

## In (security)

Online Surveillance Drama



Beyond the human nature of voyeurism and the implied subversion that goes with the territory, I feel that there must be a way to embrace—maybe even counter-exploit—the fact that we, as a society, are under surveillance whether we like it or not.

If I walk down the street near the TISCH building on Broadway at Waverly Place in Manhattan, I can easily spot at least six security cameras pointed at the street. The lack of public resistance is curious. Cameras, in the name of public security, regularly capture our images without our permission.

The fact is there will not be an escape from this living “Big Brother” scenario that encompasses our daily lives. In this case, I aim to open my arms up to it, to welcome my curiosity and, rightfully, become an actor for the tired eyes of the people who watch me on small monitors in dark rooms of the world.

April 2006 was a pivotal month in the history of surveillance in New York City. In Bushwick, Brooklyn, where I live incidentally, the installation of the first of the brand-new 505 surveillance cameras were installed. These cameras cost a staggering total of 9.8 million dollars, \$20,000 apiece, funded by federal DHS grants. The cameras are clearly marked and are placed 30 feet above the street.

This is part of a new high-tech police surveillance program that will place 500 cameras throughout the metropolitan area, starting with Brooklyn.

Each wireless camera is equipped with two zoom lenses, and records street activity around the clock. Police can check the tapes any time they need to.

These cameras are supported by grants from the Department of Homeland Security and are paid for with our tax dollars.

Here is an example of what you will begin to see in the streets of New York.



Bushwick, Brooklyn

In my quest to comprehend the strategy of these cameras, I am left stubbornly aghast. Will there actually be a group of officers that painstakingly watch the live feeds from these cameras all day?

Or will the job of monitoring the streets be outsourced to India? I am not sure that the Department of Homeland security is that prepared.

I am left thinking about the squad of surveillance officers that will be sitting there watching the streets. I know that I would go crazy watching this ultimate reality show day in and day out, and not actually being prepared to prevent a crime. In my research, I cannot find one instance where a camera actually helped stop a crime in action; instead the video feeds are used to look back at what the crime was and who was the possible perpetrator. The feeling must be that the cameras will serve as a deterrent of crime and mainly exist in order to make the residents of these neighborhoods feel safer. When, recently, I was talking to my local deli owner, who had just been robbed and installed \$12,000 worth of security cameras in his store, another customer welcomed the new police cameras stating:

"You gotta do what you have to do to feel safe."

I replied, "Do these cameras actually make you feel safer?"

The Lady gave me a curious look and left the deli. Maybe the cameras do give her a sense of security; I, on the other hand, feel uncomfortable.

In considering my thesis in which I want to stage events in front of security cameras for an online audience, I have mixed feelings about these eyes that peer down upon us, the eyes of the law. However, there is something driving me towards a creative reaction to the issues at hand. My aim is not to "raise awareness" of the fact that we are under surveillance on the streets. I think the mere cameras in the line of sight can do that. I want people to put themselves in the shoes of that squad of officers that are there to be the watchers, to protect us; if we are put into their position, perhaps we will see the credibility—or the futility—of this technology as a crime stopper.

Being the observer, and not just the observed, turns the

tables, at least to some degree. It is, in fact, the Situationist term "sousveillance" that is a driving force behind my thinking. The term, coined by Steve Mann, refers to inverse surveillance, where we begin to watch those that watch us, in a surveillance role reversal.

One attractive quality of live drama is the aspect of voyeurism. Recently I've discovered that many of the images these public cameras record are posted online, open to anyone in the general public who wish to watch. My thesis is about turning the tables on the observers behind the cameras, and exploiting the technology that uses our images without our permission. The observers suddenly become accountable to the actions they witness, and the question of accountability is raised.

But are we accountable?

Law makers are starting to crack down on offenders of voyeurism, and the laws are strict, but are the punishments realistic and is our own homeland security guilty of their own measures? In June of 2003, the New York State Legislature passed "Stephanie's Law". This law prohibits "unlawful surveillance," which is defined as (1) the installation of "an imaging device" with no legitimate purpose other than surreptitiously viewing or recording another person in a bedroom, bathroom, changing room, or other specified room; (2) for the purposes of sexual arousal or gratification, the use or installation of an imaging device that surreptitiously views a person dressing or undressing when that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy; (3) the use or installation of an imaging device to surreptitiously view under the clothing of a person (commonly known as "upskirting"); or (4) for amusement, entertainment or profit, or to abuse or degrade the victim, the use or installation of an imaging device to surreptitiously record another person dressing or undressing when that person has a reasonable expectation of privacy. A person who is found guilty of these crimes, which are rated as class D felonies, can be sentenced to a jail term of between 2 and 7 years, and, if so sentenced, must register with the State's Sex Offender Registry after release.

The project in(security), and the study behind it, seeks to make sense of the nature of surveillance and allow us to pose these questions to ourselves in a unique and sousvaillant manner.

**Abstract:**

Is it possible to create scripted interactive drama in online performance?

New applications of text- and image-based theater can exist as interactive narratives on the Web using a simple chat room as the virtual theater space and free, online surveillance cameras as the visual stimulus for the dramatic action.

Through the course of this study several questions will also be raised:

Is this the future of performance? Can a scripted interactive drama exist for a mass audience on the Internet?

What is my role as a citizen that is immersed in a society under the watch of surveillance cameras?

**Personal Statement:**

I am interested in the online energy of synchronous communication centered on the notion of the word 'live' and how it relates to the personal experience of interacting in chat rooms. How do our ever-developing online identities behave as a new form of characterization for who we are in the real world? As databases fill with our personalized information, are we living dual identities of the real and the virtual projections of ourselves?

A few years ago there was the case of the "Ripper" wherein a young man was encouraged to take multiple drugs to the point of overdose while chatting on line in a chat room. Other members of the chat taunted and coerced the 'Ripper' to take more drugs. The result was a live suicide that was brought about, devastatingly, within the medium of the chat room.

There is an element of human nature that salivates at the notion of 'live' and I want to tap into that drive to keep real time synchronous communication happening at the same rate as in the case of the Ripper. There is a way to

harness that energy in a safer environment, while retaining the drive to destruction.

This is an environment that is still being explored and still evolving through games and faster Internet connections that allow the synchronous interactions to happen more often.

Is there drama in a chat room? How can I harness that energy and immediacy and shape it into an enjoyable dramatic event?

### **Project:**

I set out to construct a live chat room performance genre that I will title "Surveillance Drama." This incorporates a live text-based chat with a synchronous feed of a live security camera broadcasting from the West Village of New York City.

A set number of audience members can log in for a half-hour-long performance. The chat room is comprised of 10 members, and the other five members are actors that have a story that they will lead the ten audience members through. This is a kind of online, murder-mystery-dinner type production. The audience is encouraged to join in and chat along with the group. There will also be web cameras involved so the audience can watch the others in the show. The audience does not know who is real and who is an actor in the chat room.

The aim has a few components:

1. Considering the fact that the show is live, is the audience more enthralled and active in the drama?
2. Does the fact that the performers and the audience are mixed allow for a better, or heightened suspension of disbelief?
3. The aim is to draw audiences from outside of the theatrical world—people who look more to blogs and chat rooms for entertainment.
4. The outcome may be more like a game, so why or how can this be theater?
5. Why is it important to be *LIVE*?

**Context:****The Social Aspects**

Is there a new tool that can be added to the social world of on-line chat? I would like to integrate on-line surveillance cameras into the text-based chat room structure. This union will add an immediate visual layer to heighten the intensity and reality of the mood and will aid in creating the architecture of a theatrical piece.

I will first establish the on-line chat group which consists of a group of actors that meet at regular intervals to perform a play using the chat-room as not only the vehicle for the narrative, but also the physical space in which the audience witnesses and participates in the theatrical event, virtually. I will then insert a new form of media as a *tool* (in this case an on-line camera located in NYC's West Village); this will, hopefully, heighten the stakes of the dramatic narrative and actually create emotional ties between strangers in a chat room.

Audiences for public performance in today's ever-growing on-line worlds are increasing and new venues for live performances are becoming just as creative and explorative as the performances themselves. There is a current quest for original and unique ways to perform live as well as have an online archive of performances. Many artists currently are using the web as a tool for gaining exposure for their work\* and audiences are eagerly awaiting the next form of on-line performances. Live streaming audio of music shows and streaming video of performances are turning up frequently. In an attempt to join and contribute to this current trend and approach I would like to introduce a new form of on-line theater.

The performance idea is a chat room wherein a small user group will join and exist inside of a chat room for a given amount of time. In this room they will be guided through a story that is predetermined by a theater group comprised of actors that is in control of the chat.

Let us take an existing group of web users for our example. For our theatrical experiment we will establish a chat room that is made up of two sub groups: ***sub group one***

(ChatACTORS) will consist of the players, the aforementioned actors in the chat room theater. Let us assume that subgroup one's members are not located in the same space; **sub group two** (Chat AUDIENCE\*\*) will consist of an audience of experienced chat users who are also not in the same physical space as one another or sub group one.

We will call our chat group DramaChatters. For the example let us make a size requirement for this chat room in order to set some parameters of the theatrical and group structure. The overall size of the group will allow for the audience to, in effect, have a sense of confusion between the ChatACTORS and the ChatAUDIENCE. With this as the intent, the line between what is reality and what is in effect predetermined is smudged a little bit; this is an important note to the establishment of an enjoyable theatrical experience in our group of DramaChatters. The number of ChatACTORS for our group will be limited to five people, and the size of the ChatAUDIENCE will consist of ten members. This keeps the entire size of the chat room limited to fifteen participants, not including the BOTs; which will come into play later in our study.

Let us take a look at the size of the group and what I am trying to attempt and encourage by limiting it.

It is important to me from the start that the enjoyment of the drama heightens if the ChatAudience does not know who in the room of fifteen is not a ChatACTOR. In order to do this the size of the room, ten audience members, will sufficiently allow for enough chat to keep the audience in question as to **who** is an audience member and **who** is running the show. We will also consider the fact that the drama cannot really be performed to a lesser number of audience members for the full effect of the show to take place; if there was one audience member the drama would have little to no impact. Since this is an on-line performance we will assume that there is an audience that will want to join the performance. As for the reoccurrence of ChatAudience members, we will be addressing this a little later.

Now that the audience is in the chat-room, what do we do next? Let's establish a time frame for the action to take place. Let us say that the drama takes place in a one-hour time block. To establish a group in this time frame it is important to get the necessary *meet and greet* notion of the

chat room in the first fifteen minutes; the audience and actors can introduce themselves and go through the obligatory chat hellos. This will encourage the group cohesiveness and allow for the suspension of disbelief that will be important to the later drama that will ensue. It is necessary that the group bonds in this manner and I will say that the actors' first responsibility is to nurture this first fifteen minutes. It is necessary as well that the actors do not reveal themselves too early so the audience is still left questioning who is part of the show and who is not.

The actual drama takes place in the last 45 minutes of the show. Here is where we will insert a tool to change the chat towards a more dramatic effect.

For our chat room structure we will attempt different models of open source chat rooms and finally choose one that best supports the project.

One open source chat is A Really Simple Chat (ARSC), developed by Manuel Keissling.

This is a PHP-based chat room that works in a web browser. This chat is actually very simple, as the name implies, and setting it up is not difficult. You have to install a database and ARSC provides the script for this to run on the database server. In testing this chat, it proved a bit unstable when more than two users were in the chat room.

ARSC 3.0 RC 1 - Mozilla Firefox

http://manuel.kiessling.net/arsc3/3.0-rc1/clients/browser\_push/index.php?

**Roomlist:**  
Free For All  
Enter  
[Refresh]

**Additional functions:**  
 Autoscroll  
◆ Help  
◆ Leave

[13:27] *User ManuelKiessling enters the room Free For All.*  
 [13:27] *User HanSolo enters the room Free For All.*  
 [13:28] <ManuelKiessling> Hi Han!  
 [13:28] <HanSolo> Hey Manuel.  
 [13:28] <ManuelKiessling> Okay Han, today we will do some dummy chat session for the screenshots i need. Are you fine with that?  
 [13:28] <HanSolo> Of course, just go ahead!  
 [13:28] <ManuelKiessling> Cool!  
 [13:29] <ManuelKiessling> Ok first, I will change the text color I use:  
 [13:29] <ManuelKiessling> See, now I write green!  
 [13:29] <HanSolo> Very cool, let me try it...  
 [13:29] <HanSolo> I'm writing red now.  
 [13:30] <ManuelKiessling> Just fine  
 [13:30] <ManuelKiessling> Now I will whisper something to you!  
 [13:30] <System> whispers: You whispered to HanSolo: This is whispered text.  
 [13:30] <HanSolo> Got it, great. I will whisper back  
 [13:30] <HanSolo> whispers: Whispering back...  
 [13:31] <ManuelKiessling> Fine. Do you know the smilies btw?  
 [13:31] <HanSolo> No, show me the smilies!  
 [13:31] <ManuelKiessling> Here you go: 😊  
 [13:31] <HanSolo> Ah, I see! ;-)  
 [13:31] <HanSolo> Oh, that was not a smilie, wait... 😊  
 [13:32] <ManuelKiessling> Now you got it  
 [13:32] <HanSolo> Merry Christmas 🎁  
 [13:32] <ManuelKiessling> Dude, christmas is over!

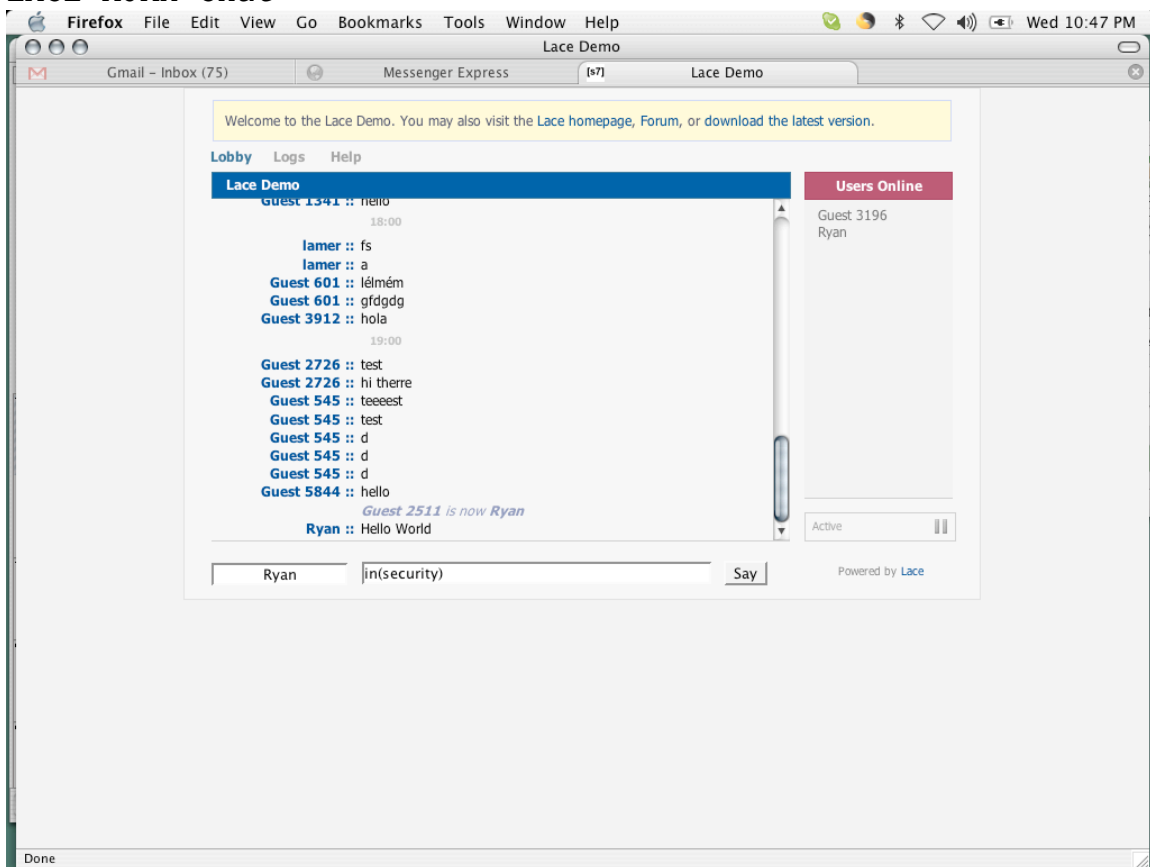
Users in room  
**Free For All**  
[Refresh]  
HanSolo  
ManuelKiessling

Übertrage Daten von manuel.kiessling.net...

A Really Simple Chat

Another example is the LACE Ajax Chat that is equally simple to install but does not require a database script, it uses flat files, as a database so there is not an actual database, just a file that holds the information. This chat is more stable and can support a chat room with many users without crashing.

### LACE AJAX Chat



Let us say that during the second stage of the chat a live image is put into the chat screen that the audience and actors can both see. For our performance we will use an image provided by an online security camera. There are cameras available that can be controlled by the audience online, that is to say the actual zoom, pan and tilt of the camera. Access to these cameras is a bit more limited but still possible to **inset** into the chat environment, allowing for audience members to control the camera.

Here is an example of an online camera that is located in New York's Times Square. Provided by Earthcam, this camera is fixed and cannot be controlled by the audience.

<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/timesquare/index.php?cam=4>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the EarthCam Times Square website. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/timesquare/index.php?cam=4>. The website features a large live video feed of Times Square, a navigation menu on the left, and various promotional banners and ads on the right.

**Navigation Menu (Left):**

- STREAMING VIDEO**
  - Live Streaming Webcam
- WEBCAM FEATURES**
  - Live Webcams
  - 24 Hour Time-Lapse
  - Picture of the Day
  - Hall of Fame
- PHOTO MOBLOGS**
  - Add your own!
- SHOPPING**
  - Apparel & Souvenirs
- TRAVEL**
  - Airfare & Hotels
- EXPLORE**
  - Panoramas
  - History
  - New Year's 2006
- NYC PARTNERS**
  - TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE
  - NYC & COMPANY

**Main Content Area:**

**TIMES SQUARE CAM**

**LIVE EARTHCAM**

Times Square Camera Map

W50th, W45th, W42nd, Broadway, 7th Ave, 8th Ave

NYC WEBCAMS

24 hour time-lapse | Email Image | Post a Snapshot | Enlarge Image

**LIVE TIMES SQUARE CAMS**

CAM 1 | CAM 3 | CAM 4 | CAM 5 | CAM 6 | CAM 7 | CAM 8 | CAM 9 | CAM 10 | CAM 11

TIME: 10:56 PM | DATE: 05.03.06 | WEATHER: 55°F scattered clouds

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Are you a fan of the Times Square cams? Let the world know. Vote for EarthCam under Tourism at the People's Voice Awards.

Vote for Us

If you are unable to view the live image, [please try the Java version.](#)

**kodak & fuji film**  
kodak film fuji film [shamrockfilmsales.com](http://shamrockfilmsales.com)

**Ads by Google:**

- Web Cams**  
Looking to find web cams? Browse our web cams directory.  
[WebCamsListings.com](http://WebCamsListings.com)
- All the Web Cams**  
All the Web Cams Savings Find Local Web Cams Here!  
[Web.Cams.AlltheIndustr](http://Web.Cams.AlltheIndustr)
- Hotel Reviews and Ratings**  
Travelers Rank the Top Hotels & We find you Great Rates & Deals  
[www.HotelSuperPortal.c](http://www.HotelSuperPortal.c)
- Underwater Camera**  
See your fish live in your pond Designed specifically for koi ponds  
[www.bonnieplants.com](http://www.bonnieplants.com)

Waiting for images.earthcam.com...

If the chat room acts in concert with this live camera then it can be established that we all exist live in synchronous conversation with the real world outside. This arrangement brings the chat room out of the strictly text-based sphere and introduces a visual element that is live and could be made controllable by the chat room. There is one website online that offers such a camera for use by the public, however during the production of this Online Surveillance project over the course of the semester, their terms of use changed and they started to charge for their camera feed.

<http://sceenz.com>

A controllable camera link like Sceenz would be ideal and unique because each person in the chat room will be able to control the camera, allowing not only the outside web public to move the camera, but also the actors and audience. Sceenz even provides a service for you to view their feeds via mobile devices as JPEGs. This would be especially convenient for us because the actor in the street could use a cell phone as a monitor for what the chat room is looking at at a particular moment in the narrative.

Now using this tool, we can introduce the live actor(s), which will comprise the nature of the dramatic action.

For example, let us establish that the DramaCHATTERS have all been introduced, then the live security camera has been introduced and the conversation is quickly steered to the live action in the street. It is possible, I've found in my research, that you can position the camera to the windows of the local apartment buildings. Here is where the **Rear Window**\*\*\* effect takes place. The voyeuristic nature of this effect will start to pique the curiosity of the chat group. If the camera eye is then placed onto the street the chat room has a new invested interest in that voyeuristic invasion of privacy. This understood, let us say that now we have an actress appear on the street corner in the camera's sight. If the camera is positioned in a way that the conversation of the chat is to be concentrated on this actress's behaviors, the members of the chat room would all start to share invested interest in her motivations and actions.

If the actress were to behave in a very conspicuous manner,

would this allow for more unnerving chat in the room? If the actress were to be waiting for someone and then a stranger were to approach and she were to have an argument with that stranger, would the chat room be more engaging? At what point in the intersection of live theater and what is perceived as reality will the chat group be so enraptured with what is going on that they feel the need to intervene? Is there a point where members might be moved to call the police, or rally other chat room members against what is ensuing?

Group cohesiveness is heightened by the introduction of a synchronous live element to the action. The emotional stakes will begin to increase as our live, planted, actress begins to take on actions that give her more depth of character which pushes the narrative forward and leads to a point of distress (or the actress' fate seems to be in peril); the chat room may feel that they can do something to help. Possibly, through this twist in the narrative, the room is lead to believe that what they are watching is not the direction that the drama was to move in the first place, and a misdirection of action heightens the stakes of the on line activity. As if by mistake the group has stumbled upon something of intrigue and this shared experience aligns the group emotionally on the same plane.

If we were to encourage the repeated audience members of the piece, we would be implementing one important social fact to the structure of the piece. If someone had experienced the interactive show previously they would indeed know the plot twist in the narrative; this would then make the repeated viewing more of a game-like situation. So here, that audience member takes on a *Prisoner's Dilemma* situation. That audience member can now on their own encourage group cohesiveness to act in concert with each other, or they can act maliciously and try to disrupt the flow of the theater piece by interrupting the action with the disclosing of secrets within the chat or in the subtext within the IRC chat. This is what I want to avoid, so within the chat room, the actors will also have to behave as monitors to keep the gaming aspect of the game at bay, to some extent. In a sense, this monitoring is a real time fact checking agent, such as with someone watching the posts on a WIKI for truth; i.e. wikipedia.org.

What if our ChatDrama was to increase in size? For instance, if this show becomes a very popular new trend in on-line drama and it becomes successful in the fact that more people want to join the chat room, why do we limit its audience size and not allow the chat room to have twenty or even a hundred users? I think it is important to limit the size of these groups in number to allow for the audience to have the most obtainable fun possible without much idling. In a chat group that is very active with a lot of members in the room, conversations are more difficult to keep up with, and as seen in chat rooms such as Book of Matches (<http://bookofmatches.com>), an online friend and singles chat room, most people are idling waiting for private chats while a few conversations are happening in the main room. Some times these conversations speed up to the point that it's difficult to follow each conversation well. In the DramaChat, we don't want the group, or members of the group, to lose the main thread of conversation. If a crucial plot point to the drama were missed the impact of the piece may be lost on members of the group, which will lessen the effect of the work.

By keeping the number of group members reasonable for a given amount of time, the effect of the narrative of the piece will not be lost due to private chats.

What about the private chats and the addition of backchannels in the drama chat? In the real world application of the chat using the ARSC template, users can have private conversations during the dramatic action. This would allow for possible subplots to the action. So, in effect I would have the actors begin these backchannels as a sort of plot enhancer. Another idea would be to allow for an aspect ratio to develop between audience members that may be more accustomed to the chat world. For instance, what if the actors wanted to discern who might be a potential ringer in the audience that starts to interrupt the plot development? I suggest that there is an additional chat going on while the chat room drama is in effect. I propose a simultaneous IRC chat to add the subtext to the piece.

This would be an IRC chat that the audience can have running along with the main chat room. For example, we have the ARSC running in the web browser and we also have X Chat Aqua running where everyone can log into the same chat on an existing server.

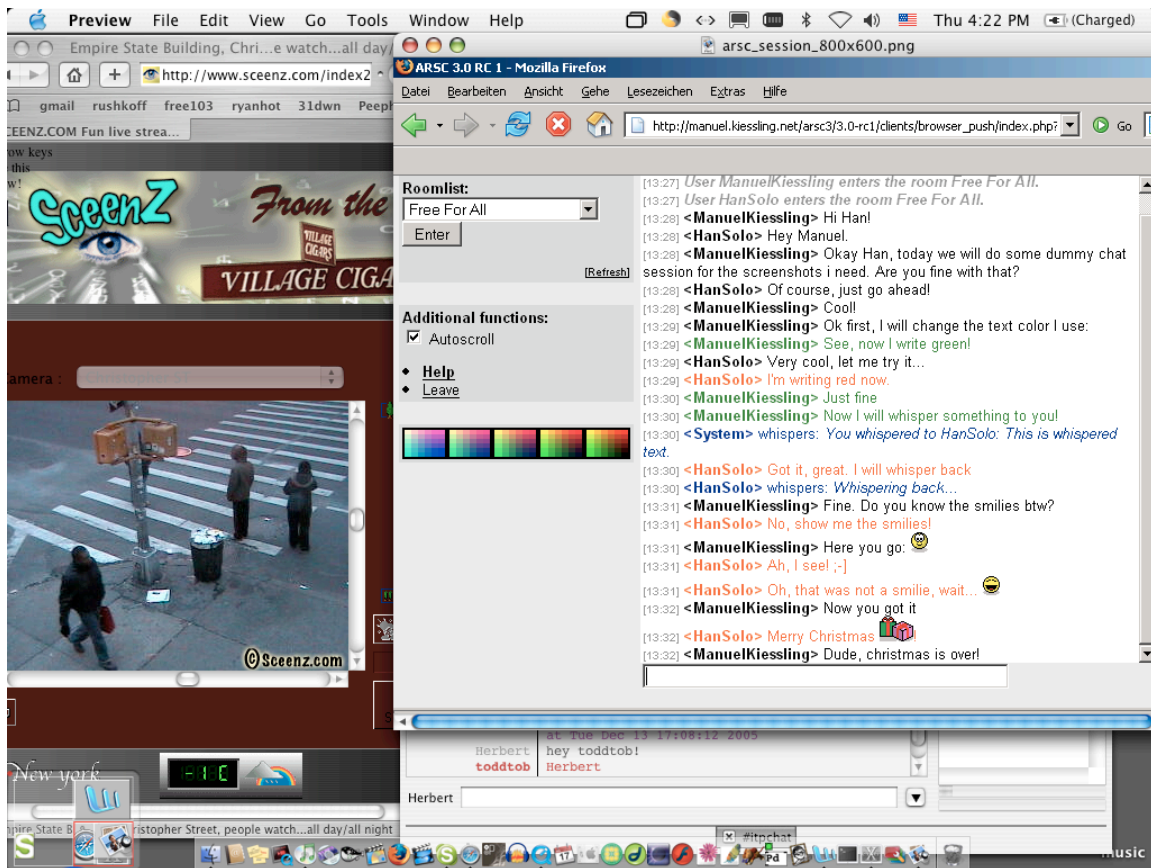
Another version of this system could be the LACE AJAX chat running and the actors using a SKYPE, a free telephony service as a tool for the backchannel discussion.

There are two attributes at play here that will add several functions to the narrative of the piece and the audience member interaction. If we were to have an IRC chat that underlies the chat room drama, the first thing that would arise is an indication to the actors of the piece which audience members are better at keeping up with the narrative. This would be in effect a tool that the actors can use to get to know the audience and make sure that they are not losing people and if the audience has a better understanding of chat speed, that many more plots develop along the way.

The other functions of the piece can be developed with the IRC as a possible voiceover narrative of the action in two forms. One, much like the director's voice over commentary that is available as a listenable track on DVD features of movies, perhaps the creator of the DramaChat is in the IRC room and the creator is giving back story and history of intent in the piece. This would add a new layer to the action and people who have been through the DramaChat before may join that room and comment along as well. This gives a new layer of subtext to the piece that also adds to the better enjoyment for repeat audience members.

The second form would be one of allegiances and strategies of the actors to inspire debate and conversation in the chat room. Perhaps, for example, one of the actors is planted in the IRC room to instigate flame wars in the chat room. This actor would function as a planted rabble-rouser in the room that tries to stir up emotions.

The added layer is if IRC is another tool that can benefit the group cohesiveness, it allows for people to form friendships with each other and also for a more enriching experience.



Mockups of the ARSC chat, with the Scenz camera on the left as well as the IRC channel X Chat Aqua on the bottom.

Overall, if the group is an online chat room consisting of actors who know each other and the predetermined direction to guide the chat in the room, and the audience is comprised of strangers or couples that know each other and are comfortable in the chat room, then a very effective and satisfying event may occur. The group may act in regards to what I like most about chat rooms, people existing from remote locations, together in a unified virtual room. If we add the tool of an online web camera that is focused on a live, yet staged occurrence, will this in effect make the group bond in a way that was unforeseeable? This happens a lot when we think of group trauma. I know I have a stronger relationship with people that I experience a crisis with. For instance, when the world trade center was destroyed in 2001, I remember the group of people that I survived that situation with, and we bonded in a way that is, for the most part, indescribable. Is it possible to instill a microcosm of that energy and group bonding in an artificial way, and not simply in the way that a relationship forms in an audience of a good production of an opera? I am looking for a sense of bonding in a short amount of time with a group of strangers in a chat room and by introducing a live security camera element to the chat I think this is possible.



**Laughing Out Loud**  
Created by N3krozoft MORD

## Concerns with Privacy

The losses of our rights to personal privacy have encouraged me to think in many directions about how to combat the fact that we are forced to lose our individuality and our ability for expression due to the implied fact that we must start to hide our identities on-line in order to remain out of the eye sight of that Big Brother-esq. terror that seeks to keep a hold of our thoughts and monitor our cyber-activity. In response to this, I would like to encourage a world where we become the watchers, not just the watched, in order to have a possible new perspective on why it may or may not be important for some sort of on-line surveillance. This is in accordance with my thesis chat room theater piece that I would like to create at the ITP program at NYU.

*Will the virtual cops come crashing down my doors?*

Can I have a private chat in a chat room, or IRC? Surveillance in chat rooms has become a topic that is beginning to crawl under my skin. Sure, I understand the fact that there are predators out there, evil lurkers in chat rooms posing as members of the opposite sex or children trying to pick up or exploit other children and people, but how far will our government go to try to keep tabs on all chat rooms and conversations? I have lived many hours, recently, inside chat rooms and I wholeheartedly feel that it is impossible and a giant waste of money and effort for our government to try to monitor these chats.

Of course, there is technology that is rapidly becoming available to do the monitoring for us. Bots can be put in chat rooms that look for key words and phrases that may bring up red flags and begin a personal investigation to the room, and we can spend a lot of money enlisting agents to sit in chat rooms and monitor the conversations. But is this really the way to look for security threats to our nation? Did AL Queda form in IM sessions from Hamburg to the US? [Probably not, goto: <http://novakeo.com/?p=131>]

Recently, in my social facts class at NYU's ITP with instructor Clay Shirky, the founder of [meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com) [<http://www.meetup.com>], Scott Heiferman, spoke with

our class. Meetup.com is an online social service that allows for groups to form under the presence of a group leader; people enlist into the group online and then organize a date for the group to meet in the physical world. This is a great way to form a local community of people with shared interests. For a class assignment I even joined a meetup.com group and spent some time with them outside of the virtual sphere. When considering surveillance in online communities for this paper I thought I would ask the founder a simple question about the presence of the government in watching the formation of new meetup.com groups. I thought that this actually might be an interesting question in relevance to the fact that meetup.com's largest claim to fame came with the website's ability to gather large support for Howard Dean in the 2004 presidential elections. In fact, Dean's supporters grew in such large numbers that all presidential candidates started to see the future of elections and promotion on the Internet as the future of voter outreach. When I asked my question to the founder of meetup.com he basically scaled me back to the feeling that I asked a very pedestrian question amongst the thinkers at a graduate institution. He said that he is asked that a lot; he was referring to his talks at a recent convention in Colorado, and he always responds the same way: "no".

So if the government has had no interest in monitoring meetup.com.com, a forum for like-minded groups to meet, how, then, are they monitoring chat rooms for possible terrorist threats? This is a joke, right? If the government keeps us in the suspicion that they are looking at all of our IM sessions and IRC chat sites then we may be afraid to actually do evil things in chat rooms, right? This may go to that Orwellian paranoia that we have been so overwhelmed with recently.

Guilt only plagues us so far, and the sexual predators that idle in chat rooms should be monitored; but by whom, the government? I don't want to linger on the fact that there are problems with identity and misguidance when it comes to predators in chat rooms looking for a sexual thrill with a minor; this is very wrong and I feel very strongly against such crimes. I feel, in brief, that there is a right to free speech, even for children, so it is difficult for me to insist that kid chat rooms should be monitored. What I am trying to investigate is not the sexual predators in chat rooms, but more the government's

idea that evil groups are forming on line in order to conspire to threaten national security.

If it is happening then it cannot be monitored. And I believe this. If groups are forming on line to generate subversive movements toward governmental or societal overthrow, they are most likely doing this in private chats that are virtually impossible to monitor; and let us say that they are doing this, and the government actually *does* find some keywords in this chat that seem to threaten national security, then what actually happens next? The government has access to the IP addresses of the users in the chat room, but now is faced with the notion that perhaps users are using public access computers, or un-registered computers or friend's computers for their chat exercises. Then what happens next, the government watchdogs begin to run more investigations to the activity of that IP address and eventually begin to slowly encroach the suspect and finally take action against them? Has this happened?

In my research I have not found one instance of the threat to national security in chat rooms that has been obtained from surveillance in chat rooms by governmental monitors.

In a sense, I want the people in the chat room theater experience to act as these virtual cops in order to actually discern that a crime has happened and force them to make a group decision as to what to do. Can the group be sure what they experienced was actually fact or fiction? Was it staged as part of the drama, or did they actually experience a coincidence of time and action? What motivates us as a group and how we feel when we ourselves are overstepping our own limitations as to what privacy is? Can I put the audience into a state of feeling as if they are *Big Brother*? How do you react if you are put into that position?

I think this is an important experiment in order to bring the awareness that cameras are everywhere and people are watching everything, but what if you step into the shoes of the person watching? Do you feel differently about your own privacy? These tools are available so why not use them as a way to heighten the awareness of their own existence?

Now imagine if someone were monitoring that chat room.

These are all questions, that by the use of a fictional narrative set forth in the confounds of a non-fictional framework, that can be breached in order to raise the public's awareness that we are all being surveyed in some manner at all times.

However, what I challenge is the fact that if you were put in the other shoes as watchers, not the watched, would you feel as if you have a greater social responsibility? This is where the truest form of corruption lies: when people are put into power positions, they start to believe that they are actually doing a service to society by becoming watchdogs for the common good as proscribed by themselves. These new developments in burgeoning censorship and the depreciation of our rights to personal speech and on-line privacy that the current administration is capable of make me feel desperate for an escape form on line social activity as a whole; I don't think there is one, for me that is. SO, I acquiesce, and just aim to turn the situation around and begin to look at the benefits of watching the watchers. For now, just being aware of their presence and a knowledge of their thought processes as they watch are the first steps to new behavioral patterns which will inevitably develop as we are thrust into this digital age.

When I started thinking about my thesis idea I didn't realize the implications of the topic with our current government's violations of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance act. In striking coincidence to writing this paper the New York Times this past Saturday exposed the president's admission that, in the days following the 9/11 attacks, he ordered the National Security Agency to eavesdrop on the private phone conversations and e-mails of American citizens. His order directed that the NSA conduct the surveillance without the normal court review, which is required to protect privacy and civil liberties.

I hope that this new revelation will also cause a more heightened awareness of the issues of personal privacy and how we are losing more of our rights to privacy every day, as illustrated by President Bush's administration. In the project that I have outlined and my response to chat room privacy I hope to also encourage the awareness of the responsibilities of the surveyors and surveyed. Let's step into the shoes of both sides and then see how we feel.



**SURVEILLANCE DRAMA.**

An introduction to the theater of online existence or the new virtual-well-made play.

Our Online celebrity lives have begun! And living large in this virtual world is becoming as second nature as going to the supermarket in your car or walking to the local market to buy milk and bread. It used to be the daily routine was to arrive home from work and turn on the evening news or open the newspaper to find out what is going on in the world, but things are different now. People are keeping up with current events on a constant basis during their daily lives, and the 24 hour news channels keep us from even having to be at home at a special hour to watch the news. This need for new information and interesting stimuli has made the world rabid for new innovations and hungry for fresh and original content.

I contend that people are living publicly more than ever. Now you can learn a lot about a person in a short amount of time. *Google* a name of a prospective new date and unleash a plethora of information about the person; you even may be more engaged by a person if they happen to have more information about themselves available on line, if they have a blog or a membership to *MySpace* or *Friendster*. If you are even more adventurous you can look at pictures that they have been featured or created on *Flickr*. It may be a given to our conversation now that all of this exists, and it is no surprise that you may be actually living too much of a public persona in this new age of technology, but I say: embrace it!

Let's exist in this virtual world as self-made celebrities. You **are** what you are *Googled* as. Or am I wrong? Is there a lie that I am being misdirected into believing by the typed word? Living a virtual life as an on-line celebrity may be another mask that we can use to lead people to believe what we want them to. This is the most important aspect of creating this new life for us. It is no mistaking that people will inherently embellish themselves in their blogs, or social accounts. This is what we have dreamed of, a chance to get outside of ourselves and create someone new, someone that we would like to be with, or even

go the opposite way for a ironic gesture of humility. This in account emphasizes our deepest eccentricities and allows for people to laugh at us and see that we are really human behind the blogosphere screen.

Here is the question, what does this remind me of? It reminds me of the theater. It reminds me of a great notion that some actors carry with them into the justification for *why* they are actors in the first place; some may say that it is because they like to play characters other than themselves. While I agree that this is something that people do as actors, I contend that they are *not* playing someone different than themselves, they are actually playing different and possibly uncovered parts of themselves that make up a role that they are playing. The notion of "being" someone isn't really accurate, you cannot **be** someone other than yourself, however, you can reveal certain attributes of yourself that you may not reveal in your daily life.

This is also the character that you create Online. You may not actually be able to convey who you really are through your Internet activities, but you are conveying something about yourself that you want others to know about you. This is the impulse for people to have a Blog, to share their views and spread their knowledge about themselves to the public at large. This is where you can create a character for yourself, someone that is part of you and is also someone that you have created out of a side of yourself that you may not actually reveal in your daily routines of life.

In a *well-made* play, a playwright may spend a good five acts in order to fully develop a character through contextualization and dramatic situations. Now, looking at someone's personal profile on line, I can also begin to see a character creating in my mind. So, what if we decide to blend the two and develop characters based on the information that we can glean from Online perusing of personal information, this is the start of a newly proposed idea of *Surveillance Drama*. How much fun is it to Google someone's name to find out their past history and involvements; we can use this commonly practiced activity for a way to build a character in Online performance.

Blogs offer a lot of useful information about a person's life, especially if the blogger is intimately candid and let's us see into their personal interests and thoughts. A blog can be viewed as an actor's personal background for a character, or actually a made up character itself.

Streaming of a live image from someone's apartment is also a glimpse into someone's personal life. Suppose we were to be looking at a character that was created, a fictional character played by someone in real life; as we were looking at them, they are presenting themselves as someone different, a character? Would this help us to start to unfold layers of their character, knowing that we are looking at a live-stream? I think people have a new sensation as they are looking at someone live, this is why so many adult Web Streaming services are doing so well. It is much more satisfying for a viewer to know that what they are looking at is live.

Live is important and with the speed of our Internet connections these days streaming can be used in many new and different ways to achieve the curiosity and imaginations of online viewers. Videoblogs as personal prerecorded snippets into the lives of bloggers add another contextualization to these online characters that we are creating. If you are investigating someone through a look at their recent videoblog entries, your interest and belief into what you are seeing is heightened.

This is what I propose to aim for, using these online characters that we are making as characters in this Surveillance drama. In the end it is not important if what you are looking at is real, it is the reality that these things have been posted on line that is important to me. It takes effort to construct these characters, as it takes time to show the world online something about your self through your blog entries.

## The Virtual Real

The person that I am online is different than the person that I exist as in the *real*, this living flesh that I embody. I am searching for that *real* to exist in the virtual world, the persona that I exist as Online. If this persona that is created through online social systems (email, different forms of blogs, Amazon wish lists, etc...) exists, then that persona exists in the virtual, online world and in effect the reality of the *virtual real*.

But it is in this notion of the *real* that we are trying to escape from through the use of these online identities. Why then do we want to have a *virtual real* to exist in? The inherent *virtual real* is made up of the online communities and virtual identities, and this is how, in some way, these virtual personas communicate with each other, and in effectively interact with each other. Once you subscribe to someone's RSS feed and add that link to your blog for others to see, you are showing these conversations happening within this world of the *virtual real*.

Does this contradict the notion that the intrinsic nature of a blog is a personal extension of who you **are** in the *real*? Are you not creating a different persona online than who you are in your daily life? I don't think so, in the best-case scenario you are as honest to your virtual persona as you are honest with your editing of yourself. Do people write entries and not rewrite them before publishing? If so, then you are getting closer to obtaining the *real* within the *virtual real*, but you are still stepping back for a moment to reconsider what you are saying, and you probably check the spelling and grammar before publishing. A videoblog is another form of trying to communicate who you are in the *real* within the *virtual real*, but video is also editable, allowing for you to edit yourself and present yourself how you want to be perceived as.

The thin line between the *real* and the *virtual real* can best be blurred with the use of live streaming and audioblogs. A live stream is a broadcast of the *real*, in real time and with no editors; this is the best way approach putting the *real* inside the *virtual real*. A live-stream of your life allows for the audience Online to have a glimpse of who you are in the *real* within the *virtual real*. An audioblog that takes cell phone calls and

immediately posts them to your blog before you have a chance to edit allows another glimpse to your *real*, Online. This is the essence and backbone of the power of the idea of **Surveillance Drama**. The knowledge of the live aspect of the Web stream allows for a greater if not heightened suspension of disbelief.

Drama is conflict. The age-old conflicts of dramatic structure: man vs. man, man vs. himself, man vs. nature and so on...

Live video has these elements of drama embedded in it. The fact that something is live makes people suspicious and watch details much more finely. If we watch a live feed of a security camera we see a narrow portion of the world framed before us on a video monitor, you are expecting something to happen, and will keep watching until something does happen; guards and security monitors have this activity as a job. I maintain that live video images contain an inherent drama that is inescapable. You may see a robbery; you may witness a live sexual act; you may see a friendly gesture; these are all elements that we go to the movies for, or theater itself, and which are now all available online for our endless entertainment.

Let us manipulate the cross over between the *real* and the *virtual real* through the use of Online Web security cameras. Since, as I have explained, the live image we are seeing is a version of this *real*, if we were to manipulate this with an edited blog form of the *virtual real* while we are live streaming, we are existing in our on *virtual real* inside of our *real*; the essence of acting in a play, Online. Let us gather beside our computers and see this melding of truth and non-truth within the constraints of the Internet.

This is not a new concept, in fact the theater and movies is an alternate form of this *real* that I have discussed, but this intersects the new possibilities of exchanging our online worlds throughout the planet. This capability of live security-theater can unite the physical world online. Events staged in front of security cameras in Singapore can be viewed in Argentina, New York and Tokyo. The theater spaces are unlimited and it is time to begin these conversations between the realities of online existence while cameras are still available to the public.

## Uncharted Territory?

**"How do you cede some measure of control or authority to the audience, reader, listener, 'user' -- yet still deliver a work that's expressive, moving, memorable, satisfying?"**

A quote from Scott Rosenberg's Hypertext Wasteland referring to Desktop Theater's "Clicking for Godot."

Surveillance cameras have been utilized in many performance and art works. I am inspired by the work of Bruce Nauman and John Keesler. Here is an excerpt from Michael Rush's article "Security Art" Rush, Michael "Security Art"

"It is a short leap from looking (fixing one's gaze upon another) to voyeurism (taking delight in extended gazing) to spying (surreptitiously studying the actions of another). Surveillance, a type of spying, has interested artists and fascists alike since the birth of video technology. Clearly derived from the uses of video in military technology, surveillance highlights the sinister flip side of the photographic gaze: intruding upon the unwitting subject with a camera. CTRL [Space]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother was published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same title at ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany. Totalling 655 pages, it does indeed extend from Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century design of the "penitentiary panopticon," in which prisoners could be observed 24/7, to present-day reality TV shows featuring participants willingly displaying their every move for the camera in hopes of claiming the jackpot at show's end. Surveillance, it seems, has actually ceased being sinister. It is now a means to a million-dollar grab bag."

The Chat Room as a theater space has been used in two successful and inspiring cases.

### **Laughing Out Loud**

Created by N3krozoft MORD

Presented in 2003 Les Voûtes - PARIS LOL was shown as part of the group exhibition called Global Resistance.  
Last presented December 2005.

The project was themed around the memorable Ripper case. A chat room theater piece was employed. The actors involved re-enacted the actual transcript of the Ripper Chat session.  
<http://www.stepzero.org/temp/ripper.html> for a transcript of the case  
<http://www.n3krozoft.com/> for the art group's website

### **ASV [v.f.] 1.0**

<http://rhizome.org/object.rhiz?3371>

Created by Vincent Makowski / AmsterdamEditions\*

Here 5 actors existed in a chat room theater performance. They had no rehearsal, had no interest in linear narrative and used absurdist dialogue and communicated between actors as characters; the public was able to act along in the chat room.

ASV [v.f.] 1.0 was performed on Sat March 23rd 2002 at 5 pm CET in the chatroom installed on [www.amsterdameditions.com](http://www.amsterdameditions.com) for the occasion during the Internet Fiesta and the Irish Museum of Modern Art's first open Net.art exhibition in which the website was involved. The technology used was simple and easy to operate.

The Chatroom Plays require any kind of chat oriented basic technologies such as ICQ or IRC.

**iSEE**

Presented by the Institute for Applied Autonomy:

iSee is a web-based application charting the locations of closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance cameras in urban environments. With iSee, users can find routes that avoid these cameras ("paths of least surveillance") allowing them to walk around their cities without fear of being "caught on tape" by unregulated security monitors.

The Institute for Applied Autonomy (IAA) was founded in 1998 as a technological research and development organization dedicated to the cause of individual and collective self-determination. Our mission is to study the forces and structures, which affect self-determination, and to provide technologies, which extend the autonomy of human activists.

**Inverse Surveillance**

Inverse Surveillance intervenes in the process of surveillance and attempts to undermine or  
The Institute's use of security cameras and the need to avoid them is especially intriguing and a perfect fit for the In (security) project.

Here is a list of other projects and groups using the subject of security and surveillance for their art and theater projects:

**NY Security Camera Players**

<http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html>

**Desktop Theater**

Uses Palace avatar chat for theatrical performances.

<http://www.thepalace.com/>

Did a production of Waiting For Godot

**Web Camera Theater**

An Italian performance group that uses web cameras to enhance performances.

<http://www.webcamtheatre.org/lab-roma.htm>

**MPG:Mobile Performance Group**

MPG is a collective of new media artists interested in finding new ways to present art outside of traditional venues. MPG disseminates their work by using automobiles, video projection, cell phones, FM transmission, wireless hotspots, and any other technologies that allow artist to engage the public. The Group was founded by Matt Roberts and is part of his classes taught at Stetson University's Digital Art program.

## Methodology

How I went about this.

With my theater company, 31 Down Radio Theater, I planned to produce this project as an online piece to test my thesis. There were a few preliminary steps that I took to make this happen.

The first step was constructing the actual chat room tool that we would show use for the drama's interface.

In the end the LACE AJAX chat proved to be the best chat for the project and the most stable. The live video feed URL was placed into the chat from the Earthcam website, looking onto Times Square.

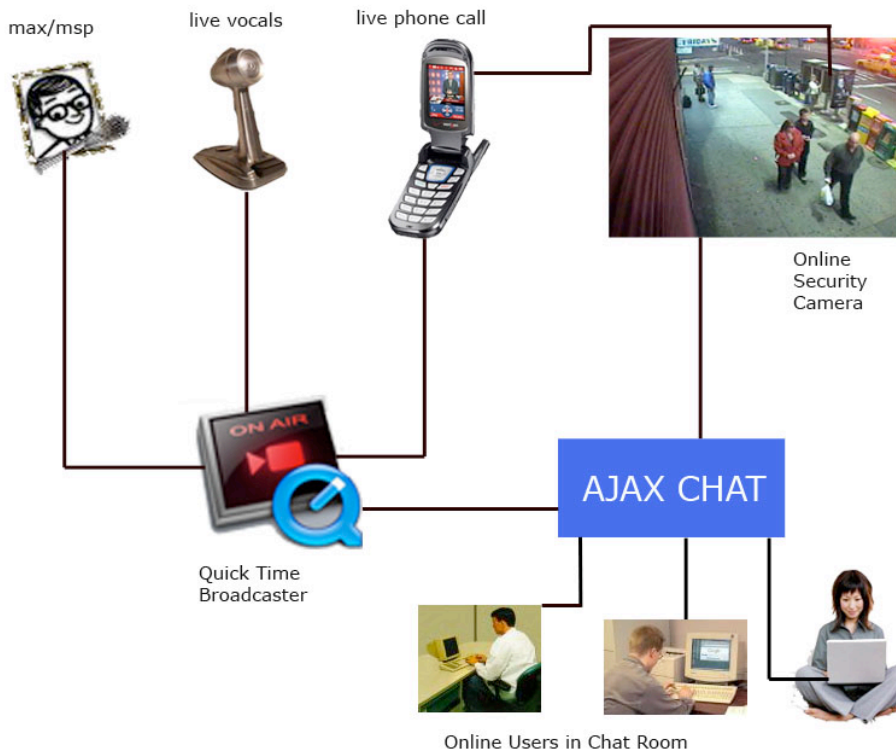
I wanted to be able to have two live feeds of audio also in the chatroom. One live audio track was my voice; the other was a live phone call from a phone booth located in the camera's view on Broadway that the actress could use to call in live to the chatroom. I also made a collection of audio samples that I could use as music and sound effects during the performance.

To do this I set up a live audio stream that was embedded in the chat web page. I used QuickTime Broadcaster to do this stream and employed the streaming server that was supplied by ITP. I had a microphone and my cell phone and the sound effects from a MAX/MSP patch that I built going into a mixing board. I ran the signal out of the mixing board back into my computer and streamed the mix out live.

I also had a SKYPE telephony backchannel on my desktop that I could use to converse with the actors.

This interface was important to keep as organized as possible for me, so I could be in control of the entire show. I was the director and operator of all of the modes of communication between the actors in the camera's eye, the audience and the actors in the chat room. I also had my text set before me in order to copy paste the text in as necessary.

Here are some visuals of the actual interface that the audience used as well as my own desktop command interface:



on-line surveillance drama

in(security) Previous Dramas Help

**i numo** :: you sound like you've had one too many  
**BOSS** :: yeah thumb  
**GROPES** :: Somebody might be harrassing her. Should we send in some rollers?  
**Thumb** :: Maybe you been watchin this girl a little too close  
**BOSS** :: send in the rollers gropes  
**GROPES** :: She's walking away  
**Gregory** :: My power's getting cut boss. Sorry to lose the trail so close to busting it open.  
**Kajoko** :: i dont see her boss  
**GROPES** :: No she's crouching on the street  
**Ohls** :: Is that girl sitting down one of ours?  
**Khan** :: Shes sitting  
**GROPES** :: By the wall  
**GROPES** :: Against the wall  
**GROPES** :: She just stood up  
**Khan** :: Is she putting a message  
**Khan** :: in the sole of her shoe??  
**Khan** :: Someone's talking with her  
**Khan** :: trench coat  
**Khan** :: shady  
**BOSS** :: not sure what's going on with him  
**jo-jo** :: trench coat mafia, programmed from hell  
**jo-jo** :: gone  
**GROPES** ::

Officers on Duty

BOSS  
firefox

Officer Name:   
 Message:

max msp patch to play sounds

skype back-channel

qt broadcaster

chat room

script

The image shows a Max/MSP Runtime patch at the top, titled 'insecurity', with various objects like 'street', 'drama1', 'drama2', 'drama3', 'bg1', 'minor', 'bell', and 'subwofff'. Below it is a Qt-based application window titled 'on-line surveillance drama' with a chat log and a video feed. A separate window titled 'in(security)Script.txt' contains a script for the application. Blue arrows point from text labels to specific elements in the patch and application windows.

Max/MSP Runtime File Edit Window

insecurity

in(security) surveillance drama

street drama1 drama2 drama3 bg1 minor bell subwofff

on-line surveillance drama

in(security) Previous Dramas Help

ryan

is it going

Preview:

Sto

Statisti

Broadcast

Audio Dat

Video Dat

Fram

CP

Total Dat

Location:

rtsp://128

in(security)Script.txt

in(security)

Boss: in V.0.  
"You are now part of the insecurity surveillance team!  
Welcome aboard!  
Considering your profile of a highly respected surveillance autho  
will take your input with extreme credibility. Whatever you say  
respond to will be held anonymously and not reflect your true ide  
It's your duty to survey the streets of Manhattan and protect the  
those who inhabit our city and the world.  
It is your strength in these matters that has brought you here an  
welcome you as a member of our team!"

Act 1

The next step was casting the piece. I have a group of actors that I work with frequently so I was able to draw from talented actors that I have worked with and know my style of directing.

I cast Kelly Tuohy as Delilah Desdemone. Kelly and I worked on creating her character using online social software. We created the character name and then opened several accounts online in that name. There is a blog on Blogger, an Amazon Wish List, a flickr account, a mySpace, and an email address that was set up and completely fictional. Kelly was then left to use these social software forums to generate a thick character that we could access in the chat room in order to develop her character's identity during the performance.

Kelly and I began early with a rehearsal process that was completely mediated by technology. This is basically a new system of directing for me, and I found it very provocative and inspiring. I could direct her from in front of my computer at home and she was in the actual playing space in the streets of New York. We communicated through cell phones and text messaging. She would go to payphones online that I could see and call in to see which ones had the best sound quality for the performance. I find it very important for the performance to be real and live, so using the infrastructure of the city is crucial to the truth of the performance. Kelly and I worked out her staging and I would say things to her like: "this is your stage, get to know the boundaries." We mapped out, using the squares on the sidewalk, the best spots for her to be visible during the show. We also worked out signs that something was wrong, from my end and hers. This was a way of communication that would allow for silent and unnoticeable conversation between the two of us.

Kelly and I worked out the timing of the actual performance and I was now in need of actors to fill the chat room. I had two in mind that were also eager to be a part of this. One was Thom Sibbitt, and he was to be the point man in the chat room. He developed his character of an eagle eye detective that was used to making busts through the eyes of cameras in the streets. The second actor was Karen Koontz, another talented actress that began developing her character as an online gambling addict that would also shop

for surveillance cameras on EBay; she was the antithesis of Thom's character.

For their actor training we practiced in the chat room and I made sure that they were used to the interface and how to work with it with authority. I then gave them a list of online cameras to watch as preparation. This was to get them used to surfing cameras on line and to be able to multitask easier.

The last actor that I included in the piece was my friend and fellow actor Zack. Hi duty was to be on the street with Kelly, one, to be there to help her if anything went wrong or if someone started to bother her, and two, to ad a creepy, unspeaking presence to the piece. He was to be her shadow, a physical person watching her, not just us online.

Then I began to write the script that we would all use in the chat room, allowing for improvisation and enough questions to permit another chapter in the story.

The story features me, as Boss, a chief of Online Security for the Late Night division of the streets of New York. Boss is in charge of an elite group of security officers that peruse online cameras in search of crimes and suspicious activity. Through the narrative, Boss's character unfolds and we find he has lost touch with reality as he begins to obsess over the routine nightly visits of a strange woman to a phone booth. His relationship to the woman become unclear as he begins to wire tap her phone calls and eavesdrop in on her ambiguous life.

This is the ultimate fate of someone who just watches camera feeds all of their days, the inevitable fixation and obsession with someone who seems out of place in society, in this case Delilah Desdemone, who calls out for Mike Sharpie, a dark figure of the night that may actually be Boss Himself.

Here is a sample of the script that we used for the performance:

in(security)

Boss: in V.O.

"You are now part of the insecurity surveillance team!  
Welcome aboard!

Considering your profile of a highly respected  
surveillance authority, we will take your input with  
extreme credibility. Whatever you say and respond to  
will be held anonymously and not reflect your true  
identity.

It's your duty to survey the streets of Manhattan and  
protect the lives of those who inhabit our city and  
the world.

It is your strength in these matters that has brought  
you here and we welcome you as a member of our team!"

Act I

Boss: Hangin' in their Thumb?

Thumb: Been a long one Boss...you know me...

Boss: maybe you should lay off for the weekend...keep  
you mind and eyes on the streets instead of winding up  
on them...

Thumb: loud and clear...;) some things though...Boss  
...they go hand and hand with this buisness...

Kajoko: Don't listen to Bossy today Thumb, he's got  
other things on his mind...and what ever you do to  
keep going ...do it...

Thumb: :) kojo...

Kajoko: mean it Thumb...that arrest you prompted was  
the highlight of the year.

Boss: That's why we have you here Thumb, you have a  
keen eye...

Thumb: for crooked barbers??

Kajoko: that guy was clipping more than whiskers!!

Boss: you did a good job the other night Thumb, just keep your eyes in the game here...this is real life and we need you at your best.

Thumb: I'll drink to that.

Kajoko: ;) hold'em thumb hold'em!

## ACT II

BOSS: I'd like to take this moment to welcome the new Officer's to our team:

{Say names of officers and maybe ask a little about them}

Now, officers Thumb and Kajoko, you will assist me in monitoring the Starbucks case, and our new officers will be assigned cameras in the Metropolitan area, keep a clear eye on the local scene and let me know if and when something seems out of place, also keep an eye on Starbucks, something seems strange to me today about that place...

I'll send you links to your cameras to monitor, keep a close eye on the links that you will be sent.

Officer ( ) patrol this camera:  
<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/timesquare/index.php?cam=3&display=flash>

Officer ( ) patrol this camera:  
<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/timesquare/index.php?cam=9&display=flash>

Officer ( ) patrol this camera:  
<http://www.opentopia.com/showcam.php?camid=2358>

Officer ( ) patrol this camera:  
<http://www.opentopia.com/showcam.php?camid=901>

Officer ( ) patrol this camera:  
<http://www.pearlywhites.com/dentcam.html>

<http://www.opentopia.com/showcam.php?camid=305>  
<http://www.unowot.com/>

<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/groundzero/index.php?cam=3>  
<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/midtown/>  
<http://www.ricodrico.com/>  
<http://www.un.org/webcam/>

Keep your eyes on the Prize folks,

and don't check your email!!

Kajoko:

SCENE III

Boss: in V.O.

"it was a .... Night on the streets of New York....the filthy apple....streets, sucker's sanctuary, loser's lane...murder's blvd...all of my officers were busy patrolling the streets...through those feeds, those beautiful feeds...alleys and murderers...but I couldn't keep my mind off her... she...she...walks in the canyons...shoes...her shoes..."

Thumb: here he goes again...

Kajoko: should we tell him?

Thumb: not yet, he'll see soon enough.

Me:" she always does it...at this same distance this same time.... pacing the streets like a fog...who was she and why was I here night after night waiting for her to come again...to tell me her name...to..to..

Thumb: and I'll have her arrested, Boss...you know what she did...

Boss: have another glass Thumb. that's what you think.

Kojoko: you've been hung up for a while Boss, can't you see it's over

Me: Kajo...you haven't had a bust in 4 weeks! you watching the streets or are you playing hold 'em again?

Kojo: a little texas stud on the side never hurt anyone.

Boss: who's hurting Kojo, you or the streets of NYC????

Thumb: forget the hole'em how about a side bet??

Kojo: oh yeahhhh....what you have in mind thumb?

Thumb: ...check out this guy here (enter link)...  
50 bucks says he.....(make a bet)

Kajoko: you're on...

(improv the bet...Boss interrupts in the end)

Boss: I think I see her ...look in the main window,  
that's her right...

Thumb: that's Delilah all right...

Kojo: great, now we won't tear him away.

Boss: keep your cool...it'll all work out.

Thumb: she's looking for you Boss

Boss: she's just looking for a way out.

Kojoko: so am I

Thumb: stop it pals

Boss: v.o. "Thinking about the phone again  
Delilah...Delilah ...."

Thumb: Ok officers, what you got on your screens?

Kojo: here's a cool one:

(kojo sends in links from current eBay auctions of  
security cameras)

Thumb: you biddin tonight kojo, for your collection?

Kojo: gotta do something with my winnings:)

Thumb: winnings, you haven't won in months

Kojo: ha ha thumb htat's what you think.

Thumb: another side bet? kojo...  
bet ya boss starts tapping that phone

Boss: yeah yeah, How'd you know, and when she calls tonight we'll be listening.

Thumb: great, Boss, Great.

(Thumb and Kojo begin to improv with he other members of the chat as Boss starts to tap into the phone line...he interrupts when se start to hear her voice...

Boss: I got it, she's making the call...I placed a tap on the line...let's listen in:

All characters improv along while we listen to her phone call.

Delilah desdemone:

"I know you're there...you're always like this... just leave me talking...leave me to talk for you...and God I don't know why I do it...?"

These past few weeks have driven me...well, they've taken their toll on me....mike (long pause)

just... ever since I met you I feel like I've broken a law that I haven't even heard of...I feel so guilty of something... something Mike that hasn't shown itself to me yet...

Like I was reading a book, a book that never got past the first chapter, a book of first chapters, Mike...

Damn it, you are so silent with me, but I hear you.... why, why do you do this to me...I cry every time you don't say anything...and I am lost...

Just lost...

broken a law, Mike...  
you keep making me feel like I'm breaking the law...

I'm not going to tell you it's over again... 'cause  
I'd just be lying to myself again, Mike....

It's not over...but sometimes I don't think anything  
has begun...

I'm here, that's all I know...I'm here in some metal  
casket standing in the street and I feel sick  
inside...I feel like you are eating away at me and I  
can't get over it...a sickness, a fucking sickness  
that keeps me awake at night, out here in the street.

These shitty streets...

You listening....(pause) I know you are...  
You're watching me...

You always watch me...I'm like a moth in the light,  
fluttering around and you sit there and enjoy watching  
me fly closer to the light..closer and closer to the  
flame... and get I get tossed off...like an old slip  
on the floor...(laughs a little)

Ever since I did that for you, I feel like I'm being  
watched, Mike...

Damnit, everywhere I go I feel like I'm being  
watched...those people over there in  
McDonald's...they're watching me...the man in that  
cab, he's watching me...I look up and all I see are  
eyes watching me and I am not fucking paranoid,  
Mike...

(sobs) who am I tonight....sometimes I don't even know  
who Delilah Desdemone is, don't know what I am to  
become...and who you are...

I hear you breathing, you...you...I can hear you  
breathing and you won't say anything...

I'm not hungry anymore...I'm not thirsty...I'm not  
anything but confused...we're all confused, Mike...me  
you and the rest of these people...

why do they do what they are going to do..why have I done what I've done??

I don't owe you anything..I just don't owe anybody anything anymore...I can't stand the thought of owing anybody anything.

I don't owe shit...I just feel like a damn little leaf floating in a tornado of your thoughts. Mike..  
I know you're there...I know..."

#### ACT IV

During this monologue the cast begins to comment on the Boss as he becomes more and more distant also watching the demise of the Delilah character in the street

Boss: yeah that's right...a tornado of my thoughts...I think we've heard enough...

In V.o.: "I just don't know anymore...I can't stand sitting here watching...I can't stand the idea of not doing anything...you out there...you can do something, I live here behind the cameras and I don't know what it's like to be out there anymore...

What is out there, hunh? I lock myself up in the room, my living and breathing self is just another book on a shelf and I don't know when the dust jacket will be torn away...how many times do I have to hear the same story, the same damned story that you invaded my privacy, how many times is it that I look at you and just don't care, you see, when I'm looking through these windows, these eyes, my eyes, when I'm looking through my eyes, I see nothing, I don't remember anything, all I see are pixels that don't add up to anything...yeah, she can go on telling us these things and we can listen to it, but how many of us really are going to do anything about anything.

Delilah, I know you're there, you're always there... Tearing away at my mind...I see you and I see myself looking at you again and again. It's me, I just don't know how to talk to you anymore, I just don't know anything at all.

How many of us care, a few minutes ago I thought that I did...but I've been taking Sudafed all day...and all I can think about is why I didn't like hearing her voice after all...your voice, your breath your thoughts.

I just didn't know what to do when the one I have been watching didn't have anything to say. or is it just that all of this watching has made me ignore and not care about anything any more.

END SHOW LINK TO CREDITS:

[http://31down.org/performances/insecurity\\_secretEntrance.html](http://31down.org/performances/insecurity_secretEntrance.html)

Now that we were all accustomed to our duties in the online performance and have worked with the script I began to schedule and advertise for our show.

I decided, schedules permitting, to do the show late at night. I planned the show at forty-five minutes in length, so I wanted to start at 11:15, so it would be over when the ITP floor closed, allowing for students to be able to enter the drama from school. I sent out email invitations to the performance, I did not open it up to the public; I wanted to know how many audience members would be in the chat room.

Here is the cryptic email that I sent out in order to gain interest:

You have been selected to be a Surveillance Officer for the streets of New York.

You will be part of the Online Late Night Division (OLND).

If you choose to go on duty this Thursday at 11:15 pm EST please respond to this email and your secret pass code will be issued to you.

This is a top secret assignment:

31 Down radio theater is being watched by the newly formed Internet Police.

We must be very careful about our current actions.

Just respond to this email to get your pass code and link to the security officer entrance.

-BOSS

There were twenty-five responses to the email, I then responded with this email:

Welcome Officer!  
Boss here to tell you the scoop!

This email is top secret, do not share with anyone.

Your personal  
in(security) pass code:

IS551890

At 11:15 PM EST go to this address\* to join the fight  
against suspicion:

[http://31down.org/in\(security\)/live/welcome.html](http://31down.org/in(security)/live/welcome.html)

Keep your audio on for alerts.

\*Please use Firefox as your web browser, if you don't  
have Firefox, it is a free download, but other  
browsers will work.

If you have trouble logging in, just reply to this  
email.

The performance started at 11:15. There were ten audience members that logged in during the performance. The result was very positive and the Online Surveillance Drama ended at midnight with Kelly getting into a cab and leaving the street. It was difficult to keep with the script because so many of the audience members were enjoying the show and chatting, so we just kept up with them and let the drama unfold as they were finding their own ways of communication and fun. I end the show with a long voice over monologue that dissolved into mumblings as the audience questioned my sanity. It was perfect and I think everyone enjoyed themselves and it left the door open for more performances.

Sometimes technology gets in the way. My cell phone that evening decided to stop charging and I couldn't use it in the show, and I was going crazy, so I managed to get Thom, one of the actors in the piece to come to my apartment and do the show from there and I used his phone, Kelly was able to roll with the punches and I called her and told her the new phone number to call, it was nerve racking but we managed to keep the show going. There was a lot of police activity on the streets that night, and the audience thought that was part of it, and it was. That is the beauty of the streets you never know what new obstacles will become part of the action, and it was very mysterious.

I truly believe that this is the future of reality television and live performance; not saying that live events for my theater company will not take place in a theater, but through the research that I have done and the project **in(security)**'s success, I have a great vision for the open possibilities of live performance on the Internet. In the fall of 2006, I hope to mount a weekend of live Online Surveillance Dramas that will hopefully be well attended online and make people reflect on the nature of voyeurism and surveillance.

### **In Conclusion:**

The future of performance will be eternally mixed with the ever-growing technical possibilities of the Web. The truth is, I love watching a "live" performance, however it is important to address the fact that as the world gets seemingly more and more hectic, there are more and more distractions from live performance. It is difficult to attend events these days unless one's friends are performing. So as this trend continues, online performance will grow as a popular, if not essential, medium of performance.

Considering the 500 cameras that New York City will have monitoring its streets in the near future, I am left thinking that this is the new infrastructure for reality broadcasting. In the future these cameras may be thought of as obsolete as public pay phones are these days, with everyone using cell phones to make their calls, the pay phones will either be removed, or that system's structure will be used for something else. In the case of the 505 Wireless Security cameras that rise 30 feet above our

sidewalks, possibly they will be used as cameras in one giant reality show that is broadcast on the Internet.

This genre of Online Surveillance Drama that I have created must be presented now; the Web is a constantly changing environment that will open and close its doors and eyes to these projects. Some sights may not like their live, free feeds being used for such projects. I believe that the time to do this is now, and it will open the imaginations and doors for new projects like this in the future.

Now, more than ever it is possible to perform to the world. The ability to hear and watch live street musicians from South America in my living room is exciting, but to be able to also engage through the web and simultaneously experience a live street performer in New York City is even more remarkable.

Erving Goffman's definition of performance resonates with me:

"'Performance' refer[s] to all activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his [sic] continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers."

The use of the word "continuous" is what stands out. It seems to me a literal statement of the live stream through the Internet: the continuous flow of ones and zeros through space bringing me sound and images at amazing speeds over great distances. The particular set of observers is documented by their IP addresses and the influence that a performer has is conveyed through media.

So it is not the actual being there that I am suggesting will change, it's just the way we experience things when we are not there physically that has a profound effect on me. Surveillance cameras and the endless smoke trails of data that can be monitored on the Web are going to become what separates us from the generations before us, the world is different now. My life online is growing and changing every second as my IP address is passed through the virtual world. I believe that we must join in the campaign for watching as we understand that we are being watched, this is where our evolution continues in the cyber datasphere.

**Resources:**

\*Artist and organizations that use the on-line platform.

See free103point9 transmission arts:

<http://www.free103point9.org/>

Arts organization that promotes on line artistic expression and transmission

Collapsable Giraffe:

<http://www.collapsablegiraffe.org/>

New York Theater Company that streams live performances and rehearsals

Jenny Marketou, New York based artist using live security cameras in her work.

<http://www.taystes.net/v2/index.html>

Rhizome.org is a good source of support for online group exhibitions

<http://rhizome.org/>

**Laughing Out Loud**

Created by N3krozoft MORD

for a transcript of the case

<http://www.n3krozoft.com>

**ASV [v.f.] 1.0**

<http://rhizome.org/object.rhiz?3371>

**iSEE**

Presented by the Institute for Applied Autonomy:  
<http://www.appliedautonomy.com/isee/info2.html>

**NY Security Camera Players**

<http://www.notbored.org/the-scp.html>

**Desktop Theater**

<http://www.thepalace.com/>

**Web Camera Theater**

An Italian performance group that uses web cameras to enhance performances.

<http://www.webcamtheatre.org/lab-roma.htm>

*\*\*Note, this is not the eventual intended audience for this style of performance; in effect I would rather encourage non-chat room experienced users to attend the on-line performance as a form of gateway to the world of chat.*

**\*\*\*Rear Window Effect**

Based on the Alfred Hitchcock movie *Rear Window*. The effect mirrors the voyeuristic addiction that one may feel once under the assumption that they have witnessed something untrue that has been perceived as true.

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The Ripper story

<http://egomania.nu/princessnatalie.com/fullstory.html>

Transcript of the Ripper Chat session:

<http://www.stepzero.org/temp/ripper.html>

Opentopia free web cam source:

<http://www.opentopia.com/>

I Love Bees: wikipedia

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I Love Bees](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Love_Bees)

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