PUBLIC LIFE AND PERVASIVE SYSTEMS: A CRITICAL PRACTICE

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation **Public Life and Pervasive Systems: A Critical Practice** is part of the research conducted both in the UK and Brazil, between the years 2001 and 2005, in a context permeated by issues related to the introduction of intrusive technologies and practices in the field of communication.

The research involved the production by the author of three pieces of artwork: an interactive installation called *4walls*, the web-based work *meta4walls* and the *Spio* project, defined as a de-generative installation. Each project deals with distinctive technologies and establishes dialogues with specific cultural and geopolitical contexts. The projects simultaneously point to a common ground of alienating factors found in contemporary societies, affected by the production of semiotic power in late capitalism. More to the point, pervasive technologies are detected behind the shifting boundaries between the private and public spheres, where new dichotomies are generated, such as intimacy and privacy, *mixophobia* and *mixophilia*, representation and mediation, 'forged reality' and social reality.

The research considers interfaces as the key tool in the analysis of such dualities in the domain of art. Among the many mediation possibilities promoted by pervasive systems and communication technologies, the creation of strategies based on non-corporative networking and social interfaces that encourage individuals to re-enact participation in the construction of public-life is seen as a challenging responsibility for artists committed to social reality. This research appoints 'reality-based interfaces' as an idea that considers interface to be opposed to an obstructing device; one that allows perspectives of flow and exchange between domains beyond the merely technical approach.

Some key artworks by distinct artists are discussed under this concept, taking into consideration their conceptual and technological proximities to my projects. Thus, the dissertation attempts to probe the extent to which the art work produced in the course of this research can match the idea of reality-based interface and, as such, function as a tool for empowering individuals, produce awareness with regards to intrusive procedures and, perhaps, work to perforate the 'bubble' that prevents one to better grasp the world 'outside' of pervasive technologies.

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key words: *intrusive technologies, intimacy, privacy, social-reality, reality-based interfaces, reappropriation, recontextualization, pervasive systems, alienation, embodied networks.*

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dedicated to:

Cristiane Mesquita

for your love along so many years, for encouraging to keep the research on at all times,
for being so patient during the whole writing process

Livia Mesquita Bambozzi da Silveira
for your sweetness

São Paulo, January 2006

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Master of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Graduate Committee.

Three artwork projects were developed as part of this research process. They are called: *4walls*, *meta4walls* and *Spio*. All the projects were publicly presented in different exhibitions in Brazil and Europe, which contributed to the development and contextualization of this research.

Relevant seminars, conferences and new media festivals were regularly attended at which work was often presented; external institutions were visited for consultation purposes and several papers prepared for publication.

Presentations of the works in formal exhibitions:

4walls

Intimidade Exhibition - Paço das Artes, São Paulo, Brazil 2003

Piemonte Share Festival – Turin, Italy 2005,

Videoformes . XX Manifestation Internationale d'art vidéo et noveaux média - Clermont Ferrant, France 2005

meta4walls

Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival - São Paulo, Brazil 2001

25th São Paulo International Biennial - São Paulo, Brazil 2002

Videoformes . XIX Manifestation Internationale d'art vidéo et noveaux médias - Clermont Ferrand, France 2004

VAE8 – Realidad Visual/Galeria CCPUCP – Peru, Lima 2004

Cyphorg Citizens and Unwitting Avatars - New Langton Arts, Berkeley, USA 2005

Spio

Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 - Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil 2004

HTTP House of Technologically Termed Praxis - London, UK 2005

Presentation and Conferences Attended:

Consciousness Reframed 2000 - University of Wales College, Newport, UK 2000

10th International Symposium on Electronic Art – ISEA Paris, France 2000

Intimate Technologies/Dangerous Zones – New Media Institute, Banff, Canada 2002

FILE Symposium 2002 - São Paulo, Brazil 2002

Emoção Art.Ficial 1.0 – Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil 2002

Redes Sensoriais - Fortaleza, Brazil 2003

Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 Technological Divergences - Itaú Cultural, São Paulo, Brazil 2004

FILE Symposium 2005 - São Paulo, Brazil 2005

Word count of main body of thesis: 27.625 words, excluding appendices.

Signed ....

January 29, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

pre-text: a short story

Between 2000 and 2002 I had the opportunity of living in the UK as an artist in residence at the University of Plymouth, on a research program conducted by the CAiiA-Star Centre (currently operating as 'Planetary Collegium'). My initial proposal was an attempt to bring together two different issues related to new media: interface as a sensorial and immersive experience and the public/private use of shared urban spaces. The matter was closely linked to my previous works, as well as to the environment I had found in the UK with regards to the socio-political and technological issues surrounding surveillance systems. Such confluences encouraged me to start this research.

The context that permeated the studies was marked by political discussions around the implementation of new laws in England, more notably since the so called Rip Bill[1] in the year 2000, which would lead to violation of civil liberties and grant government authorities with unlimited surveillance rights. My proposal crystallized as a practical and theoretical exercise where I was able to put in evidence some of the issues raised by a context of restricted freedom – which was seriously intensified after the September 11 attacks in the US in 2001.

The notions of privacy I experienced while living in UK were set in sharp contrast with what was considered an intrusive system or a privacy invasion in countries such as Brazil, where I had returned to in 2002. Biometric procedures, reconnaissance techniques, facial recognition software, the Echelon and controlled networks, are not part of everyday life in Brazil (yet). However, the emergence of such technologies raises a set of issues with regards to recent developments in world politics around security, which involve

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[1] The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Bill was passed on October 2000 after some controversy and little debate. Like it happened in other countries, newly implemented laws allowed new surveillance methods. The Bill required the UK Internet Service Providers to install controlling systems so as to allow the Government and its authorities to track subscriber's communications traffic, among other implementation. A comprehensive guide to the issues on the Rip bill can be found on Stand's website: http://www.stand.org.uk/commentary.php3

international policies that affected many localities such as Brazil, socially, economically and politically.

During the research period, I produced three projects connected to this context in different ways. They are: **4walls** (2000-2003),[2] an interactive installation dealing with privacy invasion issues; **meta4walls** (2001)[3], a web project based on cookies and data-collection and **Spio** (2004)[4], a 'de-generative' installation that mobilizes concepts borrowed from robotic and generative systems.

Each one of these pieces deals with specific aspects of intrusive systems, pointing to an archetypical condition regarding pervasive systems, as an attempt to produce straight connections between art, public spaces and social reality.

The projects are immersed into critical issues of privacy and intimacy that have been brought into focus through the implementation of recent communication technologies. These technologies have enabled the proliferation of peer to peer networks, wireless gadgets, online games, mobile technologies, GPS and PDA's that appear to be empowering new levels of intimacy, whilst simultaneously threatening individual privacy and influencing the way people experience social reality.

Under the auspices of the promise for 'solutions for a smaller world' (IBM) and 'connecting people' (Nokia), communication technologies corporations have been linking the idea of intimacy in private spaces to the notion of easy, interchangeable and shareable 'realities'.

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[2] *4walls* installation was first exhibited at the Intimidade exhibition held by Paço das Artes in São Paulo, Brazil (2002). Subsequent exhibitions took place at Piemonte Share Festival in Turin, Italy (2005) and at XX Videoformes in Clermont Ferrant, France (2005). Further information including technical resources are provided in the appendices.

[3] *meta4walls* project <http://www.comum.com/diphusa/meta> was developed with the support of the 13rd Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival (São Paulo) in which it was firstly exhibited.

[4] *Spio* project was commissioned by Itaú Cultural for Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 (2004) an international exhibition on art and technology organized by Itaú Cultural, São Paulo. The exhibition was curated by Arlindo Machado and Gilbertto Prado who have underlined political aspects in new media art practices. *Spio*'s last exhibition took place at HTTP House of Technologically Termed Praxis <www.http.uk.net>, London, UK in 2005.

Altogether, intimacy, privacy and reality have been reshaped as mere discourses: they have been commodified by the market as aesthetic values attached to technological products, and locked into a logic of technological interface as the only possible way for proximity and real time communication.

In large cities such as São Paulo, a significant number of its inhabitants live in sealed environments, protecting themselves from public spaces, street-level activities, or, a term commonly used in Portuguese, 'raw realities'. Networking activities are seen to be a solution for working and living in such a time consuming space as well as a model for sharing experiences in a supposedly protected public space – in comparison to the real city. Conversely, networks may also function as an alienation factor regarding an effective participation in actual public life.

This dissertation probes the extent to which artworks (networked or not) can function as meaningful mechanisms for reconnecting individuals with tangible realities, if possible, beyond representational artifices. This question points toward the creation of 'tools' for minimal mediation, or 'reality-based interfaces' as a definition for devices that will not only encourage individuals to participate in the shaping of public spaces, but may also suggest awareness regarding social reality. Artworks evolving out of this context would have to deal with this challenge, as it relates not only to new aesthetic preoccupations, but also to the socio-political issues pervading today's information society.

According to David Lyon 'information societies are surveillance societies', (2001: 10) which is a statement that foresees controlling mechanisms in daily life by means of the information flow on the wake of the standardization of pervasive technologies. In a world where potentially everyone is connected and easily reachable, there is also the risk of being over-watched or effectively surveilled – which is acknowledged here not as an intrusion into one's intimate sphere, but, as Felix Stalder suggests, as 'an issue of privacy

as a structural problem of political power' (2002b: 123). Having surveillance procedures as a common background, the artworks discussed here suggest divergent applications of pervasive systems, by means of its interfaces with 'reality'.

Instead of separating barriers, interfaces are here considered as joining systems, as shared borders allowing the flow of information between domains beyond a merely technical notion.

This thesis attempts to examine the possibilities of an art connected to life (social reality) dealing critically with the idea of social interfaces which can be understood as an important tool in the unveiling of the political implications of the dichotomy private versus public.

Altogether, the theoretical assumptions associated to the practical projects inform the conceptual and technological elements involved in my artwork. The projects can be seen as responses to specific contexts, raised by the necessity of dialogue with different 'realities'.

CHAPTER 1: MAPPING THE CONTEXT

> *Which world is this? It is enough to turn on the television or the radio, go for a walk in a city, buy a weekly or daily newspaper, to know that this world is constructed through a statement arrangement, through a sign regime, the expression of which is called advertising, and what is expressed (the meaning) is a prompt, a command, representing per se a valuation, a judgment, a view of the world, of themselves and others. What is expressed (the meaning) is not an ideological valuation, but rather an incentive (it gives signs), a prompt to assume a form of living, i.e. a way of dressing, having a body, eating, communicating, residing, moving, having a gender, speaking, etc. (Lazzarato, 2003)*

1.1 Social context in São Paulo, Brazil

People living in cities such as São Paulo are becoming less and less familiar with notions of sharing experiences in public spaces. Excluding special circumstances, such as commemorative events and open public festivals, it is very difficult to find situations where a common social reality is created by means of collective participation, which would include people from different social classes, notably strangers.

Cities are spaces where people, more likely strangers, move and stay in proximity to each other. The ubiquitous presence of strangers is indeed a permanent component of city life, as reminded by Zygmunt Bauman: 'the stranger is the unknown variable in all equations calculated when decisions about what to do and how to behave are made'. Bauman assumes that the presence of strangers is discomforting 'even when not behaving aggressively or actively resented' (2003: 28).

It is as if it was an emergent kind of voluntary alienation concerning the participation in public life. In Bauman's words, the (O)ther or the stranger is 'an agent moved by intentions one can at best guess but would never know for sure' (28) The option to relate or not with such an agent is a decision-

making matter that involves fear and ambiguous attitudes. Such attitudes are part of a sort of phobia particularly observed in cities such as São Paulo: it is a city that no longer provides safety for its inhabitants, and is related to a place of danger more often than of security.

The incidence of violence is emphasized by statistics and reports publicized on a daily basis by the mass media, and are considered both as the reason and the consequence of the increasing deterioration of the city's public spaces and the lack of opportunities to experience public life. Together with the privatization of the few once available public spaces, very often privileging the construction of big malls, larger avenues, parking lots and other profitable resources for car owners, what follows is a corresponding change in social behaviour, composing an even more complex picture of the city (Greater São Paulo's population is now over nineteen million).

Anthropologist Teresa Caldeira[1] refers to São Paulo as a 'city of walls', pointing to a process of spatial segregation visibly and undisguisedly expressed throughout the city. As a consequence of a society featuring one of the most inequitable wealth distributions in the world, 'physical barriers have been constructed around houses, apartments, buildings, parks, squares, office complexes, and schools'. Caldeira describes that the population actually witnesses the creation of different kinds of sealed environments: 'gardens are now everywhere separated by high fences and walls, and guarded by electronic devices and armed security men[/women]' (1996: 307). The proliferation of highly surveilled private residential condominiums, very often isolated from the city centre - where it pulses with its noises, odours and strangers - indicates that such separation is supposed to produce a safe and private distance from those considered to be 'socially inferior'.

Even spaces once designed to be open, are now integrated into the logics of separation and segregation. This process has determined the aesthetics of

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1 Teresa P. R. Caldeira is an anthropologist teaching at Unicamp (State University of Campinas, São Paulo) and at the University of California, Irvine.

security in shaping the framework of the city, which 'imposes its new logic of surveillance and distance as a means for displaying status which is changing the character of public life and social interactions' (308).

In a city containing in excess of 5 millions cars,[2] the growth in the number of armoured vehicles, cars equipped with bullet proof shields, the massive popularity of sun films/drapers for privacy, the increasing use of satellite navigation system in cars, may lead to the conclusion that cars in themselves are also a means of sealing the outside space off, producing protective, closed and private environments. It is a scenario where every corner, every pedestrian crossing, every encounter with the (O)ther (who is outside the encapsulated and protected ambient) is supposed to be risky and potentially harmful. Actions such as to avoid speaking to strangers, never stop moving, to avoid hanging out in the few public spaces left, to keep circulating by any means, are just a small part of a increasing paranoia reverberating in the statistics on violence in the city.

In considering armour, walls or fences, Bauman prompts that they all 'divide the otherwise uniform space into an "inside" and an "outside", but what is the "inside" for those on one side of the fence is the "outside" for those on the other' (2003: 29). We may think about the co-existence of 'apartheid realities', each of which are protected by thick 'membranes', creating a sort of 'bubble' that separates the inner from outer situations, resulting in different ways of living. The fence, the membrane of the bubble, 'separates the "voluntary ghetto" from the many enforced ones. For the insiders of the voluntary ghetto, the other ghettoes are "we won't go in" spaces.' (29)

This description pictures a scenario of exclusion, fear, alienation and segregation, which leaves intrusion and privacy matters, as part of socio-political concerns in cities such as São Paulo to a secondary concern. This is to say that while in 'developed countries' these are highly appreciated as a whole set of priceless citizenship values, civil rights and access to public

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2 Source: <http://www.detran.sp.gov.br> accessed: 12/12/2005

means are just abstract notions in Brazil. For the majority of its population, basic concerns related to eating, working and living tend to override that of privacy. Thus, a series of facts would corroborate to the notion of privacy as a cultural matter. Brazilians are for example, considered to be opened to socializing, which reflects behavioral assumptions, such as allowing closer corporeal proximity, longish eye contacts and tolerance regarding intrusive gestures and habits in social life.

Fig. 1: A slogan by American online e-commerce company Newegg.com, posted in airports in USA.

1.2 Social context in London, UK

In the UK, while issues on safety in public spheres do not pose an immediate risk due to the relatively organized disciplinary and control power, there is more than just an 'interesting contrast' between the two contexts. The first point to consider is that London constitutes a perfect model for an information society in the sense discussed by David Lyon (2001: 10). This means that a comprehensive set of control systems are already embedded, if not internalized, in its infra-structure. It also means that most basic requirements for a proper sense of citizenship are somehow guaranteed.

Historically, as a leading trading power and financial centre for centuries, the UK has already established in the heart of its capitalistic economy, the constant update and implementation of the latest control technologies. The British saw the rise of a new subject, with rights and duties, in a new social

concept where the State theoretically takes on the responsibility for the health and well being of people, besides organizing and "optimizing" society's economic growth, by means of order and discipline.[3] The Welfare State in Britain was the result of a series of changes instituted in order to deal with the 'Giant Evils'[4], after the Second World War. These changes meant that the government recognized its responsibility in caring for the people of Britain 'from the cradle to the grave'. The Welfare State was a commitment to public health (the National Health Service was created in 1948), education, employment and social security.

The 'classic' Welfare State period lasted from approximately 1945 to the 1970s. Over the past two decades, the government has greatly reduced public ownership by means of privatization programs, and has contained the growth of the Welfare State. What is implicit here is that most controlling mechanisms found in rich countries could be expressed as welfare policies.

The maintenance of order and discipline in the city are now in direct relation to control technologies, which have subsumed individuals to the social order of the State through socialization, education, organization and classification. In addition, new patterns of conducting "moral and honesty" have been influenced by the way through which these technologies of control scrutinize the geometrization of and circulation in urban spaces.

Such a background facilitated the adoption of more recent technologies allowing a new kind of disciplinary power,[5] featuring subtle control feeling. In

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[3] As a contrast, the positivist slogan 'Order and Progress' read in the Brazilian's flag has never related properly to any Welfare State.

[4] The five "Giant Evils"were identified by the William Beveridge Report in 1942, in the British society as: squalor, ignorance, want, idleness and disease. William Henry Beveridge (1879-1963) was a British economist and social reformer, best known for his 1942 report Social Insurance and Allied Services (the Beveridge Report) source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_State

[5] Maurizio Lazzarato converges the ideas of Disciplinary and Control Societies (Foucault and Deleuze) by saying that 'the control society integrates the "old" disciplinary dispositif'. Thus, in 'societies where disciplinary institutions and "workfare" are weaker and less developed, control immediately means the logic of war, even in times of "peace" [see Brazil, still]' Struggle, Event, Media (2003) in Republicart.net, published at: http://www.republicart.net/disc/representations/lazzarato01_en.htm

the last 5 years, London has witnessed an impressive growth in issues connected to surveillance. [6]

By 2000, one year prior to the September 11 attacks, it was already worrying the fact that laws in Britain had been deeply modified, with no transparency involved in its implementation process, in order to allow the State and the authorities to use new communication technologies as a way to exercise new forms of control. Bills were modified or implemented, such as the Regulation of Investigatory Power Act (the RIP bill - 2000) which aimed at allowing new forms of control by government agencies. For instance, internet providers were required to install communication flow sorting systems , recording the logs of each message. Routines once considered intrusive and not allowed before by any law, are now not only allowed but also mandatory.

The most common explanations for the implementation of online intrusions were that the police and the authorities must use and update equivalent methods to those adopted by criminals. Thus, the Internet was targeted as a potentially dangerous public space, used by 'strangers' belonging to groups of various tendencies including terrorists and pedophiles. Under the pretext of identifying criminals, the autonomy of many has been curtailed. A new order followed international decisions after the September 11, which lead to policies that more often than not, have exchanged freedom for security. The UK is currently notorious for boasting the highest rate of surveillance camera per capita in the world, – estimating that there is one camera for every 15 people, totalling more than 4 millions – serving as a main reference for other European countries. [7]

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[6] This dissertation will not abide by the events of September 11 because the unchain of "anti-terrorist" actions that followed the attack in the US involves political implications that give another tone to the study, adding elements that would disparage a more impartial analyses of the emergence of current control devices. The attacks have generated a "state of exception" and there was an extraordinary condescension with regards to restraining individual freedom. Many of the Technologies observed here had already been implemented or were in the process of being implemented before the attacks, so they reflect an international political tendency on course.

7 However this number could be higher, as the statistics include only registered CCTV systems. Source: the Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/recordedcrime1.html>

In London one can experience the presence of such lenses in every corner. They are inquisitive over our bodies. They watch our postures in subways, cash registers and automatic doors. They multiply, reproduce and check our images, and puts us in evidence. We are overexposed and offered to the gaze of machine eyes, as a step prior to being scrutinized by the gaze of another human being. We are constantly measured, identified not exactly by an(O)ther stranger. Surveillance and information control have become a routine practice as if they had always been part of our lives.

Envision Licensing Ltd.

"Our officers use computer systems, a fleet of detector vans and hand-held detectors to track down and prosecute people who use a TV without the right licence."

"At the heart of our operation is the TV Licensing database, one of the largest in Europe. It has details of over 22 million UK addresses."

"We can detect a TV in use from 30 metres away . . . Not only will we be able to see where the television is and what's being watched on it, we'll know on the spot whether it's licensed."

Fig.2: Envision Licensing Ltd. was awarded as one of the most invasive companies in UK (2000) according to the Big Brother awards, organized by Privacy International.

The UK is indeed a society where personal data has been collected, stored and managed in many depths and through different networks by numerous companies such as supermarket chains, internet providers, bank branches, insurance companies, credit card operators, mobile phone corporations, as well as government and private organizations like the British Telecom (BT), the TV Licensing (Envision Licensing Ltd), the National Health System (NHS - Executive), The National DNA Database, the Identity Cards Programme and

others about to come.[8] The rate of intrusive procedures in the UK has reached one of the highest in the world.

On a more intimate level, due to the internalization of control technologies in our everyday life and behaviour, most people see it as a kind of invasion that is much less serious than somebody looking into one's windows (as if it would danger one's protective 'bubble'). It remains intriguing, if not a contradiction, that, despite so many overwhelmingly controlling systems, inhabitants of large cities still respond to privacy intrusion against isolated individuals: for most, making eye contact or talking with strangers seem more intrusive than having governmental and private agencies store personal, financial and biometric data.

This can be seen as another kind of existing sealed environment, protecting one not exactly against the criminal, the violent other (as expected to be in any crossing in São Paulo), but creating a sort of artificially sustained 'private-reality' with little exchange with the ordinariness of the city and its strangers.

1.3 Merging contexts: bubbles and sealed environments

In today's urban life, the social contexts mentioned above hold in common a feature described by Richard Sennet as 'fear of touching' (1994: 212-251). The projections of this fear meets Bauman's explanations on 'mixophobia',[9] when he discloses on the existential condition of contemporary men and women 'born and bred in the deregulated, individualized, fluid world of accelerated and diffuse change' (2003: 31). Mixophobia, as opposed to

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8 In 1998 Privacy International <http://www.privacy.org> presented the first annual Big Brother awards to organizations that have done the most to invade personal privacy in Britain. Among the already mentioned nominated ones were: Vodaphone, Norwich Union, The Home Office, The Department of Trade and Industry, UK Passport Service, Capita, Amazon UK and also The Data Protection Act, for failing to provide protection for citizens. The full history of nominations can be found at: <http://www.bigbrotherawards.org> accessed: 03/01/2006.

9 mixophobia = fear of mixing. Constructed by Bauman from mix [1538, back-formation from Anglo-Fr. *mixte,* from L. *mixtus,* pp. of *miscere* 'to mix'] + phobia [1786, fear, horror, aversion, Mod.L., from Gk. -*phobia,* from *phobos* ''fear']

mixophilia,[10] is a manifestation of forces driven 'towards islands of similarity and sameness amidst the sea of variety and difference' (31). Bauman acknowledges the fact that city living is always an ambivalent experience. 'It attracts and repels, but to make the plight of the city dweller more complex yet, it is the same aspects of city life that, intermittently or simultaneously, attract and repel...' (33).

Mixophobia and mixophilia coexist in every city, but they also coexist inside every one of the city's residents. Bauman admits it as 'an uneasy coexistence, full of sound and fury – though signifying a lot to the people on the receiving end of the liquid-modern ambivalence' (34). By comparing social and cultural aspects of London and São Paulo, we have pictured London as a city more inclined towards mixophobia, while São Paulo, with its tropically inconsistent notions of privacy, could be described as tending more towards mixophilia. However, both produce protective, sealed 'bubbles' avoiding the direct contact with strangers. The overwhelming feeling of insecurity is felt differently in each city.

Bauman points to the need of shifting the balance between mixophobia and mixophilia in favour of the latter. But 'the allergic, febrile sensitivity to strangers and the strange' as the roots of mixophobia, 'lie beyond the reach of architectural competence or city-planners' remit' (36). Richard Sennet would further explicit such contradiction: 'Innate to the process of forming a coherent image of community is the desire to avoid actual participation. Feeling common bonds without common experience occurs […] because men[/women] are afraid of participation, afraid of the dangers and the challenges of it, afraid of its pain' (1996: 39-42)

In spite of all dangers, the ones inhabiting protected environments, where the 'voluntary ghettos' reside, want to experiment 'participating in the common' and to approach mixophilia. This would require a circulation between the

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[10] mixophilia = mixing affinity constructed from mix + philia [comb. form meaning 'friendship, fondness, from Gk. philia 'affection,' from philos 'loving']

'inside' (the voluntary ghettos) to the 'outside' spaces (the enforced ghettos) as defined by Bauman (2003: 29).

For those who want to get a sense of the smell of its 'shabby and squalid streets' (29), for those who strategically plan to sponge its authenticity, it is necessary to communicate with the 'outside' space. This authenticity will turn out to be the essence of commodities, products and services produced and craved by those in the protected and wealthy environment.

In most cases, those willing to have their 'bubbles' voluntarily and safely perforated employ a sort of interface, a mediating tool, and/or produce devices that would grant the endorphin filled sensation of being immersed on the other side of the fence - supposedly without the 'pain' mentioned by Sennet.

In our current and euphemistically 'globalized' condition, no big city can escape from being immersed in the recent mediation tools provided by communication corporations. Slogans such as 'Live Without Borders' (Tim Brasil), 'Connecting People' (Nokia), 'Solutions for a Small World' (IBM), bear promises of providing the feeling of participation in the 'outside' space. Far more than just selling communication tools, these slogans suggest the access to new worlds, the immersion into new 'realities', which inadvertently, come with representational artifices based on stereotypes and essentialisms that flattens and commodifies the actuality of whatever 'reality' it is being depicted.

Mobile phones, wireless gadgets, online games, GPS, connected enabled PDA's and handhelds bring together the common aspiration to interface 'realities', not necessarily promoting any true participation or closer touch regarding the 'outside' space, in the sense pointed by Bauman. They attempt to introduce the notion that reaching distant and separated 'realities' – often in-between private spheres – is the same as sharing experiences in public domains. Nevertheless, far from providing any legitimate experience of involvement in public life, 'the capability to connect', or the feeling of

participation suggested by communication corporation advertisements seem to be what best describes their ideologies concerning the construction of realities.

According to Lazzarato the representation of realities by means of its mediation, is already a fabrication, a form of replacement of a given 'reality' with 'media realities'. In Lazzarato's words, in corporate strategies 'images, signs and statements do not represent something, but rather create possible worlds'.[11] The author and activist recalls the semiotic extension of capitalism, emphasizing the predominance of language and symbols in the current economy of colonizing culture, art, urban life, and the body. 'The corporation does not generate the object (the commodity), but rather the world in which the object exists. Nor does it generate the subject (worker and consumer), but rather the world in which the subject exists' (2003: 2).

To participate in a fabricated world of signs described by Lazzarato as if 'constructed through statement-arrangement' (3) is not the same as engaging in shared spaces of a city. Recalling our previous metaphors, such technologies would not perforate the 'bubble' that separates these different 'realities'. Rather, they would set them apart through the production and commodification of 'membranes', or 'blind interfaces' that are neither permeable nor connective: they isolate.

1.4 Soft and alienating mediations

Brian Holmes considers the current forms of participation of individuals in public life, by means of recent technologies or working and leisure procedures, as an 'alienation from political society, which in the democratic sense is not a profitable affair and cannot be endlessly recycled into the production of images and emotions' (2002: 14).

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[11] Speech at PUC-SP (Subjectivity Studies Department), organized by Suely Rolnik, as an open debate on Politcs and Art also with the presence of Brian Holmes. Recorded on videotape by Lucas Bambozzi. São Paulo, 23/11/2005.

Holmes' assumptions suggest that the reconnection with the public life (the strangers, the 'outside' realities) may be needed in order to prevent from a fall into the emergent forms of alienation. However, corporative mediation solutions, with its range of globalized media products have just given 'legitimacy to a new, transnational consumer ideology' (2002: 2), based on the notion of mobility and ephemeral engagements, showing that through this path there would be no legitimate re-enactment with other than fabricated 'realities'.

The cultural industry, now fully supported by the telecommunication industries, has increasingly mobilized strategies to mimic 'realities', blurring the distinctions of 'legitimate' and 'forged' senses of ordinariness and public life employed by consumer strategies. 'Smart mobs' is a term introduced by Howard Rheingold to make reference to swarming practices, 'conducted by individuals capable of acting together even without knowing each other' (2002: xi-xii). It's origins are strongly linked to consumerism but at the same time it constitutes a socio-cultural phenomenon. The initial pretext to approach people, the apparently laudable premise of placing the individuals closer to each other, by means of smarter mediating technologies, could be a way through which one gets to meet the 'outside reality'. But when we focus on 'smart mob' tools, constituted by pervasive computing devices – 'inexpensive microprocessors embedded in everyday objects and environments' (2002: 12), there are some specific points to consider. These systems are 'locative' and naturally immersed in the public environment, and for this reason it is expected that they would help to effectively improve the experience of public life, re-shaping 'reality' at least with less mixophobia, as proposed by Bauman. Nevertheless, the immediate consequence of such actions 'in concert', has been the emergence of dispersed, temporary and instant local swarms, identified as nonsensical actions, hedonistic performances such as the *flash-mobs* – of course the employment of such technologies by activists, grassroots communities and artists, have lead to

some significantly empowered local networks.[12] These are however, subjects to be explored in chapters 2 and 3.

1.5 Intimate technologies

Mediation systems usually employ strategies to make interfaces appear convincing and authentic. In order to appear as 'real as possible', language and technology, more often than not, mimic and simulates the aesthetics of 'reality', based on an individual's ordinary life. The key elements for the engagement in a mediated event is the promise of feelings of privacy and intimacy. Telecommunications corporative slogans usually bring these elements to the front line of their plea. It can be a SMS message sent in a specific special moment, a chat with the kids on their birthday, soft words exchanged anytime with one's boy/girlfriend. The drive behind such strategies is the offer of instant access to one's private life, which is likely to result in an 'intimate circumstance'. At the same time, approaching intimacy is usually linked to the idea of puncturing the crust of 'reality', as it equals reaching not always allowed domains – even when 'reality' is just a 'produced actuality', a varnish covering a fabricated situation.

The emergence of the so-called 'intimate technologies' has blurred even more the concepts related to intimacy, privacy and reality. Sara Diamond who has organized a series of meetings in Banff Centre to discuss intimacy says: 'The new technologies we use to enhance intimacy are also the very same ones being used to open up the social arena of discovery around once-private affairs' (2002: 3). The current flood of seductive gadgets, loaded with promises of eliminating the distances between real life and its representational possibilities, they all bring in an ideal notion of privacy, which would be the open door for an easy and 'secure intimacy'.

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[12] Rheingold cites the emergence of spontaneous 'mobilezations' such as a cult of fare jumpers who ride Stockholm's public transit system and use text messaging to warn each other when a conductor is on the way to check tickets.

The recent proliferation of tiny cameras, now embedded in mobile phones have been leading to massive collections of supposed 'warm moments' that one would be likely to forget, feeding a sort of obsession on intimacy aesthetics. Like camera-enabled mobile phones, wearable computers, tactile media, location-based devices, instant messengers and voice over IP technologies (VoIP), they all attempt to offer an idea of comfort, a sort of 'everywhere-privacy' that can also be interpreted as intimacy. Rather than describing the technological instance (cellular), mobile phones encapsulate a notion of mobility, described as portable 'temporary intimate zones' (TIZ) by Matt Locke.[13] The term TIZ borrows references from TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone), coined by Hakim Bey referring to poetic events and actions that suggest subtle changes in the social reality aiming to a 'more intense mode of existence' (Bey 1991: 15). But can we still think about intimacy as a terrain of intensity, pleasure, proximity, fruition or appreciation?

Since personal information has become a valuable commodity, both privacy and intimacy turn out to be the most essential and recognizable icons of such value. As any commodity, intimacy features an aesthetically constructed significance, which becomes clear when it is connected to the idea of proximity (a temporary mixophilia) or is a result of technological mediation processes (instant access to privacy).

Also, intimacy acquires new configurations and meanings according to the technological systems it is attached to. Distinct levels and shades of intimacy can be obtained differently by phone, by e-mail, through VoIP devices, by touching sensors or through webcams.

As we learned with Lazzarato, representation strategies play an important role in contemporary alienating progression. Thus, intimacy aesthetics are related to how separated domains are mediated, or as an effect of experiencing 'reality' as a mere aesthetic understanding, an intangible

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[13] Matt Locke is a British theorist, former director of The Media Centre in Huddersfield and currently Head of BBC Imagineering. Matt has referred to TIZ in his speech at Intimate Technologies Conference, held at the Banff Centre in 2002.

occurrence. To accept fabricated worlds as a real experience is to fall into the traps of representation, as the overwhelming abundance of images produced by the media each day may compromise what we deem to be 'real'.

This research has found it valuable to sketch the distinction between what could be termed the 'real' and 'reality'. In a simple comparison, the 'real' may be described as already experienced or felt prior to having been expressed through current forms of representation. The 'real', is translated more through sensations, whereas 'reality' is susceptible to representations that are often legitimized, but not necessarily legitimate.

Suely Rolnik has developed this distinction, reserving the word 'reality' for current forms of existence, both subjective and objective, defining 'reality' as it has been formatted and structured. As a consequence, Rolnik defines the 'real', as 'something broader and perhaps less tangible […] something like a force field, that affects the mind, the body, in what is intensive and not so perceptible' (2004: 13). As such, 'reality' is thought of as a sort of battlefield from which one attempts to reach the force field of the real.

My argument is that the concept of 'reality' has been widely misused, shaped merely as discourse (a fabricated 'bubble') by corporate discourse via mainstream media in our daily life. As in a syndrome, it has been given artificial values not only by the sphere of mass media and advertising but also by most products of the cultural industry, the cinema circuit, the art system and new media.

As we do not grasp the world entirely through perception - as perception itself is often experienced through representations - then a gap is produced: what has been used to represent 'reality', may not provide an effective way to participate in a shared 'reality', that is, where the force field of the real within it is understood as a territory of exchange, public life and ordinariness. If we do not take part of such shared space, the feeling of non-belonging or detachment may result in some extreme situations:

Tourists offered homeless holidays
Charities accuse the Dutch travel company of trivializing homelessness

Kamstra Travel, based in Eemshaven, in the north of The Netherlands, is offering tourists the opportunity – at a cost of £300 – to live like vagrants on the streets of London, Paris, Brussels, Prague and Amsterdam.

As part of the package, they would receive return flights, be distributed around the cities in small groups along with a guide and left to look after themselves without money for three nights.

The holidaymakers would be given a sleeping bag and either a musical instrument or a sketchpad and pencil with which they could try to earn some money. Only on their fourth night would they be given a meal and a bed, although tourists who felt it too tough could go to a hotel at any stage.

[…] A spokeswoman for London's police force warned the holidaymakers could also face arrest. She said that the concept of 'slumming tourism' was 'at best in bad taste and at worst could have serious consequences.
(CNN.com 28/09/2001 8:14 Peter Wilkinson) [14]

If there is a product, usually it is because there is a demand. News like the one above raise many issues: the trend to experience 'other realities' (the 'outside' spaces mentioned by Bauman); the move towards avoiding alienation by abiding to the twisted logic that commodifies it; and the wish to relate to strangers as co-inhabitants of a city.

Finally, the article suggests something that perhaps communication technology corporations have noticed a long time ago: the need to employ mediators as a means to establish direct experiences in public life within the city.

This recognition implies that the force field of the real has been captured as an important cog in the corporate mechanism of shaping social reality. The

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[14] Source: <http://archives.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/08/28/britain.homeless>

map has been re-configured into one where the mediating strategies (the interfaces) play a decisive role in the way we may grasp or not the world.

If we take interfaces as a generic technical *dispositif*, increasingly being defined as the real content as stated by Lev Manovich (2000: 66), it would lead us to think that the mediation would serve us as the real contact with 'reality'.

Should we assume that interface promises of proximity and connectivity through digital technologies really dissociate users from the 'real'? Is the use of representational artifices incompatible with social awareness? To better define interface and its social mediating possibilities becomes crucial from this point.

1.6 Reality-based interfaces

Stephen Jones describes interfaces as interactions occurring from person to person (facial gesture, bodily gesture, language, conversations); from person to machines (the control surface of a machine that enables its use, known as Human Computer Interfaces – HCI); from machines to person (a function of feedback from the machine); or from machines to machines (interconnections between machines, data networks, artificial life, generative systems) (2004: 9-11).

Interfaces have been up to now understood within the communication interaction field, as 'developed from observing reciprocal behaviours of organisms and persons in their environment' (2004: 1-2). Thus, it should be understood less as an 'in between' device, separating domains and more as 'an idea of exchange and flow between things, allowing the sharing of information between domains, suggested by Julio Plaza (1986: 195). In other words, the mediating interface can be considered as belonging to both sides of a domain, as a connective and confluence event.

We can elude the existence of interfaces. Jordan Crandall points to the naivety of orientations attempting to see our current condition as an impossibility of access to unmediated reality. It would just perpetuate a *dystopia* in which the world is actively constructed and controlled in terms of relational information systems. Crandall adds indeed that 'in contemporary media, particularly with television and Internet […] reality is subsumed within the dictates of the interface' (2005: 6).

Most recent projects dealing with sensors, 'intelligent ambient' and gesture-based interactions point to a supposedly new situation where the interface cannot be just a supplementary idea. Lev Manovich argues that interfaces have become the core of many new media artworks, the key to all formal disposition confronted with its content. 'Thus the old dichotomies content-form and content-medium can be re-written as content–interface' (2000: 66). This should not be understood to mean that the interface *per se* should be experienced as the final purpose, overriding any other element of an art project – if so, most of our arguments pointing to the interface as a way to connect 'realities' would fail. Manovich rejects the idea that an artwork's content could be independent from its medium – or from its aesthetics or codes. He adds that 'the choice of a particular interface is motivated by the content of the work to such extent that it can no longer be thought of as a separate level. Content and interface merge into one entity, and no longer can be taken apart' (67). As Manovich further describes it we understand that interfaces are already slices of our cultures and may also become part of things and objects that surround us.

At this point it should be clear that Graphical User Interfaces (GUI), employed by current operating systems (OS), are just functional references for the models to be considered here based on operations with the actuality and its conforming environment. Peter Weibel relies on the concept of endoapproach[15] to describe that the experience of the observer in interactive

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[15] 'Endophysics is a science that explores what a system looks like when the observer becomes part of this systems' (Weibel 1996: 341)

works is related and dependent on an interface: 'The boundaries of the world are the boundaries of our interface' (1996: 343). As such, the world can be described as an interface from the perspective of an explicit internal observer.

Implied in this thoughts it seems important to point to mechanisms for empowering individuals with resources for experiencing tangible 'realities', if possible, as it was mentioned, beyond representational artifices.

This question points toward the creation of 'tools for minimal mediation', or 'reality-based interfaces' as a definition for devices that will not only encourage individuals to participate in the shaping of public spaces, but may also suggest awareness with regards to social reality – effective ways of 'perforating the bubble'. Artworks evolving out of this context would have to deal with this challenge, as it relates not only to new aesthetic preoccupations, but also to the socio-political issues pervading today's information society.

From this assumption it is important to envision that the individuals will not make the actual world ineffective in favour of the interface, but may use it as perspectives of flow and exchange between domains, beyond the merely technical approach.

1.7 Conclusion

'Reality-based interfaces' can be seen as exchanging experiences involving actual spaces, where mediation technologies will be employed to produce deeper connections in different levels: between exhibition spaces and public environments; between artworks and 'realness'; in a person-to-person level in situations that a real exchange is unlikely to happen. It is a proposal for minimal mediation, through the means of shareable types of interface. Hence, such concept would take into consideration the instability of the medium, cultural issues, identity, otherness and the surrounding space. Instead of

forging 'realities', they use models found in real life to produce approximation, empathy and a sense of awareness.

These qualities are to be found in different depths in the projects *4walls, meta4walls* and *Spio* which are focused in the next chapters. A fourth project called Cubo, developed collectively is São Paulo, was also included as a collaborative model of non-corporative networking that succeeded to establish a shared public environment. As possible models of reality-based interfaces, these projects were created as emerging out of the disturbing, unstable and challenging context I have attempted to deal with when developing them.

end of chapter 1

CHAPTER 2: PROJECTS IN A GIVEN CONTEXT - MOTIVATIONS

> *The electronic resources added to an already hallucinated look, the potential of amplified and distorted sounds, multiplying the effects of simultaneity, discontinuity, autonomous fragment interactivity, of the tactile connectivity in a world invaded by multitudes, by flows and by merchandise. (Marshall McLuhan, 1962)*

> *The pieces of the puzzle are all around us now, but haven't joined together yet. The radio chips designed to replace barcodes on manufactured objects are part of it. Wireless Internet nodes in cafes, hotels, and neighbourhoods are part of it. Millions of people who lend their computers to the search for extraterrestrial intelligence are part of it. The way buyers and sellers rate each other on Internet auction site eBay is part of it. (Howard Rheingold, 2002)*

2.1 Motivations in context

The technological environment directly influences the social context as it introduces new habits, routines and behaviour. This has led to different ways of relating to public space affecting relationships and the way in which one experiences culture and art.

New definitions of private and public spaces have been shaped by this context, raising common issues that have led to the creation of the artwork focused by this research. Aspects related both to the social context and to the pervasive technological environment surrounding the artwork constitute the main topics of this chapter.

In general terms, all three pieces deal with different configurations of the relationship between the private and the public by considering three nodes: intimacy, privacy and interface.

Privacy is understood as the space around an individual, perceived as personal and exclusive to the person, a kind of buffer zone within which one

is embedded. The world is perceived as external to this bubble and is filtered through various grades of negotiated porosity. Intimacy is understood as a transaction within a single or between two private instances. Implied in this idea is a certain balance or proportion between the parts, in a situation of high permeability.

The *4walls* installation (2000-2003) points to the liquid configuration of the exchange territory between the public and private spheres. By drawing on archetypical situations commonly found in private four-wall spaces and intimate situations, the artwork invites the user to deal with the sharing of experiences with 'strangers' – following Bauman's previous propositions, as it proposes inversions and reconfigurations of the observer/observed roles and consequent reshaping of the bubble.

meta4walls (2001) approaches the condition of the web as a public space, dealing with concepts of appropriation and re-contextualization of media, such as unsolicited e-mail and online junk: hacking tips, on-line illegal products, suspicious services, etc. As a portal dealing with the private use of the web confronted with the increasingly public means of such meta-space, the piece points to intrusive forms of collecting and processing personal data – such as through the use of *cookies*.[1] Issues of privacy and transparency redesign the relationship between the user's private space and the public domain of the Internet.

Spio relates directly to the growth of controlling devices and pervasive technologies such as the closed-circuit television cameras (CCTV), the radio-frequency identification tags (RFID tags), automated and generative systems as a way of proposing the discussion of the physical presence of surveillance devices embedded in daily life. The confrontation with the visible hardware nodes of surveillance apparatuses poses issues of people's attitude towards the presence of such equipment around us.

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[1] Cookies are small applications used by web browser that collect and store information about users, based on their browsing patterns and information provided when navigating.

These projects were all motivated, in general, by the issues pointed in the previous chapter: artwork working as tools for minimally mediating 'realities' that suggest questions and awareness about one's participation in public life. As different models of 'reality-based interfaces', they specifically tie up notions of privacy and intimacy under a technological context of distinct machinery tools, media and surveillance procedures.

2.2 Motivations: *4walls* (2000-2003)

Surveillance grounds these projects, given that the same technologies that allow private or intimate communication at anytime, anywhere, actually open doors to unimaginable levels of surveillance never seen by previous generations.

Surveillance here can be described as the external monitoring of a private space for the purposes of control. Its main relevant dimension is an unidirectional character: always from the outside in. There is no question of intimacy, as no exchange or balance feature between the parts. As Felix Stalder claims, rather than fighting every connection between surveillance and privacy, we have to reconceptualize what these connections do, 'rather than looking for acts of individual transgression (X has invaded Y's privacy) we have to see them part of a new landscape of social power' (2002b: 123).

Even Howard Rheingold, who, in his book *Smart Mobs,* has rendered a sunny picture of the mobile techno future, has also considered its downsides: 'We are moving rapidly into a world in which the spying machinery is built into every object we encounter. Although we leave traces of our personal lives with our credit cards and web browsers today, tomorrow's mobile devices will broadcast clouds of personal data to invisible monitors all around us.' (2002: 223)

Rheingold offers no solution to the matter of how much privacy ought to be sacrificed in the name of recent instant communications, suggesting that

issues on new procedures for everyday life monitoring appear to take place within the context of previous surveillance debates, often producing fears about centralized control, or the violability of personal life.

The discussion about surveillance is cyclic. During the 20th century it had already been recursively approached by philosophers from various schools. The modern fear of totalitarian surveillance models has found in the publication of the novel '1984' by George Orwell, in 1949, a symbolic inauguration. There has actually been a recent surge of interest in the interdisciplinary field of surveillance studies. The implications of surveillance practices in the production of social order and social control are the object of renewed attention, as more pervasive forms of institutional monitoring are being developed.[2] In the art circuit, artists from various areas have dealt with issues on surveillance, and have used surveillance technology to create work.

In every discussion, the idea of the panopticon is central and many scholars agree on the fundamental importance of the writings of Michel Foucault who has indicated that, more than a prison device, panoptism was a possibility of internalizing surveillance by the observed subject. His point of view has extended panopticism and discipline to any theorization of contemporary surveillance practice.

David Lyon considers that Foucault has popularized the idea of the panopticon as the 'epitome of social control of modern times. What had once featured merely by an eccentric social reformer, was reinvented by Foucault as a paradigmatic exemplary of modern discipline' (2001: 114).

Gilles Deleuze adds that Foucault has, moreover, identified the transience of the disciplinary model of eighteenth and nineteenth centuries societies with

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[2] See: Surveillance & Society an international initiative aiming to bring surveillance studies to wider attention, within academia and beyond <http://www.surveillance-and-society.org>. Urbaneye is a multidisciplinary group of criminologists, philosophers, political scientists, sociologists and urban geographers from seven countries <http://www.urbaneye.net>

regards to the emergence of the societies of control in modern times. The characteristics of the latter are not always tangible, but rather determined by codes, passwords, numerical languages, access to information, and the 'free-floating control that replaced the old disciplines operating in the time frame of a closed system' (1992:2). While in the disciplinary societies institutions were fixed and 'one was always starting again, from school to the barracks, from the barracks to the factory' (2), in societies of control 'one is never finished with anything – the corporation, the educational system, the armed services being metastable states coexisting in one and the same modulation, like a universal system of deformation' (2).

Further comparisons are described by Deleuze:

> We no longer find ourselves dealing with the mass/individual pair. Individuals have become "dividuals" and masses, samples, data, markets, or "banks". Perhaps it is money that expresses the distinction between the two societies best, since discipline always referred back to minted money that locks gold as numerical standard, while control relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies (3).

As Deleuze himself completes, 'there is no need to ask which is the toughest regime' (4), but rather, how power is redistributed and updated in our current society.

The emergence of more recent information technologies has located surveillance as the central means of social ordering or social orchestration, leading to no differentiations between information societies and surveillance societies (Lyon 2001: 10). Gilles Deleuze concludes his essay *Postscript on the Societies of Control* (1992) with some ironic predictions: 'What counts is that we are at the beginning of something` (4).

The characteristics of surveillance societies are yet to be fully defined, as we are just starting to understand how the biographical profiles, population data and biometric information are emerging as dynamic sources of power in the mutating social and global environment.

As a principle of power, panopticism, can be used in many contexts, beyond the modern society from which Foucault postulated most of his ideas. The controlled space of the panopticon has become, since Foucault, synonymous with the vast repertoire of intrusive practices that has characterized contemporary societies to internalize control and surveillance is the greatest form of invasion. Thomas Levin points to the wide range of such practices, 'from more traditional imaging and tracking technologies to the largely invisible but infinitely more powerful practices of "data-veillance" – that today constitute the extensive arsenal of social control' (2002: 12). Some key questions coming from such new context, were posed by Levin in his curatorial statement for the exhibition 'Ctrl [Space], Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother',[3] at ZKM, Centre for Art and Media, in Karlsruhe, Germany:

> What happens when one reconceives the panopticon in terms of new infrared, thermal, or satellite imaging practices? Indeed, what are the sociological and political consequences of a surveillant culture based increasingly on entirely non-phenomenal logics of data gathering and aggregation? (12)

The 'Ctrl [Space]' exhibition tried to offer some answers by putting together a wide-ranging list of artworks that challenged surveillance in a broad sense. It brings to our attention that many artists have explored the dynamics of watching and being watched. Some of the works include Andy Warhol's explorations of 'real-time' and early closed-circuit video in the 1960s; Michel Klier's *The Giant* (1983); Vito Acconci,s' *Following Piece* (1969); Rem Koolhas' *Project for the Renovation of a Panoptic Prison* (1979); Sophie Calle's *The Shadow/Detective* (1985); Thomas Ruff's night photographs (1992); the ironic Surveillance Camera Players's *George Orwell-1984* (1998), the surveillant science of the Bureau of Inverse Technology (1996-1999), Jordan Crandall's *Drive* (1998-2000); Julia Scher's *Superdesk* (1993-2001); Walid Raad's *I Only Wish That I Could Weep* (2001) and others.

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[3] ZKM's website keeps a partial documentation on the exhibition at <http://ctrlspace.zkm.de>. The exhibition was followed by an extensive catalogue/book published by Mit Press.

Together, these works draw a scenario that adds another ingredient to the political issues regarding surveillance, which is the one of the subjectivity of an artwork.

Der Riese (The Giant - 1983), by Michel Klier is an assemblage of images recorded only by CCTV cameras. Considered by Arlindo Machado a 'videographic poem' (1993:221), the work uses images from a large number of surveillance control rooms spread throughout Germany. Both the monotonous movements, charged with symbolism, and the narrative connections, many times established by the actual viewers, awoke theorists and artists for a new context in sedimentation. The effectiveness of the CCTV type of panopticons draws an invasive scenario through an outside-inside only permeability, where privacy is constantly being disclosed, under the scrutiny of such 'anonymous machines, performing invisible and painless penetrations' (1993: 220). The viewer is invited to take the lace of the hypothetical mega-surveillant, experimenting what must be at the destination point of the surveillance image flux – the other side of the prying camera in front of which we exist.

Fig. 3: Still image from the video Der Riese (The Giant - 1983) by Michael Klier

Eyes of Laura (2004), a work by Canadian artist Janet Cardiff provides web-remote controlling access to a robotic CCTV camera installed at the Vancouver Art Gallery.[4] It gives the viewer the sensation that he/she can have some control over the surveillance situation. Through an interface between the viewer's computer and the actual camera, the viewer can tilt, pan or zoom the camera, driven by what she/he sees in real time. As a kind of 'street culture blog' the website collects several subjective comments about the sequences of scenes observed.

By exploring the fascination about ordinary life, the work meets the 'poetics of emptiness' found in Klier's *Der Riese*. Now using the Internet to control CCTV cameras, and with a touch of voyeurism (the flow of people and cars passing is appealing), the work adds the features and the ability to effectively scrutinize events in actual streets according to subjective approaches. The point is not that of the interface between virtual and real but rather between reality-based situations and our intentions to interact with this reality (for instance, differently from porn sites using similar structures, in Cardiff's work there is nobody acting for the camera). To the voyeuristic contemplation of the world as a flow of images in *Der Riese*, Cardiff adds the semi-authorial narrative of zapping: the triggering of camera movements and zooms expand the private bubble of the surveillant further into the invigilated areas.

Yet oriented to a single user, *Eyes of Laura* functions as an example of a hybrid reality-based interface, allowing almost the touch of 'reality' through the means of a web interface, (bridging the viewer to actual spaces around Vancouver Art Gallery).

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[4] The work is available at: <http://eyesoflaura.org> accessed: 27/01/2005
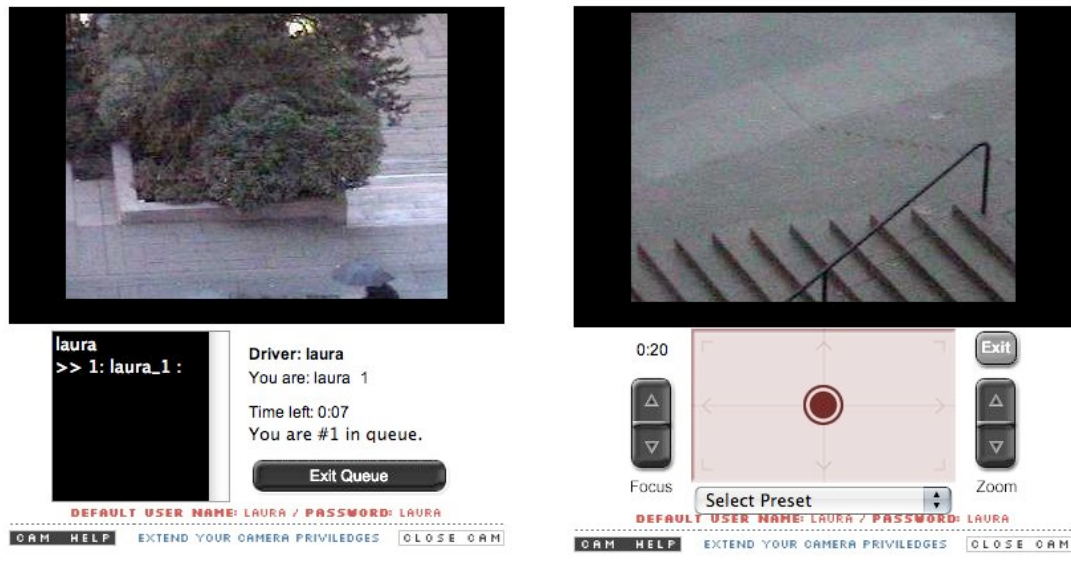
Figs. 4 and 5: The controlling console of Eyes of Laura, by Janet Cardiff (2004).

The question for now is how much awareness it can produce as a poetic-subjective tool dealing with surveillance, as Cardiff's piece can also be interpreted as just another tool for empowering intimacy and voyeuristic inclinations. Where is rupture? In works such as this one, what delineates awareness from upholding the issues that we wish to shed light on? Is it another kind of alienation? Or, how do they help to perforate the bubbles?

2.3 Project 1: *4walls* installation (2000-2003)

> *In April 1981, at my request, my mother went to a detective agency. She hired them to follow me, to report on my daily activities, and to provide photographic evidence of my existence. (Sophie Calle, The Detective, 1981)*

The *4walls* installation was firstly presented within a thematic exhibition called *Intimidade* (Intimacy) held at Paço das Artes, São Paulo in 2002. One of the intentions of the curator Daniela Bousso was to choose works dealing with 'metaphors to articulate a symbolic set showing the significance of intimacy and its situation in the contemporary world' (2003: 92).[5] The exhibition resulted in an environment of shared experiences of closeness and issues of

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[5] Curator's statement at the catalogue of the Intimidade exhibition. A copy of this catalogue is provided as a supporting material.

privacy, suggested by mutual interferences between the works, most of them dealing specifically with the subject of intimacy, such as Sam Taylor Wood's *Hysteria* (1997), Chris Cunningham's *Flex (2001)*, Christoph Draeger's *Schizo* (2001), Claude Lévêque's *Je Suis Une Merde* (2001) among others.

The *4walls* installation asks the question: 'what takes place between persons, spaces and objects in urban life?' Like some of my previous installation projects (*Private Conversation*, 1998 or *Uso Particular*, 1999), which use projections over the surface of objects, it suggests an idea of interface between actual and subjective worlds. As if objects like windows, walls or streets would gain a kind of 'given life'; as if they could accumulate small portions of human memory, in the sense used by Walter Benjamin, that a story of a street is not about its bricks, where 'a girl gave her first kiss, a kid learned how to be a man, a lover had his life changed forever' (1994: 120-121). Following that, the work can be seen as a 'symbolic' proposition, which uses archetypical situations commonly found in private, domestic and intimate spaces.

The installation comprises four windows that are hung at the end of four corridors. Each of the windows receive images that are rear-projected on the glass, corresponding to recognizable domestic environments such as lounges, living rooms and bedrooms. As the visitor enters the room/corridor and is still distant from the windows, the imagery is suggestive of intimate situations going on behind the window frame. The visitor peeps the window unnoticed, in a strictly non-relational stance. Despite the set up being within the public space of an exhibition, voyeuristic observation is permitted and even encouraged as it is an art space. As the visitor approaches the window, the narrative ambiance is changed – if she/he gets closer, the video-character may confront and argue with the visitor. As the visitor violates one's privacy, more interaction ensues.

Fig. 6: The 4walls installation in Turin, Italy (2005).

The original set up proposes four levels of interaction between the visitor and the images. They produce different levels of intensity in the narrative with particular ways of interaction.[6] Each environment displays a particular behaviour, related to ordinary and private actions that usually happen inside a four-wall scenario (solitude, anguish, repeated movements, non-sensical actions). Each level experienced by the viewer is the result of the detection by a proximity sensor, which changes the previously recorded tracks and adds other possibilities/intensities to the narratives.[7]

As the visitor approaches the projection, the simple viewer-watches-person equation is broken, as the image talks back, triggering a few subjective events in the viewer. Intimacy is suddenly thrown in to the equation, as the

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[6] Technically, the system uses a proximity sensor which triggers the digital sequences via an iCube digitizer system, controlled by MAX/MSP and Simple Nato software.

[7] The appendix section contains more info about the *4walls* installation including a DVD documenting two different exhibited versions and other relevant material.

very status of the image as representation is momentarily questioned, and what was a non-relational gaze has become an exchange, perhaps between living subjects. Feelings of uneasiness are evoked, as the viewer has to reshape his/her bubble so as to accommodate the new situation and perhaps reciprocate the same degree of intrusion that he or she had safely effected when surveilling. Additionally, the private bubble has to be negotiated afresh with the wider public exhibition space, as the permitted voyeuristic relationship has turned into one of potentially intimate exchange.

All these assumptions reveal that the artwork's engine is located in the way the viewer will think about his/her own condition and undisclosed desires. As it is not immediately clear what has triggered the confrontation, the physical interface gains in complexity, ceasing to be merely a window directing the gaze from the outside to the inside… Sudden deflations and reshapings like these force the viewer to confront their position regarding intimate exchanges, private and public spaces and the mediations between them. As such, the work is also an attempt to produce holes in the bubble protecting us from the 'outside' (Bauman 2003: 28-32), the Other.

The work would not produce the same effects if the situations were not triggered by the viewer by means of its interface. Here we could recall Manovich's postulations about the joint conditions of interface and content. To perceive the interface as the main core of the work is to override its technical condition over more significant intentions. Thus, more than just a way to take interface out of its conception as a mere apparatus, it was an attempt to bring into view the idea of an immaterial and awareness-related kind of interface.

We are not allowed to watch through the windows from outside inwards; what happens inside it is a 'privilege' of the walls, or, in Benjaminian terms, when the objects 'accumulate histories'. The questions originated from the public-versus-private dichotomy also feature some rules, which are valid only in specific directions – in this case, from private to public order, from inside to the outside. The word private is widely used in the sense of 'privilege' (Sennet

1974: 31), and since the beginning of the18th century is a word that has had its meaning adapted according to changes in our societies.

The negotiation between the private and the intimate spheres in relation to the intimacy of the represented character is another point to stress here. As such, the viewer may experience a shift from privacy (when relating to the represented Other) to intimacy (when relating to him/herself). To experience the installation was for many visitors an uneasy way to portray his/her own prejudices concerning issues on intimacy. Through such mediating technologies one was likely to be exposed also to issues on identity, cultural differences, sociability and other kinds of embarrassment.

Such aspects turned out to be quite effective during exhibitions abroad in Italy (Share Festival[8], Turin 2005) and France (XX Videoformes[9], Clermont-Ferrand 2005). There, the local context could produce a better and distinctive dialogue with the privacy issues. While in its first exhibition in São Paulo the archetypical situations presented through the work relied more on the images, in those relatively small European cities, the images and its presented situations could reveal that the archetypical condition was more related to the audience, who have manifested more intensely in relation to the proposed setting. Putting together the exhibitions contexts, a shifting condition between two important questions involved in the work can be noticed: that of the representation (the images and portrayed situations) and that of mediation (the audience and its own condition reflected through the work).

In other words, I understand that presenting the images in a more archetypical condition, such as the performer in more explicit actions (representation artifices), produced a sort of normalization in the audience – which was the case in São Paulo. Additionally, in this first exhibition, the subject of the intimacy has reverberated in consonance over the works by means of the excessive physical proximities and mutual audio interferences.

8 Share Festival <www.toshare.it>

9 XX Videoformes vidéo et nouveaux médias dans l'art contemporain <www.videoformes.com>

It somehow standardized issues on embarrassment, intrusive gestures and other emotional fluctuations to the point of its annihilation in works like *4walls* or *Hysteria* by Sam Taylor Wood, which clearly demanded a more isolated environment.

On the other hand, some qualities emerged from the opportunity of comparison suggested by having works dealing similarly with intimacy and privacy. If most works did 'show a not very encouraging vision of the self' (Bousso 2002: 93), it configured an undeniable confrontation emerging from facing life's ambiguities and contradictions, as part of human being's reciprocal issues with the world.

The 'desirable' experience of observing and the supposedly 'not desirable' experience of being observed are brought together through the means of the interfaces, but it is a result of an induced feeling related to the unstable definitions of privacy and intimacy in our times.

To play with realness and its further complexities has been the challenge for many artists, working in the art spheres or apart from that, in public spaces, for instance. Further 'urgencies' appear in these projects according to the context they emerge from. To deal with the web as a public space is what first motivated the next project.

2.4 Motivations: *meta4walls* (2001)

Regarding literary production, Walter Benjamin writes that the distinctions between author and public, maintained by the bourgeois-mainstream press through artificial means, was beginning to disappear in the post-revolution Soviet press. 'The reader is always prepared to become a writer, in the sense of being one who describes and prescribes' (1983: 90). Benjamin mentions the literary experts of his time as anybody who is in charge of the subjected job, who legitimately 'gains access to the authorship' (90), not precisely

through any means of specialist training. The result of this process becomes what Benjamin calls as 'common property' (90).

It is suggested that once the author is also a producer, what can be published or not is not a vertical decision anymore. Thus, when the Soviet press started to reflect also ordinary views, it accentuated the decline of (high) literature in the bourgeois press, but, at the same time, was a motivation for its regeneration.

Although this scenario has often been brought to contrast with present-day open source and property-based operating systems (Cox & Krysa, 2005: 21), I would like to suggest Benjamin's point of view to approach a range of concepts such as appropriation, recontextualization, popularity and ordinariness, as manifestations that blur standards concerning 'low and high' culture, 'center and periphery' in our modern times. What was once 'unusable' or 'too popular' for the bourgeoisie was appropriated by many artists who made their way through techniques that did affect the ruling models in the art system, 'transforming the technical apparatus'.

Benjamin refers to Dadaism's strength in 'testing art for its authenticity', when calling to our attention their techniques:

> You made still-life out of tickets, spools of cotton, cigarette stubs and mixed them with pictorial elements. You put a frame round the whole thing. And in this way said to the public: look, you picture frame destroys time; the smallest authentic fragment of everyday life says more than painting. Just as a murderer's bloody fingerprint on a open page says more than the words printed on it (1983: 94).

Marcel Duchamp achieved similar transformations in the 'technical apparatus'[10] when he starts to take industrialized and mass-produced objects into the art circuit. His 'readymades', such as his first one, the *Bicycle Wheel* (1913), are more a manifest than pieces of art.

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[10] Duchamp insisted in his later years, that Dada did not influence his own work. In a conversation with Pierre Cabanne he says: 'It was parallel, if you wish. [. . .] It wasn't Dada, but it was in the same spirit, without, however, being in the Zurich spirit' (Cabanne 1971: 56).

Later, Duchamp attained to distinguish several different types of 'readymades',[11] recycling his own model of recycling the real into art. Twentieth-century art history is full of examples of these types of appropriations and resignifications. Several works, artists and *avant-garde* movements have indicated the idea of recontextualization such as the Constructivists in Russia (Rodchenko's collages), Kurt Schwitters's *Merz* publications (1923-1932), the Cubists' use of readymade fragments into original art works, specially in its synthetic phase (1913-1920s), and John Cage's use of gramophone records in *Imaginary Landscape No. 1* (1939).

From the 1950's when communication media such as found footage films, television news, the television itself, and ordinary devices became more clearly subject to the production of art, Pop art (Andy Warhol) and Fluxus (specially Nam June Paik) brought to our attention the way in which ordinariness and recontextualization were already part of the art system.

By the end of the 1960's, the connections between artistic production and entertainment industry entangled strategies of appropriation. It began to be difficult to perceive 'who/what appropriates who/what'.

Already in the broadcast media age, amateur media fans collect, select, inflect, re-circulate, amplify, parody, or recombine primary images and songs for re-creations. In today's digital culture, appropriation may reveal itself as a strategy of commodification – when ambiguously linked to the cultural industry and publicity, for example. Recycling, remixing and appropriating come as the make up of digital culture. In addition, the digital means of dealing with media content provide efficient resources for people to gather and distribute all kinds of content. The same media provides the means for producing (authoring) and distributing (publishing). This characteristic has

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[11] In one of his latest texts, 'Apropos of Readymades' (1961), Marcel Duchamp exposes a basic antimony between art and 'readymades' by suggesting the creation of different kind of 'readymades'. To exemplify one particular type, he says: Use a Rembrandt as an ironing board'. He also emphasizes its lack of uniqueness by saying that 'the replica of the 'readymade' delivers the same message'.The text is widely available on the Internet. See:Tout-fait <www.toutfait.com> or <http://www.marcelduchamp.net>.

been expanding the production of content and its immediate availability to a level never seen before. But it does not means such production has been shared, accessed or even visible. The networks may be the proper environment to gather all this digital content but it is necessary to better understand its 'connections'. To drive attention to some hidden meanings, to put the focus on the apparent triviality of some experiences, to bring into view the value of ordinary things, to distinguish the expressivity from the mere connectivity, to make visible the contradictions of this environment have also become an evident responsibility of artists dealing with new media.

2.5 *meta4walls* (2001)

> *Sometimes it is wise to sing to the playing of the piano.*
> *Sometimes we need the piano wire for other purposes.*
> *(Lachlan Brown, 2002)*

The web-based work *meta4walls* emerges from this approach and relies on a specific context. In the late 1990's surveillance of employees web-surfing was just starting, and SPAM was becoming a significant matter, though certain types of unsolicited e-mail were not so familiar to most people.

The idea of re-appropriating existing media grounds the project on different levels. The digital junk produced by unsolicited e-mail and 'shady services' available on-line can be seen as 'found objects', approaching the work to an idea of assemblage, as 'readymade' aided fragments applied to the piece.

The *meta4walls* project was developed as a prototype put together with the presentation of a paper on intrusive system at the XII Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival (São Paulo, 2001). As such it was partially commissioned by the festival, where it was first presented to the public. Instantly, it got many reviews and featured in exhibitions such as the 25th São Paulo International Biennial (2002) and Arte Nuevo InteractivA'05 2005 (Merida, Mexico). It was also presented as a study case at the meeting Intimate Technologies/Dangerous Zones (Banff, Canada 2002). Apart from

such formal invitations and exhibitions, several web sites and net art publications have pointed to the work, placing it in more informal shows.
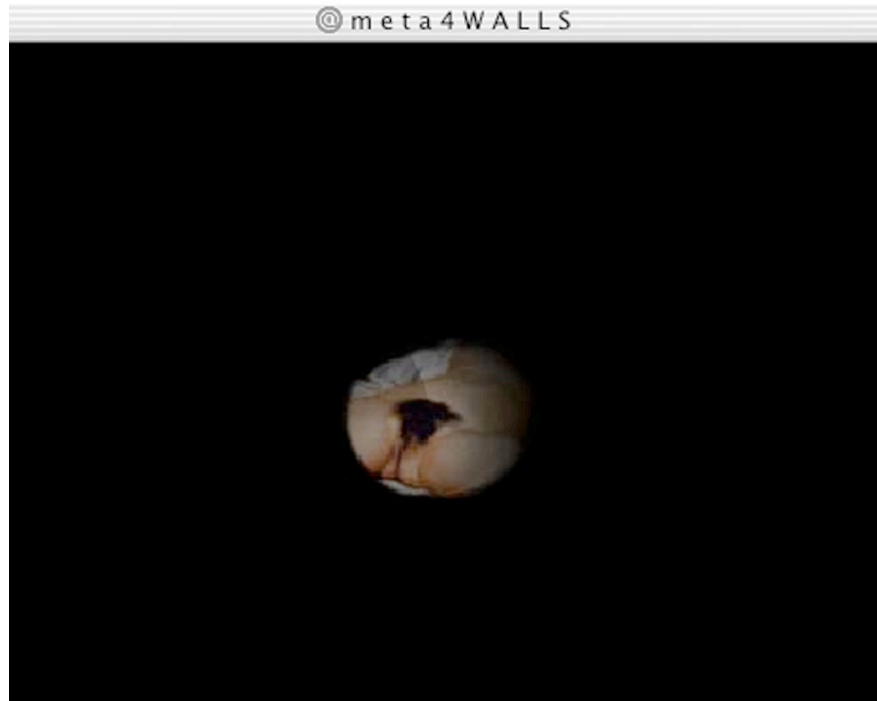
Fig. 7 The meta4walls's opening page (screenshot).

meta4walls is a portal that brings together links to certain suspicious services available in the net, such as addresses offering on-line university diplomas, dual citizenship and easy passport issuing, surveillance tools, passwords to porn sites, hacking tips, illicit drugs and other peculiar links.[12] As a whole, these links constitute a portrait of a specific period of the Internet, as services that would emerge in a more massive way by the year 2000, determining a supposed propensity of the net for this kind of e-commerce.

As a way of attracting the user to such content, the artwork deploys strategies that ambiguously combine a portal of shady and dodgy services to something

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[12] Though quite well known, by the year 2000 such subjects were not highly spammed. I have been collecting and storing unsolicited e-mails that reveal the progression of different kinds of spam through the web. Such 'collection' has about a thousand messages dated from 97. The most 'interesting' ones were surely posted between 1999 and 2001.

that could be recognised as a work with 'artistic intentions'.[13] The aim is to bring the art public to the 'dog-world' of the web, which ultimately constitutes what I meant to suggest as the 'junk-reality' of the Internet as a public space. The flow of e-mail considered as spam is today 68% of the world's online traffic.[14] It means that more than 15 billion emails sent daily are dominated by deceptive, partly or entirely fraudulent announcements of products (devices, investigation services, clothing, makeup), pornography (adult content, personal ads, relationship advice), financial (mortgage, loans, investments, real estate), scams (pyramid schemes, chain letters) health solutions and other kind of frauds based on vacation offers, online casinos, account notification, credit card verification, etc. If it cannot be considered 'the reality' of the Internet, this is, nevertheless, what currently dominates it.

Thus, *meta4walls* was designed as a work to bridge this 'mundane' universe into the art context. The initial image that gives access to the portal`s content is a small reproduction of the painting *'L'Origine du Monde'* (The Origin of the World - 1866) by the French painter Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). This picture is placed in the opening page with indefinite contours, suggesting it as a hole on the black screen, through which one can see the pubic region and the pair legs spread open, which characterize the controversial realist painting – it is worth to mention that when it was first exhibited, it was covered with a curtain, and the viewer had to open it up, as in a peep show.

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[13] LB: […] This work is a portal where some bizarre things would gather. It would attract a kind of public that normally feels embarrassed to go after pornography and all kind of dodgy content. The work is a kind of trap, a catch to make people believe that they are going to a site of 'good taste", but in fact, the site will take them to the 'real and wild world' of Internet, at least the world I consider real in the Internet, where everything can be sold: happiness, marijuana, pornography. […]

Christine Mello: You keep these messages, How do you keep other things, like you keep your images when you had an image data bank, the way you kept your shavers, hotel cards?

LB: 'I usually keep the messages that catch my attention the most, because they are strange. The first time I saw someone offering to fix a chair in the Internet, I kept it, because that was a kind of business that appeared unexpected, contradictory to the online principles by then. For instance, I did not produce any image for *meta4walls*. It is totally done with images that circulate in the Internet and were appropriated, most of them found on my own e-mail box. From Courbet's image to the image of a girl masturbating, all those images came from this universe, this junkyard from the Internet.' Excerpt from an interview to Christine Mello (February 2002)

[14] As for February 2005. Source: SymantecTM Spam Statistics
<http://www.trustmarquesolutions.com/security/documents/symantecav1.pdf> accessed: 05/11/2005

Depending on the user, such situation could suggest both an entry door to a soft-porn type of site, or an artistic site designed with at least some good taste. In aesthetic and conceptual terms, such ambiguity makes direct reference to a work by Marcel Duchamp entitled *Etant donnés: 1. La chute d'eau 2. Le gaz d'éclairage* (Given: 1.The Waterfall 2.The Illuminating Gas - 1946-1966).[15] In this work, peering through a peephole, one finds oneself looking at the shaven cleft, between her spread legs, of a nude woman lying on her back. Here the viewer is also a voyeur, as the work 'invites and excludes' at the same time.

Fig. 8: Marcel Duchamp's Etant donnnés (1966). Inside view.

Playing with references, appropriation and recontextualization, *meta4walls*

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[15] Etant Donnés consists of an old wooden door, bricks, velvet, twigs leather stretched over a metal armature of a female form, glass, linoleum, an electric motor and other material gathered by Duchamp on his walks in the park (NY) The viewer of the piece first steps onto a mat in front of the door, which activates the lights, motor, etc., and then peers through two 'peepholes' to view the construction behind the door. The *voyeur* strains, unsuccessfully, to see the 'face' of the eerily realistic nude female form which lies supine on a bed of twigs, illuminated gas lamp in hand. Source: <http://www.freshwidow.com/etant-donnes2.html> accessed: 10/12/2004

seeks relationships that are enigmatic enough to persuade the viewer to look for a second layer of meaning, which precedes the external suspicious links. Thus, driven by curiosity or the doubt about 'what kind of trap it is', one is likely to click on Courbet's image. The reference to *Etant donnés* is suggested from here not only through the voyeuristic approach of *'L'Origine du Monde'*. In either cases the woman's face does not appear, suggesting a porn perspective, which will be emphasized by the next click, when subtle intimate sounds are added to the environment. The next screen shows a small movie portraying a very similar situation, framed in the same angle of vision. Besides the apparent similarities, the image is now taken from a porn context, showing a woman masturbating with a corn cob. This is not truly explicit and the images will only be revealed through the movement of the viewer's mouse - as if she/he was looking for something hidden in a dark room, with the help of a spotlight. This central soft-porn image is surrounded by the external links that actually constitute the core of the work. The invitation to the links adopts a very enthusiastic advertising spiel, common to most spam, bulk mail and other related kinds of e-commerce:

BACHELORS, MASTERS, MBA, AND PHD DIPLOMAS: FIND OUT HOW!
GET RICH EASY! WORK FROM HOME!
INCREASE SEXUAL POTENCY
GET A SECOND PASSPORT - GET VISA TO EVERYWHERE
HACKING – DO IT YOURSELF

As the user is somehow attracted to visit the links and so she/he does, the system collects all kinds of data from his/her computer as well as from the websites being visited (by installing specific cookies). This information will then be reported back in a message window that appears a few minutes later, which insists in popping up to the foreground, no matter which window is being accessed at that moment. Triggered by information provided by the cookies, the codes simulate a message-window that looks exactly like the user's operating system-type of messages. Such mimic is thought to produce at least for a few moments, a certain doubt about what is produced by the work and what are the normal functions of the computer. Written on the report, one will see detailed comments not only about the site one has just

visited but also about one's own set-up, such as the display resolution, machine processor, amount of Ram memory installed, browser version, time spent on specific sites, plug-ins installed and other info. The surveillant's anonymity, invisibility and ethical aloofness is shattered by the rendering and publication of the user's profile. Personal data published on screen sketch an outline of the user, who, again, is not sure about the extent of personal information unwittingly given out. The protective bubble that was supposed to be in action was rendered ineffective.

Privacy and intimacy are deliberately blurred in the work. The piece was designed to be experienced in a private space (as the name suggests) in an alone and intimate circumstance, which was an intention to trigger more confidential thoughts, an unique notion of intimacy. The situation of being caught by the report has proven to be quite embarrassing and also creates a certain uneasy situation, suggesting to the viewer what it is to have not only one's privacy undisclosed but one's intimacy endangered. The work's intrusive elements intend to link to situations that one is unlikely to think about. To connect the viewer to real situations, to make her/him establish further connections between real and possibly-real situations are important points here.[16]

People who have accessed the piece in computers located in public spaces [17] or at their work places, very often were scared about the presence of somebody else in the room – underlining the intimacy/privacy issues involved in confront with surveillance. Due to the fact that the reporting windows tend

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[16] A more 'radical' version of *meta4walls* would trigger telephone calls to the viewer, through a series of pre-recorded telephone calls commenting the web-sites just visited. By invitation, this version was proposed to Impakt Festival (2003) in Utrecht. <http://www.impakt.nl>. Unfortunately there were restrictions regarding access to the local telephone system and it was not technically possible to implement it.

[17] When exhibited at the 25th São Paulo International Biennial in 2002, the practices on curating and presenting net art in Brazil was marked by general misunderstandings regarding some of its specificities. *meta4walls* was shown in regular PC computers together with other nine Brazilian works (curated by Christine Mello) and other ten International pieces (curated by Rudolph Frieling ZKM, Germany). The lack of a proper space led the organizers to opt, against the curators will, to a configuration that resembled an office or press room inside the exhibition and it was negatively detected by most viewers. The ideal way to show net art works has still been raising many critical debates in new media circuits and beyond, without a final word, as it often relies on the specificities of each piece in relation to the exhibition context.

to come to the foreground and could not be closed with a single click, this would reveal, to the eyes of passers by, one's private interest on illicit and dirty sites. The only way to completely close all windows is to 'force-quit' the whole browser, and users who are not familiar with computer not always know how to do it. I have some records showing that *meta4walls* did cause panic in certain situations. Additionally, by the time the work was launched, UK employers gained powers to snoop on workers – so it was concurrent with debates and privacy concerns.[18] Perhaps more than the 'talking back' of the surveilled object, *meta4walls* brings in the notion that there is no safe observation point in a surveillance society, and that widespread surveillance does not even require visual or presencial availability of the object.
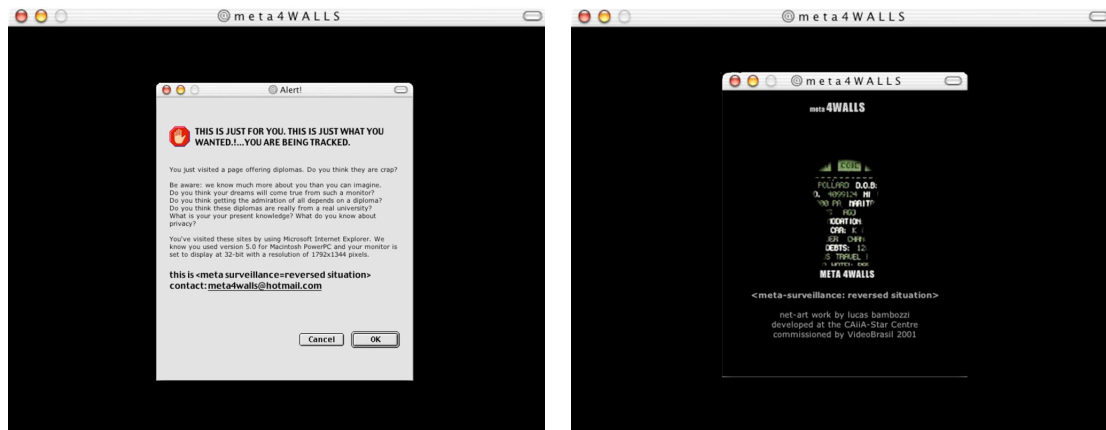
Fig. 9: meta4walls's pop-up report based on cookies (screenshot).
Fig. 10: meta4walls's pop up window credits (screenshot).

A series of references can be found in other works similarly emphasizing the idea that what happens in online sessions is definitely not detached from what

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[18] It is worth to mention a significant exhibition during 2002 in Madrid, Spain, in which the work was censored in a short notice. Initially included by curator Laura Baigorri in the showcase Muestra net.art/cd.art, for La Casa Encendida, in Madri the work was targeted by the sponsors as inciting hackerism and pornography. They alleged that the work would point to illicit links on the web and forced the curator to decline about its inclusion. The exhibition was based on works dealing with politics on the web and included works by Andres Burbano (Colombia), Gustavo Romano (Argentina), Brian Mackern (Uruguay), Technologies to The People - TTP (Spain) among others. In a genuine tactical media action, during the 'physical' opening of the exhibition, Daniel Garcia Andujar (TTP) pointed the *meta4walls'* URL from his home page, disclosing at the same time the whole story on the censorship – and causing embarrassment to the sponsors and organizers.

happens in 'real' life. Net art projects such as *Technologies to the People* [19], by Spanish artist Daniel Garcia Andujar, *Mejor Vida Corp.*[20] and *Mejor Vida Biotech*[21] by Mexican artist Minerva Cuevas, have inflicted similar occurrences by producing events dealing both with their friction with the reality, Always redirecting the user navigation to external links.

By gathering materials discarded as digital garbage in the virtual space, *meta4walls* brings back to the public domain events in the relationship between the receptor and the content – not exactly the image anymore –, inquiring not only the spam itself, but the way in which people deal with such mundane things. Suely Rolnik has summarized the work in a review following the launch of *meta4walls*:

> It is about the vast universe of commercial emails, especially those offering sexual delight, which compulsively invade computer screens in a veritable harassment of the soul. Instead of the automatic gesture to delete all this junk that the market dumps on us, the artist collects them, forwards them, not without producing some interruptions in the offer and consumption fluxes, deploying discrediting comments about privacy. In these unexpected insertions the receptor is caught in the act, not only in his/her sexual misery and onanist transaction with images, which is the most obvious; but also and more disturbing, in his passive submission to the harassment of images: she/he discovers that is being controlled even when she/he thought they were in their most intimate privacy, his/her most hidden erotic dreams, in the remote veins of their unconscious. It is the actual junk from the virtual market used as a weapon against its tyranny in the subjectivity of the receptor. The tables were turned. [22]

Rolnik points to the idea of recontextualization as a matter of production of subjectivity. If subjective elements start to shape 'realities', regarding the development of products and technologies, if ordinariness is to become a means of commodification, it sounds reasonable that one attempts to turn it around by creating subjectivities with the 'technical apparatus'. If not changing

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[19] <http://irational.org/tttp/TTTP/>

[20] <http://irational.org/mvc/english.html>

[21] <http://www.mvcbiotec.org/>

[22] This review was written spontaneously by Suely Rolnik and followed the launching of *meta4walls* over the Internet by September 2001.

it, at least revealing its contradictions; and in particular, according to Benjamin, not turning 'the struggle against misery into an object of consumption' (1983: 96). As for the *meta4walls*, there is no aesthetical value being applied to the 'junk-realities' that would lead the work to such risks. Once accessed, the junk appear per se, with no frame, as they are, located at their own URLS, at their own habitat. It is more a matter of bringing attention to such environment.

Marcus Bastos suggests that 'in a time where garbage must be cleaned and separated, why not think of these forms of reutilization as media recycling?' (Bastos, 2002: 4). To this 'economy' I add Lev Manovich's view, which states that what was once referred as quoting, appropriation, and pastiche no longer needs any special name. 'Now this is simply the basic logic of cultural production: download images, code, shapes, scripts, etc.; modify them, and then paste the new works online - send them into circulation (2002: 2).[23] Manovich indicates a more popular and expanded use of creative tools, referring to means of production characterized by a non-specialist kind of production, which recalls Benjamin: 'Authority to write [to design?] is no longer founded in a specialist training but a polytechnical one, and so it becomes property (1983: 90). Manovich concludes: 'When I ask my students to create their own images by making photographs or by shooting video, they have a revelation: images do not have to come from Internet! (2002: 2). A new way of thinking authorship is implicit here (as well as a generation gap). In more than 17 years working with video, when producing *meta4walls* was the first time that the images were not of my own authorship. More to the point, there would not be any. As a web-based work, the appropriation happened through the use of sources that did not rely on authorship or artistic qualities. Still, the reference to 'readymades' concerned not only the process of re-contextualization, but to the use of everyday and ordinary sources for the work.

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[23] Published on Nettime <http://amsterdam.nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-l-0204/msg00062.html>

2.5.1 Permeating contexts: data-veillance and soft intrusions

The meta-linguistic condition of *meta4walls* is emphasized through simulated conditions of intimacy and privacy. Such condition is suggested in relation to the works' most apparent and superficial content, which is embedded in its forms and strategies. The data mining technologies are intrinsic to the employed technologies, through the use of cookies. Cookies are well known intrusive codes that most users opt-in to have them installed, intending to have a more customized, 'exclusive' and intimate navigation. Cookies collect and store information about users based on their browsing patterns and information provided. Web sites can thus 'remember' information about users to facilitate their preferences for a particular site and allow the use of user passwords.[24] Cookies are widely used as a tool of commercial customization, placing ads according to individual and regional preferences. Cookies allow advertisers' aims to minimize waste and better target the audience they want to reach – in other words, a means of making their relationship more intimate. However, this cannot be true, as cookies are not a two-way conduit between comparable private instances, but instead, they establish unidirectional flow. By the point of view of the users, they are supposed to provide online 'comfort'. But still, if these tiny programs appear innocent and 'invisible', they are among pervasive technologies that can also be employed against the user. Something experienced in intimate online web sessions can unexpectedly be shaped in non-virtual, 'reality' forms. The particular way cookies are processed in *meta4walls* give emphasis to such idea of soft-intrusion, as for invasive procedures performed by software (not

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[24] There are two kinds of cookies that a web site can use. Persistent cookies are stored on the hard drive for many months or years. Per-session cookies are cached (stored in memory) during visits to the web site and are automatically deleted from the computer when it is disconnected from the Internet.

Some common uses for Internet cookies are:

1) An anonymous code given to the user so the web site operator can see how many users return at a later time. These are persistent cookies. 2) An identifying code. This usually occurs after a registration. The site could keep a detailed account of pages visited, items purchased, etc. and even combine the information with information from other sources once they know who the user is. 3) A list of purchased items. This is often used in 'shopping chart' web sites to keep track of an order. Often cookies of this type 'expire' as soon as the user logs out or after a short time. These are 'per-session' cookies. 4) Personal preferences. This can be anonymous or linked to personal information provided during a registration.

visible, not evident, always running in the background, as in a micro panopticon model). Cookies and other pervasive forms of information collection can make us think about our condition as a sort of living data. shaping the context of 'data-veillance': we are increasingly relying on databases not only as individual identities but also as cross-referenced information, as a net of relationships, a correlation between the various data that we were turned into. New forms of structuring digital archives have emerged and it is not just the individual data that are being stored in databases. The same way encrypted data may appear as nothing else than just digital codes, data can be assembled to build profiles. In a networked society the correlation between the various sources of data have been cross-referenced, serving to purposes not always related to the offering of comfort or customized services, but to allowing new profile accessing configurations.

Insurance premiums, for example, can be based on health data that is already available to insurance companies. For our convenience, we are told, the companies already know everything they need about our profiles. As Felix Stalder reminds us, the common problem is that we don't know what they know. Thus, we cannot be sure how much their information, if accurate, will be used against us. 'If we are denied insurance coverage, or if our premiums are higher than usual, there is little way of knowing how this decision came about, nor how we can appeal it' (2002b: 120).

The data we allow to be collected through cookies, questionnaires or other means is valuable for a series of databases. They conform the archives that represent us. We started to live in archives that no longer just hold our past for inspection by historians, tax collectors and other researchers. In digital archives, each time we perform an electronic act we add information to the running files of our activities, both as individuals and members of target groups. This involves the idea of 'reputation' as a key element on pervasive trends. Rheingold underlines reputation as the key point where technology and 'cooperation' based on shared databases converge. Although not new, online credit verification services 'are an ideal carrier for more finely nuanced

reputation repositories capable of forecasting your taste in music […] attesting to your ability to evaluate wines, as well as verifying your credit record' (2002: 113). On the basis of reputation, databases and archives, the policies for the future are being planned, from marketing strategies to decisions about which technologies will be implemented. As archives are continuously available and accessible, they have become an essential factor in acting in our financial, healthy and social 'realities'. Archives have also become crucial in how the reality is forged (see chapter 1) and a notion of the present is created. Focusing on the individual's role in the creation of such 'reality', it is always important to think about his/her actions in this present.

As a means to simulate data collection *meta4walls* has also a component based on fake questionnaires and scam services. They are an attempt to catch the viewer to some services based on escrow, theft identity and 'phishing' tactics. In such kind of scam one is attracted to access pages where one will be asked to update personal information, such as passwords and credit card, social security, and bank account numbers. For such, in *meta4walls* a range of services are offered in an attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information by filling up different kind of questionnaires such as:

> CHECK YOUR OWN CREDIT INFORMATION FROM DATABASE ALL OVER THE WORLD
> DRIVERS: CHECK YOUR RECORDS
> CHECK: YOUR OWN FBI FILE – HERE
> KNOW SECRETS ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOR – TYPE YOUR ZIP CODE HERE
> XXX PORN FREE PICTURES. – SIGN-UP FREE!
> FREE HOLIDAYS NO CATCH – JUST REGISTER NOW:

Differently from what happens through the portal's main page, where all the URL's are operational and established at their respective current Internet addresses, here the accessed pages are generated internally by the work.

If in the 'real world' some clicks can lead to websites mimicking established and legitimate enterprises, eventually leading to identity theft, in *meta4walls*

the result will be a feedback commenting the viewer's intention behind his/her attempt to snooping other people or checking supposedly secret information.

What feeds the raw material of *meta4walls* is 'reality' at its 'dodgiest', but not as its less interesting manifestations. Again, ordinariness and trivial situations attracts. By making explicit the mediation artifices (cookies and questionnaire catches) largely used in the 'real world', the work establishes itself as an interface putting one in contact to such 'real world' of the Internet. By doing so, it may produce holes in the bubble. At the same time it shows that there is indeed a 'bubble', which glooms our vision of what the web as a public space really is.

2.6 Motivations: *Spio* (2004)

Since the release of *meta4walls*, the web has expanded its 'technical apparatus'. Scam and 'phishing' have sophisticated its tactics, spam is now huge, junk dominates the web, and cookie-like principles have been embedded into other systems, such as the Radio Frequency Identity tags (RFID)[25], which reports one's habits and consumer profiles. Sophisticated ways of mining data are progressively emerging, expanding the context of 'data-veillance', operations to spheres beyond the web. Step by step our condition as living-data has been confirmed via procedures conducted by Wal Mart, Amazon, Google and many others, disguised behind the purpose of customizing their services.[26] As these procedures are implemented, they find the reader/individual still numbed, apathetic about the implications of such implementations in the domain of privacy. It reveals the consolidation of a new regime of power, which resorts to behaviour modulation strategies, as the basis of the control society described by Deleuze (1992: 3-7). The difference is that this dominion is not only in the sphere of the great economic powers and the large corporations but it also invades public space, private

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[25] RFID tags are poised to become the most far-reaching wireless technology since the cell phone, according to high-tech market research firm, In-Stat. Worldwide revenues from RFID tags will jump from $300 million in 2004 to $2.8 billion in 2009. Source: RFID News <http://www.rfidnews.org>

[26] Regarding numbers, by 2005 Google was probably approaching the Petabyte range of data collected (8 billion WebPages, indexed, stored, cross-referenced etc).

domestic environments and the actual body, transforming them in prothesis of security devices, as it is evident with the popularization of the new identification and monitoring wireless systems.

Inspired by the growth of apprehensive feelings resulting from the popularisation of intrusive devices, about to land in households in developed countries, I took the opportunity to develop a project dealing with similar issues, which was called *Spio*.

2.7 The *Spio* project (2004)

> *It started with the telephone, the TV and the Internet, but imagine when your fridge begins to communicate with your palm pilot, updating the shopping list as you run out of milk, and perhaps even sending a notice to the grocer for home delivery. (Felix Stalder, Privacy is not the antidote to surveillance, 2002)*

Spio was developed as an installation system commissioned by Itaú Cultural (São Paulo) for the *Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0* (2004) an international event comprising a large exhibition and a symposium. The whole event was built under the theme *Technological Divergences*, proposed by Jeffrey Shaw as an aim to question the political use of technology, its ever increasing presence in daily life and its impact on society. According to the curators' statement, in a scenario where art appears as a standing point against new globalized technocracies, the invited works attempted to 'criticize the current thinking that glorifies technology as a panacea for all the problems of the modern life'.[27]

Artists dealing more directly with the political matter such as Antoni Muntadas (Spain), Coco Fusco (Cuba/USA), Fran Ilich (Mexico), Oliver Ressler (Austria) and Minerva Cuevas (Mexico) were invited to participate along with artists whose works are more technology-driven, very often based on complex interactive systems such as the Knowbotic Research group

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[27] Words by curators Arlindo Machado and Gilbertto Prado at the exhibition's presentation. Available at <http://www.itaucultural.org.br/index.cfm?cd_pagina=2354>

(Germany/Austria), Christa Sommerer and Laurent Mignonneau (Belgium/France) and Diana Domingues (Brazil). As the works would share contiguous spaces in the exhibition an inevitable dialogue appeared to be put in place. Thus, I found that the development of *Spio* should deal with the gap between these two spheres of practices and opted to present a work that would carry an ironic approach to technology-based intrusive/pervasive systems.
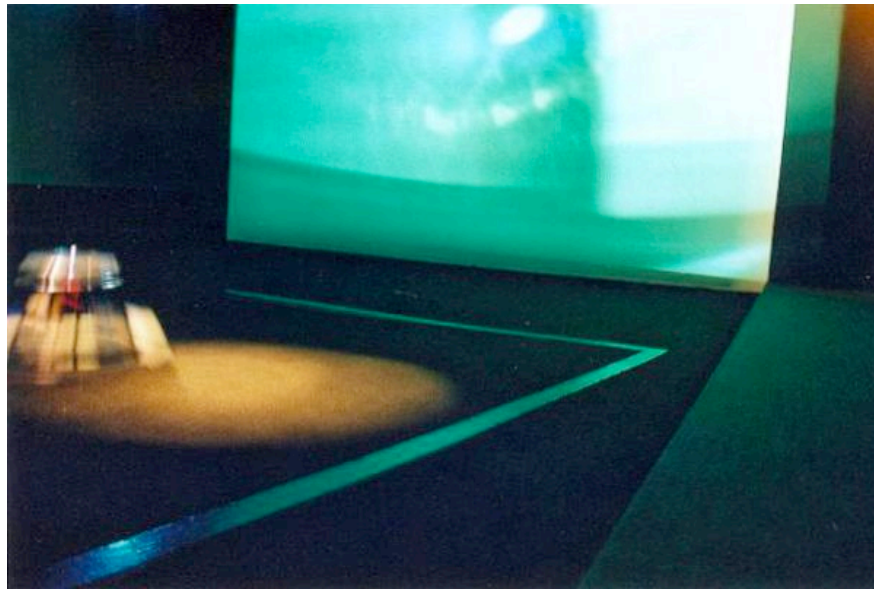

Fig. 11: The Spio in action at Emoção Art.Ficial, São Paulo (2004).

Spio is a 'self-surveilled' system based on a robotic domestic appliance assigned with cameras for capturing and processing images. It was built over an autonomous sweep cleaner (Roomba, 'a robotic floor vac'[28]) factory programmed to clean different sized rooms through pre-defined and logical movements. The robotic appliance was *hacked* and equipped with two high sensibility CCTV cameras [infra-red + 0.5 lux] allowing the scanning of the space from a different perspective, contrasted to the point of view of the human eye.

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[28] http://www.irobot.com/consumer/

The project was presented as an installation system, fed by light and sound interferences, produced by the movement of the robotic cleaner in interaction with the presence of the audience. The images are processed in real-time according to the position of the appliance in the space. If gone beyond the allowed limits (marked on the floor), the robot triggers sound and visual events, leading to chaotic and unexpected turbulences in the images.[29]

Its movements and position are tracked by two cameras placed above the installation space, which send the spatial parameters to two computers, each one running tracking and image processing software. According to the given spatial parameters the computers re-process the outputs, which will, in turn, influence the whole environment. Some of these parameter are given during the programming stage, such as if the image would be colorized, distorted or shaken; which sounds would be triggered and when all the events would happen. Other parameters are given during the interactions with the public, which changes the pre-oriented routes of the robotic sweep cleaner, making it trespass or not a pre-defined safe area and trigger the events.[30]

As a self-performing device it brings in elements concerning its retro-feeding features, which makes allusion to current generative systems. Generative is a term that has been used to characterize works usually automated by the use of a machine or computer, or by using mathematic or pragmatic instructions to define the rules by which the artwork is executed'.[31] Actually, it renders images continuously, in spite of the fact that there are no images produced by the artist or by any other human means, validating such approach. However, I adopted the term 'de-generative', which better describes the work, as for a system that is not exactly interactive nor generative. The given parameters, associated with the presence of the public, plus the coincidental little accidents along its course interfere in the system in such a way that after a

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[29] The hardware and its technical production was made possible with the help of Fábio Seiji Massui. The software development, based on Macromedia Director and the Xtra plug-in Track Them Colors was done by Caio Barra Costa.

[30] A video showing the installed system in action is provided.

[31] Definition by Generative.net <http://www.generative.net>.

certain period of time the movements and triggered events start to run by mutual interference, not only by the initial algorithms. The robot may start unending circles or may stuck in certain spots, triggering annoying audio loops and nervous flickering in the images.

Spio was clearly inspired by the Fluxus' and Nam June Paik's use of irony and humour so as to highlight the contradictions of their time. In many of Nam June Paik's works one could notice the simulation of high-end techniques with excessive visual effects treatment, with references to science's utopias such as robots and impossible gears, as well as the use of toys, furniture, domestic appliances or strange engines. *Spio* refers to some of these approaches, at the same time as it indicates Paik's willingness to work with video in less controlled environments,

His robot K-456, created in 1964 as the first of series, was purpose-built for street actions, as Paik said: 'I imagined it would meet people on the street and give them a split-second surprise. Like a sudden shower.'[32] When he and video engineer Shuya Abe created in 1969 their famous video synthesizer, it became clear the intention to produce art by adding performative actions along the creative process and lessening the control over the final results, as in a happening.[33]

Paik's 'not-so-serious' videos and performances were eased with the creation of Paik/Abe's synthesizer, a machine 'allowing free and random interferences in the images […] "live" television at its most unexpected' (Fifield 2000).

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32 Source: <http://www.medienkunstnetz.de>

[33] The term originated with Allan Kaprow's piece *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), although the first happening is considered to be performance *Theater Piece No. 1* (1952) by John Cage (who was Kaprow's teacher in the mid-1950s). Fluxus artists called it Flux Events, as a kind of performances that took the form of banal or everyday activities, sought to dissemble the high culture of serious music and art.

*Fig. 12: Paik's robot K-456 performing on the streets (New York, 1964).*

*Spio'*s images were an attempt to evoke such 'disorder' unlikely to be found in a machine's routine. The kind of colorization and distortion effects applied to the typical black and white analogue CCTV cameras were also a reference from Paik/Abe's synthesizer – which was basically a colorizer, allowing the transformation of the black and white cameras' source according to inputs on a keyboard.

To observe Paik's vision of technologies is very motivating, instead of producing distance or apathy. For instance, he considered sophisticated and big TV studio very scaring, saying more than once that he used technology in order to hate it more properly.[34] Ironically, a big studio (a 'huge machine' as he called the WGBH studios) helped him to create his 'anti-machine machine' (Paik 1970: 1-2).

Spio recalls similar ironies about supposedly new practices emerging from digital culture. In *Spio*, the final emphasis was placed on a banal appliance, an *arty* toy - regardless of the 'apparently sophisticated' system based on a robotic device and its tracking recognition features - immersed on a technological environment, but triggering doubtful results, a suggestion of the emptying of intrusive technologies.

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34 Texts by Paik Nam June, in Paik Nam June Museum
<http://www.paiknamjune.org/eng/paiknamjune_04_07.htm>
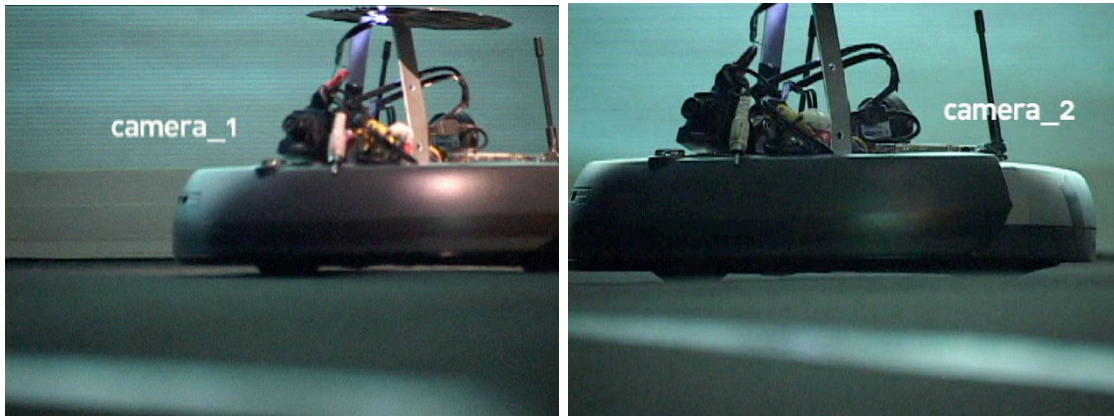
Figs. 13 and 14: Spio's robotic device with CCTV cameras (São Paulo, 2004)

In addition, the ineffectiveness of the intention in interactive works is also a point addressed by the work, reflecting issues and changes in the authorship models. Once installed, *Spio*'s behavior is a totally independent matter, based on casual and unexpected confluences between the public and the work. For a hesitant audience visiting a highly technological exhibition, the appliance suggests very basic interactions, based on simple participative actions. The way to disturb the robot is done by physically touching it, not through any complex interface. The public was allowed to pose as an obstacle or even help the apparatus to perform its scrutinizing mechanical job.

Its mediating functions between public and private spheres were however a bit more intricate as it involves its sponsor as an institutional issue.

For the exhibition at Itaú Cultural *Spio* featured also a 'polemical' online component. Through the use of a webcam for live streaming, it was possible to monitor the work and the visitation from home. Thus, as in a graphic drawing, it was possible to visualize the tracing of the robot's tracks, starting with geometrical and precise lines and tending to a chaotic behavior, specially noticed when the exhibition was full. The installation of this webcam was however motivated by other issues, which concern the monitoring of the piece's maintenance by the institution, as well as a less functional and more symbolic intention, which was to leak information from the institution

premises. This latter detail is symbolically important due to at least two points. First, apart from being one of Brazil's largest banks it is run by public money through tax exemption endowment programs, sometimes with lack of transparency about its aims and procedures. Second, the high level of security policies laid down by the institution have prevented the exhibition of the *Spio*'s original proposal, alleging security breaches, which also occurred by lacking transparency.
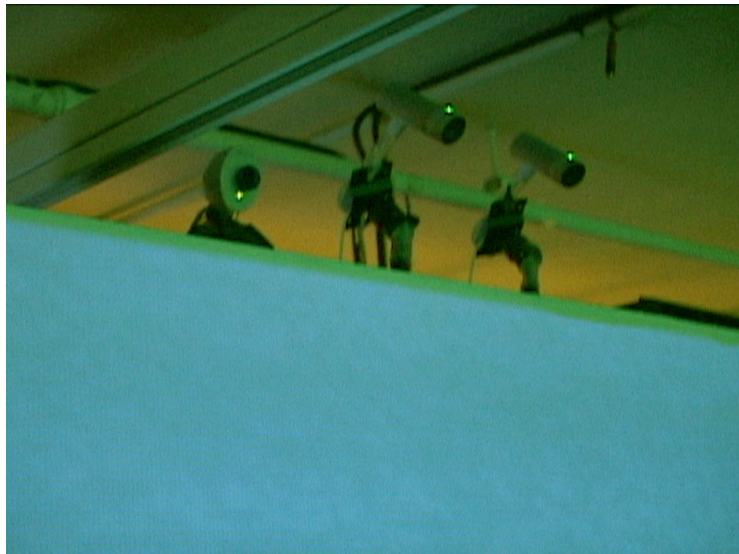
Fig. 15: Tracking cameras in the Spio installation (São Paulo, 2004)

The original version of *Spio* consisted of a set of three different observation apparatuses, or 'spying toys', suggesting its use for civilian surveillance activities. They were: 1) a remote controlled helicopter; 2) an outdoor robot and 3) an empty bottle of wine, all equipped with small cameras and wireless video transmitters. The idea was to present a series of performances that would serve to collect data/images on the surroundings of the Itaú Cultural building. The project described its finalities and uses by dealing with issues related to political correctness:

> To observe curators in private meetings, to locate CCTV cameras installed in public space, to snoop posh buildings using public money, monitoring private events that carry public relevance, to analyze traffic and pedestrian flux from a safe distance, to follow corrupt politicians, to raise questions on privacy invasion events […] to

capture unstable images for use in unstable media installations.[35]

Being a commissioned project, its original development and presentation was denied by the institution, which overrode the curators' decision, due to eventual risks for the external public, as it was partially meant to be performed in the surrounding public space.

Alt last I was asked to change the project also on the grounds of alleged of financial restraints, which were added to the external security problems. Since it was possible to keep the core of the concept untouched, I agreed to continue with the project.

The story behind the project lead art critic Christine Mello to place it as an act of 'institutional critique'. Contrasting to the flood of urban intervention projects, Mello welcomed the proposal as 'an intervention that would take place just outside institutional and corporative domains'.[36]

Systems like *Spio*, playing with high and low technologies, melting past and present fears, are expected to bring into view some of the conflicts found in certain communication technologies. As a parody of surveillance tools, the project makes references to the same context from which other pervasive devices are emerging, anticipating a time when ordinary tools may transmit information about the owner's profiles and habits. Based on apparently harmless gadgets, this kind of intelligent appliance, equipped with sentient and watching resources are supposed to be progressively present at our homes, constraining our habits down to adaptation and normalcy by the situation. Thomas Levin writes about the need to encourage people to develop 'surveillant literacy', which means 'the ability to read how surveillance is mobilized for purposes that seem innocuous, and to see how the unchecked proliferation of surveillance can lead to abuse' (2002: 12-13).

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[35] As described in the original project.

[36] Christine Mello's observations about Spio project were posted during her lecture at the Symposium Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 organized by Itaú Cultural, as part of the same exhibition where Spio was presented.

Thus, how to distinguish between a normalized situation of surveillance and an awareness-related, a counter-alienating one? In this case, is it the ordinariness a kind of normalization?

2.8 Conclusions

The surveillant significance of *Spio'*s images acquire various shades: as effective surveillance, as an inhibiting device, as disciplinarian and even as 'spectacle', adding new contexts to the idea of Foucault, according to whom our society 'is less the spectacle society than the surveillance society' (1991: 190). In fact, both. The ever present scrutinizing eyes of the robot makes *Spio* a dumb vigilant. The repetition of mechanical movements, performing circles and spirals, disrupted from a logical routine of surveillance can be seen as production of *détournement*[37], a sort of subversion where a potentially harmful device is rendered useless. Once interpreted by the audience as a playful apparatus, it becomes innocuous.

In *detournement* actions, an artist reuses media elements to create a new work with a different message. An inspiring approach can be found also in the activist-performances of the group Surveillance Camera Players (SCP), who turn CCTV cameras against their original purposes and use them for mediating their own performances.

Rather than destroying the cameras or following a conventional political action (to write to an MP, for instance), they perform plays in front of the cameras, positioned in well-populated areas, as a way to inform people about their presence, showing that such actions can be effective even with a sense of humour. Recently, they have abandoned well known (and more 'sophisticated') plays such as Samuel Becket's *Waiting for Godot* or George

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[37] *Détournement* was postulated by participants of the Situationist International (a movement initiated in 1957) as for signs and images produced for/by the 'spectacle' (Society of Spectacle) is altered and subverted so that instead of supporting the status quo, its meaning becomes changed in order to put across a more radical or oppositionist message.

Orwell's *1984*, in order to perform plays written by themselves, directly concerning surveillance and privacy rights.

Fig. 16: The SCP performing the play:
You Are Being Watched For Your Own Safety (New York, 2001)

Such tactics, of not avoiding the spectacle but sometimes 'jamming it', 'emptying it' or turning it into a awareness production, has been the *leit-motif* for a great number of collectives and artists dealing with interventions.

Brian Holmes suggests that reality, activism and these 'artistic events' are all linked together.[38] He points out the extent to which some of these work-manifestos produce displacement – perhaps holes in the bubble – 'transforming the ordinary into beauty as a trace of the truth' (2003a: 5).

It seems that what matters is to produce an art with potentials to affect and be affected by 'reality', exploring the gaps in the systems that suggest artistic interventions. This seems to be a way to avoid new forms of alienation. Activists using art or artists dealing with activism may produce some of these effects in reality, depending not exactly on their strength, but specially if the context has been taking rightly into consideration.

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[38] Holmes explains that 'the originality of Rancière's work on the aesthetic regime is to clearly show how art can be historically effective, directly political. Art achieves this by means of *fictions*: arrangements of signs that inhere to reality, yet at the same time make it legible to the person moving through it – as though history were an unfinished film, a documentary fiction, of which we are both cameramen and actors' (2003a: 5). The text (Hieroglyphs of the Future - Jacques Rancière and the Aesthetics of Equality) is available at: <http://www.declarations.ca/knowledge/hieroglyphs.htm>

Contemplating a close proximity with the practical projects, the next chapter traces further conclusions raised along the explanation of these works.

end of chapter 2

CHAPTER 3: CONFRONTING THE CONTEXT - CONCLUSIONS

> *Technologies define us. We are conditioned to relate to them in predefined ways. Using technologies changes what we know and how we know it. But we do have a say in this. We can shape the technologies that we are using. Networked technologies do not have to stand for servitude. We can imagine human uses. We can support emerging alternative socio-technical networks by reflecting on technologies without utopia-glazed eyes. Critiquing the vicious nature of networked, neoliberal managers is vitally important. But don't stop there. Don't leave the discourse about human uses of cooperation-enhancing tools and networking to them - or to them inside of us. (Trebor Scholz, Downtime, 2005)[1]*

3.1 Networking *dystopia*

The projects mentioned in the previous chapter are part of an urge to deal with the context permeated by environments of exclusion and segregation, resulting from the narrowing of public spaces (São Paulo), as well as an attempt to respond to what can be considered as 'hypocritical notions of privacy'. Recalling topics already discussed in previous chapters, this notion relates to the 'fear of touching' (Sennet), and other forms of mixophobia (London, Europe). What we know about each other extends in an interpersonal contact mediation continuum.

Technology is socially determinant in this context, as it maps its own structure and attenuations onto the life of individuals regardless their needs for expression. Since communication technologies are increasingly not only operating on the mediation level of such context, but also shaping it and affecting how we perceive 'reality', artworks dealing with socio-political issues have to decode societal forms into a conscious praxis.

John Hopkins writes that we need to articulate art into a praxis that at the same time as it acknowledges the affect, it also pushes through the affect to

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[1] Downtime. Source: Collectivate.net <http://collectivate.net/journalisms/2005/11/19/downtime.html>

reach out to an (O)ther. In his words, 'if the attenuation applied by the technology destroys our perceived abilities to humanely connect with the Other, we need to drop the technology'.[2] Many commentators will agree with Hopkins in that, if we persist in modifying our needs and expressions indefinitely in order to fit into a technological society, we will inevitably live in a state of alienation, resulting from technological euphoria in an environment of fabricated worlds in the globalized age.

Zygmunt Bauman sees our current society as a dystopia that has emerged in *lieu* of a model anchored somewhere between the totalitarian regimes of Orwell's *1984* and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. This new dystopia is configured in a world of flow, 'where social networks and collective action are irreversibly disintegrated as a side-effect to the rise of an evasive and slippery kind of power' (2000: 21-22). Social disintegration is not only a current condition but a result of such new power techniques.

As Brian Holmes affirms, new forms of power enforcements shape 'societies that are deeply sick and which cover their pathological conspiracies with deliberate lies'.[3] Aspects once used to describe the end-of-the-century context still serve us to inquire about our current state of affairs.

With all its entrepreneurial opportunism, networked lifestyle within a technological society where time has been compressed into a state of 'eternal present'[4], have been pointed out as 'instruments of oppression and casualized labour that squeeze every last drop of genuine energy and creativity out of the worker' (Scholz 2005).[5] A possible antidote against this grim scenario, Scholz

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[2] Source: The Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC). Thread: Downtime & Play
<http://mailman.thing.net/pipermail/idc/2005-November/000089.html>.

[3] Source: Mailing list of the Institute for Distributed Creativity (iDC). Thread: Activism now and
<http://mailman.thing.net/pipermail/idc/2005-December/000106.html>.

[4] Guy Debord states that societies whose modernization has reached the stage of 'integrated spectacle' are characterized by the effect of five principle factors: incessant technological renewal, integration of state and economy, generalized secrecy, unanswerable lies and eternal present. Guy Debord, The Society of Spectacle, 1998

[5] Downtime. Source <http://collectivate.net/journalisms/2005/11/19/downtime.html>

goes on to say, is that 'we need analysis of the world around us. We need to think and feel'[6].

These are considered symptoms of emergent forms of alienation imposed by current capitalism. Corporate media have been telling us to live the present as 'always connected', always delivering energy to immaterial models of production, parting us from a closer touch with social reality (the strangers, the 'outside' realities).

A consciously produced work of art offers analysis of the world around, it makes us think and feel. But how can new media-based art fulfil these tasks without being compromised by its own increasingly dependent structures on corporate technologies? Are artists bound to hermetically and endlessly discuss artistic authority and cultural politics, even when trying to break out of the bubble and inflict social change with their art?

3.2 Art into politics

Hal Foster has pointed out to the fact that the reception of art has been plagued with an unsolvable 'familiar and unfruitful' dialectical pair: 'aesthetic quality versus political relevance, form versus content' (1996: 172). Foster himself, profoundly based on Benjamin's *The Author as Producer* (1934), abandons the task of overcoming these oppositions by suggesting that history has been developed a series of responses, as in a 'cause and consequence' way, but the oppositions never disappeared.[7] The aesthetic dimension applied to politics was seen by Benjamin as a dialectical figure: it can serve as a means of alienation, as well as a tool for social critique through a political approach.

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[6] Ibidem

[7] According to Foster: 'Benjamin sought to overcome these oppositions in "representation" through "production", but neither opposition has disappeared' (172). Foster take Benjamin's The Author as Producer as a main reference for The Artist as Ethnographer a chapter within his book The Return of the Real (1996)

Such dualisms were forwarded along the century with dialectic shades in different waves: Benjamin revealed the aestheticization of politics under fascism.[8] 'Communism responds with the politicization of art' (1994: 196). Moving Benjamin's dialectic forward a few decades, artists in the 80's responded to the capitalization of culture and privatization of society under Reagan, Thatcher and company (Foster, 1996: 172). Brazil fell under an overwhelming dictatorship from the mid 1960's to the end of the 1980's and the production of political art then was strong and urgent, immediately responding to censorship means and authoritarian context.

Today, art collectives all around the world have responded to late capitalism through various forms, both off and online. For instance, the World Trade Organization (WTO) events in Seattle, Prague and Genoa saw their critical equivalent in many performance based portable technologies in situ, as well as many online tactics of disparagement – to the point where these meetings are today inseparable from activist-'artistic' events.

Ever ongoing, these assumptions rely on the fact that under the technological means existing since Benjamin's times (new means of literary production, photography, photomontage, cinema), 'the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, as well as the reaction of the masses toward art' (Benjamin 1994: 170-195).

Merging some of these proposals it is possible to anticipate a common space for art and politics. Rather than drawing them closer or apart, one should explore the existing hybrid and convergent zone: a politics contaminated by its neighbouring art, and an art contaminated by its neighbouring politics.

Stephen Wright approaches politics and art through the idea of 'use-value'. In his curatorial project *The Future of the Reciprocal Readymade (Use-Value*

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[8] Benjamin finishes his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* saying that fascim 'expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology' […] 'Mankind […] self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure' (1994: 196)

and Art-related Practice) held by Apexart in New York (2004), considers to be a self delusion to believe that employing art to 'questioning, investigating or even depicting socio-political issues'[9] would empower individuals to do anything about these concerns. Wright concludes that 'art usually breaks its promises' of use-value, because it 'remains caught in an essentially representational paradigm, protected from the real, which allows the symbolic transgressions of the artworld to be confused with real-life' [10]. Art based on political activism, which may occur in the 'judicial, penal and civil spheres of society'[11] would bring use-value just for the artworld elite that consumes it.

In the way Wright pictures the current scenario, it is implicit that regardless of its frictions with 'reality', even when art directly faces real-life issues in the conformed world, the use-value concept continues to be sustained on romantic pillars of artistic contemplation. As such, socio-political approaches would add no more than just a coat of varnish onto the real, which would render difficult to alter the technical apparatus behind art production, and/or inflict social change. Wright asks: 'Would it be possible to envisage dealing with use-value in a way that they empower rather than impress people?'

3.3 Interfacing interventions

A possible answer to Wright's question comes from artistic intervention: when there is a real transit between spheres, between the protective environments of the artworld and public spaces, the art does not necessarily feed back into the art system; but, when artists recycle their skills, perceptions and '*habitus* back into the general symbolic economy of the real'[12].

An example of an intervention piece that successfully produced symbolic value and political awareness was the project *Nike Platz* performed in Austria in 2003 by the group 0100101110101101.ORG.

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[9] Ibidem.

[10] Exhibition catalogue *The Future of the Reciprocal Readymade (Use-Value and Art-related Practice)* curated by Stephen Wright for Apexart, New York, 2004
<http://www.apexart.org/exhibitions/wright.htm>

[11] Ibidem.

[12] Ibidem.

Fig. 17: The infobox installed at Karlsplatz in Vienna by the group
0100101110101101.ORG (2003)

The group installed a hi-tech container in the middle of *Karlsplatz*, one of Vienna's historic squares. On the outer windows, a sign attracted the attention of passers-by: '*This square will soon be called Nikeplatz. Come inside to find out more*'.[13] The plan to change the square's name has also been advertised on a fake website: www.nikeground.com, while brochures were distributed in the city. The one-month campaign provoked puzzled and worried reactions of Viennese citizens concerned with a historic square apparently being sold by the City to a multinational without prior consultation. Thus, immediately after the container was set up and open to the public, handwritten letters and emails began to jam the inboxes of local and national Austrian newspapers. Shortly after both Nike and the City of Vienna denied any responsibility for *Nike Ground,* and the City reassured the public that 'following World War II, street names cannot be modified, unless they look very similar to others'.

After this rather clumsy official response to a public 'scandal', the artists claimed victory for bringing the attention of the Viennese to the issues of symbolic domination of public spaces by private interests. The group aimed to

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[13] Nike Ground – Rethinking Space. Source: <www.nikeground.com>.

produce a 'collective hallucination capable of altering people's perception of the city'.[14] Konrad Becker, director of Public Netbase, the netculture institution behind the performance's production, declared: 'It is our duty to directly intervene into urban and media space [...] we see *Nike Ground* as a statement for the artistic freedom to manipulate the symbols of everyday life'.[15]

The manipulation of everyday life symbols is precisely what Lazzarato has pointed out as one of the Capitalism's abilities to produce 'realities', by constructing worlds 'through a statement arrangement, through a sign regime' (2003: 2).

0100101110101101.ORG's achievement was to reveal this fabrication, through a 'reverse engineering' process, a concept often applied to computing and hacking procedures.

Using elements such as reconstruction, reappropriation and recontextualization, Nike Platz managed to 'hack' into urban space and triggered an effective and attentive social mobilization and participation in public life. The container and all the real elements used to produce the prank, such as the Nike's famous logo, legitimated a configuration outside the art world, awakening people from possible alienation.

Spanish artist Antoni Abad gives another example of artistic intervention in public spaces through the use of mobile and pervasive technologies. Abad has been producing, since 2004, a series of projects using mobile phones and the web so as to produce a hybrid network, which aims at empowering minorities or marginal collective groups, such as taxi drivers in Mexico City, Gypsies in Leon and Lleida, prostitutes in Madrid, disabled people in Barcelona and motorcycle delivery young men in São Paulo (yet to be produced).The artist takes advantage of the latest generations of mobile

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[14] Ibidem.

[15] Nike buys streets and squares: Guerrilla marketing or collective hallucination?, at:
<http://0100101110101101.ORG/home/nikeground/story.html>.

phones, which allow multimedia contents to be immediately published on the internet through GPRS and UMTS[16] data transmission networks. But, before diving into a deeper analysis of the artist's project, Wrights question resurfaces again: how to effect empowering and not just cause the impressive? How to prevent the consumerist alienation inherent in the use of a mobile phone? Can participatory, group-forming media help to overcome the paradigms of consumerism and broadcast media?

According to Armin Medosch, current examples of mobilization or 'mobilezation' suggested through the use of mobile phones would not provide the right answers. 'Neither flash mobs nor smart mobs are any help in the anticipation of any kind of autonomous society envisaged by communicational libertarians' (2004a: 13). The technological determinism should be avoided along with the questionable vertical implementation of services and structures centred in the logic of globalization.

A certain utopian feeling sets in the ever-growing field of wireless networks, a perspective in which they can be different given their level of mobility. In fact, the network does not substitute either places or fields, as it inserts itself within them, highlighting the polarizations and interconnections of which it consists. As Medosch writes, 'mobile networking is an utopia on the plane of immanence, where control is handed over to a distributed many-to-many architecture' (13-14). Yet avoiding further euphoria, Medosch proposes that everybody should be involved in the shaping of future technologies.

Antoni Abad's project consists of precisely what Medosch yearns for: the distribution of mobile phones and wireless connection to the internet over many-to-many architecture, which, in turn, shapes the use of the technology.

The first of the projects, called *Sitio Taxi*, was described by Abad as 'a mobile, audiovisual communication network project for the taxi drivers of

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[16] Different technical standards for mobile telecommunication networks and services. GPRS stands for General Packet Radio Service and UMTS stands for Universal Mobile Telecommunications System.

Mexico City.'[17] 17 taxi drivers were invited to carry mobile phones with integrated cameras, at all times throughout the day, turning themselves into chroniclers of their own 'reality'. At an initial meeting, it was suggested that they created or affiliated themselves to certain channels, forming broadcasting groups for each channel they have agreed to participate in. As the project went on they visited public and private places in the city, gathering experiences and opinions through telephone conversations and multi-media messaging (audio, video, photography and text). The material was then published on the Internet in real time, or held back for broadcasting at later meetings, depending on further agreements. From time to time, face-to-face meetings were held, where the drivers, along with their family and friends, could exchange the technical skills they had acquired as well as any 'socially relevant' experiences.

The project turns 'reality' into a field of discovery, where ordinary people are encouraged to portray whatever they see and feel that would be of any interest to them and others. Ordinariness is presented in the website with no further aestheticization, as the content is not intended to be filtered by any means other than the participants' own. Through the broadcast or the posting on the web, the technology figures in this situation as an empowerment of one's point of view; an open window allowing the expression of life stories, cases, thoughts, reports, life-styles though the 'voice' of 'non-specialists'. As in a blog, there is a minimal level of mediation between the idea (the picture, the sound or the text) and its publication; that is, the intention with which the subject intends that idea to be perceived. The empowerment lies here: the Taxi drivers are both authors and producers of their own publications/social reality.

The artist makes clear his intention to stimulate a free flow of all kinds of information by not biasing the participants, for instance, by saying that this is an art project, and by not interfering in the publication process at all. Taxi drivers in Mexico are not a harmonious and uniform community (about 20%

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[17] As described in the artist's web site. Source: <http://www.zexe.net/TAXI>

work illegally),which brings into view the bureaucratic and socially impaired system ruling the city. Once on the web, the result is a heterogeneous portrait of the drivers, which also reflects the city in its arbitrary and diverse condition. Even so, the drivers have found much to share not only between themselves but also with other inhabitants of the city. The project, differently from how the media portrait them, worked as a mirror to the community, allowing the participants to see themselves as a group, with embodied networking possibilities.[18]

FIG. 18: The project Sitio Taxi conducted in Mexico City (2004) by Antoni Abad

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[18] Some information were provided by Antoni Abad's lecture at the 1º Encuentro Iberoamericano de Nuevas Tendencias en Arte y Tecnologia . Esdi/Mecad <www.mecad.org/simposio.htm> as well as through informal conversations with the artist.

Following *Sitio Taxi*, Abad has continued the series, called 'Canales' (Channels), employing similar strategies and procedures, while expanding the issues of mobile networking to other spheres. *Canal Gitano,* (Gypsy Channel), for instance, managed to penetrate a typically closed community. Through the postings and pictures of the 16 young gypsies participants living in the city of León (northwest of Spain), one may want to 'learn' about their daily life, rituals, religion, cooking recipes and other private details. As this is done from the point of view of young insiders, it can be seen as an 'innocent' exposure of private life. At the same time, however, they have a channel to make their traditions public, or rather, be the authors and producers of how they want their traditions to go public. This exercise can be a way to prevent cultural prejudices, and speak to outsiders of how they want to correlate with society. It does matter how its social use is conducted. Still, the work shows itself as a transparent interface, a non-alienating and non-alienated network.

Fig. 19: The project Canal Gitano conducted in the city of León, Spain
(2005) by Antoni Abad (screenshot)

Abad claims to be displacing the idea of authorship, since the 'result' is not intended to be 'objectified' in a gallery, but publicly published on the web. This constitutes a complex matter involving aspects around the reputation-based economy of the art world, founded on individual names and their recognition

as artists. The fact that these projects are still an 'artist's work', and Abad eventually partially displays it in galleries and art institutional spaces, has been a matter of concern for those criticizing the project, who see on this practice an act of turning ordinariness into an object of consumption. Others, such as Steven Wright, would suggest that such practices could be better described as 'art-related' rather than 'art-specific' activities: 'These forms of symbolic production, implicitly questioning and even shattering the borders of art, live up to art's promises far more effectively than those practices upheld and underwritten by current artistic conventions' (2004: 4). According to this point of view, the rhetoric of authorship can be bypassed here, as it becomes relegated to a curatorial and institutional instance, where 'what is art or not', the 'insides and outsides' seem to be constantly redefined for institutional purposes.

In fact, in interventionist activities, such as the *Nikeplatz* and Abad's works, authorship claims are contradictions in themselves. If we foresee a 'many-to-many architecture' network to be built under truly participatory and sharing practices, conflicts arising from attempts to inscribe egocentric assertions become evident and tend to be rejected by the commons. Perhaps solving Wright's question, the impressive gives room to the empowering when what matters most is not the artist's signature, nor the technical apparatus used, but the local reality-based interface that mediates new possibilities.

3.4 Re-communiting: local linking local

At this point, the ideal of a networking interface here is a sort of 'transparent mediation'. As if it could disappear and become invisible, attaching itself to the reality it represents or metaphorizes. In 'reality-based interfaces', the action takes place locally from a global connection. In one end of this connection there is always an individual, which is an element of hybridization of the network – an element that can work subversively, impregnating the net with unexpectedly transforming forces.

In this sense, the reinforcement of the 'local' is crucial, as a policy of 'geographization of citizenship'. According to Milton Santos (1926-2001), the present worldwide technical network is an instrument of worldwide production, circulation and information. 'In a local perspective, the network practically integrates and dissolves itself through collective work, implicating solidarity efforts from the various actors. This solidary work is also co-presence in a space continuum, creating the quotidian of contiguity' (1996: 268)

Thus, says Santos, it is necessary to break this productive logic, resisting to the 'fast-speech' of the 'fast-men[/women]' and providing accessibility – in a broader sense of the term – to the 'slow men/women]'. A transforming proposition is embedded in Santos' proposition:

> In face of technical and informational networks, poor people and migrants (slow-men[/women]) are passive, as much as all the other people. It is in the communicational sphere that they, differently from the classes regarded as superior, are strongly active. For them, it is the search for the future they long for as a need to be fulfilled – a need for all kinds of consumption, material and immaterial. It is also a need for political consumption, a need for participation and citizenship (Santos, 1996: 268)

As already mentioned, the traditional notion of community has definitely been transformed by information technologies; and in some cases, technology has empowered communities. From this point of view comes the concept of 'linkania'[19] [or linkage], increasingly in use in the geographic outskirts of São Paulo. As suggested by Hernani Dimantas, the concept 'overlaps the idea of citizenship as a movement of auto-organization of chaos' (2004: 78). Linkania stands for the 'deterritorialization', a citizenship without cities, countersigned by the individual. As a 'surviving principle' in communities on the geographical

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[19] Marcelo Estraviz who coined the term 'linkania', reproduces a sort of dialogue explaining it: 'That is all about linkania […] it is the link of a friend, a neighbour. It is a tip. It is the help a friend gives you from a city in Europe through e-mail. It is the discussion on a list to visit a certain exhibition, it is the link to the exhibition, which they print and put up on the day-care centre's board of the district association. It is the article that a blogger comments on and makes others think. It is the valuable discovery of an unemployed person who goes to an information centre and registers himself in a government project, which will give him a job. And it was his neighbour who told him about that. He gave him the tip, the link. And then, slowly, we get to know what our rights are because information is public. […] And it is really like that, sort of chaotic, badly structured.' (2004:3)

peripheries, it acquires new dimensions while expanded through the virtual worlds, reinforcing the need to act collectively while preserving one's individuality.

There is no collaboration without a common interest, and this has been evidenced through individual's engagement in blogs, discussion lists, forums, wiki's and PHP-based pages, and through the effectiveness of some of interventionist art. The networks are witness to the power of individual publications.

Such kind of a more libertarian networks appears where there is a consciousness of an asymmetric power ruling the world. The urgency is for individuals of all generations, on all continents, to collaborate, share, put their heads and hearts together in an effort to create new articulations. Artworks dealing with reality-based interfaces restore the power of commun(e)cation.

This approach challenges the mighty identity of corporative networks. This network society is what forms a multitude, involving the centre and its peripheries (the slum), now networked: the 'third world' producing awareness, the 'slow men[/women]', the local; shaping itself into a strongly connected community,

3.5 Project 4: *Cubo*, a report

Between January and April 2005, I participated in a project called *Cubo* (Cube), conceived by the groups *A Revolução Não Será Televisionada, Bijari, Cobaia, Contra-filé, Cia Cachorra* and *Perda Total*. The aim was to produce interaction and dialogue with the specific environment of São Paulo's city centre and its dwellers, those who effectively circulate there and who make of that environment their lives, a public that is normally at the margins of any kind of entertainment.

The project was planned in two stages: the first was based on a common proposal to seek immersion in São Paulo city centre's often intangible social

conditions. The second stage arranged for the presentation of the achieved results on a large-scale projective structure, constructed in the form of a cube (five 7 x 7 m screens)[20]. The groups involved would produce images to be projected in all five visible faces of the cubic structure, building a common discourse to be presented publicly during three consecutive weekends, in the heart of the city centre.

We wanted to carry out work in which there would be a closer dialogue with this public, who is today enmeshed within the city centre's revitalisation discourse, under the imminence of being expelled from their downtown homes by the gentrification process. The recorded images resulted from months of attentive collecting, fruit of the engagement with the people who circulate downtown, work downtown, live downtown, who imprint life onto the city centre and who would like to live there in a dignified way – as fought for by the MSTC (a squatters' movement). As such, we sought to connect more intimately with this 'reality'. The *Cubo* would be made into a channel, a vehicle through which they could express themselves – if they so wished.

However, in the first not yet properly fine-tuned presentation there was an evident opacity between the internal and external spaces. The *Cubo* failed to function as an interface allowing permeability between the performance space and the spontaneity of the streets. The public with which we hoped to establish a dialogue remained apathetic, excluded from the presentation – no matter how much we strived to make the images represent them.

On the second weekend, in a new location we tried to increasingly change this structure. More 'transparent' and immediate kind of mediation devices were progressively introduced, such as, for instance, the making cameras and microphones freely available to the 'outside' audience, as well as

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[20] The cube's interior was equipped with all necessary gear for live presentation in open public spaces: five high luminosity video projectors, four video-switchers, eight laptops, DV players, handheld cameras, vinyl pickups, digital samplers and a powerful PA. The structure was inspired by some projects and '*dispositifs'* dealing with the concept of expanded-cinema such as the Corpocinema (1967) or Place - a user's manual (1995) by Jeffrey Shaw.

deploying people who were really willing to interact in direct engagement, face-to-face, with what was going on around the *Cubo*. As we opened to less controlled sets, engaging ourselves in improvisations, we managed to achieve more spontaneous participations: over 15 rappers performed together with the project's DJs and MCs, encouraging freestyle sessions, closer to rap and to Brazilian popular *repente* rhyming poetry. Another kind of sound and visual treatment was demanded to dialogue with this, leading to further improvisations. From then on things began changing and the presentations naturally gained the participation of the true city centre dwellers, of the public around it, previously apathetic.

Fig. 20: The project Cubo at Patriarca Square, in its first presentation weekend (2005)

In the third presentation weekend the project finally worked in terms very close to expectations. The public really participated as we brought in more elements from within the *Cubo* to the outside. Cameras began to work as effective and friendly mediation mechanisms, and not of embarrassment. This allowed us to see and to feel what went on the other side of the screen, in the

same way as it opened to the public the invitation for celebration coming from the inside. The mediation finally became more transparent, and a dialogue was established, made possible by a sense of embodied networking. These relationships took place in a very energizing form, something that is foregrounded when working with context in real time.

Together with other groups, experiencing temporary or long-term associations, and moved by the desire of mutual cooperation I have been learning to conduct experiences of such nature, which is valuable in the bringing together of important aspects of theory and practice. These are complementary and non-excluding forms of exploring structures linked to the mediation between distinct 'realities'. But, above all, with the clear aim of tooling up another dimension: of working as a conduit, as an actually empowering mediation interface, which can be put to somebody's service (a person, a group). This individual or group, who usually longs to say something, can eventually become aware of the real usefulness of such channels/interfaces in an effort to improve their socio-political condition – as such, 'reality-based interface' art understands the work as an inherent part of this 'outside' condition.

3.6 Conclusions

The artistic projects analysed in this research have had as their main function the raising of awareness. Through a subjective filter, they seek to address relevant aspects often existing in invasive technologies at the time they were created. Each operated in its own capacity; language, media, technology and social context. The artworks achieved this function and are constituted today as images of a specific point in the history of the emergence of pervasive technologies. The context today is pictured as more complex than when the projects were created and it just helps us to perceive the speed of these implementations. Each of these works can be seen as different operative models of 'reality-based interface'.

3.6.1 *4walls* as a 'reality-based interface'

The *4walls* installation dealt with an idea of interface that made evident the way personal surveillance can be manifested through many formats: sometimes, voyeuristic, sometimes subjective and sometimes just banal. The 'reality-based' component is located in the capability to make the viewer 'suffer' what it is to feel as an intruder, as the perception of relevance of the interface unfolds simultaneously. This embarrassment from the point of view of the user is the key point, as it is produced while experiencing the work, not conceptually, at distance. In this sense, despite the representational aspects, what connects the viewer with the reality is not the image itself, neither the windows, but his/her own approach to the work, that is, the interface that is played out.

Originally produced as a technical prototype, its capabilities to relate to social reality gained relevance over the design of the interface as a mere technical mechanism.

To experience the installation was for many visitors an uneasy way to portray his/her own prejudices concerning issues on intimacy. Through such

mediating technologies one was likely to be exposed also to issues of identity, cultural differences, sociability, racism, homophobia, amongst other kinds of embarrassment.

3.6.2 *meta4walls* as a 'reality-based interface'

The net art piece *meta4walls* is still online producing connections between current contexts and its own – referenced as a portrait of the year 2000 – configuring itself as the most 'time-specific' out of the three proposed works. In its last exhibition (Cyphorg Citizens and Unwitting Avatars, USA 2005)[21] this aspect was recalled by the curator Rick Rinehart, not only preserving but updating the piece's critical approach to intrusive means in daily life. The context has changed, most of the intrusive resources have had its capabilities and scopes augmented, 'but the principles of gathering information persist within the same logics'.[22]

The piece's 'reality-based' condition is derived from the spam itself, which produces an effective way to connect people to the 'realness' of the junk universe.

It revealed intrusive techniques by means of pointing to intimate situations in a two-way street. When one is caught in his/her most intimate Internet session, one may be aware that even one's dreams may be somehow monitored.

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[21] Cyphorg Citizens and Unwitting Avatars (2005) was organized by the New Langton Arts, San Francisco, USA. At this show it was presented together with works by Radical Software Group' *Carnivore (2001)* and Brooke Singer/Preemptive Media's *Zapped!* (2005). According to the curator the works aimed to examine the shifting boundaries between individual, corporate and civic spaces, exploring the invisible bread crumb trails we leave behind as we shop, drive and surf the web'. A common ground was clearly identified among the works. Like *meta4walls*, *Carnivore* also relates to a specific time of intrusive resources on the web, while *Zapped!* refers to the introduction of RFID tags in daily life. Both are an intrinsic part of the context from which *meta4walls* has emerged.

[22] Cyphorg's archive is available at:
http://www.newlangtonarts.org/view_event.php?category=Network&archive=1&displayYear=2005&&eventId=239

The idea that what happens online may lead to consequences in 'real off-line world' does not scare many people anymore. But for many viewers the work served as an introduction to this topic.

3.6.3 *Spio* as a 'reality-based interface'

Spio points to control/lack-of-control relationship within the automated systems. The improbability of certain more recent tools is in focus. On the one hand it may induce discipline as it explicitly exposes its visual apparatus in confrontation to the viewer. On the other hand it trivializes the surveillance apparatus to a certain level, normalizing the surveillant condition. These are all depictions of a world permeated by lies and fears. As such, *Spio* expands the idea of 'reality-based-interface' to different levels. It produces awareness by the possibilities of normalization of intrusive devices. As a system that is at the same time a found object (a vacuum cleaner transformed into a mediation mechanism) and a surveillant/surveilled device, it produces confusion and misapprehension. It interfaces 'nothing with nothing' and this void may produce strangeness about a device whose functions, tasks or parameters one does not know for sure. It can be seen less as a finished object and more as a hub of linking possibilities.

As the system is also composed by other 'electronic eyes', controlling and measuring the robot's own movements, once again, what is at stake is the conflict 'who watches who. In this sense it returns to the panoptical, as an ambiguous mechanism injected into the disciplinary reality of control.

3.6.4 *Cubo* as a 'reality-based interface'

As an interventionist project which dealt with responsibilities over the context, the *Cubo* achieved to produce effective mediations, immersed on the city-centre 'reality'. Through the project, a many-to-many kind of encounter was possible. City dwellers could meet and dance with each other, with ones that

live in close proximity, but who, for some reason, they have never met before. At the end, the Cubo and its screens, MC's, VJ's, microphones and cameras, functioned together as powerful model of 'reality-based-interface`. But we had to learn how to read the different layers of 'realities' in the context of the city centre, and above all, that technologies cannot be vertically implemented by any means. 'We had to take the public squares to do away with the museum as mediator' (Bambozzi et al. 2004: 112). The project was itself the interface, so it did not rely on the elimination of the mediator but rather the subtleness of an approach to the interface. The same interface that once separates, can produce real encounters according to its configurations regarding social reality. 'Reality-based interfaces' can be mechanisms that make such experiences viable.

Individually and as a group, these works promote awareness. They offer the possibility for each individual to place him/herself before the mediatic context, leading one to observe themselves in the position of one's privacy and rights – invader and invaded, active and passive. As conscious attempts to surmount effects of alienation while not renouncing representation, my projects are seen to belong to the blurred borders between experiments in art and engagement in collective actions hoping to inflict social change.

The challenge to generate perception concerning aesthetics and social relevance, which will allow connections outside the art world has been a major task in most of my recent works. I went on to make documentaries motivated by such issues. To make documentaries can be a way of learning with reality, a way of placing oneself in a relationship with the other, with the environment or with a certain unknown context. And in this process, this path may be transformed, it can make myself different, make me see something I could not se before. And more than that, it can work as a channel for somebody else's expression. Then a bubble can be perforated as it creates another channel of expression.

Considering these interfaces in their mediatic dysfunction (a poetic function), containing potent subjective elements, that may produce even further connections between the real and the virtual, between subjectivity and reality – they feed directly off reality.

3.6.5 Final considerations

Since I began this research in 2001, there have been very important transformations in a more particular context. More than making myself available for studying the systems, the literature, the theories, attending symposiums, writing articles, I came to live in an environment that is surrounded by the questions posed in this dissertation. I have 'lived the research', transposing it into my 'subjective reality'. I became involved with activist actions, joined collectives, learnt more about a sense of community and injected myself with the perspectives of transformation of their constituted forces. I became aware of the art system's contradictions and those in my own work. It is as if the questioning I underwent during this research led me to prove them in real life. I have let myself be transformed by each conviction constructed from readings, from each epistemological struggle, each contradiction I came across and each dead-end.

I have felt in my skin the urgency as an individual (in Brazil or anywhere else), to put my head and heart together and in tune with the other, so as to create new articulations, to generate empowerment.

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4.1 Netography

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Anat
http://www.anat.org.au

All Surveillance
http://www.all-surveillance.com

Autonomedia
http://www.autonomedia.org

Arteleku
http://www.arteleku.net

Banff + Horizon Zero
http://www.horizonzero.ca

Boredomresearch - Vicky Isley & Paul Smith
http://www.boredomresearch.net

Cukt, Central Bureau for Technological Culture/Piotr Wyrzykowski
http://cukt.art.pl

Creative Time/Blur 02
http://www.creativetime.org/programs/archive/2002/Blur02/BLUR02.htm

Dark Markets
http://darkmarkets.t0.or.at

DoCoMo
http://www.nttdocomo.com

Eyebeam
http://www.eyebeam.org

Epic [Googlezone] – Museum of Media History
http://www.letitblog.com/epic/

First Monday
http://www.firstmonday.org

Gadgets
http://www.engadget.com/entry/5843952395227141/

Generator
http://www.generative.net/generator/

i-Dat
http://www.i-dat.org/

Institute for Distributed Creativity
http://distributedcreativity.org

Interaccess Electroni Media Arts Centre
http://www.interaccess.org

Locative Media
http://locative.net/

Lo-Fi Net Art Locator
http://www.low-fi.org.uk/

Media Art Net
http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/mediaartnet/

Medialounge
http://www.medialounge.net

Mute - Metamute
http://www.metamute.com

Near Near Future/Régine Debatty
http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com

Negativeland
http://www.negativland.com

OpenFlows Networks
http://www.openflows.org

Paper Tiger TV
http://www.papertiger.org

Parachute Contemporary Art Magazine
<http://www.parachute.ca>

Privacy Exchange.Org
http://www.privacyexchange.org/

Promote Awareness
http://www.promoteawareness.com/

Redundant Technology Initiative/James Wallbank (UK)
http://www.lowtech.org/

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São Paulo International Biennial 2004
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Secret Agent Project-looking at Surveillance and agency
http://www.ascu.buffalo.edu/~mrbohden/index

http://digitalmedia.berkeley.edu/shawn/art.page.secret.html

Stand . A Guide to the RIP bill
http://www.stand.org.uk/commentary.php3

Surveillance Camera Players
http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html

Surveillance Society – reading and lecture topics
http://users.aber.ac.uk/jfs/surveillance/surveillance_lectures.htm

Test
http://www.test.org.uk/

The Institute of Applied Autonomy (USA)
http://www.appliedautonomy.com/

Urbaneye
http://www.urbaneye.net

V2-Deaf
http://www.v2.nl
http://www.encart.net

Web cams around the world:
http://www.earthcam.com/

Wikipedia
http://www.wikipedia.org

4.2 Artists' references:

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http://www.bakteria.org

Blast Theory
http://www.blasttheory.co.uk

Bureau of Inverse Technology/Natalie Jeremijenko (USA)
http://cat.nyu.edu/natalie

Cornelia Sollfrank/NetArtGenerator moiNAG
http://soundwarez.org/generator/moiNAG/

David Rokeby/VNS
http://homepage.mac.com/davidrokeby/vns.html

Etoy
http://www.etoy.com/

Irational (Heath Bunting, Minerva Cuevas, Daniel Andujar and others)
http://www.irational.org

Janet Cardiff/Eyes of Laura
http://eyesoflaura.org

Jordan Crandall – Under Fire
http://www.wdw.nl/underfire-archive/

Julia Scher
http://adaweb.walkerart.org/~scher/index.html
Security Land
http://adaweb.walkerart.org/project/secure/corridor/sec1.html
Konsent Klinik
http://adaweb.walkerart.org/project/secure/kk
Wonderland
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Mongrel
http://www.mongrelx.org

Patrick Lichty
http://www.accessgrid.org
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Ricardo Miranda Zuniga:
http://www.ambriente.com/

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Matt Locke at Test
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4.3   Filmography

Blow Up Michelangelo Antonioni (1966) Italy/UK

Gattaca Andrew Niccol (1997) USA

Guy Michael Lindsay-Hogg (1996) Germany/UK

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appendices

appendix A

4walls

interactive installation by lucas bambozzi

description

The 4wall installation was developed as a "symbolic" proposition, using archetypical situations commonly found in private, domestic and intimate spaces.

The work consists of four demolition windows hanged at the end of four corridors. Each of the windows receive images that are rear-projected in its glasses, corresponding to a recognizable in-house ambient such as lounges, living rooms and bedrooms. As the visitor enters the room/corridor and is still distant from the windows, intimate situations are supposed to happen, somewhat active and intense. As the visitor approaches the window, the scenes change accordingly.

The original set up proposes four levels of interaction between the visitor and the images, producing a different narrative intensity with particular ways of interaction.

Each ambient reproduces a particular behaviour, related to ordinary and private actions that happen inside a four-wall situation
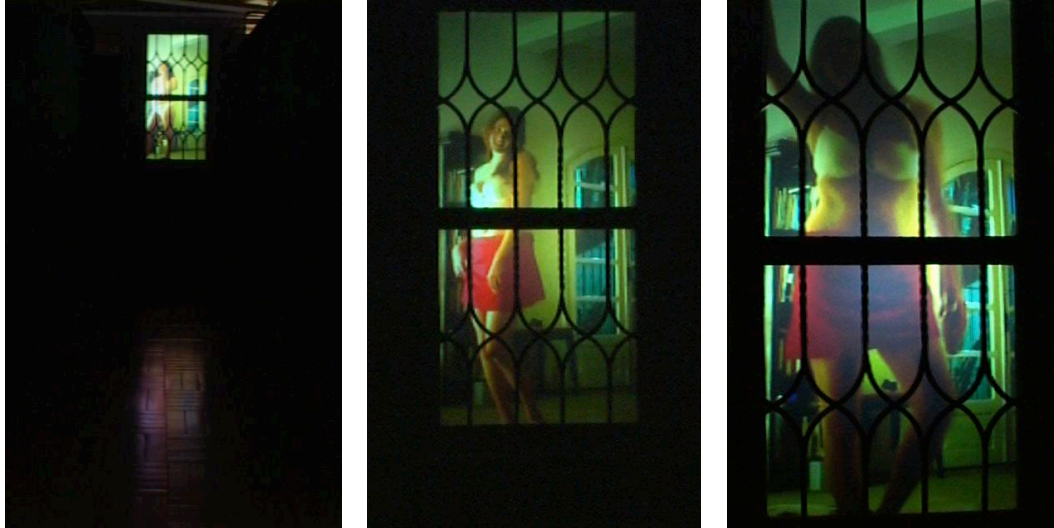
The 4walls installation was developed during the residency at CaiiA-Star Centre (currently Planetary Collegium).

exhibitions

Intimidade Exhibition at Paço das Artes, São Paulo, Brazil
December 7, 2002 to January 10, 2003

Piemonte Share Festival – Turin, Italy
February 24 to March 1, 2005
<www.toshare.it>

Videoformes . XX Manifestation Internationale d'art vidéo et noveaux média Clermont Ferrant, France
March 15 to April 1, 2005,

Credits and technical details

Concept, creation and direction: Lucas Bambozzi

Software development: Caio Barra Costa

Performers: Carolina Botelho, Lali K., Cristiane Mesquita, Lucas Bambozzi and Giovana Soar
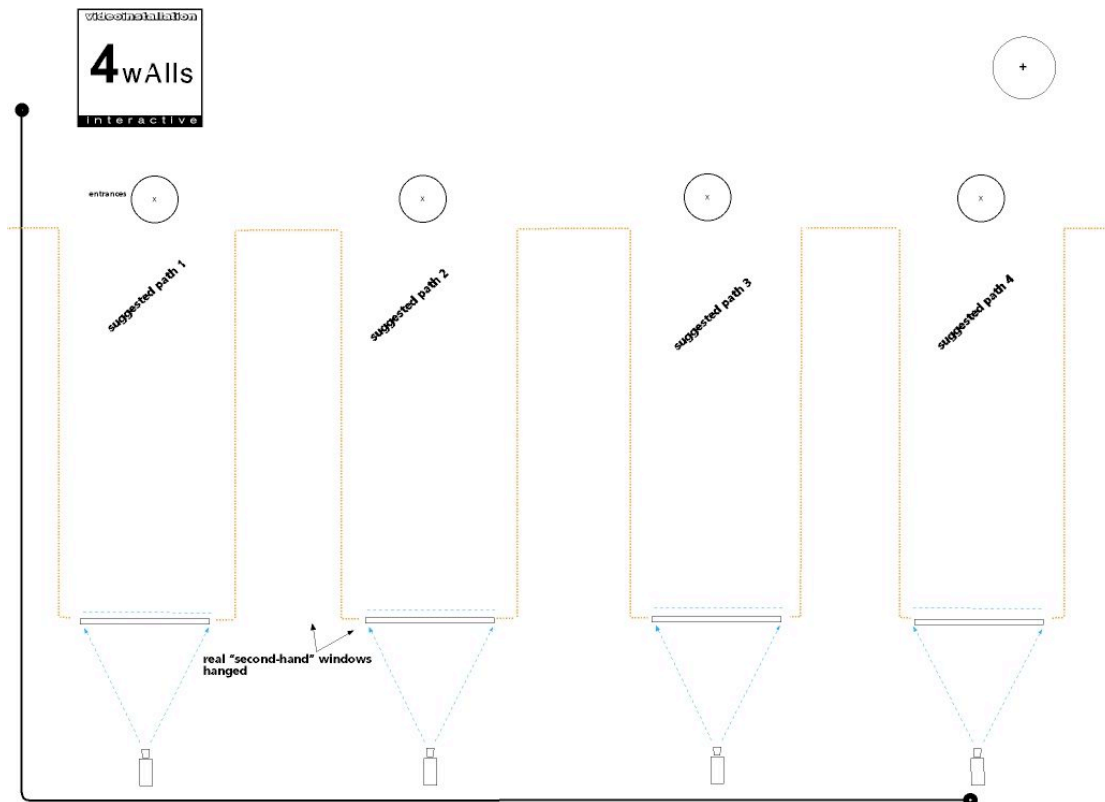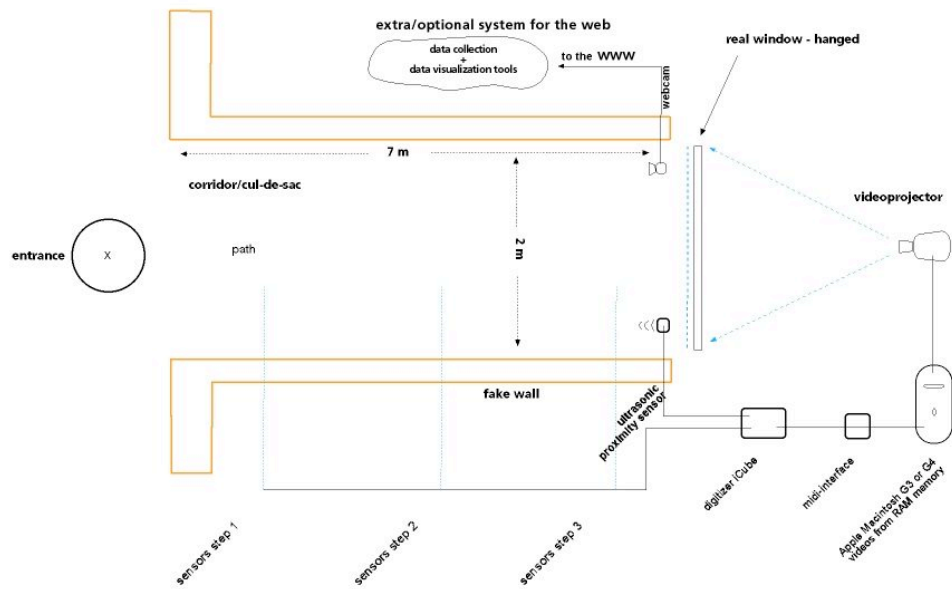
Support: Bolsa Vitae de Artes / Vitae Arts Fellowship provided the support for the development of the specific version presented at Paço das Artes

installation drawings:

videoinstallation
4wAlls
interactive

project by lucas + bambozzi

extra/optional system for the web

data collection
+
data visualization tools

to the WWW

webcam

real window - hanged

7 m

corridor/cul-de-sac

videoprojector

entrance X

path

2 m

fake wall

ultrasonic proximity sensor

digitizer iCube

midi-interface

Apple Macintosh G3 or G4 videos from RAM memory

sensors step 1

sensors step 2

sensors step 3

videoinstallation
4wAlls
interactive

+

entrances X   X   X   X

suggested path 1   suggested path 2   suggested path 3   suggested path 4

real "second-hand" windows hanged

appendix B

meta4walls

net-art by lucas bambozzi

technical info:

title: meta4walls

part of the 4walls project by lucas bambozzi

programming: Dan Harris and limbomedia (UK)

url's

http://www.comum.com/diphusa/meta [original]

http://rhizome.org/artbase/2857/meta/index.html [Rhizome's artbase]

http://www.bienalsaopaulo.terra.com.br [25th São Paulo International Biennial]

**browsers**: Internet Explorer 5, Mac ou PC [not optimized for Netscape or Safari]

plug-ins: Flash 5
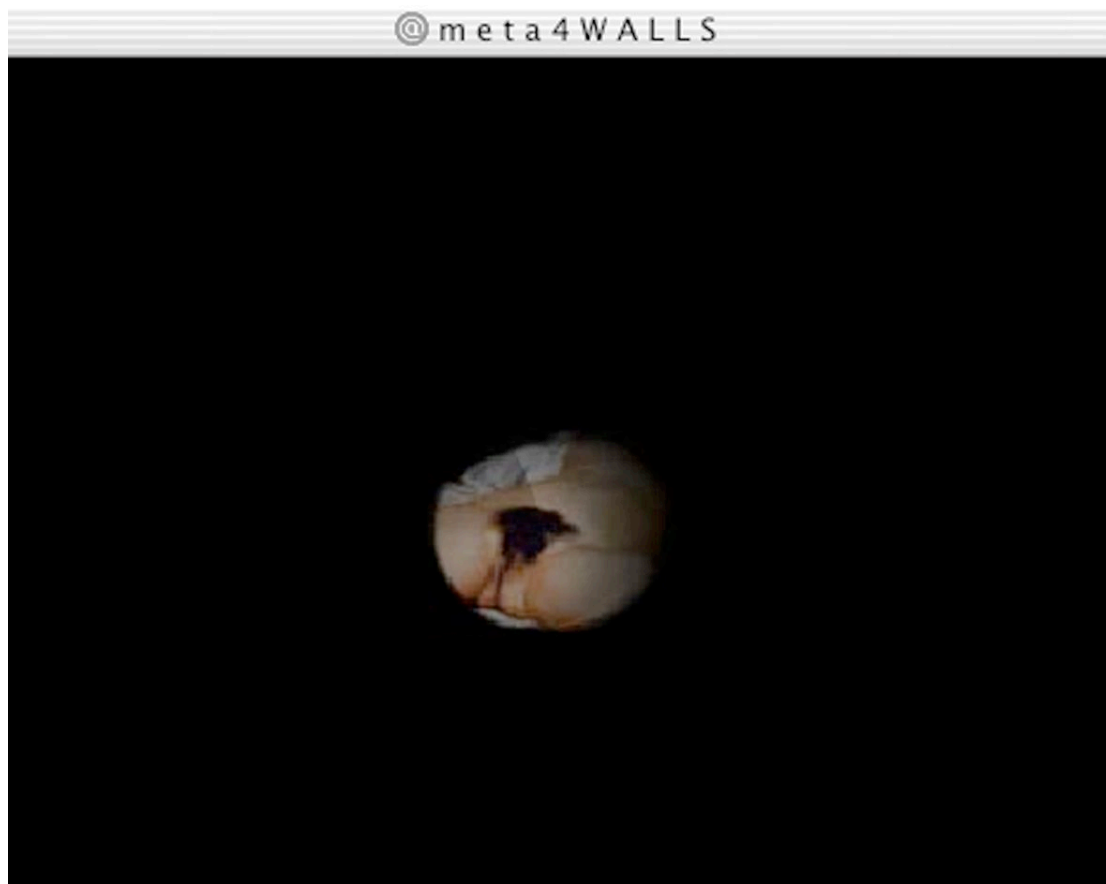
description

meta4walls is a web-based work simulating a sort of meta-surveillance on the Net as a public space. It employs mechanisms widely used to collect personal information through cookies, forms and questionnaires. Scripts generate automatic feedback that appear in the foreground despite the sites the user is navigationg through.

It is entirely made by using content received via unsolicited e-mail. Inviting the user to visit a range of illicit links or to access 'secret' information in a displaced context, it suggests to visitors the feeling of being observed and having their privacy endangered – as they will experience their personal data being collected.

meta4walls is part of the 4walls project, which was developed during a residency from 2000 to 2002 at the CaiiA-STAR Centre (currently operating as Planetary Collegium - UK). These projects are part of a MPhil research initiated in 2001

meta4walls project was originally developed as a prototype put together with the presentation of a paper on intrusive system at the XII Videobrasil International Electronic Art Festival (São Paulo, 2001). It was partially commissioned by the festival, where it was first presented to the public. It got many reviews and featured in exhibitions such as the 25th São Paulo International Biennial (2002) and Arte Nuevo InteractivA'05 2005 (Merida, Mexico). It was also presented as a study case at the meeting Intimate Technologies/Dangerous Zones (Banff, Canada 2002). Apart from such formal invitations and exhibitions, several web sites and net art publications have pointed to the work, placing it in more informal shows.
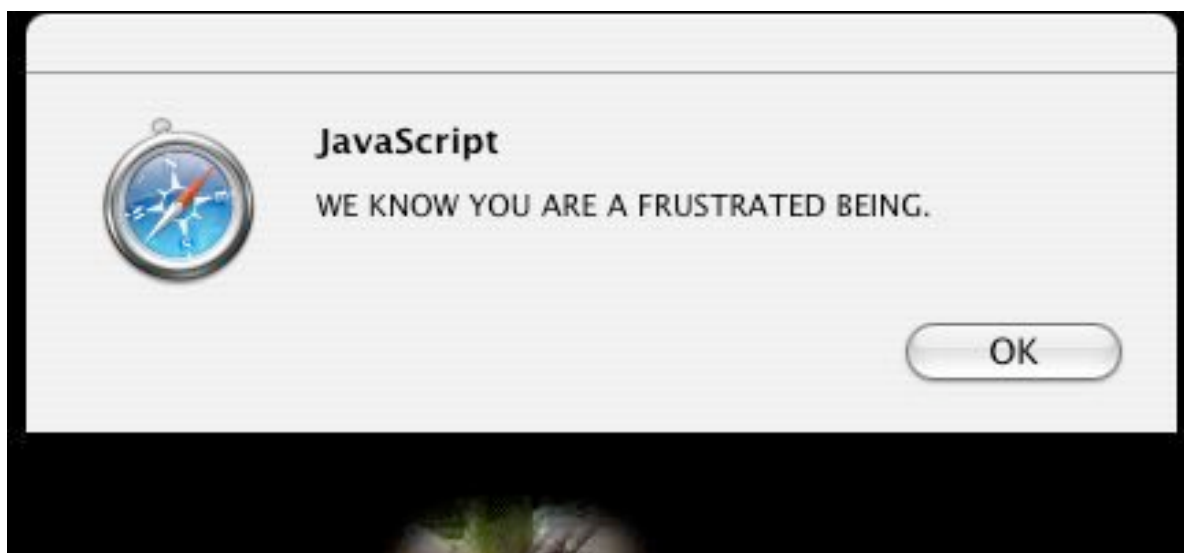
reviews and additional info:

This review by Suely Rolnik was written spontaneously and followed the launching of meta4walls over the Internet:

> In *meta4walls* Lucas Bambozzi works with the living product of this relationship between receptor and image. Nothing to do with another offer of interactivity where the receptor is included in a game of marked cards, once that is excluded, the goal is exactly the perverse game of inclusion/exclusion.
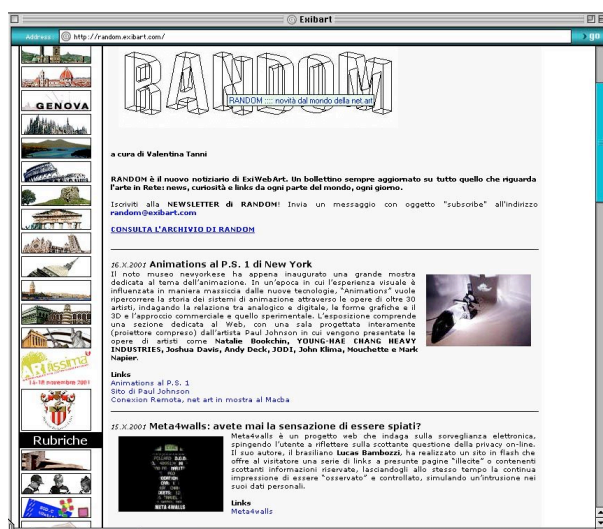>
> It is not just any image that Lucas privileges as a support of his work. It is just about this vast universe of commercial emails, especially those offering sexual delight, that invade compulsively computer screens in a true harassment of the soul. Instead of the automatic gesture to delete all this junk that the market dumps on us, the artist collects them, forwards them, not without producing some interruptions in the flux of the offer and consumption using discrediting comments about privacy. In these unexpected insertions the receptor is caught in the act, not only in his/her sexual misery and onanist transaction with images, which is the most obvious; but also and more disturbing, in his passive submission to the harassment of images: he/she discovers that is being controlled even when he/she thought they were in their most intimate privacy, his/her most hidden erotic dreams, in the remote veins of their unconscious. It is the actual junk from the virtual market used as a weapon against its tyranny in the subjectivity of the receptor. The tables were turned.
>
> *meta4walls* is the confluence and the development of the best in Brazilian art. Among others, a Cildo Meireles and a Lygia Clark from the 70s now cybernetic, are mixed in the genealogy of this art work. (…) The *Insertions into the Ideological Circuit* by Cildo which were carried out through objects of a "physical" nature such as Coca-Cola bottles or banknotes expand into cyberspace and move on to include the circuit of virtual objects.

The *Structuring of the Self* by Lygia intermediated a physical relationship between artist and receptor by equally physical *Related Objects*, and mobilised in the receptor the potential to be affected by the world and to participate in its creation, it expands now into cyberspace and starts including a virtual relationship between artist and receptor, intermediated by equally virtual objects.

The work is this event in the relationship between the receptor and the image, the commodity, the electronic media, sex, art. It is impossible to predict if it will happen or not. One thing is certain: when the work happens a small but, powerful invisible sudden change will have taken place between four walls.

Suely Rolnik, September 2001

meta4walls reviewed by Random
Exibart <www.exibart.com> 2002

15.X.2001 **Meta4walls: avete mai la sensazione di essere spiati?**

Meta4walls è un progetto web che indaga sulla sorveglianza elettronica, spingendo l'utente a riflettere sulla scottante questione della privacy on-line. Il suo autore, il brasiliano **Lucas Bambozzi**, ha realizzato un sito in flash che offre al visitatore una serie di links a presunte pagine "illecite" o contenenti scottanti informazioni riservate, lasciandogli allo stesso tempo la continua impressione di essere "osservato" e controllato, simulando un'intrusione nei suoi dati personali.

Links
Meta4walls

meta4walls reviewed by Neural Online <www.neural.it>

interveiew/statement:

Excerpt from an interview to art critic Christine Mello

> [1] LB: […] This work is a portal where some bizarre things would gather. It would attract a kind of public that normally feels embarrassed to go after pornography and all kind of dodgy content. The work is a kind of trap, a catch to make people believe that they are going to a site of 'good taste", but in fact, the site will take them to the 'real and wild world' of Internet, at least the world I consider real in the Internet, where everything can be sold: happiness, marijuana, pornography. […]

> *Christine Mello: You keep these messages, How do you keep other things, like you keep your images when you had an image data bank, the way you kept your shavers, hotel cards?*

> LB: 'I usually keep the messages that catch my attention the most, because they are strange. The first time I saw someone offering to fix a chair in the Internet, I kept it, because that was a kind of business that appeared unexpected, contradictory to the online principles by then. For instance, I did not produce any image for meta4walls. It is totally done with images that circulate in the Internet and were appropriated, most of them found on my own e-mail box. From Courbet's image to the image of a girl masturbating, all those images came from this universe, this junkyard from the Internet.'

> Christine Mello, February 2002
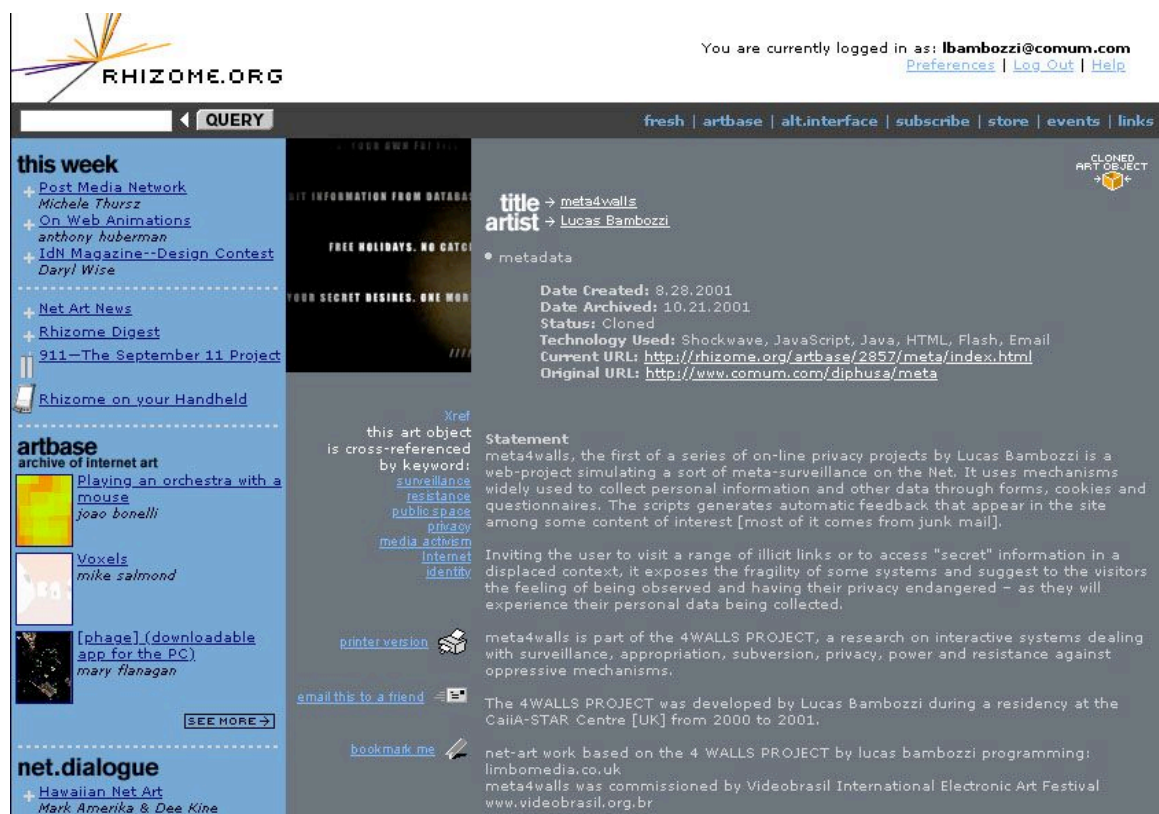
meta4walls at the Rhizome's art base archive

curatorial statements:

Introduction to the exhibition **Cyphorg Citizens & Unwitting Avatars** at New Langton Arts, Winter 2005, curated by Richard Rinehart

Cyphorg Citizens & Unwitting Avatars

The boundaries between individual, corporate, and civic spaces have shifted dramatically, driven by technological advancements in data-mining, data-surveillance, sensors, and other tracking technologies. These shifting boundaries provide opportunity and danger on all sides. From encryption for the common person, to companies tracking our every habit with membership cards and internet 'cookies', to advancements in military/law enforcement data-mining and surveillance, elements of our identity are increasingly translated into code, creating a new "data-self". This data-self leads a second life and mediates our experience within the new civic, corporate and private worlds. Our data-selves are nearly invisible yet have little privacy. They are vulnerable in very real ways. Identify-theft, credit record errors, and medical information sharing all affect us directly. Prick our data-self and we bleed.

This exhibition goes beyond digital avatars created out of choice for purposes of entertainment, education, or socializing in the form of video games or online chat forums. The exhibition focusses on the data-self that is an unself-conscious and unwitting by-product of the common person's everyday activities. This data-self can be pictured as a cyphernetic or information organism (cyphorg), an updated version of the industrial age hybrid, the cybernetic organism (cyborg). Without taking a simplistic or polarized dys/utopian stance, this exhibition explores the process whereby citizens are represented as data or physically tracked with devices that attach codes to our bodies. The art projects in this exhibition map the new civic and private territory in which our data-selves live. The artists in this exhibition also ask how we can take control of our data-selves, guiding them between the benefits and dangers of these new territories? Is there such a thing as a healthy cyphorg-citizen?

Richard Rinehart, curator

selected exhibitions:

2001 - **Videobrasil** International Electronic Art Festival . São Paulo, Brazil

2002 . **25th São Paulo International Biennial** . Net.art . São Paulo, Brazil

2002 . **Intimate Technologies/Dangerous Zones** – New Media Institute, Banff, Canada (presented as a case study)

2004 . **Videoformes** . XIX Manifestation Internationale d'art vidéo et noveaux médias - Clermont Ferrand, France

2004 . **VAE8 – Video/Arte Electrónico** – Realidad Visual – Galeria CCPUCP – Peru, Lima

2005 . **New Langton Arts** . Cyphorg Citizens and Unwitting Avatars . Net Art Exhibition with Lucas Bambozzi, Radical Software Group and Brooke Singer . Curated by Rick Rinehart – Berkeley, USA

archive direction:

http://www.newlangtonarts.org/view_event.php?category=Network&archive=1&displayYear=2005&&eventId=239
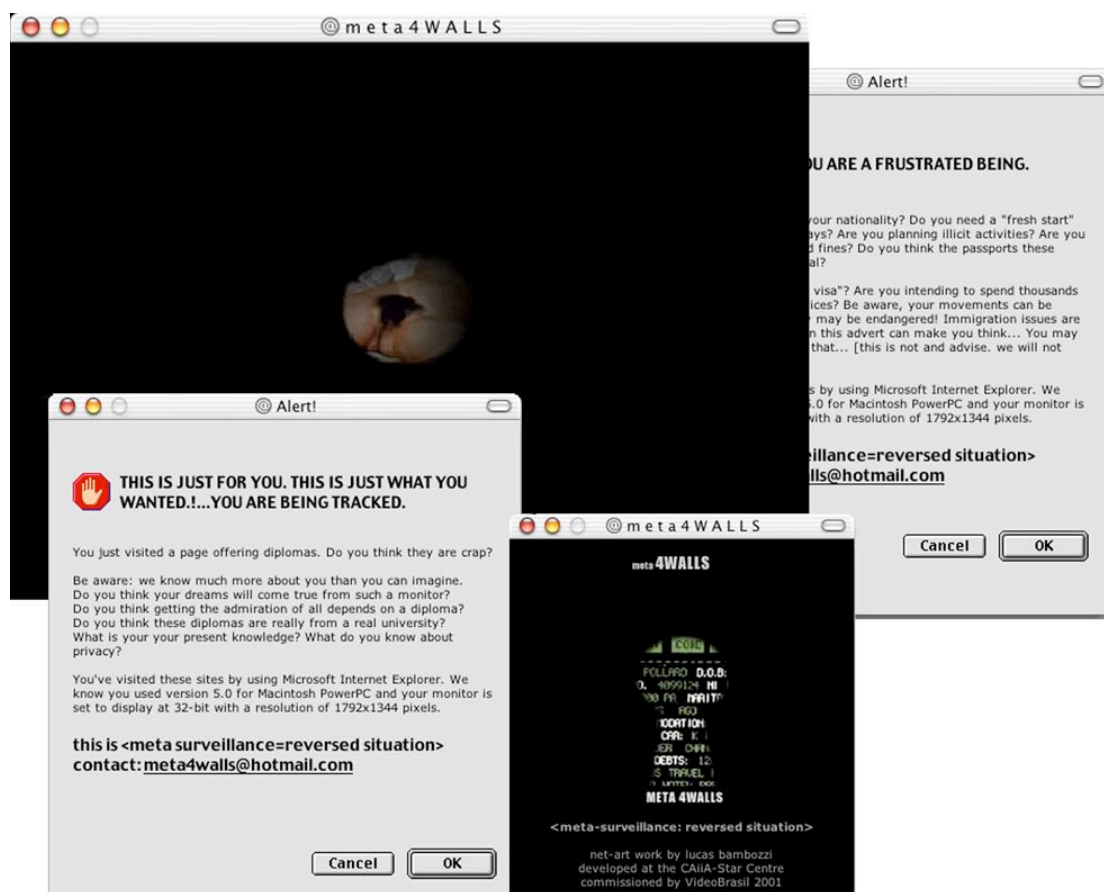
credits

Concept, creation: Lucas Bambozzi

Development: Limbomedia/Dan Harris

Support: Conceived during a residency at CAiiA-STAR Centre (currently Planetary Collegium) University of Plymouth from 2000 to 2001.

Additional support: Ministry of Culture, Government of Brazil – resources for the residency.

Commissioned by Videobrasil 2001

appendix C

spio

a de-generative installation by lucas bambozzi

It started with the telephone, the TV and the Internet, but imagine when your fridge begins to communicate with your palm pilot, updating the shopping list as you run out of milk, and perhaps even sending a notice to the grocer for home delivery. Or maybe the stove will alert the fire department because you didn't turn off the hot plate before rushing out. (Privacy is not the antidote to surveillance, Felix Stalder 2002)

description

SPIO is a 'self-surveilled' system based on a robotic vacuum cleaner modified for capturing and processing images from a different perspective.

Equipped with high sensibility and infra-red CCTV cameras the installation scrutinizes the space through pre-defined movements and triggers sound and visual events.

Cameras track the robot's movements, configuring a system where the watcher is also watched.

The CCTV cameras installed in the vacuum cleaner

The system is fed by light and sound interferences, which is produced by the presence of the audience, leading to chaotic movements and unexpected turbulences in the images, as well as in the sound - which generates feedback loops.

Picture from the Roomba's manual showing a typical cleaning pattern. The vacuum cleaner prevents itself to be stuck or fall into stairs.
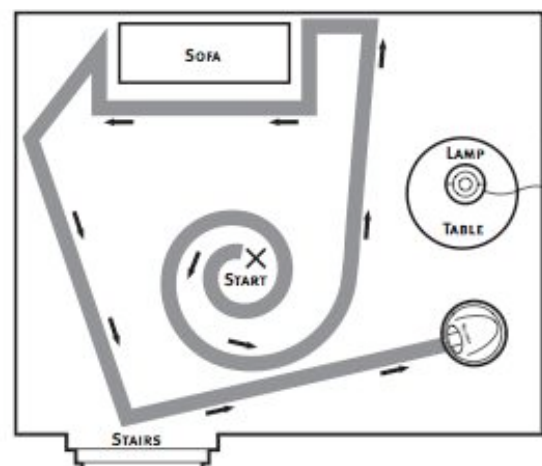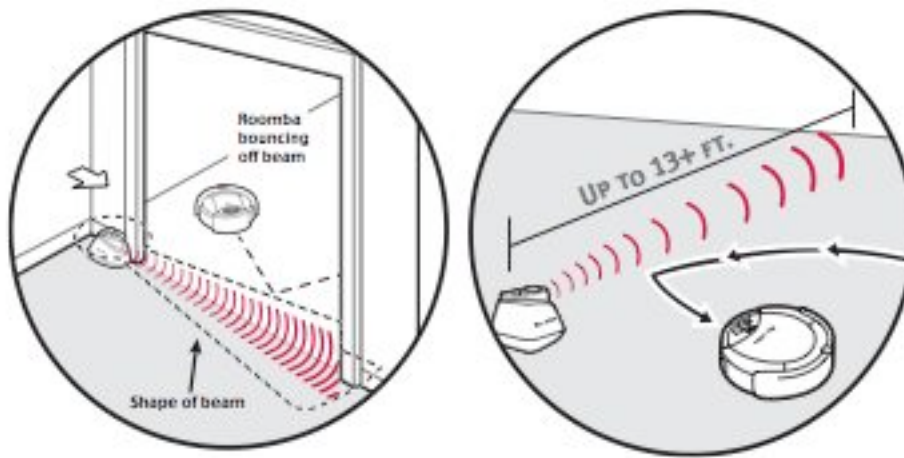

The position of the robot is tracked by two cameras, which send the parameters for processing images and sounds in real-time.

Two iSight cameras were used for tracking movements

lucas bambozzi - mphil

*An infra-red sensor can define virtual walls*
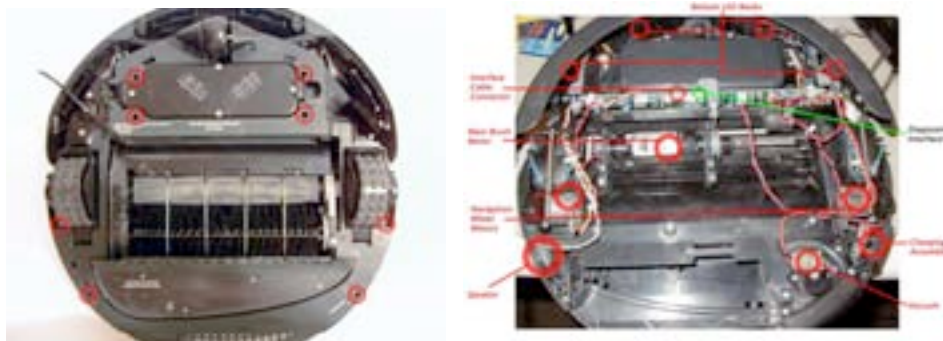
Hacking the iRobot's Roomba vacuum cleaner

A webcam was used for live streaming, showing the work in action

The set-up for Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 at Itaú Cultural included also a web cam for live streaming. By the time it was being exhibited, it was possible to see the actions of the robotized sweep cleaner in real time as well as the images it produced. Thus, as in a graphic drawing, it was possible to visualize the tracing of the robot's tracks, starting with geometrical and precise lines and tending to a chaotic behavior, specially noticed when the exhibition was full.

catalogue page at Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0
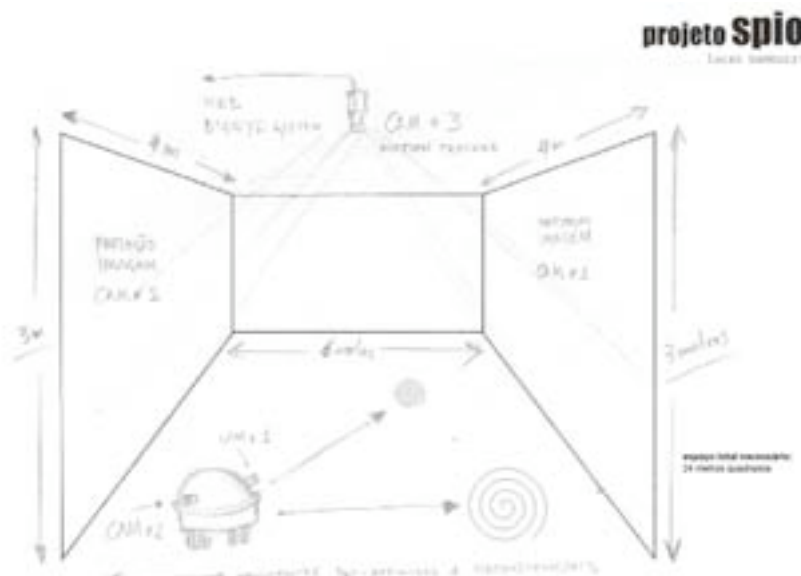
[Lucas Bambozzi]

(Brasil)
Projeto Spio, 2004
instalação

Resultado de pesquisa desenvolvida por Bambozzi ao longo dos últimos quatro anos, a obra discute os sistemas de controle e vigilância na sociedade moderna. As imagens captadas por uma câmera instalada sobre um robô espião, que circula dentro da área da instalação, são tratadas e recondicionadas, revelando de maneira cômica o aspecto intrusivo das câmeras de vigilância.

Lucas Bambozzi, jornalista formado pela Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, desenvolve desde o fim dos anos 80 estudos e trabalhos artísticos em torno da expressividade da linguagem audiovisual, com ênfase nos meios eletrónicos. Trabalha em várias mídias e com diferentes suportes. Participou de exposições em mais de 30 países.

(Brazil)
Projeto Spio, 2004
installation

The result of research carried out by Bambozzi over the course of the four last years, the work discusses the control and surveillance systems in modern society. The images, which are recorded by a camera, are installed on a spy robot that moves around inside the installation area, are treated and reconditioned, revealing comically, the intrusive aspect of surveillance cameras.

Lucas Bambozzi has a degree in journalism from the Federal University of Minas Gerais. Since the 80's he has developed artistic studies and works around the expressiveness of audiovisual language, with emphasis on electronic media. He works in various media with different supports. He has participated on exhibitions in more than 30 countries.

Paik's performmances with robot K-456 at Parnass Gallery (Wuppertal, Gemrnay, 1965),
an inspiring piece for Spio.
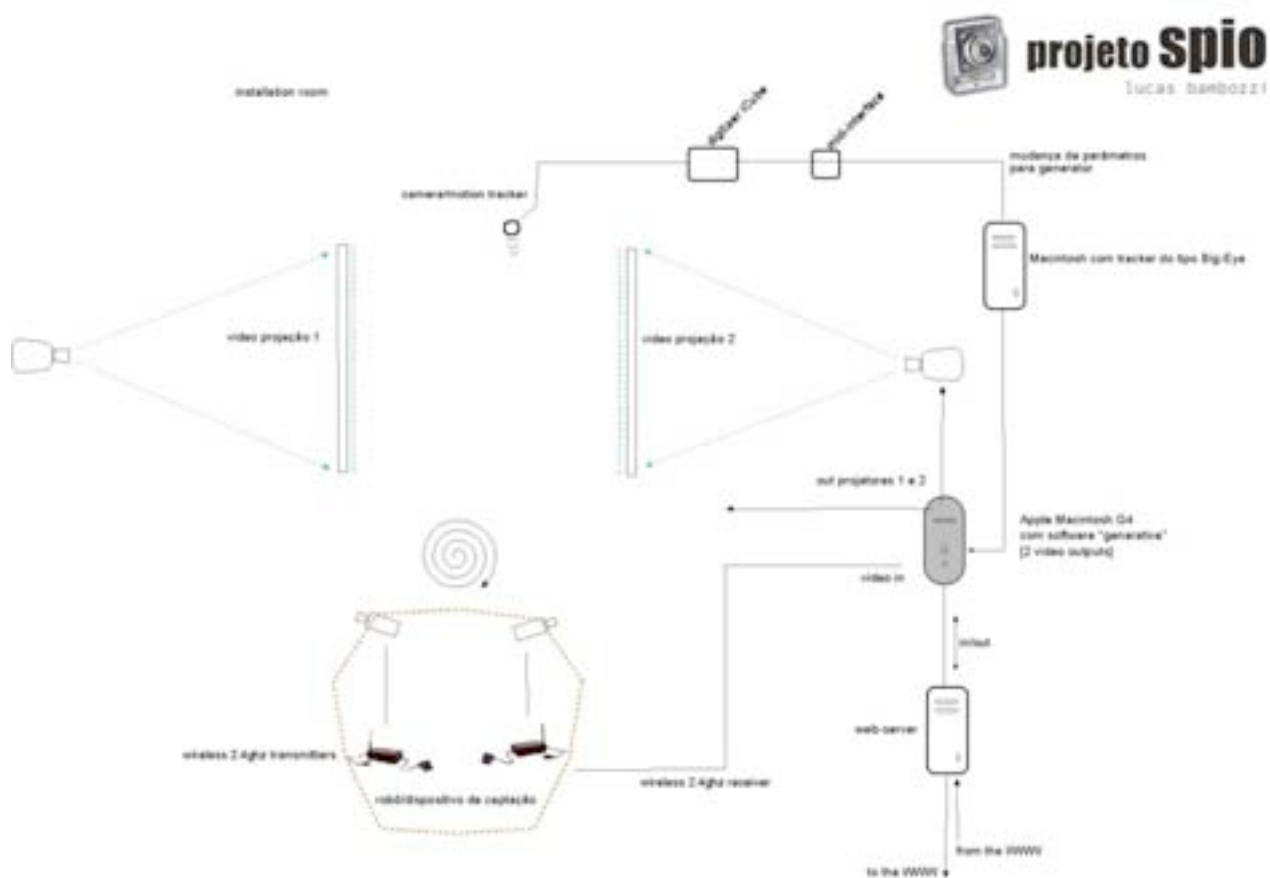
Drawing for Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0. The development turned out to be based on
*Macromedia Director and the Xtra plug-in Track Them Colors.*

curatorial statement for the exhibition at HTTP Gallery, London

[…]

In the UK, one of the most visible interactions of place and high-technology communications systems over the past 10 years has been the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV). Designed to improve the economic fortunes of public, commercial street systems, such technologies are so widespread that it has been estimated that the average UK urban resident is now monitored more than 300 timesa day, making Britain the most visually surveilled nation on Earth.

Artists working in digital media are increasingly exploiting the subject of CCTV. Lucas Bambozzi's SPIO, now installed at HTTP gallery, is an autonomous vacuum cleaner equipped with high sensibility and infrared CCTV cameras. SPIO scans the exhibition space through pre-defined movements and triggers sound and visual events in the ambient. The work is making an ironical comment on the self-surveyor apparatus, based on apparently innocent gadgets that will be filling our homes and habits more and more.

Tobi Maier, Dosensos, for the HTTP Gallery, London 2005
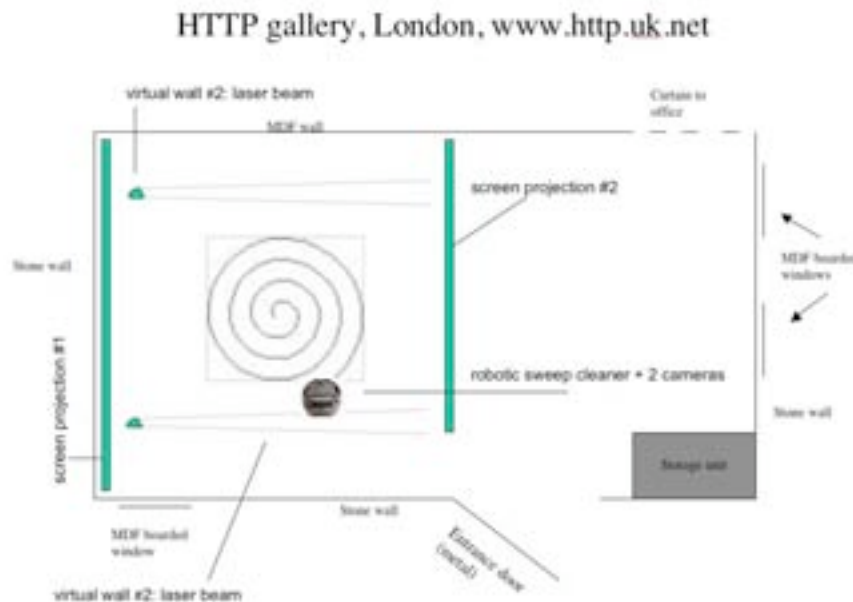
Drawings for the HTTP Gallery

Original proposal [not exhibited at any venue]:

The original version of *Spio* consisted of a set of three different observation apparatuses, or 'spying toys', suggesting its use for civilian surveillance activities. They were: 1) a remote controlled helicopter; 2) an outdoor robot and 3) an empty bottle of wine, all equipped with small cameras and wireless video transmitters. The idea was to present a series of performances that would serve to collect data/images on the surroundings of the Itaú Cultural building.
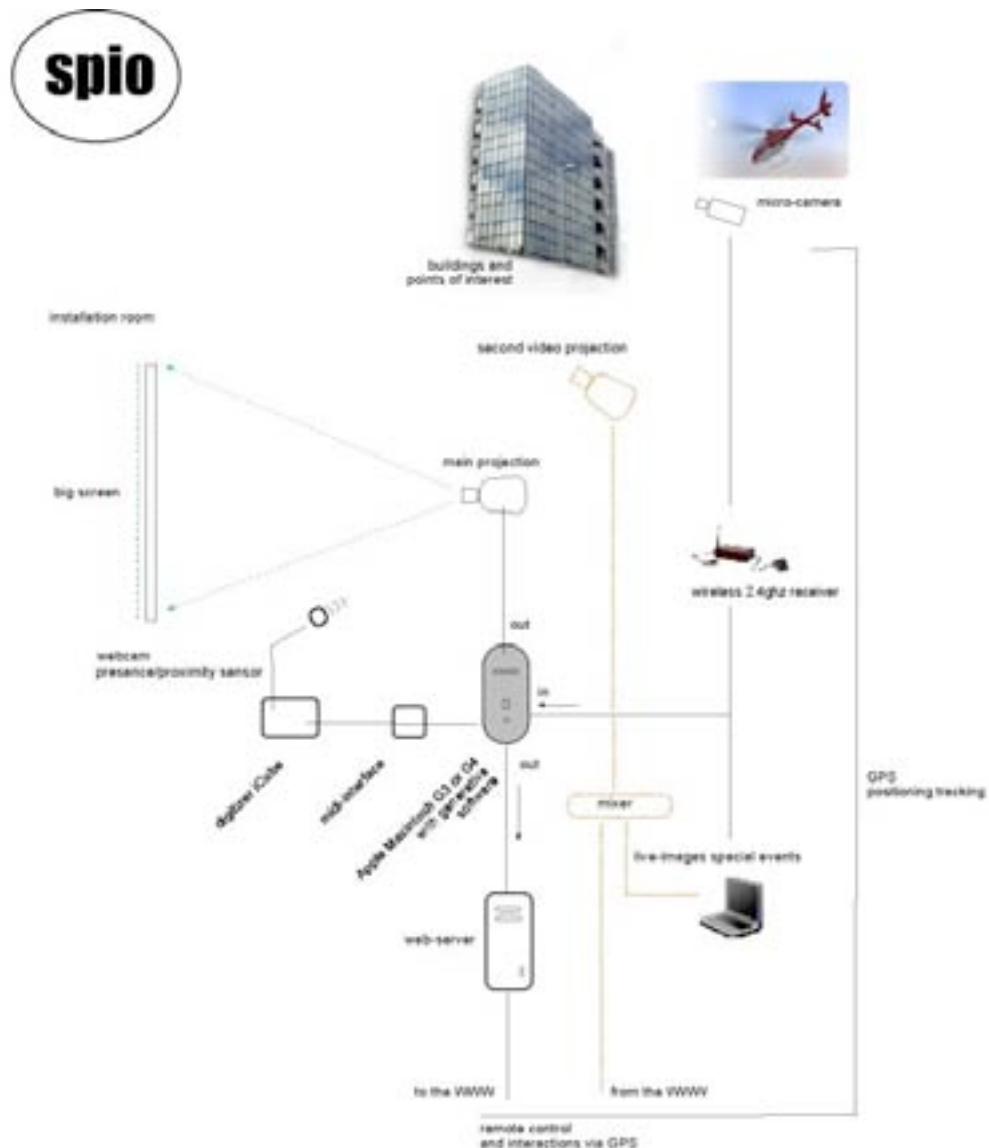
general structure

this drawings is for ilustrative purposes only. the correct structure of the installation, its technical needings as well as some procedures will only be properly figured out after starting the work process. other resources could then be added and a better and more concise project may arise.

proposal for a series of performances in the original version
[snapshot form the project]

SPIO robots:

The installation is composed by the following eyes or platforms/devices:

Spio 1: helicopter
Spio 2: climber/dog outdoor robot
Spio 3: bottles [beer, wine, etc.]

The installation comprises a series of performances that will be produced as an inherent part of the system.

Basically the performances will simulate a ritual of 'espionage' around the building where the installation will be set up. The images transmitted during the flights, rides or the spying session [depending if it is the helicopter, the tractor or the spy object] will be sent to the processing generator and then viewed by the visitors. Viewers around the world will be able to observe the actions of the robots by accessing data visualization tools and graphics showing its position and movements. The images it captures will be also viewed and can be mixed according to some pre-defined parameters.

In addition to the performances, the present proposal foresees the production of 4 special events including live video improvisation and manipulation by the artist. The sessions [1 hour of duration each, in two consecutive days] should be adjusted according to the venue and its characteristics.

Other experiences with GPS can be performed, connecting the internet viewers in a more effective way with the system.

exhibitions:

Emoção Art.Ficial 2.0 Itaú Cultural São Paulo, Brazil

July to September 2004

<http://www.itaucultural.org.br/emocaoartificial2>

HTTP House of Technologically Termed Praxis London, UK

April 5 to May 1, 2005

<http://www.http.uk.net>

HTTP is a non-profit organization run coordinated by Marc Garret and Ruth Cathlow from Furtherfield <http://www.furtherfield.org>

Spio exhibition was an invitation by HTTP's associated curator Tobi Maier, from Dosensos <http://www.dosensos.org>

 Credits and technical details

Concept, creation and direction: Lucas Bambozzi

Music: Radboud Mens (HTTP/UK only)

Hardware and technical production: Fábio Seiji Massui

Software development: Caio Barra Costa

Technical production in UK: Giles Pender for Furtherfield

Support: Itaú Cultural (Brazil) and Furtherfield (UK)

appendix D

Cubo

public intervention . multimedia action . mediating people

Despite the *Cubo* project is not part of the research, it was included in the dissertation as a collaborative model of non-corporative networking that succeeded as establishing a shared public environment. The project was created and performed collaboratively with the groups: by the groups *A Revolução Não Será Televisionada, Bijari, Cobaia, Contra-filé, Cia Cachorra* and *Perda Total*. *Cobaia* is the group I have participating actively since its creation in 2003.

A DVD containing the Cubo's making of is included. It shows the whole process of its creation, since the first discussions and all the public presentations.

The groups working inside the Cubo

Cubo

public intervention . multimedia action . mediating people

Building up the Cubo, before the presentations

A poster inviting people for the presentations

Cubo

public intervention . multimedia action . mediating people

DVD . ntsc . [Portuguese dialogues] aprox 20 min.