

ALTMAN SIEGEL
GALLERY S/F

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For Immediate Release:

Trevor Paglen

February 27 – April 11, 2009
Opening reception February 27, 6-8pm

Altman Siegel Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition of new work by Trevor Paglen. This will be Paglen's debut exhibition with the gallery and will feature selections of photographs from the series *Limit Telephotography*, *The Other Night Sky* and *Symbology*. The exhibition will open on February 27th and run through April 11th, 2009.

In the tradition of the great photographers of the West, Carelton Watkins, Eadweard Muybridge and Timothy O'Sullivan, Trevor Paglen is both a landscape photographer and an explorer. His subject is most often landscapes of secrecy from classified air bases in the Great Basin, to clandestine space-craft in Earth's orbit. Paglen's practice of surveying and photographing undisclosed military operations is a contemporary iteration of the frontier photographers' tradition of documenting previously unknown territory. His photographs capture the ancient grandeur of the American west and the infinite beauty of the universe, and reveal within them the high-tech, man-made omnipresence of the American state.

Literally and metaphorically, Paglen's photographs point to the limits of visibility, imposed both by the realities of physical distance and by informational obfuscation. The classical notion of seeing and knowing is confounded in Paglen's compositions when he exposes the "black world" hiding in plain site. In his *Limit Telephotography* series, Paglen photographs unmarked military installations from as close as he can get, which is sometimes many miles away. The blurry images document the fact of the existence of the landscapes, but also the physical and conceptual space between seeing the reality and knowing what is actually happening there.

The photographs from the series *The Other Night Sky* are the culmination of a project in which Trevor Paglen has mapped and photographed the nearly 200 top-secret US surveillance satellites that orbit the Earth. Using customized astronomy software and amateur observational data, Paglen models a particular spacecraft's orbit and can accurately predict when and where it will appear in the night sky. Paglen then uses a guided-exposure camera system to accurately record the path of the satellite over the course of the long-exposure. The satellite's path is often counter to the natural orbit of the stars further highlighting its unnatural presence in the sky. The final irony is that as Paglen photographs the satellite, it is engaged in the same act in reverse.

Trevor Paglen is a 2008 recipient of SFMOMA's SECA Art Award, which features an exhibition that runs concurrently with this exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Paglen's work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions at the Berkeley Art Museum; Bellwether Gallery, New York; and The Lab, San Francisco. In 2010 his work will be featured in a solo exhibition at Secession, Vienna. His recent group exhibitions include the 2009 Istanbul Biennial; *Experimental Geography*, Independent Curators International, New York; *Conspire*, Transmediale.08, Berlin; *Crimes of Omission*, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; and *Dark Matters: Artists See the Impossible*, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. Paglen recently published his third book [Blank Spots on the Map](#), which is widely available in bookstores.

For more information please contact the gallery at (415) 576-9300 or info@altmansiegel.com.