***Mirror With A Memory***

Podcast - Episode 3 - “Evidence”

Full Transcript

**MARTINE: Welcome back to *Mirror with a Memory*, a podcast exploring the intersection of photography, surveillance, and artificial intelligence. I’m your host, Martine Syms.**

**You’ve probably seen a deepfake video by now—the viral ones are usually of a famous person or a politician doing things they didn’t really do or saying things they didn’t really say.**

**Like this deepfake video of Kim Kardashian by the artist and researcher Barnaby Francis, who works under the pseudonym Bill Posters:**

*“When there’s so many haters, I really don’t care because their data has made me rich beyond my wildest dreams”*

**I know you can’t see it but trust me: the effect is uncanny, the vocal impression synced with Kardashian’s mouth, face, and mannerisms.**

**Deepfakes are big in pornography now, too. And disinformation campaigns. And various types of attempted fraud.**

**It’s essentially a mapping process. A well-trained AI reads two videos—one of the celebrity or politician or whoever, one of the deepfaker mouthing out what they want that person to say. The AI tracks the motion of the lips and face on both looking for patterns, then digitally combines them. There are full-body versions of this, too, that result in things like Bernie Sanders dancing to Lady Gaga, though these tend to be less convincing.**

**There are a few different ways to fake the vocal component: An analog recording (like Jordan Peele’s spot-on impersonation of Obama). Or, more recently, an AI that collects data from your voice and reconfigures it to create entirely new sentences.**

**The videos themselves can be wonky. Sometimes you can see the image separate and the algorithm struggle to keep up. But some of them are quite good and the technology is only improving.**

**Part of the problem—the *threat*—is that people trust videos and they trust images, even when they know they shouldn’t. Even when they know that photography has been manipulated since the earliest days of the medium.**

**So there’s a paradox we want to look here at when it comes to thinking about photographic evidence. We *know* these problems, yet we still rely on images and videos to prove that something’s real. And increasingly, corporations and governments are relying on artificial intelligence in these ways too.**

**But before we layer in the digital, let’s start with the original deepfake by an artist who was thinking about so many of these things long before anyone else.**

**--music--**

**LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON:** I’m Lynn Hershman Leeson and I work in many media, I’m an artist and a filmmaker. And I use a lot of computer based technologies as well. I like to think of working at the edge of things, kind of in the blur where you don’t really have disciplines or definitions but just porous edges, and I think it’s the porous edges that create what is an identity, things that really isn't obvious.

**MARTINE:** I’m constantly in awe, honestly, of everything that you’ve made and been working with for so long. It’s very inspiring to me. So I feel like I’m a real Lynn nerd. I’ve read all the books. [Laugh] I’ve watched most of the films. And it’s just constantly bringing up issues.

**LYNN:** Well that’s very kind of you. I feel like I’m inspired by your work as well. Next time I need to know something about myself I’ll know who to ask. [Laugh]

**LYNN:** But I’m very happy because for years, or for decades, my work was really unknown. And in fact was not even seen until six years ago, most of it was never seen. And it just needed Martine’s generation and millennials to be born. So it’s like it’s been waiting their whole life for you.

**MARTINE:** That’s what it feels like, honestly, because it really did feel like speaking directly to the concerns of my lifetime and my generation.

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**LYNN:** To me surveillance is an essential underlying core, kind of the spine of what one works with when they’re dealing with identity. It’s often the leftovers, the discarded things that tell the most. So, artifacts and discards I think are evidence that are really crucial in understanding who we are and what our true identity is, rather than the one that we project to the outer world.

**MARTINE:** That seems like a good place maybe to start talking about Roberta Breitmore and maybe just explaining who was she, how did she come to be, and the project, around this idea of evidence?

**LYNN:** Well most of my important work, or I should say, my most important work comes out of the cusp of disaster. And I had had an exhibition at a museum, my first museum exhibition, where I used sound and media and my exhibition almost in the middle of the night was evicted. It was thrown out because they said what I was working with wasn’t art. And I thought well who needs a museum and went out and rented a room at a cheap hotel and set up many of the things that were in the exhibition, which were really the evidence of a woman who could have lived there but didn’t. So it was all the artifacts from her glasses, to what she read, to the clothing she bought, to discarded bills and records of her life. And the room was open 24 hours a day. You just got a key and went in and checked it out. And as I was sitting in the room I was thinking, well what if you could create somebody, or a person who would exist in real time and in real life but was fictional. And so she emerged from that project and what I did first was to think of what the archetype of the single blonde woman living in the 70s in San Francisco would be like and then adapted her life to what I wanted to propose. [Her first uh entrance into the world was 1972. And she was exorcised in 1979…

**MARTINE: Like literallyexorcised, in a crypt in Italy, in an act akin to a sort of ritualistic cremation.**

And this character Roberta existed kind of as a performance first with myself, because nobody else would do it, and eventually there were three multiples that would go out and interact with the world, for instance taking ads out for roommates, going out to meet people in public where I had surveillance photographer and video. And everything was recorded. All of her meetings were recorded, everything about her and who she was, became a way of understanding her. And only after she was exorcised you could go through these hundreds of documents of information that let you re-perform just by going through the material the experience of that archetypal person and culture.

**MARTINE:** And what did you learn at the end of Roberta’s life about that persona or about that woman—typical woman in San Francisco in the 70s?

**LYNN:** Roberta was a mirror for culture and she reflected the society she lived in. I should say also that, you know, she saw a psychologist, she had a driver’s license, she had credit cards. And if I had done her six years later I would have been arrested for fraud. But this was pre-computers. I was able to get away with it.

**MARTINE:** There’s a way that this evidence and the video, the photography, create her reality. Then that becomes this real person in a way.

**LYNN:** Again you know what is fiction? What is real? I mean media creates a story and a narrative that often serves another purpose than truth. And I think sometimes you have to use these fictions in order to get to the underlying truth of what’s going on.

**MARTINE:** Yeah, absolutely.

**LYNN:** It’s a stand-in for reality essentially. And that’s what I’m interested in is that blur. You know, was she real if she represented what was going on? Maybe more real than than an actual person that didn’t keep the records.

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**MARTINE:** You were talking about where identity is kind of formed in this blur. And I’m kind of thinking about how that’s expanded in a way, like how all this data that’s created, though it’s not really our identity, there is an intersection in that. So I guess I’m thinking about the surveillance you use with Roberta to create an identity and how that relates to your more recent concerns like how it’s grown or how it’s changed.

**LYNN:** Surveillance is a kind of witnessing of an event happening in various forms. So it could be an analysis of the discards of somebody’s life that usually aren’t paid attention to or it could be photographic or video records of an event actually in progress and in process, as it happens. These are things that are collected, and that I analyze afterwards to see what was really there. Just like when I shoot a film I find that the real truth is that outside the time that you say “cut.” Modern surveillance, to me, it’s more invisible which makes it even more dangerous and more perverse, because there are things like algorithms that are traps and threats. There are biometrics, the history of our DNA, the tracking of your choices online, the access people have to your digital identity, how your digital identity is sold, how it could get you in trouble. How your identity could be false, and keep you from getting an education if you can’t get a loan or buying a house because the information under your digital profile is something that isn’t real. And since you don’t know it exists, you can’t even fight it or argue for yourself. So that’s why it’s so dangerous, I think this kind of perversion of control, of your identity and who you are by access to your online profile that people eagerly provide in the simplest way just by putting through in your email, you have all this massive amount of information about who you are, what your choices are, even who your mother’s friends are. So these are more sophisticated ways of culling identity in the present, much more sophisticated than existed in Roberta’s time.

All these things that people, normal people don’t have access to or ability to analyze become the witness to who we are at the deepest level.

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**AMERICAN ARTIST:** My name is American Artist. And I’m an artist, educator as well, and really what I like to say about my practice is that I’m exploring Black labor and visibility within networked life. And what that’s looked like for me is studying the migration of Black Americans within the United States, the history of race in America, but also looking at things like the history of Silicon Valley as a continuation of forms of settler colonialism within the United States and sort of thinking of these different practices of captivity as well as exploitation and thinking about how those have a legacy in contemporary American life.

What’s really compelling to me about the Roberta Breitmore project is that it sort of only exists through evidence in that like, the only way that she could really create this person was through these IDs, these photos, these other elements of evidence. And that’s really interesting to me because of also how often a lot of the evidence that's created around us and how we circulate is often out of our control, and maybe depicts us in ways that we don't want to identify with. But in that process that’s sort of how identity becomes recognizable is through these forms of evidence.

**MARTINE: In a gesture engaging the evidentiary in similarly active ways, American Artist legally changed their name *to* American Artist in 2013.**

**AMERICAN ARTIST:** When I changed my name what was interesting to me was when I went to this hearing and they sort of asked me why I wanted to do it, really their only concern was that I wasn’t evading some sort of legal repercussions, you know, I wasn’t changing my identity to escape something. And besides that they really couldn’t care less why or what I was changing my name to.

It was interesting to me how my capacity or desire to exit or escape this system might have been read in that one moment. But for me it was about many other things, one of them being how to sort of manifest a reality of what it means to be an artist by simply stating, you know if I say I’m an American Artist then suddenly I’m an American Artist. But also in the context of let’s say digital systems, the way that it’s not really recognized as a name has been sort of a continuing aspect of that, you know. It’s like my SEO was kind of non-existent for a while because of that.

**MARTINE: As in: Search Engine Optimization, how you or your website is ranked in search engines like Google based on factors like domain age, website security, how many times you link to others, how many times others link to you...**

I think that that has been valuable to me in being able to have some amount of anonymity within the context of digital space, while at the same time in real life it’s the opposite. It's like an extremely unique signifier, you know, as a name. It’s like not something that’s easy to forget.

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**MARTINE: The Cambridge Analytica scandal broke in 2018. This was the revelation that Facebook had handed over all kinds of personal data to a political consulting firm for advertising purposes, all without anyone’s consent.**

**As we’ve all learned more about how this works—how the data we give to the internet is harvested, how the internet itself never forgets—more and more of us are considering how we live our digital lives.**

**We asked our friends, colleagues, and members of the general public how they’re navigating all of this. Here’s what they had to say...**

**Speaker 1:** So, for the question, tell us about your online presence. If I searched for you what might I find? Honestly, very little. And I think that’s also by choice.

**Speaker 2:** My approach to posting online content has changed in the past five to ten years because of what we are finding out about Facebook day to day and how they’re collecting information from us and how it’s kind of very difficult to limit the type of information that they collect.

**Speaker 3:** My approach to posting online has definitely changed probably mostly in that I’m not posting things that are as personal. I used to use Facebook and I used to just put up a Facebook album anytime I went anywhere, you know, anytime I had fun with my friends I would take a million pictures and I would upload them all. I would say now my approach is a little bit more curatorial.

**Speaker 4:** I’m certainly more cautious about posting photographs that might be construed as too intimate, or that could be leveraged against me in some capacity that I might not find out later. I think I’m cautious about particularly as a woman but cautious about what I wear, what I’m holding, if I’m photographed with alcohol, and so I tend to post wholesome content of family and friends and some jokey material but, generally speaking, my life is much less broadcast than it was prior.

**Speaker 5:** Because all my social media and websites and everything is public I’m just under the assumption that everyone or rather anyone is accessing my images online. And I don’t necessarily have a problem with that especially since I'm in a field where publicizing your content is key to growth.

**Speaker 1:** It’s a track record of who you are in a way, what you post online. And that stuff can come back to you. So for that reason I feel like I’m always lying when I’m posting photos online, I never want to be too happy because there’s already a lot of that and I can’t be too truthful because maybe the truth will hurt some of my close friends. [Laugh] yeah so that’s that’s how I sort of see it. You kind of have to, in my opinion, blur the lines of what you post and what you want to share about yourself.

**MARTINE: Enter the Dignity Image, a term and concept American Artist coined in 2016. They had a solo exhibition of photographic work built around this concept at the Museum of African Diaspora in San Francisco in 2019.**

**AMERICAN ARTIST:** So before I called it the Dignity Image, just thinking about these images that we sort of have for ourselves that we never circulate online. And the reason I kind of came to that was because I was doing this performance, an online performance where I wasn’t publishing images in my social media but rather was posting these same blued-out images and redacted captions. And I did that for about a year. And it was a critique of social media and how we’re commodified into the realm of social media but also asking those around me, friends and family, to not rely on this projected image of who I am through social media but rather to insist on an authentic experience of me, if such a thing exists. What happened during that time was that I was really scrolling through my phone often, looking through my camera roll as a stand in for my social media in a weird way, sort of like surrogate experience. And I’d return to some images more than others, images that were important to me that I wouldn’t share online. And I just thought about how the personal images that we save have a significance outside of this system of valuation and attention economy that we’re expected to participate in in a certain way. Meaning that, in this moment in time it feels like if an image isn’t fit for social media then it has no value, but obviously that's not true.

That’s where this term Dignity Image came from, was trying to ascribe some kind of intrinsic value to images that we choose to save for ourselves, that we don’t circulate, that we don’t submit to this commodified experience. There is an amount of political resistance in choosing not to share an image like that. And that’s really what I wanted to focus on. Through that process I asked some people around me to share images with me of their Dignity Images. Oftentimes you know those ended up being photographs of or with deceased family members, or photos where people are embarrassed of how they look, or photos that they took to remember something but not for, you know, a public display of it but merely just to remember that it happened. A lot of these ways of creating and valuing images are really outside of what we associate with something like social media.

**MARTINE: Still, social media’s influence persists. Here’s an excerpt of an interview from a video work American Artist made in 2016 called *Prosthetic Knowledge of the Dignity Image.***

***Prosthetic Knowledge of the Dignity Image*:** When I’m taking a picture, Facebook’s always at the back of my mind. I can’t seem to get, uh get it… Even, even though I might not put any of those pictures online, it’s always at the back of my mind. Because people, uh… because it’s something that people around me are doing. Uh. And the thought is just inevitable.

**AMERICAN ARTIST:** Part of what I wanted people to understand is how their information is handed over in these contexts and also how we’re expected to perform and how it shifts our ability to see ourselves or perform in a certain kind of way.

I think that the way that we see ourselves through images or maybe you could say evidence that we’re creating with our own cameras and devices is different than how we’re sort of categorized or produced as data points through social media or through digital systems. And I do think that it gets a little bit muddied when we’re interfacing with digital services so often. You then start to reproduce what is shown to you and what is shown to you is not purely an image of what you put out there but it’s also sort of impacted by what these data systems want you to buy or want you to see. So I think, you know, what autonomy might look like now is much more complicated and it’s also much more complicated to resist or refuse to be complicit in systems like this. And that's something that I’m really struggling with because I feel like it’s a conversation that me and my peers have been having for a long time, of how to have some resistance towards how technologies and digital systems compromise us or hold us captive, or you know, have authority over what we create. But it just feels like it’s becoming quickly so thoroughly compromised that it’s hard to think of what those sorts of resistance look like.

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**MARTINE: This points toward a much bigger problem, as we move from the idea of evidence as proof of self or proof of identity, to evidence in the more judicial sense—and the dangerous ways that states and corporations are using photography, surveillance, and artificial intelligence to produce it.**

**AMERICAN ARTIST:** There’s definitely a continuation between photography, surveillance, artificial intelligence in that, for one thing, photography has always been used to produce evidence and thinking about how that evidence then goes to support the presence of an individual or to assert or frame a certain identity. But also thinking of the history of photography in relationship to criminology and surveillance. Thinking of things like phrenology or scientific racism as that’s been used in sort of creating materials such as books or media that depict for example biological qualities of Black people as, you know, biologically inferior. So that’s something that has always been reproduced through things like photography and surveillance.

And thinking about how artificial intelligence then maps onto that, it’s sort of allowed for these systems of surveillance and photography to operate with a sort of fake autonomy, sort of like autonomously reproducing a lot of the values that were already inherent within them. And that's something that has been a result of artificial intelligence becoming so broadly used, And because it’s become much cheaper and easier to produce these types of systems and to rely on them, then we sort of also want to allow these artificial intelligence systems to make decisions that formerly would have been made by people. Not that they wouldn’t have made the same mistakes if people were doing it, but now those same biases are sort of hard-coded into the machines that we’re interfacing with.

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**MARTINE: Here’s me and Lynn Hershman Leeson again, speaking about a recent piece of hers called *Shadow Stalker*. It was commissioned by the Shed in New York for a recent show called “Manual Override,” which included my work as well.**

**MARTINE:** It returns to this idea about surveillance and evidence and I guess maybe can you introduce it? Especially in this intersection that we’re talking about between photography, surveillance and AI?

**LYNN HERSHMAN LEESON:** *Shadow Stalker* is an interactive installation and film that uses projections and algorithms to make visible systems of racial profiling that are increasingly being used by police departments worldwide. You know, it’s about the shadows that we create on the internet about information that follows and reflects the histories that we have like our zip code and all the consequences that happen from our online life. And this is also evidence that’s providing statistics and material that become a foundation for the faulty logic that limits our options in the future.

When you enter the room you see a film, a ten minute film, the first half is by Tessa Thompson which really explains some of the dilemmas of predictive policing.

**Tessa Thompson:** Officers are given maps with red squares indicating where a crime will occur. The algorithms are based on past crimes. Police patrol those five hundred by five hundred foot square locations, looking for suspects, most often they’re in low income districts... But do these little red squares that are supposed to reflect our reality actually create it?

**LYNN:** January Steward is the character from Deep Web that again gives further warnings about how to protect yourself.

**Spirit of the Dark Web (January Steward):** Wade into streams of flooding erasures, become addicted to deletion and contaminated histories. Insist on being legible. Own your profile. Take hold of your avatar. Honor your shadow, hold it tight. It contains your future and your past and like DNA, history refuses to evaporate.

**LYNN:** When you put your email into a system, when you enter the installationit then does a data mining search that brings up all the information about the individual. After the surveillance camera takes your picture it creates a shadow of your profile and inside of that is inserted all the information about you that moves through you as you walk through the room with a connective projector. And this is an obsolete projector that my team found that allows this to happen. And the individual shadow follows them in the room with all of the information that’s growing inside of them.

**MARTINE:** It’s a way of visualizing the way people are invisibly tracked?

**LYNN:** Absolutely. Mainly to let them know that this is going on. I think that when people see their own information inside their moving shadow it has a different resonance than if you just say it’s happening.

**MARTINE:** Absolutely. I mean I’ve been so, so angry the last few months. [laugh] It’s like… I’m laughing about it only because it’s insane and I’ve really been thinking a lot about how to channel my anger or what I can do with it, rather than just be consumed by it. These technologies in terms of their methods of control, or have been apparent to me but I guess I’ve only realized recently how many people aren’t aware of how it’s used, you know how they’re not aware of how they’re being tracked in this way.

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**MARTINE: American Artist has studied and made work about predictive policing technologies, too.**

**AMERICAN ARTIST:** So for the exhibition *My Blue Window*, this was at Queens Museum, I created this installation where when you first walk into you’re confronted with this large blue curtain and this navy blue fabric was meant to reproduce this fabric that’s associated with police and this ideology that’s really become prominent within police of blue life, and blue lives matter. And so you enter into the installation and you go around this curtain to enter into this space where you watch this large film projection and you sit on these stadium bleachers kind of like bleachers you would have at a sporting event and you watch this dash-cam footage from a police car.

In the film there’s this heads-up display that seems to be on the windshield of the police cruiser. And it sort of begins by showing this amorphous blob that’s kind of like undulating and then above there’s this text that says forecasting. And what it’s doing supposedly is generating predictions around where crime is going to take place. After that happens then a map appears and it’s a map of this area of Brooklyn, Flatbush, Brownsville and that sort of area, which is heavily policed. And that’s where this video takes place. And so in this video you see the map, you see the hotspots generated on the map. And this is sort of based on existing predictive policing softwares, it’s not an exact replica but it sort of takes qualities of different softwares and combines them in order to generate this interface. As the police officer drives around the map sort of reorients. And they’re trying to go to these places where supposedly crime is going to take place. And in the meantime, as they’re driving around, these bright blue boxes that look kind of like facial tracking are blinking onto people that you see in the streets as the car drives by. So you sort of suppose that these people have been identified as potential criminals. And it’s really meant to sort of show how an actual police vision might operate and a lot of the people that end up being seen in the videos are Black people that live within that area sort of incidentally because that’s a lot of who lives there. And It's not really a coincidence. And so something about predictive policing as strategy, is that it’s sort of using geography as a stand-in for race. And so saying, we’re determining places where crime might happen based on a specific zone where things happened and using that to dispatch police, it’s not acknowledging the fact that obviously people live in specific places and these geographies are not incidental to the types of people that are being policed. And ultimately reproducing a lot of the biases and prejudices that we already associated with policing as it is today.

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**AMERICAN ARTIST:** When I was thinking about this aesthetic of speculative fiction and sci-fi it was important for me to think about this story that’s almost, you know, cliché in thinking about predictive policing which is *Minority Report*. That’s also where the name of the application, the phone app that’s in the exhibition comes from. So the title of the app is *1956/2054*. That first date is when that book was written or published by Philip K. Dick and the second date is when this story actually takes place. And it was interesting to me to think about these two dates in relationship to predictive policing and then the actual materialized software is in effect right now which is somewhere between those two years. It was also compelling for me to think in the context of this story, the way that the “minority report” actually functions. The “minority report” is sort of this small dissenting opinion or within the prediction, there’s sort of a larger probability of something happening but there’s always this smaller probability of it not happening and that’s what’s considered the “minority report.” I thought that was important because in every prediction it's always probabilistic, it’s never 100% true or accurate. It’s always just a guess. And so there’s always a minority report embedded in any sort of prediction. And whether or not we choose to see it, or whether or not we choose to believe that our predictions are 100% accurate is really determining what our future possibilities are going to look like.

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**AMERICAN ARTIST:** In this book *Carceral Capitalism*, Jackie Wang talks about this idea of a crisis of legitimacy. And one of police feeling like their relevance is being taken away, or like they’re losing ground and that happening in the face of widespread protests around police brutality and calls that the police are racist. So what she proposes is that part of the significance of the reliance on these database systems, these predictive policing systems that use data science is that they are meant to be objective, they’re meant to allow the police to say, we’re not racist because we’re using scientific tools, we’re using data-based technology. And the fact of the matter is that that is not objective in any way and, in fact, because of how it’s developed, because of how information is fed into it, it really just reproduces and kind of creates a feedback loop of a lot of the biases and racial biases that are already expected from the police.

So thinking of this sort of algorithmic vision as really a continuation of that biological vision, or the body-born camera as it’s been called. And so I just want to sort of, like, make that continuation really clear, you know, that we’re not really entering into a new era of anything but really just sort of most recent and maybe the most nuanced version of something that has always been present and operated in different ways.

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**MARTINE:** Have your feelings toward AI changed over time? I know mine certainly have [Laugh] and you’ve had been working with for a decade over a decade longer...

**LYNN:** I don’t think it’s artificial. [laugh] It doesn’t interest me in the same way that it did when we were inventing it. It’s turned into something I think, for me, my interpretation of it is that it’s being used in the negative way of controlling a culture rather than expanding on creative potential. So, I mean there are different ways of using it for patterning I guess. But I’m not all that interested in exploring what it is because it usually just points out some of the disastrous problems and also reflects the biases of programmers and doesn’t really help us to create a world of preserving the planet or individuals or creating their expansive potential. But I think that all of this is going to change because I think we’re going through a period of correction right now. That everything is erupted and we have a chance to revise all of our thinking. And maybe AI will go along with it, where we could use the potential of it in a way that is more enriching.

**MARTINE:** And what is the potential that you see? Like what are those possibilities that, obviously, it’s gone in one direction mostly owned by corporate interest and the state, are influenced by that but what are the other things that brought you to it that you were interested in exploring and that you think maybe we’ll begin to explore more of?

**LYNN:** Well I’m thinking about maybe a global connectivity, ways to solve the problems together that we’ve created that your generation has inherited. I think that we have to think about the symbiosis of life rather than a separation of the wealthy from the poor and the dominance of certain corporations and individuals over others.

But, as far as agency, I think we have to understand that we have it in the first place. Roberta, and a lot of my work, was born out of the difficulties of an environment and created a way to survive beyond that, or at least to see beyond the immediate difficulties of what culture and society were doing to us. But now we live in a global culture and I think we do that to invent entities and agencies that will allow us to kind of side-step the inheritance we’ve been placed into. And people younger, you know, can create their own world that’s going to be based on consciousness and connectivity and generosity. And create a place of survival that goes beyond the rational into one of creative spirit, that allows us to be human in a way that I think humanity has as an ideal.

**MARTINE:** I think bearing witness is a really great way of describing your practice. So I’m thinking, you know, I love how you said you’re in the blur, you know? I think that’s a beautiful way of describing what you’re doing.

**LYNN:** When you’re young and have a deep trauma, in order to survive you remove yourself from the trauma as it’s happening and look down as it as if it’s someone else. And I think that I adapted the early trauma survival skills to looking at the trauma of our culture, and maybe even predicting the culture because of the patterns I could see in it. In a way turn that early trauma into an advantage in order to to survive and also to survive ashifting world.

I think it’s kind of a test of where we are, you know. And what we need really as a culture is to understand when surveillance is taking place, what the evidence is, how it could be used against us and turned into something that’s more liberated and could be used to defy the technology that exists by creating another one that’s better.

I think to be an artist is to be an optimist. Because you have to believe that you could not necessarily change things but that you have a vision that can inform the world of things that you see that can’t be seen in any other way. So I think that survival and being optimistic, no matter what field you’re in, is heroic.

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***Mirror with a Memory* is a production of the Hillman Photography Initiative at Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh. For more information on the ideas and individuals featured in this episode, please visit cmoa.org/podcast.**

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