

The Technogalactic Software Observatory – Comfortable silence, one way mirrors

A drinking fountain and screens of one-way mirrors as part of the work session The Technogalactic Software Observatory organised by Constant. ([link](#))

For the past 100 years the western ideal of a corporate landscape has been moving like a pendulum, oscillating between grids of cubicles and organic, open landscapes, in a near to perfect 25-year rhythm. These days the changes in office organisation is supplemented by sound design, in corporate settings mostly to create comfortable silence. Increase the sound and the space becomes more intimate, the person on the table next to you can not immediately hear what you are saying. It seems that actual silence in public and corporate spaces has not been sought after since the start of the 20th century. Actual silence is not at the moment considered comfortable. One of the visible symptoms of our desire to take the edge off the silence is to be observed through the appearance of fountains in public space. The fountains purpose being to give off neutral sound, like white noise without the negative connotations. However as a sound engineer's definition of noise is unwanted sound that all depends on ones personal relation to the sound of dripping water.

This means that there needs to be a consistent inoffensiveness to create comfortable silence.

In corporate architecture the arrival of glass buildings were originally seen as a symbol of transparency, especially loved by governmental buildings. Yet the reflectiveness of this shiny surface once combined with strong light – known as the treason of the glass – was only completely embraced at the invention of one-way-mirror foil. And it was the corporate business-world that would come to be known for their reflective glass skyscrapers. As the foil reacts to light, it appears transparent to someone standing in the dark, while leaving the side with the most light with an opaque surface. Using this foil as room dividers in a room with a changing light, what is hidden or visible will vary throughout the day. So will the need for comfortable silence.

Disclaimer :

Similar to the last 100 years of western office organisation,
this fountain only has two modes
on or off

If it is on it also offers two options
cold water and hot water

This fountain has been tampered with and has not in any way been approved by a professional fountain cleaner. I do urge you to consider this before you take the decision to drink from the fountain.

Should you chose to drink from the fountain, then I urge you to write your name on your cup, in the designated area, for a customised experience of my care for you.

I do want you to be comfortable.

About the work session
from www.constant.vzw

From 7 until 12 June, the Techno-Galactic Software Observatory will explore practices of proximate critique with and of software. This worksession has been called an 'Observatory' because we are interested in different ways to look at software, and at the implications of how

it is currently probed and scrutinized as part of its production. Techno-galactic because we want to extend the observation to include different scales of computation, of software communities and their political economies.

With the rise of online services, software use has been increasingly knitted into production, while suggesting that these roles constitute separate realms. This has an effect on the way software is used and produced, and radically alters its operative role in society. The shifts ripple across galaxies, through social structures, working conditions and personal relations, resulting in a profusion of seamless apparatuses that optimize and monetize individual and collective flows of information. The diffusion of software services affects the personal, in the form of intensified identity shaping and self-management. It also affects the public, as more and more libraries, universities and public infrastructures rely on "solutions" provided by private companies.