

# ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

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www.altmansiegel.com

## Minnesota Street Project Foundation



Trevor Paglen  
*CARDINALS*  
September 5 – November 2, 2024

Altman Siegel is pleased to present *CARDINALS*, a new body of work marking Trevor Paglen's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery. The show is composed of photographs of novel aerial phenomena taken by Paglen over the last two decades. In conjunction with the exhibition, Minnesota Street Project Foundation will screen Paglen's single-channel video *Doty* (2023) from September 19 through October 5, 2024.

"The calls started around 2006. I'd spent years poking around and photographing classified Air Force installations, talking to former workers on top-secret airplanes, visiting CIA 'black sites,' and hunting down anyone I could find with knowledge of the Pentagon's 'black world.' I was furiously working on a book about what I'd discovered. That's when the calls started. Every few weeks, I'd end up in long conversations with people alleging to be sources deep in the military and intelligence establishments. One man, claiming to work on top-secret projects at Edwards Air Force Base told me about a highly-classified manned spaceflight program, and described an obscure unit patch fabricated from material found on experimental space-suits. Another told me about crash-recovery teams charged with collecting debris from downed foreign satellites and even more 'exotic' technologies, while acknowledging an active CIA misinformation campaign around said tech. UFOs were a constant theme.

I never met any of these characters in person, and I didn't make much of those calls at the time. As far as I was concerned, anything I couldn't validate was irrelevant. I forgot about them. Only in retrospect did I come to believe that I may have been the target of a disinformation campaign. More recently, I made a video installation profiling Richard Doty, an Air Force counterintelligence officer and 'Mirage Man' who used UFO lore to spread disinformation about Air Force technology programs. Doty is a strange and mercurial character: after leaving the Air Force he came out as a UFO 'whistleblower,' telling stories about 'real' UFO programs he was tasked with protecting. In our conversations, he mentioned that the Air Force has an unofficial code name for exotic aircraft of unknown origin: *CARDINALS*.

Why UFOs? Why have they been so closely linked to technology and disinformation? UFOs are deeply weird: they simultaneously exist and do not exist. Like quasi-magical objects, they blur lines between perception, imagination, and 'objective' reality (whatever that may or may not be). UFOs live in the latent space between the material, the sensible, and the perceptual. They inhabit the crossroads of fear, desire, logic, and hope. They produce communities of believers and debunkers, and dreams of divine salvation, endless energy, impossible physics, dark conspiracies, and existential fears. They conjure a fantasy that somewhere, somehow, someone knows a "Truth" so powerful that it could spell the end of modernity and capitalism. Against this backdrop, Erik Davis, author of the book 'Technosis' on the interplay of technology and mysticism, puts it, 'the question of whether or not UFOs are *real* is... too crude and too philosophically taxing to broach.'

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I don't think it's an accident that a proliferation of UFO sightings is concomitant with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence. Each comes with their own forms of optimism and pessimism, wonder and doomsaying. Nor do I think it's a coincidence that the UFO has reemerged in this era of synthetic media, disinformation, and political and cultural fracture. A historical moment wherein our relationships to text, images, information, and media are being entirely upended. An emerging media environment characterized less by crude forms of spectacle or surveillance than by ubiquitous psyops.

In many ways, UFO photographs distill the essence of photography itself. The photograph is a record, but it's not clear what of. An exposed sheet of film has some relationship to the light that facilitated that exposure, but it's impossible to pinpoint the exact nature of that relationship (over the last 150 years, the best answer the theorists have been able to come up with is: 'it's complicated.'). Like UFOs, photographs lack context; they don't explain themselves no matter how loudly they speak. They lend themselves to laborious forensic analysis but make no promise of yielding anything conclusive, much less constructive. In other words, all photos are UFO photos.

The works in this series are made with various cameras: a Phillips Compact II 8x10, a Wista 4x5 field camera, a Pentax medium-format handheld, a Canon 35mm, and two digital medium-format cameras, one modified to shoot infrared. The vast majority are shot on analog film — usually Kodak Portra, T-Max, and Fuji FP instant.

They are undoctored.” - Trevor Paglen

Minnesota Street Project Foundation will screen the artist's single-channel video *Doty* (2023) from September 19 through October 5, 2024 at 1201 Minnesota Street. The 66-minute video will be presented on loop inside the screening gallery, located one block from Altman Siegel, Thursday-Saturday from 3-7pm. This showcase is free and open to the public.

Join Altman Siegel and Minnesota Street Project Foundation on Tuesday, September 24 at 6pm for a special screening of *Doty* (2023) followed by a conversation with Trevor Paglen and author, teacher, and independent scholar Erik Davis. The event will take place at 1201 Minnesota Street and is free and open to the public.

Paglen's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Altman Siegel, San Francisco, CA; Matadero Madrid, Madrid, Spain; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.), Berlin, Germany; Pace Gallery, Seoul, Korea and New York, NY; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, PA; Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy; Barbican Centre, London, UK; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; MCA San Diego, San Diego, CA; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City, Mexico; Tensta Konsthall, Spånga, Sweden; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany; Kunsthalle Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland; Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, NV; Frankfurter Kunstverein, Frankfurt, Germany; Eli & Edythe Broad Art Museum, East Lansing, MI; Secession, Vienna, Austria; Kunsthall Oslo, Oslo, Norway; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA. Group exhibitions include Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; 14th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China; 14th Shanghai Biennale, Power Station of Art, Shanghai, China; Contemporary Art Museum, Kumamoto, Kumamoto, Japan; Mudam, Luxembourg; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA; Kunsthalle Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany; Frac Normandie Rouen, Sotteville-lès-Rouen, France; The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX; GAMEc Bergamo, Bergamo, Italy; Espacio Fundación Telefónica, Madrid, Spain; Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, MN; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany; C/O, Berlin, Germany; Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria; Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, CA; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany; Kunsthalle Basel, Basel, Switzerland; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; MCA Denver, Denver, CO; de Young Museum, San Francisco, CA; Queensland Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; MOCA Toronto, Toronto, Canada; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Cleveland Art Museum, Cleveland, OH; MAXXI, Rome, Italy; the Gwangju Biennale, Korea; Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, TX; Manifesta 12, Palermo, Italy; Smart Museum, Chicago, IL; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL; the Institute

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of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan; Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria; Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK; Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; and New Museum, New York, NY. Paglen received the Nam June Paik Art Center Prize in 2018 and was a recipient of a MacArthur Fellowship in 2017.

Erik Davis ([www.techgnosis.com](http://www.techgnosis.com)) is an author, teacher, and independent scholar based in San Francisco. He is the author, most recently, of *Blotter: The Untold Story of an Acid Medium*, a study of LSD blotter art. He also wrote *High Weirdness: Drugs, Esoterica, and Visionary Experience in the Seventies* (2019), *Nomad Codes: Adventures in Modern Esoterica* (2010), and the cult classic *TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information* (1998), which remains in print. Erik's scholarly and popular essays on music, technology, drugs, and consciousness culture have appeared in scores of books, magazines, and journals, and his writing has been translated into a dozen languages. He also writes a Substack called *Burning Shore*, and co-runs *Alembic*, a center in Berkeley devoted to meditation, movement, and visionary arts and culture.

### About Minnesota Street Project Foundation

Minnesota Street Project Foundation provides critical access to the space and tools necessary for artists, technicians, and curators to create. We collaborate broadly and support unparalleled opportunities for the presentation of contemporary art, fostering discourse, expanding access, and engaging the community at large. Working in community, the Foundation aims to strengthen Bay Area arts enterprise by building and sustaining a robust support infrastructure. Founded in 2019, Minnesota Street Project Foundation is a non-profit organization, which operates alongside Minnesota Street Project and Minnesota Street Project Art Services and is part of a growing contemporary arts campus located in the Dogpatch neighborhood of San Francisco.

For more information, please contact Altman Siegel at [info@altmansiegel.com](mailto:info@altmansiegel.com).