

VISUAL ARTS PREVIEW • ORWELLIAN ART • BY MARLISS WEBER | 455 words

Watching The Watchmen

THOSE HUGE PHOTOS OF SECURITY GUARDS YOU'RE SEEING DOWNTOWN ARE PART OF THOMAS KNEUBÜHLER'S TRESPASS ACT

TRESPASS ACT

By Thomas Kneubühler. Latitude 53 (10248-106 St). Aug 7-Sept 5.

No trespassing. But forgive those who trespass against us.

The assumption being, that in this modern age of CCTV surveillance and security guards in malls and apartment complexes and the street (they give lousy directions, by the way), our privacy and freedom are compromised and we're being trespassed against all the time.

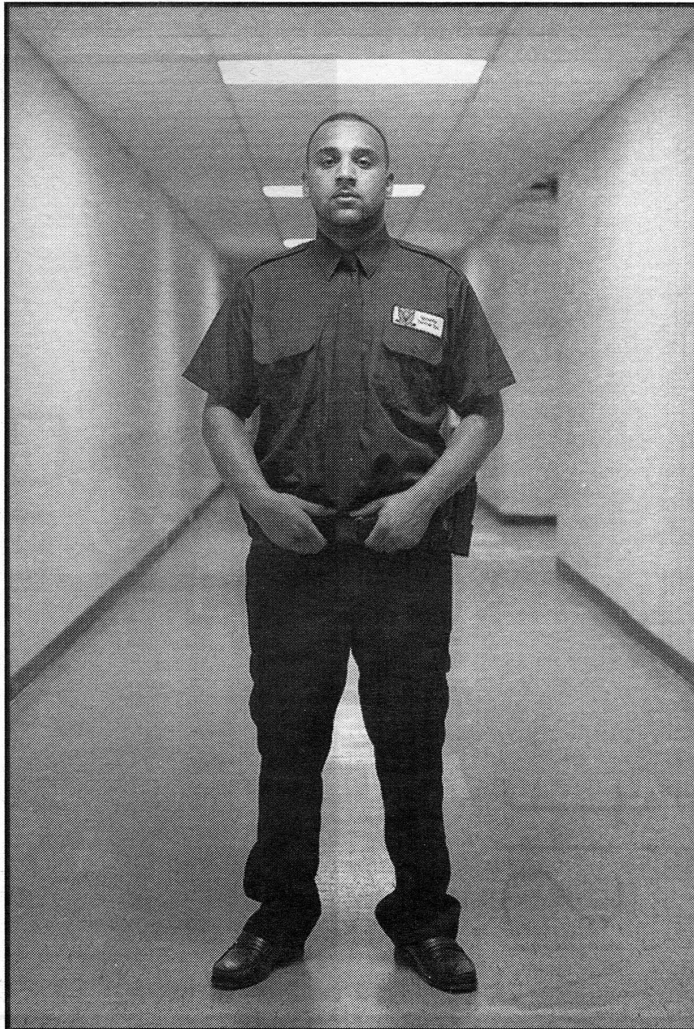
But hey, we're safe, right?

That is the conundrum in Thomas Kneubühler's new show *Trespass Act*, which goes on display starting this weekend at Latitude 53. A photographic exploration of security guards, highrises, and security systems, Kneubühler's work examines issues around surveillance, security, and property, and the laws that protect us but also curb our freedom.

"As an artistic practice, I like to explore new places, maybe unknown or forbidden territory," Kneubühler says. "Which is perhaps a form of trespassing itself. And in this sense, when I show these photographs, the people who see the exhibition are trespassers as well."

Which leads to a fascinating discourse about the nature of art and privacy. Does art, especially photographic art, actually intrude, or trespass, on its subjects? Are we second-hand trespassers just for looking? And Kneubühler and Latitude 53 are taking it one step further. Around the downtown core, you'll soon see giant posters of security guards adhered to the fronts of buildings. Is Big Brother watching? Well, a picture of him will be, anyway.

"I think it's interesting that people don't necessarily notice cameras on the street," Kneubühler says, "but I think they'll certainly notice these photographs, which basically stand



Guarded Expressions | The photos in *Trespass Act* would like to see your ID, please. IMAGE BY THOMAS KNEUBÜHLER

for the same thing."

Kneubühler hopes the photographs attract some attention — and raise some discussions — among the general public. "I hope people start talking about them, asking questions, having great conversations about the pictures and what they mean," Kneubühler says. "I don't necessarily expect any public discourse to come about, but on the individual level, I hope people talk amongst themselves about what it means to have privacy and security." If, in these post 9/11 days, the two values aren't mutually exclusive.

Todd Janes, executive director of Latitude 53, is particularly interested in bringing artists into the gallery whose work raise these kinds

of big questions. "I love it when an artist's work transcends the gallery space," he says. "There's something that happens when art is in a white cube — it's legitimized. But when you take it outside, there's far more room for dialogue about it and about its impact on the general public. So I really hope this exhibition inspires dialogue about some of these pretty major dichotomies." Like the ones that exist between the notions of public and private, and safety and transgression.

So watch for *Trespass Act* and its accompanying giant security guards. Just know that they'll be watching you too.