

Fact Sheet

Exhibition Artist	9/11 Trilogy Laura Poitras
Location	Artists Space Exhibitions 38 Greene Street, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor New York NY 10013
Opening Duration Hours	Saturday, December 13, 6 – 8pm December 14, 2014 – February 15, 2015 Wednesday – Sunday: noon – 6pm
Screenings	<i>My Country, My Country</i> <i>The Oath</i> Noon, 2pm, and 4pm  <i>The Program</i> <i>Death of a Prisoner</i> <i>PRISM Whistleblower</i> On continuous loop  <i>CITIZENFOUR</i> Screening dates and venues to be announced  Complete list of films, film credits and running times follows
Programs	To be announced, please visit our website: <a href="http://www.artistsspace.org">www.artistsspace.org</a>
Supporters	The Laura Poitras Exhibition Supporters Circle: Thomas Dozol, Robert Gober & Donald Moffett, Steven Schindler & Susan Kath, Michael Stipe, Thea Westreich Wagner & Ethan Wagner, Anonymous The Friends of Artists Space Lambent Foundation Fund of Tides Foundation The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Cowles Charitable Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation
Press Contact	Leanne Mella 212 226 3970 <a href="mailto:leanne@artistsspace.org">leanne@artistsspace.org</a>

For Immediate Release

# 9/11 Trilogy Laura Poitras

## Opening Saturday, December 13, 6-8pm

December 14, 2014 – February 15, 2015

Coinciding with the worldwide release of Laura Poitras's critically acclaimed documentary *CITIZENFOUR*, Artists Space is proud to present the *9/11 Trilogy*, including *My Country, My Country* (2006) and *The Oath* (2010), shown continuously throughout the course of the exhibition, complementing screenings of *CITIZENFOUR*. In addition Artists Space will present Poitras's three short films *The Program*, *Death of a Prisoner*, and *PRISM Whistleblower*, all of which pre-figured the production of *CITIZENFOUR*. Together, these films rigorously address the expansion of the security state in the aftermath of 9/11.

*My Country, My Country* (2006), *The Oath* (2010) and *CITIZENFOUR* all revolve around individuals whose lives, in differing ways, have become intrinsically tied to the "war on terror" and U.S. military operations overseas. Each film stems from an encounter between Poitras and one of these people. The writer Janet Malcolm has posited that: "The moral ambiguity of journalism lies not in its texts but in the relationships out of which they arise." These films highlight the complexity at the

heart of practices of journalism and reportage, in the light of contemporary ideological struggles between state and citizen.

The *9/11 Trilogy* considers a historical period in which access to information, and agency in relation to that information, has become contested ground among governments, citizens, security agencies, and the media. The films collectively raise vital questions around the role of critical visual culture at a historical juncture at which the construction of a social imaginary of “freedom” is positioned at odds with transparency and accountability.

*My Country, My Country*, portrays the tragedy and absurdity of the occupation of Iraq through the experience of Riyadh al-Adhath, a medical doctor and Sunni electoral candidate in Baghdad. Poitras met Dr. Riyadh at Abu-Ghraib prison where he was recording prisoners’ complaints. Subsequently she began visiting his clinic, meeting his patients and ultimately living with his family as she followed their daily lives. Contrasted with footage of U.S. military, UN officials and private security companies in their orchestration of the country’s 2005 elections, the film frames a dizzying and disastrous confluence of local and global interests, within which Dr. Riyadh is an impassioned yet helpless figure.

*The Oath* originated from visits by Poitras to Sana’a, Yemen where she conducted research into the lives of Guantanamo prisoners including Salim Hamdan, better known as the driver of Osama bin Laden. Hamdan was the subject of litigation in the U.S. Supreme Court that resulted in the disbanding of the Pentagon’s system of military tribunals, which were found to be unconstitutional. In the course of her research Poitras met Hamdan’s brother-in-law, a taxi driver and part-time jihadi going by the nom de guerre of Abu Jandal. Abu Jandal had also served bin Laden as a bodyguard, and becomes the ostensible subject of *The Oath*, paralleling the “ghost” subject of Hamdan. Poitras’s documenting of Jandal’s contradictory statements and

motivations, and his personal conflict over his jihadi oath to bin Laden and the imprisonment of his brother-in-law, serves as an unsparing, yet fittingly irreconcilable articulation of the extrajudicial actions of the U.S. state, and its human and ideological consequences.

In comparison, *CITIZENFOUR*, now in theatrical release, hinges on a moment of reflexivity that suggests the manner in which Poitras's films have inverted typical journalistic relations. In 2013, Edward Snowden, an infrastructure analyst working for the U.S. National Security Agency, contacted Poitras. Snowden had identified Poitras as a filmmaker whose work directly addressed the apparatus of the security state, and saw her as a potential conduit through which to make public numerous secrets he was privy to. Poitras's first video interview with a self-exiled Snowden, in a hotel room in Hong Kong, provided a vehicle through which the NSA's PRISM program became known to the world. At Artists Space, three short films are exhibited that serve as key documents in Poitras's process of investigation and reporting leading towards *CITIZENFOUR: The Program* (2012), *Death of a Prisoner* (2013) and *PRISM Whistleblower* (2013).

*My Country, My Country, 2006*

Laura Poitras, dir.

Digital video, 90 minutes

A co-production of Praxis Films and The Independent Television Service (ITVS)

Produced in association with P.O.V./American Documentary

Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films

*The Oath, 2010*

Laura Poitras, dir.

Digital video, 96 minutes

A co-production of Praxis Films and The Independent Television Service (ITVS), with funding provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

Courtesy of Zeitgeist Films

*CITIZENFOUR, 2014*

Laura Poitras, dir.; Mathilde Bonnefoy, ed.

Digital video, 114 minutes

Producers: Laura Poitras, Mathilde Bonnefoy, Dirk Wilutzky

Co-Producers: Katy Scoggin, Kirsten Johnson,

Executive Producers: Steven Soderbergh, David Menschel, Diane Weyermann, Jeff Skoll, Sheila Nevins

Courtesy of Radius-TWC

*The Program, 2012*

Laura Poitras, dir.

Digital video, 8 minutes 21 seconds

Courtesy of *The New York Times*

*Death of a Prisoner, 2013*

Laura Poitras, dir.

Digital video, 9 minutes

Courtesy of *The New York Times*

*PRISM Whistleblower,  
2013*

Laura Poitras, dir.

Digital video, 12 minutes 34 seconds

Courtesy of Praxis Films