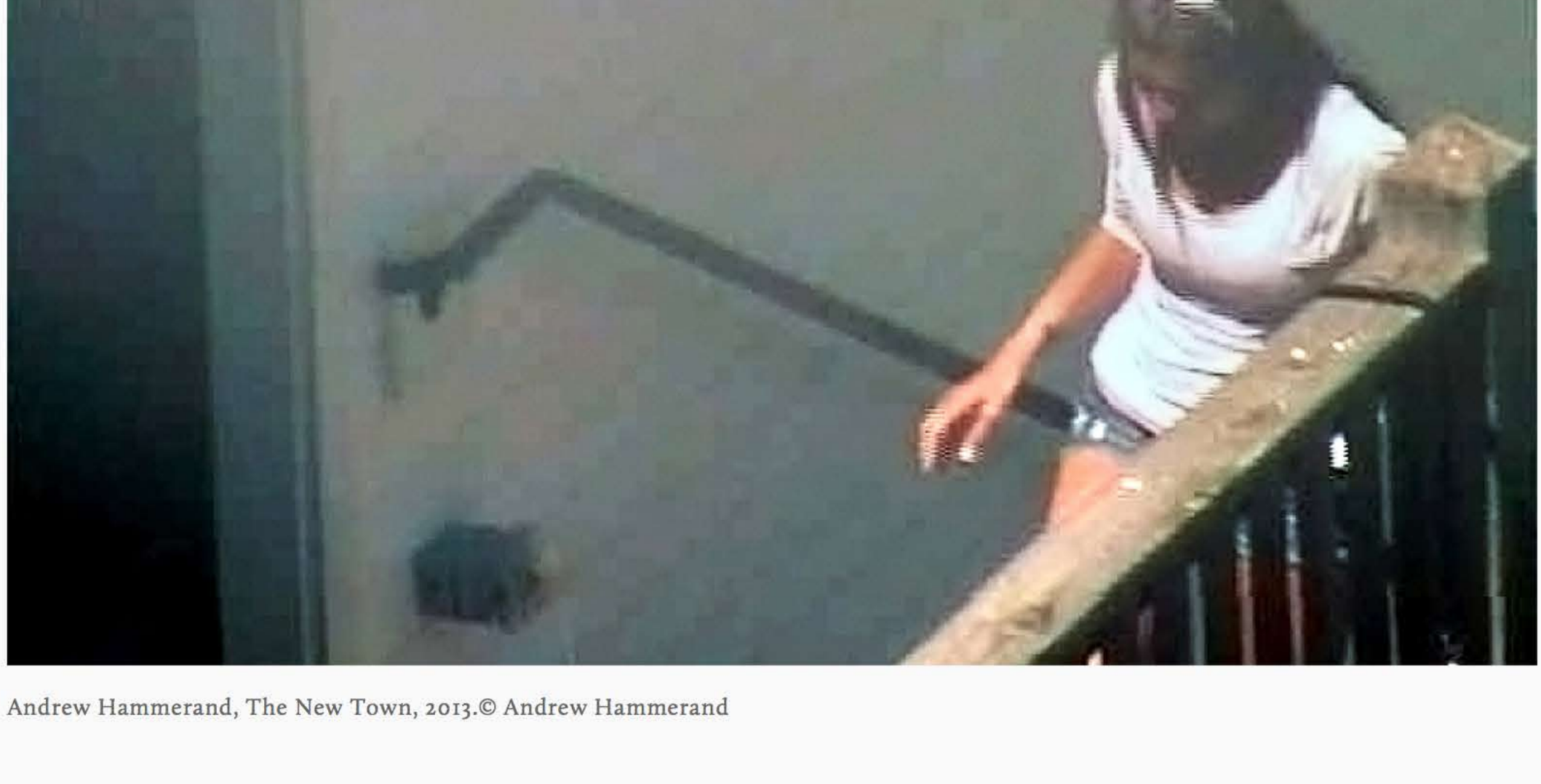
In one of the book’s handful of essays, “What’s in an Image,” writer Marisa Olson seems to demonstrate that ramifications of said hyper-connectedness have, in fact, made themselves seen. They come in the form of two hugely ubiquitous bête noires (or aspirational figures, depending on who you are), Kim Kardashian and Donald Trump. The latter, according to Olson, scored his startling - some would say tragic - electoral upset by “carrying out civilian pys-ops through contracts with big data firms like Galantir and Cambridge Analytica.”

Further along in *Public, Private, Secret*, a piece entitled “Watching Murder Online,” by Sarah Tuck, holds up to the light of scrutiny the rash of beatings and/or murders perpetrated by police on America’s black population - incidents documented largely by gadget-wielding bystanders, rather than traditional media. While the proliferation of amateur cameramen has resulted in, arguably, greater accountability for abusers, Tuck is of the opinion that these images and videos of violence unwittingly “monetize the vulnerability of the black body.”



The “Other,” Curators: Mark Ghuneim with Elizabeth Kilroy; graphic design: David Reinfurt; technical design: Jon Bulava and Lily Healy

While quite textual for an art book, it should be known that Cotton’s absorbing anthology features several long visual interludes - images taken from the ICP exhibit in all its ominous splendor. Like bracing hits of sushi wasabi, they act as counterpoints mitigating the excesses of the book’s meat. They also serve as a reminder that, despite the impression the book gives, *Public, Private, Secret* is a work that needs the naked eye for its full appreciation.



Andrew Hammerand, *The New Town*, 2013. © Andrew Hammerand