

Feeling uncanny at the Museumplein



In 2006, artist Martijn **Engelbregt** approached people at the Museumplein with a cameraman to ask them how they felt about being filmed. Obviously, they felt uncomfortable. The interviews are fun to watch – until you realise that you are probably being filmed as well while watching them.

The interviews can be seen at the exhibition ‘My [Public] Space’ at the Dutch Media Art Institute, which deals with the way in which new technologies have blurred the boundaries between private and public spaces. Apparently, people are OK with this: “The urge for expression is greater than the fear of being monitored”.

Israeli-born artist Guy Ben-Ner took his wife and children to various Ikea stores to enact short plays that were captured on film. Since they had obtained no permission from Ikea, they had to use a hidden camera and frequently move to other stores.

The Ikea showrooms are designed to convey a sense of ‘home’. Ben-Ner and his family took this one step further by walking around in their pyjamas, paging through the Swedish books from the book shelves and sleeping in the beds on display.

Ben-Ner’s idea is quite brilliant, but for some reason it does not seem to work as well as it might have.

Jill Magid (photo above), who recently did a project with the Dutch secret service AIVD, has contributed a video she made with the Citywatch department of the Liverpool police. She walked around the city wearing a bright red coat, while speaking on the phone to policemen who followed her on their CCTV screens.

CCTV footage shows her walking amidst shoppers with her eyes closed, following instructions from the police. The effect is quite alienating.

In a Nettime interview, Magid said that she sees CCTV primarily as a tool enabling her

'to see and capture myself (and my body) in a form that I could not experience without its employment'. The political ambivalence of the cameras – maintaining security versus invading privacy – simply makes them 'more loaded' for her.

The exhibition further includes a website by [Hasan Elahi](#), who was questioned by the FBI because his name sounds Arabic. He responded by giving not only the FBI, but also the general public detailed information about his life. His website shows his current whereabouts and contains his bank statements and telephone bills – even photos of the toilets he has been to.

In an interview, Elahi explained that his website is about taking control: "It's a matter of: you want to watch me? Fine! But I'll hold up a mirror at the same time. As a matter of fact, if you want to watch, I'll show you everything you want to watch".