

## **White Wall and Black Hole: Micropolitics of the Undetectable Face**

Based on Deleuze's and Guattari's concept of the face as an abstraction, this paper investigates the political dimension involved. Aside from the genome project, biometrical data of the face represent a most crucial human code and therefore a possible instrument of power. Foucault's historical study of the human body as tied to the production of normative ideals has exposed such power relations. After examining the practices of the "facilitation machine" as it pertains to the biometric passport picture, I discuss examples of an extended political discourse through the proliferation of images with digitally invisible faces.

The requirements for biometric photos facilitate a binary, semiotic system of facial recognition software. In the view of Deleuze and Guattari, the face is always political and has to be recognized as a code with an inescapable representational dimension. As in the case of a close-up, the face comes with an "inhuman" side as well. By forcing the lines and pores of a person's face into a universal grid system, the human face is produced while it also becomes subject to being infinitely reproduced. In this process, the face is translated into a binary code, while everything outside this grid is rejected as irrelevant. A passport photo comprehensively links up each citizen with a unique combination of geometrical information, and therefore it is an important tool of control. In any unique passport such photo becomes an over-coded representation of an individual, but in fact, and paradoxically, it is unable to represent real persons in their particularity.

Still, there is a micropolitical dimension relevant to the face's coding. The act of camouflaging the face is to be interpreted as a re-coding within the facilitation machinery. As I argue, the technique of "dazzle painting" on ships during World War One can be applied to the face, causing the face detection algorithm to be tricked. The images of a dazzle painted face present a different code, disturbing prevailing power relations. Although it is impossible to escape the code of the white wall and the black hole, there is a way of expanding the political discourse of the human face by making it digitally undetectable.

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