

(In)Security

Jorinde Seijdel

Editorial – April 7, 2004

This is the first issue of *Open* to come out in *cahier* form and to be published by NAI Publishers. The new *Open*, redesigned by Thomas Buxó, is published twice a year in a Dutch-language as well as an English-language edition. The *cahiers* are thematically arranged, with art and public space as starting points – not as an isolated phenomenon, however, but as a component of the cultural and social developments that define the dynamics of the current public domain, and in relation to relevant areas such as architecture/urban planning, landscape architecture, spatial planning and digital media. The new *Open* strives more than in the past to achieve a balance between theory and direct contributions from actual practice. It is intended for all with an interest in the function and organization of the public space and/or the role of art within it.

Open 6 is devoted to art, public space and security. Within today's public domain, the call for more protection, supervision and care dominates on all fronts. The individual and the community are demanding maximum security for the public space and for themselves, and ever more control over the other. There seems to be a veritable obsession with security. A fearful culture is being postulated, in which, however, little is clear about the nature or the provenance of the threat. Is there really danger out there, socially, politically or economically speaking, or is the new fear coming out of a collective sense of being powerless to exert any influence on everyday reality, for instance? Are there perhaps so many new structures and associations emerging in the pluriform, multicultural and global network communities as to engender a universal perception of being uprooted and alienated, with all the feelings of unease that this entails? Has the gap between citizens and government perhaps grown too wide as well? Or have the media, with their over-exposure of danger and their barrage of shocking images, become the primary authors of our fear?

The issue of security seems to consist of a steadily condensing constellation of disparate as well as related socio-cultural, political and economic factors, which is increasingly coming to dominate the culture. At all events, it is questionable whether the solution lies in the implementation of a society of control, or in a capsular society in which everything and everyone is suspect and we move from one protected enclave to the other: the rhetoric of security is not far removed from the rhetoric of danger. In any case, thorough and critical analyses of the current propositions on security seem to be in order. For the implications of thinking in terms of security for the public domain, for its organization, experience and use, are considerable. Neither the perception of nor the relationship to the public as audience and the public as sphere, in the role they play in the theory and practice of art and public space, can remain untouched.

Open 6 examines what lies at the root of the public yearning for security, of the cumulation of fear, and what new questions are being asked of and by artists, designers, theorists, clients and policy makers. Theoretical considerations and scenarios from art, architecture, philosophy and politics are reviewed, in an attempt to uncover something of the current security paradigm, or to propose alternative (conceptual) models.

Legal philosopher Gijs van Oenen analyses the transformation of the public sphere into 'the new securityscape', and art historian and philosopher Lieven De Caeter develops an

initial 'short archaeology of the new fear'. Art critic Sven Lütticken considers fictitious and genuine models of the enclosed space in philosophy, art, architecture and media, while the essay by art and culture theorist Thomas Y. Levin examines how artists working in the public space relate to the panoptic surveillance society. In the articles by architecture theorists Harm Tilman and Mark Wigley, security and architecture take centre stage – in the former primarily in a Dutch context and in the latter in direct connection with the World Trade Center buildings in New York. There is also an autonomous visual contribution by artist/photographer Sean Snyder in the context of his *Temporary Occupation* project.

This *Open* also includes a polemical column by Hans Boutellier, author of *De Veiligheidsutopie*, offering a personal view from his specific expertise on the possibility of art torpedoing the vacuous order of the Security Utopia. In addition there are contributions more directly connected to concrete events, places or (art) projects, providing insight into the current aesthetics and ethics of security. *Open 6* also includes the debut of a book section, which will be expanded in the following issue with more reviews and reports.

Jorinde Seijdel is an independent writer, editor and lecturer on subjects concerning art and media in our changing society and the public sphere. She is editor-in-chief of *Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain* (formerly known as *Open. Cahier on Art & the Public Domain*). In 2010 she published *De waarde van de amateur* [The Value of the Amateur] (Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam), about the rise of the amateur in digital culture and the notion of amateurism in contemporary art and culture. Currently, she is theory tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and Head of the Studium Generale Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. With Open!, she is a partner of the Dutch Art Institute MA Art Praxis in Arnhem.

Tags

Architecture, Art Discourse, Control, Design, Public Domain, Public Space, Urban Space

This text was downloaded on June 26, 2026 from
Open! Platform for Art, Culture & the Public Domain
onlineopen.org/in-security