

The Mallards' Call (2017 – 2020)

Can there be any sublime in today's surveillance? How does aesthetics inform us about the nature of the relationship existing between surveillance and sociality? And if the prospect of social withdrawal is unbearable, would we be ever able to escape the surveillance state?

In the Mallards' Call, I repurpose imaging surveillance technologies to the photographic space that lays at the intersection of personal documentary, performance, and art photography. A long-time cybersecurity researcher by background, I now resolved to turn surveillance technology towards myself. I intend to record in my images the resulting introspective investigations, in the attempt to make the invisible visible. In so doing, I aim to shedding new light on the absences in our lives. I aim to addressing the epidemic level of loneliness in today's society, and how the said condition incentives the use of social media where the present body of work was live shared during its production. Mediating almost every form of social participation, those media are, in fact, perfect surveillance platforms in disguise. Appropriating the techniques of surveillance, and exploring how surveillance underpins our own way of life, the present project questions the politics and aesthetics of surveillance themselves.

To develop the concept, I returned alone to the prairie where I used to walk with my late wife, and I started photographing an allegorical elegy for her and on the lonely human condition. Each image was inspired by the wakas collected in the Man'yōshū, from which the present work draws both its title and the captions.

With the project revolving around absences and their allegorical representations, the process reflects such void by resorting on infrared illuminators for night vision as modelling lights lighting the new-moon nights' scenes, and on infrared cameras. The lights employed are outside the visible spectrum. As such, they cannot be seen, just like the beloved longed for, by all mammals – photographer included.

