



The Eye of Surveillance 1
(Acrylics on canvas 2007)

The Eye of Surveillance

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Within the theme of tactics against fear I am interested in the paranoia that fear tends to generate for the ordinary person as well as for all-powerful institutions. I took the computer and explored it in relation to surveillance and paranoia, or rather explored the question ‘Is computerised surveillance for my protection?’

Being someone who is conscious of giving away or dispersing personal information, the surveillance equipment I see installed in many public places such as train stations, Crown Street Mall in Wollongong, and main areas of the Wollongong University campus, for example, is an interesting concept. Is it for my protection, or for Big Brother to watch his minions? I toy with the idea of hands-free espionage in the computer age, turning it onto itself as the electronic eyes are watching the viewer — eyes reminding of the observing and peeping tendencies the institutions have become accustomed to. I do not deny the fact that surveillance is not completely bad; surveillance cameras in airports can contribute to the security of the public as well as cameras in other public locations such as dark car parks. After all, tight security tends to make everyone feel better, if only momentarily. I think the ambivalent state of surveillance can emphasise how complicated the situation can be: whether it is good or bad depends on the use of the technology, not the technology itself. The hardware is mostly hidden from view inside the computer case, contributing to its mechanical work. Another part of the machine that is there but not always noticeable. I brought them to the front of the images so that the patterns and intricate detail could be examined not only as working pieces but also as works of art. The tools created in this computer age such as satellites, computers and plasma television sets respond to whoever controls them.

Surveillance could go both ways and turn from a device that helps keep order to a device that is abused according to the paranoia of whoever controls the equipment.