

False Democracy

On Critical Art Ensemble, 2001, *Digital Resistance* / Chapter 5: *Recombinant Theater and Digital Resistance*



Within the brief period of the last fifty years we have moved from a totally analog worldview to one that is shared with the digital. We consider the Internet to be a virtual space. "And our understanding of space is changing for coming generations." ¹ We are conquering this virtual space, which presents itself as both picture space and space of action, place of signs, of real presences and communications. ²

The Internet as an apparently democratic space is a concept of the past because capitalist structures dominate the virtual space. Nevertheless, virtual space offers a large range of communications and surveillance tools, which are used to organize movements against political and economic oppressors. However, these tools are made available by capitalist companies. This seems to be paradoxical situation.

The act of civil disobedience as political participation has its source in the ancient world. Many people have a natural necessity to act against injustice and disproportionateness. In the historical context as well as in the present context, we can observe many examples where a repressed class fights against their oppressor.

There is a company in Great Britain that specializes in video surveillance for small stores. ³ They offer a surveillance system that sends the video image from the camera, which is installed in the store, directly to the Internet. People can observe the store from their computer at home. When they observe a burglary they can send a text message directly to the owner of the store. Consequently, the store becomes a scene for a reality show that everybody can watch from home, but with the difference that the visitors watch it for moral reasons. The intention to fight against injustice is certainly only one reason for watching this live stream. The future of this development is a collective observation system where everybody is observing and taping everybody. It is surveillance as a digital theater where the visitor is also a participant. Will we soon live in a society of democratic surveillance as new form of entertainment?

Damian Jurt | Geneva | 10.5.2011

¹ Quoted in <http://www.xcult.org/rest> | 6.3.2011

² See <http://www.xcult.org/rest> | 6.3.2011

³ See <http://interneteyes.co.uk> | 10.5.2011



Picture from <http://interneteyes.co.uk>