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*in New York City*

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### **2.7.18 — UP YOUR DAY!**

Topics: Anna K.E., Bridget Donahue, Chris Dorland, Lyles and King, Sondra Perry, Susan Subal

Has the information age raised the specter of political oppression? It sure has in social media, where the promise of the open Internet has given way to big data.

It may, though, be a trick question, especially when it comes to art. **Edmund Clark**, for one, uses new media along with photography to assail censorship, torture, and the war on terror. **Mark Pauline** styles his studio and gallery as Survival Research Laboratories, but they look much like the blue-collar America that technology has displaced. Still others, like **Chris Dorland**, evoke virtual reality within the incomplete physical space of gallery architecture and installation. All find themselves torn between political realities, dystopian visions, and sheer pleasure. When it comes to the police at least, bring on the body cameras.



From the very start, Dorland holds out a work in progress, at **Lyles & King** through February 11. A video rests against a wall, facing the door, just a stride or two past the entrance. It nestles between the shelf on the right, for the guest book and such, and metal studs reaching to the ceiling. Its cryptic content and colorful, shifting images lure one in. To see the whole, of course, one has to step around the porous barrier, but already one can admire how the space has adapted. Dorland might simply have failed to finish the job for opening day.

That impression vanishes soon enough, for he has plenty of video, plenty of barriers, and not a trace of Sheetrock, as “Civilian.” More studs form partial crossing walls in the large room at back. They also serve as armature for taller screens, without blocking the view from one to another. They orient the viewer, much like the grid of geometric abstraction, while leaving the work open. So does the imagery, with its quick cuts and more fluid motion. So, too, does the difficulty of making sense of it.

It looks both mundane and futuristic, much like the deluge of **virtual realities in real life**. Dorland says that he draws on ads and his own nocturnal walks for the cool blacks and warmer colors. They continue the dialogue between completion and incompleteness, much like the partial entrance wall with its glimpse of more to come. They suggest a dialogue, too, among new media, installation, and architecture. The gallery did a heroic job of reclaiming a dark space a few steps down from the street, adding over time a full partition (for a small side room, currently with paintings by Simon Mathers that look abstract but borrow from dairy cartons) and very short stairs to the back, with an assist from an artist. Once again, I had to think, an artist is lending a hand to its future.

Futurism has the usual dark side, as with **surveillance cameras** and 24/7 **excuses for entertainment**. Dorland’s darker screens include a woman’s hand as at once a temptation and a slap in the face, while block letters dare you to amp (or maybe to give) **UP YOUR DAY!** Put it down to politics, **Twitter**, or a weakness for sci-fi dystopias, but something is in the air. Just a few blocks over, **Anna K.E.** confesses her dependence on *Blade Runner*, for what she calls “Crossing Gibraltar at Midday,” at **Susan Subal** through February 28. (I guess no man is an island, but some women are.) Her images, too, connect photocollage and **video to the body**.



A block further, **Sondra Perry** raises more mundane fears of **twisted data** and the **surveillance state**, at **Bridget Donahue** through February 25. While the story is no less elusive, it incorporates real news and black experience—something to do with the exploitation of amateur athletes. Like Dorland, both artists combine new media and metal constructions for

layers of real and virtual reality. Their sculpture looks vaguely human and vaguely utilitarian, like **Joel Shapiro** after one too many video game. To insist further on her work as installation, Perry paints the room blue. If that sounds ominous, her contribution to “**Take Me (I’m Yours)**” last year at the Jewish Museum alluded to the “blue code of silence” and “blue screen of death.”

Dorland gets more personal while turning down the messaging. A civilian, after all, is often caught up in war but never in fighting. He can still play on closure and openness, and most often the open wins out. The barriers never preclude sightlines or passage. The incoherence never precludes the familiar. For all the software and walls, he still gets to wander at night.

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