

STEPHEN DEWYER—Inter-
rupting Subjectivity in Order to
Interrupt Subjection: Refigur-
ing the Social Imaginary in to
the poor oligarchies and the
wealthy poor: to (lose/ac)count
by two, text by KEY JO LEE

Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean
they aren't after you. — Joseph Heller

What occurs in the moments wherein the self—
as perceived by oneself—and the self as simulta-
neously perceived by an unseen, but felt, (O)ther
converge in a single consciousness? What are the
contours of the certain disjuncture between self-
perception and the projected self as perceived?
And, finally, what do these questions reveal about
the traffic of identification between the State and
its subjects? Such are the inquiries proposed by
Stephen Garrett Dewyer's latest work, to the poor
oligarchies and the wealthy poor: to (lose/ac)count
by two, which is part of a series of works through
which he addresses sensibilities that are explicitly
linked to the apperception of constant and inevi-
sible surveillance by the modern cum postmodern
cum modern again, contemporary subject. Dew-
yer seems to be theorizing the slippage between

the subjection of Subjectivity to the all seeing eye of the State based on a human-driven panoptical model and modes of State policing wholly understood as technologically motivated mechanisms of surveillance that undermine any personal resistance to being seen.

The work concretizes the fantasy of perpetual scrutiny into a palpable reality, thus it warrants the paranoia consistent with interminable surveillance. But, interestingly, that surveillance is partly self-directed obliging questions of autonomy and agency forcing us to become aware of our participatory engagement with State forces that, in turn, precipitates a reckoning with the limits of governmentalized social circumscription. Embedded in the piece is the commonplace anthropomorphization of the State engendered by the monolithization of, and subsequent endowment of personhood to, multiple and ever-multiplying institutions as they are transformed into a singular body politic. Dewyer intervenes on that blithe transformation by interrogating the subject's creation of the State's subjectivity. An interview with the artist revealed his understanding of a tacit connection between conceptions of the State and conceptions of surveillance as they become conflated in the popular social imaginary. He states, "there are some conceptions of the State as being this omnipresent thing that thinks on its own...[and] a notion of surveillance having a thinking spectator...that surveillance knows what it's surveying..." In to the poor

oligarchies, Dewyer actualizes the two subjects involved in relationships of surveillance and effectively demonstrates that the boundary between watcher and watched becomes blurred as soon as it is recognized. How he achieves a visual demonstration of this complex mental interaction is a matter of technical intricacy. A deep interrogation of one's place in the seen/seeing process is triggered by the composition of the installation.

The work in the gallery consists of:

“live-stream video from four cameras placed on walls facing opposite sides of two doorways. Live-stream video from two cameras that are placed on opposite sides of a doorway project onto two blinds that are covered with mirrors on one side while video coming from two cameras facing a different doorway project onto two blinds that cover mirrors placed on an opposite wall. The projections reflect onto a fabric partition according to the movements of the doors which rotate the blades of the blinds.”

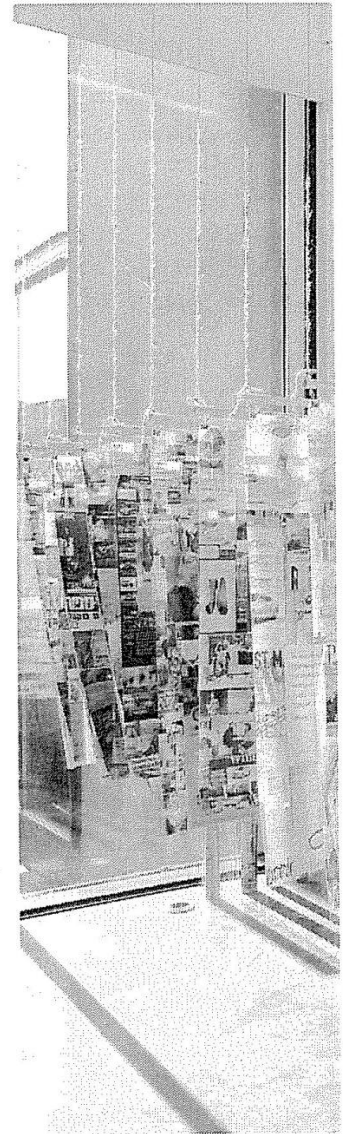
One's entry into the work is inscribed both literally and figuratively. Literal entrance is registered by the doors of the gallery itself that are implicated in the work by the existence of a camera trained upon the threshold. Figurative entrance is registered in the always already participatory nature of an art installation and its purposeful conscription of space to be encountered, and consciously inhabited, by the spectator.

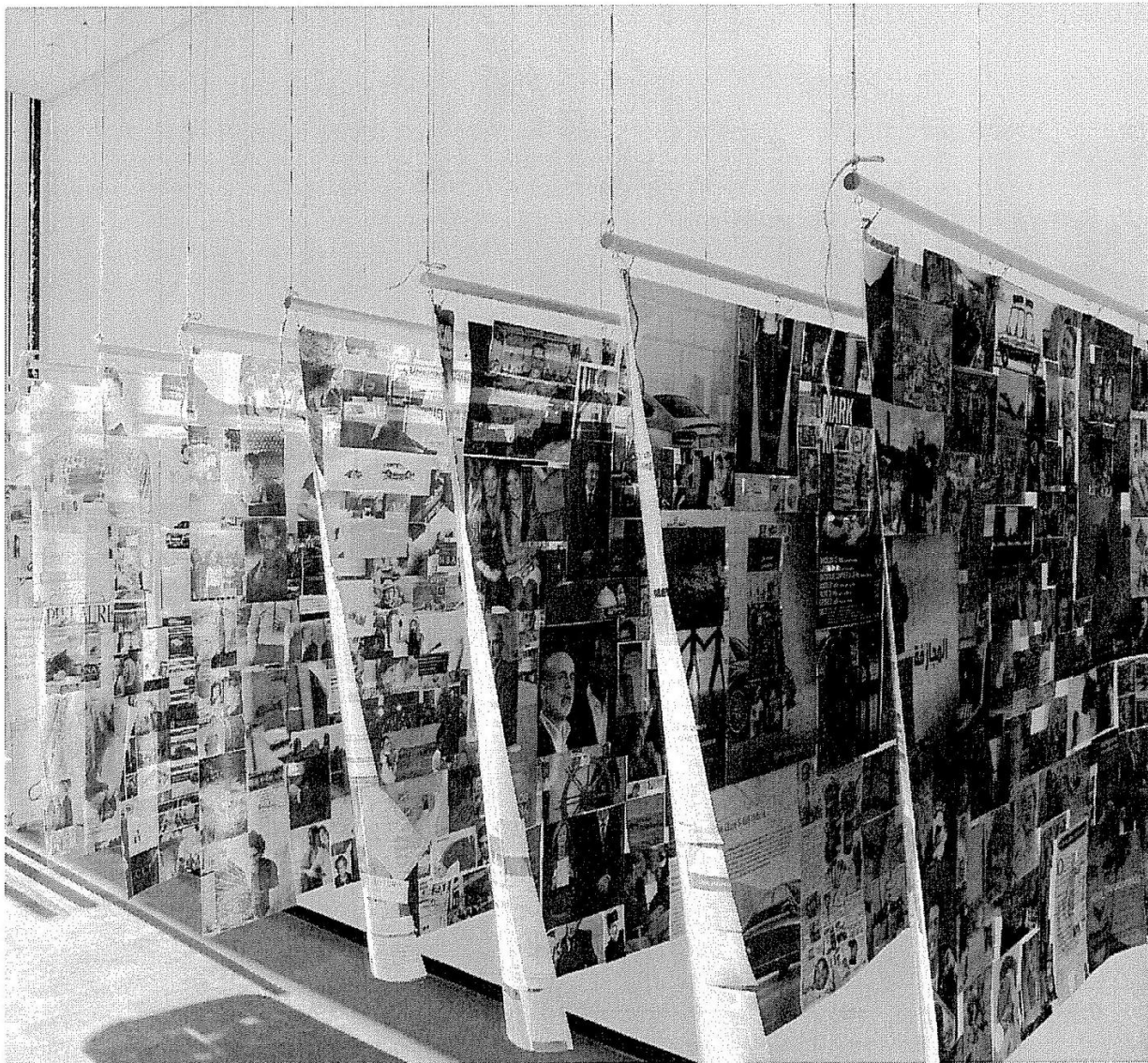
The cameras are affixed to their walls well above eye-level and you become aware of them only at the moment when you open the door and immediately see part of yourself, for the mirrors and blinds only afford a partial view, projected upon a screen in real-time. These non-operated yet operating ocular devices always imply a viewing subject and, as such, coerces our recognition of the always felt, but not necessarily cognized, assumption of a thinking watcher. One who becomes ever more present in Dewyer's demonstration of its absence. The presence of two subjects is amplified by the series of blinds, mirrors and screens, made interactive through a system of pulleys attached to the entry and exit doors of the gallery, that make up a seemingly self-motivated system of revelations and occlusions of the spectator's body. However, you are never fully in control of the apparatuses of exposure. At any moment, another spectator can enter the space, reactivate the blinds and through the pulley mechanism, determine what piece of yourself you can see. The partiality of your view of yourself, whether through self-investigation or through the intellectual occupation of your surveyor, is always reinforced by your inability to find a fulsome reflection of yourself within the installation's design. This design feature simultaneously instantiates the limited view of the State.

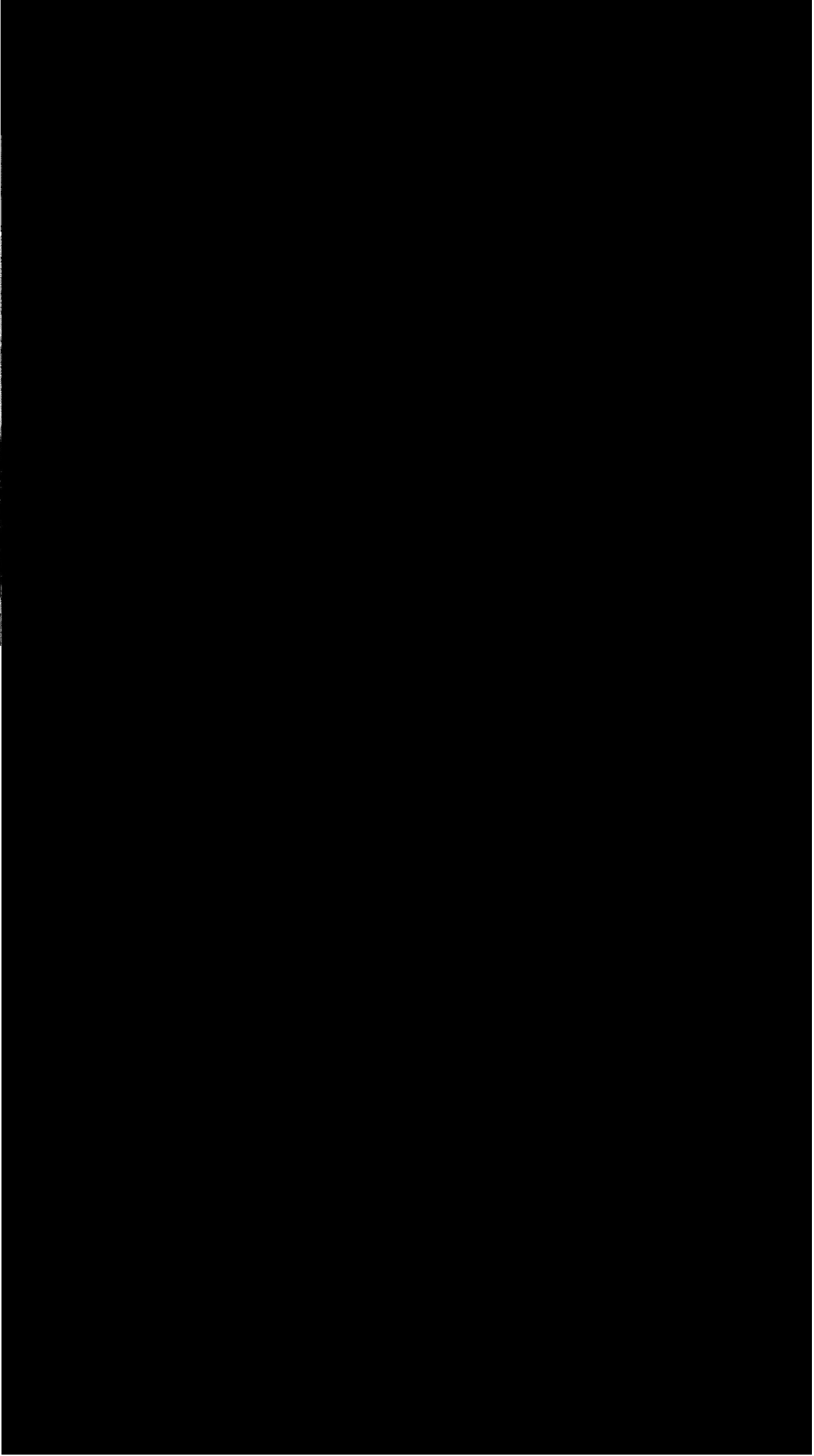
The title, to the poor oligarchies and the wealthy poor: to (lose/ac)count by two remarks upon the work's material establishment of the concomitant

surveillance of the anthropomorphized State. It initiates the work's activation of the possibility for social reversals imbricated within, but often rendered invisible by, the transit of power among the mutually surveilled. The State's mutual and simultaneous scrutiny of the Rich and Poor and the latter groups' ability to, in turn, scrutinize the State instantiates a tripartite ocular and affective network of subjectivities. Dewyer refigures the nodes of that network changing it from a schema that poses the State and Rich on the same plane and the Poor as irredeemably subject to both into an as yet unrealized circuit of equalized gazes. This revised arrangement of subjectivities, which provides the critical thrust of the work, is manifested in spectatorial experience and mobilizes the work's political potential through the dissection of perceived subjective subjection in "real" space and time.

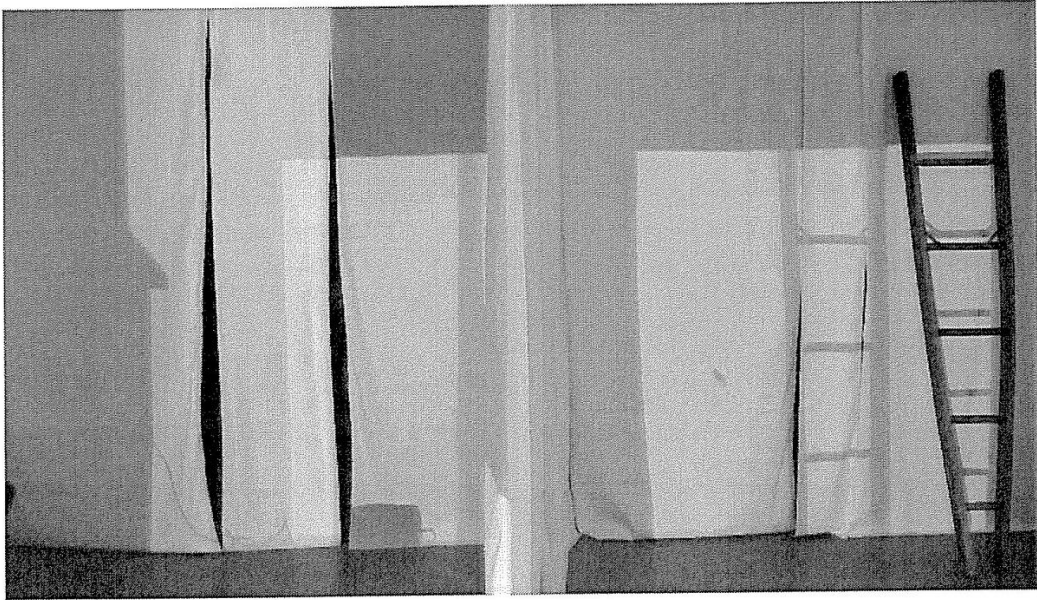
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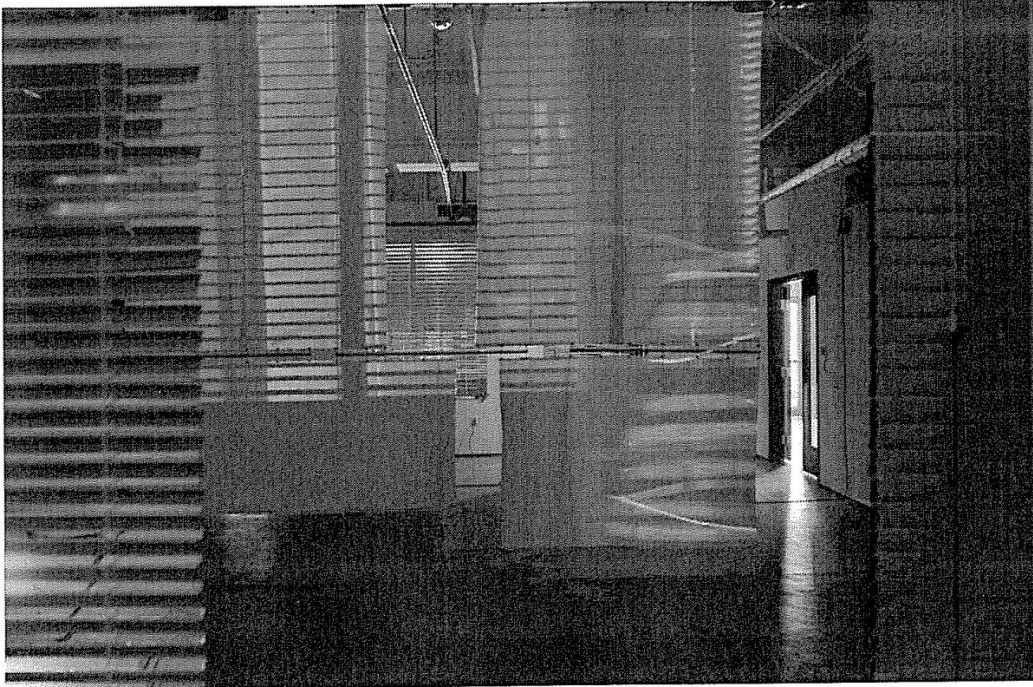




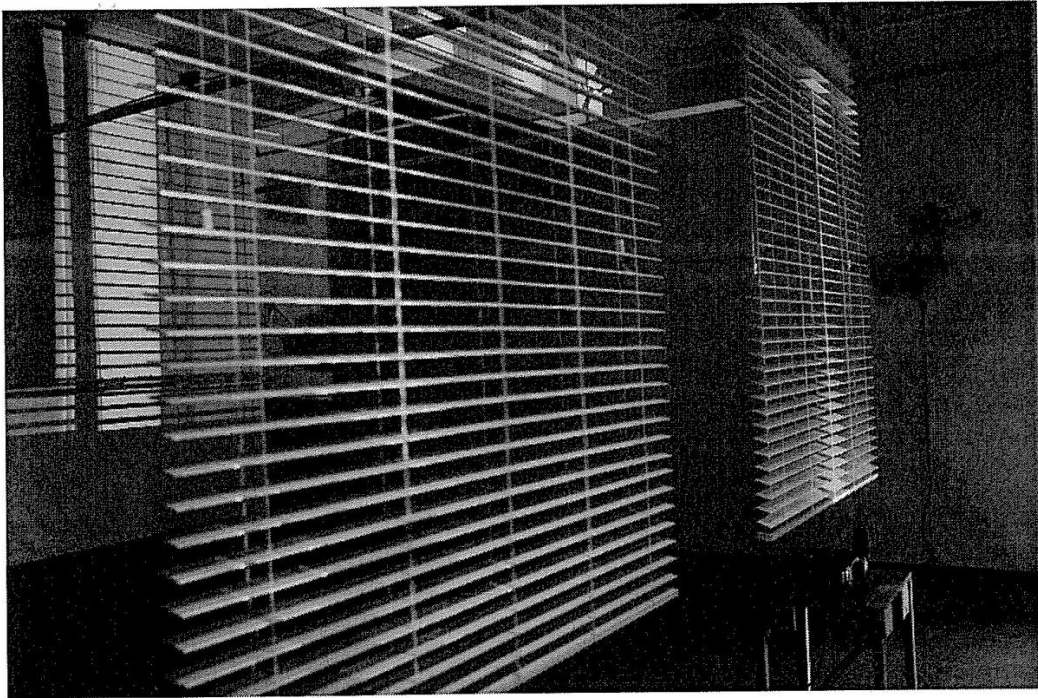
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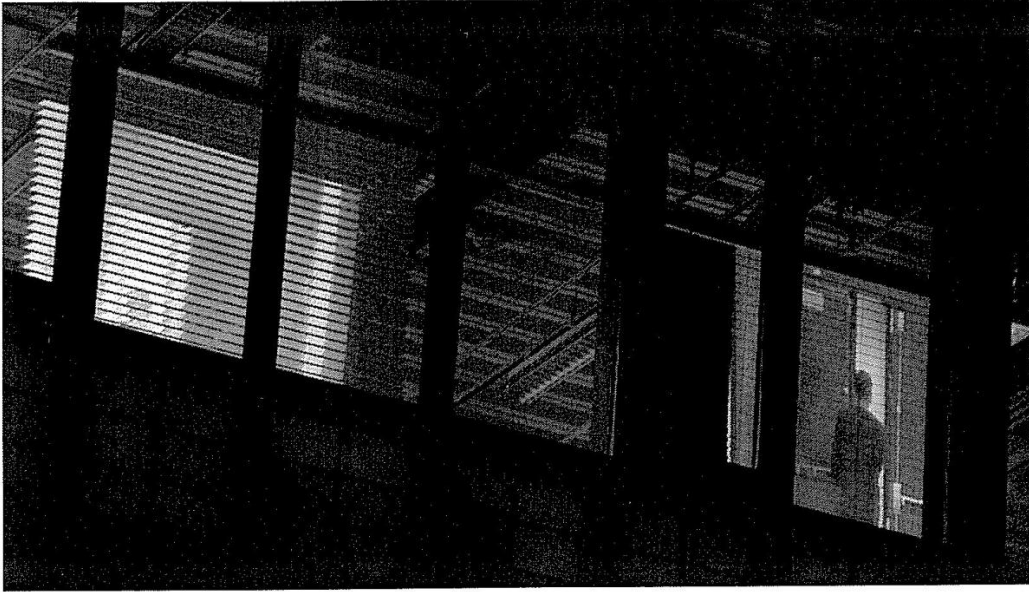
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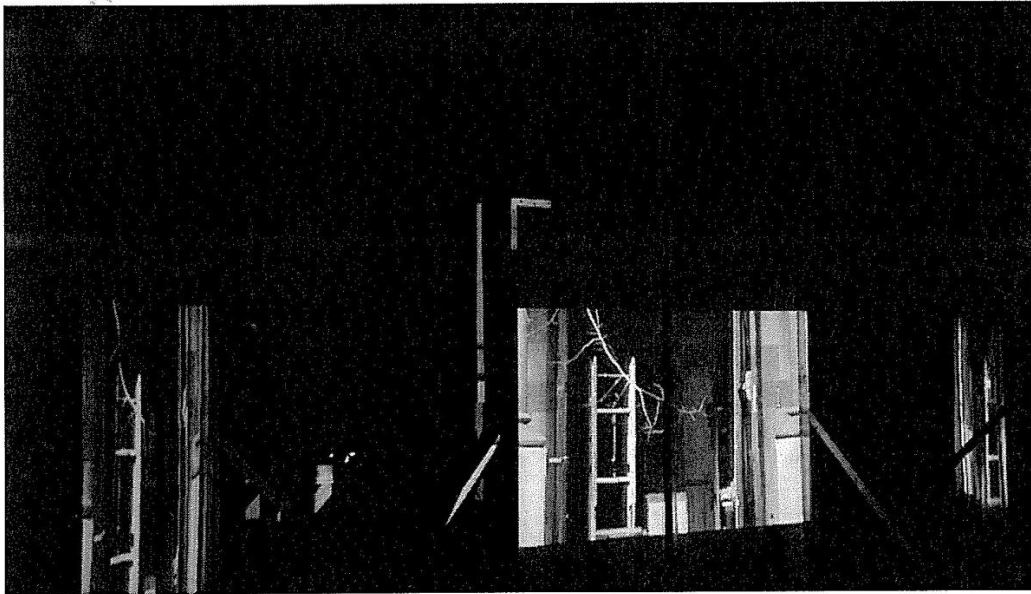
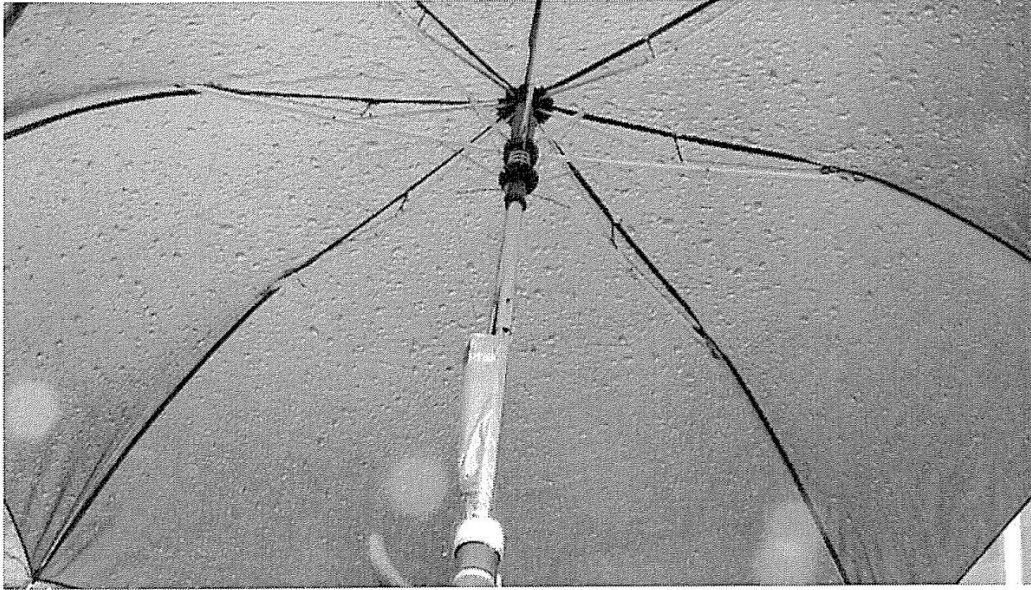
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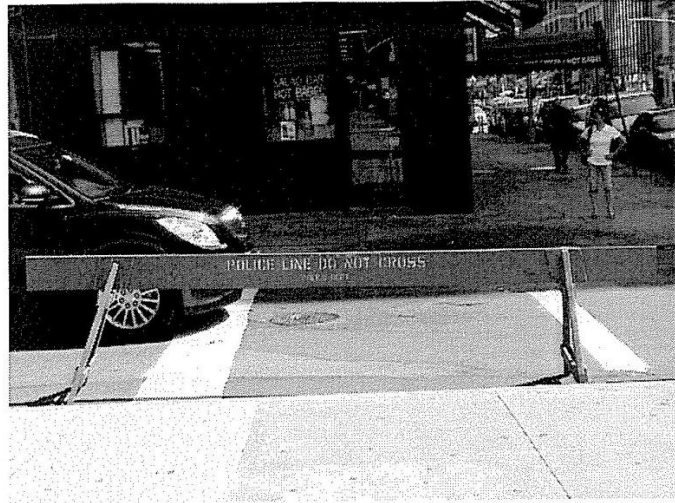
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