

Where there
is power



Oolite Arts

...de usted. Saludos a sus hijos y familia...
...y especialmente por la circunstancia en la que se encuentra a sus órdenes, en la ciudad de Valer...

de mi esposa Leni y de mis hijos Jorge Armando y Greys Valer...
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...de mi esposa Leni y de mis hijos Jorge Armando y Greys Valer...

Continuando con el punto anterior, yo soy estudiante y además quiero ser una ignorante. La verdad es que no me agrada, por eso quiero ser empleado, como va a combatir la inseguridad?, piensa apoyar el candidato?, si es verdad que le va a quitar a los ricos para darle a los que dicen de usted? (que va a poner una dictadura, un comunismo inclinación es hacia usted, pero quiero estar segura y sin temor y en el momento lo grande que se siente que casi todo un pueblo tenga en el y el narcotráfico, la corrupción, la inseguridad, el desempleo, las respuestas a mis preguntas cuando tenga tiempo, en verdad se lo agradezco y lo ayude por el bien del país.

Estimado comandante, soy un ex-estudiante de la I.U.P. caso ya no estoy allí. Aun así me siento orgulloso de ser venezolano y como mi familia conocemos el mundo en el que vivimos y compartimos su respeto y admiración por el venezolano que si queremos a nuestra Venezuela, los que el "bravo Pueblo".

PARA MI, LA CONSTITUYENTE ES COMO UN BATE, UN CHUZO O UN PICO DE BOTELLA con el cual UN NIÑO DE BOLIVARIANO SE ENFRENTA A SU REALIDAD, SONANDO CON SER GRANDES PARA QUE LE TIENAN MIEDO Y ASI PODEN QUITARLES A LOS QUE TRABAJAN SUS AMOROS Y SAPATOS QUE ELLOS MENCIA TUVIERON. AHORA CUMPLIRAN EL PATRIOTICO Y SOBERRANO Y PODRAN ENTRAR A LA COCINA DEL PAIS Y COCINARSE UN BUEN GUISO, Y COMERSE DE DINERO QUE VAN A LA EDUCACION Y A LA SALUD.

July 21 - September 19, 2021

Organized by Amanda Bradley and René Morales

It is a disorienting moment in our national history. We have survived disasters and near-disasters, yet the future feels tenuous. Many of the teleological narratives that guided state power throughout the 20th century have crumbled in the 21st, leaving behind ideological vacuums of monstrous proportions. The game has been disrupted, but we have yet to understand whether or how its rules have changed, or if any rules remain at all.

If the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, then art, which is fundamentally rooted in the observation of our world, has a special role to play. *Where there is power* provides a sampling of approaches by which artists expose and occasionally trouble the machinations of the social institutions and forces that structure our lives. Featuring the work of 13 locally based artists, the exhibition touches on an array of urgent, overlapping topics ranging from racial conflict and the suppression of peaceful protest to mass incarceration, law enforcement, diminishing natural resources, immigration, cults of

personality, the military industrial complex, and resistance in the digital sphere. Recurring themes vary from the resilience of both individuals and groups in the face of discipline and oppression to the question of our own complicity within the dynamics of social power; from the inherent value of shedding light into dark places to the insight that systems of control may be more flawed and vulnerable than what they appear to be.

The title of the exhibition refers to the famous quote, "Where there is power, there is resistance," by the philosopher Michel Foucault. If the turbulence of our current world is due at least in part to shifts in this equation between the forces of power and those who resist it, it suggests the emergence of new means by which to both achieve subjugation and defy authority. The stakes involved in the proper appraisal of these emergences, so key to understanding our own recent history, could not be higher, for as George Orwell wrote, "Who controls the past controls the future, and who controls the present controls the past."

Yucef Merhi

b.1977, Caracas;
lives in Miami

Maximum Security, 1998–2004

Digital prints on laser paper

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist and
The Bonnier Gallery, Miami

It was in 1998 that the pioneering digital artist Yucef Merhi first began hacking the emails of Hugo Chávez. With the help of Trojan spyware, Merhi would continue to download data from both the personal and official accounts of the Venezuelan president for the subsequent six years. The project came to an abrupt end in 2004 with a server migration that enhanced the encryption level of the populist leader's accounts. By then, however, the artist had amassed a stockpile of messages, attachments, and metadata. When the breach was finally discovered, officials in the ministry of culture were reportedly so distraught and afraid of repercussions that they tried to keep word from reaching Chávez's ear.

Maximum Security consists of thousands of printouts of these records presented in the form of a site-specific wallpaper installation. Immersed amid the visual

equivalent of a cacophony of voices, the visitor comes across innumerable communications to and from Chávez and a host of military officers, corporate CEOs, diplomats, cabinet secretaries, and so forth. There are emails from family members and childhood friends sharing intimate memories and congratulating him on his electoral victories. Most of all, there are messages from people who need favors, among them an impassioned plea for assistance from Carlos el Chacal (Carlos the Jackal), the notorious leftist radical currently serving a life term in France for orchestrating a string of deadly attacks, including the raid of OPEC headquarters in Vienna in 1975.

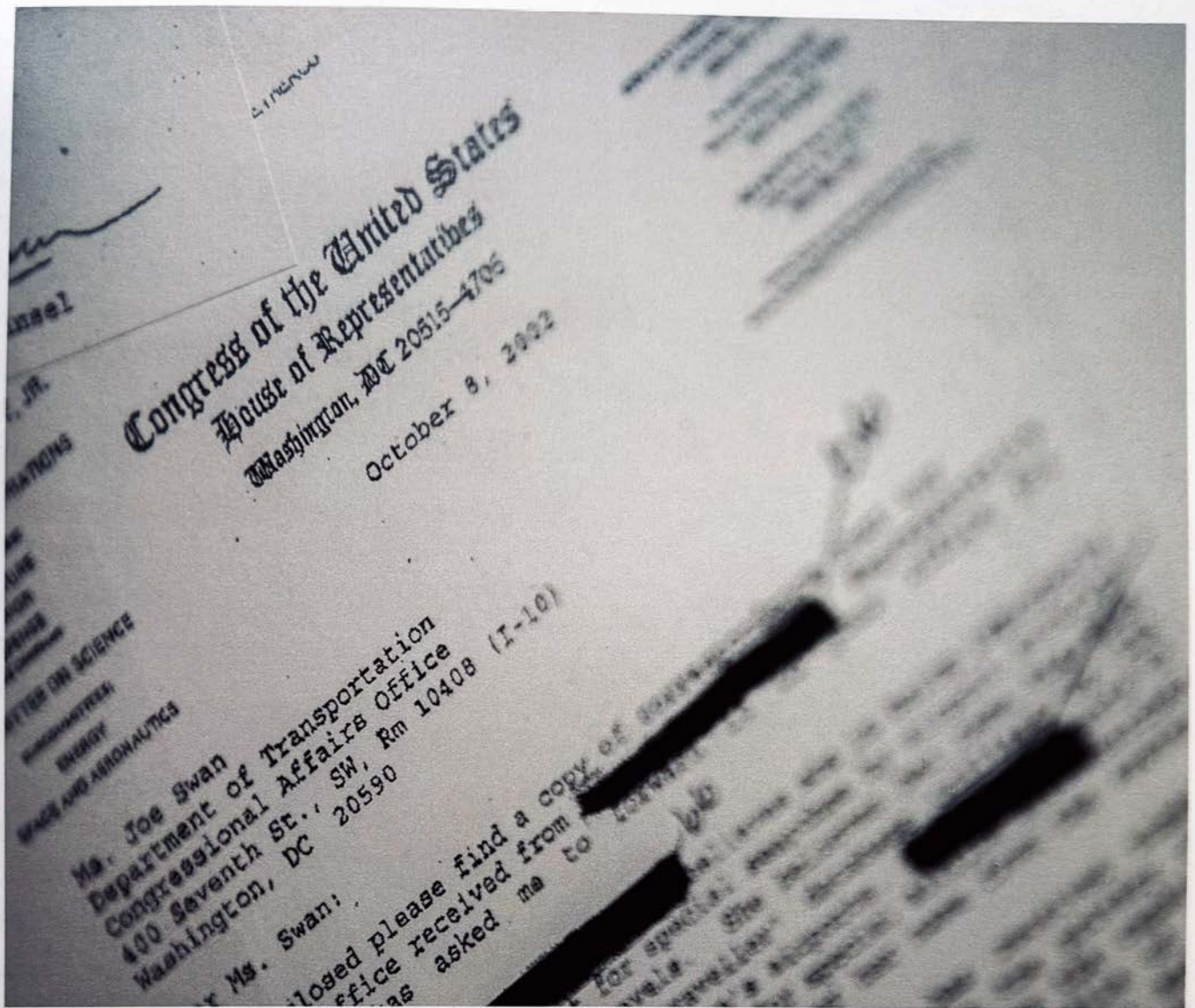
No Fly Security, 2018–2019

Digital prints on laser paper

Dimensions variable

The CIFO Collection, Miami

In another wallpaper titled *No Fly Security*, Merhi turns his attention to the government of his adopted country. The work constitutes the world's largest compilation of records related to the infamous "no fly list," a non-public roster of individuals prohibited from flying into or out of the United States on suspicion of terrorist ties. The list exemplifies the under-regulated intensification of state control that began almost exactly 20 years ago in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attack.



As in *Maximum Security*, Merhi determines the placement of each printout according to a preordained mathematical system. The algorithm produces a swirling pattern, creating nodes of density from which pages emanate outward until they crash into the next node, like an ocean wave wrapping around a buoy. The fractal-like geometry that results is not just aesthetic; it yields an accurate spatial representation of network patches being disassembled and reassembled as they trek across cyberspace — a “datagram,” to use a term coined by the artist.

While the two works address regimes at opposite ends of the political spectrum, they share in common the implication that the walls of power are riddled with hairline cracks, containing weak points soft enough, in the case of *Maximum Security*, to be infiltrated by a 20-year-old hacker with a dial-up modem.



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