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London Through the Lens of Avant Garde Film

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Dr. Gretchen Smith

Engaged Learning

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London Through the Lens of Avant Garde Film: Final Report

Summary:

My exploration of the medium of Avant Garde film led me down an unorthodox path. I found myself, for the first time, in a foreign country. America's brother, England, had its cultural similarities and differences. At first, it was unclear what aspect of my adventure would be worth capturing on film. It didn't take long to notice the enormous number of surveillance cameras lining the streets, alleyways, and tube stations in London. After further research, I learned that London is the most heavily surveilled country in the world. This was at a time when personal privacy was a hot issue in the Americas, since Edward Snowden had just revealed the activity of the NSA.

I realized that I wanted to explore this international connection with Avant Garde film. I set out to paint a picture with the moving digital media of film. My goal was not to provide an answer, but to ask a series of questions: where do you draw the line between surveillance and a violation of privacy? At what point do violated rights overshadow the possible threat of terrorist attacks? Can a country founded on liberty and personal freedom maintain those liberties in the age of surveillance technology? These were all questions I sought to present with my film.

Impact:

London Through the Lens of Avant Garde Film is available online for free, to anyone who wishes to view it. I am hoping that my film will provoke a discussion on the subject it evaluates. While I try and take a neutral position with the film, I think it is important for the individual to have their own sense about where they draw a personal line in government intervention. I'm hoping to showcase the film at upcoming avant grade and independent film festivals. If it is accepted, I hope it will impact the audience in the same way it affected me while I was making it.

What I Learned:

I learned that the issues we hold in high regard in the United States are equally pertinent overseas, sometimes to an even greater extent. I learned that the value of art lies not in its ability to make a statement on behalf of the artist, but in its ability to ask a question that demands introspection and consideration on behalf of the audience. Finally, I learned about the malleability of film in its form, and that film can act as a

moving painting to tell a story just as effectively as a narrative edited in Classical Hollywood Continuity Mode.