A LOOK INSIDE

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE
A LOOK INSIDE is an initiative of the European Privacy Day 2013 and the Flemish-Dutch House deBuren. The exhibition is curated by Jeroen De Meyer and Bart de Melker and presented at De Markten, Brussels from January 22 to February 3, 2013.

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On January 28, the world celebrates Privacy Day, a day in which events are held around the world to recognize the importance of privacy for our human values and fundamental freedoms.

The exhibition A LOOK INSIDE, curated by Jeroen De Meyer and Bart de Melker, is an initiative of nine institutions and organisations who see art as an ideal and precious tool for creating awareness about privacy. This catalogue contains brief presentations of the 18 European artists present at the exhibition, a short essay on privacy and art in the information society by Manu Gyselbrecht and a short story on privacy by Esther Severi.
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THIS IS PRIVATE

A foreword by Peter Hustinx and Willem Debeuckelaere

Peter Hustinx
European Data Protection Supervisor (EDPS)

Willem Debeuckelaere
Privacy Commission of Belgium (CBPL-CPVP)
“This is private!”
No three words can arouse greater curiosity than these.

Today, more than any other time in history, our lives and identities are exposed - sometimes through choice, sometimes not.

Is privacy an old-fashioned concept? If anything, in this age of CCTV, reality TV, tabloid journalism, smart phones and social networks, it is more relevant than ever. This unique exhibition is a stark reminder of just how relevant.

On the occasion of this elegant cultural inauguration of Data Protection Day 2013, we are delighted that we can be associated with one of the most pertinent social commentaries of our time.

Peter Hustinx, Willem Debeuckelaere
HELLO WORLD?¹

An analysis of privacy and art in the information society
by Manu Gyselbrecht

With a background in multimedia, philosophy and art science, Manu Gyselbrecht currently investigates the relationships between art, social change and technology.
Nowadays we leave a multiplicity of digital traces behind us, which can be automatically collected and analysed. Data mining, data harvesting, data aggregation and data farming are just a few methods and techniques companies and governments use to have an insight into who we are and what we do.

“As the volume and variety of data grows, so does its value.”
(BCG 2012, p. 23)

According to Felix Stadler (2010, p. 78) this evolution provokes a redefinition of the concept of privacy. Previously, this concept was seen as a balance between the autonomy of citizens and the control of institutions. Stadler (2010, p. 87) pleads for more insight regarding the mechanisms used for collecting data.

Armin Medosch (2010, p. 69) states that collecting personal data is no undesired side effect, but an essential part of the information society. Today technologies are offered to us, that look fun on the surface and we are told they are meant for our self-expression but when we look at them more critically, the technology behind appears to be very different and rather opposite to what was initially seen. For Medosch (2010, p. 74) this strategy, in combination with the automated analysis of data in networked information systems, means we are evolving towards a new power-knowledge and information capitalism. In a recently published report from a global management-consulting firm for an American cable company there is literally described how the value of personal data, from a macro-economical perspective, can give our stagnant European economy a new boost (BCG 2012, p. 21). Seen from

1* “Hello World!” is one of the first programs used, since the seventies until now, for programming and testing of computers. It can also be used for reverse engineering and hacking.
this perspective, privacy is a last hurdle that needs to be overcome before reaching a new economic reality.

“The coolest ideology of art within the culture of information is “destructive creativity,” of which hacking would be one logical extension.” (RALEY 2009, p. 26)

As a democracy we have to, as Pierre Bourdieu and Hank Haacke (1995, p. 54) stated in the beginning of the nineties, encourage critical thinking – especially a relentless self-criticism – without it democracy is doomed. The question is how art can offer an insight into the underlying implications of technology and how art in particular can visualize the tension between technology, privacy and control. With the arrival of net-art, David Garcia and Geert Lovink (1997) defined that according to the statement ‘The hunted must discover the ways to become the hunter’ the artist can expose underlying logics through reconfiguration of existing meanings and appropriation of techniques and methods. Don’t Be Evil? According to Chantal Mouffe (2008, p. 13) we have arrived in an age where art that wants to be critical can only do so through an agonistic attitude, where the artist positions himself as a friendly enemy. The form and aesthetics of this type of artistic research can best be pointed out with the following words of Garcia and Lovink (1997): “An aesthetic of poaching, tricking, reading, speaking, strolling, shopping, desiring. Clever tricks, the hunter’s cunning, maneuvers, polymorphic situations, joyful discoveries, poetic as well as warlike.” Welcome to a Brave New World!
Notes

UNDERHAND AND UNPERTURBED

A short story about privacy by Esther Severi

Esther Severi studied Fine Art in Brussels, Berlin and New York and Drama in Antwerp. She works as a writer and a dramaturge. She was one of a group of young writers who visited Paris in July 2012 at the invitation of deBuren. In 2012-2013 she will be organising a mobile Writing Studio under the auspices of detheatermaker. In addition, together with Paul Verrept and Wouter Hillaert, she forms part of the team at Uitgeverij Bebuquin, a publisher specialising in theatrical texts. Since 2011, she has taught in the Drama Department of Artesis College in Antwerp. She was awarded a writer's grant by the Province of Limburg for the period January-April 2013.
The strange feeling comes over me as I insert the key in the lock downstairs. I watch what I’m doing, the way I turn the key without ringing, not announcing myself as I used to, when my aunt let me into the building with a simple ‘yes’. Upstairs too, on the fifth floor, the course of events is different from before: I open the door myself and enter the crowded empty room.

I am not alone – the others are already there: my mother, uncles and aunt, and my grandfather. Everyone has their own key, although only one person has ever lived in this flat. Where do those keys come from? Why so many and why now, just as the flat is about to disappear from our lives for good?

In the hall I take off my coat and look forwards and backwards through glass doors. I promised to help clear the flat; that’s why I’m here. I saw it as an opportunity. I wanted to see what remains of her character, taste and life choices, wander around in them and record whatever I saw in my memory, as if I could in that way fix the remains of her life. They will become photographs, still lifes, whose authenticity will become ever more obscure and eventually disappear. My main hope is to discover something I didn’t know, so that she will appear to me in a new light and hence go on living. I hope for traces, missing details, as if via the contents of the flat and their clearance she will speak to me one last time. In my imagination the stories, even before I discover them, are vitally important.

I didn’t ring because I am no longer visiting her, but the exhibition of her now concluded life. With her death a private collection has of necessity been opened to the public.

When I enter the living room, I hesitate, but set to work. Curiosity wins out over scruples. I tell myself that I am looking for the person she was when no one was around and that I’m allowed to do so because in that way I can preserve her story. There is: the start of a narrative, a large number of events and an end. But the gaps in between are intolerable.
I want the narrative to be complete. Perhaps it’s not true that something is missing, perhaps it’s fiction: that what is missing could be the narrative itself.

The flat is large: a classic 1960s apartment. As I walk back from the kitchenette at the front to the bedroom with the balcony, I wonder if anyone needs this much room. It’s big, but what does it house, what does it carry? The important thing about this place, and what she missed so much towards the end, was the lock on the door. Control over who was admitted. Control over how it was furnished, organised. The interior was there to surround her. It was reassuring, because it was familiar and appropriate: it was a reflection of herself. Now it looks gloomy, having become redundant and useless. When a person dies, does something die in things too?

The clearing process is protracted and capricious. Sometimes we manage to empty a cupboard in a quarter of an hour. Then we find something and come to a halt: something we hold and gaze at for a long time, as a way of postponing the end of the day and the emptiness. My grandfather sits down somewhere, shakes his head and throws his hands in the air. We want to be part of this, to be together, but feel that something is wrong: the fact that we are here – it’s not the place or the time for it. We are breaking in and nosing around among things not meant for us. We can’t help it: it brings us close together. What we are doing is at once underhand and unperturbed.

She wasn’t allowed home, that final year, but refused to accept it. In the future she would be at home – a desire that she kept to herself and cherished like a talisman. It represented: being alone, deciding for oneself. The excellent care at the hospital turned her into a body that was washed, fed and transported. It determined the course of the day, but her personality and
free will were no longer really involved. In the white room she
seemed to grow smaller and smaller. Every smidgeon of indi-
viduality immediately slips off the chilly walls.

Sometimes she asked us to get something for her, to
bring something for her. She had to relinquish control of her
home: her things, habits and systems were a prey to anyone
wandering in.

Privacy is an invention. It is a convention and is there
for our convenience. A way of ordering, structuring daily life:
into what is or is not important, into what belongs. We have
made it into a right and by recircumscribing, redefining and
correcting were try to postpone its precariousness. The way
the concept is defined inevitably continues to clash with reality.
So it becomes: a legitimate fiction, rock-solid and yet mobile.

Because it is strange that I should be entering and
walking round this apartment, as if it were mine, but there’s
no alternative. This is the situation and it has its own neces-
sity. Every individual story makes the right to privacy a timid
chameleon.

Emptying means that nothing must be left behind. Neat rows
of cardboard boxes stand ready and waiting – everything must
go into them. We are an investigating committee: we analyse
and structure what she has left behind. We invent new catego-
ries and destroy the old. Each box has a name or category:
porcelain, decorations small, decorations large, paper, photos,
stationery, flowerpots, sheets. We must be strict and compre-
hensive. Her collection disintegrates and everything acquires
a new place. We choose and divide, want to keep something
or throw it away. It’s as quick as that: that’s how quickly we ap-
propriate it.

I go on looking round, I’m searching for something I can’t un-
derstand, for what I think was missing from her life. It needn’t
be much: something small, something handwritten, a few
photos. Something that feeds my imagination. Something like the box filled with letters that was found after my grandmother’s death. On it was the instruction that whoever found the box was to destroy the contents without reading a single letter. It was sealed: keep off. It still existed, but had to disappear – a simple action that my grandmother could not have performed during her lifetime. Throwing away the letters would have ended part of her life too visibly. Something very personal, just for you, links periods and brings things together. An object, a photo or a letter is like a bridge to the past; it makes you experience something anew. It reminds you of the completeness of who you are and what you have experienced. Its importance disappears when you yourself disappear.

The box was in our house for a while, then it was gone. ‘Burned,’ my mother said, when I asked about it. One winter evening, by herself, she had slipped the letters into the stove, unread.

You can have a house cleared, pay someone to do it. In that case most things are thrown away, and what still has any value is sold. Personal possessions become merchandise, second hand. The most intimate things fall victim. For example, recently, in a dusty little shop, I found an old video projector with accompanying tapes. When I watched the tapes I found that they were family films: small children playing in the garden, the whole family on a trip. I was alarmed at finding myself so suddenly in someone else’s private life. Without wanting to, I was becoming a voyeur...

So much is traded, so much used and resold that our past itself becomes merchandise that is constantly in circulation. It makes me reflect on what I myself possess: diaries, letters, my laptop and the many documents and photos on it. Furniture, books, clothes. There is so much that looms up automatically around me and piles up. Everything carries
meaning, everything has a story in it. I already become embarrassed when someone enters my place for the first time. I scan the room in advance: what must I hide, what traces must I erase? What do I want it to look like, depicting me?

An interior is mainly intimate. It surrounds me because it is important: because I recognise something in it or expect something from it. What will happen to my things when I’ve gone? Is it crazy to be thinking like that already? Is an object just an object that will look different in someone else’s eyes, different from what it means to me now? What portion of meaning will disappear when I disappear? Is a secret only a secret if I’m there to maintain it?

We have breaks for coffee – there was still a packet on the shelf. We empty the fridge, use and divide up the contents that are still usable. My mother gives me an absent-minded look when I remark how normally life is continuing.

The living room, the kitchen, the bathroom and then the bedroom: we seem to be coming ever closer to the core, closer to the truth. But what we discover is ... literally physical, the size of her body that has now gone but appears to us in fragments as we clear out. What we discover is not new, but precisely what we knew so well and have lost. It is as if I am touching her when I take a piece of clothing out of the wardrobe. As if she is lying down when I spread out a pair of trousers or a sweater on the bed. As if she is getting ready to go out when I see her winter coat hanging in the wardrobe. Each garment transforms: is no long material or shape. No longer an object but a piece of her. It is so close to her and to who she was and what she did that it can no longer be worn by anyone else.

We finished with her clothes and when that was done the job was complete. Actually I didn’t find anything. I wanted
to reconstruct a time line with new information. It proved impossible, futile: the story was less of a story than I had dreamed. Perhaps the gaps will remain what they are: things that once existed, all trace of which has been wiped out. Perhaps not, perhaps things are simply visible and hence exceedingly banal. Perhaps I ascribe too much importance to her privacy or anyone else’s. As if it will transport me to a world which will always exist for me, will always seem more real than the one I know or inhabit. As if through the urge to find a story, I must imagine looking into and penetrating someone else’s life.

I find it difficult to accept the factual nature of things, but give up, go home, taking a box full of things with me. I could not decipher what was written, could not break the link between her and things. But I could take something with me, add it to my interior, my life and give it a new story.
EXHIBITION ARTWORKS
Discover the Queen of the Digital Age. Touch her and get a glimpse of her network & database, fed by the gallery. On the machine & throughout the exhibition space you’ll find barcodes – just like the ones you find on your favorite products. Scan them with the barcode scanner (underneath the screen) to discover more about the exhibition & the featured artists, e.g. how to wear Ultrasonic & Reverse Blinking. She appreciates it if people listen to her, so don’t forget to wear the headphones. Cookies are her favorite food.
REVERSE BLINKING

Ief Spincemaille (BE)

Imagine that your head is captured inside a photo camera. It is completely dark. Only when the shutter opens or closes, you see the world in a flash. The shutter moves so fast that nothing has time to move. Everywhere you point your gaze becomes like a photograph. You see people like frozen figures, whole streets as untouched moments. Life as a sort of slide show.

Reverse Blinking creates this experience. It is a completely closed helmet with two shutters in front of the eyes. They open and close in 0.3 sec, and are controllable by the user. Where virtual reality goggles are trying to make us believe that the IMAGES we see are REAL, Reverse Blinking does the opposite. The goggles manipulate vision in such a manner that the REAL environment around us looks utterly unreal, as if it were a photograph or an IMAGE. Doing this, it shows us until which degree our society is dominated by images. The world has become an image, and the image has become the reality.
ULTRASONIC

Wendy Van Wyensberghe (BE)

Human ears are limited. You can hear sound from 20 to 20,000 Hertz. With this garment, the inaudible higher frequencies become perceivable. Only specific materials, actions, animals produce these ultrasonic sounds.

When you put on the headphones, humans voices disappear, bodies are reduced to friction, of fabric and of skin. Sometimes breath even produces high tones. Handling synthetic materials is loud. Energy saving lighting and neon tubes hum audibly. Mice sing lovesongs, rats laugh, bats hunt for insects. Engines purr at all frequencies. A hidden ultrasonic realm is unveiled.

The cape simultaneously is the tool and the manual in one.
I am always here is a video installation that deals with CCTV and the way it influences our reality. It features a CCTV-system that monitors the room in which it is present. It hangs fairly unnoticed on the wall of the room and most people will walk past without noticing. But once it is noticed and a visitor looks up trying to see himself, he will only see the surrounding room and just a glimpse of his own image quickly fading out. It is as if he views the room as it would look without him being present.

The CCTV-system creates its own reality by filtering out those things that it finds ‘uninteresting’. In the case of I am always here it filters out the people who are aware of its existence. CCTV’s preventive powers are claimed to be based upon awareness. A person looking straight into the camera is fully aware of being surveilled. Thus, he won’t be seen as a possible suspect and is uninteresting from a surveillers point of view.
MANIFESTO FOR CCTV FILM-MAKERS (AND OTHER FILMS)

Manu Luksh (GB)

Manu Luksh is an intermedia artist whose practice interrogates conceptions of progress through the devising of tools and frameworks and the instigation of processes, with a strong emphasis on research and dissemination. Recent works have addressed surveillance, corporate data harvesting, and the regulation of public space, and have been shown at ARoS Art Museum (Aarhus), Centre Pompidou (Paris), NTT-ICC (Tokyo), and Eyebeam (New York).

In her films she focuses on the effects of emerging technologies on daily life, social relations, urban space, and political structures – specifically, the limits of permission and injunction, the thresholds and constraints of public space, and the traces of data that accumulate in digital networked societies. Films shown in the exhibition are The Eye 02, Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers, The Spectral Children, Mapping CCTV, Love, Piracy, and the Office of Religious Weblog Expansion, The Order & Orchestra of Anxiety.
HYBRID MACHINE

Alex Mayo & Robotic Works (BE)

Alex Mayo, a robot made in 1980 in Tournai, is filled with different emotions and programmed to share them. Apart from being a creator-director-animator at Robotic Works, he is also a graphic designer and illustrator at the Mayo Factory. After years of experimenting, he developed a special technique of drawing of which he alone knows the secrets. He produces graphics and illustrations for all supports, whether they are posters for music events, fanzine publications, murals, videos,... Characters, backgrounds and objects often find themselves cut-out, removed, chopped, pixelized, molten and recomposed into a surrealistic hybrid puzzle.
VISITORS TO A GALLERY

Stanza (GB)

This artwork uses the live CCTV system inside the art gallery to create a responsive mediated architecture. This project continues where Publicity version one (2004) left off, utilizing existing real time CCTV networks to make artworks. Custom made electronics and sonar sensors are placed on the gallery floor to create the installation in the gallery space. Visitors control the CCTV feeds by their own movement in the space. The piece becomes a semi performative controlled system. The proximity to the main ultrasound sensors affects the aesthetic of the image.

This artwork is responsive to the body in the data space. The visitors act as an intervention in the the gallery space and become embedded in the artwork. The idea of using the information inside the space is also to make the space transparent and extend the gallery space outwards.
PanoptICONS addresses the fact that we are constantly being watched by surveillance cameras in city centres. Because people don’t really notice this constant breach of their privacy, the cameras don’t make them feel safer. The reaction to this unsafe feeling is often to put up more cameras. In this way the surveillance camera spreads through the city like a pest, a pest that feeds on our privacy. To represent this, camera birds – city birds with cameras instead of heads – are placed around the exhibition facility, to feed on the presence of people. In addition, a camera bird in captivity is displayed to show this feeding process and to make the everyday breach of our privacy more personal and tangible.
YOU ARE WATCHING BIG BROTHER

Briko2K (BE)

George Orwell introduced us to Big Brother, who was in charge of watching people. Things have changed. The power of television and other media has become so large that Big Brother doesn’t need to watch people, because TV educates and sedates people. So now we no longer say “Big Brother is watching you”, but “You are watching Big Brother”. The project is presented as an interactive video installation, creating a relationship between the sculpture and its observer. Who’s watching who?
YOU ARE WATCHING

BIG BROTHER
THE SHOPPING CART

Bart Dewolf (BE)

Inspired by voodoo, this presentation of the current economic system has throughout many years endured the consequences of a life outside the visors of the many “Little Brothers”. The scars are carried as trophies and underline the story that needs to be told.

There is no such thing as one “Big Brother”. There are loyalty cards in supermarkets, operations with bank cards, information filled into search engines on the internet, coupons... Now that groups have the food production, wholesale, distribution and even retail trade in hand, these data become a very powerful instrument.

Our mobile phones are designed in Scandinavia, the raw materials come from all over the world, parts are produced everywhere, assembling is done in Asia, and the product is sold cheaply in Belgium. Daily tons of eatable food are thrown away or purposely destroyed.

The logistics exist, but private companies (per definition not democratically organized) tell us they are doing research on lettuce varieties that can grow in the desert to eradicate hunger from the world.

Information provides power, just as hunger is an instrument as well as a weapon.
SURVEILLING THE SURVEILLER

Sylvain Vriens (NL)

A surveillance feedback loop. In **Surveilling the surveiller** visitors can sit down on a chair facing two small security monitors. The images on the monitors are live as you approach it. But as soon as you sit down the monitors show a previous visitor sitting in the place where you are sitting. Instead of monitoring the place, you monitor the visitor before you, who in turn is monitoring the visitor before him etc. In normal situations CCTV is, as the name suggests, a closed system in which the surveilled have no clue how and when they are surveilled. The idea for **Surveilling the surveiller** is to make an infinite loop in which each surveiller is being surveilled at the same time. By watching previous surveillers one may conclude that he or she will be surveilled as well.
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

Bob De Groof (BE)

PRIVACY is an empty word for Abu Ghraib prisoners whose pics circulated throughout the world, even though for a good reason: to show the world what happened there. Anyway, these victims of torture lost any privacy long before that. Freedom of speech and religion are part of privacy. But where does this end and does a crusade begin?
The Paris-based artists Léonore Bonaccini and Xavier Fourt form the artist-duo Bureau d’Études.
For the last several years, the French Group has been producing cartographies of contemporary political, social and economic systems. The visual analysis of transnational capitalism is based on extensive research and is usually presented in the form of large-sized murals. ‘Governing by Networks’ visualizes the mutual involvements and dependencies within the global media conglomerates. Revealing what normally remains invisible and contextualising apparently separate elements within a bigger whole, these visualizations of interests and cooperations re-symbolize the unseen and hidden.
THE STATUS PROJECT – PIERCING THE VEILS

Heath Bunting (GB)

Our identity is constructed as human beings, that can possess one or more natural persons (straw men) and control one or more artificial persons (corporations). Lower class human beings possess one severely reduced natural person and no control of an artificial person. Middle class human beings possess one natural person and perhaps control one artificial person. Upper class human beings possess multiple natural persons and control numerous artificial persons with skillful separation and interplay.

With works from The status project as Piercing the Veils, Heath Bunting is surveying these class systems of human being management and is producing maps of influence and personal portraits for both comprehension and mobility. The status project is also producing new British natural person identities and running a series of European workshops in which people can build their own natural persons.
DON’T TAG ME

Dawamesk (BE)

The artistic creations of Dawamesk (Thomas Mercier) have him situated in the Art Brut. His paintings, collages, silkscreen printings, drawings & installations are personal, spontaneous and free of conventions.

From the point of view of someone invested in the counter-culture he makes a certain form of “rebel” art. For this exhibition his work, titled “Don’t Tag Me”, questions our digital identity. He reworks old pictures and paintings of people long forgotten. Through different techniques he « erases » their identity.
Stories by citybooks & Annelien Van Heymbeek

Barbershop gossip? For your ears only! Listening stations, sit down and listen to stories that evolve around privacy, surveillance or technology.

One chair features 3 citybooks*: ‘922 People Like This’ by Frank Westerman, ‘A Date’ by Irena Cvetkovic & ‘A Song for Tbilisi’ by Lasha Bugadze. All writers of these stories were invited by deBuren to take part in a two week residency in various European cities.

The second chair features ‘Mensstad’ by Annelien Van Heymbeek. A radio drama finished in 2010 as a master thesis for the Erasmus University College Brussels department RITS. ‘Mensstad’ presents a fictional society that drowns in a diarrhoea of information, technology and speed. This radio drama unfolds little by little a world that doesn’t sound all that unfamiliar.

“Do you have something to hide?”
“Yes. Don’t you?”

*citybooks can be read, listened to and downloaded for free on www.citybooks.eu
MUCH IS AT STAKE

A conclusion by Marek Prawda

Marek Prawda
H. E. Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Poland to the EU
This year, 2013, is when work on a new EU legislative package on data protection enters a decisive phase in order to be shaped into its final form. Many experts and politicians will focus on negotiations in the Council of the European Union and European Parliament and their decisions will make a great impact on data protection standards across the world. Much work is ahead of us, but the topic will be present in European debate and I hope that it will produce increased awareness that protection of personal data is of concern to all. Lawyers, officials, companies and specialised institutions or organisations all work on data protection, but the most important subjects in this sphere are individuals. Privacy is a significant part of our lives, exerting influence on both our personal and professional walks. The necessity for shielding personal information in this fast changing world is what many still need to realise in order to provide for their safety and well-being of their families. The exhibition, somewhat provocatively entitled “A LOOK INSIDE” uses artistic means of expression to make us think about the problem and remind us how much is at stake.

Marek Prawda