

Privacy under attack!

Open Territories: Project Presentations, 26 February 2003

by Christel Vesters

With a small audience present, the afternoon started with a presentation by Austrian art/design collective Automat. Their project H.I.D.E. (Human Identity Database Emulation) consists of collecting human identities. In the booth they set up in the exhibition space, people are asked to be photographed and donate their "identity" to the H.I.D.E. database. When they do, the image of their face is digitally encoded and broken down into pixels, and entered into the V2_ web environment.

Automat is not so much concerned with the question of what to do with the collected information - and the possibilities are multiple - as well as with the act of collecting an sich. What happens with the accumulated data, is up to the owners: they can implement or integrate it into other databases, circulate it etc. When asked "Why should people participate in this project?" Automat will rhetorically answer: Why not? It's common practice and an everyday phenomenon that personal information is taken from you and stored into a database. But at least with H.I.D.E. you are given the choice to have personal information stored. The issue of privacy, or the protection of our privacy, is a hot topic in the debate on databases and information collecting. The H.I.D.E. project tries to simulate the data collecting process, and the way personal information can be distracted from you, knowingly or unknowingly.

H.I.D.E.

Human Identity Database Emulation

The web-based art project H.I.D.E. (Human Identity Database Emulation) addresses the current issue surrounding the collection and storage of individual biometric characteristics. The connection of this visual information with relation to the use of person-based facts and figures within the growing landscape of network abstracts are creating comprehensive, and increasingly concealed databanking systems. Via the live recording and compilation of an individual's facial characteristics within H.I.D.E., the art group AUTOMAT simulates such biometric signatures, each recorded visitor receiving an individual coding.