Touchy (2012) by Eric Siu

Touchy is a human camera – a wearable device that literally transforms a human being into a functioning camera. The individual who is wearing the device is constantly "blinded" unless someone touches his/her skin. The touch causes the shutters in front of the eyepieces to open and restores the wearer's vision. When physical contact is maintained for 10 seconds, the camera takes a "Touch-Snap" (i.e., a photo that is taken by *Touchy*), which is displayed on the device's LCD.

Online social technology loosens our social boundaries, yet equally dehumanizes physical communication. Connecting with people can now solely occur through our fingertips as conveniently as pushing a Facebook "Like" button or posting a birthday wall post. Considering the urgency of such dehumanization, *Touchy* is devised to encourage offline communication through touch, eye contact and engaging activity of photography presupposing that a camera is historically known for sharing valuable life memories and emotions. The resulting touch-snaps remind us of the ephemeral richness of togetherness.

Touchy hybridizes the roles of humans and cameras by unifying their respective capabilities. The mechanical process of taking a photo is transformed into a physical touch and eye contact. With these capabilities, *Touchy* becomes a magnet for physical communication, potentially turn itself into a social healing device by establishing a reciprocal relationship – the wearer, who is caged in darkness, craves human touch, while "Toucha," the person who touches *Touchy*, offers assistance and receives a touch-snap through an effortless touch. The project then investigates the possibility of healing social problems, such as "Hikikomori" in Japan, isolated senior citizens, orphans, or those who experience social anxiety.

Touchy pursues to extend from being a performance device to an actual contribution to society. Since September 2012, the artist has put himself into experiment throughout numerous performances. He has experienced personal transformation after meeting vast amounts of people whom he otherwise would not have met, seeing a great deal of smiling faces, and experiencing countless friendly touches in thousands of touch-snaps.

http://touchy.camera/en/
http://ericsiu.net/

Cover photo by Keith Tsuji