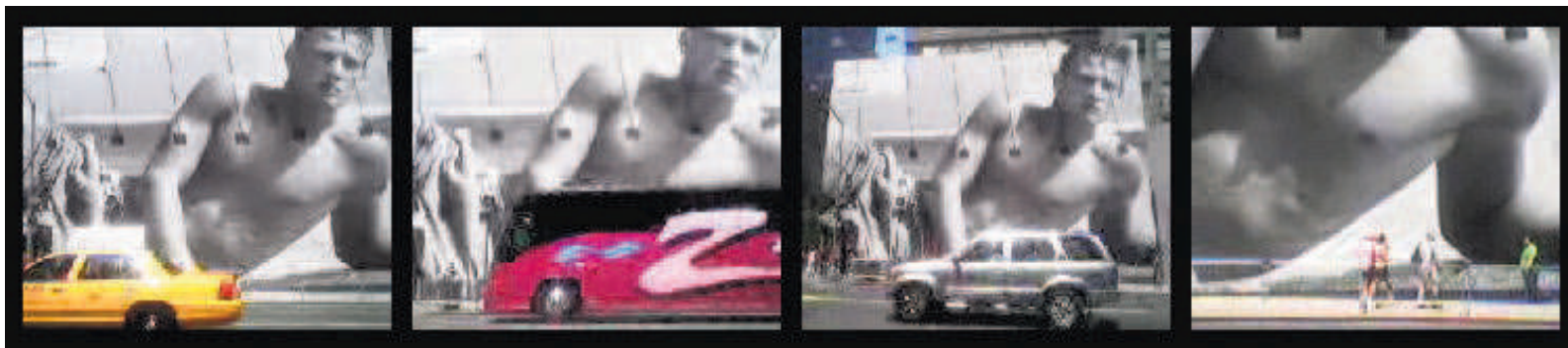


THE CITY VISIBLE



STILL IMAGES FROM CELLPHONE VIDEO BY WENDY RICHMOND

By WENDY RICHMOND

THE first question I am usually asked about my recent work is: "Do people know you're taking their picture?"

Almost never. In the three years that I have been shooting with my cellphone camera, I've recorded more than 1,600 tiny, silent, 15-second videos, and I've been confronted only once. The woman looked straight at me and said: "I know what you're doing. You're going to put my face on someone else's body on some porn Web site."

"No, I'm not," I replied. But I deleted her picture and put my phone away.

Like the thousands of surveillance cameras that watch us 24/7, I record the daily activities of city life: people waiting for the subway, walking their dogs, watching a parade, window shopping. But my goal is not to catch something out of the ordinary. In this project, which I call "Public Privacy: Wendy Richmond's Surreptitious Cellphone," I seek just the opposite: the steady and mundane urban choreography that we all perform together. My grids are the culmination of the dances I've witnessed on a world-class stage: New York.

I shoot with my cellphone because it is like a periscope, allowing me to stare without being noticed. I look like everyone else who is texting, Web surfing or checking messages.

I also use my cellphone because it feels right to employ a ubiquitous 21st-century tool to record 21st-century city dwellers. Almost all of us have one, and for all I know, someone is recording me right now, as I write these words on my laptop at a small outdoor cafe (under the gaze of a surveillance camera).

Wendy Richmond, an artist, writer and educator, writes the Design Culture column in Communication Arts magazine. Her cellphone work was recently exhibited in a solo show at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego.

ONLINE: THE DAILY SHOW

A compilation of Wendy Richmond's cellphone videos, everyday life 15 seconds at a time: [nytimes.com/thecity](http://nytimes.com/thecity)

# She Is a Camera

A diarist of the day-to-day captures images of people when they're not looking.

