




Brooklyn Gallery Owner Builds NSA Listening Tower

By Kim Zetter  September 12, 2007 | 8:29:53 PM Categories: [Surveillance](#)



The patriotic director of a Brooklyn art gallery is building a 10-foot-tall cell tower to help the NSA and other spooks spy on his neighbors' communications without having to obtain a pesky warrant or place phone companies and ISPs in legal jeopardy.

David Kesting, director of the [Capla Kesting Fine Art gallery](#), says the tower, when completed this week, will capture, amplify and rebroadcast signals up to half a mile away using high-gain antennas and a satellite dish. This will help authorities monitor the phone and e-mail traffic of all his neighbors by allowing them to simply pick up the communications surreptitiously from the street without having to worry about being caught up in class-action lawsuits brought against telcos for violating their customers' privacy.

Kesting is kidding, of course.

The "[CIA Cell Tower](#)," as he's dubbed it, is part of a working exhibit that's being constructed for the [Conflux Festival](#) -- an international art confab that runs this week in New York.

The tower project was inspired by recent changes to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act that allow authorities to eavesdrop on communications that travel through the U.S. without a warrant, provided the target of their investigation is located outside the U.S.

"When people see this project I want them to remember the decreasing gap between public and private space that happens every day," Kesting says. "And I want them to remember what is going on specifically with the radiowaves that are around us and how the information that travels on those radiowaves is consistently being taken advantage of (by the government and telcos)."

It's possible, of course, that the only thing his neighbors will notice is the really good connectivity they'll receive once the tower is unveiled at 7pm on Friday outside his gallery. Kesting plans to keep the tower up and running for as long as the gallery lives on to give his neighbors great wireless service. And if the NSA or other spooks find it useful, they're welcome to use it, too, he says.

Photo: CL/Talkleft.com



Internet 'liberation'

Brooklyn artists look to boost open signals, political awareness

by michael rundle / metro new york

SEP 14, 2007

WILLIAMSBURG. If a team of local artists has its way, the Internet will soon be set free.

A 10-foot-high tower — designed to monitor and amplify local wireless signals — is being constructed out of wood and antennas at a local art space. Once in operation, the tower will increase the range of unprotected signals — originating from homes, offices and coffee shops — for more than half a mile in every direction.

The tower will be unveiled tomorrow evening at the Capla Kesting Fine Art gallery.

"Many other cities across the country have nearly universal Wi-Fi access. Why not New York?" said John Leo, at CKFA. "This project simply means that more people will be able to access existing free signals."

The designers hope the project — named the "CIA Tower" — will also raise awareness of government-funded wire-tapping, the erosion of civil liberties and the need to secure home connections from eavesdropping.

"It's a pretty slippery slope we're on," said co-designer and CKFA Gallery founder David Kesting. "Warrantless spying on anyone is a pretty horrific thing."

If the tower proves a success, Kesting hopes that the project could be expanded.

"We hope, judging on the success, to slim down the cost and offer it as an application to replicate in other galleries across the area," he said. "It would create an amazing loose network of signals."

Kesting admits some providers of free signals might be unaware that they are being used, but hopes they will appreciate the idea.

"If people get upset, they'll be able to take their signals down anyway. If they don't, well, now they'll be able to access their signal away from their house," he said. "We will stay up until the police tell us to take it down. I don't think that will happen. Well, I hope it won't."

The "CIA Tower" forms part of the Conflux Festival of urban exploration, which takes place across Williamsburg this weekend. More than 100 projects will be unveiled at galleries and other venues throughout the festival, including walking tours, bike tours and interactive games.

"The festival focuses on the urban environment, how people interpret it and adapt to it," said Conflux founder and director Christina Ray. "We thought [the tower] sounded very interesting and mysterious. It's nice to have some projects that are up in the air. We don't quite know what is going to happen."



'CIA CELL TOWER' Monitors Local Internet Users' Wireless Transmissions

Published: Tue, 11 Sep 2007, 18:35:00 GMT

[Edited by Carly Zander](#)

NYC Residents Launching High-Tech Post 9-11 Neighborhood Watch Program

BROOKLYN, N.Y. - Sept. 11 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) -- Capla Kesting Fine Art announced plans to build a 10-foot-tall cell tower designed to capture, monitor and rebroadcast wireless signals in the internet-savvy neighborhood of Williamsburg Brooklyn. The tower, named "CIA Cell Tower" will be constructed at 121 Roebling Street and unveiled during the Conflux Festival, an event organized to promote awareness of the city.

Possible terrorist cells close to the east river are targeted as candidates for Wi-Fi "eavesdropping" to ensure our safety. Proponents of the tower point to the August 3rd scare of a homemade submarine coming within striking distance of The Queen Mary 2 which was docked on the Brooklyn side of the East River.

"Though they are not involved in the construction or operation of the tower, government agencies such as the NSA and the CIA can benefit from its use," said John Leo from Capla Kesting Fine Art whose gallery contracted the construction of the tower based on illustrations and paintings from their exhibiting artist Travis Lindquist. "It is not an invasion of privacy but, a symbol of how far our government is willing to go to ensure our private space is an extension of their ability to protect us."

Local developers competing for rental and loft sale revenue have been offering free wireless internet services as an attractive addition to their properties, unknowingly exposing themselves and their users to potential snooping.

"Developers are prime candidates for assisting in the use of this tower, they will provide a broad spectrum of internet users to spy on and the unsecured wireless signal in which to use," said David Kesting, director of the Capla Kesting Fine Art gallery.

Congress' recently approved changes to the 1978 Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act allows the NSA to monitor domestic conversations and e-mails and provides the legal standing for the cell tower's construction.

"The tower allows groups like the NSA to collect data intercepted through e-mails and internet traffic on unsecured Wi-Fi connections without having to approach internet service providers such as AT&T Inc. This will eliminate the U.S. government's alleged complicity in current class-action lawsuits filed by consumers who feel their privacy has been violated," explained John Leo.

Construction of the cell tower started today, the 6th anniversary of the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center and will finish for an unveiling on Friday, September 14th at 7:00 PM at Capla Kesting Fine Art, 121 Roebling St., Brooklyn, N.Y. Travis Lindquist's exhibition, Times Like This One, will be on display until September 23. Gallery hours are 1:00 - 6:00 PM Thursday thru Monday, or by appointment.

Media contact for the gallery, John Leo can be reached at 917-292-8865 or gallery director David Kesting at 917-650-3760 or via email at info@caplakesting.com and online at www.caplakesting.com.

The Conflux Festival can be reached at <http://confluxfestival.org>

The New York Times

In Brooklyn, a Conflux Junction



Learning how to pick a lock on handcuffs at the Locksmithing Institute, a Conflux booth.

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER
Published: September 18, 2007

It's intriguing to witness how the ideas of Guy Debord, the French writer, filmmaker and co-founder of the Situationist movement, are still alive and kicking. Over the last few days, more than 100 artists assembled in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, for Conflux, a festival inspired partly by psychogeography, a term that Debord coined in the mid-1950s to describe the ways that the physical environment can affect people's emotions and behavior.

Now in its fourth year, with projects mounted in multiple locations, the festival, which ended on Sunday, centered mostly on the intersection of Havemeyer Street and Metropolitan Avenue and offered everything from audio graffiti to surveillance technology.

Debord's bent was radical and revolutionary. "We want the most liberating change of the society and life in which we find ourselves confined," he wrote. Translated to a festival, this meant a distinctly freewheeling approach.

Artists didn't always appear when or where they were scheduled to. Time was fluid. One multimedia walking tour (arising from the concept of the "dérive," or "drifting" — what Debord described as "transient passage through varied ambiances") was supposed to make 10 stops in 2 hours. The tour took 3 hours and made 5 stops.

Technology, unsurprisingly, showed up everywhere.

A guerrilla cell tower was erected on top of a gallery. Text messages were projected on the side of a building. The Dublin artists Tim Redfern and Ralph Borland installed a surveillance camera on Havemeyer Street that mimicked cameras in Britain that "talk back" to subjects. The device transmitted no images but emitted a self-generating soundtrack that sounded like a mumbled stream of concrete poetry.

Matt Roberts combined multiple technologies to create instant abstract experimental videos. His tandem bike was outfitted with saddlebags holding a video camera pointed at the ground, a global positioning system, or G.P.S., device and a laptop computer loaded with a software editing program. You could ride on the back of the bike, directing Mr. Roberts through the streets, and when you returned to Conflux headquarters, he would burn a DVD, a kind of instant [Stan Brakhage](#) souvenir.

Students and professors from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at [New York University](#) were in abundance. Michael Dory, a student, made "audio graffiti" by inserting an MP3 player and miniature speakers into disposable objects like a coffee cup, a rolled-up advertising circular and a soda can and placing them around the neighborhood.

Another student, Mouna Andraos, fashioned a vending cart from wooden wine crates, a solar panel and a hand crank, at which she offered free alternative power for cellphones and portable music players. ("Détournement," the reuse of pre-existing artistic elements or media in a new ensemble — another practice favored by Debord — was on full display here.)

Surveillance was a recurring topic. A panel discussion was devoted to "Sousveillance Culture," sousveillance being the Situationist term for watching from below ("sous" means under in French) rather than monitoring from above. The artist Hasan Elahi described a post-9/11 experience with the [F.B.I.](#) that inspired him to wear a tracking bracelet and publish his activities — his plane flights, spending, bathroom usage — since, he said, he felt he could do a better job watching himself than the government could.

The good news is that you can still interact with the environment — or be acted upon — without the aid of technology. Jane Rigler's musical "Relay" involved 13 performers at three locations who improvised on saxophone violin and even wine glasses filled with water. The musicians relocated periodically to form new ensembles, so the work was always changing.

A duo called Public Domestications created a little street library, a school desk chained to a lamppost holding miniature books by [Oscar Wilde](#), Rudyard Kipling and others. It met with the worst fate of street art: it was torched on Friday night.

In a more anarchist vein, Lucas Murgida offered "The Locksmithing Institute of Conflux," which provided instruction on how to pick locks, including those on handcuffs.

At times Debord felt so marginal that you could forget all about him. An exception was a presentation on "Guy Debord's Game of War," a work in progress by the Radical Software Group that the artists plan to publish eventually as free, open-source software. Taking their cues from an actual game developed by Debord, the group used its discussion to gather feedback on how older war-game strategies jibe with contemporary warfare, like the so-called war on terrorism.

In perhaps the most far-out take on psychogeography I witnessed during the four-day event, a young woman could be viewed on Saturday on the sidewalk applying a hole-puncher to a sheet of paper. Her name was Jaclyn Meloche, and her project was "Making Winter." On Sunday she planned to spread out the "snowflakes" and make snow angels.

I suppose this fit the Conflux program: She was inspired to change the physical environment. And I couldn't help wondering what Guy Debord would think. Over the weekend, the temperature dropped 15 degrees.

[Free WiFi for Williamsburg?](#)

September 21st, 2007



The eight foot tower perched on top of the [Capla Kesting Art Gallery](#) in Williamsburg was a small sight to behold, but the much larger shadow it projected onto a nearby wall hinted at the true size of its implications. It captured, amplified, and rebroadcast unprotected wifi signals from the area to be used freely by anyone. But the signals routed through the antenna are easily monitored, so users needed be wary not to do things they wouldn't want someone else to see.

The [project](#) was part joke, part public service. On the one hand, it poked fun at government surveillance by pronouncing it would keep an eye out for homegrown “terrorists,” like the pilot of the [mock submarine](#) prank in the East River. On the other, it strove to raise awareness about privacy concerns in a wireless world as well as the feasibility of cheap broadband access.

At least one lawmaker called to commend the gallery for bringing attention to broadband access. “Internet access is a huge tool, especially in underprivileged neighborhoods,” said Amy Cleary, media coordinator for Assemblymember Joe Lentol, who represents Williamsburg.

But David Birdsell, dean at Baruch College and member of the city's [Broadband Advisory Committee](#), which takes comments from New Yorkers on how technology affects them, was a bit more reserved. Although the city should certainly be considering similar concepts, he notes, approval from the internet providers the tower captures signals from is necessary. Otherwise, Birdsell says, “I very much doubt that this is being considered by municipalities.”

In the end, though, the tower may have just been an art project rather than a service: While the tower was functioning on the night of the gallery opening last Friday, part of it was taken down due to worries of rain. And since then, it has been working only in fits.

By Mike Muller on September 21, 2007, 7:44 am

In category: [Tech](#), [Arts](#)

Recommend this entry via: [stumble upon](#) | [digg](#) | [del.icio.us](#) |