



surveillancism

By Uijae Jung

We no longer put our hands in our pockets when we walk out of stores.
This subconscious gesture to prove our innocence shapes not just how we act but how we in-
-habit our bodies.
Our hands, once expressive extensions of ourselves, are now strategic tools in the choreo-
graphy of surveillance.
Do we still act, or are we acted upon?

Our bodies have become objects under constant survey, designed to meet the expectations of
a system that demands clarity, order, and proof of innocence.
Our physicality is no longer subjective or instinctive, but defensive.
Where are your hands? Are they visible or hidden? Inside or outside your pockets?
Vulnerability is dictated by their placement,
reduced to a binary, hidden equals suspicion, visible equals compliance.

Through this lens, space itself is reshaped.
Every step, every gesture is calibrated within environments monitored by machines that de-
mand objectivity and suppress the inconsistency of human expression. Our facial expressions
are measured, our movements analyzed, and our very presence is tracked as data points.
This is not a natural order, it's a dictatorship of optics,
the only form of control so normalized that we accept it without question.

This surveillance driven world creates paradoxes.
It promises safety yet amplifies our vulnerability.
It offers connection, breaking borders and uniting cultures, but at the expense of individuality.
We are linked, but are we truly free?
Risks are rendered distant, pixelated cubes on screens while the real dangers remain
hidden in plain sight.
The perception of safety washes out our emotional engagement,
leaving us both overexposed and detached.

In this system, feelings themselves are quantified. Your smartwatch monitors your nerves,
anxiety, and excitement, reducing indescribable complexity into neat, digestible numbers.
We trust these numbers over our own instincts.
Our emotions are no longer raw or human, they are measured, managed, and manipulated.

As space and safety shrink, so does freedom.
We became more willing to accept a simpler, less complex reality,
especially during the covid period.
Democracy leans toward technocracy, prioritizing quantification over human nuance.
QR codes, statistics, and binary systems dominate. Everything is reduced to numbers:
how many, how much. It doesn't matter how you live or die.
What matters is how you're counted.

Numbers have become religious already, dictating value and worth.
Institutions prioritize funding for science over art,
not for reasons of meaning or culture but because the numbers say so.

And so, the system reshapes us. It alters not just our actions but our thoughts, our emotions,
and even our understanding of safety, risk, and freedom.
Ironically enough, we crave the safety and freedom it provides while resenting its control.

Perhaps we no longer want freedom in its truest sense.
We've grown comfortable with less freedom, less complexity.
A simpler world feels safer, even if it's less human.
In this world where we are both safer and more vulnerable, connected and isolated,
informed and dehumanized, the question isn't whether we're being watched.
It's whether we can ever stop watching ourselves.

We aren't just living within the system. We are becoming it.