

TIN FOIL HELMET

Niels Bonde

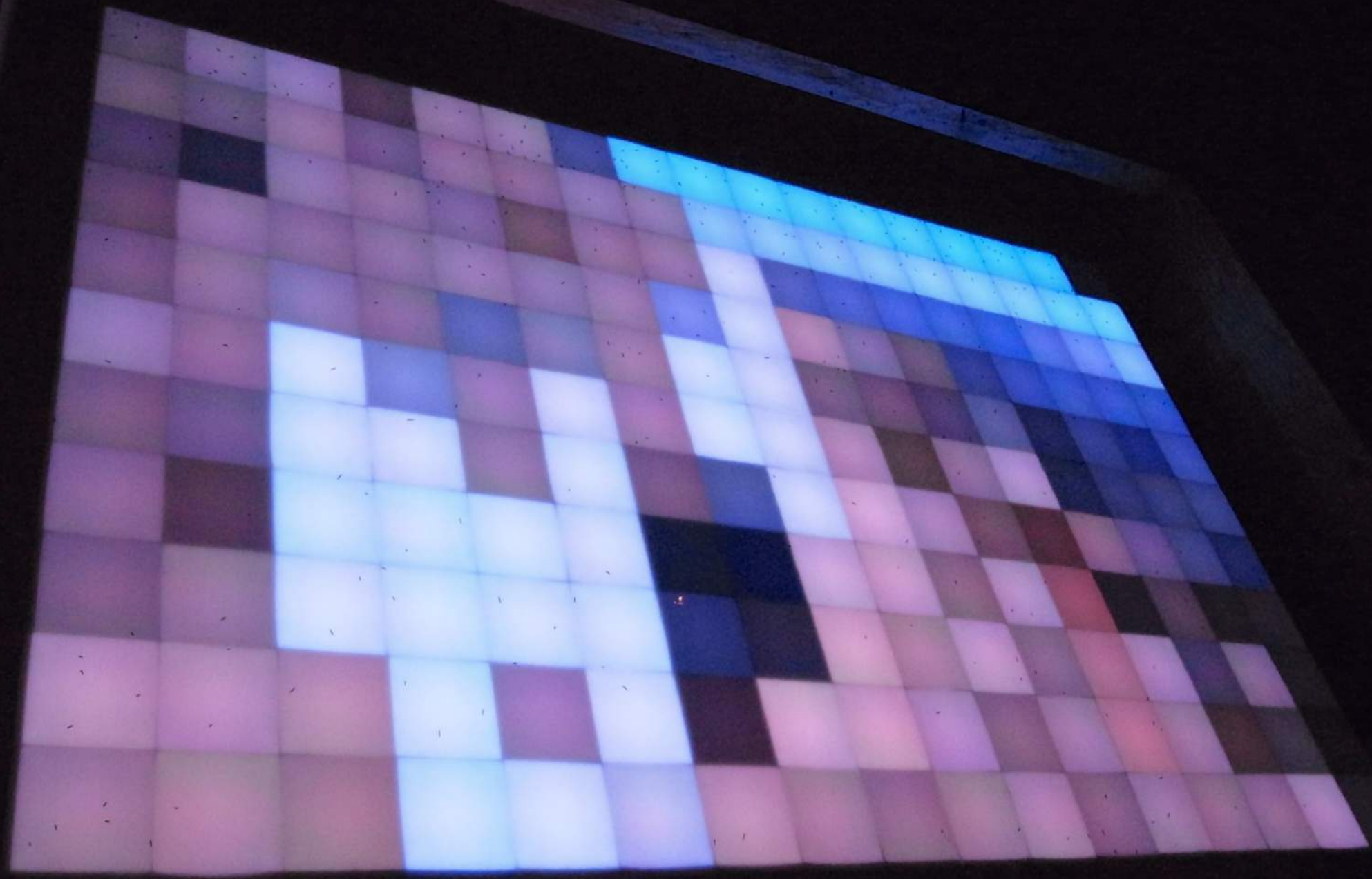
Represented by:
Martin Asbæk Gallery Copenhagen
Galleri Fagerstedt Stockholm

Website:
nielsbonde.com

TIN FOIL HELMET

Niels Bonde

Cover "The Separation of Powers" LED object 3 x 70 x 100 cm animation 0:56 min looped



DRONES AROUND HOLLYWOOD

Niels Bonde 2015.

Even the most important events in our lives are no longer seen with the naked eye, they are now seen through our tv-, computer- and smart phone-screens. The series of works that “Drones Around Hollywood” is part of, addresses this phenomena directly, as they are only recognizable as you see them through your cell phone in front of the screen. The large LED screen shows a very, very pixelated film of the Hollywood sign, taken by a drone circling the the mother of all signs, a sign that has come to signify both an area – now known as Hollywood, as well as the commercial film industry. All this because a real estate developer in 1923 put up a sign to advertise his land development.

Exhibition visitors and museum guests holding mobile phones to take pictures or film snippets is seen everywhere, sometimes to an extent that it is difficult to walk around without being in someones picture frame (1). The large LED screen show a very, very pixelated film of the Hollywood sign, taken by a drone circling the screen. The work creates a fucked-up mix of references to voyeurism, paranoia, movies and real estate development. The work responds to the fact that we live in a post-mobile phone- and post-internet-era, that to some extent defines content and form in teenagers lives as well as in academic discourses.

The sign Hollywoodland was initially put up in 1923 as advertisement for a local real estate development, however, as the the sign stayed up and the last syllable - land got lost, the Hollywood – sign has become emblematic of not just the area but the city (2) and the name has become the definition of a particular kind of film production (in Los Angeles). As the content of the work “Drones Around Hollywood” is dealing with electronic phenomena, it is only apt that the media is electronic as well.

As our society is developing, the psychic delusions are developing as well in response to historic as well as technical developments. In 1840 the french psychologist Félix Voisin in the parisian mental institution Bicetre counted 14 patients claiming to be Napoleon Bonaparte. Today a common delusion is to be the main character in a reality show, a condition that has its own diagnosis: The Truman Show Delusion⁽³⁾. The diagnosis gets its name from the film, where the main character Truman Burbank is growing up in a reality show built around him, and where everyone else in the show are actors. The fact that The Truman Show Delusion has become such a recurring aberration, is presenting normality and the doctors with a problem: as the patient claims that the telephone is surveilling him or she states that there are thousands of cameras on her every move, then it is impossible to deny objectively. The overlap between reality and delusion is considerable, and ideas that previously would be sure signs of insanity are today actually very likely true. Sadly in this case the delusion supplies the framework, and the culture fills in the details.

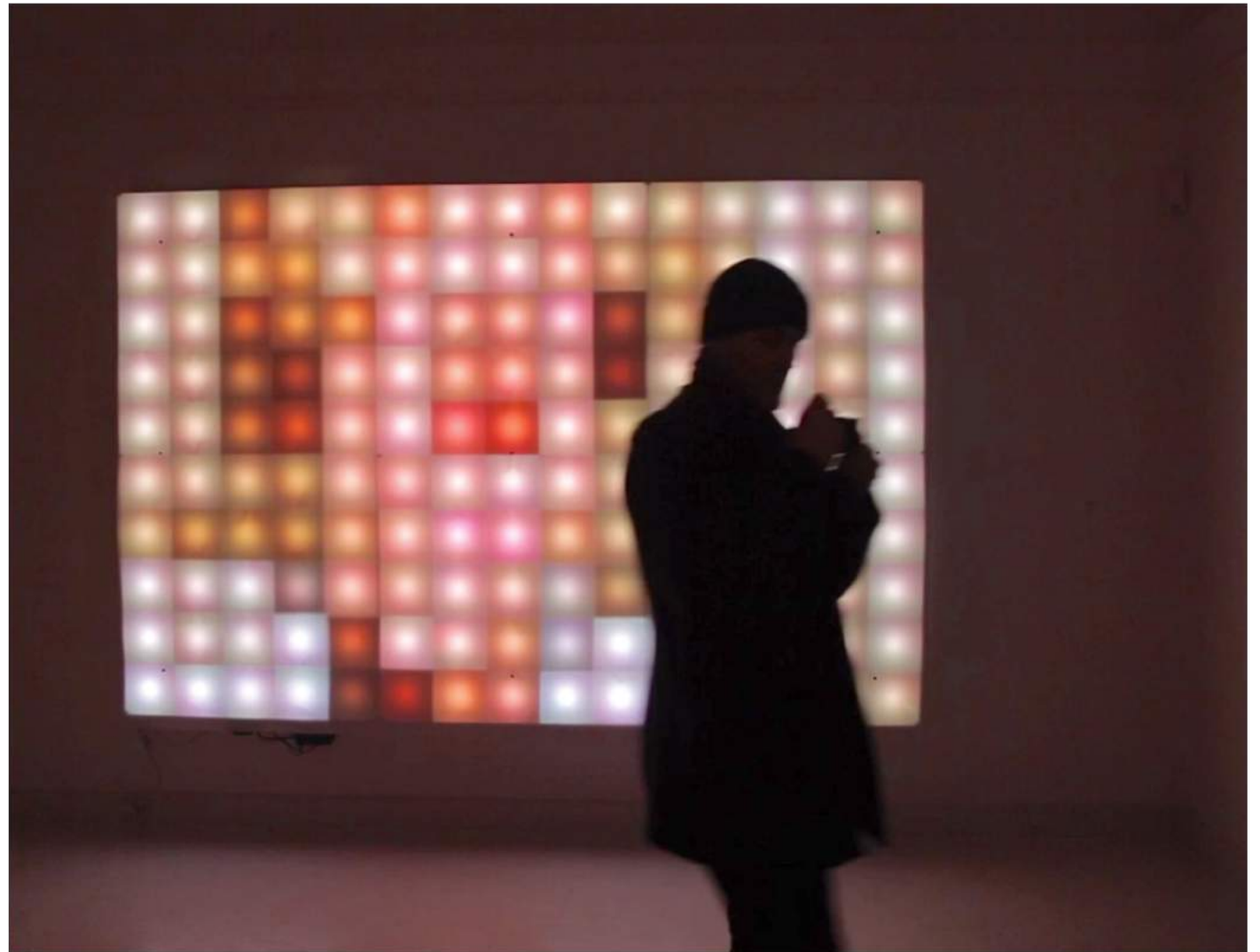
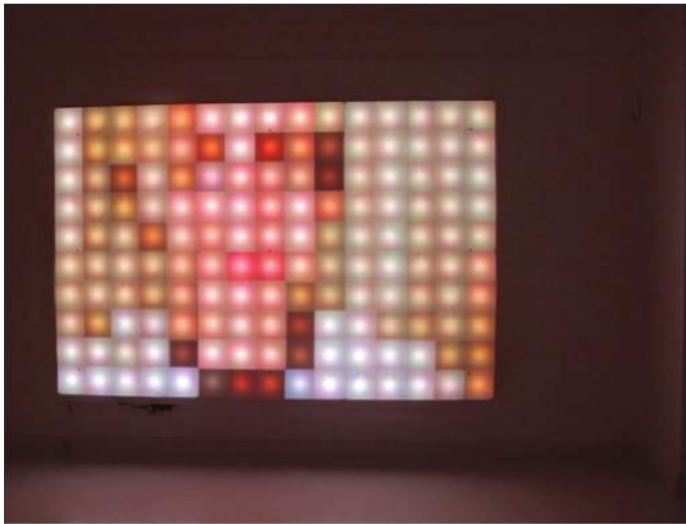
Apart from "The Truman Show", surveillance and the voyeur and has been the a central theme in movies from "Peeping Tom" by Powell, Hitchcock's movies "Psycho" and "Rear Window", Lynch's "Blue Velvet", Mendes' "American Beauty", de Palma's "Body Double" and Coppola's "The Conversation", but the list goes on and on. As the film industry is such a big part of our common references and the idea of the voyeur and his object is such a strong and recurring idea in movies, Hollywood is fuelling this particular kind of cultural drive towards an insane lust for images.

¹ "The 10 most annoying concert behaviors". Andy Greene. Rolling Stone January 14, 2013.

² "Learning from Las Vegas". Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour. 1977.

³ "Unreality Star". David Marantz. New Yorker Magazine. September 16, 2013.





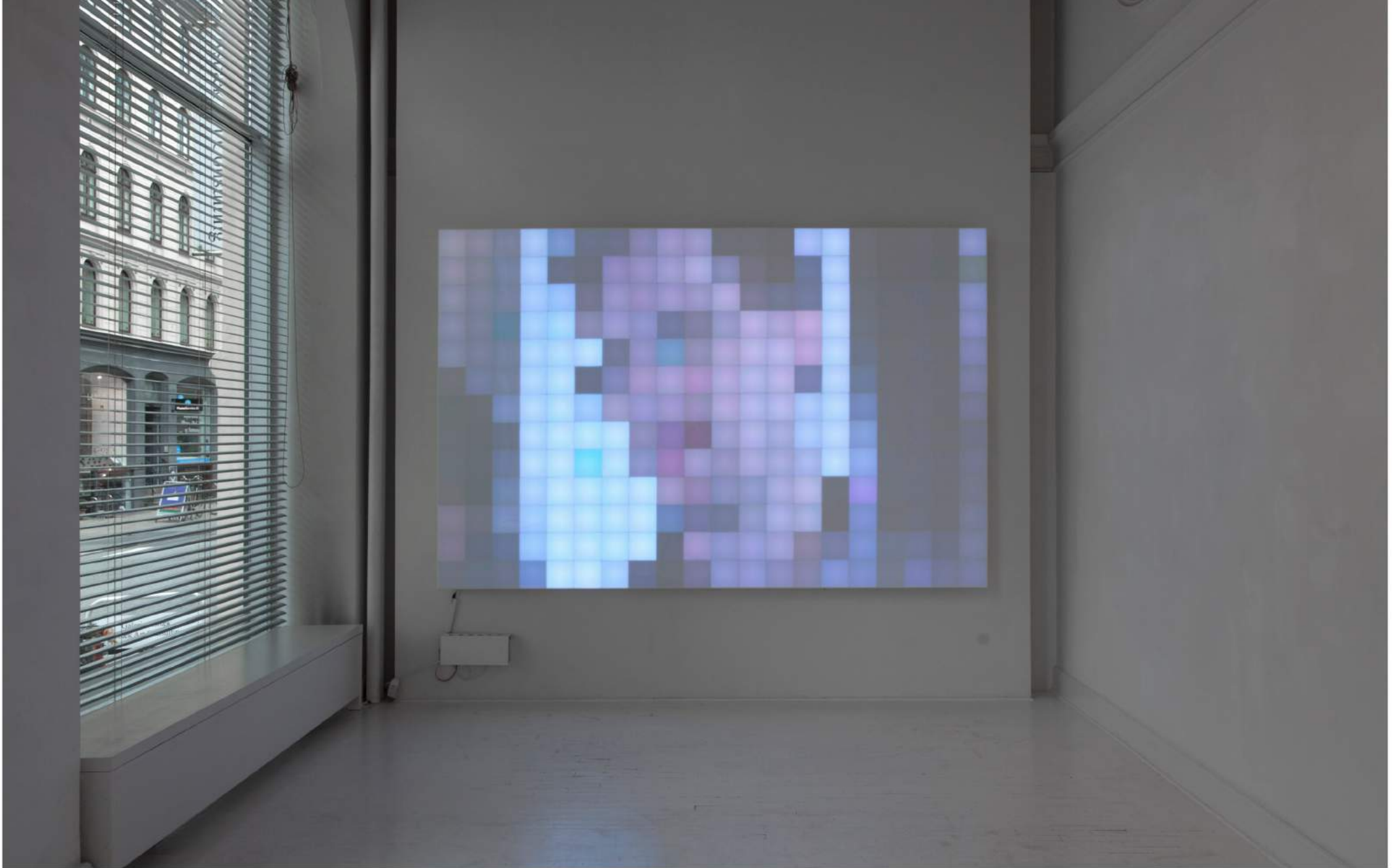
45 MILLIONS VIEWS

Niels Bonde 2013

The counters in the likes and dislikes of facebook, youtube etc. enters every image and video in a raw popularity contest, which from now on will define how we look at, produce and evaluate images. This video wall enters the contest at top level, as it directly refers to a video with 45 million views 159.860 likes and 252.577 dislikes. On that note I would expect about 60% of you to dislike this work.

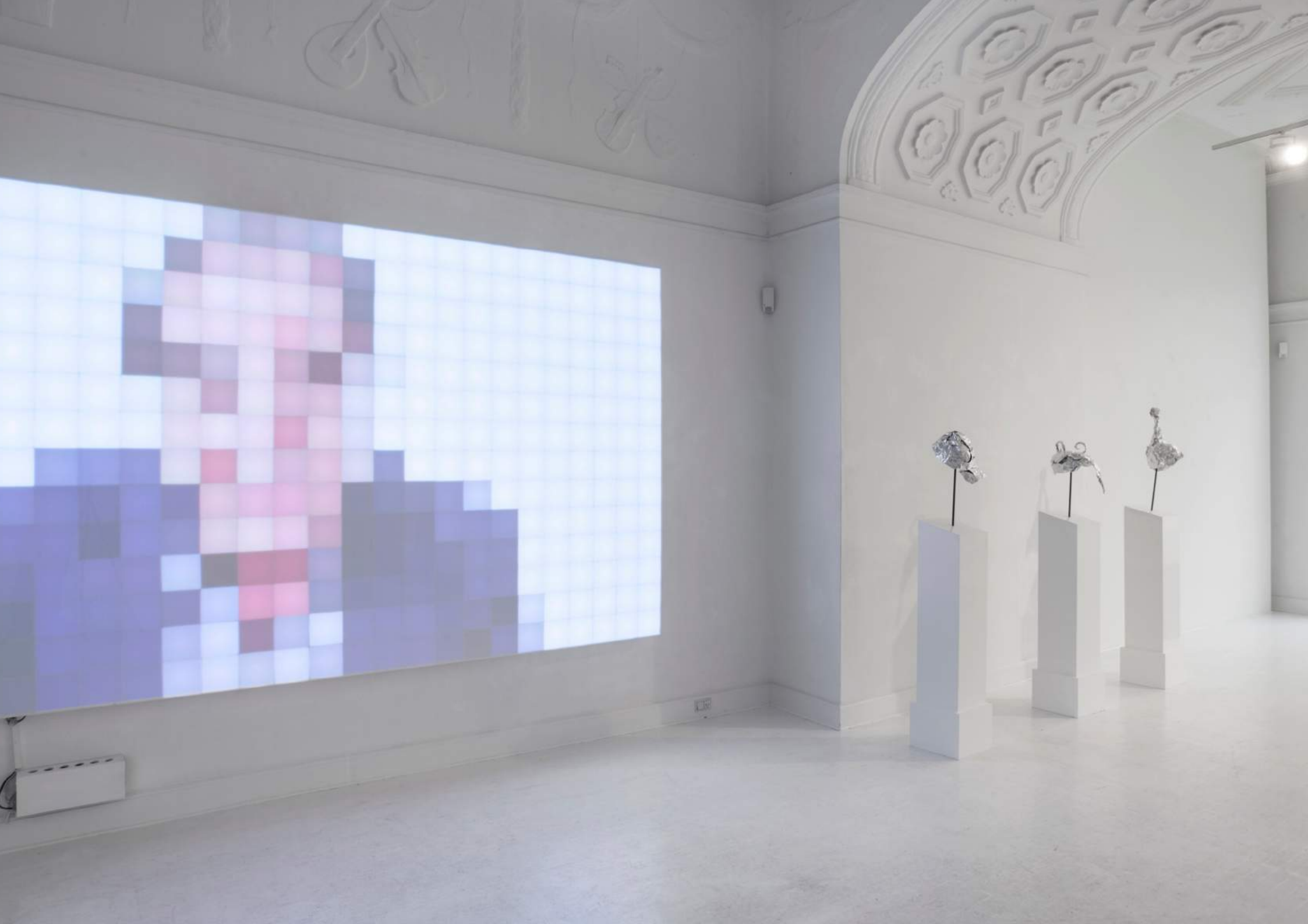
Many events and even the most important events in our lives are no longer seen with the naked eye, they are now seen through our tv-, computer- and smart phone-screens. This series of works addresses this phenomena directly, as they are almost only recognizable as you see/hold up your cell phone in front of the screen. The works bases it's premise on the fact that we live in a post-mobile phone- and post-internet-era, that to some extent defines content as well as form in teenagers lives as well as academic discourses. As the content of the work are either is about youtube-specific phenomena "45 million views" or about electronic surveillance and control, it is only apt that the media is electronic as well.

Opposite: "45 Million Views" 2014 LED object 300 x 200 cm Animation 2:33 min looped.



Above: "I wouldn't want to live in a world like this" LED object 300 x 200 cm animation 7:45 min looped (Tin Foil Helmet Martin Asbæk Gallery Copenhagen)

Opposite: "I am Bradley Manning" LED object 300 x 200 cm animation 7:45 min looped (Tin Foil Helmet Martin Asbæk Gallery Copenhagen)



“Nothing was your own, except the few cubic centimeters inside your skull”

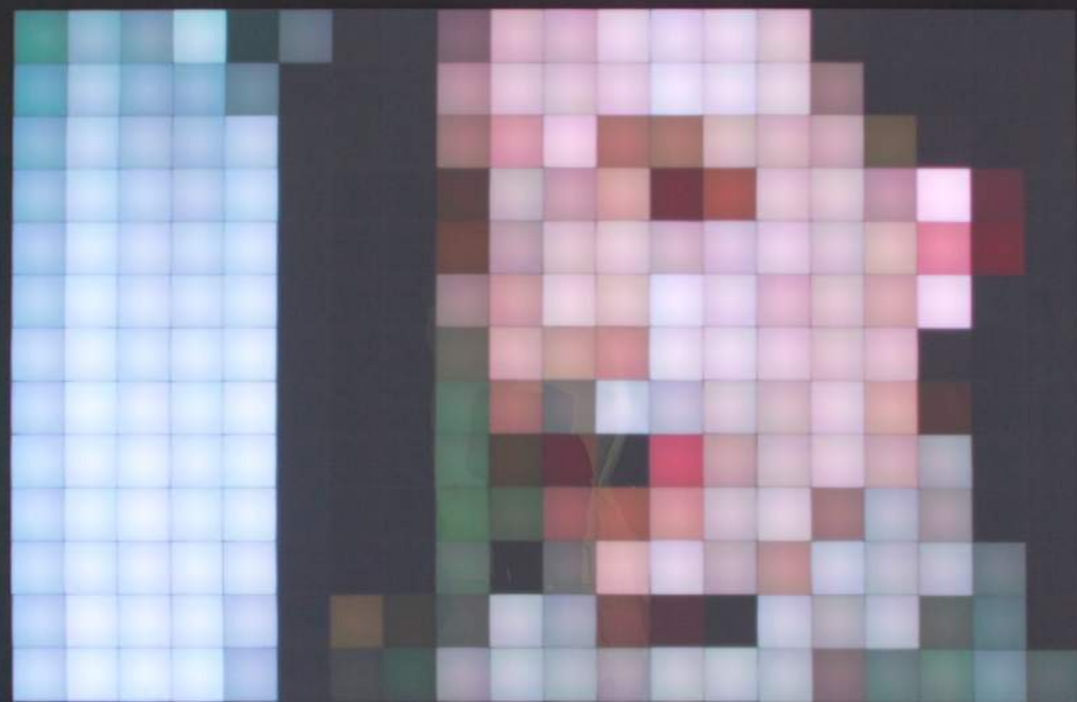
George Orwell “1984”.

What is happening to the right to privacy? This question – highly relevant today – is the theme for the exhibition, which works with and comments on the issue in a variety of media: LED screens, scale models and sculptures. Today’s mediascape is constantly shifting the boundaries between the private and public sphere. TV programmes exposes private matters; surveillance and bugging have become the order of the day, while we ourselves, on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, enthusiastically let others share our private lives. Niels Bonde has visualized a protest in a series of sculptural tin foil helmets, the last poetic defences of the mentally disturbed. The tin foil helmets are placed on tall stands, like the evil-averting statues of antiquity, the herms, and have been produced with a quotation from Joseph Heller’s novel *Catch 22* in mind: “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t after you”.

The reference to the borderland between private and public space in the digital age is shown on the pixellated LED screens whose films refer to whistleblowers as heroes, the American system administrator Edward Snowden, the soldier Bradley Manning and the author George Orwell, who issues a last warning from his death bed – not to permit total control. “Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull,” wrote the English author George Orwell in his dystopian novel “1984”, which describes the crushing oppression of a totalitarian regime exerted through surveillance and thought control. As we know, the novel launched the concept “Big Brother is Watching You”. Even as ordinary users of the digital sphere we become victims of systematic tracking of our movements on the Internet, so that our actions, comments and purchases are stored without our actual acceptance.

Another work is the tripartite screen "The Separation of Powers", which has its title from the principle often imprecisely used interchangeably with the trias politica principle, is a model for the governance of a state (or who controls the state). The model was first developed in ancient Greece. Under this model, the state is divided into branches, each with separate and independent powers and areas of responsibility so that the powers of one branch are not in conflict with the powers associated with the other branches. The typical division of branches is into a legislature, an executive, and a judiciary. It can be contrasted with the fusion of powers in a parliamentary system where the executive and legislature (and sometimes parts of the judiciary) are unified. In our current situation it seems as if all three powers have a strict surveillance of all citizens as their ideal.

As a device in the artistic presentation, all the media used are created in lo-fi (low fidelity), a principle borrowed from the world of music, where a deliberately chosen low quality produces a more authentic effect and greater artistic freedom. At the same time the greatly pixellated screen images have an aesthetic expression with art-historical references to Mondrian's abstract formal idiom in Broadway Boogie-woogie, the disco floor from Saturday Night Fever, where John Travolta wore out his dancing shoes, as well as the GIF animations of the earliest web graphics.





Opposite: "A Final Warning" LED object 300 x 200 cm animation 1:59 min looped

Above: "The Separation of Powers" LED object 3 x 70 x 100 cm animation 0:56 min looped





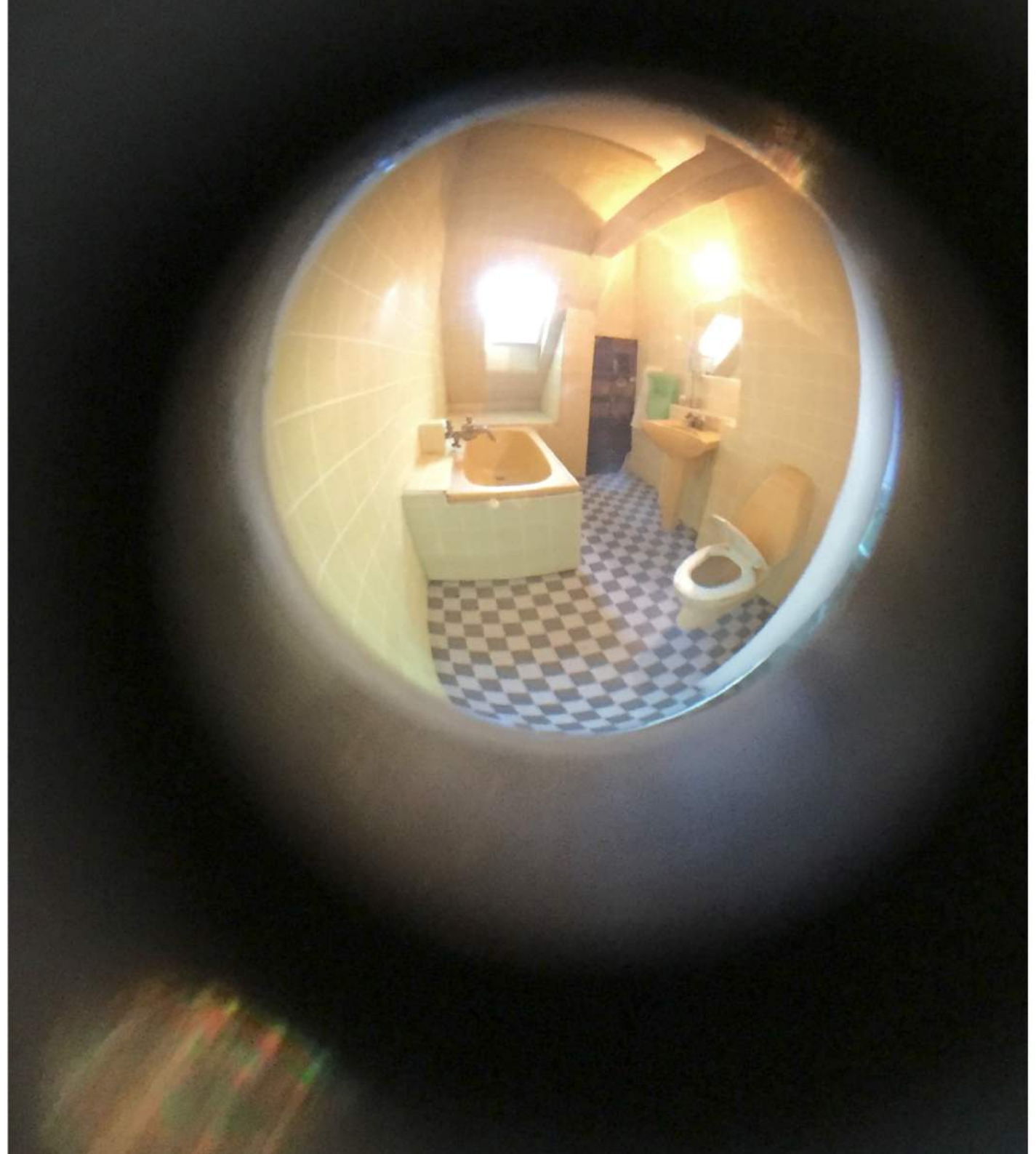
This Page:
"Peter Emil's Room" 2014
Installation of scale model behind wall

Opposite:
Top left
"Peter Emil's Room" 2014
Installation of scale model behind wall

Bottom left
"Niels ' Bathroom" 2014
Installation of scale model behind wall

Right
"It's not me, it's you" 2014
Installation, peep holes in door

"Niels' Bathroom" 2014
Installation of scale model behind
wall.





“Strange how paranoia can link up with reality now and then.”

Philip K. Dick, *A Scanner Darkly*.

The tin foil helmet is the last defence of the paranoid schizophrenics, wrapping their heads in foil as protection against evil radiowaves and wireless control. Each helmet has been named after one of the NSA spy programmes, made for specific purposes: one to log your google search history, one to check your phone log and another knows your location. The names of the NSA spy programmes have their own logic relating to their usage and function, but also to a level of humor referring to paranoia regarding surveillance, and to some extent insanity.

“Boundless Informant”. The big data analysis and visualization system making use of dial number recognition (DNR) and digital network intelligence (DNI) information.

“Cult weave”. One of the NSA’s Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) databases.

“Egotistical Giraffe”. A technology for uncovering the identities of those using an online system designed to keep users anonymous.

“Evilolive”. A metadata collection tool used for telecom and Internet communications.

“Fallout”. A DNI metadata processor that provides filtering for the NSA’s PRISM program for collection of Internet e-mail, files, social media and more with cooperation from service providers.

“Genie”. The program for planting spyware.

“Money rocket”, “Shiftingshadow” and “Yachtshop”. Cable-intercept programs targeting counter-terrorism in the Middle East, Europe and Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the general Internet.

“Storm brew”. NSA Internet and telephony network collection program.

“Trafficthief”. Part of the TURBULENCE program for detecting cyberspace threats and the PRISM program for collecting Internet data, especially from e-mail and social media providers.





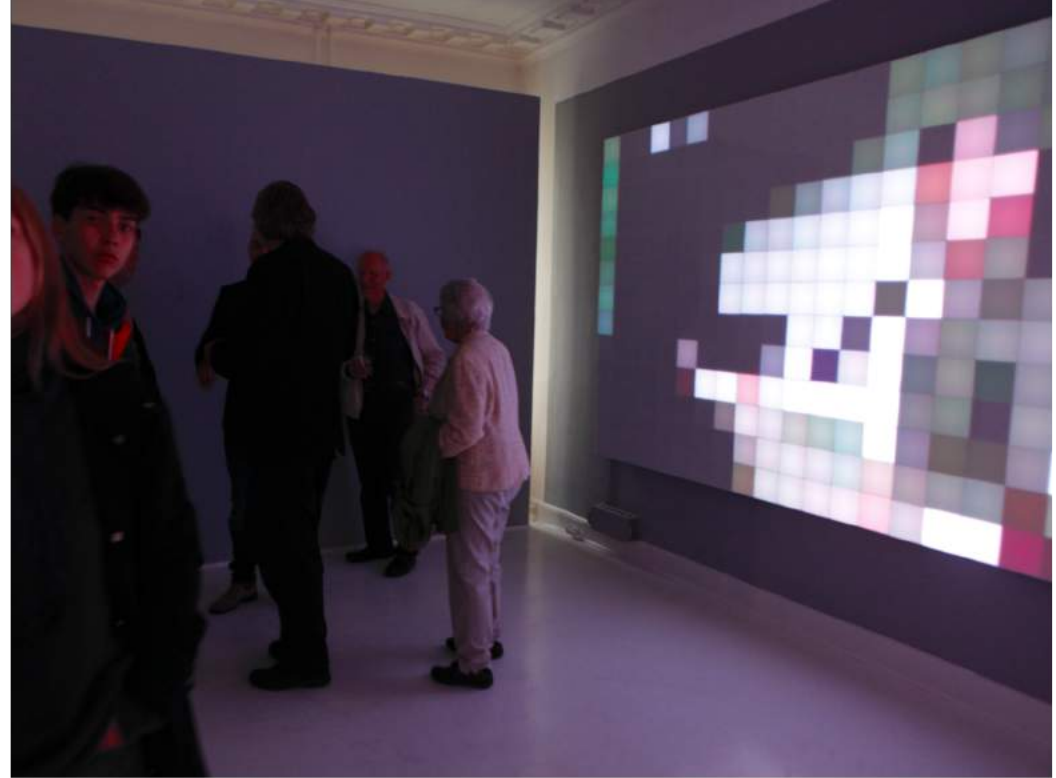
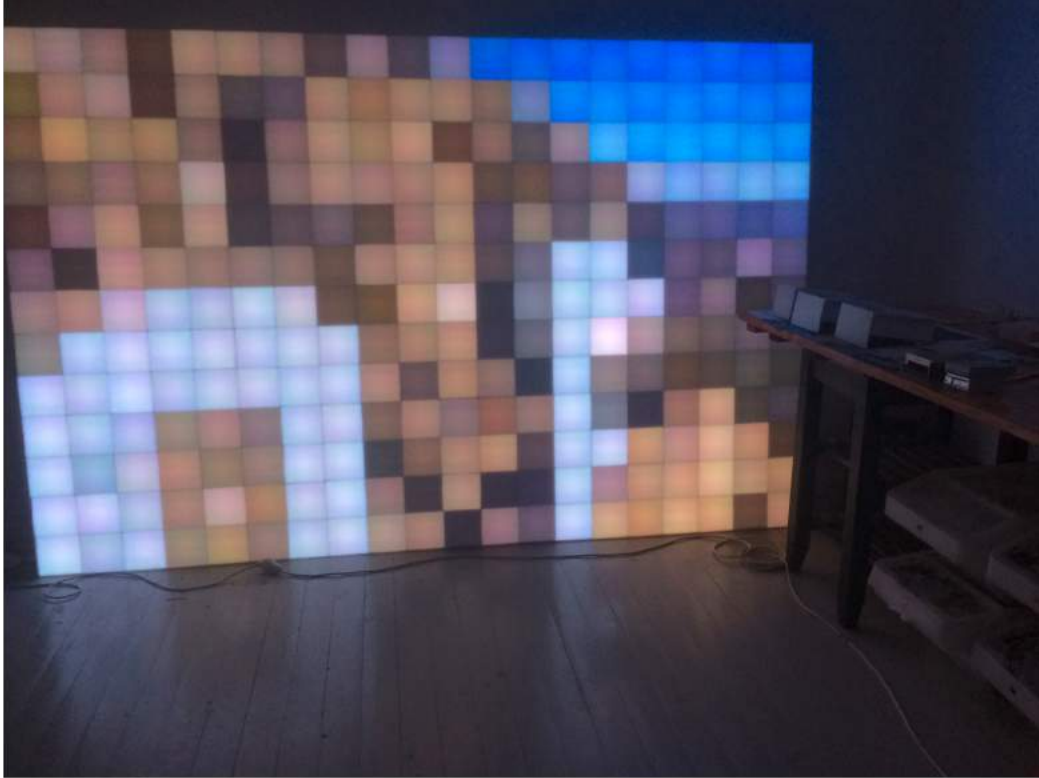


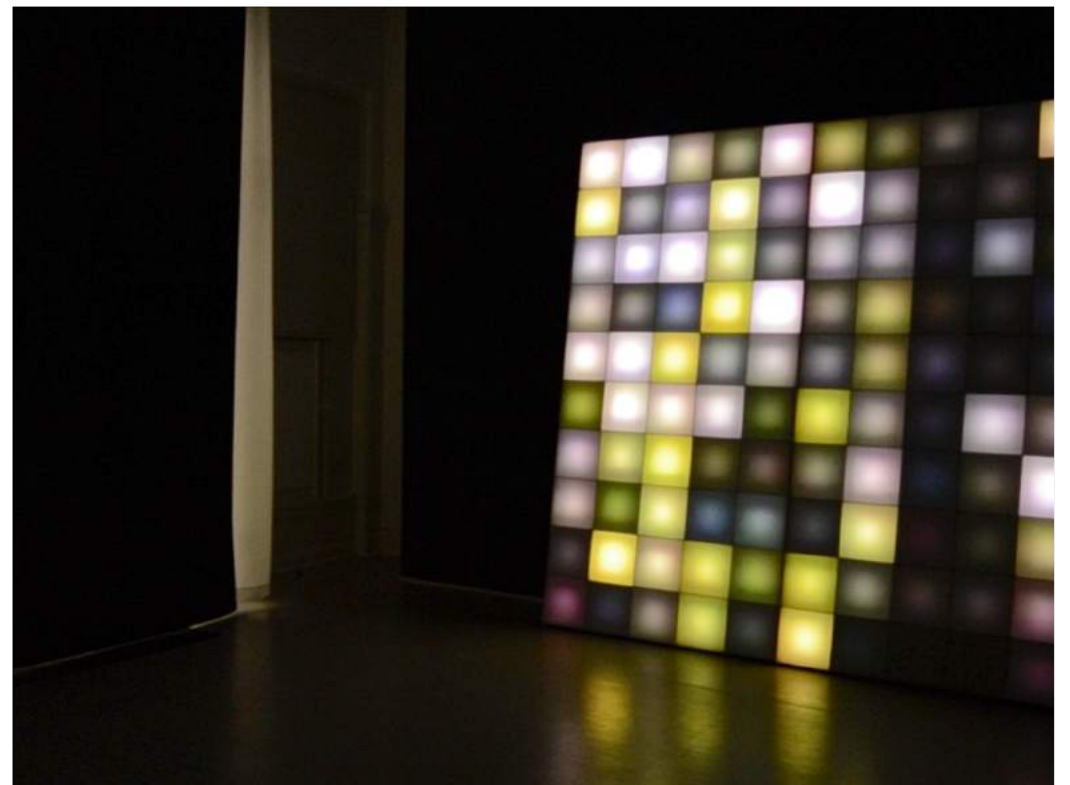
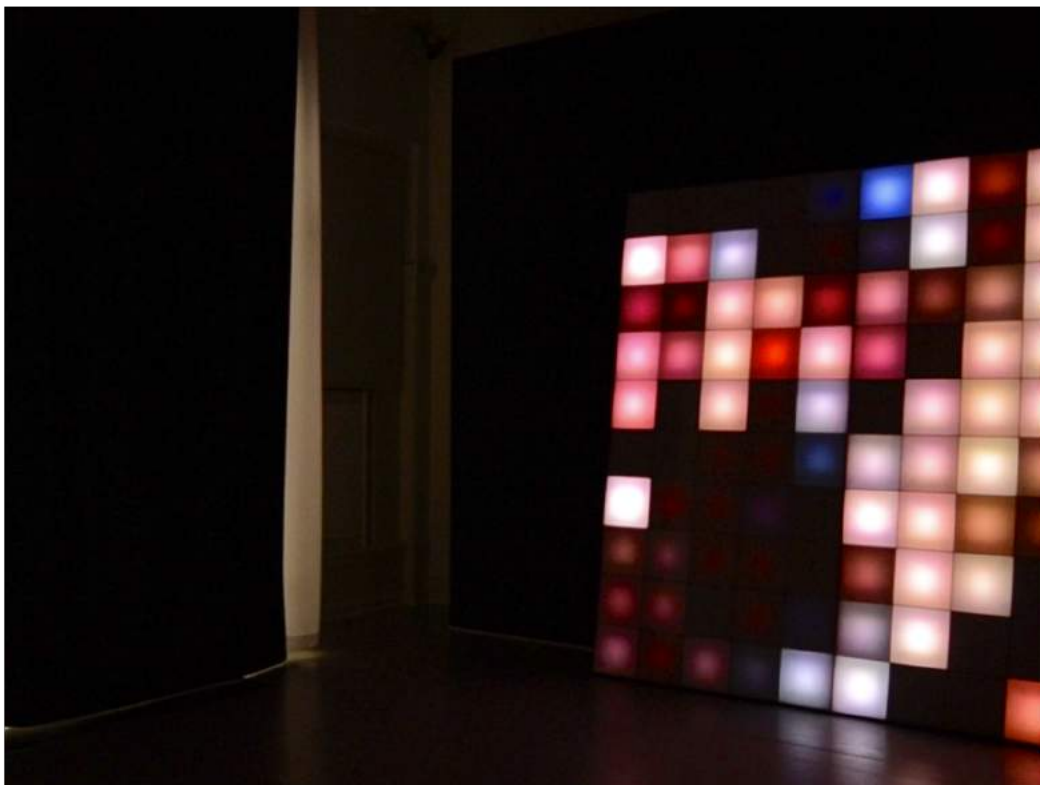
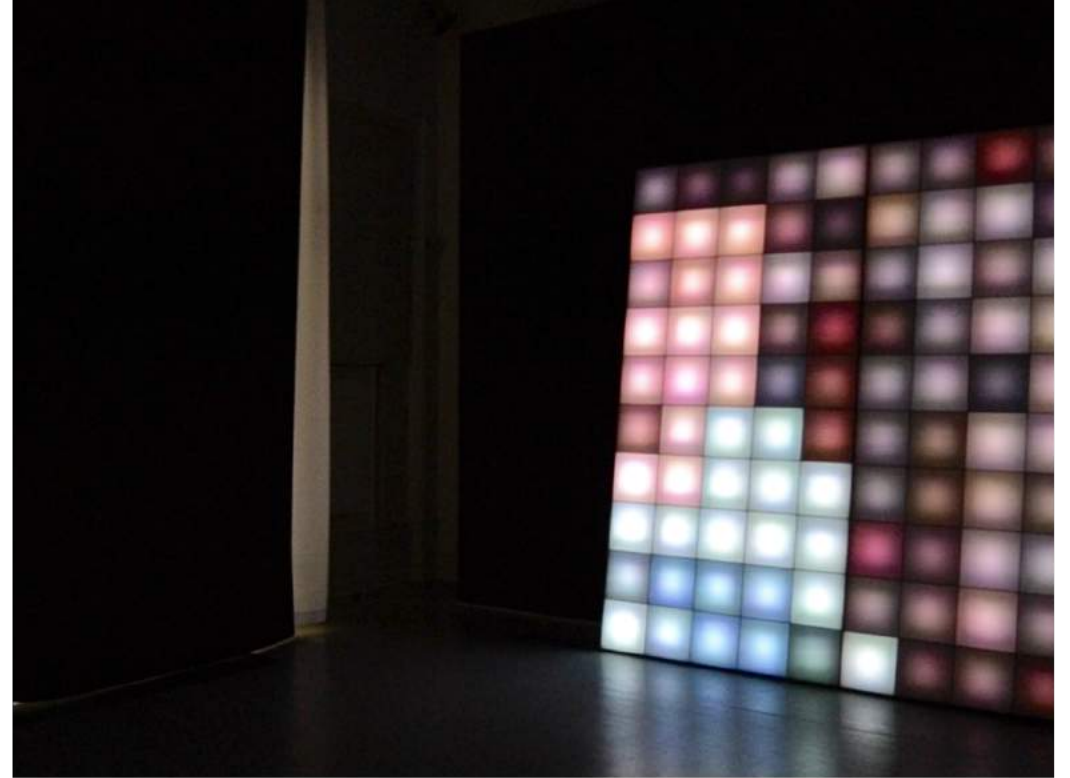
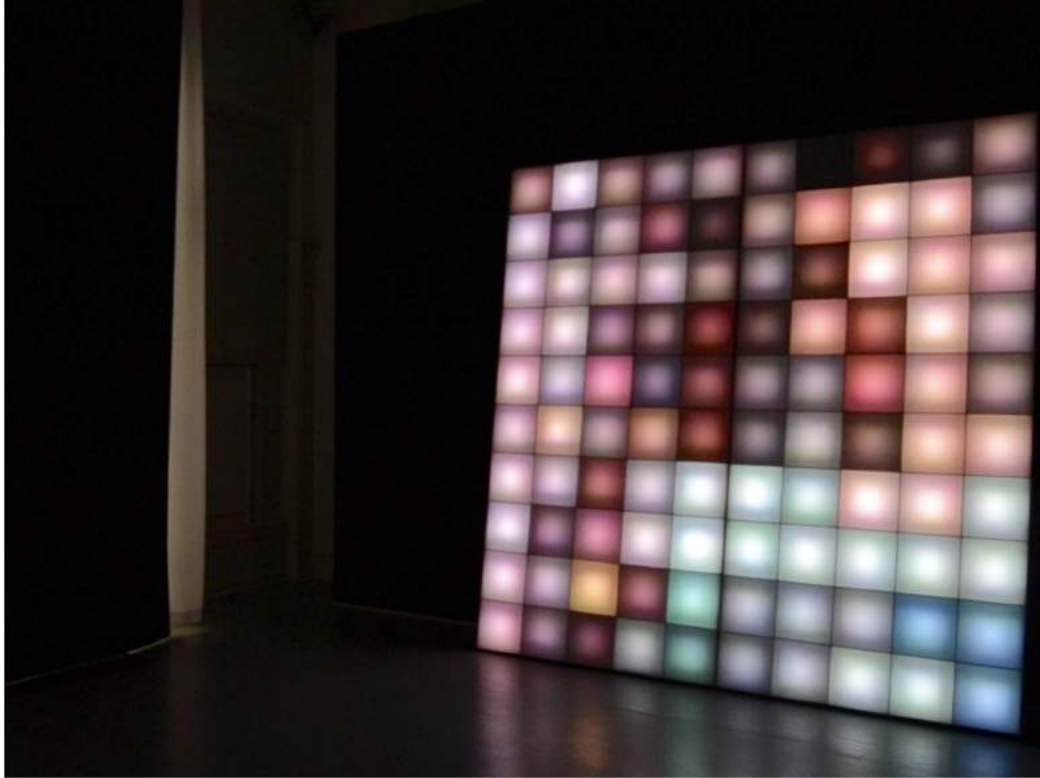
“A uniquely empathic perspective on subjects, and social frameworks in relation to systems of control, caught in between surveillance and paranoia - the portrayal of a society of neglect and self-denial, hiding in the spotlight of full media attention.”

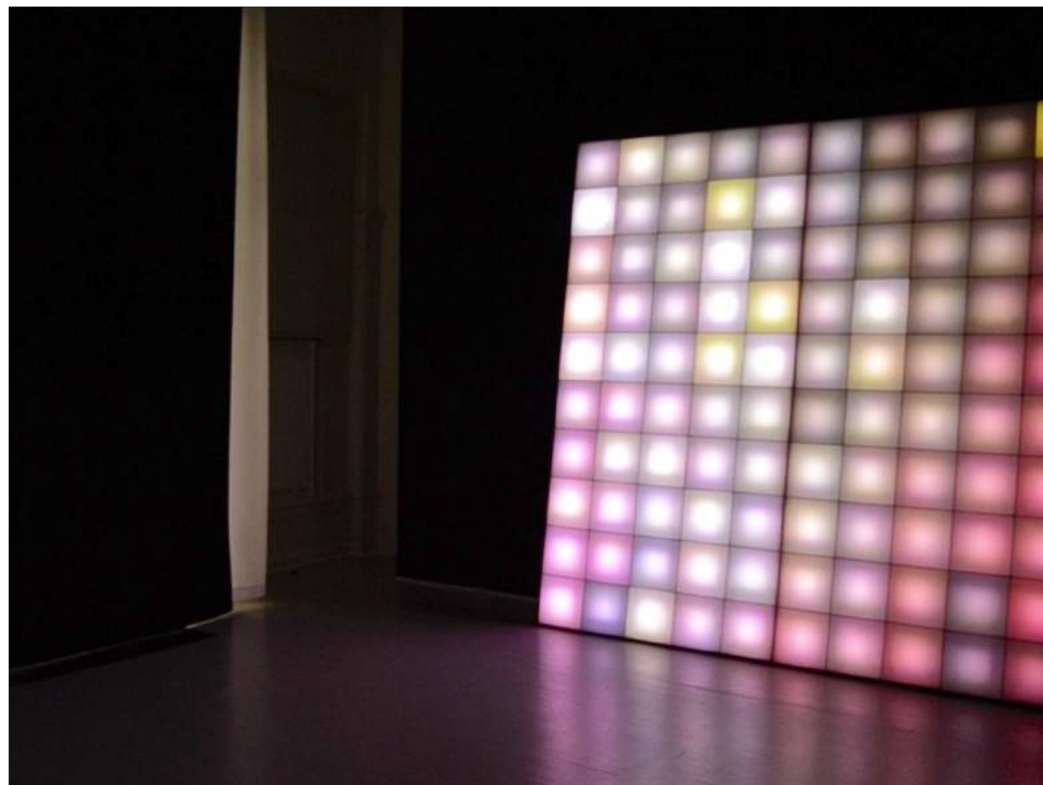
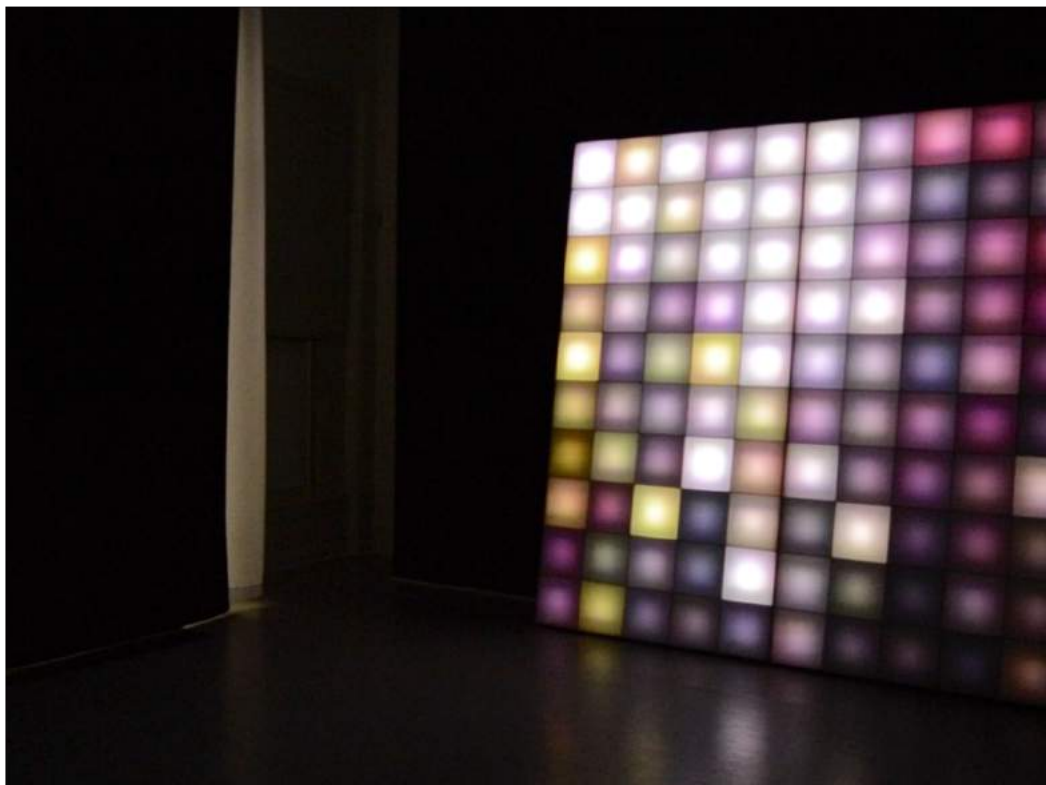
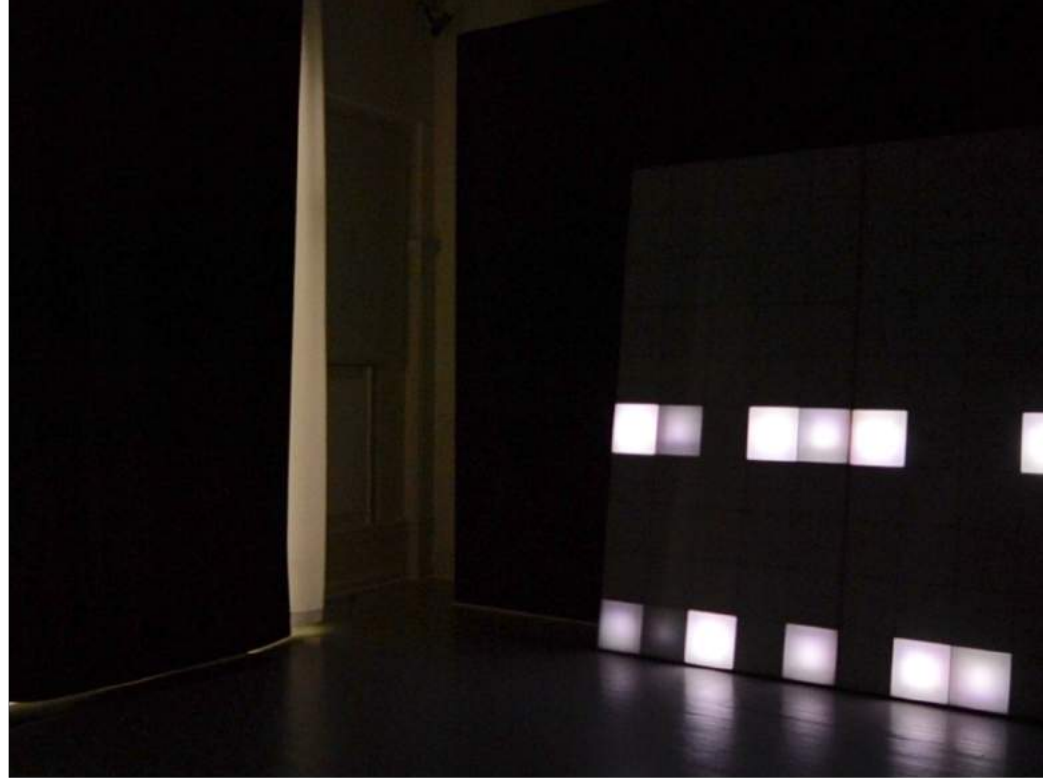
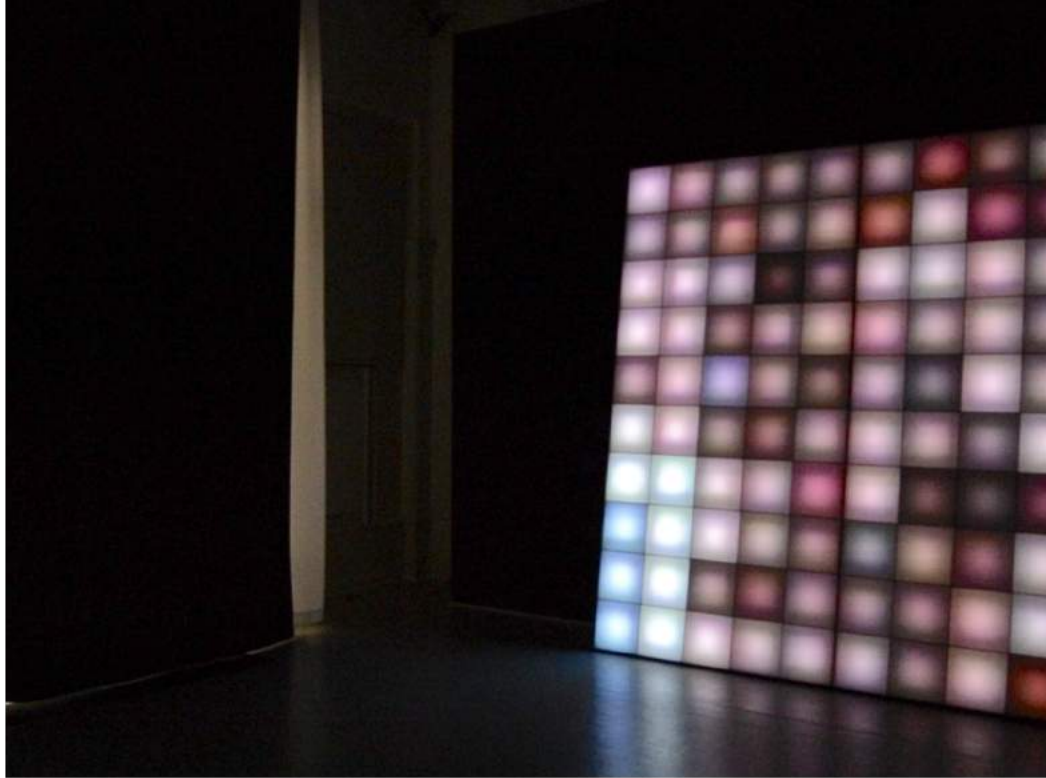
Andreas Schlaegel 2014.

“As an artist he has been active and working on topics related to the way information is made both accessible and rendered abstract on the internet since its very beginnings. Since then he has continuously researched the complex shifts of notions of interactivity, the growing importance of images as currency, in particular in social media, and the large field of surveillance, and its psychological implications. Applying his work to diverse media, ranging from transferring popular imagery from the web into traditional oil paintings, or increasing the abstraction of youtube videos through custom made LED display screens, to permanent public large-scale interactive installations, such as the “Secrets of the Magnetic Stripe” at the Experimentarium in Hellerup, where a light installation is fed with coded information from a credit card reader upon issuing payment, translating the stored information into a light display. Bridging the space between the virtual and the physical, pieces like these show a deeper concern with technology and its effects, not only on esthetics but also on ethics, finding ever new forms for contemporary representations of a continuing conundrum of our times.”

Andreas Schlaegel is an artist based in Berlin. As a critic he is writing for Frieze d / e (Berlin), Spike (Wien), Flash Art (Milano), / 100 (Berlin) and Kunstkrættikk (Oslo).









Niels Bonde (born Glostrup Denmark 1961)

Educated at The Royal Danish Art Academy Fine Arts department in Copenhagen 1988-1994 and Städelschule Institut für Neue Medien in Frankfurt am Main 1993-1995 and teaching at Malmö Art Academy 1999-2005 as well as on Kunsthøjskolen in Holbæk from 2010 to the present.

Bonde has had residencies at International Studio and Curatorial Program New York and in DCA in Berlin. In 2005 recipient of the Danish Foundation for Arts 3-year work grant. Exhibitions at MIT List Visual Arts Center, Stedelijk Museum, Deutsche Hygiene Museum, ZKM, Statens Museum for Kunst Denmark.

Niels Bonde is a pioneer of digital art in Denmark, working in traditional media as well as video, installation and digital media. In 1995 he co-founded Artnode an early digital arts platform.

