

Zoe Kleinman 'Facebook 'fake army' launched by artist', *BBC News*, November 2015



Technology

Facebook 'fake army' launched by artist

By Zoe Kleinman
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constant dullaart

A Dutch artist is compiling thousands of fake Facebook profiles, all named after soldiers who fought in the US revolution in the 18th century.

Constant Dullaart's 'army', staffed via two volunteers, will be dispatched to add likes to various posts across the social network.

He told the BBC that he wants to protest against what he calls the "quantification of social capital".

It is a violation of Facebook policy to create a fake account.

Facebook uses various techniques, including pattern recognition, to try to halt the spread of fake activity.

The artist admitted that he has not discussed his plans with the firm.

'Declaring war'

"It might be that Facebook will notice and will start to kill them off," he said.

"If I'm using the analogy of the soldiers - in that sense I feel like I did declare war on this idea that quantified social capital represents quality."

Constant Dullaart intends to bring together artists, philosophers and critics to decide what his fake army should do.

"It will be interesting to have a commission deciding who deserves the extra social attention," he said.

He expects the project to last for up to two months but said he could not be sure about the life expectancy of his invented troops.

"It is not my intention to run it as a business model... but [creating fake profiles] is an enormous industry that deserves the attention."

He is basing the profiles on real members of the Hessian army from the late 1700s but declined to give the names of those he has chosen.

There are currently around 1,000 of them on the site, but there could eventually be up to 20,000, he added.

Instagram equality

For a previous art project he purchased fake Instagram accounts and set them up to follow 30 real Instagram users from the art world.

He was trying to give every account he chose 100,000 followers, he said.

One gallery owner complained to Instagram, which is owned by Facebook, that the influx of followers was making it difficult to identify genuine collectors and enthusiasts.

"I wasn't trying to drown out his business," the artist said.

"I wanted to equalise a lot of artists to make them equally important."