

HITO STEYERL

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Hito Steyerl (*1966 in Munich) works in Berlin as a filmmaker and writer. Both her creative output and her theoretical writings often explore documentary strategies in art. She focuses in particular on the links between documentary approaches and socio-political power structures. Another key theme in her work is the global circulation of images.

HOW NOT TO BE SEEN

A Fucking Didactic Educational .Mov File, 2013

Steyerl's latest work was premiered at this year's Venice Biennale, and in the light of the recent revelations about NSA surveillance it seems to have burning relevance. We live in an age when government agencies are not alone in accessing digital tracks of one kind or another. Our environment is scanned and surveyed in its totality by satellites and companies like Google. We contribute to this scope for surveillance ourselves through our daily dealings with digital data and the Internet. Is there still any chance of remaining unseen or vanishing off the radar?

Hito Steyerl's work shows us what options we can adopt, ranging from apparently pragmatic suggestions (hide!) to comically absurd ones (be a superhero). The aim is certainly not turn back from our digitalised lifestyles to some primeval analogue reality. Steyerl's responses are not pessimistic about civilisation or hostile to technical progress. Quite the opposite: subversive strategies can only evolve with and within the new technologies. And Steyerl's work operates with and within them, too. Her subtitles already hint in this direction: this film does not make use of the classical cinematic strategies. Nor does it engage in the educational pathos of political agitation. Rather than that, Steyerl's work is a ".mov file", a video format that borrows formally and structurally on the kind of tutorials we find on portals like YouTube.