



NYC Museum Highlight - “Laura Poitras: Astro Noise” at The Whitney

March 7, 2016

by Hamptons Art Hub Staff

“Laura Poitras: Astro Noise” at The Whitney Museum of American Art is the first solo museum exhibition by artist, filmmaker, and journalist Laura Poitras. This immersive installation of new work builds on topics important to Poitras, including mass surveillance, the war on terror, the U.S. drone program, Guantánamo Bay Prison, occupation, and torture. Some of these issues have been investigated in her films, including *Citizenfour*, which won the 2015 Academy Award for Best Documentary, and in her reporting, which was awarded a 2014 Pulitzer Prize.

For the exhibition, Poitras has created an interrelated series of installations presented in the Whitney’s eighth-floor Hurst Family Galleries. The immersive environments incorporate documentary footage, architectural interventions, primary documents, and narrative structures and allow visitors to interact with the material in intimate and direct ways. The show represents a creative expansion for the award-winning journalist and filmmaker and continues her exploration and documenting of post-9/11 America.

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“ANARCHIST: Power Spectrum Display of Doppler Tracks from a Satellite (Intercepted May 27, 2009), 2016.” by Laura Poitras (b. 1964). Pigmented inkjet print mounted on aluminum, 45 × 64 3/4 inches. Courtesy the artist.

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The exhibition title, *Astro Noise*, refers to the faint background disturbance of thermal radiation left over from the Big Bang and is the name Edward Snowden gave to an encrypted file containing evidence of mass surveillance by the National Security Agency that he shared with Poitras in 2013. The Snowden archive partially inspired Poitras’s presentation at the Whitney.

“Laura Poitras: *Astro Noise*” is organized by Jay Sanders, Curator and Curator of Performance at The Whitney. The exhibition is on view from February 9 to May 1, 2016.

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“Laura Poitras filming the NSA Utah Data Repository construction in 2011.” by

Laura Poitras (b. 1964). Photograph by Conor Provenzano.

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[Laura Poitras](#) (b. 1964, Boston) is best known for her powerful film project “9/11 Trilogy,” three feature length documentary films created in response to the United States invasion of Iraq. Collectively, these works reveal the strategies and tactics developed in the aftermath of 9/11 that have come to be known as the “war on terror” including ground wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere; torture; mass and warrantless surveillance; and the use of drones in what officials call “targeted killing.”

The first of these, *My Country, My Country* (2006), follows the family of an Iraqi doctor during the United States occupation. *The Oath* (2010) weaves together the stories of two men involved with Al Qaeda and the larger issues surrounding the United States prison at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. Finally, the Oscar-winning *Citizenfour* (2014) details Poitras’s meetings with whistleblower Edward Snowden as he revealed the massive scale of the National Security Agency’s global surveillance programs.

Poitras has been awarded a MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, and a Peabody Award. Her reporting on NSA mass surveillance based on Snowden’s disclosures won the George Polk Award for national security journalism, and shared in the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. She has taught filmmaking at Yale and Duke Universities, and is on the board of the Freedom of the Press Foundation. Along with Aj Schnack and Charlotte Cook, she is co-creator of [Field of Vision](#).

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“still from O’Say Can You See 2001/2016.” by Laura Poitras (b. 1964). Two-channel digital video, color, sound. Courtesy the artist

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BASIC FACTS: “Laura Poitras: Astro Noise” is exhibited February 9 to May 1, 2016 at The Whitney Museum of American Art, 99 Gansevoort Street, New York, NY 10014. www.whitney.org.

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