

**Press
 Release**

Title	Trevor Paglen <i>Machine Visions</i> 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize Winner's Exhibition	
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Trevor Paglen *Machine Visions*

Nam June Paik Art Center Prize Winner's Exhibition



- ▶ A solo exhibition by 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize winner, Trevor Paglen
- ▶ Influenced by Nam June Paik, who “taught us how to see the rapidly changing world,” Paglen records and intervenes in the operations of the digital world and its technological systems, recording its aesthetic outcomes.
- ▶ Artist and geographer Paglen presents a variety of works revealing the global data and surveillance systems of the digital world, re-editing its “hidden landscapes and forbidden places.”
- ▶ Artist Talk explains Paglen’s political aesthetics regarding the workings of contemporary digital media such as satellites, AI and state surveillance

■ *Machine Visions*

◦ **Period** : October 16, 2019 – February 2, 2020

◦ **Venue** : Nam June Paik Art Center 2F

◦ **Artist** : Trevor Paglen

◦ **Opening** : October 16, 2019

[Artist’s Talk] 2:00 pm, Nam June Paik Art Center Seminar Room

[Opening] 4:00 pm, Nam June Paik Art Center 1F

◦ **Organized and Hosted by** Nam June Paik Art Center and Gyeonggi Cultural Foundation

Nam June Paik Art Center (Director, Seong Eun Kim) presents the first solo exhibition of Trevor Paglen’s, who is the 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize winner, in Korea, from October 16, 2019 to February 2, 2020. Paglen, an artist with a PhD in geography, describes his works as “maps of the hidden landscapes and forbidden sites of the digital world” as he reveals invisible systems and physical devices of state surveillance.

Upon receiving the 2018 Nam June Paik Art Center Prize, Paglen commented, “it’s an incredible honor to be awarded the Nam June Paik Art Center Prize. Nam June Paik was an incredible visionary, an artist who taught us how to see a rapidly changing world, and a huge inspiration to me personally. To be recognized in relation to Nam June Paik is truly one of the greatest honor I can imagine.” Nam June Paik Art Center Prize jury committee chairwoman Kim Hong-hee praised Paglen as “an artist who implicitly exposes the secret surveillance devices of military and intelligence bodies using multiple media including photography, video, sculpture and installation. By visualizing the results of

his thorough research and investigations through abstract color and formal exploration, he creates his own unique style, combining politics and aesthetics.”

Machine Visions, Trevor Paglen’s first solo exhibition in Korea, is an intensive exploration of the unique artistic world that Paglen has created, based on a variety of media. The exhibition title refers to the phenomenon whereby images are no longer created for humans but by machines in order to operate machines. Featuring 19 video, photographic and satellite works, this exhibition offers an overview of Paglen’s oeuvre, including images filmed and reproduced by AI systems, aesthetic constructions of surveillance satellites born of cosmic imagination, and visualizations of invisible state surveillance systems.

In his video work, *Behold These Glorious Times!*, we find images reborn from combinations data input from other image data on objects, sensations and human figures recognized by AI systems. These forms can appear strange and ugly, as frightening as monsters or phantoms. Coming face to face with these products prompts us to ask ourselves whether technological development is really creating the kind of world we wanted, and to wonder what we are actually seeing.

Paglen’s *Prototype For a Nonfunctional Satellite* is designed to evoke our imaginings about space. Taking the launch of a satellite and making it into a work of fine art, Paglen uses his work to pose questions that let us renew our interest in and perception of space, still a place of mystery. He describes these works as “impossible objects.” Paglen’s satellites serve no commercial or military purpose; rather, they are designed to become temporary artificial stars, creating pure happiness and a sense of mystery.

In works such as *They Watch the Moon* and *89 Landscapes*, Paglen photographs surveillance and communication systems, global internet hubs (Frankfurt, Amsterdam, London) and intelligence agency buildings created with the aim of ensuring military secrecy. Noting that power is enabled by infrastructure, Paglen directs his gaze directly at the power systems that exist secretly within it.

Calling his works “maps of the hidden landscapes and forbidden sites of the digital world,” Paglen uses high-performance optics and telephoto lenses, or dives 100 feet below the surface to explore the sea bed, photographing scenes of deep space and bottomless abysses. Capturing places of accumulated data, from hidden sites such as classified military installations and prisons to data from the digital world, drawing on AI, cable, and spy satellites, he re-compiles his own political map of unseen, unmapped places.

■ NAM JUNE PAIK ART CENTER PRIZE

Nam June Paik Art Center Prize awarded by the governor of Gyeonggi Province was inaugurated in 2009 with the aim of discovering artists who, like Nam June Paik himself, open new artistic horizons through ongoing experimentation and innovation. Previously, the prize has been awarded to a series of artists and theorists who inherit Paik's artistic spirit, achieving fusion and consilience across various genres including music, performance and the visual arts by integrating technology and art, finding new means of communication and interacting with viewers. In its inaugural year, the prize was awarded jointly to four artists (Seung-taek Lee, Eun-me Ahn, Ceal Floyer and Robert Adrian X). The following year, in 2010, it was given to philosopher and sociologist Bruno Latour. Subsequent winners include artists Doug Aitken in 2012, Haroon Mirza in 2014 and Blast Theory in 2016.

■ ARTIST



© Trevor Paglen Studio

Born in the United States in 1974, Trevor Paglen studied art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, before gaining a PhD in geography from the University of California at Berkeley. His works have been exhibited at institutions including the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands, Frankfurter Kunstverein in Germany, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Smithsonian Institution in the US, Tate Modern in the UK, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark and the Israel Museum, and he has taken part in international events including Berlin Biennale(2016), Gwangju Biennale(2018) and Manifesta 11(2016). Paglen has published five graphic art books on subjects such as geography, national secrecy and photography. He received a Pioneer

Award from the Electronic Frontier Foundation in 2014, a Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize in 2016 and a MacArthur Fellowship in 2017. In 2015, *Citizenfour*, on which Paglen worked as a cinematographer, won the Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature.

■ Presented Works

1. *Drone Vision*, 2010

HD video, no sound, 5 min



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

The growing importance of drones in American military strategy has made them a key source of inspiration in Paglen's work. From the artist's perspective, drones are an important element in redefining vision and distance. Artists have actively recorded the use of drones in war for the past several years. The growing ubiquity of technology and its increasingly intimate relationship with politics has made it harder to grasp its most basic infrastructures. These technological developments show that it has become harder for us to interpret and take action towards the invisible surveillance structures that control us. *Drone Vision* delivers a "drone's eye view" from the perspective of a drone operator. Paglen introduces it as a reflection of his deep interest in an

environment in which “secrecy, responsibility and endless war” pursue ever more perfect technology.

2. *Autonomy Cube*, 2015

Plexiglas cube with computer components, 49.85 cm x 49.85 cm x 49.85 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Autonomy Cube is a sculpture designed to be housed in art museums, galleries, and civic spaces. The sculpture is meant to be both “seen” and “used.” Several Internet-connected computers housed within the work create an open Wi-Fi hotspot called “Autonomy Cube” wherever it is installed. Viewers can use the hotspot and search the Internet with freedom via Tor, a network that guarantees anonymity. Paglen introduces this work as a partial criticism of invisible surveillance structures within museums. Unbeknown to themselves, viewers looking around an exhibition are exposed to CCTV cameras. By imagining how to apply a directly opposing logic of this structure of museum surveillance, Paglen created this work as a way of keeping museum viewers around the world informed of each other’s state of connection.

*Tor Network: A type of free software that guarantees online anonymity and the evasion of censorship. Its origins lie in the United States Naval Research Laboratory. The core principle of Tor, “onion routing,” was developed in the mid-1960s by the Lab's employees, mathematicians and computer scientists, with the aim of protecting U.S. intelligence communications online.

3. *Prototype For a Nonfunctional Satellite*, 2013

Mylar, steel, 487.68 cm x 487.68 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Developed in collaboration with aerospace engineers, *Prototype For a Nonfunctional Satellite* is a small, lightweight sculpture. If placed into low Earth orbit 360 miles above our planet, it would be inflated by CO₂ cartridges to become “a sculpture in the sky,” appearing in the dark sky as a slowly moving, flickering star. It would remain in orbit for approximately three months, before burning up upon reentry through the atmosphere. The nonfunctional satellite is thus not a permanent, fixed device but a romantic gesture. Like a type of atmospheric art, it was the first satellite to be created with no regard for military, commercial or scientific gain.

4. STSS-I and Two Unidentified Spacecraft Over Carson City (Space Tracking and Surveillance System, USA; 205), 2010

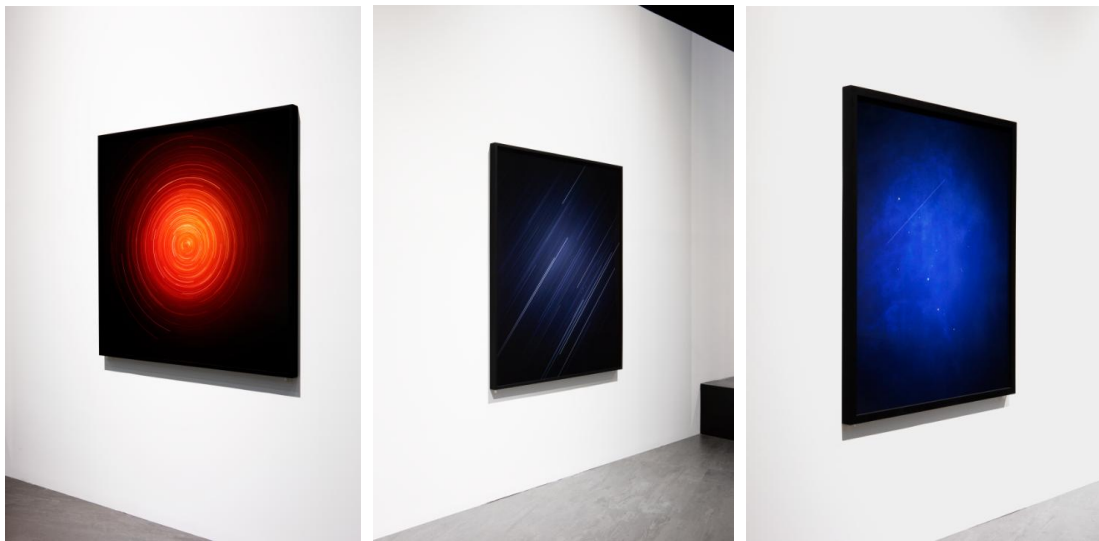
C-print, 121.92 cm x 121.92 cm

5. PAN (Unknown; USA-207), 2010

C-print, 152.40 cm x 121.92 cm

6. LACROSSE/ONYX II Passing Through Draco (Radar Imaging Reconnaissance Satellite; USA 69), 2007

C-print, 152.40 cm x 121.92 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

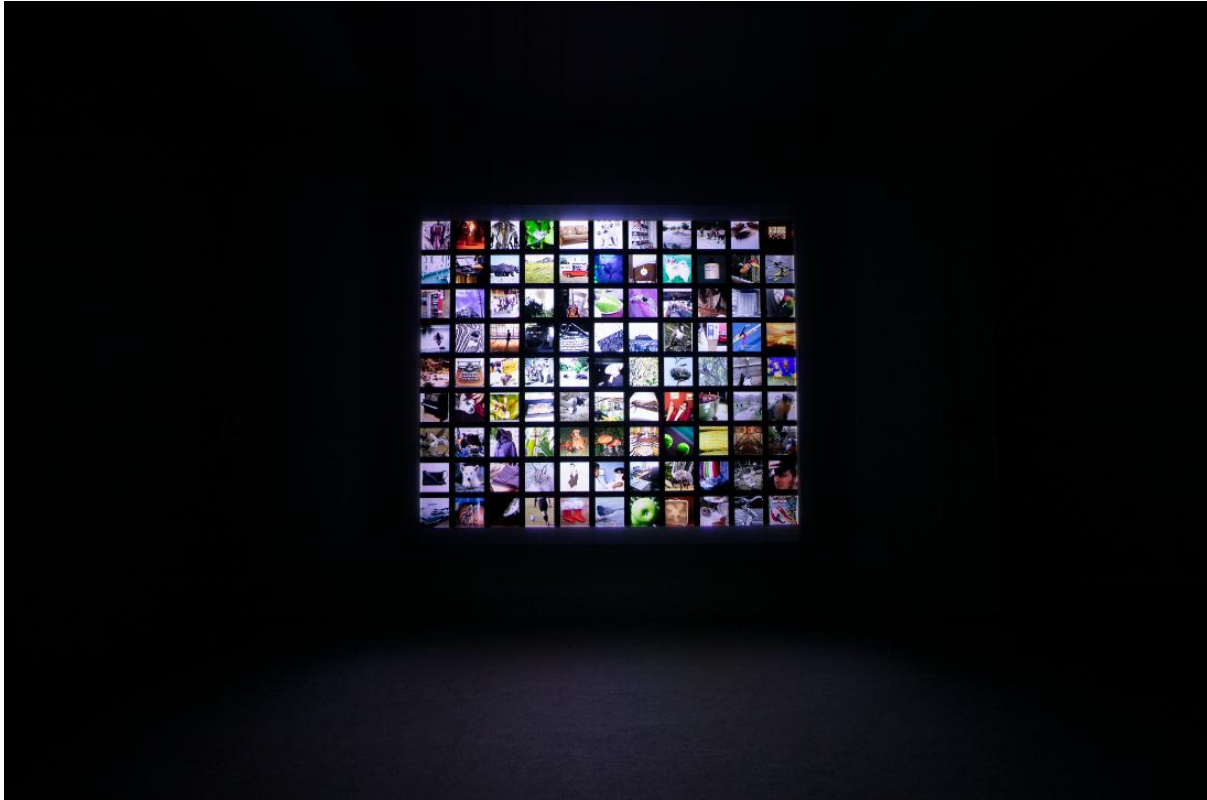
Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

The Other Night Sky is a project to track and photograph obscure objects that orbit the Earth, moving across the invisible sky.

Paglen describes the sky as not just a wide, free expanse but a place where the structures of electronic devices such as drones and satellites coexist. Space flight was developed “to deliver nuclear missiles to the other side of the planet,” and would not have been invented were it not for the historical conditions of nuclear arms and the Cold War. In *The Other Night Sky*, Paglen scours the night sky in search of objects such as old satellites, discarded spacecraft and space debris. He tracks spaceships, investigates their orbit, and takes their pictures using a camera mounted with a computer-guided telescope. When all goes to plan, the result is a skyscape covered with a pattern of small lines. These are the traces of the satellites previously invisible to us.

7. *Behold These Glorious Times!*, 2017

single channel color video projection, sound, stereo, 10 min



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

The photographs appearing in the video are used to train AI networks to recognize individuals, faces, gestures, relationships and emotions. Known as a training library, this collection is not for people but a repository of images designed by machine in order to train machines. Paglen focuses on the way images are no longer created for humans but by machines in order to operate machines. They input image data from the objects, feelings and characters habitually perceived by humans, and create new images. These forms are strange and shocking, appearing like monsters, or ghosts. When we see the outcome of these data games, and when we recognize the ways and processes by which they are produced, we find ourselves asking whether technological development is unquestionably a positive thing. What, Paglen asks, are we watching? He makes us realize that in order to understand the world as seen by machines, we must completely discard our perspectives as humans.

8. NSA-Tapped Fiber Optic Cable Landing Site, Keawaula, Hawaii, United States, 2016

C-print, 121.9 cm x 160 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Paglen, who traces communication cables linking the east coast of the U.S. and Europe, speaks of the undersea political and military power that clearly exists but remains invisible to us. His photographs seem to reveal coastal landscapes, warm-hued beach scenes and calm seas. But we remain unaware of the massive data traffic flowing through the cables buried in the sea bed in these seemingly tranquil scenes. Paglen investigates systems of mass surveillance and control in the intermediate areas between what we see with our eyes and what governments or the military actively hide from us. The time- and space-transcending communication systems that emerged with the development of the internet spoke of a bright future where the world would become freely connected as a unified whole. Through his photographs of invisible surveillance systems and control, Paglen reveals the contradictions produced by this convenience.

**9-11. National Security Agency, Ft. Meade, Maryland; National Reconnaissance Office, Chantilly, Virginia;
National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Springfield, Virginia, 2014**

C-Print, 45.72 cm x 65.58 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Paglen says that these photographic works began as concept for expanding his interest in surveillance. America's politics of surveillance and their corollary institutional logic are an invisible yet official secret. But these images demonstrate that such invisible worlds powerfully dominate the actual world in which we live. Paglen has made these images publicly available on his website, for anyone to download and use free of charge. The huge hidden systems of the U.S. intelligence agencies are shrouded in an aura of mystery and fear, but the artist has made these photographs accessible to anyone. In so doing, Paglen makes paradoxical use of the logic of the states and individuals who build structures of surveillance.

12. *They Watch the Moon*, 2010

C-Print, 91.44 cm x 121.92 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Taken deep in a forest in West Virginia, this photograph depicts a classified National Radio Quiet Zone. Taken as a long exposure in the light of a full moon, the work shows a vast area in Maryland. Here, radio transmissions are severely restricted and use of the internet is impossible. Through a largescale surveillance system that captures electronic telemetry signals that escape into space, bounce off the moon and are reflected back to Earth, the artist records the experiments that jeopardize human rights and the operating systems hidden in government-run projects. By searching for the invisible secret strategies of military institutions creating spaces of darkness, and their traces, Paglen reveals the unseen.

*National Radio Quiet Zone: An area in which radio transmissions are restricted in order to protect radio telescopes and communication stations from radio interference. Located in a sparsely populated region, it is regulated by federal law.

13. *Symbology, Volume III, 2009*

Twenty fabric patches, framed, 304.80cm x 30.50cm

14. *Symbology, Volume V, 2013*

Twenty fabric patches, framed, 304.80cm x 30.50cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Military culture is filled with visual language consisting of symbols and insignia that signify everything from various unit and command affiliations to significant events.

Military communities produce patches as part of their visual language, symbolically identifying their wearer's job, projects and program affiliation, achievements and place within the military hierarchy. These internal military identities and symbols, along with the programs, projects, places and entities of defense industry insiders, build unique political aims and systems. These deeply-hidden secrets, symbols and insignia evoke the realms of secret groups and societies following mysterious religions throughout history. Through such symbols, Paglen allows us to compare how secret groups within the military today create their own shared cultures.

15. *Image Operations. Op.10*, 2018

Single Channel 4K UHD Color Video Projection, 5.0 Dolby Surround Sound, 23 min



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Image Operations. Op.10 is a single-channel video work filmed at Berlin's historic Funkhaus. It shows the Kronos Quartet in a studio, recording Debussy's *String Quartet in G minor, Op.10*. In the video we see algorithms generated by computers watching the musicians: a mixture of human and mechanical perspectives. The AI system informs us of each musician's personal information, and her or his emotions as they change in real time. The work prompts reflection on new forms of surveillance such as automation, machine learning and algorithms. *Image Operations. Op.10* makes us think about a society like something out of UK drama *Black Mirror*: not one where our lives are monitored by the state or overarching institutions, but one where technology infiltrates our daily lives and controls us.

16. *Babel (Corpus: Spheres of Purgatory) Adversarially Evolved Hallucination, 2017*

Dye sublimation metal print, 152.40 cm x 121.92 cm

17. *Tornado (Corpus: Spheres of Hell) Adversarially Evolved Hallucination, 2017*

Dye sublimation print, 152.40 cm x 121.92 cm



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

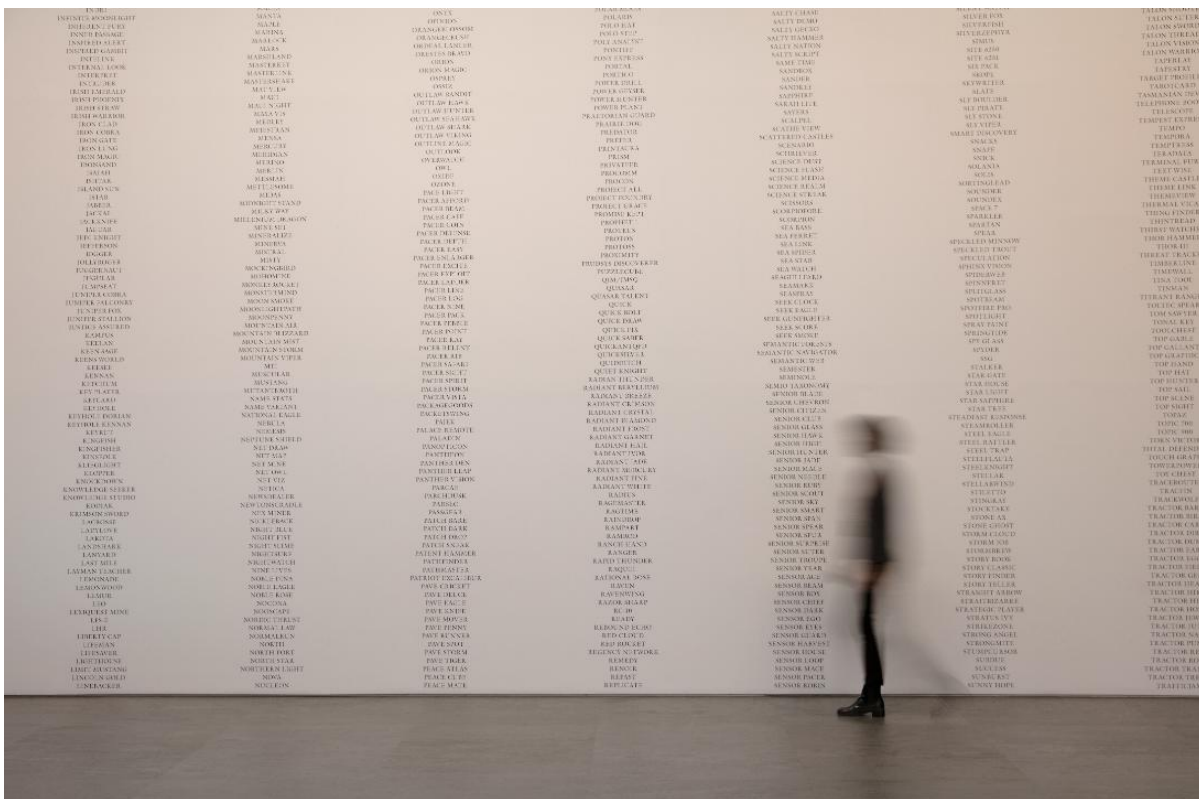
Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Paglen developed his own taxonomies from literature, psychoanalysis, political economy, and poetry. An AI system was trained to recognize images of inauspicious omens such as war, catastrophe and natural disaster. Then, images of objects were combined with large amounts of structured meta data to create a training set for the systems.

Through these sets, the AI system learned how to recognize objects; once this was possible, it became able to recognize objects it had not seen before. Once it had ingested a sufficient number of training images, a second AI system was used to “paint” that subject. The results were dark, apocalyptic and melancholy images that Paglen calls “hallucinations.” They show the perceptions and perspectives of machines of machines forced into a hallucinatory state by a human.

18. Code Names: Classified Military and Intelligence Programs(2001-2007), 2009

Vinyl, Variable installation



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: The Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

As the security realm expands into the cybersphere, Paglen’s research has come to include various aspects of the way governments handle information. *Code Names* is a list of words, phrases, and terms that designate active military programs whose existence or purpose is classified. These include lists of information compartments and Pentagon “Special Access Programs.” The lists show more than 4,000 code names used by the National Security Agency (NSA) and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) for surveillance programs.

19. 89 Landscapes, 2015

2-channel color video projection, sound, 24 min



Copyright: Trevor Paglen

Courtesy of: the Artist, Nam June Paik Art Center

Paglen photographs the sites that constitute the global information system. He shot these 89 scenes while participating as a cinematographer in *Citizenfour*, Laura Poitras's documentary about Edward Snowden, the whistleblower who exposed information monitoring by the U.S.'s National Security Agency. They show gorges where the surveillance systems are located, and the installations that support them. At first glance, these landscapes appear to show tranquil pastures or deserts. But in scenes of the sea bed a loudening, intensifying sound creates a sense of growing unease. The picture gradually zooms in, using explosive sound to instill a sense of fear in viewers, then, at a certain point, suddenly stops. These sequences play out repeatedly. By turning his lens to surveillance technology, Paglen reverses the relationship between those watching and those being watched.

■ Exhibition-related education programs

- For more information about exhibition related programs, please check the homepage.
- Group visits can be booked via our homepage. www.njpartcenter.kr

■ Exhibition Guide

- **Free admission**
- **Opening Hours** : 10am – 6pm
- **Last entry**: 1 hour before closing
- **Closed**: Every Monday (excluding public holidays), January 1, New Year's Day and Chuseok