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## Washington's power players illuminated in unique video portrait at Smithsonian (Photos)

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To see what power in Washington really looks like, see "The Network", an intimate innovative video portrait of 89 major players now at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery and at CONNERSMITH Gallery.

Imagine House Majority Leader Eric Cantor "linked" with House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi; White House Press Secretary Jay Carney "tagged" with Republican strategist Karl Rove -- who teared up; anti-tax crusader Grover Norquist, Mr. Taxpayer Protection Pledge, "connected" in any way to John Podesta, chair of the Center for American Progress and former Chief of Staff for President Clinton.

View slideshow: Washington's power players illuminated in unique video portrait at Smithsonian and at CONNERSMITH Gallery

Other best-known figures include former Supreme Court Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and John Paul Stevens; Emmy Award-winning journalists Martha Raddatz and Cokie Roberts; top political adviser and lawyer Vernon Jordan; multi-sports team owner Ted Leonsis -- combined with lesser-known but key powers that be, such as Stephanie Schriock, president of Emily's List, which helps elect pro-choice Democratic women

candidates; Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO; Joe Solomonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign for LGBT equality.

"The Network: Portrait Conversations by Lincoln Schatz" illuminates what the Chicago video artist aptly terms "the eco-system of Washington".

Schatz creates his "generative video portraits" by using three cameras to film the individuals, then processing these 50-plus hours of tape through his custom software to constantly re-combine the interviews based on 160 topics, instead of looping like a traditional film.

Art intersects high-tech; documentary joins portraiture; conservatives combine with liberals; Republicans with Democrats; Public sector with private sector...

Think of it as a 21st century interpretation of the Renaissance ideal of portraiture as a "speaking likeness".

Or just get the companion book "The Network: Portrait Conversations by Lincoln Schatz" (Smithsonian Books). The exquisitely produced book has a brief version of each interview, accompanied by a screen shot of each sitter.

Schatz and Anne Collins Goodyear, associate Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Portrait Gallery (NPG), which commissioned "The Network", explained the project recently at both the NPG and at the CONNERSMITH Gallery.

At DC's CONNERSMITH, "The Network" is on view and also on sale, for about a quarter of a million dollars, gallery co-owner Leigh Conner told me.

Schatz said "The Network" offers "a window into what these people are; what makes them work." He came away from his exploration "inspired with faith in all of the people...they are supremely intelligent and committed to duty, service, honor."

He noted, "Early on, I parked my politics at the door. I had biases, stereotypes, like anyone else."

Schatz did not use name labels because "I didn't want people to shudder when 'X' comes up." These talking heads head (or recently headed) the National Rifle Association; Human Rights Campaign for LGBT equality; the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Islamic Society of North America...

One of the most striking links among "The Network" odd bedfellows is Karl Rove and Jay Carney, each discussing September 11, when they were with President Bush on Marine One flying from Florida to Washington.

Rove, then a senior political adviser to President George W. Bush, tears up in the video when describing flying through "the plume of smoke that was streaming out of the Pentagon...The President saying very quietly, "'Take a look. You're looking at the face of war in the twenty-first century.'"

Carney discusses his own perspective of 9/11 when traveling with President Bush as White House correspondent for "Time" Magazine. Whenever Carney's White House Press Secretary job ends, "...I'll want to do something challenging and new, because

there's nothing better than waking up scared every morning because you're not quite sure you can pull it off."

Goodyear, who commissioned "The Network" for the NPG, said the project demonstrates "the very important role that portraits can play in capturing history...and also shaping history. It opens the pathway of imagination."

The curator praised Schatz as "The best interviewer I've ever seen."

NPG also owns Schatz's video "Esquire's Portrait of the Twenty-First Century", profiling 75 of the most influential individuals ranging from George Clooney to LeBron James to Amazon.com founder Jeff Bezos to fashion designer Marc Jacobs. The Hearst Corporation had commissioned Schatz to create the work for Esquire's 75th anniversary.

What's next for Schatz? Something regarding outer space. Sounds challenging and new, but Schatz surely can pull it off.