

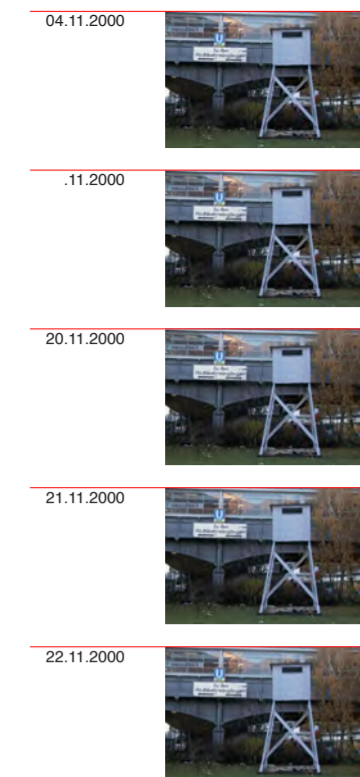
GUARDS GO MOBILE

Starting Point

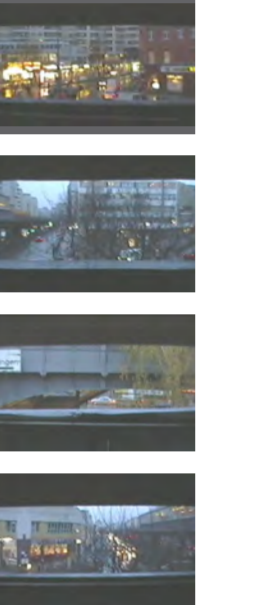
Through the progress in the information technology and the new standards in datatransmission cellular phones are easily combined with multimedia functions. This leads to a situation where nearly every object can become a potential surveillance media that will be excessively used for private and commercial uses. Surveillance becomes an always present possibility, independent of any sense of territory, that today is still the driving force behind surveillance of malls, headquarters or homes.

Since all of this data can be shared and combined through Internet the collection, use and ownership of this surveillance material becomes diffuse and widespread, omnipresent as well as potentially democratized.

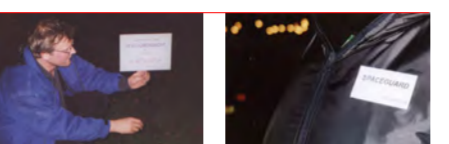
The project tries to anticipate this new situation where public, private and controlled space become indistinguishable and tries to explore the changes that will occur on an urban as well as psychological level. Through the setup of an urban experiment the project tries to raise awareness and evaluate the dangers and potentials of this development.



Views out of the watchtower to different directions. One of the most interesting observations was the social separation between the different segments of the square.



The pictures taken by the videocamera were shown on the TV-screen. Between the observation of different places we were showing parts of the reality-show "Big Brother".



We decided to use the watchtower according to its potential for one day.

On November 21, 2000 a video-camera was installed in the upper part of the watchtower, a TV-Screen showing the images taken by the camera was attached below.

The camera's perspective was changed every half hour. We singled out five different places: a situation at a traffic light, a Turkish market and the entrance to the Underground, a supermarket, a bus station, a bank.

Cardboards informed the passers-by about the video-observation in these areas.

While the video-observation was going on we asked people in the street about their ideas on observation and its future, on fear and security.



WATCHTOWER

Among the districts of Berlin Berlin-Kreuzberg was the first to get a watchtower to observe his inhabitants at a central place, the Kolossus Tor. The opening was celebrated on November 4, 2000.

The tower was built by Martin Kalwasser, a Berlin artist and architect. His installation "Watchtower" reacted to plans proposing the surveillance and control of public space favored by several Berliner politicians.

The tower symbolized an evident, well-known and well-established mode of observation. This is why we chose this place to start our inquiry into surveillance systems.

MOBILE

We built mobile observation systems. They consisted of a metal-framed case, a webcam, and a display showing the images taken by the camera.

Meeting with friends on a sunny Sunday afternoon on January 14, 2001

We took a coffee at a cafe next to the Brandenburg Gate, a historic monument of special significance for the (re)united Germany.

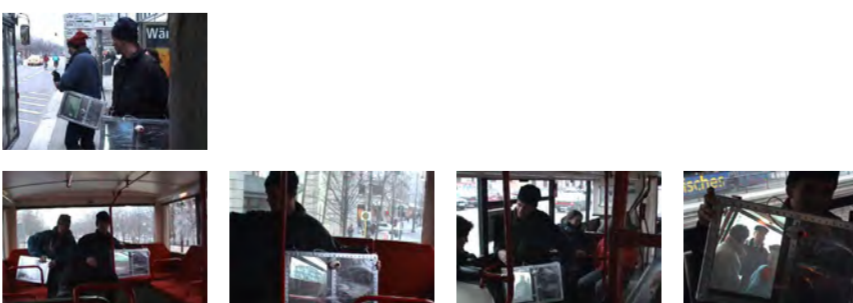
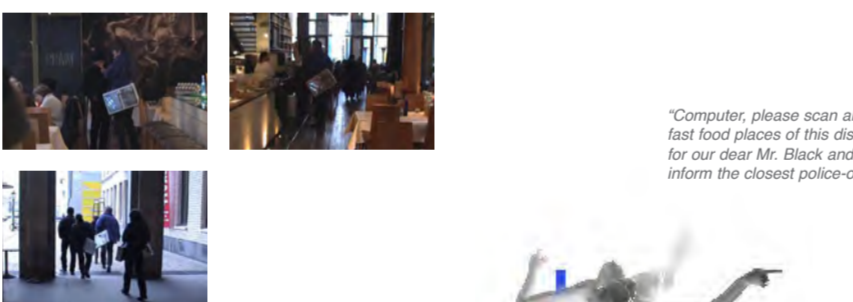
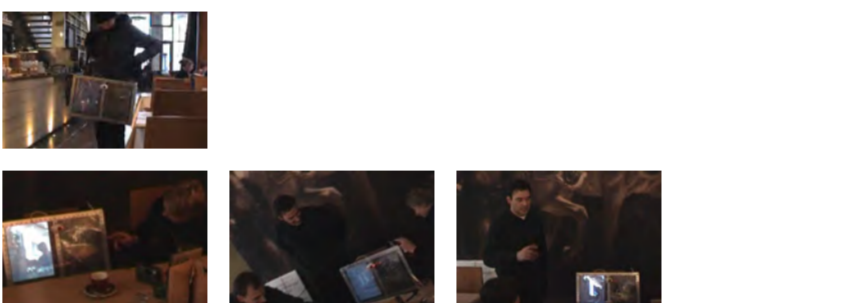
The manager came over to talk about his ideas of mediapresence and internet advertising. He wants webcams in his place for promotion of the events that take place there.

We took off for a little stroll across town, four of us wearing mobile observation systems. First place we came across was the Russian embassy, highly secured because of possible tschechenian terrorists.

Present policemen think that our mobile system are Junny, - no opposition, no repression at all from this side. One of the main surprises of our experiment in general was that nobody opposes being observed. Everybody was interested in the technology applied, and liked the concept of the project.

A busride down "Jünger den Linden", one of the prominent boulevards in Berlin. We quite aggressively exposed the fellow busriders to our instruments. Annoying some, and partly raising some interest.

We walked over to Alexanderplatz, the central square of East Berlin, - socialist big scale urbanism. We got into a talk with public-services-garbage men, who came up with their own ideas of how to work our webcam-screen-module.



"Computer, please scan all the fast food places of this district for our dear Mr. Black and inform the closest police-officer."



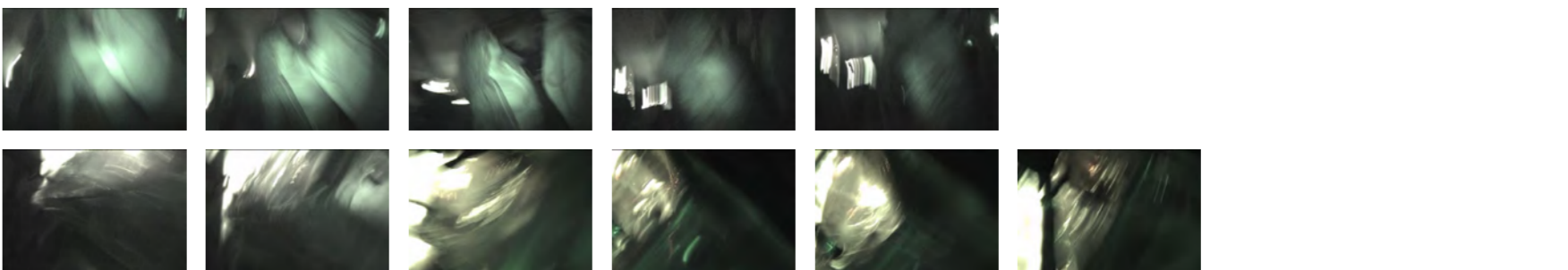
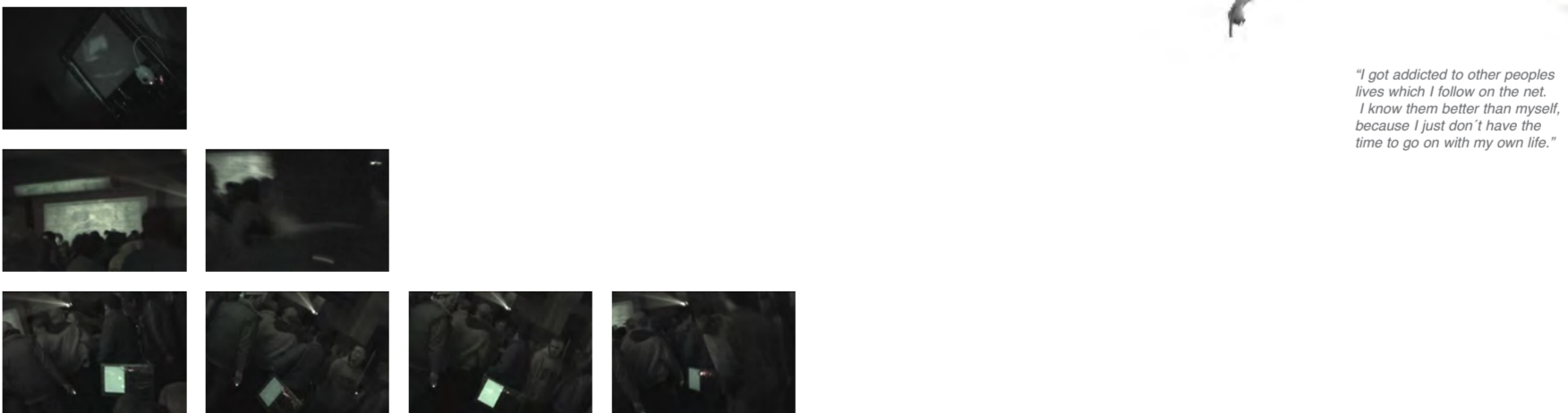
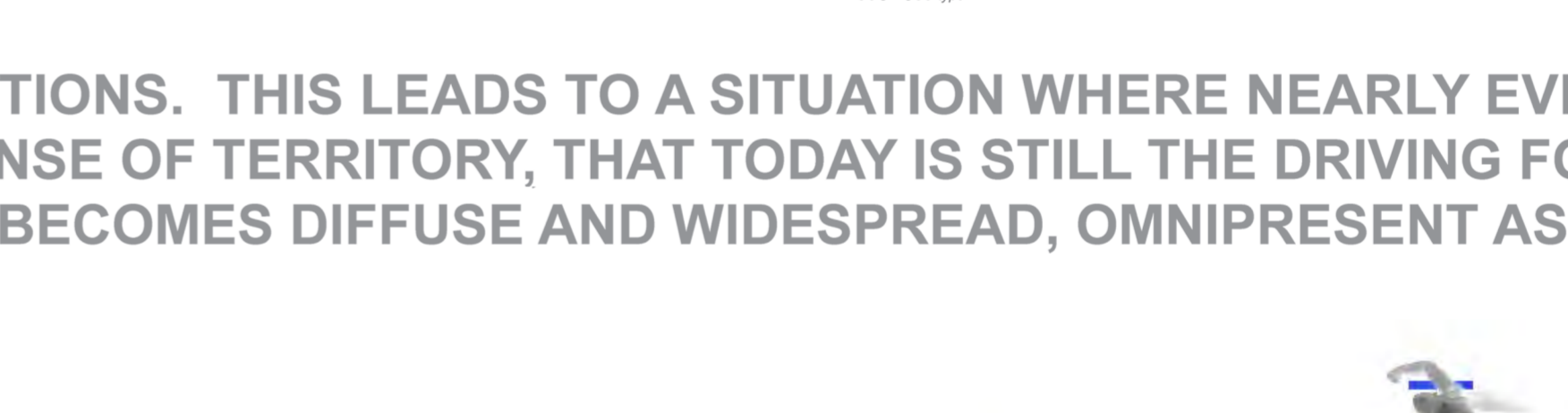
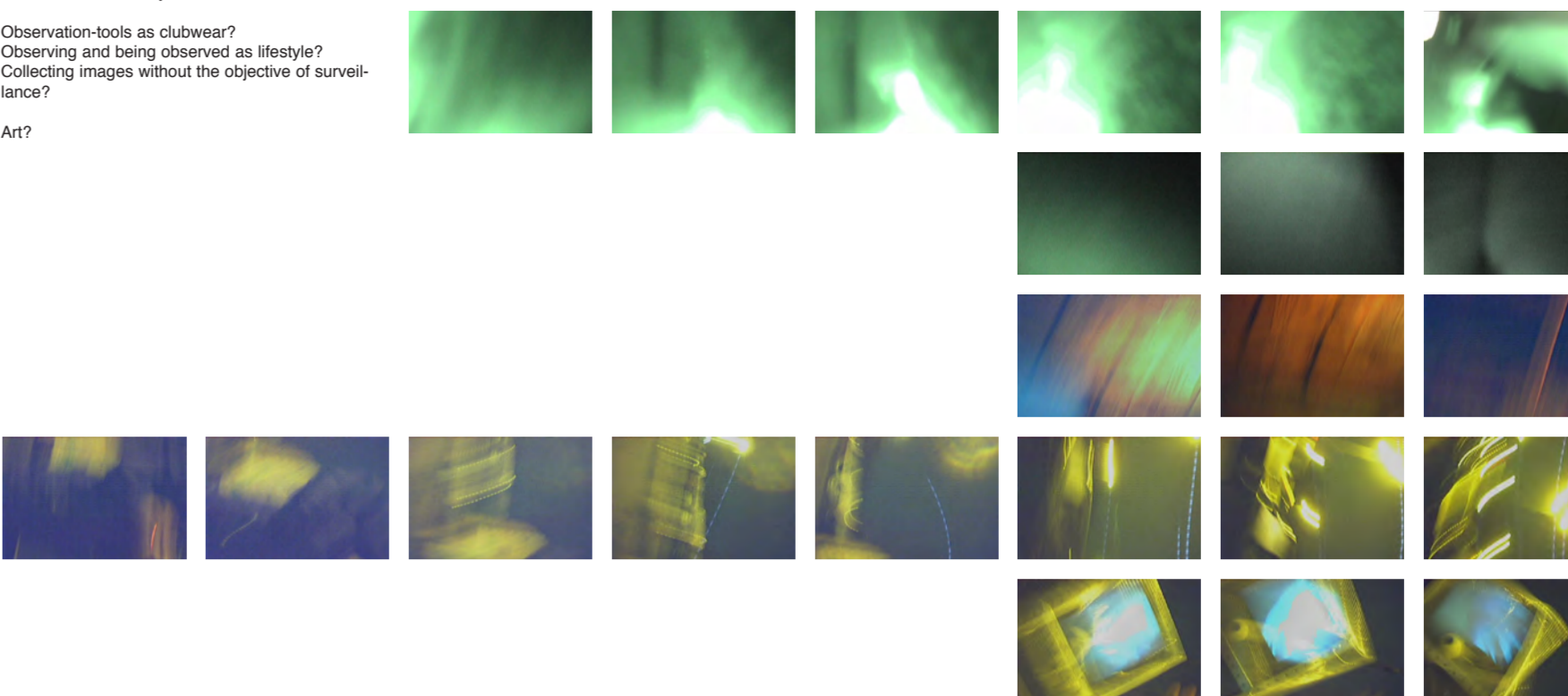
"The Swabs (southern Germans) are the only ones I really fear. They have always been intimidating our neighborhood, but since Berlin became the new capital it got much worse. I like the watchtower. I feel safer."

CLUBBING

We tested our observation systems' potential as a fashionable accessory.

Observation-tools as clubwear? Observing and being observed as lifestyle? Collecting images without the objective of surveillance?

Art?



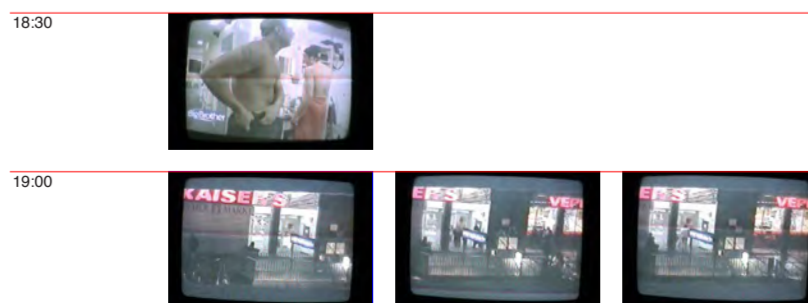
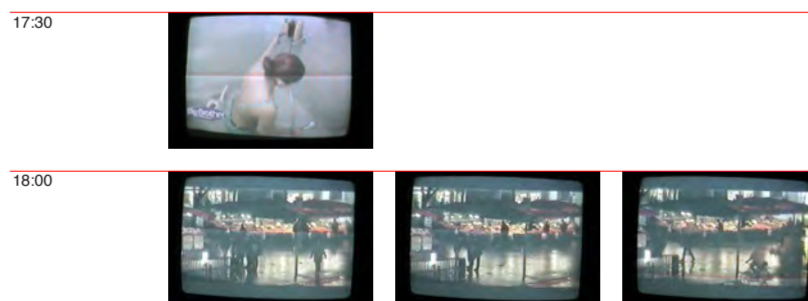
"This chick looks great. Another entry for my photocollection of redheads."

"Since I got this espionage-system, people are finally talking to me."

"Those espionage-systems are everywhere. They became to be a real pain in the ass. Always being watched. Even if you want to pee in the woods you look around if somewhere a fucking camera is around."

"I got addicted to other peoples lives when I follow on the net. I know them better than myself, because I just don't have the time to go on with my own life."

THROUGH THE PROGRESS IN THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THE NEW STANDARDS IN DATATRANSMISSION CELLULAR PHONES ARE EASILY COMBINED WITH MULTIMEDIA FUNCTIONS. THIS LEADS TO A SITUATION WHERE NEARLY EVERY OBJECT CAN BECOME A POTENTIAL SURVEILLANCE MEDIA THAT WILL BE EXCESSIVELY USED FOR PRIVATE AND COMMERCIAL USES. SURVEILLANCE BECOMES AN ALWAYS PRESENT POSSIBILITY, INDEPENDENT OF ANY SENSE OF TERRITORY, THAT TODAY IS STILL THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND SURVEILLANCE OF MALLS, HEADQUARTERS OR HOMES. SINCE ALL OF THIS DATA CAN BE SHARED AND COMBINED THROUGH INTERNET THE COLLECTION, USE AND OWNERSHIP OF THIS SURVEILLANCE MATERIAL BECOMES DIFFUSE AND WIDESPREAD, OMNIPRESENT AS WELL AS POTENTIALLY DEMOCRATIZED.



16:30
17:00
17:30
18:00
18:30
19:00
19:30

"Ah, there he goes again. This Mr. Jones always crosses the lawn and doesn't step onto the path. This will be another SOS line."

"I do not approve a general surveillance of public spaces; however there should be certain exceptions from this rule, i.e. places frequented by drug-dealers etc."

"You think this is a dangerous place? I didn't recognize."

man, 32 Los Angeles (obviously used to much worse places)

"The Swabs (southern Germans) are the only ones I really fear. They have always been intimidating our neighborhood, but since Berlin became the new capital it got much worse. I like the watchtower. I feel safer."

A series of portable surveillance tools were traveling through the town, collecting sounds and images.

The current project that we work on, is to transmit those images into the web where it will be simultaneously on display. On a central place in town these images could be displayed on big screens. This dispersed "electronic watchtower" is placed within an existing public space, confronting and maybe fusing the digital with the urban space.

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