

media coverage), a realm of the mind—seemingly abstract, cool, clean and bloodless, idealistic, pure, perhaps part of the spirit, that can leave behind the messy, troublesome body and the ruined material world. Far from being left behind, however, the flesh forms the essential site of VR. It is the site of fictions made material, fictions which are the images of our subjectivity—how we know what we are.

—Catherine Richards

Excerpted from “Virtual Bodies,” *Public 11: Throughput*, 1995.

War Game



—Lynne Cohen

Web-Cam

Web-Cam, or live video feed to the Internet, is an ideal symbol of the erosion of privacy, the eradication of individual control over private space that marks our electronic information society at the end of the millenium. The type of Web-cam postings doing so, which are real-life precursors to two predictable Hollywood narratives telling of media-controlled lives, *The Truman Show* and *Ed TV*, are best represented by the *Jenni-cam* site. Having received mass media attention over three years ago, this site is the first to be well-known, and, therefore, has many imitators. Jenni puts non-censored cameras in the bedroom and living room of her Manhattan apartment. Guests and members of her Web site can look in and “interact” in her private life, especially upon reading such insightful notes to her fans as, “Yikes! Allergy season.”

Her efforts could suggest that individuals are able to regulate privacy, take it into their hands and re-define private space past bourgeois notions of autonomy and propriety. This is commendable. In fact, it recalls how much art of the seventies, performance, film and video art of a conceptual and often feminist bent, has taken cues from Marxist thought and broke down private/public boundaries.

However, the missing part of the equation that problematizes Jenni-cam and similar efforts (incidentally, most of these pioneering Web-Cam sites have been made by women, possibly because the potential audience,



curious voyeurs, is mostly male) is that the so-called public electronic space, which private space is opening into, is far from democratic and is, therefore, not truly public. For this reason, making the private become public on-line does not involve the progressive “politicizing of the personal,” as went the popular feminist rallying cry of past generations, but the regressive politicizing of it by surrounding “public” space.

But, is not cyberspace a free, unregulated frontier?

Uhhh—no. On-line “public” space is ruled by the private space of masculine, corporate, and mass media interests. Due to pretences of freedom and lawlessness, the Internet’s filtering of public space is simply more invisible than more carefully monitored forms of communication. Predominantly developed by men of questionable social skills slaving away in Silicon Valley dungeons for corporate dragons, the Web is still most commonly used to peddle the masculine-dominated world of porno, ever-so-fashionable now due to a seemingly endless retro-seventies trend. However, an encompassing and certainly sanitizing corporate takeover of the Web is imminent, due to the onslaught of e-commerce. This is, of course, equally unsettling.

This kind of control is the reason why Web-cam, despite offering iconoclastic possibilities of public/private breakdown, has to date failed to do so. What is needed to reverse on-line bias is at minimum an acknowledgement that electronic space does not equate democracy. Then, by making Internet inequity known, private inequities may be addressed on it that are not tainted by their framework. Then, the personal can indeed become politicized, as opposed to acting as an agent for the status quo.

Web-cam, for calling for a public/private breakdown, has inadvertently become a natural symbol of the demise of privacy upon the dawning of the new millenium. Indeed, it will remain so as long as those contributing to it continue to open up the private to the public without politicizing the act of doing so.

—Earl Miller

Word

How many, how often, how asked. Can you think without a word? I know it sounds incredible today, but in 1970 when I was thirty years-old I had not heard nor read the word “lesbian.” During an early women’s group I heard the word and as I heard it and found its meaning I acknowledged an inner sensibility I had not known before. I came out. To have a word is to have a freedom.

—Barbara Hammer

Work Room



—Lynne Cohen

Youth

Know-it-alls. A great commodity. (*see* Intelligence, New Technology)

—Janine Marchessault

Zero

Zero is really nothing else but zero. But it would not be wrong to say that the zero was invented so as to signify empty space. That great confusion arose in the early mathematical systems as far as nothing was concerned. The Babylonians, for example, wrote “106” as “1. .6”, a subtlety that could easily be missed by a tired or drunken scribe. Without zero, an empty space next to an empty space (as in 1006) could easily be read as a single empty space.

“Zero” is said to derive from the Sanskrit “*shûnya*.” Indian civilization distinguished over twenty-five nuances of “*shûnya*” (the non-existent, the non-present, the unthought, the unborn, the immaterial, . . .) and India can be rightly designated as the Great Breeding Ground of Zero. It was in ancient India that was born “*shûnyata*,” a Buddhist concept that relates to vacuity and does not distinguish between reality and non-reality, thus reducing things to complete insubstantiality.

Zero is at the origin but it seems it may also be at end of a certain line, as in the ground zero of the bomb, the zero degree of writing and the zero of entropy. Whether cyphers belongs to generals, writers or scientists, everyone seems to agree that the universe is ineluctably heading towards a state of evenly distributed homogeneous cold dust.

While we are set on this ineluctable crash course with nothing, our world is for now one of weak truths, weak events and weak forms—a lukewarm buffet of near-zeroes where everything tastes the same and where architecture and cities are more about holes, voids and interstitial spaces than about actual forms. The zeroes of the cities are those empty spaces between form apexes. Not form that bites back like a hungry hyena when given mental space to do so. Sometimes they are voids but then sometimes voids are as form-full as solid sheer-angled blocks. The zero is often mediocre. As