PANOPTICON

Cecilia Vilca / Helio Santos
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"This is the look-prize: the chance to be seen understood as one more right. A right, following this new logic, that saves men from the horror of privacy." Fernanda Solórzano

PANOPTICON

The whole world is a Big Brother

Cecilia Vilca (Peru) - Helio Santos (Mexico)

Description

Interactive installation that uses images and videos from public security cameras placed in several cities around the world and available online. The participant is situated in a sort of virtual tour or immersive telepresence that involves a physical space, a kind of virtual reality constructed by these images that are wickedly captivating and that invite you to watch.

The Panopticon is the design of perfect prison where you can watch without being seen, but knowing that you are being monitored, the same happens with contemporary cities, because we know that we are watched but do not know who guards or exactly when we are being watched. Furthermore we never know if the devices really work or if there is someone behind the lens.

This project provides a reflection on the presence - absence and relative distances of the cities and the world, shortened by digital technologies and telematic communication, it also talks about how we interact, and the nonlinearity of the physical-virtual current distances. The voyeurism, starring roles, pseudo news, the correlation between surveillance and spectacle.

Is the other's gaze a prison? Or punishment is a prize for starring? What is the distance? How much of ourselves can survive this constant surveillance? Is there such space free of "society of the look"? Can we achieve this?

“The symbolic removal of obstacles imposed by the city’s colonial defects represents the renewed hope of building a utopia, uncontaminated space where what we learned fades and the ideological control apparatus that hangs over us stops to function”. Move to survive, migrate to find ourselves or preserve them. Escape from this “container” that we called home, country or family. Survive that eye without eyelid that is called society. Turn identity into a utopia.
Virtual tours, video-surveillance, tele-presence and the concept of real time are just some of the issues related to the project.

Panopticon was exhibit in ExTeresa Arte Actual, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA), Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico at December 13, 2013.
How it Works

Interactive installation that proposes an immersive virtual tour and journey through surveillance cameras around several cities in the world, they are georeferenced in the physical space of exhibition.

It is an interactive floor that shows various geographic coordinates that change randomly, when the audience enters the space of the room and approaches to these coordinates the video for the city appears.

An overhead projection, an application in AS3 and a Kinect sensor to detect the precise position of the user are the building blocks of Panopticon. An application in AS3 is responsible for controlling projection and collecting data Kinect sensor to correspond to the user actions.
Form of Interaction

Interaction happens when one or more persons enter the installation space and begin to move in it, walking between the coordinates that appear projected onto the floor. When the participant is positioned on one of these coordinate, a video corresponding to the chosen coordinate is detonated. This all generates a trip around the world. The world is seen through the Orwellian eyes, the eyes that watch, the eyes that control mobs.
The Participants' role

The users are introduced through the performative character of this installation, but the user’s own image is also embedded within the video, like a game of mirrors, the user sees itself and walks into the cities, participant self-monitors. This experience remains as long as the user is within the area of the coordinate.

We are at the other side of the keyhole, the hunter is hunted. Voyeur attitude is so demanding that it becomes physical. Literally through technology, distances are shortened and they became relative, approaching our observation target. We can walk around the world and watch as a vigilant. The space of installation refers to the real physical coordinates, meaning each point in it is geo-referenced.
Physical space requirements

- Lighting: We recommend the complete absence of light or very low indirect lighting.
- Height: a minimum height of 15 meters is needed above the floor and an area on the floor of minimum 5 m x 3 m. In the case of having a short-throw projector the height of projection is greatly reduced.
- Floor in a light color, by preference white.
- It has to be possible to hold an overhead projector on the ceiling or wall of the site where you will mount Panopticon.
Technical requirements

- Video projector.
- Computer with Windows operating system.
- Support overhead projector.
- Sensor Kinect.