

Chapter 22

Resisting With Art: The Surveillance Art Against Surveillance

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ABSTRACT

Surveillance has become an element of everyday life. Modern society is used to surveillance. It has become inconspicuous. But art makes surveillance apparent. In this chapter, the notion of surveillance art was debated, and surveillance art was evaluated as activist art. In surveillance art, there are artworks created by singular artists or art groups. In this chapter, two groups were analyzed: Surveillance Camera Players and Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers. The two art groups focused on CCTV. Surveillance Camera Players tried to take attention by playing in front of the CCTV in the public sphere. Surveillance Camera Players created awareness for surveillance cameras that normalized in everyday life. Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers also invited to make a film via CCTV footage. The manifesto noticed to determine with the act. Consequently, surveillance art creates social awareness, and it is a way to resist surveillance.

INTRODUCTION

Surveillance is one of the important elements in modern society. Surveillance studies have continued for a long time. However, these studies have increased when digitalization has begun. Surveillance has become an element of everyday life. Art also started to include surveillance.

It is possible to define art in many different ways. The lives of individuals have become a subject of the art. Namely, societies and individuals give form to art. Art has a critical perspective. It can gain attention for some subjects and can create social awareness.

In this chapter, the relationship between surveillance and art has been discussed. The relationship has been evaluated with approach of surveillance studies. From literature to cinema, from theater to painting, it is possible to examine surveillance in works of art. The relationship between the two notions can explain as follow: 1. Some artworks can make normalize (acceptable) surveillance; 2. Some artworks can resist to surveillance. These two determinations seem to contrast each other. However, art is not only

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Resisting With Art

normalization but also a resistance area. Art can make normalize surveillance and at the same time, it can be an area that to form a resistance against surveillance. The chapter prefers to dwell on the second one. The intersection of surveillance and art as surveillance art is evaluated as activist art.

Some basic notions were focused in the chapter. Primarily, the relationship between surveillance and aesthetics was discussed. The debate was made over the notion of the aesthetics of surveillance. Additionally, the relationship between surveillance studies and aesthetics was discussed.

Another notion is surveillance art. This notion includes the relationship between surveillance and art. Generally, surveillance art refers to the art that creates using surveillance technologies. There are some artworks that can be evaluated as surveillance art. In surveillance art, there are artworks created by singular artists or art groups. In this chapter, two art groups were analyzed: Surveillance Camera Players and Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers. These two groups focused on closed-circuit television (CCTV). There are different elements in surveillance technologies, in other words, surveillance technologies do not involve only CCTV. But CCTV is the most known and the most visible of surveillance technologies. Surveillance Camera Players and Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers have published some documents. Consequently, the documents can inspire other art groups. The art groups can apply strategies in the documents and can create the same artworks. These two groups do not have only artistic purposes. One of their purposes is also to create social awareness. For this reason, their activity can be defined as activism. These two art groups were selected to analyze due to being activists.

Document analysis was applied for the analysis of Surveillance Camera Players and Manifesto for CCTV Filmmakers. The chapter's subject is discussed with the approach of surveillance studies. The chapter has two scopes. First, the chapter tries to consider general overview studies about surveillance art. It has been observed that there are limited studies related to surveillance art during the literature review. Thus the chapter overviewed literature about surveillance art. The second scope is to discuss surveillance art as art activism. It tries to draw attention to the importance of art in noticing surveillance.

SURVEILLANCE AND AESTHETICS

In this title, first, surveillance and aesthetics concepts will be discussed than the aesthetics of surveillance concept as the intersection of surveillance and aesthetics will be debated.

Surveillance is defined as following in lexical meaning: “The act of carefully watching a person suspected of a crime or a place where a crime may be committed” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n. d.). Namely, a person that under surveillance is evaluated as a person of interest or a suspect. This definition has assigned negative meaning for surveillance. According to Gary T Marx (2015), surveillance is neither good nor bad, but context and compoment do make it so (p. 733).

The notion of surveillance is though, with the relationship between control and power, the notion usually is discussed in that perspective. Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, which is one of the cornerstones of surveillance studies, is about control. Bentham (1995) discussed to provide how to keep under surveillance via architecture. His panopticon has also been an inspiration to other surveillance studies. Bentham said “a simple idea in architecture!” (1995: p. 31) about panopticon. According to Miran Božovič, “the panopticon is nothing more than ‘a simple idea in architecture’, never realized, describing ‘a new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example’ –the possessor of this power is ‘the inspector’ with his invisible omnipresence, ‘an utterly dark spot’ in the all-transparent, light-flooded universe of the panopticon” (1995: p. 1).

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