

# Collectively

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The Third Annual Philosophy and the Arts Conference at Stony Brook University, Manhattan took place on March 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010. It was organized by the following graduate students, under the guidance of Dr. Megan Craig, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Stony Brook University:

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**Panel I: Collective (Dis-)Organization**

**Collective as Form, Playground as Medium**

**Tim Stott**  
**National College of Art and Design**

*The system of art realizes society in its own realm as an exemplary case. ... [We] see in it the paradigm of modern society. But this situation only raises the question: What difference does it make?*  
Niklas Luhmann<sup>1</sup>

*When the present existence has ceased to make sense, it can still come to sense again through the realization of its form.*  
George Spencer Brown<sup>2</sup>

The general claim of this paper is that playgrounds offer a medium for forms of collectivity. Of course, this begs a number of questions.

There is a longstanding association of playground with the organisation of collectivity. Johan Huizinga famously wrote of a playground as a 'magic circle' within which an 'absolute and supreme' order obtains.<sup>3</sup> The various intensities, dependencies of this order, hold players "apart together' in an exceptional situation.<sup>4</sup> But to my mind there is a more appropriate description of playgrounds to be found in Herman Melville's statement in *Moby Dick* that there are some enterprises 'in which a careful disorderliness is the true method.'<sup>5</sup> If play is indeed such an enterprise, then we might well ask how its disorderliness is 'cared for.'

This latter is a problem of *organisational complexity*, by which I mean that playgrounds present the problem of a number of interrelated elements whose behaviour is organised but neither simple, and so not fully predictable, nor random, and so not resolvable by statistical aggregation; hence, the familiar disorderliness of playgrounds—organised and complex.<sup>6</sup>

How do playgrounds make this organised complexity possible? To answer this question we might make use of the conceptual resources of systems theory, if the basic question asked by systems theory is, as Eva Knodt claims, 'how is organised complexity possible?'<sup>7</sup> The particular resource that I want to make use of here, as indicated by the general claim of this paper, is the form/medium distinction developed by Niklas Luhmann.

Before attending to this distinction in more detail there are further points to be noted, related to the above, which concern some peculiarities of the modeling of collectivity in play.

Firstly, with the withdrawal into play there is a *loosening* of otherwise binding and determinate collective forms, however provisional or more or less consequential this might be. In this regard, Maurice Blanchot once wrote of the 'non-personal intimacy' of players (gamblers, in fact), such that in play the particularities (personal, biographical, economic, etc.) of players comes to be forgotten, or at least not taken into account. We might say, then, that play introduces players to one another anonymously.<sup>8</sup>

Anonymity and intimacy: that both hold between players disputes the now common claim that play expresses or realizes—or to use more current jargon, *optimises*—prior subjectivities. The collectivities modeled in play are based upon a relation between players that is proximate and distant at the same time, as well as being independent of or forgetful of other collectivities that hold at other levels.

Secondly, following this, play understood as form is uncoupled from a certain realist assumption that makes play supplementary and secondary to a non-play reality already

given. Play therefore ceases to be representational and becomes instead operational and constructive; no longer a fragile world of illusion, to be protected from the demands of the real by its advocates or to be dismissed as unnecessary by its detractors.

In addition to this, modeling collectivity takes on a greater significance now that playgrounds have become nexus for a problem particular to neo-liberal governmentality; that is, what Foucault described as the governance of free subjects.<sup>9</sup> The dominance of this governmentality in various guises has led to the naturalisation of certain models both of play—as the pedagogy of risk management, for instance—and of player—as the entrepreneurial or at least economic subject.

Finally, when one considers the dispersal of playgrounds throughout contemporary post-industrial societies, the fact that to a perhaps unprecedented degree play in general no longer has its proper time and place, then our most pressing problem becomes, at the very least, by what means the modelling of collectivities in play might be observed.

It might be that some contemporary art works, which I will cautiously describe as ‘participatory’, provide just such a means. Not because with such works we play more or play better, but because when playgrounds provide the medium for participatory art works, the forms of collectivity that gather there can be observed, to quote Luhmann, ‘in the mode of the made, i.e. the mode in which [they] could be made other.’<sup>10</sup> Observed thus, forms of play introduce an excess of compositional possibility in the world. This is done by orchestrating second-order observations of collectivities in play and raises the question of ‘Other – but how?’

We might ask what can be done with this excess of compositional possibility and these various dramatisations of a question, which is also something of a promise. Needless to say, perhaps, to make the test of such excesses whether or not they provide solutions to particular problems would be to condemn ourselves to a melancholic reflection upon art’s

unfulfilled (political) promises.<sup>11</sup> There is unlikely to be any affordance here for a 'practical apprenticeship for the real political and social freedom to come,' as Jameson describes Schiller's programme of aesthetic education, to which, of course, play is central.<sup>12</sup> Rather, the direction of the question suggests the initiation of further searches, and the production of more or less fitting, more or less complex dramatisations of the question itself – 'Other—but how?'

Certainly, this question functions as a primary operations in the dynamic reproduction of the social system of art, affecting a *dance* of system-environment distinction by which a system risks itself and raises the question of its own functioning.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, 'Other – but how?' presents a highly productive paradox. In dramatising this question, the work of art generates indeterminacies (as the occasion for further searches), but then must show them both to be determined by the work itself and to fit the expectations of observers (even if the only expectation is that a form provokes communication as to whether or not it is fitting). In this way, the work overcomes its own contingency and the improbability of its forms by re-entering the system-environment distinction in each of the system's operations,<sup>14</sup> but then also, precisely by constructing itself on the basis of re-entry, preserves an 'unresolvable [sic] indeterminacy' at its core.<sup>15</sup>

What, then, does it mean to conceive of a playground as a medium? For Luhmann, a medium cannot be understood except in its distinction to form, and neither form nor medium are given prior to their functioning as substrates by which a system constructs itself.<sup>16</sup> Here, of course, we are only concerned with the social system of art.

Substrates consist of elements that either 'loosely coupled', in the case of medium, or 'tightly coupled', in the case of form. Loosely-coupled, a medium presents a "reservoir" of selection, a space of meaningful compositional possibilities' for the elaboration of forms.<sup>17</sup> Tightly-coupled, forms are selected from a medium, leading to a

‘concentration of relations of dependence’ between elements.<sup>18</sup>

Medium can be perceived only as form, otherwise it is too diffuse. For example, it is only because the air, as medium, is not itself condensed or tightly-coupled that noises, as forms, can be transmitted through it. Or: ‘We only hear the clock ticking because the air does not tick.’<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, the potential of a medium always exceeds the forms actualised from it, because forms are necessarily selective and therefore reductive: there is always something unmarked by a selection, always a part of the form that will elude observation.

This means that, if we take complexity to consist of the uncertainty of an observer, then there is an ineradicable complexity to the selection and observation of forms.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, each form of play holds in the face of uncertainty as to what is not selected, what is not marked and remains potential in the medium of the playground.<sup>21</sup>

A crucial problem for the forms of collectivity gathered in play is how to handle complexity; how to orchestrate it and how to constrain it. If the work of art must itself, paradoxically, generate indeterminacy, then again we might ask, bearing in mind the caveats above concerning implementation and problem-solving, to what extent might we find here models for how to handle complexity or to ‘care for’ disorderliness? Perhaps the mere asking of this question is enough. If nothing else, such works compel us to discover evidence of order, of collective organisation and possibility in what are otherwise considered the most improbable forms.

The following two works stand as exemplars of the above. The first is Gabriel Orozco’s *Oval Billiard Table* (1996). By eliminating pockets from the table and suspending the red ball from the ceiling so that it hangs just above the surface of the cloth, Orozco has loosened the conventional form of billiards so that the game is now available as a medium for the imprint of further forms. As medium, elements of the game present more possibilities than otherwise would be available to players of conventional billiards, both as to what

can be played and to the ways in which players might be bound together in play. To 'simply' play billiards would be to make the game operative and binding through a preference for one side of the form, the side marked as play, the other side of which, non-play, would remain unobserved or latent. With *Oval Billiard Table*, this latency becomes the potential of a medium. More precisely, the medium-form distinction is not given to players but is used itself *in a medial fashion*. One can argue that it is by virtue of the *mediality* of this distinction that participation is solicited in the work, changing according to the particular form this distinction takes from one moment of play to another. And as each form of play models collectivity in a particular way, collectivity too is used here in a medial fashion.

In the absence of any instruction from Orozco, an observer/participant (these are not necessarily discrete positions) of this potential playground is faced with the uncertainty of a medium from which a selection nonetheless must be made. With *Oval Billiard Table*, collectivity is modelled *for* something, but its particular *telos* remains undisclosed, or at least under-determined.

With Tino Sehgal's *This Success/This Failure* (2007), the conditions of the playground are quite different. The ICA in London is given over as a playground for children from nearby inner-city schools. Neither props nor toys are provided. Instead there are two instructions: 1. that the children make their own play and 2. that when an attendee of the gallery enters and encounters them playing at least one of the children must approach that attendee, state her name and declare whether or not her play and the play of her co-performers is to be considered a success or a failure.

Criteria for success and failure are given by the children, but just what these criteria might be is less interesting here than what happens to the form of play following this instruction to make and observe such a distinction (success/failure). There are at least three ways in which this can be understood.

1. By observing and evaluating their play thus, the children assist in the artwork's necessary demonstration of its fittingness to the anticipations of a more or less informed audience, despite its improbable form.
2. By demanding self-observation, *This Success/This Failure* introduces a minimal technique of self to the children's play (problematically assuming that the children do not already do this). As such, *This Success/This Failure* enacts a further development of the exhibitionary complex of art and culture by which a 'self-regulating citizenry' has been produced.<sup>22</sup>
3. But there is also an address to attendees of the gallery, thus achieving a minimal level of self-organisation between the two insofar as each is made conditional upon the other by way of a third (the children's play).<sup>23</sup> An attendee is now in a position to begin or to refuse, compelled to select in the absence of a fantasy of observation that is not also participation. As an attendee, one cannot be uninvolved in the situation of the work—to observe is to *also* play.<sup>24</sup>

Following this latter point, the children's play is not some spontaneous behaviour from which (adult) observers are exempted, and an account of collectivities in play will have to be generous and sophisticated enough to understand this 'also', which is both separate within and inseparable from a form of collectivity in play, as it is upon this 'also' that the possibility of self-organisation turns.

What is more, the topology of the playground is extended (beyond the 'player-actor'), so that the playground now *imagines* a further operation and a further observation. The question of 'Other—but how?' is restaged at another level, that of the attendee, who is drawn into the topological neighbourhood of play.

In many ways, the position of the attendee models our own; that of an observer compelled to discover evidence of an organised disorderliness in what are otherwise the most improbable forms and compelled to restage the question of 'Other – but how?' Just how to observe and care for this disorderliness in play remains unclear; but, as noted, it is a current governmental problem, and if it is not to be given over fully to managerial solutions, then we should also make it ours.

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<sup>1</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, translated by E. M. Knot, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 309-310.

<sup>2</sup> George Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), xxi.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: a study of the play element in culture*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, (New York: Everyman's Library, 1907), 382.

<sup>6</sup> See Warren Weaver, 'Science and Complexity,' *American Scientist* 36 (1948): 539, 536-544.

<sup>7</sup> Eva M. Knodt, 'Foreword' in Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, translated by E. M. Knodt, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), xvii.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, translated by S. Hanson, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 217. Incidentally, this possibility of 'non-personal intimacy' suggests that, contra Badiou's thesis concerning the current domination of 'romantic formalism,' there might be more to such forms of collective play than either 'ludic me-ism' or 'communitarian expressivity.' See Alain Badiou, 'Manifesto of Affirmationism,' translated by B. P. Fulks, *Lacanian Ink* 24 (2005), < <http://www.lacan.com/frameXXIV5.htm>> (23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009)

<sup>9</sup> Playgrounds provide a nexus for this problem because, on the one hand, governance is obliged to limit itself and to allow for independence and self-organisation on the part of

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players, yet, on the other hand, repeated governmental intervention is required to secure against disorganisation and to reproduce the freedoms that neo-liberalism demands and consumes (e.g. the unimpeded realisation of individual desires, fulfilment of individual potential, etc.). See Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power,' in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982) and Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique : Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979*, edited by F. Gros, (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard, 2004), also Michel Senellart, 'La Question du Libéralisme,' *Magazine Littéraire* 435 (2004).

<sup>10</sup> Niklas Luhmann, 'The Medium of Art,' *Thesis Eleven* 18/19 (1987): 111, 101-113.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Rancière, 'The Aesthetic Revolution and Its Outcomes: emplotments of autonomy and heteronomy,' *New Left Review* 14 (March-April, 2002): 151, 133-151.

<sup>12</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-century dialectical theories of literature*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 90.

<sup>13</sup> Dirk Baecker, 'Why Systems?' *Theory, Culture & Society* 18 (2001): 63, 59-74

<sup>14</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System*, 120.

<sup>15</sup> George Spencer Brown, *Laws of Form*, 57. See also, Michael Schiltz, 'Space is the Place: *The Laws of Form* and social systems', *Thesis Eleven* 88 (2007): 8-30.

<sup>16</sup> Niklas Luhmann, 'Cognition as Construction,' in Hans-Georg Moeller, *Luhmann Explained: from souls to systems*, (Peru, Ill.: Open Court, 2006), 253. *Nota bene*. Medium is to be understood operationally—it has no ontological primacy over form, as though it were some base matter into which form makes its cuts.

<sup>17</sup> Niklas Luhmann, 'The Medium of Art,' 104.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> On the correlation of complexity with the uncertainty of the observer, see William Rasch, *Niklas Luhmann's*

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*Modernity: the paradoxes of differentiation*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 47.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. W. Ross Ashby, 'Principles of the self-organizing system,' in *Principles of Self-Organization: Transactions of the University of Illinois Symposium*, edited by H. Von Foerster and G. W. Zopf, Jr., (London: Pergamon Press, 1962): 258, 255-278: 'The real world gives the subset of what *is*; the product-space [read: medium] represents the uncertainty of the *observer*.'

<sup>22</sup> Tony Bennett, 'The Exhibitionary Complex,' *New Formations* 4 (spring 1988): 73-102.

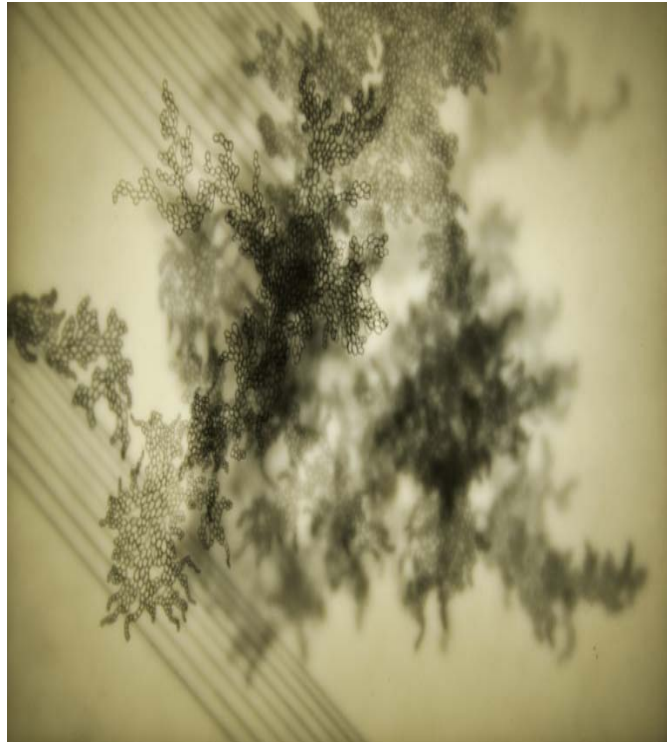
<sup>23</sup> Ross Ashby, 'Principles of the self-organizing system,' (1962), *E:CO* 6 (2004): 256, 102-126

<sup>24</sup> Sehgal in Tom Griffin, 'Tino Sehgal : An Interview,' *Artforum* XLIII 9 (May 2005).

**Congeries of Time/Two Silences of Heaven and Earth**

**Sung Won Yun**  
**School of the Museum of Fine Arts**

Time is the essence of life, and the measure of change. This insight informs and inspires my work which points to the circulation of life. I seek to represent this relation through the interaction of micro-organisms with congeries of infinite temporal layers.



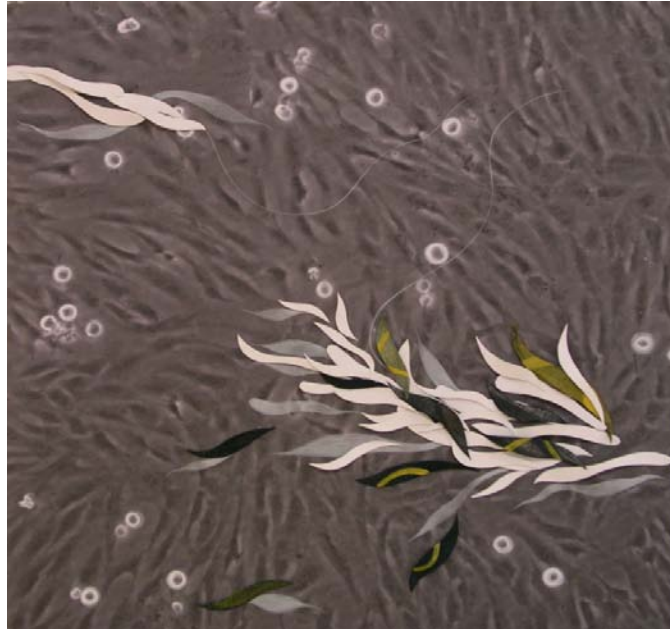
Panel I: Collective (Dis-)Organization



In my early works, I constructed evolutionary images of organisms. I cut paintings or photos containing organic shapes and reassemble them to produce a larger organic form – one that derives from the micro-structures of animals or plants. The new images mimic the characteristics of life as I dissect the various parts while still maintaining the appearance of a “whole” organism. By performing dissection again and again, one can eventually disclose the images of single cells.

My recent works create the micro-organisms that seem to float in their own universe, a spatial construction with infinite temporal layers of such organisms spanning time from a primordial period to the present moment. Such a trajectory suggests a horizon of apparently infinite time. As the layers accumulate, the meaning of each layer emerges and finds a new integration, pointing to a universal synthesis.

I feel the same event happening repeatedly in time, creating new meanings; the micro-organism portrayed as floating in the universe interacts with a dynamic trajectory linking past, present, and future.



The photographs of Iceland included point to the same flow of time in nature. The enduring snowfields of Iceland record a history of change, an accumulation of time, a transformation that points both to the past and to the future – in the only apparent stillness of the present moment. Such images suggest the temporal dynamism of geological processes, and evoke a phenomenology of space and geometry of form in the emotional texture captured by the photographic image. The mirroring surfaces of Iceland's winter land- and seascapes, often shrouded by clouds, offers a sense of serenity and timelessness that I seek to evoke in my painting. At the heart of this perception, the two silences

Panel I: Collective (Dis-)Organization

of heaven and earth become parts of an indistinguishable whole, witnesses to a unity of being that is both within us and beyond us in the world we inhabit.



In short, through my graduate study, I have focused on constructing evolutionary images of micro-organisms from the collective motion of individual unit cells and the universe in which the micro-organisms are incubated is generated by the superposition of temporal layers. The universe contains memories of each layer, and a new meaning is created as the layers are accumulated. As such, my work is closely related with the theme of the conference, "Collectively."

**CollectiviCity: Professor Challenger’s Patchwork Urbanism**

**Bryan Norwood  
Boston University**

In *Delirious New York*, Rem Koolhaas writes that “the original promise of the metropolitan condition” is the “Culture of Congestion,”<sup>1</sup> which is a culture premised on conflict, complication, and a continuously changing skyline. The urban environment is made up of ideologies, of concepts, and these concepts in a Deleuzian epistemology grow in multiplicity by reinventing and redrawing new paths through the multiple growths, tubers, and lines that weave a net of complexity and complication within internal points and external relationships.<sup>2</sup> Paradox, a situation in which more than one answer, or direction of flow, is affirmed to be right,<sup>3</sup> sets up an epistemological basis for urbanism in problematization, not in resolution (*Collage City*) or dissipation (*Sprawl*). Solution based responses to urban conditions will react with either the audacity of functionalist modernism or the failing nerves of contextualist postmodernism,<sup>4</sup> both of which are the product of pure individuality. By defining complication, paradox, and problematization as positive urban concepts, the city can be thought as a collective effort of architects and occupiers, writers and readers that frees up the metropolis so that it no longer needs to be conceived of as a fixed state, or an object unto itself.

Koolhaas describes Manhattanism as “the urbanistic doctrine that suspends irreconcilable differences between mutually exclusive positions.”<sup>5</sup> Problematization induces action,<sup>6</sup> and equally so solution based planning produces inaction by attempting to solve or resolve tension. However, problematization is easier said than done. This paper will attempt to develop a theory for problematization and

complication that combines both homogeneity and heterogeneity, striation and smoothness, into patchwork urbanism. It will then demonstrate how this theory might be implemented.

### **I. Smoothing and Striating**

Striated space is roughly, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the result of the logic of trees, a logic that springs from a central point. It is space that is segmented, territorialized and articulated,<sup>7</sup> a condition that requires points and stability. In the city we striate by ordering streets, zoning patterns, height limitations, setback laws, ways in and out, ways up and down, access to utilities, traffic patterns, red lights, and green lights to name a few ways. Stratification, as Manuel De Landa describes it, generates structures by processes “which begin with a heterogeneous collection of raw materials, homogenize them by means of a sorting operation, and then consolidate the homogeneous groups into something larger and more permanent.”<sup>8</sup> This process of sorting and then concretizing takes place through a double articulation of content and expression.<sup>9</sup> Content involves both the gathering and sorting of pieces, just as geologic strata striate from the largest to smallest pebbles.<sup>10</sup> Expression cements pieces together and forms new substances. Smooth space is sorted and ordered to create urban environments, and these environments concretize as the various systems of the city grow and solidify around the content.<sup>11</sup> However, striated urban environments hardly ever stay clearly organized—as the city grows and develops, it slips away from its original plan.

Smooth space, in contrast to striated space, is based on the logic of rhizomes, a logic of multiplicity. Rhizomes roam from one idea to another like nomads that avoid both compartmentalization and primordial unity.<sup>12</sup> Rhizomes are not made up of points, but rather of lines that are always between a beginning and an end, never at them, which means they are in a constant process of becoming.<sup>13</sup>

Rhizomes are “a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight” (ATP 21). Smooth space is not homogeneous, but rather is heterogeneous like felt (475), and heterogeneity is a result of rhizomatic assemblages that jumble and mix-and-match.<sup>14</sup> Smooth space is not devoid of systems, relationships and organization, but none of these are masterminded. Smooth space depends on three aspects: articulation of superpositions that overlap diverse elements, intercalary elements that exist between nodes, and intervals that provide stable behavioral patterns (ATP 328-9). As cities develop, multiple systems intersect and new orders and disorders emerge. Junkspace develops between nodes, and new patterns and usage systems form.<sup>15</sup>

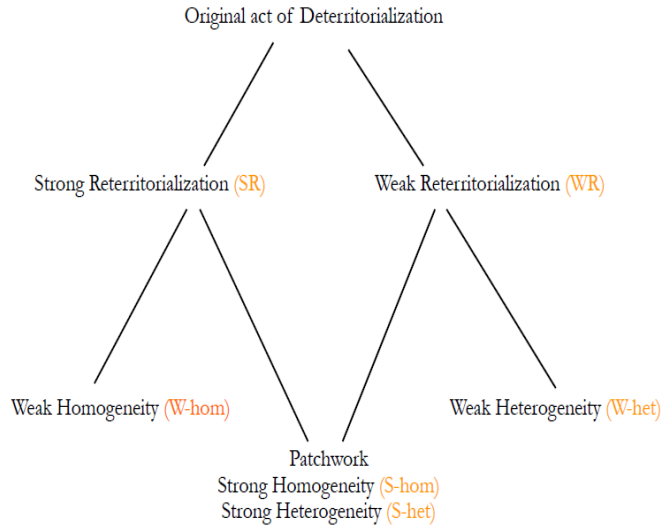
Just as the city is never purely striation, it is also never purely smoothness. There is never an undiluted smooth space or striated space; there are only different patchworks which combine smooth felt with striated fabric (ATP 476). As Deleuze and Guattari write, “Smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space” (474). Smooth space makes urbanism unresolved, varying, and mutable, while attempts at striation are necessary for urbanism to survive and evolve. Every time planners try to pin down smoothness and striate it, the striation seems to slip back into the smoothness of the desert. Deleuze and Guattari enlist a mad genius to tell this story:

. . . Challenger who made the Earth scream with his pain machine, as described by Arthur Conan Doyle, gave a lecture after mixing several textbooks on geology and biology in a fashion befitting his simian disposition. He explained that the Earth—the Deterritorialized, the Glacial, the giant Molecule—is a body without organs. This body without organs is permeated by unformed, unstable matters, by flowing in all directions, by free intensities or nomadic singularities, by mad or transitory particles.

That, however, was not the question at hand. For there simultaneously occurs upon the earth a very important, inevitable phenomenon that is beneficial in many respects and unfortunate in many others: stratification. Strata are Layers, Belts. They consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy, of producing upon the body of the earth molecules large and small and organizing them into molar aggregates. Strata are acts of capture, they are like “black holes” or occlusions striving to seize whatever comes within their reach. They operate by coding and territorialization upon the earth; they proceed simultaneously by code and by territoriality. The strata are judgments of God; stratification in general is the entire system of the judgment of God (but the earth, or the body without organs, constantly eludes that judgment, flees and becomes destratified, decoded, and deterritorialized).<sup>16</sup>

## **II. Homogeneity and Heterogeneity, weak and strong**

If the urban environment is a paradox producing patchwork moving between striation and smoothness, what is happening in dead cities? Why do so many mid-size cities appear to have so little life—so many problems but so little problematization? Why, when I am in the silent downtown of Jackson, MS, do I get the feeling that there is no body without organs fleeing the judgments of God? The answer is weak homogeneity and weak heterogeneity. Weak conditions go to the extreme because they are unable to deal with the conflict, conditions that do not acknowledge the patchwork territorializing and deterritorializing forces. Weakness or inability to deal with multiple streams of thought often force ideologies into positions where they shutdown and fend off the other by blocking out disagreement.



The root of weak homogeneity (w-hom) and weak heterogeneity (w-het) is two fold the 1) process of reterritorializing the earth into a city after the initial deterritorialization of rural development, whether it is done strongly or weakly, and 2) the avoidance of patchwork. Reterritorialization can either be weak or strong, this much is a given. New York sets an example of strong reterritorialization (SR) with the laying down of a grid while Los Angeles is a case of weak reterritorialization (WR) where the grid does not proceed and dominate Original act of development. Neither of these situations is bad in itself, but the fallout of these moves depends on whether the city chooses to embrace the possibilities of patchwork. New York was a delirious pathwork when competition flourished in juxtaposition to its grid.<sup>17</sup> Los Angeles may become a patchwork as it reaches its absolute geographic limits (proscribed by how far people are willing to drive to work) and has to infill and organize.

Both w-hom and w-het induce lifelessness as the result of indifference. Homogeneity is the product of organizing strata, and w-hom happens within stable systems that only striate. The homogeneous city is a city that has no conflict—that has no difference—a city whose imagination has failed. Conflict breaks down when forces of homogeneity gain the ability to over-order, and, consequently, the force that was difference and limit, consumes everything. There is no longer anything to differentiate or set a limit against. W-het results in stagnation, where rhizomatic connections are made very slowly. Because of its refusal of homogenizing, striating forces, weak heterogeneity fails to produce conflict because anything goes. The antiutopia of meaningless suburbanization and the generic city are a result of weak heterogeneity, not the homogeneity or ideological ubiquity that sprawl critics so often accuse the suburbs of producing.<sup>18</sup> Neither the w-hom of the city that is constantly in danger of falling out of itself and losing its life nor the w-het of the suburbs that is able to set something against itself to limit itself and define life.

In contrast, strong homogeneity (s-hom) and strong heterogeneity (s-het) are necessary companions that cause the all important mixture of omnipotence and impotence, individual and collective, necessary for the practice of urban architecture.<sup>19</sup> Each is premised on the existence of the other. In strong reterritorialization, difference is brought to the forefront by holding a single dimension or ideology still. In weak reterritorialization, no static dimension exists or is effectual, and therefore there is nothing to weave against. The combination of these two moves into a patchwork creates the metabolism of urban life. Cities only work when heterogeneity is in tension with movement towards homogeneity and when homogeneity is in tension with movement towards heterogeneity. Patchwork promises delirious mania.<sup>20</sup>

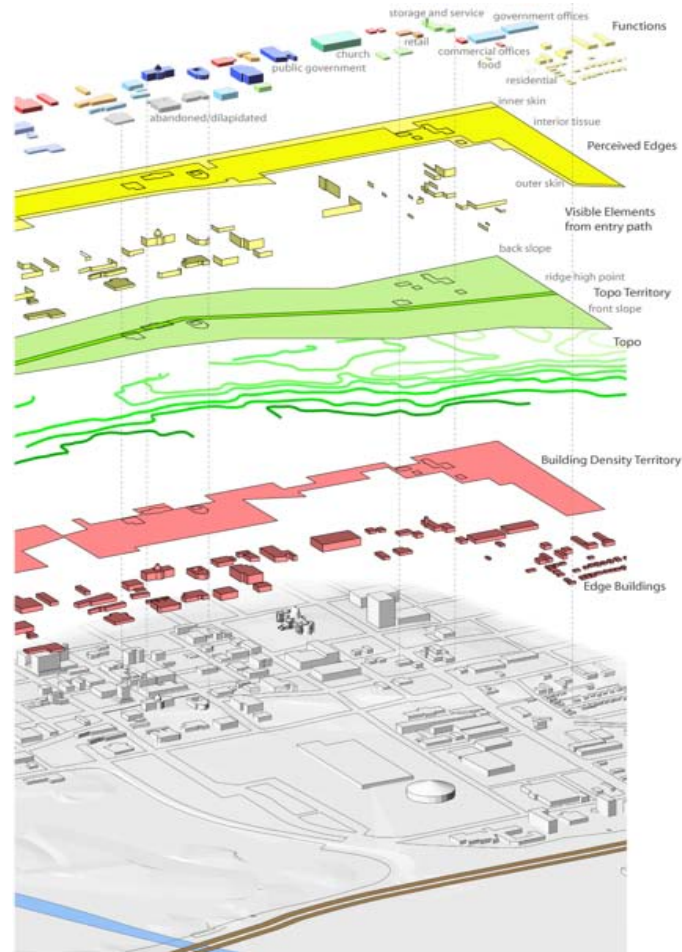
### **III. Isolation: weak homogeneity reversed**

Downtown Jackson, MS is in a condition of weak homogeneity.<sup>21</sup> In strong homogeneity the grid or other form of striation is enlivened as a third element, but in weak homogeneity, the means of striation does not hold together as a unique, delimited third-element that acts as the background for architecture. Downtown Jackson has a fear of defining its edge and allowing something different to exist beyond. Forces of homogeneity blur the edges of the city and consequently people and buildings close to the edge are constantly in danger of falling out of the city. On the east side of Jackson, the interstate culture and city culture are slowly bleeding together, trying to create a hybrid with no difference. The grid over extends the edge of Jackson and the differentiating element exceeds the stuff to differentiate. At the same time, the high speeds and fast food of the interstate over extends from the interstate into the city (for example, the downtown BancorpSouth bank only has a drive-thru ATM).

When the I-55 connection between Lakeland Drive and I-20 was completed in December 1969, the Clarion Ledger newspaper proclaimed a new age in transportation had begun for Jackson.<sup>22</sup> Downtown Jackson could now be reached in a matter of minutes from all the suburban areas. Downtown was entering a new age of economic prosperity and promise with the creation of a new connection. The promise of healthy growth of an urban core the interstate was supposed to bring to Jackson has gone unfulfilled. A project that was 90% subsidized by the federal government turned out to be a temporary source of income. What really happens to cities when interstates are introduced? Some are cut into pieces by a barrier that is difficult for urbanism to puncture (Ex. Seattle, Atlanta). Other urban cores begin to disappear all together (Los Angeles). Downtown Jackson follows another pattern—the isolation of the city from the interstate.

The downtown corridor of State Street sits on the inside of a zone that makes up the edge of the urban core of the city. This edge is situated about three-quarters of a mile

from I-55, a condition that isolates Jackson from its major traffic corridor. The routes in and out of the city (Pearl and Pascaguoula Streets and High Street) have become expressways offering a taste of suburban culture to the invaders who flood the city every day from 8 till 5 p.m. (and flee at night): a gas station here, a drive-thru fast food joint there.



**fig. 2** analytic of eastern Jackson edge (interstate shown in brown at the bottom)

What is the appropriate response to the isolation of downtown from the interstate? Instead of trying to bridge the gap, what would happen if isolation were perpetuated? Jackson certainly does suffer from an excess of surface parking and a lack of infill buildings to maintain the density of the urban fabric, but is the remedy linking to the human density of the interstate or cutting it off? The interstate and sprawl cannot simply be conceived as the enemy, it would be a worthless battle. The response needs to be more complex.

The first option, trying to overcome isolation by building or creating a connection to the interstate, carries an implicit value judgment that the interstate and Jackson should be linked. A hybrid culture of suburban interstates and urban density would have to emerge, but, as is seen in many US cities, the intertwining of the interstate and the city is not a simple matter of mixing the two—Corbusier already tried this. The interstate and the city are ideologically opposed.

The second option, damming up the city and heightening the difference between the interstate and the city does carry on the current conditions, but with no less of a value judgment. By heightening the characteristics of both the interstate and the city edge, the second option provides more possibility in created strong conditions. In fact, the Jackson City Zoning Code already recognizes the need for territorialization. The south site is largely zoned Central Business District, which is characterized by the code (707-A C-4) as:

The purpose of this district is to preserve and perpetuate an intensive and cohesive downtown urban core . . . . The intent of this district is to develop a strong sense of place by extending the duration of downtown's activities by improving the pedestrian environment and creating mutually supportive land uses such as cultural arts, education, entertainment, housing, business, other commerce and government.

These goals have become typical of urban planning in recent years, particularly with the influence of New Urbanist anti-sprawl doctrines of smart growth and mixed-use development. The concept of isolation provides a strong initial move that could be accomplished many of the goals of the central business district with minimum built work. The creation of building mass and territorialization on the east side of downtown would define and limit downtown, which would allow an organism—a place—to form. The city does need densification to create a walkable, lively, and mixed-use core, but the creation of this core depends on its limits being defined.

#### **IV. Challenger and the Story of the Response**

Professor Challenger, whose lecture we previously discussed, did not stop at words. He built a set of half-bridges to see but not reach the body without organs, a smooth meaningless plane of the earth, that he tortured. It was a cruel joke on an organless victim that could not be reached to reterritorialize and dignify with meaning. The citizens of Jackson, watching the pain, joined with Challenger in a frenzy of building and began to construct these piers—complicit in the act of torture. They did not do it for the sake of torturing, but for the good byproducts that it brought: safety, place, meaning, and a sense of belonging.

The Jacksonians started to organize their world by assigning meanings—each pier had a relationship to significant events and dates in the past. The first was connected with a recent insertion, the interstate, and the second with an abandoned railroad track. The railroad track was even revived as a pleasant biking and running path to give it new life. Parades and races were held on the old tracks to celebrate the edge of Jackson and to rejoice in new life found in the creation of place.

The third pier was given a larger meaning—the vast ocean of nothing that it stared at—the fairgrounds. By this time, the citizens realized they were going back in time,

towards a more fossilized era. When the fourth pier was built, the distant, long forgotten body of water could be seen and everyone recalled it was name the Pearl River—a name give to it by the French explorer d’Iberville when pearls were discovered at its mouth. There was no need for the pearls this time, the discovery of the river was enough in itself. The fifth pier could only be named for the ridge itself—a 35,000,000 year old Eocene formation sitting on top of a 65,000,000 year old volcano.



**fig. 3** the first six piers

Soon, Jacksonians ran out of reasons without running out of piers to build. “Why were they even naming them in the first place? The assignation of meanings to these piers was just arbitrary was it not?” Challenger contently watched the citizens come to this realization just as he had planned. The sixth pier, in all its intensity became meaningless. More piers followed. Semiotic systems started to break down. There was no longer a fixed world that was referenced, edges became places and places became edges.

Panel I: Collective (Dis-)Organization



**fig. 4** the first six piers



**fig. 5** walking path under piers

As Jackson became increasingly deterritorialized, it was also becoming more territorialized and the city lost control of itself. Heterogeneity was getting stronger and so was homogeneity—everyone came in and out as they pleased and did whatever they desired. Challenger was both hero and villain, a provider of freedom and chaos.

As the piers got bigger, meaning became more irrelevant, but the fervor of building did not stop. Groups of citizens began to identify with individual piers. “We are the 1927 GM&O Railroad! Public transit must be restored!” was one group’s battle cry. “Down with the railroad!” shouted the 1969 interstate group. “It’s all meaningless!” others cried. Everyone argued over who was right, and mania ensued.

The mayor and the city planner’s tried to stop the violence and chaos—they tried to regain control of their city but it was too late—they were impotent. Visitors came from far and wide to observe the calamity.

During the day, there was an uneasy peace as citizens went to work and the piers continued their peaceful, attractive program. Things would change at sundown. Tribes of citizens gathered around their bridges at night, burning leftover construction refuse and any other scraps of wood they could find, plotting how to gain dominance over other piers. Ideological battles raged. At night, Professor Challenger could be seen standing atop of the city he tortured, his blue-gray eyes peering out from under his long black hair, observing the disorder resulting from the striations citizens were imposing, and he smiled to himself about the mania he had created.

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<sup>1</sup> Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli, 1994), 293.

<sup>2</sup> Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), 52.

<sup>3</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense*, trans. Mark Lester and Charles Stivale, ed. Constantin V. Boundas, (London:

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The Athlone Press, 1990), 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> See James Williams, "Deleuze's Ontology and Creativity: Becoming in Architecture," *Pli* 9 (2000), 204. Also Peter Eisenman, "Unfolding events: Frankfurt Rebstock and the possibility of a new urbanism," in *Re:working Eisenman* (London: Academy, 1993), 59-61.

<sup>5</sup> Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 162.

<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Grosz, "Deleuze, theory and space." *Log* (Fall 2003), 80.

<sup>7</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 3. Hereafter referred to as ATP.

<sup>8</sup> Manuel Delanda, "Immanence and Transcendence in the Genesis," in *A Deleuzian Century?* ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 125.

<sup>9</sup> ATP 44. Content and expression are not the same as the historical philosophical division of substance and form, because both articulations contain substance and form. Smooth space is matter and function that is converted to substance and form in the act of striation.

<sup>10</sup> De Landa, 123.

<sup>11</sup> If all the buildings in most any built environment were burned to the ground, the infrastructure (particularly the roads) would most likely dictate the rebuilding of the city in a pattern similar to what existed before.

<sup>12</sup> John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), 22.

<sup>13</sup> ATP 21. "Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle" (25).

<sup>14</sup> Mark Bonta and John Protevi, *Deleuze and Geophilosophy: A Glossary and Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 94.

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<sup>15</sup> See Rem Koolhaas, “Junkspace,” *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 175.

<sup>16</sup> ATP 40. Also see Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, “When the Earth Screamed,” 1929, available at [http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/doyle/arthur\\_conan/screamed/](http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/d/doyle/arthur_conan/screamed/).

<sup>17</sup> Manhattanism died in the 60s. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, 283-90.

<sup>18</sup> See Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL*, “Generic City,” 1248-64. Also Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 51-95. Also Michael Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Koolhaas, *S, M, L, XL*, xix.

<sup>20</sup> See Koolhaas’s film on Lagos, Nigeria for a discussion of the combination of both top-down planning and bottom-up systems, *Lagos Wide and Close: Interactive Journey into an Exploding City* [Motion Picture] (United States: Submarine, 2006). The real urban potential of deterritorialization is strong heterogeneity combined with homogeneity. The danger of some approaches, such as that taken by post criticality, is the headfirst dive into deterritorialization without considering the importance of the territorializing assemblages that resist smoothing.

<sup>21</sup> I discuss another form of this weakness, what I call Glacierization, in Bryan Norwood and The Jackson Community Design Center, “Mania: an emergent sustainability of density and intensity,” *MONU: Magazine on Urbanism* 12 (August 2009), 116-26.

<sup>22</sup> *The Clarion-Ledger*, Jackson, MS, December 14, 1969, B4.

**Teaching to Digress:  
Artists' Models for Collectivity & Reverse Pedagogy**

**Mark Clintberg  
Concordia University**

I have an excellent novel close at hand. Also, there is a meandering and charming path through the woods, the promise of a three-times-daily-all-you-can-eat buffet, a pirate radio station with chaotic dance parties, salubrious hot springs, injurious ball hockey, manic elk crossings. Probably I should be working. Focusing. Producing. But for my colleagues and I who are involved in the Banff Centre residency known as Reverse Pedagogy, that would be entirely *counterproductive*. As guest faculty, I am but a temporary interloper; the rest of the group has been at it for weeks, earnestly involved in leisure. But we are all collectively dedicated to a *study* of leisure, the pursuit of pleasure, fashioning our own *fête galante*.

Just one example among countless other collaborative artists' projects today, this residency's structure, objectives, and outcomes foreground many of the challenges and benefits for artists who hope to involve pedagogical and collaborative strategies in their practices.

Artist Paul Butler is the organizer of Reverse Pedagogy. He is known for his ongoing Collage Party, a serial event where invited artists and members of the public spend hours or even days in a space with various forms of printed matter and objects as fodder for an amorphous, cumulative series of collages. Collage Party's intuitive and relaxed approach led naturally to Butler's 2008 residency post in Banff. Enlisted artists were asked to ignore their usual assumptions about the schedules and strategies involved in productive studio practices.

Contrary to the model often used in the contemporary public educational system, where learning is framed as a form of labour, Butler's approach eschews work *per se* in favor of collective leisure. The purpose? By favoring a regime whose only rigidity was enforced through a parade of overheated lattes and shots of Jagermeister, the participants in this residency would – it was hoped – be all the more earnestly productive in their studios *when they found a moment to spend there*. Strenuous labour was limited. Performative and ephemeral production was suited to this frenzied, bingeing-and-fasting approach: quasi-collaborative exhibitions were extemporized every twenty-four hours, including a séance, a gnocchi-making party, an impromptu live talk show, and a tin-can phone sex service. When communitarian values are blended with leisure, things can get a little out of hand.

Butler's model argues that strenuous labour, in a pedagogical setting, will not produce fruit as effectively as self-directed, leisure-based production that is distant from any form of teacherly authority. A primary source for his ideas is Jacques Rancière's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*. Rancière's writing demonstrates how students can negotiate their learning under deft and gentle supervision rather than instruction *per se*. Butler's expectation was that artists would flourish under a similarly light-handed approach. In his view, a vacation-based residency stands a better chance of allowing artists to think creatively and develop innovative work together. Reverse Pedagogy considers the mainstream social order as a hindrance for artistic production, arguing that if only the artist could retreat, withdraw, rekindle themselves, they could connect more fully with their creative consciousness.

But aren't most if not all residency programs built around this same assumption? Don't artist's retreats, colonies, short-term utopian dwellings, all rely on the fundamental understanding – or faith? – that once artists are left to their own devices to work as a group, without the interruptions of daily life, creative instincts will thrive. Why is

this residency any different? Reverse Pedagogy takes leisure more seriously than this; it isn't only an escape from the trappings of labour, but a studied indulgence in recreation. Life is full of opportunities that the methodology of Reverse Pedagogy holds at its core: distractions such as online social networking, cinema, and cuisine. This socially collaborative project simply amplifies life's natural tendencies.

Antoine Watteau's *L'embarquement pour Cythere*, which depicts a group of aristocrats on a mythical excursion to an island of love, is a prime example of the *fête galante* genre. This category of painting is tied with the development of rococo in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and usually involves elegant parties in natural settings. Food, drink, and musicians tend to be involved. Marianne Roland Michel describes the *fête galante* genre as a "fashion [...] to invest the realities of daily life with a picturesque disguise."<sup>1</sup> At *Cythere*, lovers share private embraces, while another group is led into cheerful oblivion by a smattering of putti.<sup>2</sup> Certainly its subjects appear to know how to have a good time, but – at least for the moment – they appear relatively restrained next to Reverse Pedagogy. Despite the painting's relative timidity by today's standards of bacchanalia, what Watteau's image does share with Reverse Pedagogy is its sense of hope for love and communion as a conduit toward creativity, which is spurred on by the fuel of leisure despite the tempers, rages, and vulgarity the world offers us.

Keeping in mind Watteau's iconic image, Reverse Pedagogy is indeed a form of *fête galante*. For several reasons, not the least of which being that artists who participate must be at financial liberty to temporarily vacate their employment and homes for a mountain furlough – remember that the participants in the *fête galante* were aristocrats – but also because of Reverse Pedagogy's aspirations for communal harmony.

The concept of the group retreat as a source of inspiration that allows the harness of passions through relaxation is hardly new from an art historical perspective. Watteau's is but one example. Enacting rather than

representing social moments as artworks may be considered a somewhat more recent phenomenon; happenings, events, and flash mobs have become a commonplace of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. What seems to draw many examples of these forms together is the desire to familiarize and harmonize participants with one another rather than alienate them – often with a subtext of creating social networks while training or increasing sensory awareness.

Reverse Pedagogy, then, is a pastiche, an appropriation of the residency-retreat format, which I propose is a revision of the tradition of the *fête galante*. Banff is infamous among artists as a site of extra-marital affairs, emotional meltdowns, and passionate sorority and fraternity. It is a strange analogue for summer camp, which for some is heavenly and for others torturous. Reverse Pedagogy exaggerates and intensifies the usual hedonistic partying, rapid formation of social and erotic ties, randomly materialized rituals, and suspension of mores one sees during intensive group retreats. It is also a social space that fosters learning through collaboration and cohabitation.



*Reverse Pedagogy* common room (photo: Scott Rogers)

Outreach and teaching strategies can result in several appealing outcomes for artists who work with communities: groups of citizens who might have never otherwise met are drawn together in order to develop knowledge or skills. But I cannot be entirely optimistic with regards to these matters: working in the public sphere, particularly when education is involved, is a complex and often turbulent affair. Group work can be treacherous. People love to argue. Students and teachers alike become angered or bored. Collaboration that involves pedagogy cannot avoid these truths. So instead of glossing over the frustrations involved when artists attempt to work socially, particularly when art is framed as a leisure activity that can garner ameliorative gains, I hope in this text to work through the material and social results that crop up in the aftermath of such practices.

Collaborative and socially outreaching art of the late 1980s and 1990s – which generally privileged viewers as producers rather than consumers – frequently were infused with subtle hints of new pedagogical agendas for art production. A significant body of writing analyzing such practices exists, including Suzanne Lacy's edited collection of essays *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, as well as *But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism*, edited by Nina Felshin, and *The Reenchantment of Art* by Suzi Gablik, to name but a few. What these texts have in common is their valuation of active viewership whose situation or knowledge is improved by their involvement with the creative process. According to these authors the audiences' needs and desires can - *should* - be considered and met by the artist. By these models, the artist must successfully evaluate an audience's deficiencies and desires in order to decide the best *modus operandi* to offer them. Two related problems arise from this. Firstly, in a heterogeneous community, it is difficult for a single artwork to satisfy the requirements of every viewer-participant. Secondly, how can artists be sure that their knowledge and abilities will be of use to a community? Despite an artist's best intentions, collaborators may resist or

express hostility toward collaborative ventures because of this. Does the promise of leisure and relaxation as a lure for collective pedagogy manage to circumvent these concerns?

Of particular interest when considering the question of collectivity is an essay by Jan Avgikos that outlines the challenges faced by the artists' collective Group Material as they managed a gallery and community space in New York City with the objective to "lead art back into life, thus bringing new life to art."<sup>3</sup> Avgikos casts a less celebratory image of Group Material's ambitions, as the Group's transformative aims were willfully resisted by their hosting neighborhood. The author describes the Group's storefront space as a social experiment unfulfilled. "Members of the neighborhood were not assimilated within Group Material's ranks, nor did [they] initiate an independent action group; the gallery did not become a community hotbed of political protest."<sup>4</sup> This author presents an early critique of the collaborative practices' risks: what will the artist do in the face of a disinterested or hostile constituency? This question applies forcefully to a project like Reverse Pedagogy: is the *fête galante* in itself enough to promote harmony or hostility between its members?

At the centre of the residency was Dean Baldwin's artwork titled *Grand Trunk Portable Cocktail Bar - No. 3*, a steamer trunk outfitted with equipment and comestibles to give elaborate bar service from his studio, the hall – or anywhere else where drinks were needed on campus. Beautiful and preciously crafted cocktails – such as a classic gin martini served in a cut crystal glass then wrapped in a brown paper bag – might to some be only woeful reminders of the excesses that residencies often promote. As a social hub, however, Baldwin's roving bar managed to involve residents in conversation and argument, but also serve as a daily ritual. Drinks that *Grand Trunk Portable Cocktail Bar - No. 3* produced resulted in at least one black eye, several raised voices, and an institutional display made a shambles by enthusiastic revelers. While certainly offering a communitarian experience, this project does not pretend to

confer value or direct ameliorative objectives for its participants. It avoids rather than solves the problem of leading art back to life and life back to art.



Dean Baldwin, *Grand Trunk Portable Cocktail Bar - No. 3*  
(photo: Dean Baldwin)

Amidst the fallout from Nicolas Bourriaud's influential *Relational Aesthetics*, several contemporary artists are investigating collaborative models as the grounds for new practices – sometimes with the goal of creating the temporary utopias that Bourriaud champions, but often in the optimistic hopes of generating lasting learning and benefit for their collaborators and themselves. And many of Bourriaud's case studies use leisure spaces as the stages for their practices. A primary value frequently associated with collaborative practices now dubbed as relational is that of generosity. Artists hoping to enter the social arena as creative

civil servants often make offerings to communities as demonstrations of good faith, and these offerings can constitute the work itself. Gifts are frequently more than ornamental in the structure of pedagogical art practices – the provision and exchange of knowledge is at their core.

An analogous example from popular culture is worth considering here. Oprah Winfrey's project *The Big Give* is a television show where participants compete "to come up with the most creative ways to take a given amount of money and other resources and multiply them before giving them away to help others."<sup>5</sup> Challenges presented to participants include gifting \$100,000 in 24 hours. Currently it seems that artists are expected by some curators and even art historians to operate in a similar fashion. Rather than giving monies, socially collaborative practices are expected to give transformative experiences by involving citizens at the moment of inception. Following this model, those artists who present the highest number of the most sophisticated forms of gifting are then to be rewarded with acclaim. This idea of a competition of gifting positions the artist as a good citizen, responsible for providing for their community.

Troubling questions of reward, motivation, and consequence rise from *The Big Give* approach. The show was cancelled in 2008 at Winfrey's request.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps her decision to axe her own show was motivated by what seems disastrously clear: gifting is far from being entirely benevolent, particularly when it is publicly broadcast. Gifts that reach into the public sphere with private ambitions can meet with resistance from their intended recipients. It cannot be expected that socially collaborative works, with gifting at their core, can avoid the same challenges.

Gifts can be a beautiful, effective, and meaningful gesture. Fostering knowledge and curiosity is a noble goal. But to position socially involved collaborative artworks as simply benevolent and without ideologies of their own is retrograde. Artists working in this vein, even those who have a light touch on the authorial rudder of their practices as with Reverse Pedagogy, are still powerfully involved in the

creation and framing of experience. To consider them only as social agents or facilitators overlooks the highly political reconsideration of producers and consumers that drives their practices. Though the *fête galante*, as used in Reverse Pedagogy, is an artificial appropriation of the everyday, its effects outside of this fantastic space are bound to be lasting. Similarly, Winfrey's gift-givers may have skewed their performance for the sake of competition, but their recipients still benefited. Even Rancière's ignorant schoolmaster is aware of the vital importance of his presence as a guiding agent of learning. The actions of schoolmasters and artists who work in this way develop a formidable end product: a community that is empowered and intellectually engaged. And that is far from a neutral objective. This kind of intervention is not just a social lubricant. It is also an explosive. Due to this potential for interpersonal eruptions artists handling social relations as material must be cautious, and also willing to take responsibility when unexpected adversity – or genuine collaboration – strikes.



*Reverse Pedagogy party* (photo: Gordon Peterson)

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<sup>1</sup> Marianne Roland Michel, iii. "Watteau and His Generation." *The Burlington Magazine*. Vol. 110, No. 780. (March 1968): i-vii.

<sup>2</sup> Note that I refer here to the 1717 version of the painting, now at the Louvre, and not the later version in the collection of the Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Avgikos. "Group Material Timeline: Activism as a Work of Art," *But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism*. Edited by Nina Felshin. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995: 89.

<sup>4</sup> Avgikos, 98.

<sup>5</sup> Edward Wyatt. "Next Project for Oprah: Feel-Good Reality TV." *New York Times*. Published December 16, 2006. Accessed digitally August 13, 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/16/arts/television/16opra.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Don Kaplan. "O 'Give's Up." *New York Post*. Published May 14, 2008. Accessed digitally August 13, 2009. [http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142008/tv/o\\_gives\\_up\\_110750.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142008/tv/o_gives_up_110750.htm)

**Panel One Response I**

**Carlie Anglemire**  
**Stony Brook University**

In Bryan Norwood's essay on "Professor Challenger's Patchwork Urbanism," he writes of the need for cities to be planned based on Gilles Deleuze's idea of a negotiation between smooth and striated space in order for us to have a sense of place while living in these environments that are both organized in development and also resistant to lasting structure. Sung Won Yun's artistic mode of expression is similarly involved in the process of creating possibilities for dwelling, not in a physical terrain where we live or which we pass through and visit, but in what she calls the "universe" of the artwork that embodies tensions between individual particles and the entities in which these microcosms participate to form a whole. On the one hand, we seek anchorage, an enduring center grounded in memory and prepared to withstand a future influx; and we also defy stagnancy in the desire for the unexpected, the inspiring surprise that vivifies us and pushes what we had formerly perceived to be limitations. Human beings, the cities where we find and lose ourselves, and the artworks with which we must learn to tarry and dwell upon as Hans-Georg Gadamer writes in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, all face the condition of temporality, with its demands for acclimation to variation as well as a sustained memory of the significant presence of what has stolen away, that to which silent remnants such as a photograph or fossil testify.

Bryan Norwood describes the striating of smooth space as an act of expression in which a multitude of pieces

are joined in conglomerates. The result of this linking of many elements into a new order is ideally the possibility for people to gather together in a both defined and mutable place, to experience the uneasy harmony and conflict of vitality. He writes: “Expression cements pieces together and forms new substances. Smooth space is sorted and ordered to create urban environments, and these environments concretize as the various systems of the city grow and solidify around the content.” A city develops an identity through determination of what is internal and external to its space, what it allows in, what it relegates to the edges, and how it allows what is on the outskirts to travel through.

In contrast to the tendency toward solidification is the nomadic spirit of smooth space, which challenges the possibility for fixity. In order for a city to be “living,” it must have both strong heterogeneous and strong homogeneous forces at work. The recoil of either the impulse for the chaotic or the effort toward foundation through ordered amalgamation leads to a loss of present place: a city in this case becomes something that we feel bogged down in or alienated from. Rather than being at home in the historically rooted places where we have grown up while also sensing the possibility of branching out and being at home elsewhere, we have the false impression that we are nowhere and are either stuck in this nowhere or are almost utterly unattached to it as a placeless place from which we flee.

Sung Won Yun characterizes the artistic process of her early work as a dissection of forms in existing works of art for the harvesting of smaller fragments that she then reassembled into new congeries, a deconstruction and rebuilding of images not unlike that which takes place in the striation that Mr. Norwood writes of as occurring in the formation of urban centers. In the context of her more recent work, Sung Won Yun describes the creation of a space in artwork that through the layering of components evokes the timeless, eternity, or the transcendent unification of the past with the present and future. She writes:

As the layers accumulate, the meaning of each layer emerges and finds a new integration, pointing to a universal synthesis. I feel the same event happening repeatedly in time, creating new meanings; the micro-organism portrayed as floating in the universe interacts with a dynamic trajectory linking past, present, and future.

Remaining connected with the past while transcending it in present experience and the actualizing of future possibilities is a fundamental concept that requires creativity in order to successfully achieve. An accord with conditions of temporality appears as a foundation of the possibility of dwelling meaningfully, in our experience of artwork and in living in general. Sung Won Yun captures this tension between loss and the desire for retention of an element of what would otherwise pass away particularly in her photographs of Iceland, of which she writes,

The photographs of Iceland included point to the same flow of time in nature. The enduring snowfields of Iceland record a history of change, an accumulation of time, a transformation that points both to the past and to the future – in the only apparent stillness of the present moment.

The image to which this statement corresponds is striking in the context of thoughts about what happens in the process of striation of smooth spaces in the creation of cities. Although I enjoy metropolitan conveniences, I cannot help being affected by the imposing beauty of the land beyond the lighted buildings on the coast.

In making art and defining the spaces in which living and creating is possible, we seek to both transcend ourselves and find a place where we feel comfortable lingering. As Gadamer writes in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*:

...in the experience of art, we must learn how to dwell upon the work in a specific way. When we dwell upon the work, there is no tedium involved,

for the longer we allow ourselves, the more it displays its manifold riches to us. The essence of our temporal experience of art is in learning how to tarry in this way. And perhaps it is the only way that is granted to us finite beings to relate to what we call eternity.<sup>1</sup>

Gadamer suggests that we must stay with a work of art for as long as it calls on us to see the breadth of what it has to offer. A willingness to suspend anxiety about time and reside with something is a precondition for understanding. If there is no central point of focus with boundaries, however much this center may shift over time, there is nowhere from which life might upsurge. However, being over-determined by one mindset to the point of weeding out all roots of difference also stymies a multiplicity of sources of vitality.

Something that a vital urban space and artwork as Bryan Norwood and Sung Won Yun respectively describe them share is the quality of resembling a living organism.<sup>2</sup> This organic (dis)unity cannot be one that is strictly homogenous but must also have strong heterogeneity or a peripatetic tendency in order to breathe. Toward the end of Bryan Norwood's essay, the inhabitants of Jackson, Mississippi transform their city to achieve "safety, place, meaning and a sense of belonging." To what extent is the "delirious mania" of a living urban environment reconcilable with a longing for home or dwelling? Is it and how is it possible to realize a sense of place, or as Sung Won Yun puts it "unity of being," in the face of rapid transformation?

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<sup>1</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Trans. Nicholas Walker. Ed. Robert Bernasconi. *The Relevance of the Beautiful* (Cambridge, UK.: Cambridge U Press, 1986), 45.

<sup>2</sup> This is evocative of Hans-Georg Gadamer's argument in *The Relevance of the Beautiful* that "everyone understands when we say that a work of art in some sense maintains an "organic unity." What we mean is readily explained by reference to

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the fact that every detail or aspect of the picture, text, or whatever it is, is so united with the whole that it does not strike us as something external that has been merely added on; it does not obtrude as if it were some inert element that has simply been imposed in the process of creation. On the contrary, the work seems to possess a kind of center. Similarly, we understand a living organism as a being that bears its center within itself in such a way that the various parts are not subordinated to any particular external purpose, but simply serve the self-preservation of the organism as a living being.” (43) This seems to also be influenced by the Hegelian concept of an ideal work of art as that with an internality and externality at home with one another in expression.

**Panel One Response II**

**Nolan Geiger  
Stony Brook University**

Both of our authors—Tim Stott and Mark Clintberg, respectively—are concerned with political issues of authority and governance. And they see a wealth of potential in addressing such issues by means of participatory (or collaborative) platforms found in the arts. For Stott, issues of governance arise in the management of complexity by a playground’s players; for Clintberg, issues of authority arise in a schoolmaster’s management of the students’ learning environment (or, in this case, the environment of the artists on retreat).

The authors invoke the minimality of participatory art as a providential resource for collectives and their constituents. A medium’s coupling of elements is a minimality which gives rise to a saturation, “a ‘reservoir’ of selection,” as Stott says, from which the players draw a variety of formations. And, this variety of formations, as Stott says, stem from the medium’s reservoir which always exceeds the actualization of the medium. Basically, it only takes a coupling of a few elements in order for a playground to emerge. Thus, the providence of a playground is its minimality.

For Clintberg this is similarly so. A facilitating environment is drawn from the minimality of the ignorant schoolmaster’s presence, a minimality which forges a platform allowing the students to negotiate their creativity on their own accords. In Reverse Pedagogy, as Clintberg would contend, the schoolmaster *is not* providential for the students because of pedagogical dominance or knowledgeable expertise; rather, the providence on the part of the ignorant

schoolmaster is the ability to delicately orchestrate a platform for the students to orient themselves without the schoolmaster's influence.

My response attempts to invoke a novel response, a novel response whose complexity will—hopefully—not be difficult to manage. And by no means is my response undermining—I assume my lodged criticism will, in fact, be an issue which our authors and myself may freely play with. Or, perhaps, I won't play—but, much like the ignorant schoolmaster, my response will try to cull enough elements to provide a facilitated environment which turns the discussion of this panel into a place of play; a playground, if you will.

In my opinion, neither of our authors acknowledges a question of accessibility regarding the management of complexity. Or, in other words, as an issue: how can someone participate in these participatory art schemes without the efficiency or ability to manage complex paradoxes like that of the distance and proximity players experience on a playground? There would have to be a necessary ability; one would need to have the skills necessary to gain some handling on the providential minimality of these improvisatory<sup>1</sup> platforms.

If one is to invoke managing complexity—that is, if a player can assess mediums in their reservoir-like richness with the orientating interrogative “Other—but how?” (as Stott says, citing Niklas Luhmann) one has to concede a necessary means of access, a staple for being able to access the complexity of these—*minimal*—but highly—*improvisable*—platforms; put concisely (perhaps redundantly so), one has to be able to manage complexity—plain and simple. For, I assume, if one is to ask “Other-but how?” there must be some type of know-*how* in question.

But, this is not simply something pertaining to Stott, this also applies to Clintberg. If one is to look to Reverse Pedagogy or ignorant schoolmasters in order to turn laborious learning and artistic production into something of leisure, then one would have to concede a reservoir of

knowledge on the part of these artists on retreat. For, in order to be part of a collaborative retreat, one must have some schemes, skills, know-how, etc. to manage the complexity met in the deft and gentle facilitated environment of the ignorant schoolmaster.

A furtherance of my rejoinder but with a twist: neither author gives room to the possibility of breakdown (and by this I do not just mean breakdowns that cripple what was building or driving forth from the collective, I also mean failures that allow one to gain a greater hold of what was being played at). An example of a such a type of failure: in jazz, players perform a piece of music by “speaking on it,” and in doing so they improvise that piece by taking its performance as a facilitated environment—an arguably comfortable place for experiment and play; the jazz musicians take the piece as a reservoir because the scheme of jazz music forges enough elements such that the actualization of the medium never exceeds the richness of that piece—or, put another way, the scheme of jazz music allows the players’ performance to never actualize that piece twice in the same way, to never play (or “speak on it”) as they did at another time where they took to the same harmonic schemes of that particular piece; the great virtue of jazz is the way a piece’s scheme is simple and can be filled in or colored in the way any improvisational platform can—that is, with a variety of possibilities; *but*, in jazz, there are times when a player in “speaking on it” does something outlandish or completely out of the range of the harmonics of that particular performance, such an instance frustrates the collective effort as they collaborate on this improvisatory platform.<sup>2</sup>

Although the jazz example cited previously may sound frustrating, such an instance may achieve greater understanding for the players as a whole (because, as a whole, the misled efforts of an individual player may potentially show a hole or rift in the collective’s harmonics) and the same for the players as individuals (because, as an individual, the player notices their disconnection from the participatory artwork played at—but, also, the individual

player in instances of failure or breakdown realizes something novel that might be taken into the next phase of play or into another session of play or even to another platform of play or, better yet, to another collective). And thus it would seem that in breakdown know-how is furthered.

Hence, I am raising a larger issue of cognition: How can the complexity be potential and accessible, or, as Clintberg says, negotiable as opposed to, perhaps, directed, if there is not a gestation period to inculcate the skills necessary for the possibility of this access? And, in order to bolster my argument, I'd like to explicitly indicate that the rebuttal to my claims *cannot* be that I have overlooked the instance of children.

Saying that participatory art is accessible to children does not mean participatory art doesn't require schemes, skills, know-how, etc. As Piaget says, the child learns and hones schemes by piling up bricks, thatching sticks and performing other types of activities where things are placed into formations—Piaget calls these ludic exercises.<sup>3</sup> But the child eventually kicks these formations down, the little boy knocks his piled bricks to kingdom-come, all done in order to be able to take the schema learned and accentuate it—that is, the child improvises with the schemes they know how to enact. Presumably, this occurs in the learning of all art forms. And, perhaps, with larger implications for the issue at hand, in the producing of all art forms, not just the learning. Schemes *must* be laid out with competence in order to be improvised.

Citing the instance of children also ties into another clearly foreseeable rebuttal to the issue I am taking up here. One cannot say, “well, know-how isn't a necessity for the players of a collective in participatory or collaborative art because one can engage in such endeavors and keep failing until they finally have know how...” Such a call to learning through failure is completely perverted. It has misplaced how one acquires know-how through failure. In order to learn from failure one has to recognize failure because, otherwise,

one never knows when one failed because one can't see it, one can't recognize what was failed at.<sup>4</sup>

For as much as complexity is potential and accessible in participatory art, for as much as allowing the spontaneity of facilitated creativity may seem inviting, it appears that there must be necessary conditions set in order for such platforms to be taken up by whomever comes into the fold. And, thus, my criticism of our authors (to move back to the political thread in their convergent concerns) is that within a modeling of a type of political potential based upon participatory (or collaborative) artworks lays a dormant type of conservatism—a conservatism where only those who can access these collaborations by means of (the necessary) skills may forge different complexions and configurations of set collective.<sup>5</sup> Or, as a final formulation of my point: collectively?—only if you've got the skills, only if you can play in the schemes.

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<sup>1</sup> Most of my argument is simply re-hashing Gilbert Ryle's point that improvisation requires some base know-how in order to deal in the improvisatory scheme. (Ryle, Gilbert. "Improvisation." *Mind* 85, no. 337 (January 1976): 69-83.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes even free play is just too transgressive, just goes too far, just is a little too far or out there, as the slang goes.

<sup>3</sup> Jean Piaget, C. Gattegno, and F. M. Hodgson, *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1962), 111-123.

<sup>4</sup> And so Samuel Beckett's famous dictum "fail again, fail better" doesn't ring true to the matter at hand here. My point is that in order to fail better one has to be able to recognize the failure for someone to realize they have failed.

<sup>5</sup> Thus, in summation, my question is really: communitarian values and participatory art for whom? What type of a collective is this that gets forged in the examples of our authors—examples which are seen as a positive resource for addressing issues of governmentality or authority.

**Panel II: Surveillance, Sensation and the Social**

**Collective Conviction: Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Inner Public***

**Kathleen MacQueen  
Stony Brook University**

In the fall of 2005, the large inner space of a New York City Chelsea district gallery is darkened; the tall floor-to-ceiling windows that face the street have been repeated in the interior so that when I enter, I also have the impression of being about to leave, drawn to the exterior light that filters through these frosted panels but fails to fill the gallery space. Figures, silhouetted behind the haze, move in and out of the window frame giving me the impression of watching workers taking a cigarette break outside. Instead I am viewing Krzysztof Wodiczko's interior, high definition, life-size projection: *If you see something...*

The sidewalk cigarette break is a common sight in New York City since Mayor Bloomberg passed stringent no-smoking laws; it is as ubiquitous as the slogan peppered for the last few years throughout the transit system: "If you see something, say something." Now an occupant of the interior, I begin to overhear the exterior conversations that penetrate the glass boundary. Just as when moving through the city, I pick up little snippets of conversation here and there and make an effort to identify its source and its subject. The conversations are as mobile as the figures on the other side of the windowpanes so I decide to lean against a pillar to stabilize myself and focus on the dialogue and gestures of those individuals who remain just out of reach but not out of earshot beyond the veil of glass.

The conversations are anxious, human dramas – conflicts produced when an individual finds him- or herself at odds with the system whether political, social, or economic. Two women speak of a marriage that is ending; a man confesses of his inability to care for his aging mother; two other men share the problems their children are having in the playground. Seemingly mundane, the edge in their voices belies the nature of the snatches of conversation I have just described. A sense of urgency holds me voyeuristically, a solitary observer who listens. In a conversation in Punjabi, English words slip through: “deportation,” “nine eleven,” “Muslim” and slowly the weight of the anxiety clarifies the visual haze that renders the identities of the speakers anonymous. The woman’s marriage is collapsing because her Middle Eastern husband cannot take the racial isolation that has suddenly become the norm at his workplace; he is returning home to an environment in which she, as a Western woman, feels uncomfortable. The son has not been able to care for his aging mother because he has been wrongfully held in detention for five years and is now in deportation hearings. The children in the playground have shunned their Arab playmates. A man cries because he is under investigation for sending money to Pakistan and hasn’t been able to feed his family since his accounts were frozen.

*If you see something...* divides interior and exterior space as well as listeners from speakers. I am the one intended by the system to say something. I am the one who might possibly call the authorities based on a conversation overheard while taking a cigarette break at work. I might also be the one who recognizes the fragile circumstances of these people who are, because of a turn of events, suddenly highlighted for all to notice. I am the one unexpectedly lurking in the shadows, actively listening, as if someone’s life depends upon it. Their voices are private, my accountability is made part of the public system but circumstances also reverse these positions. The pronoun ‘I’ becomes tenuous; it yields to the pronoun ‘You.’

Implicit in the haze that hinders the glare and impinges a mirrored reflection, that softens the hard edge of a framed division and prevents direct contact with the projection, is a wound. If you fail to recognize it in the body language then you shall certainly hear it in the cadence of the voices. The wound as an act of incision, a cut, a disruption – Derrida's *trace*, Barthes' *punctum* or Lacan's *cut in the real* – also, the originary trauma of the subject or the violence of interpretation. Cultural production is an active process, aggressive and demanding, but the controlled management of conflict can at times relieve the escalation of tensions that often leads to traumatic events. To (ad)dress the wound can initiate healing. But in the case of trauma, that wound is often invisible, buried in the deepest recesses of the psychic fabric – hidden and seemingly forgotten but ultimately manifested in alternate behaviors and visions. We will therefore begin with invisibility – the site of the wound – we will begin with Krzysztof Wodiczko's *inner public*.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his career as an artist, Krzysztof Wodiczko (b. Warsaw 1943) has been a cultural facilitator as much as a cultural producer. With his vehicles, instruments, and projections, he has sought both to highlight the conditions that inhibit speech and to create alternate conditions that facilitate speech. In response to Michel Foucault regarding *parrhesia*, the practice of open speech in a democracy, Wodiczko points out that technically *parrhesia* belongs to the *politis*, the privileged participants of a democracy.<sup>2</sup> How does one listen to those who are denied democratic process, those who by their very movement find themselves *in-between*: in-between countries, in-between legitimacy, in-between jurisdictions? In a recent conversation, Wodiczko presented a new question: "What was the position of this project in the lives of those who animated the interiors and exteriors of my projections? Isn't it that they are the public themselves? ...This *inner public sphere* of the project is the way the project is being used by the group as a transitional object."<sup>3</sup>

He refers to D.W. Winnicott's term 'transitional object' as a process of development, of healing, and of taking control of one's own life.<sup>4</sup> Wodiczko was willing to relinquish control of his project to his subject group: immigrants whose lives were traumatized by the fall-out of fear generated after September 11<sup>th</sup>. He worked with fifteen different human rights and social organizations to reach the participants. The entire project took over 2 years. Wodiczko describes his initially tentative position in relation to these organizations: "It is a complicated process. I met with potential participants who then convinced their support organizations to take part in the project because they started to trust my intentions and see their own benefits. This took six or seven months: to be rejected, to be mistrusted, to be put into tests... Psychologically speaking there is the destruction of the project; the project has to survive and be reconstructed as something useful." In this way they became co-artists, actors (active) in their own lives, reconstructing traumatic memories as therapy, as cultural work, and as artistic work. This *inner public* used the project as a means to reintegrate intimately personal and politically public worlds far removed from the exigencies of the art market.

The *inner public sphere* is, for Wodiczko, a kind of meeting place: the operations of the project and the reverberations that emanate beyond the project. As the artist explains: "I have not organized this...as a theory; I just watch and notice that something else is being created that stays longer than the project itself...These co-artists make use of the kind of set-up I propose: their supporters – case workers, psychotherapists and activists whom they trust, also their lovers, their friends, researchers, and media people who are connected to the various groups, and the technical crew who is often committed to the project – all these people reinforce their political links and collective identity." He also explains that this *inner public sphere* is not a closed system, that "art critics, filmmakers, and others intersect and connect" depending on their level of commitment and

engagement. Yet the permeability of the social system must remain a critical question and so Wodiczko creates a division between *those who know and those who don't*.

By denying full visual access to the participating public, Wodiczko emphasizes the strained conditions that democracy has accepted in proposing a distinction between citizens with rights and citizens without them: the economic migrant and political exile in-between the *here* of temporary status and the *there* of untold horrors. Instead of empathizing with individuals whose physical, social, and political experience we cannot possibly know, the viewing public faces its own accountability for the conditions endured by others. In this way, Wodiczko radically shifts focus away from the viewer's empathic experience to that of the *inner public*, whose own act of bearing witness constitutes for the migratory individual not only open speech but also activism. We, the viewing audience, are left in the broad open space of the gallery, a cultural space and a market place – Benjamin's arcade – they, the *inner public*, are on the other side of a divide, an uncertain space – the city street. They are, as Judith Butler describes them, "a population...cast out of the polis and into bare life, conceived as an unprotected exposure to state violence."<sup>5</sup>

We are all under surveillance in this space – the viewer but, above all, the passersby on the sidewalk, framed by the window becoming *tableaux vivants*: part image, part spectacle. But in as much as they are there to be seen, it is not the artist who has positioned them but Homeland Security, America's Most Wanted, and 1/3 of us who willingly admit (in a recent Stanford University poll) to viewing anyone of a different race with suspicion.<sup>6</sup> The semi-opaque glass protecting the anonymity of the speakers is suggestive of the shadow world to which our surveillance has relegated them. They speak in closed intimacy, the window denying any threshold that might be crossed yet they almost gesture to us, recognizing our presence, perhaps even *warning* us. Just

as we are privy to their conversations, they too seem cognizant of this game of cat and mouse.

The game of observation, surveillance, and capture is part of the system of national and colonial expansion that marks the economics of modern migration. It is also the game of the modernist flâneur introduced by Charles Baudelaire and discussed by Walter Benjamin who sets the flâneur as writer in the panoramic space of the marketplace.<sup>7</sup> The panorama – like the arcade and flâneur a nineteenth-century innovation – is a place of entertainment and spectacle. The modernist flâneur interpreted by many in the twentieth century as indicative of a non-conformist creative spirit, an individual set apart from the crowd, alienated by society but as such sufficiently detached to be a more accurate cultural chronicler (Dziga Vertov, Robert Frank, or Jack Kerouac, for example) becomes in the twenty-first century a more dubious individual of questionable intent as public space is redefined by the conceptual perimeters of terror.

This fascination with surveillance now ramped up for the twenty-first century had previously netted 2,500 calls a week from 8 to 12 million viewers on the Fox Television Network's long-running program *America's Most Wanted* (PBS, 1999). Thus it is not only the Foreign Intelligence Security Act of 1978 (FISA) and its amendment the USA Patriot Act of 2001 and 2008 that has widened the government's surveillance potential but each and every citizen who is authorized to determine perpetrator from onlooker: "If you see something, say something!" Or from Benjamin's 1938 perspective:

In times of terror, when everyone is something of a conspirator, everybody will be in the position of having to play detective. Flânerie gives the individual the best prospects of doing so.<sup>8</sup>

The question arises: when is the act of observation *surveillance* and when is it *witness*? Wodiczko's interior

projections of 2005 deal with the contentious choices a citizen is asked to make. Tactically, he sets the stage for a profound, philosophical struggle: what is the relation between reality, recognition, and interpretation? Who wields the power of representation? How are they ethically positioned? Judith Butler recognizes the discrepancy in representation as a discrepancy in voice:

The ability to narrate ourselves not from the first person alone, but from, say, the position of the third, or to receive an account delivered in the second, can actually work to expand our understanding of the forms that global power has taken...<sup>9</sup>

After September 11<sup>th</sup> the use of the first person narrative changed dramatically and complicated (if not irrevocably changed forever) both the pronoun “I” and its contiguous neighbor ‘You’ through the question of accountability. Butler, in speaking of the conditions (rather than the causes) of terrorism, claims:

...we have to understand not only how [terrorism] is experienced by those who understand themselves as its victims, but how it enters into their own formation as acting and deliberating subjects.

This is the beginning of another kind of account.<sup>10</sup>

The first person narration is by function incomplete; only can ‘You’ complete the ‘I’ – not in the sense of mirroring but as a dialectical debate in which positions of power are inscribed. “I imagine crowds of strangers presenting themselves in such unsolicited disclosures as they make their way through the city,” wrote Wodiczko in 1998 about his piece *Aegis: Equipment for a City of Strangers*. Over the next ten years, he would craft situations by which strangers create stories out of their unsolicited disclosures – of the circumstances under which migrant populations manage their day-to-day experiences but also why they came to migrant status in the first place. Their stories serve as a metaphor for

movement between the *here* and *there* of being – what Michel de Certeau considers as indicators of the locutionary space of communication - its transience and instability, how it fluctuates, changes, and responds to stimuli.<sup>11</sup> Wodiczko's windows serve as metaphor for the consequences of a failure to perceive such conditions – both a breaking through and a blocking off.

Wodiczko accepts the representational challenge in presenting the conditions of those cast outside the system through the contradictory position his *inner public* performs. "The speaker can speak but can the listener listen?" he asks. A story is told; this is the first step. When it is heard, the pronoun "I" cedes to the pronoun "You." As Slavoj Žižek and Jacques Rancière argue, "political struggle proper is...not a rational debate between multiple interests, but, simultaneously, the struggle for one's voice to be heard and recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner."<sup>12</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko by visualizing a painful division produces a double effect: on the one hand, he claims "it is the impossibility of real understanding of their situation that is being projected"; on the other hand, he instigates a tessellated reaction generated by the *inner public sphere* that extends out into the city through a larger discourse as a means to formulate the pronoun "We"—*counter-speak* to the isolation of fear.<sup>13</sup>

There is conflict inherent in his projection: it is not so much that he establishes a binary between us (the citizen with rights as viewer) and them (the immigrant as projected image) but that he forces an awareness of the difference between *here* and *there*. Conflict, for Wodiczko, is not an impossible position. Simultaneous to the *If you see something* project, Wodiczko was working on his proposal for a 9/11 memorial whose concept is presented in a 2009 publication entitled *The City of Refuge*.<sup>14</sup> Here the artist offers his vision of a memorial not as a passive monument but as an active democratic forum for contentious debate of the conditions of terror. His design of a floating public agora

anchored in New York harbor, accessible via pod-like ferries that form both a metaphorical and physical connection to the city's social, political, and intellectual networks, addresses the complex web of cause and effect in order to foster non-violent resolutions.

The city has become increasingly congested with roadblocks and restricted zones. The barricades no longer serve the purpose of critical resistance, rather political containment. The flâneur is stuck within a maze of unpopulated bureaucratic minefields. Dissent is stymied. Debate has left the classroom. Intervention has withdrawn to the lower hemispheres. Urban space is contested and so the prophetic nomad has abandoned the city streets in favor of the waterways. The concept of Wodiczko's visionary network is "formulated as a political and ethical argument."<sup>15</sup> His philosophical model is Emmanuel Levinas' analogy of the Judaic concept of half-guilt, half-innocence and the founding of ancient cities of refuge to harbor unintentional criminals and safe-guard them from revenge. These safe havens were developed as centers of learning to foster a just, open, and civil society.<sup>16</sup> To this notion of mutual responsibility for crimes committed, Wodiczko adds Chantal Mouffe's agonistic pluralism whose precept is based on an acceptance (even benefit) of disagreement and discord: rather than strive for an unrealistic democratic consensus the goal is to harness the strife of conflict in a constructive rearrangement of social and political programs.<sup>17</sup>

Wodiczko has long adhered to the belief that intellectuals have a responsibility to be active participants in society, contending not only with ideas but also with matters 'on the ground.' To fail to make use of their access to the public is to accept a position the artist extrapolates as "objective innocence' and 'subjective guilt."<sup>18</sup> In other words, we are all responsible for the inequities of the world and the resulting conflicts: our inaction or ignorance only augments our guilt. We must all act as individuals to facilitate and

activate collectives. The artist does this through the process of his work. Now in this social model he suggests a means to expand and make more inclusive his own discrete methodology.

Philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein describes a picture as a model of reality – existing states of affairs – out of which larger propositions are built.<sup>19</sup> He builds his argument in a spatial sense, atomically. In much the same way Wodiczko likens his local memorial site to a global proposition, his design a molecular model of interconnecting spherical volumes. The visual metaphor acknowledges both distinct and united forms. The design offers practical plans for facilities and resources logical to the understanding and de-escalation of conflict. We are presented with a model but also a substantial challenge.

Like Wittgenstein, Wodiczko investigates the conditions for the possibility of representation. As designer, artist, and activist, he facilitates those conditions. *City of Refuge* is intended to trigger response, disagreement, but also to create forums for open debate, democratic reform, ethical action and the healing of trauma. Wittgenstein uses the metaphor of slippery ice to evoke our desire for 'conditions [that] are ideal, but also, just because of that, we are unable to walk: so we need *friction*. Back to rough ground.'<sup>20</sup> When urban space is no longer hospitable to open speech and consensus building is like walking on ice, Wodiczko moves to water, alternately smooth and choppy. Let us consider his argument then as friction enough for walking. In his unsettling and provocative proposition of half-guilt and half-innocence Wodiczko creates in his words 'art for the political' rather than political art – catalyst for response rather than resolution – what Simon Critchley would consider the conditions for the making of an ethical subject, individuated through speech, responsible to a larger proposition through conviction.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'inner public' is exclusive to Krzysztof Wodiczko who coined it as a way of identifying the collective agency that developed through the process of his testimonial projects.

<sup>2</sup> See Michel Foucault, "The Word Parrhesia" and "The Practice of Parrhesia," in *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e), 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted all quotations by the artist were recorded in conversation with the author, March 6, April 21, and December 4, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of *transitional phenomena* see D.W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971), 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Butler and Gayatri Spivak, *Who Sings the Nation State? Language, Politics, and Belonging* (London: Seagull Books, 2007), 37; Butler refers to Giorgio Agamben, *Homer Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup> This poll was taken at the height of the 2008 presidential campaign.

<sup>7</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, Vol. 4, 1938-1940, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 18-19.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 4:21.

<sup>9</sup> Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 8-9.

<sup>10</sup> Butler, *Precarious Life*, 11.

<sup>11</sup> See Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the City," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (London, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 91-110.

<sup>12</sup> Slavoj Zizek describing Jacques Rancière's position against Jürgen Habermas in "Afterward by Slavoj Zizek" in Jacques

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Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2000) trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), 70.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the term *counter-speak* see Jacques Rancière, "Sentence, Image, History" in *The Future of the Image* (2003), trans. by Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2007), 33-67.

<sup>14</sup> Krzysztof Wodiczko, *The City of Refuge, A 9/11 Memorial*, ed. by Mark Jarzombek and Mechtild Widrich (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Wodiczko, *City of Refuge*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> See Emmanuel Levinas, "Cities of Refuge" in *Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> See Chantal Mouffe, "Democracy, Power and the Political" and "For an Agonistic Model of Democracy" in *The Democratic Paradox* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> See Wodiczko, "Afterward: The Intellectuals' Half-Guilt and Half-Innocence (A Self-Critical Note)" in *City of Refuge*, 37-43.

<sup>19</sup> I refer mainly to Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* from 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 46e. Quoted in Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*, 98.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the ethical subject see Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London and New York: Verso, 2007).

**William James, Michel Foucault, and Aliens?**

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In the *Principles of Psychology*, William James asserts that pure consciousness is a chaotic undifferentiated mass which is only made sense of after it has been categorized, cut up and named. This mass, this “big blooming buzzing confusion,”<sup>1</sup> is ultimately shaped by habits of attention. These habits, unlike the activities that one typically considers habitual, do not simply control mundane and basic tasks but actually mold the very world that one perceives. In his chapter on Habit, James claims: “Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent,”<sup>2</sup> insinuating that habits are extremely effective at keeping farmers as farmers and lawyers as lawyers, serving as a successful means of preventing movement between different social strata.

James’ comments about the controlling powers of habit are particularly interesting if one considers the power that might lie within habits of attention. Like Bentham’s Panopticon, habits of attention control our lines of sight, what we can and cannot see. Foucault’s writings on Panopticism illustrate how manipulated vision operates as a form of power and a means of imprisonment. Kurt Vonnegut’s novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* provides yet another example of how vision can take the form of a cage. In his novel, Vonnegut describes an alien race from the planet Tralfamador who view the limited human perspective as a type of prison. Vonnegut’s critique of human perspective, taken together with Foucault’s writings on Panopticism, illustrate the potential for human perspective to become a trap. A fusion of James, Vonnegut and Foucault’s writings

highlights the dangers of habitual attention, how the Panoptic structure can become internalized and how we can become imprisoned in our own habits of perception.

In his anti-war, science-fiction novel *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Kurt Vonnegut provides an interesting example of the way that one can become trapped within one's perspective. *Slaughterhouse-Five* tells the story of a soldier named Billy Pilgrim who is captured by the Germans during World War II. During the course of the novel, Billy is abducted by aliens from the planet Tralfamador and exhibited in one of their zoos. The Tralfamadorian perspective differs from human perspective because the Tralfamadorians have already seen every moment of their lives. While they cannot change any aspect of their fates, they can travel to different periods of their lives, experiencing what they choose out of the spectrum of time. Because of their ability to travel through time, the Tralfamadorians have difficulty understanding the limited perspective of humans. The tour guide at the Tralfamadorian zoo uses the following metaphor to explain the plight of earthlings:

The guide invited the crowd to imagine that they were looking across a desert at a mountain range on a day that was twinkling bright and clear. They could look at a peak or a bird or a cloud, at a stone right in front of them, or even down into a canyon behind them. But among them was this poor Earthling, and his head was encased in a steel sphere which he could never take off. There was only one eyehole through which he could look, and welded to that eyehole were six feet of pipe.

This was only the beginning of Billy's miseries in the metaphor. He was also strapped to a steel lattice which was bolted to a flatcar on rails, and there was no way he could turn his head or touch the pipe. The far end of the pipe rested on a bi-pod which was also bolted to a flatcar. All Billy could see was the little dot at the end of the pipe.<sup>3</sup>

To the Tralfamadorians, the human perspective is a trap. While the Tralfamadorians are capable of seeing any aspect of time humans are stuck on a one-way railcar with their head fixed in a steel cage, forced to look at the richness of experience through the narrow window of a six foot long steel pipe. Vonnegut's fantastic description, involving aliens and time travel, ultimately illustrates the narrowness of human perspective. His insights reveal that perspective can, in fact, be a cage in which one is trapped.

For Vonnegut, the true trap of humans is that they do not realize that they are imprisoned. They are unaware of the limits of their perspective. As the narrator says: "He [Billy Pilgrim] didn't know he was on a flatcar, didn't even know there was anything peculiar about his situation...Whatever poor Billy saw through the pipe, he had no choice but to say to himself, 'That's life.'"<sup>4</sup> What is most disturbing about Billy's plight is that he has no idea that he is caught in any sort of a trap. Human perspective has the capacity to operate in much the same way. Just as Billy Pilgrim is strapped to a train car and forced to look at the world through a fixed perspective, human attention can become trapped by habits of perception, forcing one to look at the world through the narrow window of subjectivity.

James' account of pure experience and attention suggests how it might be possible for humans to become caught in their own perspectives and, like Billy Pilgrim, to become unwittingly entangled in the trap of perception. James believes that the world appears first as a chaotic mass of elements that can only be comprehended after it is categorized and named. The ultimate categorization of the world is caused by the amount of attention that one pays to different parts of experience. The selection of certain parts of pure experience over others eventually becomes habitual, allowing one to select the same world over and over again with little thought or effort.<sup>5</sup> Habitual selection of a limited world restricts the scope of what one perceives, imprisoning one in an environment that does not reflect the depth of pure

experience. Like Billy Pilgrim, it is possible to become unwittingly trapped in perspective.

An understanding of James's psychological account of habit will help clarify how one can become trapped within one's own perception. The word "habit" most often calls to mind activities that one accomplishes with little thought or care. Habit is often thought of as confined to the movements of the body- as only capable of influencing simple, everyday and common actions. James, however, recognizes that habit has effects that go beyond simple motor activity and, in fact, influences perception, thinking and willing. For James, the effects of habit reach into many different realms of activity and ultimately play a large role in shaping the world in which one lives. In short, habit guides what one does, what one sees, and how one sees it.

James begins his explanation of habit by examining how it works on a neural level. Habits are nothing more than neural pathways that become strengthened through repeated use. Each time a person commits a new action, a new neural pathway is created. With every repetition of the action the neural pathway deepens, making it easier and easier to complete the action. Eventually, the neural pathway becomes so deep that the action associated with it occurs with little effort- habitual action occurs almost automatically. Just as a stream cuts grooves deeper and deeper into the riverbed along which it runs, our actions cut grooves deep into our brains, allowing the current of activity to flow without resistance.

The neural law of habit, namely that "our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised,"<sup>6</sup> applies to the realm of perception in addition to the realm of our daily simple actions, like opening a door or getting dressed in the morning, James also asserts that we have habits of attention that shape the very way we perceive the world. For James, perception is active, is fueled by attention and is subject to the force of habit. Habits of attention ultimately shape the perceived world, caging us in the automatic flow of habitual action.

James describes attention as the active selection of an environment out of the chaotic flux which is pure experience. For James, primary experience is an “infinite chaos of movements”<sup>7</sup> that must be sorted in order to be understood. Since this primordial experience is so overwhelming, one must select certain elements out of the flux in order to make sense of one’s experiences. The world that one lives in is selected from this undistinguishable, swarming continuum of pure experience. What one selects is powered by what one attends to, what one considers interesting and important.

Attention, like everyday and simple actions, is subject to the effects of habit. What one pays attention to out of the stream of consciousness is often a matter of what one has always seen. Because of this habitual selection of one part of the stream over another, certain parts of the primordial stream simply disappear. Habit’s effects are not limited to action but also extend to perception. The perceived world is shaped by habits of attention, what one tends to see and what one tends to ignore. The more one pays attention to certain things, the more stably they become fixed as the experience which occupies one’s consciousness.

While attention may be subject to the effects of habit, it is not completely habitual. Attention, at least at first, involves a choice. James believes that one is sensibly affected by many things at once, by an entire spectrum of experience. However, one is only capable of attending to specific aspects of this sensible spectrum. Attention, in this scenario, is not completely passive. Instead of outside experience shaping what one perceives, attention shapes what one experiences, selecting what, out of pure experience, one will appropriate as one’s own. As James puts it: “*My experience is what I agree to attend to.*”<sup>8</sup> The undifferentiated stream of consciousness left in its chaos is something that one never actually experiences. Instead, this stream is carved up by attention, by what one chooses to emphasize and notice out of experience. There is a certain amount of consent necessary in perception. However, once an activity of

attention becomes habitual, that part of experience becomes cemented; it becomes something that one always chooses. Just as Billy Pilgrim is trapped in the cage of his human perspective, habits of attention trap us in the prison of selective perception, making it impossible to view the full richness and depth of pure experience.

When viewed in concert with Vonnegut's story about the Tralfamadorians, James' theory of attention assumes a troubling tone. Just as humans, according to the Tralfamadorians, are incapable of viewing the full richness of their environment, James' account of perception suggests that perspective can lock us into a cage of our own choosing. This cage leaves out a large part of pure experience, limiting our ability to see the world in its full chaotic multiplicity. While James focuses on the necessity of habits of attention instead of their detriment, in fact claiming that they are essential for making sense of our experience, his writings, when read with the echoes of Vonnegut's Tralfamadorians, do suggest the limiting aspect of our perceptive faculties.

While James' writings are mostly limited to a subjective account of habitual attention, he does admit that society plays a huge role in the formation of perceptive habits. A consideration of society's role in the creation of habits adds another layer of concern onto the worry surrounding the trap of habitual perception. Michel's Foucault's writings on Panopticism in *Discipline and Punish* illustrate how controlled vision can be a trap, a prison and a form of societal control. While Foucault's theories are concerned mostly with vision that is controlled externally, in the form of prisons and observation, James' psychology is concerned mostly with the way that habits and attention operate internally. When considered together, these two thinkers illustrate the co-dependence of societal influence and internal habituation. The two rely on one another: society influences habit and habit influences society.

While it is tempting to read James as espousing a theory which is overly-concerned with the subjective, comments that invoke the social are peppered throughout his

writings, indicating a halo of interest in the external. In his account of attention, James acknowledges that the world one selects out of pure experience is not completely autonomous, not entirely unique, but is largely influenced by history and society.

But in my mind and your mind the rejected portions and the selected portions of the original world stuff are to a great extent the same. The human race as a whole largely agrees as to what it shall notice and name, and what not. And among the noticed parts we select in much the same way for accentuation and preference or subordination and dislike.<sup>9</sup>

While the majority of James' account of attention in the *Principles of Psychology* focuses on the neurological and the subjective, this comment, buried at the end of his section on the "Stream of Consciousness," suggests that society is a significant component in the formation of habits and attention. James acknowledges the effects that society has over perspective, implying that the power of habitual perception is subject to external influences.

In his chapter on habit in the *Principles of Psychology*, James notes that society not only influences habit but that habit has the ability to regulate and control society. Habit is a successful social regulator because it keeps individuals from straying from their chosen vocations, preventing individuals from challenging the ranks of predetermined social strata. James refers to habit as "the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent."<sup>10</sup> By this, James means that habit keeps people in their places, preventing most from making radical changes in their lives. Habit's ability to regulate society stems from our unwillingness to change. Once we have become a fisherman or a farmer we are hesitant to change our vocation. As James says: "It [habit] dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again."<sup>11</sup>

Our resistance to change contributes to the regulation of society; it keeps us all in our original places. While James does assert that the mind has a certain plasticity, a certain capacity for change, he also asserts that the mind becomes increasingly hardened with age. After a certain time, our vocation, mannerisms and habits are set and, while not impossible to change, require extreme amounts of effort to reverse the effects of time.<sup>12</sup> Habit, then, regulates society because we become conditioned to a certain mode of living. Modes of normalcy are regulated by the law of habit, by the fact that we tend to do what we have always done.

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, illustrates how controlled vision can be used as a form of power. Unlike the Tralfamadourians, who simply observe the limiting qualities of human perspective, Foucault investigates how an active control over vision and perspective can result in political power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault uses the architecture of Jeremy Bentham's Panoptic prison as a starting point for an examination of the power structures existent in modern society. Foucault's writings deepen the problem of habitual vision raised by Vonnegut and James. His insights reveal how controlled vision can itself be used as a form of imprisonment. The Panoptic prison, originally conceived by Bentham, relies on the control of lines of sight, on the manipulation of visibility. Controlled vision, when internalized, takes on a similar form to habits of attention. One no longer requires the heavy walls of a prison to control behavior; instead, prison walls become internalized, enforcing power with habitual precision.

Bentham's Panoptic prison operates by controlling what prisoners can and cannot see. The Panopticon is round in shape and contains cells along its periphery, with a single guard tower in the middle. The angle and construction of these peripheral cells makes it possible for the guard in the center tower to see the prisoners but impossible for the prisoners to determine what is going on in the tower. As Foucault says: the prisoner "is seen, but he does not see."<sup>13</sup> The peripheral cells of the Panopticon eliminate the

prisoner's ability to see his captors as well as his fellow prisoners. His vision is strictly controlled. In Foucault's words: "They [the prison cells] are like so many cages, like so many small theatres, in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and constantly visible."<sup>14</sup> Cages become theatres, transforming a place of imprisonment into a place of observation. Thus "Visibility is a trap."<sup>15</sup> When vision is cut off and regulated, so is behavior.

The prisoners' controlled vision enables the Panopticon to be run efficiently and simply. An entire prison requires only one guard because the prisoners' lines of sight are held captive by the architecture of the penal complex. This economy of power is enabled by an architectural structure that is *visible* and *unverifiable*.<sup>16</sup> In an ideal Panopticon, the central guard tower is always *visible* to the inmates, reminding them of the fact that they are under constant observation. Yet, from the vantage point of the prisoners, whether or not there is actually a guard in the tower is *unverifiable*. The inmate knows that he is being watched, but he does not know by whom, or by how many. The power of the Panoptic structure lies in this relationship of seeing to being seen. A Panopticon does not require heavy bars or chains because the see/being seen dyad creates a self-inflicted regulation of the power structure. The knowledge that he is being observed is enough to keep the prisoner in his cell, eliminating the need for heavy artillery. This control over the prisoner's lines of sight ultimately leads to self regulation. Controlled vision leads to controlled behavior.

Foucault extends this Panoptic structure to society at large, invoking the power of observation as its regulating force. The individual in the guard tower is replaced by "the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator-judge, the 'social worker judge.'"<sup>17</sup> These individuals serve as judges of normalcy throughout society. Their gaze is everywhere, pervading our schools, homes and playgrounds. The power of the Panoptic guard tower invades all of society. Each individual is held captive within the cage of his own

perspective, all the while knowing that he is being observed. In the end, we all become judges, caging our neighbors with our gaze and replacing the walls of a prison with the power of vision.

Much like habits of attention, Bentham's prison attempts to lock prisoners in cages of limited perception. While Foucault locates the power of Panopticism in observation, in the force of being judged by others, his account could be strengthened by an examination of habitual attention- by understanding the way that judging functions from within instead of from without. William James' account of habit, attention and perception provides an interesting account of how Foucault's Panoptic structures may operate from within. Panoptic observation, judgment and self regulation may be as automatic as our typical habitual activities like tying our shoes or getting dressed in the morning. It is possible that the Panoptic structure operates not simply out of fear of being observed, but as a result of our ingrained habits of attention. For James, habit not only regulates our basic and daily action, but also controls what we perceive. His psychology suggests that the power of Panopticism may not rely completely on the power of observation, but that it also rests on our habitual powers of attention, on the habitual internalization of society's power structure.

While each individual's world is bound to be different, reflecting certain nuances of attention, a large portion of the world that individuals select is determined by society. Like the Panopticon, habitual lines of sight may be controlled by an outside force, by the observation of others. Thus we have formed a circle. On the one hand, Foucault seems to underemphasize the internal, he downplays the impact that habits can have in regulating society, instead locating the power of Panopticism in the external. James, on the other hand, provides only a partial account of the social and external. While habits become automatic, they do not begin that way. They must be formed and conditioned by something and it is likely that this something is society. Thus,

James and Foucault can benefit from talking to one another. They both realize that there is a link between perception and behavior, emphasizing that what we see is as powerful as what we do.

The resonance of Vonnegut's fictional tale of the Tralfamadorians with the psychology of James and the social critique of Foucault, paints a somewhat disturbing picture of habit and attention. The majority of human action, while capable of controlling habits through the force of the will, is automated by the force of habit. Habits, once formed, are difficult to change and require extraordinary amounts of effort to reverse their effects. James also acknowledges that our habits of attention are, for the most part, determined by societal and historical forces. What we choose to attend to is largely a reflection of what society chooses to acknowledge and name. Thus, the panoptic structure has the capacity to be internalized. The gaze of society's judges can become internal, shaping the world that we see and the actions we commit. In short, the dangers of habitual perception are real. We must vigilantly guard against becoming trapped in dangerous habits if we wish to safeguard ourselves against the plight of being strapped to a rail car, with our head in a cage, capable of looking only through the narrow view of a six foot long pole. While habit certainly contains positive as well as negative connotations, the combination of James' habits of attention with Vonnegut's Tralfamadorians and Foucault's Panopticism paint a bleak picture of human existence. This paper does not intend to depict the entirety of human perception in such a bleak light. Instead, it hopes to illustrate the implications of habitual perception when taken out of a strictly subjective context, invoking social critiques and fictional accounts of aliens.

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<sup>1</sup> James, William. *The Writings of William James*. Ed. John J. McDermott. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1977. p. 233.

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<sup>2</sup> James, William. *Principles of Psychology*. Volume I. New York: Dover, 1950. p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse- Five*. New York: Laurel, 1991. page 115.

<sup>4</sup> Vonnegut 115

<sup>5</sup> While James asserts the human tendency to become trapped within habits, he does not want to condemn humans to a life of automatism. Habits may be difficult to change, but they are not permanent. One can combat the trend towards entrenchment in a narrow perspective.

<sup>6</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 112

<sup>7</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 284

<sup>8</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 402

<sup>9</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 298

<sup>10</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 121

<sup>11</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology*. 121

<sup>12</sup> James, *Principles of Psychology* 105

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish.*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage, 1995. p. 200

<sup>14</sup> Foucault 200

<sup>15</sup> Foucault 200

<sup>16</sup> Foucault 201

<sup>17</sup> Foucault 304

**Collecting the Frayed Edges: Jean-Luc Nancy and the Knot of Being-With**

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**I. Introduction: Being as Being-With**

The scope of Jean-Luc Nancy's project in *Being Singular Plural* is recognizably ambitious.<sup>1</sup> Equally rich as an ontological and a political work, Nancy attempts both a deconstruction of all prior political philosophy, as well as a repositioning of the entire question of Being.<sup>2</sup> These two aims are linked by what Nancy sees as the necessity of establishing a political thinking founded upon the proper thinking of Being as radically and irreducibly being-with—the singular-plural being covered over by philosophy. In order to open up the thinking of Being as being-with, the ultimate aim of Nancy's project is no less than “redoing the whole of ‘first philosophy’ by giving the ‘singular plural’ of Being its foundation.”<sup>3</sup> Nancy's first philosophy, in turn, is derived from what in Nancy's view is “the last ‘first philosophy’”: Heidegger's fundamental ontology. “It is necessary to refigure fundamental ontology,” Nancy writes, “with a thorough resolve that *starts from the plural singular of origins, from being-with.*”<sup>4</sup> *Being Singular Plural* begins this project of re-writing Heidegger's *Being and Time* by radically reformulating a term that is one of its cornerstones: being-with.<sup>5</sup>

While laying out Nancy's rethinking of collectivity as being-with, this paper will seek to raise the question of the limits of that very “with.” The question will be one of voice, of listening, of exposure to the margins that we, the collective

that we are, always manage to do—and therefore *be*—without. Can a collective at all be with itself among so many silent voices? While Nancy illustrates being-with as a knot, I will ask if being is at all times being unraveled, being frayed at the edges that taper off into silence? This paper will attempt to listen to that silence, to hear with an ear listening like a glance that does not gaze.

## II. *Being Singular Plural* as Phenomenology of the Everyday

In rewriting Heidegger's existential analytic as a "co-existential analytic,"<sup>6</sup> Nancy first takes a turn *within* Heidegger's thinking before the juncture at which Heidegger establishes being-with as the foundation of a fascist collectivity. At this point, Nancy then moves *outside* of Heidegger's thinking and into Nancy's thinking of a singular-plural being-with. This passage through Heidegger is essential for first allowing being-with to emerge as a phenomenon, but it is essential only as a passing through, for, as Nancy states, Heidegger's "existential analytic still harbors some principle by which what it opens is immediately closed off."<sup>7</sup> Nancy's task is to open this closure by tracing a contradiction in Heidegger's treatment of the everyday:

One cannot affirm that the meaning of Being must express itself starting from everydayness and then begin by neglecting the general differentiation of the everyday, its constantly renewed rupture, its intimate discord, its polymorphy, its relief and its variety.<sup>8</sup>

Heidegger first opens being-with through the existential analytic of being-with [*Mitsein*] in § 26 of *Being and Time*, but then closes off this opening in § 27 by splitting being-with into the authentic being-with of *Dasein* (described later in *Being and Time* as fulfilled in the destiny of a people [*Geschick des Volkes*]) and the inauthentic being-with-one-another of [*Miteinandersein*] of everyday averageness and

indifference.<sup>9</sup> The principle by which the analytic opens itself up to, then subsequently closes itself off from being-with, can be found at this juncture, the juncture where the branching of being-with into authentic and inauthentic being-with occurs. It is at this point where Nancy takes his turn out of Heidegger's thinking and into a phenomenology of the everyday, redeeming being-with from the Heideggerian split into authenticity and inauthenticity. If phenomenology is understood in the sense of seeing that which shows itself as it is, then Heidegger must, by necessity, reject any phenomenological analysis of the everyday, for the everyday is a space in which human beings show themselves not as they are, but inauthentically, i.e., *as they are not*. Thus, while Heidegger sees everydayness as "the undifferentiated, the anonymous and the statistical,"<sup>10</sup> Nancy turns away from Heidegger by redeeming the richness of the everyday and opening it up to phenomenological analysis in its everydayness.<sup>11</sup> For Nancy, everyday being is Being in the only authenticity it can ever have and will ever need: our Being-with in a singular space of plural beings opened up through Being's giving itself over to itself in giving itself over to us. Through laying out this task of a phenomenology of everyday life, the true scope of Nancy's ambitious project reveals itself.

In Nancy's reading, everyday being-with, at all times singular and plural, is all that Being is. As a result, everyday being is the only proper object of any existential analysis of Being. In this everydayness, we show ourselves as we are and in the only way we can be—as a gathered together in a collectivity that was never apart. The project of *Being Singular Plural* aims to reclaim the richness of everyday experience and establish it as the foundation of a thinking of Being that will ground a politics of being-with as "a being-together without assemblages."<sup>12</sup> The phenomenological foundation for this ontological-political project is based on opening oneself up to what Nancy calls the constant "strangeness" of Being—a strangeness of rupture, discord and polymorphy in which we are exposed to ourselves as

strange as much as the world exposes itself to us as strange. In our polymorphous existence collected together in a singular-plural being, we are with ourselves in strangeness, a strangeness that exposes itself to us, and a strangeness that we expose ourselves to. If care is the “originary being of *Dasein* itself” for Heidegger,<sup>13</sup> then exposure would be the originary being of *Mitsein* itself for Nancy. We exist as exposed and are woven in our exposure into a space of touching.<sup>14</sup> Being is this space of touching and the very act—always continuous and polymorphous—of touching across the space between us. This between is a distance and connection, a space of difference: “it is that which is at the heart of a connection, the *interlacing* of strands whose extremities remain separate even at the very center of the knot.”<sup>15</sup>

In what follows, I will not attempt to untie this knot, but to trace its strands to their frayed ends, not in order to *see* where these ends lead us, but to *listen* to what these ends lead to. I have chosen to ask the question of listening, as opposed to vision, in accordance with Nancy’s repeated privileging of *logos* as the primary means of touching and exposure. Through *logos*, Being speaks to us and speaks as being-with in its strange singular-plural voice. This voice emerges at times from the center of its tightest strands, but also *at times* from its frayed ends, where multiplicities of voices fray off into silence—stranded there, so to speak. The stress on “at times” is intentional, for the question is primarily one of access to the possibility of exposing oneself. I will suggest that these stranded voices of the frayed edges of being-with are not *with* us (the we who understand the *logos* of this talk, the we at the privileged center of the collectivities we inhabit) in the fullest sense of Nancy’s own use of the word, if being-with means having access to the possibility of offering oneself over to exposure. In turning to Nancy’s later work on listening, it will be shown that the phenomenology of everyday life of *Being Singular Plural* can only function if it learns to listen to and not merely hear these voices.

### III. Being as Exposure and Logos

As a political project shaping a collectivity that is already collected in its being, Nancy's thinking of being-with demands the constant vigilance of maintaining the opening to strangeness.<sup>16</sup> The strangeness of being never presents itself as a full or finished product, nor as some sort of complete totality. It is always partial, fleeting, retreating, vague, hazy, tapering away into silence. As Nancy writes: "'People' are silhouettes that are both imprecise and singularized, faint outlines of voices, patterns of comportment, sketches of affects, not the anonymous chatter of the 'public domain.'"<sup>17</sup> The task of grasping one's own being as being-with involves, on the one hand, letting these silhouettes be as silhouettes, letting them come to be as faint as sketches, or letting them be, in Ed Casey's words, as "ghostly demi-presences."<sup>18</sup> Yet on the other hand, grasping one's own being as being-with demands precisely that: at least a certain amount of grasping, touching, reaching out, exposing oneself to exposure. The individual, Nancy writes, is "an exposition both discreet and transitory."<sup>19</sup> In *Being*, one makes this exposition and receives that which is excreted in the discreet and transitory exposure *of* and *to* others. The task of a phenomenology of everyday life is to preserve this discreet and transitory exposure, but to preserve it—paradoxically enough—as discreet and transitory. This discretion must be exercised through the various manners of perceptions: an eye that glances but does not gaze, an ear that listens in attunement to what is said, and an understanding that does not conceptualize.<sup>20</sup> Above all, this discretion must be one of a language that, in the words of the later Heidegger, "brushes against the essence of language without violating it."<sup>21</sup> This language, this vision, this hearing, and this understanding are what the Nancy's phenomenology is always *on the way to* yet will never, as Nancy is fully aware, arrive at. Leaving aside for now a necessarily immense discussion of the question of vision, the following remarks will focus on Nancy's treatment of *logos* and listening—a listening attuned to the frayed ends of the knot of being.

Faced with the silhouettes of the strange demi-presences that populate our Being, those strange presences that we ourselves are, we must sketch these beings in some way. We must, as exposed exposers, speak about those presences, expose them to *logos*. For Nancy, this cannot only be done if “we have thought *logos* (the self-presentation of presence) as creation (as singular presence).”<sup>22</sup> Through *logos*, existence is in a process of continual self-creation, presenting itself to itself by speaking of itself to itself. Thus, “existence exposes the singularity of Being as such in all being.”<sup>23</sup> Beings expose themselves *as* phenomena through speaking and expose themselves *to* phenomena through listening. In this flux of exposure, of touching across the space of the between, Being makes itself present to itself in the ever-fleeting demi-presences of its beings. In the play of speech and listening, these silhouettes are sketched out, given weight, heft, and body, a body found and touched. Through *logos*, beings “co-appear,” for as Nancy writes, “Being-social is Being that is by appearing in the face of itself, faced with itself: it is *co-appearing*.”<sup>24</sup> And only if these beings co-appear on the foundation sketched out in Nancy’s first philosophy, only if they co-appear having thought *logos* as the self-presentation of presence, will Being “coincide *with* itself.”<sup>25</sup> The coincidence of Being with itself is rooted in our comportment and dependent upon our capacity to dwell within language, to dwell without reducing language to a mere tool of conceptuality, labeling, or counting. By dwelling in language in this way, the meaning of the with of the being-with takes full shape: “But the meaning of the ‘with,’ or the ‘with’ of meaning, can be evaluated only in and by the ‘with’ itself, an experience from which—in its plural singularity—nothing can be taken away.”<sup>26</sup> Though nothing can be taken away from this being-with, I would like to ask the question of that which was never there.

Though deeply compelling and worthy of a much more thorough discussion, I regard Nancy’s project as having at least one fundamental flaw—a fundamental flaw that Nancy himself can help us repair. Even while, according to

Nancy, “nothing can be taken away” from this self-presencing of presence, one must nonetheless ask about that which has already been taken away by the very assemblages that most deeply structure our everyday experience. To illustrate this question, I will focus on an example that defines our own collective being: silent voices, marginal voices, voices that cannot be made present as phenomena without violating the infinitely brittle messages (not brittle as such, as if they need protection by *us*, but brittle only in comparison to the dominant forms of conceptual grasping) they speak. I take it as a matter that needs no proof that we exist in a collectivity in which many voices either cannot speak or cannot deliver a message comprehensible to the collectivity’s ear. While Nancy may speak of a “singular sharing of voices without which there would be no voice,” or say that language “exposes the world and its proper being-with-all-beings in the world,”<sup>27</sup> the question remains to be asked: *whose* or *which* world is this world presented as? Is it not at the margins of this same world—our first world—where we find everyday being in what Nancy himself referred to as “its constantly renewed rupture, its intimate discord, its polymorphy, its relief and its variety”?<sup>28</sup> And are we at all able to listen to these voices without condemning them as mere cacophony? It is perhaps better not to say that they taper into *silence*, but to say that they taper into *speech* as they approach the center of the collectivity that allows them to speak at times, and always in a certain way.

#### IV. Is Philosophy List(en)ing?

On the opening page of *Listening*, Nancy asks these crucial questions regarding the collectivity known as philosophy: “Is listening something of which philosophy is capable? Or...hasn’t philosophy superimposed upon listening, beforehand and of necessity, or else substituted for listening, something else that might be more on the order of *understanding*?”<sup>29</sup> While Nancy proceeds to lay out a deeply engaging phenomenology of listening in the remainder of the

work, he leaves these early questions unanswered, lingering, exposed to us in our exposure to his work. In order to let these questions resonate more fully, I will briefly turn to another text that powerfully resonates with similar questions: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's politically charged and theoretically dense text "Can the Subaltern Speak?"<sup>30</sup> Spivak's text appeared in 1985 within the scholarly movement of the "Subaltern Studies Collective," a movement deeply informed by Antonio Gramsci's ideas of dominance and subordination, and originating with a group of Indian scholars attempting to deconstruct traditional historiography by relocating the locus of history to the subaltern classes, the marginalized detritus of history.<sup>31</sup>

As Spivak's later critical intervention into this project demonstrates, such a project of recovery of lost or unheard voices is not one of cultivating a mere sensitivity to the need for their recovery, but of something much more profoundly difficult to address: the possibilities of understanding these voices. *Listening to*, not merely *hearing* subaltern voices is for Spivak much more akin to a constant process of auto-deconstruction through questioning categorical impositions than it is just a mere matter of recovering lost historical sources by hearing them speak. Such an attempt at listening is also, despite the most vigilant rigor of the listener—a listener at all times a translator, even within the same language—both the only possibility for survival of subaltern voices, and the very agent of their destruction. Taken at the most vulgar physical level, the subaltern, of course, possesses a resonate voice, and he or she *can*, without question, *speak*. Taken at the level of a phenomenology of the everyday in which the phenomenon shows itself as it is, the subaltern *cannot speak* because he or she cannot speak to a listening to which it can expose itself as it is. In being heard, the subaltern vanishes to the margins it never left, never attaining even the status of a demi-presence. The subaltern, to employ Nancy's term, is out of touch and, most importantly, we are out of touch with it. Stranger than the strangeness of Being, the

subaltern is, in short, a *stranger*, a voice whose silence cannot even be heard.<sup>32</sup>

With the voices of subaltern silence speaking at its margins, Nancy's being-with cannot present itself fully to itself. Gaps remain, gaps which the understanding cannot measure. Yet these gaps must not necessarily be read as calling into question Nancy's *ontological* project of being-with, as much as they may be read as affirming the ethos and praxis of the *political* project of being-with. For do not Spivak and Nancy both re-affirm at least the attempt to hear what is said at the silent margins through an openness to what may be called, with great reluctance due to the delineating power of the word, "strange"? And, could it be asked, do they do so to the extent that they have stepped beyond what is fittingly called the discipline of philosophy? Is philosophy anything but a collective of hearing that cannot listen? Perhaps literature and art are—as Deleuze most keenly recognized in his writings on Samuel Beckett, Witold Gombrowicz, Francis Bacon and others<sup>33</sup>—much more fully attuned to this strangeness fraying at the edges of what the dominant discourses of our collective are always, at the slightest provocation, ready to declare "strange," or even "mad"? Is not philosophy, that most tediously trained collective of listeners, least of all capable of listening to anything but itself, unless it first collects its other as part of itself? As Nancy himself writes in his own series of ellipses: "[This is the] question of philosophy as 'literature,' which is about asking how far it is possible to take the third-person discourse of philosophy. At what point must *ontology* become...what? Become conversation? Become lyricism?...The strict conceptual rigor of being-with exasperates the discourse of its concept..."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. by Robert D. Richardson and Anne O'Byrne. Stanford: SUP, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Following Nancy's translators, I employ "Being" as a translation of Heidegger's "*Sein*."

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<sup>3</sup> Nancy, *Being*, xv.

<sup>4</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 26.

<sup>5</sup> Simon Critchley offers an in-depth analysis of the parameters of this project or rewriting: Critchley, “With Being-With? Notes on Jean-Luc Nancy’s Rewriting of *Being and Time*,” in: *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas and Contemporary French Thought*. New York: Verso, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 93 ff.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 93.

<sup>8</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 9.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper, 1962. For “the destiny of the people” as described in *Being and Time*’s most politically pernicious moment, see 435 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> The recent work of Ed Casey, from whom I borrow the notion of redeeming the everyday, can be regarded as a significant contribution to this larger phenomenological project: Edward S. Casey, *The World At a Glance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007: 267-275.

<sup>12</sup> Nancy, “Confronted Community,” in: Andrew J. Mitchell and Jason Kemp Winfree, eds. *The Obsessions of Georges Bataille: Community and Communication*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2009: 25.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger, *B & T*, 169 (translation modified).

<sup>14</sup> For a fuller reading of Nancy and touching, see: Jacques Derrida, *On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*. Stanford: SUP, 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> It is in this sense Simon Critchley describes Nancy’s being-with as an “ethos and a praxis.” Critchley, 245.

<sup>17</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Casey, 269.

<sup>19</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 85.

<sup>20</sup> My understanding of listening is heavily indebted to Heidegger and Derrida, especially: Derrida, “Heidegger’s Ear: Philopolemy (Geschlecht IV) in: *Reading Heidegger*:

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*Commemorations*. John Sallis, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993: 163-220.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1959: 112 (my translation).

<sup>22</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 18.

<sup>24</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 38.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 98.

<sup>27</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 85.

<sup>28</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Nancy, *Listening*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell. New York: Fordham University Press, 2007: 1.

<sup>30</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in: Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988: 271-313.

<sup>31</sup> For an overview of the collective, see the texts collected in: Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed. *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*. New York: Verso, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> The example Spivak illustrates is of Bhuvanewari, a young woman of about sixteen who hangs herself in 1926 in Calcutta. In order to avoid her suicide being read as "illegitimate passion," the "sanctioned motive for female suicide," Bhuvanewari waited until her menstrual cycle commenced to hang herself. Her act thus became "absurd," "a case of mental delirium" attributed to a "melancholia" regarding her purportedly bleak possibilities of marriage. A decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of the armed resistance against British occupation and was unable to carry out a political assassination assigned to her. Despite this discovery, her suicide continued to be read as due to an illicit affair. Thus Spivak writes: "The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read." Spivak, 307-8.

<sup>33</sup> Such a reading of Deleuze is reflected in Fred Evans' recent work: *The Multivoiced Body: Society and Communication in*

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*the Age of Diversity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Nancy, *Being*, 33-4.

**Panel Two Response**

**David Smucker  
Stony Brook University**

Habits of Attention, the frayed edges of a collective 'we' or 'us', the recognition of political positions towards which we have a simultaneous responsibility and profound deafness. As a first step towards linking these together, I'd like to recall Plato's famous allegory of the cave, elements of which seem to resonate through these three papers. The two railcar system with its elaborate headgear that the Tralfamadorians describe seems a lot like the rig which keeps the prisoners of the cave focused on the wall; the projections on that wall, which afford only oblique glimpses of another reality, which is in fact much richer than its surface presentation, have their echo in Wodiczko's projection; and the attempt to reconcile the philosopher's position with the cave-dwellers, to incorporate these 'others' into 'our' world bears some resemblance to Mr. Knowles desire to incorporate the stranger into a collective of Being.

Upon struggling to the surface, scrambling out of the cave, the philosopher is blinded by the light of the outside world. His first experience with reality proper and not just its shadow is a painful one. His habits of attention are meaningless in this encounter. At this point, whether he likes it or not, he has been forced into a position of openness to the world. But to what end? With his previous worldview upended, his enlightenment forces a re-organization of his perceptions, and a corresponding re-organization of his 'knowledge'. His newly found sense of ethical responsibility to those caged below sends him back into the darkness to free those that remain.

It would be condescending to claim that our avowed openness to the positions of the other somehow enlightens them, as the rescue of cave-dwellers by the philosopher might imply. I would like to propose that, in plunging back into darkness, the philosopher will be blinded a second time upon his return to the surface, and will find it necessary to overturn his habitual views of the world yet again, but this second time to do so communally with another person. In this way, his continual encounter with new individuals can be a metaphor for a constant questioning of presuppositions and emplacement of provisional guides to navigating the world.

At this level, we are looking at the engagement of individual beings with one another. Let's look at this from the point of view of a knot of being, as Mr. Knowles's paper guides us to do. From the point of view of a fundamental unity of beings within being, these individual beings are confronted with one another. They, if they can change their habitual ways of looking at the world and one another, recognize their co-belonging within being. This seems to be a best-case scenario. In most cases, however, we are faced, upon an encounter with a profound *stranger*, with a situation in which the worlds that two individuals inhabit seem to have no overlap. From the point of view of Being, what happens here? Being presents itself to itself as multiple. Not all of Being can be taken in from any one viewpoint. Being may be unitary, but it is not univocal.

Dr. MacQueen's paper invokes a phrase which seems to apply very well here, agonistic pluralism. The acceptance of division, the notion that each position is not solely capable of encompassing the richness of the world. Yet, this does not discount the position from which 'agonistic pluralism' is written, a third term, a third point of view from where the legitimacy of both positions, antagonistic to one another as they may seem, are equally justified. Recognizing that this position at least hypothetically exists, and that it may be nonetheless unattainable, seems to be the ground of the true being-with that Mr. Knowles is getting at. Yet, this is not exactly an incorporation of the other into philosophy. That

too would smack of condescension, as if all that the other needed to fully 'be-with' were to be more like us. It is a movement, perhaps guided by philosophy, to a point outside of itself, as Mr. Knowles suggests. It is not a growing towards one another's position, but a growing, together, towards a third one. This might be the language that allows being to recognize itself. Not the language of philosophy, where in having both read Nancy's work we realize our true being-with, but instead language in its opposition to noise. The language that communicates, that draws opposition into community.

And yet, this is only another of the many positions which being presents to itself. I would present, in contrast to a knot where two strings are tied together, a square knot in a loop of string, which presents several overlapping areas (three?), but where the positions of these overlaps are relative to the tightness of the knot. As we change our subjective position, as we alter our habits of attention, as we submit to agonistic pluralisms in order to avoid mutually assured destruction, we tighten and loosen the knot. At each moment, we must validate the solidity of our position, for, as Ms. Brennan points out, habit is not without its usefulness, it enables our lives to continue, and even gives the buzzing confusion coherent meaning. The difficulty is making a habit of occasionally breaking our habits, of accepting ourselves as provisional beings.

The consequences of not doing so, as these papers argue, can be severe. Dr. MacQueen's investigation of Wodiczko presents us to ourselves as judging, investigating beings, persuaded in the name of 'public safety' to report on our neighbor. Lest we totally internalize the panoptic surveillance Ms. Brennan sees ensnaring our perceptive faculties, and continue to survey and so separate ourselves from one another, we are confronted with the responsibility of attempting to encounter the surveyed other as a fellow being instead of a potential criminal. Doing so might not just break us out of a system where we are unwitting agents of a policing apparatus, but indeed enable us to more fully

embrace our unique ontological potential as beings capable of being with one another. The ascent out of the cave may be arduous, and demands that we possess the resolve to blind ourselves. Yet, to continue to face the wall in the shackles of our entrapped outlook leaves the other in shadow, a shadow that encroaches on us in the form of ignorance, bigotry, and the betrayal of our own humanity.

**Panel III: Recognizing and Reconceiving the Collective**

Presentations on Panel III “Recognizing and Reconceiving the Collective” included Raphael Ng’s *The Man Full of Content: Agamben’s Happy Consciousness*, Katherine and Tim Graham’s *Collective Interpretation and Re-Contextualization: Meaning’s Permanent Vacation*, Sue Spaid’s *Amending Museums’ Biases Against Working Collectively and Exhibiting Collectives*, Connell Vaughan’s *Street Art as Collective Curation*, and Gillian Sneed’s response to the panel. The text on which these presentations were based is included here, with the exception of Raphael Ng’s *The Man Full of Content*, which has unfortunately been withheld at the author’s request.

## **Street Art as Collective Curation**

**Connell Vaughan  
UCD Dublin**

### **Introduction**

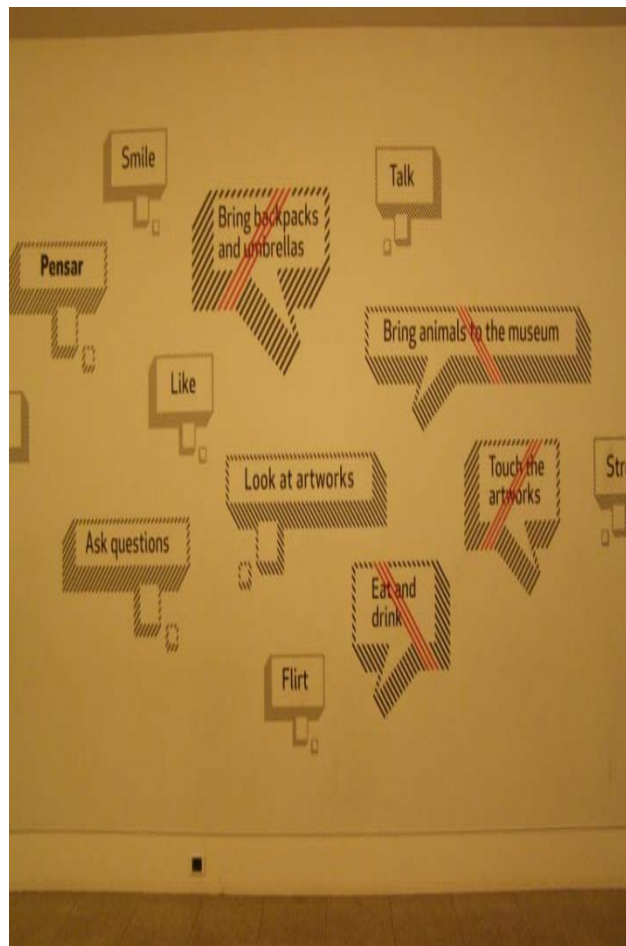
This paper will look at street art as an example of an art form that involves what I call “collective curation”. By this term I refer to both the fact of installation that accompanies the creation of street art, namely the curatorial decision made by the street artist about the location and timing of their art, and, the collaborative nature of this decision. In short, a collective form of curation is central to the creative process in street art. While street artists can ostensibly work as individuals, as well as part of an explicit collective, this curatorial feature of street art ensures that the collective (understood in a variety of ways) is essential to the operation of street art. This variety includes the necessary engagement with the built and natural environment, the public, institutions, and the work of other street artists’ etcetera for the piece to work.

Street art, in proposing collective approaches to exhibiting, challenges standard practices of the operation of the contemporary art world. Such alternative practice is visible when we consider the role of the curator. By combining the role of the artist and the curator into one, that is, the creator of exhibitions, street art, like installation art revolutionises our understanding of what art and an art institution can be. No doubt this new agent in the contemporary art world can be seen as the antithesis of the collective ideal. Certainly the experience of institutional recognition achieved by many street artists has been one of a trade off between some sort of censorship and career payoff. Usually this involves the hardening of the role of artist/curator into one specialised individual or institutional position. It is in this

### Panel III: Recognizing and Reconciling the Collective

context that the continuation of the traditional art world to place restrictions on collective engagement, for example in terms of the display of street art in a gallery, makes sense.

Nonetheless these interactive aspects of the collective, such as embodied engagement remain a measure for the freedom to dissent and further creation in relation to the aesthetic of street art. It is on these terms that I will focus on street art as “collective curation” that challenges the traditional operation of the art world.



**Classical account of the art world-the institutional theory of art**

Initially defined by Arthur Danto, the concept of the “art world” is characterized like so: “to see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry-an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art; an artworld.” (Danto, 1964, p580) Institutional theory thus takes a seemingly unambiguous and static approach to the question of art whereby something is art if it is conferred the status art by an art world or art institution. Steven Davies offers a useful definition of this approach to art. “To be an artwork, an artefact must be appropriately placed within a web of practices, roles, and frameworks that comprise an informally organised institution, the art world.” (Davies, 2006, p38)

Therefore, the logic of institutional theory runs as follows: Art institutions confer art status by naming and framing artefacts (and by extension related practices). This practice is exemplified by the mantra “look but do not touch”. Furthermore, the institutional classification that occurs in the practice of the art world is responsible for what is excluded as much as what is included.



Rubbish, metaphorically speaking, as that which is no longer an economic good and also not art, as the lowest category of object, is disqualified from the gallery. Both classifications, namely art and rubbish, derive in a sense from the same historical and institutional activity. Thus in defining what counts as an object of art, institutions are equally responsible for the creation of rubbish 'as much as' they are responsible for the creation of quality. It can consequently be observed that the traditional aesthetics of the art institution establishes a political dynamic, which draws a clear distinction between outside and inside. For example location within the art world is confirmed by presence in the gallery, whereas identity as an aesthetic artefact is established through the use of the frame.

The purpose of this paper is not to catalogue what is contained within the gallery or outside the gallery but to understand the operations of the distinction itself and specifically how the terms of this distinction are subject to re-evaluation. It is my thesis that the "collective curation" mentioned above counts as an example of a challenge to the operation of, and our understanding of, the art world.

The idea of change, however, is not contradictory to the basis of the institutional theory of art, namely the reductive point that 'art is what counts as art'. Specifically the content of the institutions of the art world are subject to the politics of the art world and the decisions of the curators therein employed. In fact Danto can be seen to begin from this realization when he considers the acceptance of the readymade as art. However a more significant type of change in relation to the art world has not been theorised in terms of the institutional theory of art. And that is the politics of the changing art world itself, not just its contents but its operation.

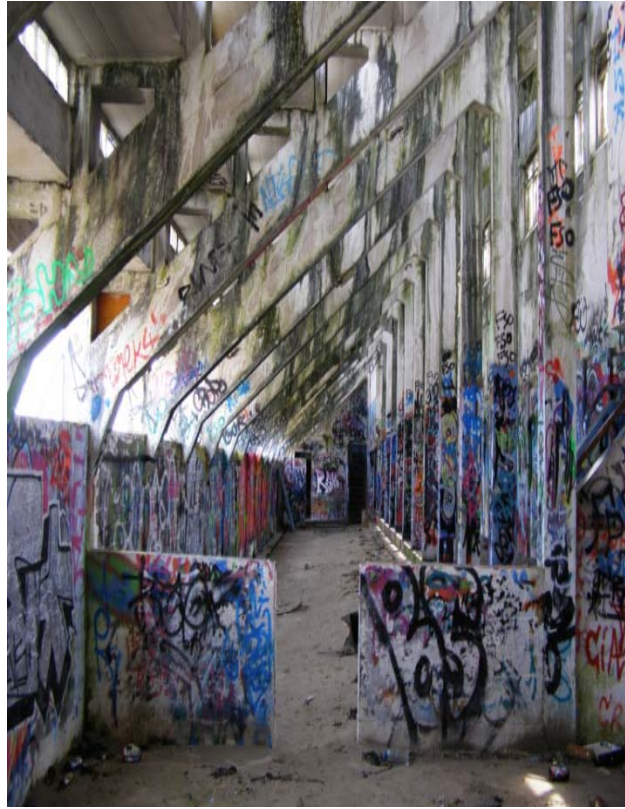
#### **Installation Art as "Collective Curation"**

This challenge to the operation and conception of the art world is best seen when we consider the changing nature of the art exhibition. Installation art (and by extension

street art) is a case of such dynamism because it disrupts the usual distinctions of the art world by forcing the issue of immateriality as a concern when it comes to defining art. The significance of this can be seen in the central role that the idea of that the artefact itself was allotted in the definitions of the art world cited above.

Essential to the notion of installation art is the distinction between installation art itself and the installation *of* art. Put simply, in the installation of art, the arrangement is secondary to the works contained therein. Herein lies an implied distinction between materiality and immateriality. For example the *Mona Lisa* can be seen to possess the same aesthetic qualities when it is hung in the National Gallery in Washington as it does in the Louvre in Paris. Idealised here, is the role of the curator as arbitrator of taste, operating devoid of ideology and practicing a sort of neutral hanging of artefacts. Whereas, in the case of installation art, it is the positioning of the work that is central to its essence and how it is to be interpreted.

In Bishop's words: "Installation art presupposes an *embodied* viewer" (Bishop, 2005, p6). By embodied viewer Bishop is referring to the phenomenological subject posited in the writings of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty *et al.* Briefly, for phenomenologist's the subject and the object is but an artificial division. It is also a division that we see replicated in the institutional accounts above. Embodied perception, however is where both the object and the perceiver co-exist. In positing a certain immaterial, ambiguous and might I say collective quality, something beyond mere material qualities is made central to the operation of the piece as art. The issue could be put like this: the work is instinctive insofar as it is interactive. It is this reliance on the embodied viewer which is seen to be the grounds on which installation art can supersede the economy and distinctions of the art world. It is in this context that the use of actual rubbish as art makes sense because it is precisely because of the disqualification of rubbish from the gallery that artists have been keen to engage it as an artistic material.



I am taking it as given that such an account equally applies to graffiti/street art. Here the work is equally instinctive insofar as it is open to embodied perception. Moreover this is because it is illegal and is also seen to break with the culture industry. In both cases the ambiguity of the status as art of graffiti and installation as art is also at play. Furthermore when the installation of art and installation are combined the aesthetic itself is grounded in the collective.

I maintain however, that instead of superseding the art world, the institutional ambiguity inherent in graffiti and installation art is better understood as developing as well as disrupting the operation (and distinctions) of the art world. Like graffiti, the prospect of installation art has seen a recent flourishing in the idea of what an exhibition can be. Here we find an ever

increased emphasis on site-specificity, trans-nationality, trans-disciplinarity, intersectionality, temporality etcetera. Exhibitions are increasingly *ad hoc* projects that are valued for their ability to move across boundaries, these being physical or theoretical. And it is in this context that the issue of the collective is best understood.

In the words of Robert Hughes: “In America the *Mona Lisa* turned into its own facsimile” (*The Mona Lisa Curse*). The possibility of a neutral hanging or installation of art should be considered as naïve. It is only when the institutional fame is contested, as in the case in the “collective curation” of installation art and graffiti, that something approaching politics is visible.

Installation art, like graffiti, may be considered not only as overcoming the simple installation of an artefact to be looked at but also as a kind of avant-garde exhibition. As such, while they embrace an ambiguous and alternative status in relation to the art world, they remain institutional by proposing new ways of exhibiting. An example of this is what I call *The Graffiti Gallery* at the baths in Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Here we see an exhibition that operates with a blurring of the distinction between installation art and the installation of art. In addition, this work(s) opens up a whole new range of possibilities when it comes to orientating one’s body and engaging ones instincts in relation to the work that are usually forbidden in a gallery setting. It also demonstrates an exhibition where the creation and the curation of the work is the result of collective and interdependent action. It should be clear that *The Graffiti Gallery* is a radical departure not because it operates outside the traditional operation of the art world but rather because it proposes an alternative mode of exhibition, and, in doing so, an alternative type of art institution.

The institution suggested here is one that finds a certain degree of resonance in websites such as <http://www.woostercollective.com> where the focus is on the showcasing of interactive, ephemeral and collective forms of art in a method that approaches the “collective curation” seen in street art.

### **The Experience of the Institutionalization of Street Art**

In advancing an institutional aesthetic centred on the role of the collective exhibition we have to allow the altering of one principle of institutional theory, namely the identification of activities of embodied experience instead of artefacts themselves as art. By recognising exhibition as the unit of meaning in the art world as opposed to the artefact as the unit of meaning we can include those practices that challenge the artefact centred operation of the art world.

The overcoming of the distinction between what is exhibited and the way it is exhibited as essential, is perhaps easier to view when we consider the agents of each. The installation of art is the work of the curator. Installation art however, claims some degree of artistic creation or generation. As such, contemporary practice (installation art and graffiti/street art) points to a merging of these notions in the example of the artist as curator and curator as artist.

The curator operates within the institutional framework of the art institution and by extension the capitalist system.

In practice we can see that the curating of installation art and graffiti does not exist beyond the capitalist infrastructure that marks the institutionalised art world. Rather it currently operates an avant-garde. And like all avant-gardes, it aims to become, in time, the dominant mode of artistic appreciation.

Such structural change to the art world can be seen in the way the artist can now engage the immaterial in their work for economic reasons.

Maurizio Lazzarato has developed the concept of immaterial labour (albeit not in relation to the art world) which he defines as “the labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity.”(Lazzarato, 1996, p132) While the informational aspect refers to a new, digitised nature of labour and specifically to the way the average industrial worker has become intellectualised by their new interface based activities, the cultural aspect refers to “the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing

cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion.” (Lazzarato, 1996, p132) In other words, the labour of the curator is an economic labour even if it does not produce a material output. Here we can see that in the context of this economic model, exhibitions are the commodity that frames the identity and the meaning of art. Exhibitions enable the trade of such labour.

This collective identity of curator/artist is the new agent in the contemporary art world. Whereas artists traditionally traded in terms of artefacts, this new person operates where the exhibition is the unit of artistic meaning. It is worth asking what kind of artistic unit the exhibition is. The exhibition is both the installation of art and a piece of installation art. That the exhibition itself would be an example of the installation of art is clear, but that the installation of art would be an instance of art only makes sense when one considers the possibility of installation art. The traditional installation of art may superficially lack the embodied viewer, but on the scale of an exhibition it, like installation art, presupposes such an embodied viewer. The singular that is superseded in installation art is the artefact. This in the end is but the inauguration of a more sophisticated market economy, one whereby the artefact is simply delayed.

**Conclusion: A New Political Construction of the Aesthetic.**

In disruption, we should not classify the “collective curation” seen in street art and installation art as being independent from the art world economy but rather as a political challenge to the operational development of the art world. Installation is, after all, a category of the art world, just as the movement from graffiti as vandalism (or, in other words, rubbish or non-art) to graffiti as street art (or simply art) is a reversal art world categories or values. In other words, to incorporate graffiti as street art (or art) is to reverse the existing definitions of art. In short, disruption accommodated is but a part of the institutional game and a common stage in the recognition

of avant-garde practices in the history of the art world. Perhaps the degree of success of the interactive and collective exhibition is simply the challenging of the notion of what an exhibition can be.

**Collective Interpretation and Re-Contextualization:  
Meaning's Permanent Vacation**

**Katherine Graham  
Stony Brook University**

**Tim Graham  
School of the Art Institute of Chicago**

We are a brother and sister collaborative team. One's background is in philosophy, the other's is in fine art. There are two recent video works we have made which we feel highlight various ways of proliferating information technologies that complicate what it means to partake in a collective. There are ways in which technology facilitates new forms of artistic collaboration that challenge both the notion of a single producer (whether that be a collaborative, collective or single author) and the idea of final and unchangeable works.

Descriptions of the videos and our proposed method of presentation are as follows:

"Become Humble" 3:22, 2009

This work consist of clips from Andy Goldsworthy's videos "Grizedale" (1987) and "Rivers and Tides" (2001) combined with an edited voiceover of Werner Herzog from Les Blank's documentary film "Burden of Dreams" (1982) which chronicles the making of Herzog's own film "Fitzcaraldo." The combination of the Goldsworthy clips with the Herzog dialogue create the impression of a typical nature video with voiceover narration, however it quickly becomes evident that

the narrator is not in anyway optimistically regarding nature, even as the character in the video appears to be positively immersed in the environment. The video was composed entirely by piecing together video clips others had posted on YouTube, where the finished product now resides. The creation of this work was therefore facilitated by both the overt and implicit collective aspects of YouTube, which thrives due to both people's initiative in uploading original content as well as in manipulating existing content, or in other words, in people's interest in YouTube's unique collective potential. Once the content is there for the viewing, it is also there for the reinterpreting and reworking. YouTube allows for new forms of collaboration which can traverse time, geography, and personages in ways never before possible. But this also raises serious questions of authorship and agency, as in the end, this model allows that people inevitably participate in collaborations with others without any intent to do so. "Become Humble" involves a collaboration between Goldsworthy, Herzog, us, the internet, and the viewer. And while the narration and the images appear to fit seamlessly together, they don't. Thus the viewer is left to question the authenticity of the video both in terms of its materiality and its overall message, while on the other hand the video also stands as its own unique statement. We see this lack of resolution in collaboration reflecting the complex conditions of digital material and our current situation, where anything on the internet can be downloaded and manipulated, there are no finished products, and collective manipulation is the name of the game.

"Close Encounters with Monochrome" 0:56, 2009

This video combines modernist monochrome painting, minimalist sculpture, and the iconic communication music from "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," all downloaded from the internet (the still images from Google image

searches and the music from a YouTube clip). The final effect is a call and response of modernist painting and minimal sculpture; the paintings take on the higher tones of the humans attempting to communicate, as the sculptures take on the low tones of the alien craft's responses. The photos of the artworks were culled from the internet's endless collection of images and placed in a new relation to each other, then reinstated back on the internet in video form. In their new constellation, the paintings and sculptures communicate directly with one another, participating in an active art historical dialogue, while also communicating with the viewer. In this way, the manner in which we form a community of consumers and producers around access to and manipulation of internet content raises questions of what the notions of collaboration and collective participation mean today.

We view the notion of collectivity as implicit in all our internet based works, which are both produced from and reside on the World Wide Web. Therefore, we are showing and discussing these two specific videos, elaborating on the themes introduced above as well as discussing the work of various philosophers whose work we feel relates to these themes, from Wittgenstein's idea of an open concept and emphasis on the role of context and meaning as use, to Benjamin's writings on art's lost 'aura' after the introduction of its mechanical reproduction, questioning, for example, how internet-based works both express and challenge these notions in relation to their complexly collective nature.

Video links:

"Become Humble"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MuaHVGybxaw>

"Close Encounters With Monochrome"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t3EYOMgnD4>

**Amending Museums' Biases Against Working Collectively  
and Exhibiting Collectives**

**Sue Spaid  
Temple University**

**Introduction: Museums' Twin Biases**

This paper investigates and explains numerous points concerning collective work framed within the context of museums, where a collective's potential members include an artist working alongside other artists, museum staff, non-art experts, museum visitors and/or community members. Before explaining why museums must overcome their *bias against working collectively* and *exhibiting collectives*, this paper: 1) discerns *communal* efforts from *collective* efforts, 2) argues that collective efforts include the museum staff's assisting the artist(s) to create the work or assisting visitors to engage the work, 3) describes and explains the recent shift from artist "groups" to "collectives," 4) distinguishes working collectively from working collaboratively, interactively and communally, 5) articulates museums' resistance to artist collectives, given museums' individualistic orientation and imperialist proclivities, and 6) demonstrates how *working collectively* and *exhibiting collectives* multiplies efficiency/productivity/flexibility.

While the term "collective" is historically affiliated with anti-capitalist policies, it more generally refers to "control and ownership of the means of production and distribution by the workers involved."<sup>1</sup> The aughties witnessed a rise in artists, curators and residencies modeled more as think tanks, research institutes, bureaus and businesses, elucidating the trend from informal groups of like-minded artists to participants positioning themselves as a

unified collective.<sup>2</sup> Even collecting museums have opted to work *collectively* as a way to share resources associated with acquiring, executing and promoting commissions.<sup>3</sup> For the Three M Project, three museums share resources, but curatorial practices remain discrete, as each institution selects and organizes exhibitions that travel to the other two institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Museums are either collecting or non-collecting institutions. The former consider their primary duties to be the acquisition of new artworks and the care, display and ongoing research of existing objects. Temporary “traveling” exhibitions are viewed as supporting these goals, since they encourage repeat visits, generate added income, inspire scholarship and lure new members, thus fostering future patrons. Non-collecting museums are typically, though not always committed to exhibiting new art. They are often *expected*, however reluctantly, to help artists produce works never before experienced, transforming the museum into a laboratory, whose consequences are entirely unpredictable. Indicative of the controversy surrounding museum commissions, *New York Times* art critic Ken Johnson recently lamented this additional duty:

In recent years, museums have been getting into commissioning artists to create new works. It is a controversial practice. Some critics think that museums have enough to do just sorting out *what already exists* [italics my emphasis]. Curators may argue that they are in the best position of identifying promising artists and to make possible the creation of important works that might otherwise never be realized. The problem is that you cannot know for sure what you’re going to get.<sup>5</sup>

The *Bias Against Working Collectively* concerns museums’ reluctance to commission new works for fear patrons, critics and the public will object to the unforeseeable artwork’s questionable quality. As the title of Johnson’s article, “From China, Iraq and Beyond, but Is It Art?” indicates,

commissioning works is a risky business practice, since the output may *fail* to be considered art!

By contrast, the *Bias Against Collectives* concerns museums' reluctance to present works made by artist collectives. The 2010 Whitney Biennial whose stated purpose is to present the art of the past two years includes only two, Bruce High Quality Foundation and Theaster Gates, from a roster of 55 of artists. Of the 172 projects comprising MOMA's Project Series (1971-present), only General Idea was selected from hundreds of artist collectives, while five husband-and-wife teams and one pair of brothers also exhibited. As art historian Claire Bishop explains, "collective projects are more difficult to market than works by individual artists, and they're also less likely to be 'works' than social events, publications, workshops, or performances."<sup>6</sup> It's worth noting that Manifesta 7 (2008) and U-Turn Quadrennial for Art (2008) featured works/projects by 40 collectives among 169 participating artists/teams and ten collectives out of 55 artists/teams, respectively.

#### **Distinguishing Collective from Communal Efforts in relationship to Museum Duties**

It's now forty years since museum curators first requested staff to work with artists and visitors to facilitate unpredictable art experiences. When interviewed by *New York Times* art critic Grace Glueck, "Spaces" (1969-1970) curator Jennifer Licht recalled her decision "to ask [artists] for proposals that would make unaccustomed demands on [MOMA] staff and resources. So in effect, we became responsible not only for exhibiting the artists' works, but for executing them."<sup>7</sup> To underscore Licht's anticipating a need for greater dexterity, she wrote Walter Bareiss, MOMA Trustee and Chairman of the Operating Committee, to warn him that "the exhibition will really be a test of the flexibility of our working systems, and will need a strong communal effort from everyone to succeed."<sup>8</sup> Although she employs the word "communal," she must mean "collective," since a museum

that functions as an artistic producer spawns a collective (the artist(s) working alongside pertinent staff members) not a community. The museum community includes all museum employees, yet excludes the artist(s). For the purposes of this paper, “collective” means “made by a number of individuals taken or acting as a group,” while “communal” means “of, relating to, or belonging to the people of a community.”<sup>9</sup>

In describing the museum’s added role of “executing” artists’ artworks, Licht’s mistaken use of “communal” implies that *all* museum employees can be blamed or praised for an artwork’s execution. Rather, only the collective, whose particular members produced the work, are accountable. Should an artwork turn out differently than the press release predicted, it would be unfair to fault press department employees for misinforming the public, since they work off texts issued by the curatorial department, often months earlier.

When working *communally*, communal “property” entails both a sense of community membership and ownership of the “general” consequences of staff labor, which includes tasks performed by others. Communities often *jointly own* the products of their labor, such as produce grown on a communal farm. When a museum receives a positive newspaper review, all staffers should share a sense of pride in a job well done. Similarly, museum staffs, whether working collectively or communally, share —one could even say “own”— their labors’ consequences, which presents itself in the form of artists’ appreciation, pride in work well done, management/board recognition or viewer admiration. The museum community owns its press releases and marketing tools, so poorly written press releases or bad signage reflects badly on *all* members. If the reviewer complains that the work is poorly installed, only members of the collective responsible for exhibiting the work, especially the artist, should feel disapprobation. Unlike communities, members of the collective don’t necessarily own the objects of their labor, unless the community and collective are identical. Unless

organized otherwise, the artist(s) typically own(s) the objects resulting from collective labor, paid or volunteered.

Last year, Tate Modern invited Robert Morris to recreate his participatory installation *Bodyspacemotionthings* (1971/2009), which originally closed at the Tate Gallery after only four days. Not only did Tate staff help Morris (aged 78) construct this large-scale installation (filling Turbine Hall), which invited viewers to carry objects on their backs, ascend inclines and balance on objects, but museum staff assisted spectators negotiating these situations for three weeks. “Spaces” and Morris’ initially unsuccessful installation recall the era when museums were adjusting to new demands made by artists eager to produce anti-elitist works that anyone could engage. During the late 1960s, curators like Licht were responding to powerful artist lobbies such as the Art Workers Coalition, who demanded exhibitions that attend to artists’ needs and depart from museums’ traditional practices.<sup>10</sup>

Ensuing scuffles between museums and artists (museums were not used to artists constructing art onsite, visitors handling artworks and/or navigating darkened galleries, let alone artists wanting to control how viewers engage their spaces) produced deep-seated scars, still in need of mending. Traditionally, museum curators play the role of morticians, maneuvering dead bodies shipped in caskets only to be resealed in protective crates at exhibition end. Alternatively, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, MOMA’s Project Series (>2000) and the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, *routinely* offer spectators participatory experiences. Other than an *Illy* espresso and Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster’s’ fantastic audio-corridor, “theanyspacewhatever” (2008), Solomon R. Guggenheim’s collectively-organized survey of relational art, offered little non-visual engagement.

In light of the *Bias Against Working Collectively*, the following statements discern museums’ *classic* duties from their *collective* ones. Artists’ studio members and hired experts are no less a part of the collective than the museum guards and visitors handling the works. As this section

demonstrates, *working collectively* requires recruiting members from numerous communities: the museum, non-art experts, the public and the artist’s studio.

**Museums’ Traditional Duties:** For all objects *o*, owned by museum *m*, and objects *b*, borrowed either from other museums or artists, *m* is responsible for their proper storage, handling, installation, display, lighting, labeling, packing, crating, shipping and insurance. Museum *m* is also responsible for lending, archiving and conserving all *o*.

**Museum’s Collective Duties** Museum *c* executes artworks on behalf of or in collaboration with the artist(s). For each artwork *e* that *c* executes, *c* is responsible for funding an agreed-upon proportion, carrying out agreed-upon tasks according to an agreed upon schedule, which includes acquiring funding, materials, equipment and labor for the production of *e*, in addition to duties regarding objects *o* and *b*. Should *e* also be participatory or experiential, *c* staff will assist visitors as they negotiate and experience *e*.

#### **Distinguishing Collective from Group Efforts in relationship to Artist Duties**

As the Addendum illustrates, the trend of artists working as groups is hardly new. Even the practice of working collaboratively with non-art specialists has a forty-five year history. Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T.), begun in 1966, paired artists such as Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Whitman with engineers such as Billy Klüver and Fred Waldhauer to make all sorts of works.<sup>11</sup> Art historian/curator Anne Collins Goodyear emphasizes how “Rauschenberg expressed his pride in the practical ramifications of E.A.T.’s collaborations in an interview conducted twenty years after the establishment of E.A.T.: ‘Something like nineteen brand-new patents that were direct results of *Nine Evenings of Theater and Engineering* went to the credit of the engineers

of the respective companies. . . . The technology that went into *Soundings* contributed to a cure for deafness that is almost perfect now'.<sup>12</sup> Sixty-three artists, engineers and scientists (including Klüver, pianist David Tudor and artists Robert Breer and Whitman) contributed to the design of the Pepsi Pavilion presented at Expo '70 in Osaka, Japan, while The U.S. Pavilion featured the exhibition "New Art: Art and Technology," organized by Maurice Tuchman to include eight kinetic works, such as Claes Oldenburg's inflatable *Icebag*.

When tapped for Expo '70, Tuchman had been working since 1967 on "Art and Technology" (1971) for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. This exhibition, which secured artist residencies with corporations, presented 16 completed projects by artist/scientist teams. Tuchman initially invited 76 artists, though he secured only 23 corporate partnerships, of which 16 worked out.<sup>13</sup> "Art and Technology" brought Newton Harrison and physicist Richard Feynman together to create *Notations on the Ecosystem of the Western Salt Works (with the inclusion of Brine Shrimp)*, which entailed growing Brine Shrimp *Artemia* and the algae *Dunalliella* in four massive tanks, and inspired Helen and Newton Harrison's *Survival Series* (1970-1973).<sup>14</sup> According to Goodyear, the anti-war movement and widespread protests against government policies aimed at supporting American business interests, during and after the Vietnam War, further dissuaded artists from pursuing further collaborations with scientists.<sup>15</sup>

Eschewing collaborations, artists retreated to an earlier model, whereby they worked as a group to promote exhibitions, events and theories. For the most part, they worked independently, though group efforts began popping up in the eighties, especially since groups prove better equipped to tackle issues that require numbers of artists working together, rather than working separately. Using the notion of collective described earlier, the following statements differentiate artist group duties from collective ones.

**Artist Group Duties** Group members *gm* control and take ownership of the means of production and distribution of ideas, artworks and programs made by individuals acting as a group. Members own individually-produced artworks. Ex. Group Material or Colab

**Artist Collective Duties** Collective members *cm* control and take ownership of the means of production and distribution of ideas, artworks and programs made by individuals working as a team. The output cannot be divided symmetrically, though *cm* may agree to partition, sell or donate it.<sup>16</sup>

Given these definitions, Fluxus operated both as an artist group and as an artist collective, though it's little known how much *all* members contributed to Fluxkits, etc. As already mentioned, the recent trend toward collectives is due to artists wanting to function more like think tanks, research institutes, businesses and bureaus who are available to institutions (museums, art centers, businesses, communities, cities, architects, etc) to consult on public projects, perform public interventions, create commercially available products, do design work or engage communities.

Given the artworld's current obsession with "all things social," there is no shortage of texts concerning collective conspiracies.<sup>17</sup> While most "collective experts" consider artist collectives some form of publicly available social practices, collectives are more like private, old-fashioned marriages! As small-scale eco-political systems, artist collectives provide workable mechanisms for ownership, distribution, decision making, delegating tasks and resource management to affect the greatest possible outcome. Consider that Critical Art Ensemble (1987-present), a collective comprised of "five tactical media practitioners of various specializations including computer graphics and web design, film/video, photography, text art, book art, and performance" has not only published six different books, translated into 18 languages, but seven museums worldwide have exhibited their work.<sup>18</sup> Emphasizing productivity above

all, the 3Cs: Counter-Cartographies Collective website continues, “We mutually exchange skills and knowledges among us: from dissertation writing tips to map software use, from driving lessons to daycare assets.”<sup>19</sup> Collective members get way more done *working collectively* than individually!

Bishop remarks that the “expanded field of relational practices currently goes by a variety of names: socially engaged art, community-based art, experimental communities, dialogic art, littoral art, participatory, interventionist, research-based or collaborative art.”<sup>20</sup> She neither distinguishes these practices, nor does she seem to take their differences seriously, since they’re all merely alternative ways of describing *social practices*. Working off my earlier definition of *working collectively*, which joins artists, museum staff, experts and the public, collective practices can be further articulated as either *intra-disciplinary* (artist(s)+artist(s) or artist(s)+curator(s)), *participatory* (artist(s)+audience), *interdisciplinary* (artist(s)+specialist(s)) or *community-oriented* (artist(s)+non-specialist(s)). Such methods provide artists the opportunity to further develop methods for *working collaboratively* across integrated fields (intra- and interdisciplinary work); *working interactively* with audiences desiring participatory experiences and *working communally* on non-art community projects, in addition to *working collectively*. While these sub-divisions may feel like new terms invented for this occasion, these particular modes of working already have viable histories, which I would articulate were there more space available. Collectives are becoming increasingly specialized affairs, no different in distinction than site-specific, site-relational, site-adapted, site-significant or site-inspired *practices* identified decades ago.

#### **Working Collectively so as to Activate the Museum’s Collective Duties**

Despite the absence of a sufficiently critical essay describing museums’ tendencies to colonize artists on the occasion of

their first museum survey, it goes without saying that most of the key players (curators, gallerists and writers) who first champion artists get erased from public memory by the time museum curators arrive on the scene. Indicative of their remedial collective skills, museum curators notoriously edit artists' résumés to include whatever exhibitions and articles bolster their project's image, slimming texts by eliminating the formative years, when what happened matters most. Were curators far more careful in their analysis and characterization of artists' early careers, more might be known about artist groups and collectives, since artists are more inclined to join collectives after grad school. Unfortunately, museum curators feel free to cut and paste as they like, constructing whatever narrative fits their brief. Artists are apparently helpless to safeguard names of those whose services once proved indispensable from the curator's delete bar.

For well over one-hundred years, museum curators have cobbled and merged articles and reviews to explain artists' oeuvre to their publics. I mention this not because I want to disparage present museological imperatives, but because it is indicative of an informational tension that exists between curators' "after-the-fact" accounts (often 30 years later) of what happened and accounts created by those (now 30 years older), who lived through said events. Museums take a huge risk to mount a first survey of an artist's work and must raise a great deal of cash and expend invaluable staff time to gather information, locate appropriate works and assemble them all under one roof. Needless to say, the curator has a lot riding on the survey's success, so how he/she frames the artist's work is of huge importance to everyone involved. While organizing surveys is a noble pursuit (if I had my druthers I would do so full time), I reject the current policy of colonizing the artist, so as to cleanse the artist's records of his/her messy past, while restoring his/her glory for the museum's admiring public.

So why do museum curators think such paternalism is appropriate? The answer is twofold- artists act

*autonomously* when making art and museums earn *authority* when presenting exhibitions. *Working collectively* means sharing responsibility, leaving neither partner *sovereign*. Because museums wholeheartedly identify with their role as advocates of artists whom their publics perceive as especially *free*, it's no wonder there's so much resistance to *working collectively* and *exhibiting collectives*. So long as museums promote the dubious premises of autonomous artists, personal expression or original vision, it's nearly impossible for museums to reveal the delicate truth that museums and artists frequently *work collectively*. When one considers how upset Joe public gets when he/she learns that some artist didn't make his/her art, one realizes this issue's sensitivity.

While collecting museums are typically the more traditional and resistant to change, even *non-collecting* museums prove reluctant to exhibit works produced by artist collectives, preferring to cite individual names, sometimes even forcing group liaisons to take credit for collective work.<sup>21</sup> Despite the wide-ranging impact of the Addendum's collectives, collective work is far more likely to appear in books, *frieze*, *artforum*, *Flash Art* or *artUS* than in museum exhibitions.

Rather than continue to perpetuate the myth of the autonomous artist, museums must ramp up collective enterprises, if only to reap the advantages that have made many younger artists incredibly productive, despite their limited access to cash and material resources. Collective action engenders flexible/efficient/productive alternatives to working alone (four hands work faster than two). While several collectives are specifically organized around the principle of escaping identities, so as to fly below the radar as collective expert Stephen Wright describes it, museums hardly risk diminishing *brand* identity, let alone power, by *working collectively* or *exhibiting collectives*. Public surveys routinely peg museums as the nation's most trusted institutions. Museums had better comply before some radical collective kidnaps their identity in exchange for a show!

**ADDENDUM**

**Incomplete List of Artist Groups and Collectives** (decade initiated) (color-coded TBA)

JP/TH UK/AU US/CA/MX IT/CH DE/AU/PL NE/BE/DE  
FR VE/AR/BR

**Thirties**

Abstraction-Création

**Forties**

MADI

COBRA

Arte

Concreto-Invencion

**Fifties**

LI Grupo Ruptura

Gutai IG  
SI

YAM Fest Gruppo T

Gruppo N Effekt Group

The

GRAV

Equipo 57

Nouveau Réalisme

**Sixties** SPACE Fluxus

Fluxus

Fluxus

Hi-Red Center Anonima Group

APG USCO

Art & Language Pulsa

Ant Farm

General Idea

Royal Chicano Air Force

**Seventies**

Anne et Patrick Poirier

Yellow House Geneal Idea

“Art and Technology”

Colab

The Harrisons

Fischli & Weiss

Panel III: Recognizing and Reconceiving the Collective

La Raza Graphics  
**Eighties** Ocean Earth relax IRWIN  
Information Fiction Publicité  
Critical Art Ensemble  
ARC group Gran Fury  
Brixton Haha  
TODT  
REPOhistory  
Tim Rollins and KOS  
Culture Clash  
Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler  
Sapphire & Crystals  
Cacophony Society  
Guerilla Girls  
United Congress

**Nineties** CLUI Vedova Mazzei Atelier van  
Lieshout  
land foundation The Yes Men WochenKlausur N55  
Luna Nera Bernadette Corporation Gelitin Superflex  
RTS Hirsch Farm Project  
Elmgren&Dragset  
Bureau of Inverse Technology  
Nine Mile Run Greenway Project  
Red Herring Harrison Studio  
Janet Cardiff/George Bures Miller  
Futurefarmers 0100101110101101.org  
Temporary Services  
Royal Art Lodge Steiner/Lenzlinger  
Art Club 2000 L/B  
61<sup>st</sup> and Blackstone Kroesos Foundation  
Tercerunquinto  
FLOOD  
Torolab  
RTMark  
Art.net  
SITO  
Experimental Skeleton

The Stockyard Institute  
 Allora & Calzadilla  
 Type A  
 Chenoweth/Berman  
 Justseeds  
 The Atlas Group  
**Aughties** Experimental Station Famed UQBAR  
 Fdn Claire Fontaine  
 Salon People Powered Teufelsgroup  
 Parfyme  
 Temescal Amity Works M-City Nina  
 Beier&Marie Lund  
 Future Farmers -fabrics interseason  
 3 Rivers 2<sup>nd</sup> Nature Burghard  
 Bosch&Fjord  
 Free Soil Zimmerfrei NMP State of  
 Sabotage  
 Mischief Makers JAM Social Art Praxis xurban-  
 collective  
 Learning Group ETOY Corp  
 fieldfaring Brave New Alps  
 Sundown Salon Rimini Protokoll  
 Habitat for Artists AKassen  
 Paper Rad Candida TV  
 Reena Spaulings FluchtKunst  
 Free Walking  
 Lighting for Urban Rooftop Environments  
 Philadelphia Institute for Advanced Study  
 Mess Hall  
 3Cs: Counter-Cartographies Collective  
 Institute for Applied Autonomy  
 Nsumi  
 PFFR  
 Print Liberation

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<sup>1</sup> *Webster’s II New Riverside Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), p. 281

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<sup>2</sup> See the Addendum for a chronological list of artist collectives. Collective curatorial approaches include De Appel's curatorial school (NE), Office for Cognitive Urbanism (AU), Manifesta European Biennial, Raqs Media Collective (IN), U-Turn Quadrennial (DK), Eleventh Istanbul Biennial (2009) curated by Croatia curatorial collective What, How and For Whom, and the ubiquitous trio of Maurizio Cattelan (*permanent food* editor (1995 to 2007), 6<sup>th</sup> Caribbean Biennial co-curator and artist), Massimiliano Gioni (co-curator Manifesta 5 and New Museum curator) and Ali Subotnick (Hammer Museum curator), who collectively curated both the Wrong Gallery (2002-2009) and the 4<sup>th</sup> Berlin Biennial, and edited the journal *Charley* (2001-7). Older international exhibitions (Documenta, Venice Biennale, São Paulo Biennial) employ a single artistic director rather than curatorial teams. Ongoing artist-initiated residencies focused on collective practices include the Polygon project (France), Banff Centre's recent "Polymath Breakthrough" (Canada), Cittadellarte-Pistoletto Foundation (IT), the land foundation (TH) and Mildred's Lane (USA).

<sup>3</sup> The Three M Project is a partnership between the New Museum, New York City; the MCA, Chicago and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, which has presented new works by Aernout Mik, Fiona Tan, Jeremy Deller, Daria Martin, Mathias Poledna and *Urban China*. Regarding their mission: "In 2004, The Three M Project was conceived ... to jointly commission, exhibit, and acquire important works of contemporary art by artists whose work has not yet received significant recognition. All three museums share a collaborative vision and entrepreneurial spirit, and the belief that ambitious projects on a national scale can be produced through efficiency, knowledge, and resource sharing." [http://www.newmuseum.org/assets/general/pressreleases/2008.12.19Urban\\_China\\_Press\\_Release-4.pdf](http://www.newmuseum.org/assets/general/pressreleases/2008.12.19Urban_China_Press_Release-4.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>

[http://www.finchchannel.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=29728&Itemid=10](http://www.finchchannel.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29728&Itemid=10)

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<sup>5</sup> Ken Johnson, "From China, Iraq and Beyond, but Is It Art?," *New York Times*, February 19, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaborations and Its Discontents," *Artforum*, February 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Grace Glueck, "Museum Beckoning Space Explorers," *New York Times*, January 2, 1970, p. 34.

<sup>8</sup> Julie Riess, *From Margin to Center* (Boston: MIT Press, 2001), p. 88

<sup>9</sup> *Webster's II*, p. 281 and p. 288.

<sup>10</sup> Riess, pp. 87-88.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.zakros.com/projects/eat/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> Anne Collins Goodyear, "Gyorgy Kepes, Billy Klüver, and American Art of the 1960s: Defining Attitudes Toward Science and Technology," *Science in Context* (2004), 17:4, 628.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Collins Goodyear, "From Technophilia to Technophobia: The Impact of the Vietnam War on the Reception of 'Art and Technology'," *Leonardo* (April 2008), 41:2

<sup>14</sup> The Harrisons' *Survival Series* introduced self-sufficient farming techniques to grow catfish, beans, berries, cucumbers, oranges and avocados inside museums. Sue Spaid, *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecology* (Cincinnati: Contemporary Arts Center, 2002), pp. 33-34.

<sup>15</sup> Goodyear's article, "From Technophilia to Technophobia: The Impact of the Vietnam War on the Reception of 'Art and Technology'," tells the complete story.

<sup>16</sup> For an alternative viewpoint, check out [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist\\_collective](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artist_collective).

<sup>17</sup> Texts by "collective experts" include: George Baker "Introduction to 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'" (*October*, 2004), Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents" (*Artforum*, 2006); Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" (*October*, 2004); Claire Bishop, *Participation* (2006, MIT Press); Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique Relationnelle* (1998); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitudes: War and Democracy in the Age of*

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*Empire* (2005); Grant Kester, *Art, Activism and Oppositionality* (1998); Grant Kester *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004); Lucy Lippard, *Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002); French journal *Multitudes* (2000, <http://multitudes.samizdat.net/-Multitudes-Infos-une-liste->); Ted Purves' *What We Want is Free: Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art* (2005) and Steven Wright "Spy Art: Infiltrating the Real" (*Afterimage*, Sept-October 2006).

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.critical-art.net/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.countercartographies.org/about-us-mainmenu-28>

<sup>20</sup> Bishop, 2006.

<sup>21</sup> Ocean Earth member Peter Fend has complained numerous times about this injustice. Most notably, the Smart Museum's 2000 exhibition included collective works presented as "Ecologies: Mark Dion, Peter Fend, Dan Peterman," though its 2008 exhibition "Beyond Green," also curated by Stephanie Smith, cited six collectives among its 13 participants. Similarly, Matt Coolidge often represents CLUI, whose projects are carried out all over by scores of associates. Museums treat two-person teams with the same last names like one artist: Bernd and Hilla Becher (1959-2007), Anne et Patrick Poirier (since 1971) and Newton and Helen Harrison (1972-1993) (the Harrison Studio since 1993). It gets trickier when differently-named teams such as Kate Ericson and Mel Ziegler (1985-1995) or Alloro & Calzadillo are included in group shows, since museum audiences expect single, not multiple names.

**Panel Three Response**

**Gillian Sneed  
Stony Brook University**

Collecting, Collaborating, and Collectivity: three terms that can be used to describe processes of gathering things together, working together, being a part of a group. The papers in this panel grapple with these concepts as they relate to artistic production and its presentation, processes that in the realm of visual art all seem to converge on a fourth concept: curation.

Raphael's paper, tracing Kant and Nietzsche through Agamben, contends that critical art spectatorship implies a passive distancing, a sense of alienation and negation, a removal of content. As a natural counterpoint to this situation, the artist is also left without content. Her creative process, then, represents her perpetual attempt to emerge out of the nothingness of expression to become self-actualized. While the art critic's perversion of taste represents *passive* nihilism, art—the negation of the negation of the Kantian split—represents *active* nihilism. Ultimately, for Raphael, the only figure who is capable of traversing both positions in a productive manner in order to transcend Kant's separation of the artist and critic is the figure of the collector, a person who achieves a recovery of poesis by being interested, involved, self-generated, and filled with content.

Katherine and Tim's collaboratively produced videos highlight the anonymous collaborative potentialities offered by the Internet, where raw content authored by an infinite number of sources can be appropriated to produce new works. One consequence of this process is the fact that in some way these original authors have in some way unintentionally "collaborated" with one another.

Sue makes the compelling argument that though an abundance of artist collectives proliferate in the contemporary art scene, and despite their involvement in international biennials, triennials, and certainly in galleries, there is a dearth of promotion and support of collectives at the institutional and museum level. This is due, in part, to their continued propagation of the myth of the heroic, ingenious individual artist, a paradigm that directly results from the art institution's position within the marketplace.

Lastly, Connell suggests that street art represents a model of collective curation, which challenges the traditional emphasis on the art object and its container. Allying street art with installation art, which represents embodied environments over spectated ones, and values immaterial labor over material artifacts, Connell argues that the identity of a street artist implicitly combines the role of the artist and curator into one.

I really enjoyed all of these talks. So, as a preface to the following response, I want to thank all of the speakers for sharing their insights with us. It seems to me that at the heart of all of these papers are questions around the curation of content, authorship, and to some degree, the politics surrounding these issues.

Connell echoes Raphael's discussion of how the collector functions as some kind of combination of the critic and artist, when he positions the street artist as a combination of artist and curator. Yet, I wonder if Raphael shouldn't also be talking about the *curator*, rather than the collector. He posits collectorship as the site for the renewal of poiesis, referencing the "cabinet of curiosities" as the paradigm that evidences the marriage of criticality and creativity that he advocates. Yet, as we know, the cabinet of curiosities is the forerunner of the modern day exhibition. Beyond just *collecting* curiosities, the owner of such a cabinet enacts critical selections and eliminations, produces aesthetic arrangements, and engages in grouping the parts into a unified whole under a theme, or classifying them according to subthemes, all of which are better described by the term

*curating*. To me, it seems that this recovery of poiesis is perhaps better embodied in the more active, creative *and* critical act of curating, rather than the act of merely *collecting* the content.

Thinking about the differences between a conglomeration of *collected* content and a selected arrangement of *curated* content brings me to Katherine and Tim's presentation. Is You Tube a site of curation—of critical selection—or is it merely a collection—an assortment of similar or dissimilar items? Is their project a collaborative art project, or more akin to what Connell terms "collective curation," and what is the difference? Ultimately, these questions highlight the parallels between the creative project of art-making and the creative process of curation, an issue prevalent in contemporary art discourse which more and more positions curators as artists and artists as curators.

The issue of authorship is obviously challenged by the kinds of art practices that Katherine and Tim, and Connell discuss. These kinds of practices imply critical challenges to the art institution, an entity that by definition relies on fixed notions of independent authorship, chronological conceptions of history, and hierarchies of value. In fact, these are the very elements of the conventional art historical methodologies that institutions rely on. It is for this reason that I wonder if Sue's call for art institutions to take up collective art practices is not misplaced?

It seems to me that these practices are in fact antithetical to the entire *raison d'être* of these kinds of institutions. Institutions like MoMA have recently started collecting performance art, a problematic new practice that seems to fix these kinds of ephemeral works as stagnant artifacts, rather than renovate them with new life. It seems to me that not-for profits, and non-collecting museums, like the New Museum —responsible for innovative immaterial and ephemeral projects like *Unmonumental*, an exhibition mounted in four stages over a period of several months, and *Night School*, a year-long pedagogic happening—get it right,

because they are not solely aimed at quantifying and commodifying the value of collectable objects.

In “From the critique of institutions to an institution of critique,” Andrea Fraser argues that institutional critique must necessarily operate from within the art institution itself. But I would argue that within the market-driven capitalist system, this is a practical impossibility, and that the only venue where immaterial labor, ephemeral art practices, and the non-object could actually thrive is in the alternative art space, the not-for profit, or the outsider art space. While these venues also participate to some extent in the “art institution,” they are nonetheless removed from the art market, enabling a politics of criticality, which is not available at mainstream institutions such as MoMA.

Lastly, I’m interested in two thinkers relevant to this discussion. Raphael’s entire argument relies on an assumed passive distancing that occurs between the spectator and the artwork, but I’m wondering how he would respond to Jacques Rancière’s assertion in the “Emancipated Spectator” that the spectator is always implicitly involved, engaged, and active. Similarly, Connell (and Sue) mentioned Claire Bishop, and I’m wondering how he (they) would respond to her arguments in “The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents” that in collective collaborations, effective critique is only engendered through antagonism—the discomfort, negotiation, and debate engendered by an artwork—which is only truly possible, according to Bishop, when there is a leader or a single person who assumes primary authorship of the work. Does the anonymous collectivity and obscured authorship of street art diminish its political potentialities and effectiveness?

**Panel IV: Recollective Generations**

**Goodnight Analog**

**Kristine Granger  
Stony Brook University**

When I was a child and would visit my grandparents I was always intrigued with the bookshelf behind my grandpa's chair. The shelves held "The World Encyclopedia," big pictures and words for a small child. I would go through all of the books, but my favorites were the books that held the human form in transparent pages; pages that could be lifted to show the skeleton, muscles and the separate organs, all of the layers of the human form. It fascinated me that they broke the body down into layers and that you could simply lift the pages and discover another layer, one that was just as important as the first to the functioning and completion of the human. I saw this as a larger picture, and this concept of layering has intrigued me throughout my life. I struggled when I growing up about the notion of what made me and where a person belonged. I struggled to accept all the facets of myself; I struggled to understand that events, whether positive or negative, had to be accepted and seen as creating my existence. It is a theory that I have continually nurtured and dissected. The layer of living: the construction and destruction of self that is necessary for growth. This is a process that is articulated for me best through the creation of my work; as I write this thesis I continually see my struggle in the process of written articulation as opposed to my ability to illuminate through the process of making art.

I am interested in the psychological and physiological imprints that memory carries. The elasticity of our beings: when one has been stretched so far, what are the effects, or if there is a repeated pattern, can it be broken by perseverance of self? My work communicates my personal and emotional state in relation with the surrounding world as I have experienced it. I investigate what makes a person, the moments in one's life lives where events or individuals have made an imprint, handprint or shadow. These pivotal moments change you for the rest of your life. They are moments where personal decisions are made and their effects felt. My work derives from very personal events, but I believe the work's strength is that there is the shared experience enacted by the viewer. The continuation of the experience that is created at that moment then becomes a memory for the viewer.

The piece "Goodnight Analog" was inspired by my desire to create from absence. Looking back, I find that during graduate school I have created works that represent relationships. This piece was inspired by the memory of my grandfather. Last year, in February 2009, all television broadcasts switched from analog to digital. It was during this changeover that I started to think of the absence of my grandfather and the memory of him sitting in his chair watching a baseball game with the transistor radio at his side. There was a time in our recent history that at the end of the evening of television viewing, the national anthem would play while images of our national monuments would cross the TV screen. After the national anthem had finished a still image of the broadcast station would appear with a steady beep sound, broadcasting would be complete for the evening, and white noise and image would fill the room with its eerie light. I have created a corner installation that relates to both my memory and collective memory. The installation includes an analog television, television table, winged back chair, scanned Polaroid images of my grandfather and myself, Madonna

figurine and small lamp. I have also researched the wall color that my grandparents had in their living room.



Memories may be constructed in culture, museums, or within other public forms, but the memories of the individual form the basis for remembering. There are objects that function as cues for recollection. All of my works are

situated in relationships and entail personal cues for memory. Collective memory and its connection to the sensorial experience bring out forms of individual memory into the formation of a collective history. The artwork work then becomes the sensory cue in the creation of memories.

This fundamental difference in memory structures is demonstrated by the philosophy of Henri Bergson. He believed that there were two types of memory, intentional and spontaneous. Intentional memory consists of encoding and retrieval; it is an intentional, deliberate discontinuous, quantitative act, such as memorizing a poem or a history lesson. Quantitative information. This information can be acquired by anyone.

Spontaneous memory is impromptu; it is formed as a byproduct, it is qualitative. You may remember a sound or a feeling from the day, or something someone said. This would be in the back of your mind behind a veil of intentional memory. The spontaneous memories remain in the background waiting for a trigger for the rest of your life. The spontaneous memories make up part of our collective memory and are something only we can possess.

Bergson's work with memory is very similar to the work of Marcel Proust. Proust's semi-autobiographical, In Search of Lost Time, is a spontaneous memory that has influenced both early and contemporary scholarship on the topic. Proust depicts numerous spontaneous memory events during the course of the novel; one involves memories of the corner stone at St. Mark's Cathedral. Despite its emphasis on individual memory, Proust's work has aroused the interest of studies due to its treatment of objects as items capable of drawing complex and sometimes profoundly meaningful individual responses. Individual memory exists within a certain social context, and thus overlaps in many ways with the memory of others. The past permeates the present in forms that transcends individual nostalgia and speak more to the shaping of identity. This then transmits through generations through the commemorative ritual. Objects serve as agents/signifiers supplying a multiplicity of meanings,

objects mean different things to different people and can change dramatically over one's lifetime. "In Proust's novel, lost time is immediately "searched for" with spatial imaginary and within the discontinuity of language, so that the spatio-temporal continuity and its fragmentation are not an antithesis to pure time but as a servant, the preferred means for attaining time regained." (JK 194) It is haunting, memory and the sensorial that connects the artwork, artist and viewer.

**cut from the same cloth**

**Alisha McCurdy**  
**Stony Brook University**

**introduction**

The polarities in the artworks are metaphors for my search of identity within my family. The oppositions are presented in such desperate circumstances that reflect the anguished feeling of isolation from family and the past. Not knowing my place is painful, but it is through that pain that I can begin to make my own place. The artworks are introspective searches for comfort. Through my artworks I have come to a deeper understanding of why creating art is essential. It is in these processes of introspective ritual that I am able to confront myself. The process is ritual. The sacred experience of making is just as meaningful for me as the completed artwork.

My artworks are searches for personal identity within a creative family history. Materials are redefined within the works yet reference their original incarnation. Through the new configurations questions arise about their new lives in relationship to other objects. However, the questions raised are never fully answered, just as our perception of truth and fiction is never truly fixed. The difficulty to find concrete answers within the artworks included in the exhibition replicates the elusiveness of memory and truth.

Given that the works center on negotiating personal creative history, memory also becomes subject matter of the work. Materials used in the works have strong personal memory associations, though they elicit a response from the viewer. Kitchen chairs, stairway spindles, and sewing

materials, are used because they are commonly understood forms. The viewers will access the entry level of the work based upon earlier encounters of similar chairs, sewing pins, and fabrics. The universality of the materials and objects allow for some level of form constancy. The principle of form constancy acknowledges that even when a commonly recognizable object is manipulated to change its appearance, the object in its original incarnation is so strong that it cannot fully transcended. While the chairs and spindles have been manipulated so a new facet of identity is created, notions of their previous lives still exist. In using inherited fabrics, sewing patterns, and photographs I honor the provenance of the materials but also augment them in order to speak in a contemporary context. By allowing the materials to exist in a liminal position, the works become timeless.

Many of the works encompassing this thesis are comprised of elements that were created through obsessively repetitive actions.<sup>1</sup> Ritual in its very basic incarnation is the carrying out of a repetitive action to provoke transformation. It is the accumulation of mundane actions that transform commonly understood materials, string, fabrics, sewing pins, and sewing patterns. The results of the transformations are new form and material identities. Through the process of repetitive actions time opens up. It is in this escape from “clock time” and schedules that the tedious work becomes meditative. During these rituals of cutting, sewing, and drawing, I was able to approach the deeper content of the artworks. Each piece is the result of the confusion felt of having evidence of which I once was, and using the pieces from the past to construct a new identity. It is also the burden of dealing with past to move forward, all the while not knowing where the two worlds separate.

#### **artworks**

##### *Sacred Space(s)*

*Sacred Space(s)*, an installation-based piece, is the representation of several kinds of spaces: domestic space,

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studio space, and ritual space. The installation is comprised of images of home, notes, drawings, fabric scraps, sewing table, doll, and an alter-like piece with a metronome. The configuration of the piece is set up in such a way that there is no clear definition of how the space was to function. The manifestation of intersecting physical spaces is representative of the overlapping psychological spaces of studio and home as ritual areas. The home is a sacred space for humans, in its very basic nature, is protective from the surrounding physical and psychological environments. Home offers respite from our daily lives. Just as domestic space is a place of safeguard, the studio functions similarly for an artist. The studio is a place in which concerns of the outer world fall away; it is a place for creative thought and expression that is not often welcome outside.



Time is suspended within *Sacred Space(s)*. The collection of photographs from my home and the fabric scraps imply a sense of time past. The fabric patterns are dated and the interior images read as if they were taken years ago, but possibly just last week. Sequential time cannot be derived from the installation, spaces often are more powerful triggers of memory rather than linear time; duration is lost in memory and our recollections of space transcend. The confusion of time in this piece works to create a liminal space not only in physical dimensions but also in the inability of fixing a definite time. The metronome on the marble alter table sets time in the work that is rhythmic yet non-linear. The monotonous clicking of the metronome is representative of the accumulation of many repetitive actions that encompass my artwork. Tiny individual video stills are strung through sewing needles and hang on the wall behind the alter. Each string is two minutes of video taken from me working in the studio. Lying on the alter table are the remaining still images not yet cut apart and strung; the work of the studio is never complete.

#### *Patterned Space*

*Patterned Space* is the documentation of the accumulation and obsessive recorded keeping that goes into this body of work. The space is presents the viewer with a space to view the process and labor. Caught in the downward draping fabric are family photographs that serve as the basis to all of my work. From these photographs are taken patterns or templates of the individual figures. Scattered on the floor of patterns are the remnants of paper from making each of the templates that pinned to the wallpaper border. There is a contradiction of a very personal space yet generalized by the templates hung within the space. The singular, personal, identities of the figures are neutralized by the generic patterns that are then used to create multiples of the forms. Lying on the table are two handwritten catalogues that contain a tracing of each numbered pattern

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and cross reference notes that indicate the other related patterns respectively.



An ambiguity of space within *Patterned Space* is set up similarly to that of *Sacred Space(s)*. The installation is at the intersection of a domestic, child's play area, and studio spaces. The home is referenced through the rug-like sewing patterns covering the floor, wallpaper border framing the space horizontally, and the lace flowing downward, reminiscent of curtains. The little red table is to the scale of a child, and was once my play table when I was young. Below the patterned wallpaper border are several drawings that are sized and hung like 5 x 7 inch photographs that often adorn the walls of homes. The installation is a more confined space that clearly demarcates the limits of viewer interaction. While all of the elements that comprise the work are on

display, there is anxiety on the part of the viewer to cross the physical boundaries to engage more deeply with the work.

Central to the installation-based works are ideas the sense or impression of home is the starting point for my studio work. Both of these spaces are where I feel most comfortable and protected from reality. Philosopher Gaston Bachelard writes, "...by approaching the house images with care not to break the solidarity of memory and imagination, we hope to make others feel all the psychological elasticity of an image that moves us to an unimaginable depth" (Bachelard 6). There is a universal psychological framework of home that allows for the most personal conception of that special space to be a catalyst of memory for someone else.

The aspect of time or the lack of distinct time in the installations are key in that it places the viewer in a state of unease. The metronome in *Sacred Space(s)* has a methodical click - clock that wears on the viewer, not only when engaging with that piece, but also punctuates the entire show. The metronome aurally registers the processes of creating artwork to ritual acts.

#### *Storyline / Bloodline*

*Storyline / Bloodline* centers on issues of storytelling -- there is always a central figure that holds all of the stories. That one person tells another to keep the story going. The chairs in the piece were chosen specifically because they are the chairs from my family's dining table when I was young. It is at the kitchen table that we gather to recount the happenings of each other's lives and gossip. Stories are just as important as photographs and albums in maintaining a history. Tales told are not just a snapshot; stories ground the photographs taken with setting, emotions, and conversation.

The materiality of *Storyline / Bloodline* is straightforward; the piece is refined in that I only ask the materials to do what they already do. I am not trying to defy what string is or what a chair is. Rather, through the obsessive over abundance of string wrapping the chair, both materials are transformed. By placing the matching chair, devoid of the binding string, a contradiction of burdened and

unburdened set up. A thin crimson thread connects the two chairs; this further draws a comparison to be made of the one chair wrapped with 2048 yards of string to the naked chair. Artist Eva Hesse speaks of the contradictions that pervade her work as born from absurdity:

I was always aware that I should take order verses chaos, stringy verses mass, huge verses small, and I would try to find the most absurd opposites or extreme opposites...I was always aware of their absurdity and also their formal contradictions and it was always more interesting than making something average, normal, right size, right proportion... (Nemser 60)

Just as Hesse plays on contradictions of materials and forms *Storyline / Bloodline* relies on the opposition of bound and unbound to referring to presence and absence. Chairs are to be sat upon, yet here they are functioning as replacements for a corporeal presence.

The string is used metaphorically, representing the stories that wrap around the central figure, from whom the tales unravel. The preference of the individual wrapped with tales is given through the chair's placement on the quilted rug. The tonality of the deep red thread and rug in concert with the cream colored string wrapping the chair is a reference to the female body and the reproduction of life through creating new material identities.

*Guardians (Origin Stories)*

*Guardians (Origin Stories)*, is comprised of three totem like figures standing guard in front of three large-format vinyl prints. The three figures are constructed from stairway spindles referencing domestic architectural space. The totemic figures are appliquéd with inherited sewing patterns in order to redefine the role of the spindles outside of the reference to home. Each of the figure's spun details is articulated with thousands of sewing pins individually tapped into the spindles. The great number of pins creates a contrast of scale to the singular vertical figures, and also miniature scale of the pins opposes the human scale of the

totems. There is a specific figural relationship between the forms and me. The masks placed on each of the verticals were cast using a plaster mold of my face. While each appear to be nearly identical the three totems are individualized through the different patterns on the spindles as well as individual pieces of paper attached annotating how many pins each contains and who the totems are representational of.

My family's matriarchs are the keepers of the family's tales, as they grow older the stories are passed to the younger members. The individual totems are representative of my grandmother, mother, and me. The totems also reference Pacific Native American traditions of totem poles representing the deceased. The stories and characteristics of the departed are depicted through symbols carved into the tall plinths. The figural reference reaches back further to ancient Greece architecture. Caryatids are sculpted female figures that bare architectural weight in place of columns. One of the most well known examples of Caryatids is from the Ancient Greek structure the Erechtheion. Supporting the porch roof of the Erechtheion are six female figures. Each of the figures carries a basket upon her head that houses sacred objects used in ancient rituals and celebrations (Stokstad 153). The women are the guardians of the sacred objects.

In *Guardians (Origin Stories)* the three figures are the protectors of the stories and images of the family. The matriarchs are each placed before a large vinyl print taken from photographs of my siblings and I when we were young. The three images<sup>2</sup> in this piece were specifically chosen because the figural silhouettes are referenced throughout other works in the exhibition. The photograph is dematerialized as an object in that it has a direct relationship with the wall, becoming much like wallpaper. The scale is also shifted from a comfortable four by six inch photograph to a scale that is more directly relational to human scale, thereby making an encounter with the viewer unavoidable. The experience of the viewer is mediated physically and conceptually through the totem like figures. The images;

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however, cannot be visually separated from the totemic figures, the viewer sees through the figures or the shadow cast from the figures on to the images. *Guardians (Origin Stories)* differs from the other works in that the images of my brothers and me are not obscured or substituted with fabric. I find this piece to be the most personally honest work. Just as the string used in *Storyline / Bloodline* I am not asking the vinyl images to be anything but powerfully striking images.



#### *Comfort*

The main components of *Comfort* were created through casting methods. The figure lying on the floor is a cast made of fiberglass resin and tulle, a netted fabric used in dressmaking. A plaster mold was taken from my body then the resin-soaked tulle was cast from that mold. The aluminum piece placed in the center of the artwork is cast

using an experimental technique with foam vaporization casting<sup>3</sup>. Instead of using only a polystyrene foam pattern to cast, I covered the foam pattern in aluminum foil so that the molten aluminum would flow over the foil leaving a draped fabric like texture. Casting plays an important role, not only formally in *Comfort*, but also conceptually. Casting serves as a point of departure to consider issues of casting on traditions, values, and skills within a family. The process of casting is one of transference and multiplicity; direct molds are taken of an object then translated into multiple cast elements.

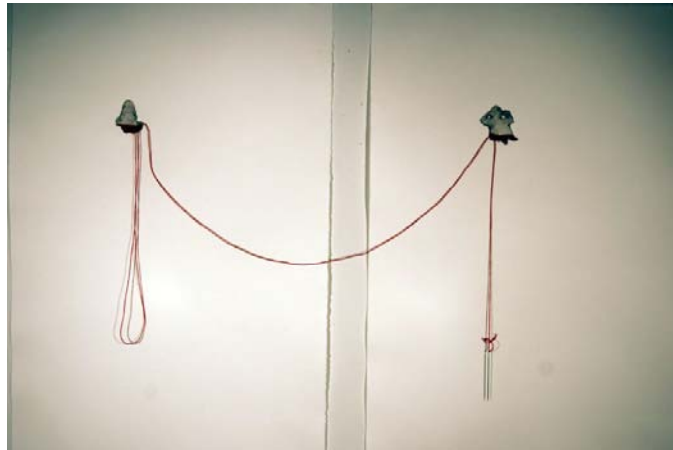
Mold and cast elements also embody characteristics of presence and absence; the only way for a form to be multiplied is if there is a mold taken and the negative space of that mold filled with a casting material.

The aluminum element has a weighted feeling; however, it seems to defy gravity in that it is not immediately apparent to the viewer on how the piece is standing. The heavy cast aluminum piece is delicately sewn to the upper portion of lace coming off the gallery wall. A second piece of lace is bound with crimson thread to the bottom of the aluminum piece. The lower length of lace drapes onto the floor and covers the fiberglass cast figure like a blanket. Sewn through the blanket of lace are twenty-five crimson threads representative of my age.

The configuration of *Comfort* draws on similarities to *Patterned Space*, with the lace pinned the wall and flowing downward to the floor. *Comfort* has characteristics of the installation-based works in that the piece articulates the wall and floor simultaneously, but it has a more direct expression of form.

The opposition of weighted cast aluminum element against the seemingly weightlessness of the lace and fiberglass figure is illustrative of the tension of being too strongly tied to a creative history that is not strictly mine.

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<sup>2</sup> I specifically use the term *images* rather than photographs, to describe the vinyl prints because photographs, even in their flatness, have a physical object presence. Here, the images are aligning themselves with architectural scale rather than the objectness of a photograph.

## The Gesture of Tradition

**Toni Pepe Dan**  
**Boston University**

*"Tradition is the illusion of permanence." - Woody Allen*

*The Gesture of Tradition* is a series of photographs that deals with the manifestation of identity through domestic tradition and ritual, art history, and the mass media. Familial and cultural history is a specific kind of narrative, one that is shrouded in reverence and subject to memory. The photograph, an object heavily involved with memory works seamlessly to convey this approach to legacy and identity.

*The Gesture of Tradition* is an investigation of the family tree - a physical and visual diagram of the qualities of one's own past. I use myself as both subject and author in an attempt to simultaneously experience the gestural characteristics of my heritage, while at the same time maintaining a sense of control as narrator. I am focused on the structure of ancestry - of what has come before us and how that defines an individual. Throughout this series, I strive to implement a sense of history - a narrative beyond the frame, delicately woven into the objects, gestures, lighting, and character. Everything within the frame is considered and functions to evoke something in the viewer that is familiar, but perhaps forgotten.

The series is comprised of a set of 10 large-scale images as well as an installation of embroidered linen napkins to accompany the photographic work. The linen napkins began with embroidered narratives based on the memories of my mother's childhood home, but the installation has since grown to include memories of my grandmother (conveyed

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through my father), as well as excerpts from my mother-in-law's family album. I saved approximately 100 handmade linen napkins from my wedding with this project in mind – hoping the stains and residue of the used napkins would help to convey the detritus state of memory as well as the communal significance of the meal. Furthermore, the ritual of marriage is in a sense the beginning of an individual's family tree. The narratives stitched into the linen napkins as well as those woven into the photographic images are embedded with the aura of storytelling (reference to Benjamin's essay, *The Storyteller*). The series of images and the installation of napkins are linked in their ambiguity and inability to organize memory linearly.



As a photographer, I am concerned with the narratives associated with images (specifically the snapshot, familial portraits, and the family album). How do we remember as an individual, a family, and on a broader scale, as a society? Memory depends on ritual and tradition to preserve its narrative through time and to link generations. *The Gesture of Tradition* is a visual attempt at a narrative recollection – to realize what is lost in the preserving nature of the photograph and possibly gained in the process of forgetting.

The classroom corridors illustrated in the specs map provide an ideal spatial and conceptual platform for the installation of the embroidered napkins. The installation would entail pinning each napkin (approximately 25) down one side of a hallway leading into a classroom, where the photographs would be hanged. The installation would be a journey, in a sense, guided by the collective memories depicted on the napkins and contingent upon the viewer's participation with the embedded narratives.

#### **Becoming *Her*: The Artist as Subject/The Photograph as Performance**

“Always mediated cultural memory is the product of fragmentary personal and collective experiences....Acts of memory are thus acts of performance, representation, and interpretation.”

–Miriam Hirsch, *Signs*

The character: she is a woman fabricated by a time that is entirely constructed within the performance of the photograph. Her actions and gestures are confined to the stage that is the frame, while her identity is contingent upon what is beyond those borders. As Judith Butler writes in *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution*, “gender is in no way a stable identity...rather it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized

repetition of acts" (407). It is important to understand that the character is the result of both historical *and* contemporary notions of the feminine – she is gender as a learned—rather than as a natural—state. The appropriation of certain gestures and poses from contemporary as well as historical art, advertising, and literature allow for a reading of the feminine as something outside of the body, challenging the notion of essence and the intrinsic feminine. The character within these images is a strategically composed product of the feminine construct explored through certain visual and literary approaches.

Simone De Beauvoir writes in *Second Sex*, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (16). These images present a woman—an individual situated somewhere between the familiar space of the domestic and the enigmatic walls of her own consciousness. There is a tension evident in the appropriation of female stereotypes and the discontent of the female character that seems to embody these historical characteristics of the feminine. The character's rejection of her situation is compounded by her gestures. Her bare, worn feet and bruised legs are abject qualities, which refer to her active role within the images and disregard for any collective notions of femininity. The rushing cadence of the character's movements is exhibited in the manner in which she commands her body over the objects, and the space of the frame. Each photograph conceals or truncates the character's face and body, revealing only parts of her

This visual approach heightens the performance of the character's gestures—the detail of her curled fingers trigger associations with character's identity, attributes that may contradict the female *norm*. The correlation between the character's gestures and her environment are in conflict with one another, making it difficult to compartmentalize the character's identity into familiar—or feminine—paradigms. Furthermore, her unusually decorative environment and the "feminine" props that surround her (teacups, jewelry, etc.) emphasize an incongruity between the character's feminine

appearance and her actions, and therefore challenge her essence.



The motive for employing feminine stereotypes—related to the character's appearance and environment— is association with the personal struggles of identity as a woman, one who must constantly confront an objectionable history. De Beauvoir wrote, "She is doomed to repetition, she sees in the future only a duplication of the past" (599). The direct connection De Beauvoir makes between a woman's future and a past she never experienced, but somehow knows how to repeat, instigated my exploration into how this past is represented and thus learned. What exactly is this past that women are "doomed" to repeat? Can a woman embrace her ancestors and their situatedness without compromising

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her future? The protagonist of this series emanates the stereotype. She wears her red lipstick, satin and lace dresses, and situates herself within the home. At the same time, however, the character's body language and actions challenge these notions of women.



In *Performative Acts and Gender Constitutions*, Judith Butler asks that the reader “consider gender, for instance, as a *corporeal style* an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative” (394). This idea of the “act” is the motivation behind the character. Each photograph is a performance in which the character “compels the body to conform to an historical idea of ‘woman,’ to induce the body to become a cultural sign” (394).

Although the character is unaware of her performance, I—as both subject and author—am in total control of this. I am attempting to simulate the feminine (revealing the performative nature of gender) and am prescribing an identity for this woman as something that is multifaceted and based within the fiction and truth of the “self” as well as the collective.

Artist as subject is another level of performance found within this series, which utilizes the gaze and further challenges conventional ways of looking. The act of looking has been deemed a typically male activity, where the female takes on a more passive role as the subject.

One of the most direct methods for subverting the patriarchal gaze is to transform the female into both subject *and* maker. The female subject sees herself and, in return, the viewer, whether male or female, must recognize that the image is from the perspective of the female gaze. Who is in control, however, is not necessarily clear. Is it the photographer as image-maker, the artist as performer, the character herself or the viewer as interpreter? This conflict of control is mainly inspired by Cindy Sherman’s series *Untitled Film Stills*. As Jennifer Dalton notes in her article *Look At Me: Self Portrait Photography After Cindy Sherman*, “each of [Sherman’s] photographs documents an elaborate ritual of research, costuming, makeup and posing....her rituals take place for an audience consisting entirely of herself” (56). The performances in this series, similar to Sherman’s, are conducted for an audience of one: the camera. The work diverges from Sherman, however, on the fact that these images reference one woman and the work depends on the interaction of the audience. The viewer’s association with memory—both personal and public— and with the character is important to her development. In addition, the tension of these images rests on the idea that no one—artist, character, or viewer—is entirely in control. Each has to realize the contribution of the other and react accordingly—thus, the gaze is omnipresent.



The method of artist as subject is particularly important in understanding the identity and role of the character. Any singular origin of her does not exist and this is further emphasized when the viewer is aware of her as both subject and author. She, of course, is a piece of me, but what makes her whole? The character is in itself a dialogue about the transformative and performative nature of identity. She is a pastiche of literary and cinematic characters including, among others, Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, William Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth, Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier,

Joan Crawford and Katherine Hepburn. She is also representative of the nameless faces in advertising ranging from the 1940s to today as well as of the faces I do not recognize in my own family snapshots. Much like a family photograph can only allude to a memory, she is always only a trace of someone, and is never whole.

Whether in cinema, literature, or personal affects, one must consider point of view. Due to the narrative structure of this series, focalization and the gaze were employed as devices for gathering information and to make sense of the ambiguous storyline. Focalization, a strategy within literature, which refers to the concept of a singular point of view, is utilized within these photographs in order to force the viewer to perceive the world through the character and to discern his or her personal interpretations from the character's point-of-view. This literary approach is transformed visually within these images through the manipulation of the gaze.

Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is an essential source for understanding the role of the female character within this series. Woolf approached writing in an experiential manner and filtered information through the focalization of Clarissa Dalloway. The acquisition of knowledge is driven inward to the thoughts of Clarissa, rather than outward toward the overarching norms of a society. Similarly, the images within this series illustrate a world limited to the thoughts, experiences, and actions of the female character (or narrator). The character never leads the viewer to an end—closure is unattainable and any paradigm for truth is defined through the actions of the protagonist. The character's gaze is pushed inward and never bleeds outside of the frame, transforming the viewer into an uninvited and unacknowledged guest. The information presented to the viewer is filtered through the logic and imagination of the character. The scope of understanding is seemingly defined by the actions of the protagonist—but what about the role of the viewer? Although there are specific visual cues—red lipstick, a fur cuff and dirty toenails,

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to name a few—to guide the viewer to a certain understanding of the character, her identity is still truncated and it is up to the viewer to attempt to complete it. The environment is tightly compressed into the frame of the photograph, which represents the walls of the character's psyche. Upon initial observation, a viewer may not be able to make any logical connections between the blurred and shadowed environment and the worn edges of a book.



The viewer's means of interpretation rest on the gaze of the character. The viewer must then embody the character's sensibilities. This act of becoming transforms the viewer into the protagonist and the character into a mirror, reflecting back memories, experiences, and associations experienced by the viewer. Understanding the transformative and collaborative nature of the viewer and the character's gaze is significant to the narrative flow. This visual approach directly correlates to the literary device of focalization and forces the viewer to participate. It prompts him or her to interpret each image, not only as him or herself, but as the character as well. The act of looking truly becomes a performance, in which information is constantly exchanged between the viewer and the character.

#### **Materials & Process**

A stack of family photographs lifted from an old album, the black paper still peeling off the backs, are spread across the kitchen table. Each image is of an event, a time, place or person that is previously unknown to me. My process for making these images is directly linked to this pile of family photographs I've collected from my parents and other relatives. These snapshots are specifically of women in my family, I have never met, recently lost or never knew at the stage in their life depicted in the photo. While collecting these photographs over the course of a year I began to question: How does the photograph of someone you never met, someone you could never mourn, then function? The idea of "second hand" information then became increasingly important in my interpretation of these photographs and the narratives I associated with them.

The notion of "second hand" takes on many forms in this series. One of the more literal interpretations is the use of second hand objects as props. Weekly, sometimes daily, trips to thrift stores, antique shops and eBay all to find the chair, table, plate or backdrop to set a scene. Each of the final images in this series began as a sketch, typically based off of

one element---an object or gesture and then added onto with each reshoot. Additionally, with each new image a new layer of wallpaper is added onto the wall of the set. Although, the viewer may not be aware of this facet of the process, the layering of the backgrounds is yet another reference to the notion of trace. Each new image shot contains the backgrounds of the images previously made, layered beneath, unseen to the viewer. Also, the wallpaper suggests a layering of information with each new image something new is added—similar to the construction of memory and the idea of legacy. The process of layering the wallpaper for each new image signifies, to a certain extent, the artist’s legacy—as an image-maker I am simply adding my own layer to the art historical dialogue that came before me. This mode of production keeps me mindful of not just the singular image, but also the connectedness of the entire process.

This idea of constructing a memory based off of the narratives and photographs of someone else is best described by Marianne Hirsch who coined the term, postmemory, in her book, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Each image in this series directly references an object, gesture or environment in the stack of family snapshots. The method for choosing a specific object, gesture or environment was more intuitive than anything else. Typically, I would investigate each snapshot, breaking it down into “strips of information.”

The term, “strips of information,” refers to how I would visually break down an image based off of the composition of the image, expression of the body or areas of interest. A photograph of my grandparents, depicts them in the foreground, but the information that I drew from was located in the background. The right side of the frame leads the viewer away from the intended focus of the photograph (the couple) and into the bedroom where one finds a coat laid out on the bed and a few small objects on the dresser. My concern with these snapshots was the narratives occurring outside of the frame -- those telling objects or

environments that were not necessarily ever meant to be heard.

Some of these photographs were in my possession for a brief period of time and were scanned in order to have a reference. Others, mainly those belonging to my father were kept on set as I shot, to reference as not only representational material, but as an object in itself. In other words, how the photographic object looked, the worn edges, the texture of the glue on the backside, etc. This also refers to a certain type of narrative that occurs outside of the image itself. It has very little to do with the people being pictured and more to do with time. A snapshot builds up a certain kind of patina as it ages, drawing attention to its surface's age and deterioration.

Furthermore, because I am reinterpreting these family photos through a highly constructed and performed image the role of the snapshot is not visually apparent to the viewer. Instead, the role of the family photo resides as a trace. This notion of trace is implied in what Baudrillard describes in *Simulacra and Simulations* as an individual's need for a "visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin to reassure us as to our ends" (259).

The snapshots are the impetus to this work because they refer back to the trace and the idea of a visible past. The napkins within this series function similarly with regard to constructed memory. There are short, fragmented narratives embroidered onto the napkins, stories lifted from my family members' memories and embroidered using my mother's handwriting, my grandmother's and my own. The act of needlepointing is quite repetitive and has a long history within women's work and the domestic. It is something that I never did before this project and although the concepts within the images and the napkins are similar, the process was very different. This part of the series began as a conversation between my mother and I—my images usually begin with visual or literary connections rarely through conversation. Embroidering each napkin was an activity I brought with me wherever I went---whether I was at home,

school or somewhere else making the napkins totally occupied my attention. I could be in the middle of a crowded room and the repetitive action of needlepointing would make me unaware of my surroundings, it was almost meditative.

The process for making both the napkins and the images is closely tied to the experience of remembering and the role of memory within photography. *The Gesture of Tradition* explores what a photograph reveals and what it conceals. As well as the function of second hand information—how the photographs and stories of others become our own history.

**Panel IV Response**

**Laine Nooney  
Stony Brook University**

It should come to us as little surprise that at a conference on collectivity, the tree of artists would shake out three presentations so united in intention, so desirous to graze the past, and yet so thwarted in their capacity to “get back” to the very originary unit they nonetheless passionately pursue: the family. It is the family, for many, which is our first collective, the primary social structure that sutures the individual to the ancestor, and is the first bridge to be crossed—or burned—in the pursuit of the where we came from and the how we came to be.

Yet each of these artists brings us into a very physical mediation with the futility of grasping the past; the grasp here, is impossible, and as such I am reminded of the nostalgic lingerings of the French exile and Romantic writer, François-René de Chateaubriand, who wrote “There is always a time when we possessed nothing of what we now possess, and a time when we have nothing of what we once had.” The perpetual slipping away of life and objects that Chateaubriand conjures is an analog to the erosion of memory which time renders upon its subjects. Faced with the inevitability of this loss and the futility of grasping, these artists employ a more nuanced touch—the gesture.

The gesture is a quality of touch enshrined in the very title of Toni Pepe Dan's work, *The Gesture of Tradition*. The gesture of tradition Dan employs is that of a “fabric”ated narrative rendered through the performance of the photo; here, the photograph, even though it is, in the artist's own words “heavily involved with memory,” produces an oddly indexical measure of our very distance to the past. The

gestures Dan self-photographs grip the body, confirming her own Butler-derived assertion that gender is performative and affirming that her own attempts to reconstruct the stage of history is an effort hopelessly over-determined from the outset, blooming with revelations already concealed by the limits of the photographic frame.

In “Goodnight Analog” we are gestured to come in and sit awhile, before an installation of Kristine Granger's own memory *of* – of layers of living, of the chiaroscuro play of night and light against the winging back of a chair, of Madonna held aloft by the suggestive altar of televisuality. But this is too a staging, a performance of nostalgia. In a very literal way, we possess nothing of what we once had; the historical gap of this piece is mediated by its own remediation: the images aren't photographs but digitized scans; the end-of-the-night send-off plays from a DVD loop. These disjoints explore the improbability of possession—our present may be analog, but the past is always, intensely, digital, broken into mere pieces of memory which we cannot quite shake and we certainly cannot meld.

Alisha McCurdy's work is likewise a devastating manifestation of the gestural past. Rather than reconstituting the familial scene, McCurdy cuts herself out of this scene, becoming both pattern and shadow of her own history. The white space either framed by or surrounding the fabric form tells a non-story of absence; there's no mimicry at work here, no narrative gesture, no effort to re-image herself into reunion with the telling photos' absent figures. Although “cut from the same cloth” McCurdy's work suggests that similarity is not without difference, repetition not without ritual. Memories become like paper dolls, arranged at will, pinned in place, but somehow not quite bound to their surfaces.

I wish to consider that the project to bridge the past and the present is a process always already marked by failure, but failure is most certainly the point—indeed, perhaps the only way out of the trap of what historian Peter Fritzsche terms “the melancholy of history”, which is constituted by the knowledge that “the losses of the past are irreversible.”

Fritzsche, in his book *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History*, writes: “The masonry of former lives has crumbled, but the historical worldview of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries transforms rubble into evocative ruins [...] Although the modern era has often been regulated by rationality and science, it also conjured up fantastic stories [...] along with a passionate longing for the things of the past.” Deployments of nostalgia are mechanisms for responding to this traumatic loss of the past; but then the clever bind of nostalgia is that we can't move out of it, because the trauma itself involves concealing what occurred between the now and the then; nostalgia requires forgetting what we've forgotten. To put it in Fritzsche's terms, we live in ruins, yet we remember whole houses, but we have no idea how these houses became ruins. What I appreciate about each of these artworks is their ambiguity regarding what the whole house was to begin with, whether it ever existed, and each artist very appropriately centralizes her investigation within the frames, boundaries and white spaces of domestic space and experience. The passage of time, it seems, turns our childhood homes into something like Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*—architectures of memory that are larger on the inside than they ever were on the outside. Thus the wholeness was never whole—art provides means for building new doorways and hallways across our memory, not in the duty of uniting or making memory complete, but to pursue, in a very hypertextual way, an alternative traversal of the past.

Is an alternative, then, to the problem of historical melancholy and the Gordian knot of nostalgia that we could confront and acknowledge our attempts at nostalgic intervention as performance, as installation, as cutting out absence, and find the revelation of new hallways rather than the frustration of dead ends in our inevitable failure to reconstitute the past? If grasping the past is a project that always unravels at the very moment we pin it in place, then is turning to the past with gesture the only philosophical and aesthetic resolution for brushing up against our history?

**Panel V: Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Political**

Presentations on Panel V included Bulent Eken's *The Cinema of Nuri Bilge Ceylan: Collectivity, Minority, and Reterritorialization*, Carolina Drake's *Ethics and Aesthetics at the Intersection: Doris Salcedo's Art and the Problems with Art Theory*, Kim Charnley's *An Exploration of the Concept 'Multitude' as the Ground for Political Art*, and Valerie Mackinnon's response to the panel. Unfortunately, Bulent Eken's *The Cinema of Nuri Bilge Ceylan* has been withheld at the author's request.

**Ethics and Aesthetics at the Intersection:  
Doris Salcedo's Art and the Problems with Art Theory**

**Carolina Drake  
UNC-Charlotte**

In recent aesthetics, much has been said about bringing ethics back into the field of art theory.<sup>1</sup> One reason is that we find in the contemporary art world artists who are producing works that display a clear affective dimension often related to the reality of violence, suffering, and marginalization, that make moral demands on us. In these cases, the affective and ethical dimensions ontologically constitute the work as art. For example, Doris Salcedo, an artist from Colombia, creates art of this sort. Yet many philosophers tend to separate the work of art from its historical context, where the ethical dimension is found. That is, a tradition often rooted in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, characterizes the "aesthetic attitude" and makes disinterested pleasure the defining feature of the aesthetic.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is not concerned with the contextual field of art, where violence, suffering, and marginalization are portrayed affectively and ethically. This tradition, rather concerned with beauty characterized through a disinterested aesthetic judgment, makes the joining of ethics with aesthetics implausible. Another tendency in this tradition is to be preoccupied with defining art essentially rather than with engaging in the contextual field. So, in both cases, art is separated from its ethical dimension.

Yet it is evident that art continues to engage reality, with artworks exhibited every year that refer to the trauma of war, the marginalization and dehumanization of minority groups, and exploitation of persons. Surprisingly enough or not, art theory that either relies on a disinterested attitude or on essentialism has fallen behind in accounting for art that

has a central ethical dimension dependent on its historical context. The significance of these artworks also reveals an urgent call for aestheticians to give more attention to the ethical aspects of art with the goal of ending this artificial isolation between ethics and aesthetics. To end this isolation, I propose, we need a different approach that does not exclude ethics from aesthetics, but rather can account more successfully for the ethics and the historical context of art.

I will discuss two of Salcedo's works, *Shibboleth* (2007) and *Unland* (1999), because they clearly denote how art can have ethical value that is necessarily apprehended affectively and is relevant to the work's recognition as art. I further argue, turning to Judith Butler, that the ethical dimension of these works comes prior to their ontological recognition as art. This being the case, we would now need a theory able to account for works where the affective experience is prior to their recognition as art. Prominent art theories account for art by separating it from its ethical dimension and, in my view, defending that recognition is prior to any affective experience, such as empathy or compassion, which is apprehended. I defend an approach to art that will more successfully account for works where apprehension precedes recognition. As I am doing philosophy in the intersection between ethics and aesthetics, I first present my approach to bridge ethics with aesthetics and, second, critique an essentialist theory of art in that it separates ethics from aesthetics. I later argue that a theory that includes history as part of the ontology of art is helpful, but does not go far enough to account for works such as Salcedo's. Finally, my goal is to reconstruct an approach that will prioritize the work's affective apprehension of the ethical dimension of art.

To represent the reality of violence in her art, Salcedo traveled to the northern heartland of Colombia's civil war and, over a period of three years, spoke to children who had witnessed the murder of their parents. These testimonies inspired a series of three sculptures given the collective title

*Unland*. In one piece, Salcedo conjoins two fragmented tables to suggest the dysfunction caused by extreme trauma. The closer we get to the object, the better we perceive how parts of the table are covered with human hair sewn over it. These human traces may or may not belong to the actual victims of violence, but what is relevant is that there is an ethical dimension in this artwork, where sorrow achieves a public form.

Here, the work of art, if apprehended affectively, can make a moral demand upon us. For example, the work can urge us to secure the precarity of the lives lost to violence, cause outrage, or motivate a call to action. Such is the importance of this ethical dimension, that without it, the work could be reducible to furniture, or an indiscernible object. And such is the importance of an affective experience, that without it, the viewer would feel plain indifference to the reality the work refers to. Further, this entails that we are not limited by our perceptual recognition, which is a cognitive experience. Salcedo is not attempting to show us a mere piece of furniture or create a cognitive experience of conceptual art, but rather to give us an affective experience. So there is a central affective dimension to Salcedo's work of art that is a crucial element of its ethical dimension, which comes in even before we start to recognize the work as art. To account for this statement, my initial goal is to support the claim that the affective experience of these works of art precedes our recognition, and for this I turn to Judith Butler.

Butler's general project in *Precarious Life* is to assess how the ontological notion of life has been constructed through the notion of framing. Her emphasis is on the question of "the conditions under which it becomes possible to apprehend a life...as precarious, and those that make it less possible" (p. 2). Specifically referring to the visual field of war, she argues that there are delimiting conditions placed on our visual field. In this visual field we can recognize lives as human by the way the world is framed, and we can also apprehend that lives exist outside the frames of recognition. Butler's further goal is to critique traditional ontology, in this

case arguing that life precedes the notion of discourse and the normative frames that, precisely, construct the ontology of life. I suggest that her philosophical endeavor can be successfully applied to the ontology of art if we focus on how artists “frame” reality through their works and on how the viewers apprehend, through affect, empathy or compassion, what the work is attempting to bring into the field of recognition.

Specifically relevant to aesthetics, Butler explains that within a visual field there are conditions that simultaneously allow and prevent our apprehension of what is a life. Starting with the assumption that those who gain representation have a stronger opportunity of being humanized, while those that fail to be represented are not regarded as human, she argues that there are norms, explicit or tacit, that operate in many ways, one of which involves frames that exercise a delimiting function on the perceptual field. But Butler acknowledges that this normative framing is not solely limiting. To begin with, under these conditions there is a viewer who assumes to be in an immediate visual relation to reality, and, she writes:

“There are ways of framing that will bring the human into view in its frailty and precariousness that will allow us to stand for the value and dignity of human life, to react with outrage when lives are degraded. (p. 77).”

I.

This relationship between viewer, conditions under which a life becomes apprehended, and frames, plays in the visual field of war and, also, in the field of aesthetics where the artist can frame a reality. So Butler’s theory, I suggest, meant to be applied to the visual politics of war, can be applied to works of art that “frame” an ethical reality, also, within a visual field. The ontological question referring to the being of life inside these operations of power leads Butler to distinguish between “apprehending” and “recognizing” a life

(p. 4). Recognition is a stronger term, linked to cognition, but apprehension is less precise and can imply “marking, registering, acknowledging without full cognition” (p. 5). This last concept is linked to sensing and perceiving, but in ways that are not yet conceptual forms of knowledge. With this idea, and after clarifying what normative powers are at work when something is “framed,” Butler suggests that we are not limited by the stronger, cognitive, forms of recognition, but rather that we can apprehend something as “not being recognized by recognition” (p. 5).

This last suggestion entails that apprehension can become a basis for the critique of the norms of recognition, because, Butler states that we can “apprehend or fail to apprehend the lives of those that are lost or injured” (p. 3). Following this account, it can be suggested that apprehension is a form of sensing that can precede recognition.

The constitutive ethical dimension of a work such as *Unland*, relies on the viewer’s apprehension through his/her affective experience to recognize the work as art. Without the ethical dimension being recognized, the work would be incomplete ontologically as a work, so apprehension in this case necessarily precedes recognition. Because the affective experience takes place before we make an aesthetic judgment, and before we can make an ontological claim about the work being art, what this reveals, moreover, is that the ethical dimension of a work is not accounted for successfully, or at all, with current art theories. The reason for this, I argue, is that theories that rely on either essentialism or a “disinterested” aesthetic attitude are already basing their approach on the assumption that recognition precedes apprehension. So the ethical dimension of works of art such as Salcedo’s, among others, cannot be successfully accounted for using a theory that situates the artwork in the field of logic and perception, setting aside or leaving out the affective experience of the work. Moreover, as I show, an approach that includes the historical dimension of the work into its ontology makes a move that, although

more successful, falls short in grasping the ethical dimension I want to account for.

## II.

I argue that Arthur Danto's philosophy of art is not successful in accounting for the kind of work Salcedo creates. Danto separates art's essence, which is universal, from the historical and contextual dimensions of the work, which are contingent. By focusing on art's essence, he excludes the historical dimension of the artwork. Consequently, the ethical and affective dimensions are excluded as well from art's ontology. So the affective experience central to the ethical dimension of Salcedo's art is accounted for only after the work is recognized as art. The ethical dimension and the historical realm of the work, in this theory, are not a part of its essential definition but are rather part of the interpretive dimension of art, which is excluded from its definition and, most problematically, separate from its ontological constitution as art. This leads me to claim that an essentialist theory of art cannot successfully account for works such as Salcedo's, among others. With the cases I present, where the affective dimension comes prior to the recognition of the work as art, these works would remain ontologically incomplete, or unsuccessfully accounted for.

*After the End of Art* is a compilation of lectures in Fine Arts given by Danto, wherein we find the central claims of his essentialist theory, previously argued in his earlier works, such as *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, and in his article "The Artworld" (1964). Arguing that what matters is *not* what art is, but rather what makes the difference between art and non-art, Danto focuses on the problem of indiscernible counterparts.<sup>3</sup> In this case, *Shibboleth* (2007) can be perceived as sharing the same physical properties as its mere real counterpart, a crack on the floor, so it has indiscernibility issues. For this reason Danto argues that we need to define art philosophically by including its non-perceptual, ontological properties in this definition. Yet these

non-perceptual properties have nothing to do with the affective experience the work provides, but rather with the essential conditions a work of art must meet to be art.

It is clear that *Shibboleth* is a good example of a work that, at first glance, presents indiscernibility issues. It was exhibited at the Tate Modern museum in London in the form of a 548 foot long meandering crack on the floor that works as a dividing line. Yet it is relevant to ask if the essentialism that defines it can account for the work's ethical dimension. The title of this work comes from a biblical word used to exclude those who don't belong to a particular social group or class by not being able to pronounce this word correctly. In her proposal for the project, Salcedo writes that it is about the "absolute indifference"<sup>4</sup> of the privileged to the sector of society that remains excluded, invisible. The crack, which occupies the negativity of space, disturbs the Turbine Hall, the same way that, to Salcedo, "the appearance of immigrants disturbs the consensus and homogeneity of European society." The interpretation of this dividing line and its boundaries leads us to the ethical issue raised by this work, which is exclusion: historical, racial, and religious. Salcedo is working with aesthetic strategies that help the viewers apprehend, through affect, that there are lives disregarded as such and considered less human which are excluded and marginalized.

Yet, *Shibboleth's* indiscernible similarity to a crack on the floor demands that the viewer's experience of the work allow her to bring in the historical field, along with the work's ethical dimension, in this case experienced affectively, to recognize it as art. For example, by feeling empathy for these marginalized groups, the viewer will grasp the moral demand the work is making, and respond to it effectively. An effective response is, ideally, linked to a call to action to secure the precarity of these lives, or a response of outrage.<sup>5</sup> This moment where interpretation takes place is prior to our perceptual recognition of the work as art. So apprehension precedes recognition. That is, if there were no apprehensive experience, there would not be an affective response.

Without this affective response, the work's ethical dimension fails to reveal itself, so the work fails to reveal itself ontologically as art. I defend the claim that, if the affective apprehension of the ethical dimension in these works is posterior to their recognition as works of art, then the ethical dimension is not accounted for. Under this claim, Arthur Danto's essentialist theory becomes problematic as I further show.

Danto, precisely, accounts for the ethical dimension of the work of art as posterior to the work's ontological recognition as art, so recognition is prior to apprehension. With this theory, works such as Salcedo's would fail to be completed ontologically as artworks. A reason why recognition comes prior to apprehension in this theory is because by focusing on art's essence, Danto excludes the historical dimension of art, separating with it, its ethical dimension. In "The Artworld," Danto's view is that we have reached a point in the history of art where an artwork cannot be perceptually differentiated from a mere object, so that we need a theory that will differentiate artworks from other things.<sup>6</sup> Not only does Danto exclude the historical context of the work (and with it, the ethical) but we also find his claim about art to be now post-historical. In *After the End of Art*, Danto explains how "there is a kind of transhistorical essence in art, everywhere and always the same, but it only discloses itself through history" (p. 28). Although this claim is sound, in that history has a role, what Danto does not regard as sound is that this essence can be identified with any style of art, so history does not have an ontological role. While in the past other definitions such as the Vasarian idea that art is imitation, or the romanticist idea that art is the expression of feelings, failed because new artworks appeared that could not be accounted for with these definitions, the essence of art cannot convey to historical contingencies if it is to remain universal (p.29). Danto can now declare the end of these historical narratives. In his view it is not the role of art to search for its definition, but rather, once art is indiscernible from reality, the question of definition belongs to philosophy.

Danto, by establishing two minimal conditions, meaning and embodiment, defines art essentially. So a crack on the floor such as *Shibboleth* can be art if it has meaning embodied in the work. This aesthetic experience constrains the viewer to the field of logic and perception, demanding that we first identify the work as art if it conveys an essentialist definition, and later, in the process of interpretation, refer to the embodiment of the work, which is its contextual dimension where history and ethics are brought in only after the work is defined as art. So with this account, recognition comes prior to apprehension. This consequently generates an interesting problem given that the work of Salcedo would remain incomplete, or unaccounted for, with an essentialist theory of art.

Another problematic issue in this theory is the tension generated between the universal definition of art and its interpretation which is historically contingent.<sup>7</sup> Danto argues that something has to have meaning and embodiment to be identified as an artwork, so it has to be *about* something. This claim entails that *what* meaning something has, or *what* the work is about, is articulated in the interpretation of the work, which is historically situated, and does not necessarily constitute something as art. So his thesis makes a distinction between 1) something being art by having meaning and 2) *what* meaning art has through its interpretation. To interpret the work is to be committed to a historical explanation of it, determined by the artwork's mode of embodiment, but interpretation is separated from art's essence. With this move, Danto confidently embraces essentialism, claiming his definition of art captures the essence of art that is universal across history. But here he questionably makes a distinction between art's essence, which is transhistorical and universal, and its interpretation, which is historical, as he intends to make both of these compatible by embracing point 1 and dissolving history by separating interpretation from essence and declaring that art is now post-historical.<sup>8</sup>

What is most important about this tension is that Danto appears to generate ambiguity within his own thought, given that, aside from the theoretical definition of art, we find in works such as *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* his claim that interpretation is constitutive of its meaning.<sup>9</sup> This makes his initial claim about the universality of essentialism ambiguous because the more “constitutive” interpretation is of art’s meaning, the more subjected it is to historical change, and thus, the more ambiguous is his claim to essentialism. This ambiguity is relevant in that it sustains my view, that interpretation is, actually, constitutive of art’s meaning. Further, that interpretation, necessarily making use of the historical and ethical dimensions of the work of art, comes prior to our ontological definition of art.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, the more Danto insists that we need theoretical criteria (through his essentialist definition) to distinguish art from non-art, the less contingent upon history and the more unsubstantial aesthetic experience becomes. Danto makes a claim that compromises the autonomy of his theoretical approach, given that if interpretation is fundamental to the meaning of the work, then essentialism loses its universality. Defined through essentialism, *Shibboleth* and *Unland* would remain ontologically incomplete. The ambiguity in Danto’s own thought is a clear sign demanding for an aesthetic approach that will account for the historical dimension (and with it, the ethical) of the work of art, to bridge the artificial isolation between ethics and aesthetics. To begin with, it may be that losing this universality can only open space for a more successful approach to art, as I subsequently show.

### III.

I now evaluate Umberto Eco’s approach and argue that, although more successful than Danto’s, does not go far enough to account for the central, affective experience of

Salcedo's works. It being the case that the historical contextual dimension of the work could be accounted for in a theory prior to our ontological recognition of the work as art; it would follow that its ethical dimension, apprehended through affect, would be accounted for as preceding recognition. Umberto Eco does not fully give such an account, but in *Open Work* he approaches art without excluding or separating it from its historical context (and, thus, its ethical dimension) like other art theorists do. So he disregards the universality of an essentialist definition, and instead argues that the work is completed only when it is interpreted in the historical context in which it is embodied. His approach is useful for my argument, because although Eco does not specifically address ethics, he does open the way for a more successful approach to art which does not dissolve history in favor of essentialism.

His article "Two Hypotheses about the Death of Art" offers an insight to this view when he states that when we interpret a work, there is no contradiction in assuming a) That one must appreciate the whole structure of the work as a declaration of poetics, and b) that such a work can be considered fully as art only when its poetic project can be appreciated as the concrete, material, and perceptible result of its underlying project (p.176). Point (a) stresses that the work has meaning, a condition which makes it art, but point (b) emphasizes that we can consider it fully as art only when it is embodied materially. That is, the work is ontologically complete as art once it is considered in its specificity. Here, there is no strong conceptual tension between universality and historicity like there is with Danto. Eco, by rather leaving the work "open," prioritizes the necessity of the work's historical dimension.

These points suggest that, theoretically, Eco prioritizes neither apprehension nor recognition. In fact, the central goal of this approach is to leave the work ontologically open, which entails that the ethical dimension of the work of art can be grasped as well. In *Open Work*, Eco's central argument is that the work can be completed, but never

closed. The reasons for this are that the work is rendered open by its author, given material embodiment in a specific time and place, and completed by a viewer with subjective interpretation. To allow interpretation, which is contingent on historical changes, to be brought in philosophically, Eco has to claim that the work of art is open, or a work in movement. Instead of separating art from interpretation (and from history) like Danto does, Eco leaves art “open” to a variety of interpretations and, thus, ontologically open to the contingent factors of history. With this move, Eco disregards the universality of an essentialist definition and, in declaring the work “open,” subjects art to history, allowing for apprehension to come either prior or posterior to recognition, but not necessarily *a posteriori*, like an essentialist theory would sustain.

There are charges of relativism that any non-essentialist approach has to account for when the context-dependent, historical dimension is part of the ontology of the work of art. In this case, Eco wants to prevent art from being endlessly subjected to the contingencies of history and the relativity of its unlimited variety of interpretations, yet without leaning towards universality. In his book *The Limits of Interpretation*, Eco addresses this issue with the notion of authorial intentionality.<sup>11</sup> It is the author of the work who renders it open, mounting the sequence of semiotic elements in the order she chooses, so that the piece can reject the definitive, concluded message and rather multiply the possibility of interpretations. But the fact that the semiotic elements are arranged in *some* sort of sequence prevents us from claiming that the work can mean just anything or that it has unlimited interpretations. Eco argues that “if there is something to be interpreted, the interpretation must speak of something which must be found somewhere in the work, and in some way respected.”<sup>12</sup> Although the material aspects of the work are related to (but also separate from) the author’s intention, without authorial intentionality, we would have a conglomeration of random components ready to

emerge from chaos. So interpretation, although not limited to one meaning, is also not unlimited.

With the interpretive constraint made clear, Eco successfully includes history as a part of art's ontology. He does not specifically address ethics in his work, but my reading of his approach entails that unless history is brought in to the ontology of an artwork the work is incomplete. From this point I can claim that Eco opens the way to a more successful approach to art given that once history is better accounted for, the ethical dimension of the work, apprehended affectively, can be brought in as prior to our recognition of the work as art. And this approach can more successfully account for works such as Salcedo's, where an affect based response has to come prior to our cognitive or perceptual experience of recognition.

As we have now seen, Butler's ontology of life in relation to the visual field can be applied to the ontology of art, which is also revealed on a visual field. This has allowed me to claim that, in works such as Salcedo's, our apprehension of the ethical dimension, through affect, comes prior to the recognition of the work as art. My claim consequently reveals the need for a theory that will account for artworks without separating the historical dimension of the work, and thus the ethical, from its ontological definition as art. My reading of Umberto Eco allows me to move away from this separation and claim that the historical dimension of the work of art (and thus the ethical dimension) is part of the ontology of the work as art. Although I do not have enough space to develop my argument further here, my purpose has been to show how, if the ethical dimension is to be salvaged from aesthetic theories that separate ethics from aesthetics, we need a radically new and more successful approach to art that will bridge instead of separate ethics and aesthetics.

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<sup>1</sup> For work on this recent debate, see Hagberg, Garry, editor. *Art and Ethical Criticism*,. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.

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Also see, Costello, Diarmuid, editor. *Life and Death of Images*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> On the problems related to this, see Mark Reinhardt, "Picturing Violence: Aesthetics and the Anxiety of Critique," *Beautiful Suffering, Photography and the Traffic in Pain*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. He relates it to the problem of aesthetization, and addresses thinkers such as Kant, and more recently Jerome Stolinz and Marcia Muelder Eaton, who make disinterested pleasure and beauty central in aesthetics. (pp.13-37).

<sup>3</sup> This focus is clearly stated in "Works of Art and Mere Real Things," *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1981. (pp.1-33).

<sup>4</sup> See Achim Bordchart-Hume. *Doris Salcedo, Shibboleth*. Unilever Series. 2007. (p. 35).

<sup>5</sup> I don't have space to develop this argument further, but when I refer to the "effectiveness" of a work making a moral demand on us, I imply that there are two conditions for apprehension to precede recognition. 1) The affective response from the viewer, where the ethical dimension of the artwork is apprehended and 2) This response should generate a "call to action," outrage, or an urge to secure the precarity of those lives. Judith Butler specifically addresses this issue when she explains how, "It could be that the apprehension of precariousness leads to a heightening of violence." Following this claim, I suggest that, if not secured through affect, apprehending that lives are precarious can lead to further destruction or injurability. See *Frames of War*, London: Verso Press, 2007. (p.ii).

<sup>6</sup> Danto, Arthur. "The Artworld," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol.61, No.19. (p. 572).

<sup>7</sup> For a further critique of the conceptual tension between universality and historicity, see Kelly, Michael *Iconoclasm in Aesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Danto particularly, as I point, resolves the tension in favor of universality.

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<sup>8</sup> Referring to this issue, I quote Danto, “I really meant to proclaim that a certain kind of closure had occurred in the historical development of art (. ..)Whatever art was to be made from then on would be marked by a post-historical character.” *After the End of Art*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997. (p.22).

<sup>9</sup> See Danto, Arthur C. *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> I resolve the tension between universality and historicity in favor of historicity only as a first step to more successfully account for the ethical dimension of the work of art, apprehended affectively. I do not entirely defend an institutional or historicist theory of art, because it does not take my claim far enough ontologically.

<sup>11</sup> For more of Eco’s view on authorial intentionality, see Collini, Stefan, editor. *Umberto Eco, Interpretation and Overinterpretation..* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

<sup>12</sup> See Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990. (p. 34).

**An Exploration of the Concept of 'Multitude' as the Ground  
for Political Art**

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At this point it is obvious to even a casual observer that notions of 'collectivity' have a hold over the social imagination. This collectivity, as it now appears, is no longer tied to concepts of class or nation. It has become a more elusive power – given weight by the communication technologies that act as a kind of metaphor embedded in daily life: a demonstration of the potential for heterogeneous, globalised and spontaneous connectivity between human beings. But what is an effective way to think this moment in relation to politicised art? After all the idea of global connectivity seems to appeal as much to marketing executives as it does to radicals. How should its optimism be approached by work that attempts to critique capitalism? This second question – simplistic though it is – remains central to the practice of visual art to the extent that it claims to be political and of the present.

This paper will concern itself principally with a comparison between two formulations of the potential for the collective at this time: firstly, the concept of 'multitude' which is drawn from the work of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – the radical neo-Marxist bestsellers *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2006) and *Commonwealth* (2009); and secondly the notion relational aesthetics (RA) formulated by Nicholas Bourriard – which has been a significant influence on artistic production in recent years. These two ideas are invoked in a particular relation: the first 'multitude' will be used to critique the second 'relational aesthetics'. The grounds of critique and comparison will be quite simple: namely, the

proper balance of optimism and pessimism that is required by the development of a politicised art that invokes 'collectivity'. A background to this discussion will be provided by the thought of that arch-pessimist and self-confessed moralist, Jean Baudrillard. Baudrillard's work has certainly informed Antonio Negri's characterisation of post-Fordist capitalism (although Negri's world-view is fundamentally optimistic about the potential for radical political change) but this is not the reason for its inclusion here. Rather, it is used because it offers an exemplary reflexive attention to the claims of theory itself: theory's tendency to operate as a discourse of power. It is here, with regards the potential hypocrisy of any theory that analyses power whilst simultaneously enacting it, that Baudrillard's pessimism, even his paranoia, is entirely appropriate and rational. The paper will conclude with some comments on the best way to conceive of an art relevant to the concept multitude, in the light of the preceding discussion.

How then, can the concept 'multitude' be used to critique the claims of relational aesthetics? It will first be necessary to identify points of comparison between these two concepts, or conceptual approaches, and to observe that there is no self-conscious relation between them: neither Hardt and Negri, nor Bourriaud make reference to the each others' ideas as far as the author is aware. This is largely because their ideas are confined to different fields. Hardt and Negri's work is an analysis of globalised post-Fordist capitalism that attempts to lay out the theoretical ground for radical change; as such it does not concern itself with the role of art beyond the use of situationist-type interventions by protest movements (Hardt and Negri 2006). Bourriaud's work, by contrast, is a theoretical justification of a key tendency of artists in the 1990's who sought to establish environments in which meaning could be elaborated *collectively* (Bourriaud 2002:15). As such, Bourriaud's work is a discourse that makes its political claims from within the disciplinary boundaries of contemporary art. Nonetheless, it is also the case that both works make extended reference to

a similar inheritance of continental theory ( Althusser / Foucault / Debord etc) and, crucially, both in different ways respond to the optimistic potential or collectivity in this cultural moment. In so doing, both *Empire* and *Relational aesthetics* absorb the fundamentally pessimistic critiques of contemporary capitalism that have been developed by Marxist-inspired theorising of the sixty years; they attempt in different ways to find grounds for optimism despite the apparent ubiquity of the 'society of spectacle', the immanence of 'biopower', the elusiveness of 'post-Fordist capitalism'.

As the introduction indicates, it is the argument of this paper that the balance of optimism and pessimism is most successfully achieved in the work of Hardt and Negri for reasons that will be indicated shortly. It must be acknowledged, however, that a positive assessment of *Empire* and Hardt /Negri's subsequent works has not been universally arrived at by left-wing commentators. Their work has been widely criticised for its lack of detailed attention to historical detail; for its proposal of vague concepts like 'multitude'; for its 'arrogant' attempt to go beyond classical Marxism among many other objections (Penguin 2003). It cannot be denied that *Empire* is a broad brush account of the global situation. The fundamental premise of the work is that capitalism has entered a new stage beyond imperialism that the authors term 'Empire'. This stage requires a new analysis – a fundamental updating of the Marxist problematic. Now the state is no longer the paradigmatic form of sovereignty; the state forms only one node in a power which is supra-national, and includes in its network other bodies such as the UN, the IMF, the World Bank as well as multi-national corporations.

The logic of this new order remains capitalistic in that it is based on exploitation of labour. The networks of 'Empire' work to maintain an equilibrium in which dissent is neutralised and creativity is channelled in the interests of globalised capital. 'Empire' is the condition of post-Fordist capitalism where, crucially, the key tendency is towards the

development of technological and informational networks in support of the flow of capital and immaterial production. Immaterial production can be defined as post-industrial, an economy based on the creation of signs, experiences and affects<sup>1</sup>. Repression is effected through the structuring of subjectivity by work, leisure and also information: an 'informational colonisation of being' where the dominant power 'creates situations in which, before coercively neutralising difference, [it] seems to absorb it in an insignificant play of self-generating and self-regulating equilibria' (Hardt and Negri 2000:34). The operation of this power also extends to the formation of subjectivity and the structuring of creative flows.

So far, the tenor of these ideas is clearly pessimistic. However, Hardt and Negri follow an immanent critique of capital, where 'Empire' contains within its contradictions the possibility of its demise. This hope is located in the figure of 'the multitude' – a 'powerful multiplicity unfettered by the state or by any kind of representation' (Lotringer 2007: 19). This multitude is made possible both by the diminishing importance of national or regional identifications, and by the unstable subjectivities produced by 'Empire'. Having said this, multitude remains an elusive idea throughout Hardt and Negri's work – it is a term that points towards nothing less than a type of global unity in diversity that cannot quite be articulated within the constraints of a current conceptual language. Rather, it is a term that can only be developed through an 'experiment or series of experiments advanced through the genius of collective practice ... to take that next concrete step and create a new social body beyond Empire' (Hardt and Negri 2000:206) The possibility of these experiments is underscored by the location of desire and creativity in 'the multitude': for Hardt and Negri all of the developments of modernity have been prompted by this 'desire' expressed in terms of protest, disobedience and, most importantly, in concerted attempts to found a different way of living.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, *Empire* (2000), *Multitude* (2006) and *Commonwealth* (2009) are best understood as attempts

to provide a theoretical focus to these powers of dissent in a period when the classic discourse of Marxism seems to have lost its relevance:

The first question of political philosophy today is not if or even why there will be resistance and rebellion, but rather how to determine the enemy against which to rebel. Indeed, often the inability to identify the enemy is what leads the will to resistance around in such paradoxical circles (Hardt and Negri 2000: 211)

It bears repeating at this point that this paper focuses on the proper relation of pessimism and optimism in discourses of collectivity in political art; it has nothing to say about the accuracy of Hardt and Negri's analysis. In fact, *Empire's* relation to the 'real' does not seem to be observed in its claims about the nature of post-Fordist capitalism so much as in its *rhetorical position*: that is, its attempt to unify various critical discourses beneath an internationalist banner that affirms the power of collective action. After all, why not? Given the strange, uprooted status of meaning at this point such a call is surely as plausible as any other. It is this that is meant by a relationship between optimism and pessimism – between call for action and critique – and this that represents an important point of comparison with *Relational Aesthetics*.

*Relational aesthetics* has been used since the late 1990's as a kind of exegesis of the work of contemporary artists such as Vanessa Beecroft, Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Tiravanija among many others. As has already been observed Bourriaud's work (first published as *Esthetique Relationelle* 1998) demonstrates a similar intellectual heritage of continental aesthetic and political theory to that of *Empire*. Furthermore, Bourriaud proposes that the meaning of the artworks discussed in *RA* is derived from their production of inter-subjectivity<sup>3</sup>, a term that is also central to Hardt and Negri's analysis of the potential for multitude. According to *Relational Aesthetics* the artwork that developed in the 1990's marked a significant departure from an understanding

of the artwork as principally an artefact whose meanings are addressed to 'private' experience. Rather these artists create 'open-ended' works whose address is principally public. Bourriaud sees this work as political – its emphasis on creating the potential for inter-subjective encounter or 'models of sociability'<sup>4</sup> as a resistance against the reification of social experience, and the absorption of sociality and subjectivity into modes of consumption.

This conception of repressive social forces in Bourriaud's work exhibits striking similarities to that advanced by Hardt and Negri (2000: 206). However, the project of relational aesthetics is in fact substantially different, because of the way that it carefully regulates its definition of the political. With *RA* the actual or potential intersubjective encounters are seen as enough to constitute resistance, through the institution of 'micro-utopias' of limited duration, in place of 'social utopias and revolutionary hopes' (Bourriaud 2002:31). Whereas *Empire* is clearly an attempt to revitalise a utopian political narrative, Bourriaud implicitly seeks refuge within the domain circumscribed by the term 'art', as though this space can be protected from the prevailing social conditions rather than being constituted by them. This ambivalence towards the political is framed as a response to contemporary culture where direct criticality is based on 'a marginality that is nowadays impossible' where '... traditional critical philosophy...now only fuels art in the form of archaic folklore...' (Bourriaud 2002: 31).

Bourriaud's disenchantment sets the tone of his definition of the political. The mention of 'marginality' refers to the widespread sense that there is no longer a margin, or an 'outside', from which a political critique of contemporary culture can be made. Hardt and Negri also concede this point; indeed, their characterisation of 'Empire' is based around its shifting formulation where centre and margins seem to interchange – there is no stable configuration (Hardt and Negri 2000). This claim is perhaps the weakest point of their theoretical armature. If it is the case that there is no outside to capital then it is hard to see how such critique as 'Empire'

is itself possible. It is Baudrillard who has worked furthest through the logic of such a claim as Lotringer observes (2004). At the very least, we can suggest that neither Hardt /Negri nor Bourriaud exhibit quite enough pessimism, or paranoia, with regards the role that the dissemination of their own theory plays in the structures of capital that they identify as the context of their theory.

Although it does not attempt to be a programmatic theory, *RA* does make the implicit claim that the artworks it considers represent formal and theoretical innovation. Without this claim Bourriaud's would have no basis for claiming any distinctiveness – as innovation remains a criterion central to the disciplinary coherence of contemporary art. As Julian Stallabrass has observed it is important to remember that Bourriaud's work is not merely a discussion but a promotion of the work of certain artists (Stallabrass 2004:177). *RA* forms its argument around a microscopic utopian demand – the possibility of an intersubjective generation of meaning around open-ended artworks. This is taken by Bourriaud as a 'formal' innovation, based on a response to new developments in culture. The developments in question are largely to do with communication: Bourriaud asserts the importance of the urban experience and also of course, the internet, which in the 1990's was already exerting a powerful influence on the social imagination. In place of the ideal of collectivity implicit within Marxist thought there is reference to the possibilities suggested by the growth of a 'culture of interactivity' and '...the emergence of new technologies, like the Internet and multimedia systems [which] points to a collective desire to create new areas of conviviality and introduce new types of transaction with regard the cultural object...' (Bourriaud 2002: 26).<sup>5</sup>

As a framework for developing political art, it becomes obvious that *RA* has severe deficiencies. The fluidity of form presented by the works of many artists incorporated under the rubric of 'relational aesthetics' , rather than challenging commodification, tends to identify the work with

the artists themselves, fostering a particular auratic quality which is at odds with the claim to collectivity ( Kayak cited in Bishop 57). One is tempted to say that the wonder of Bourriaud's work is that it manages to make such a microscopic political demand, by a talent for hybridising theoretical references, into something that sounds plausible. *RA* is a kind of disappearing knot where strands of 20<sup>th</sup> century radical thought come together and immediately lose their problematic - a rhetorical style well suited to the demand for fluid subjectivity that is presented by contemporary culture.

Most importantly, *RA*'s bonsai utopianism does not effectively address the exclusions that pre-exist any art context – as has been effectively argued by Claire Bishop (2004). In her essay *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, Bishop promotes the art of Santiago Sierra and Thomas Hirschorn, whose work is characterised by antagonism, against the 'feel-good' works of Tiravinija and others:

In this model, the kernel of impossible resolution on which antagonism depends is mirrored in the tension between art and society conceived of as mutually exclusive spheres – a self-reflexive tension that the work of Sierra and Hirschorn fully acknowledges ( Bishop 2004:78)

This identification of a fundamental division or exclusion that exists between art and society is certainly accurate; however, Bishop uses this observation as the grounds for the re-inscription of this divide. Rather than the classic avant-garde demand of the collapse of the distinction between art and life, Bishop advocates an affirmation of the distinction, as a way of revealing the limits of what art can achieve, the social exclusions upon which it is based. Implicit in her argument is the claim that political art can at most achieve is to point to the exclusions that constitute the various contexts of art and the social, and to de-stabilise the clear self-identifications of those who occupy these areas. Yet, if this is the case, political art simply models these exclusions to the same art audiences

that Bishop correctly identifies as the consumers of *RA* – an audience of dealers, artists and social elites (Bishop 2004: 67). Such an art invites its audiences to consume an experience of their complicity, as opposed to a mirage of social harmony. Does this really represent ‘better politics’ as Bishop suggests (Bishop 2004:79) - or rather, a restatement of a particular Alexandrian pessimism art’s potential to connect? Bishop is careful to distance her critique of *RA* from an advocacy of socially engaged art ( Bishop 2004: 77); from the point of view of an activist art this represents a failure of nerve. The challenge is to bring sensitivity to ‘antagonism’ and its possibilities for the development of activist art. Although, Bishop is correct to criticise the ideological grounds of *RA*’s micro-utopias – and the fact that they are purged of negativity- the problem is not that *RA* does not recognise the boundaries of art, nor that it affirms a unified subject, but that it does not do enough with the antagonistic potential of the exclusions between art and the social.

It is the contention of this paper that a position such as Bishop’s falls short of the energetic fusion of pessimism and optimism that is necessary for an activist political art, although its criticism of *RA* is acute. Although Bishop advocates work that points to the antagonism between the social and art, this can only be signalled from within the space of art, which implicitly retains its integrity; however, Bishop is right to identify that a key weakness of *RA* is its inability to understand anything other than a utopian definition of interaction or connectivity in human relations. Jean Baudrillard makes a similar observation in his 1977 work *Oublier Foucault* (‘Forget Foucault’) where Deleuze’s and Lyotard’s conception of desire are criticised alongside Foucault’s understanding of power:

Such a coincidence is not accidental: it is simply that in Foucault power takes the place of desire. It is there in the same way as desire in Deleuze and Lyotard: always already there, purged of all negativity, a network, a rhizome, contiguity

diffracted ad infinitum' (Baudrillard 1977 trans. 1987: 17).

Baudrillard's point here can be explicated in two ways: firstly, he suggests that Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard have misrecognised the reality of contemporary capitalism to the extent that their work is merely symptomatic of it. Their theories have lost any relationship to the real of capitalism such that they simply exchange amongst one another the same basic formulae, according to wider logic of disembedded signs. Secondly, he affirms that the theories that result – particularly Foucault's analysis of power – is itself a discourse of power analogous to the one it seems to discover through its genealogical study:

'...an interstitial flowing of power that seeps through the whole porous network of the social, the mental, and of bodies, infinitesimally modulating the technologies of power (where the relations of power and seduction are inextricably tangled). All of this reads *directly* in Foucault's discourse (which is *also* a discourse of power). It flows, it invests and saturates, the entire space it opens....' (Baudrillard 1977 trans. 1987: 9).

There is no space here to assess whether Baudrillard's critique of Foucault, Lyotard and Deleuze is justified. The central point is that in Baudrillard pessimism about the status of meaning under capitalism does not allow theory to sit outside its purview, in an 'outside' or protected space. Theory, even Baudrillard's own, is always potentially complicit in the processes of simulation<sup>6</sup>. Here is the proper place for pessimism – in the reflexive awareness of theory (of any kind) to its own complicity in a system of exclusions as well as its tendency to descend into a state that Baudrillard calls 'indeterminacy': where even the signs of radical theory are no longer 'invested' in any real situation (Lotringer et al. 2007 ). This type of vigilance is the only possible response if,

as Hardt, Negri and Bourriaud all claim, there is no longer an 'outside' to capital.

It might be objected that critiques of the kind presented by Baudrillard unnecessarily complicate matters; why is it necessary to advocate these kinds of paranoid positions? In response to this, it is easy to point towards the various reversals and slippages of meaning that make any kind of optimistic discourse unstable and subject to appropriation. The phenomenon is most easily seen in the way that 'creativity' is promoted in the form of entrepreneurship. In fact, notions very similar to those of 'the multitude' seem to be central to a blurring of the distinction between innovative entrepreneurial thinking and contemporary art. Writing in a recent edition of *Art Monthly*, Jennifer Thatcher, director of talks at the ICA, terms this as 'art's current fascination with grass-roots activism, amateurs and subcultures' (Thatcher 2009:332). The context of this discussion is that an interest exists in parallel with various marketing, economic and internet buzzwords that focus on the potential of the internet and other recent communication technologies to sustain radically new forms of entrepreneurship. The convergence is such that it is possible to cite a 'slew' of shows in the US in 2009 that referenced 'Crowdsourcing' and 'The Wisdom of Crowds': terminology drawn directly from a 2004 book on innovation in marketing: 'Crowdsourcing' by James Surowiecki (Olson cited in Thatcher 2009: 332). Without an appropriate degree of pessimism it is not possible to guard any hope against its appropriation by the protean discourses of capitalism.

What then are the proper grounds for optimism in the development of a politicised art and how can it operate alongside the pessimism identified here? Although the concept 'multitude' lacks clarity, it does offer a call to enact through connections a new form of community, utilising all of the technological affordances of this moment in post-Fordist capitalism. Here the core concerns of activist art – those of promoting and enacting community in a space that does not try too hard to distinguish between art, popular culture and

political activism – are more relevant than ever. ‘Trojan Horses: Activist Art and Power’ (1984) Lucy Lippard’s inspirational account of the state of hybridity between political art, community activism and a punk DIY aesthetic in the New York of the early 1980’s remains a historical blueprint of the type of political art proper to the concept ‘multitude’. In an important sense, there can be no going beyond the aim of ‘a massing of energies’ towards ‘cultural democracy’ as described by Lippard. Even the politicised internet art that has been advocated by Julian Stallabrass (2004) falls short in this regard. The examples that Stallabrass highlights tend to interrupt the signifying regimes of corporate power, rather than actively engaging in attempts to enact ‘multitude’ in practice<sup>7</sup> (Stallabrass 2004: 192). Perhaps Stallabrass remains within a paradigm which insists that relevant art must be formally innovative. By contrast, this paper would like to suggest that the potential of the internet for activist art is in its interface between the virtual and the social, not its challenge to the disciplinary conventions of contemporary art. There is no need to discriminate between reactionary and innovative forms of art – it is the potential of these forms to create connections that is important. It is characteristic of the strange reversals we find in this period, that any position that insists on formal radicalism in art practice becomes strangely conservative.

This is not a question of renewing art, or life, by overcoming the boundary between art and the social in the utopian avant-garde sense. This is not a utopian optimism but one that is founded on an acknowledgement of the energy inherent in multitude – where energy is understood as an event that by definition cannot foresee its outcome – where multitude is powerful because it is not conceptually realised, and where multitude represents the potential of an outside to art discourse. The connections that matter in this art activism are both affirmations and antagonisms, as they must be if art is to engage with its outside. Perhaps, Bishop is keen to distance herself from socially engaged practice because such work tends to conceive of itself with a clear conception

of the social in mind. By contrast 'multitude' is a concept that eludes the categorisations of political and social philosophy. The concept 'multitude' is borrowed by Hardt and Negri from Spinoza – as such it represents a return to the beginning of modern political thought in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Spinoza's conception of the 'mass' as powerful, irreducible heterogeneity tended to be repressed by theories of the State – principally in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Hobbes who saw the 'many' (when they were not subsumed under some form of political unity) as the supreme danger to state sovereignty (Virno 2004). For Hobbes the key figure of a coherent state is 'the people' – that is the many subsumed within and represented by the state – whereas 'the multitude' represents the dissolution of order involved in any 'regurgitation' of 'state of nature' in civil society (Virno 2004). As Virno suggests Hobbes hated the notion of multitude because he clearly saw the threat it presented to power – the multitude is 'anti-state'. However, Hardt and Negri stress that part of their project is to make it possible to think of this concept multitude, which is neither the traditional notion of a 'political class', nor the mere anarchy that Hobbes feared (Hardt and Negri 2006: 350). Activist art that engages with multitude, therefore conceives itself as engaging with a category of the social that has not been clearly formulated, and has the potential to undermine the categories of art in return<sup>8</sup>.

The antagonism that Bishop proposes as central to the exclusions that allow discrete social spaces to exist and the contingency of these spaces does offer a useful criticism of Hardt and Negri's concept of multitude. This seems to be an important point about the nature of social reality and potentially points to a weakness in Hardt and Negri's concept, which tends to affirm 'desire' in a way that does not acknowledge antagonism, or any other fundamental negativity. But it is important that any antagonism does not simply feed back into the codes of artistic practice – to re-enforce disciplinary boundaries or notions of the radical and

progressive that are meaningful only to those inducted to the regimes of visual art.

Bishop's analysis is useful because it does point out the restricted nature of the audience for the contemporary art that is confined to Biennial's. This restriction is underscored by all sorts of assumptions about the radical nature of contemporary practice and the reactionary character of those who do not comprehend it. However, in the final analysis Bishop is not willing to contest the constitution of this audience: she avoids the question of socially engaged art entirely. Her account falls back of criterion of quality – or at least on the importance of maintain a disciplinary historicity that allows new works to critique and innovate within a discipline. An activist art that engages with the concept multitude would combine diverse practices aimed at the promotion of social energy with sensitivity to 'antagonism' – but would see this as a further opportunity for the generation of energy. Engagement with multitude does not mean the development of formally innovative artworks but a rediscovery of the de-historicised formal remnant of stylistic innovation – in other words contemporary art - as a use-value: a medium which to destabilise the social exclusions of art and an experiment with antithetical understandings of what it is to create.

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<sup>1</sup> Hardt and Negri do not claim that the economy has entirely moved over to this form of production. Rather that this is the key tendency in the development of capital

<sup>2</sup> Negri was a key theorist of the Italian autonomia movement that has been characterised by attempts to found squatted alternative spaces since its inception in the 1970's.

<sup>3</sup> They also share an assumption that 'the mass' is basically productive rather than passive. Bishop identifies this feature of Relational Aesthetics as the heritage of Althusser. For Hardt and Negri the similar claim that it is the challenge of the workers that always instigates the development of

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capitalism is derived from both Italian Operismo and Deleuzian thinking.

<sup>4</sup> Which seems a slightly weaker version of the 'forms of life' that appear in Hardt /Negri and Virno in relation to 'the multitude'.

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting, however, that there exists ambivalence in RA towards the internet that is revealing about the purposes of the work. Elsewhere, Bourriaud identifies the internet under the rubric of the 'communication superhighways' as integral to the reification of experience that relational aesthetics resists through the staging of 'real' encounters: 'We feel meagre and helpless when faced with the electronic media, theme parks, user-friendly places, and the spread of compatible forms of sociability, like the laboratory rat doomed to an inexorable itinerary in its cage, littered with chunks of cheese' (p. 8) Bourriaud's prose moves around the vague figure of 'resistance' through interchangeable oppositions that work towards the aim of validating a particular form of artwork without critiquing its claims. In Jean Baudrillard's terms, which to a great extent run parallel to Hardt and Negri's characterisation of *Empire*, this represents a 'simulated' tension.

<sup>6</sup> This term is used here instead of power because Baudrillard explicitly denied that power exists any more – rather that it is revived by attempts to resist that call it again into being. Obviously, a thorough investigation of the implications of this claim would require more space than is available here.

<sup>7</sup> Stallabrass concentrates on internet art that involves various forms of hacking or Situationist detournment of signs within the confines of virtual space.

<sup>8</sup> Baudrillard would call this a relationship of seduction

**Panel Five Response**

**Valerie Mackinnon  
Stony Brook University**

In venturing an attempt at synthesis of these three panelists, I fear I would descend into a misguided reductionism, yet, in the simplest of terms, Charnley, Eken and Drake share a thematic core: an investigation of the status of meaning in ethical artworks in a capitalist, or perhaps post-capitalist society. But if I may go further, I want to propose that these three instances of theory and exegesis together signal an event which discloses that meaning in a kind of hermeneutic movement of the ethical aesthetic. Namely, in their confluence we find a defense of the ethical dimension as found in the artist, in the audience and in the artwork itself.

Each author, Drake, Eken and Charnley, I would argue, articulates a priority of a differing aspect of the aesthetic experience. Charnley, with his account of the tenuous position between pessimism and optimism in relational aesthetics and in regards to the ever growing and globally connected multitude, asks questions of the formal innovation of an ethical work of art that turns upon the ethical situation of the work itself. Carolina Drake's defense of an ethically influenced affective apprehension, grounded in historical context and imbedded in the artist's intention, as prior to the cognitive recognition of the work in its ontological framing, prioritizes the viewer of the work with the charge of validating meaning. And Eken, in his discussion of collective utterances giving voice to minority, particularly in the non-normative and deterritorialized status of marginalized voices being themselves the medium of becoming, indicates the filmmaker Ceylan as the operative

articulator of those collective utterances, where the artist himself becomes allegory to a deterritorialized public.

It is this tenuousness between public and private that recurs in all of these explorations of ethical aesthetics. That meaning for Drake depends upon the affect of the viewer echoes in Charnley's exploration of Relational Aesthetics, in which the "meaning of the artworks... is derived from their production of intersubjectivity." It is through Ceylan's cinema that this question of the intersubjective element to ethical artworks finds conflation between public and private, where "private immediately opens onto the political" (4). Charnley explores Claire Bishop's critique of relational aesthetics' 'bonsai utopianism" (8), whose work addresses exclusion and division between art and life in a way which "destabilize the clear self-identifications of those who occupy these areas" (9). This notion challenges those artworks which dissolve that distinction. Eken shows that Ceylan's films play with this distinction between private and public in a way which comments on the deterritorialization of the minorities Ceylan is hoping to give voice to, and through his own use of family members, non-actors, even his own wife as characters of film, he utilizes allegory to both highlight and confound the distinction between art and life. Where, in political works, does this distinction need to be affirmed and maintained, and where must it dissolve? The question of an artist's intention must come into a broader understanding of that interplay, of individual creation opening onto collectivity, through antagonism and action.

It is not explicit in Eken's account of Ceylan's films whether his collective utterance, one articulating the loss and hopelessness of a deterritorialized public, makes an intended claim toward a specific moral action or response. Whereas in Drake the intention of the artist, even if opened to the multitude of interpretation which accompany the reception of a work, grounds the work's very meaning in its call to action. The operative terms in Drake's effective apprehension

are a cause of outrage, a call to action, a motivation. Must ethical works of art be fundamentally prescriptive and teleological?

Drake ties meaning explicitly to historicity, but places the viewer's interpretation of the work, which is "constitutive of art's meaning," so that the variety of subjective interpretations is grounded in the intentionality of the artist. Drake gave a fine look at Umberto Eco's emphasis on authorial intentionality, where "it is the author of the work who renders it open, mounting the sequence of semiotic elements in the order she chooses, so that the piece can reject the definitive, concluded message and rather multiply the possibility of interpretations." (15) Is this promise of openness overly optimistic? Hannah Arendt, in her look at action in *Human Condition*, writes "It is because of this already existing web of human relationships, with its innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, that action almost never achieves its purpose but it is also because of this medium, in which action alone is real, that it 'produces' stories with or without intention as naturally as fabrication produces tangible things" (Arendt,184).

Charnley's look at a global unity in diversity, of a multitude that situates itself in the precarious position between pessimism and optimism, is the ground from which post-capitalistic artworks arrive into a collective discourse. But for Charnley "Engagement with multitude does not mean the development of formally innovative artworks but a rediscovery of the de-historicized formal remnant of stylistic innovation...as use value," (13), namely as medium. Where does collectivity articulate meaning in ethical artworks, is it a medium of the work itself, does an artwork's ethically grounded form entail an ethical content, or an ethically sensitive reception?

The poignancy of these three papers, which each investigate political artwork's articulation of aesthetic

meaning, sheds light on the very interdisciplinary movement we occupy in this conference setting, how do we use theory and philosophy to an application of the ethical dimension of our post-capitalist society, with ever growing means at communication and alienation, towards an active production by the multiple? And so I will now turn to you for your questions.

**Keynote Address**

**No Ghost, Just a Shell**

**Simon Critchley**  
**The New School for Social Research**

*[Megan Craig's Introduction]*

It is my pleasure and privilege to introduce Dr. Simon Critchley. Dr. Critchley is Professor and Chair of the Philosophy Department at the New School for Social Research, and he is the author of numerous books, some of which came up in our previous panel discussion. Most recently, *On Heidegger's Being and Time* (2008), and also *The Book of Dead Philosophers* (2009). Two books of conversations with Simon Critchley will be published by Polity later this year, *How to Stop Living and Start Worrying* is the first of those, *Nicely Impossible Objects*, and *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (all forthcoming). Simon also has several books that have been near and dear to my heart which are not listed in that list, one of them *Infinitely Demanding*, also *Very Little, Almost Nothing*, and a really astoundingly beautiful book on the poetry of Wallace Stevens called *Things Really Are*. I should say that Simon was my dissertation advisor and a critical mentor and teacher for me at the New School for Social Research where I had the great privilege to do my graduate work. He is certainly one of the foremost scholars on Levinas and Derrida and it is through him that I encountered both of those thinkers. So it's really a tremendous honor to have him with us. He is also I would say an experimenter in the true Deleuzian sense of the word, in his own right, and I recently discovered that you can

become his fan on Facebook, which I think is the mark of a different threshold. It's not just that he occurs on Facebook, but is in fact one of the *figures* of whom you can become a fan. So I encourage you all to become fans, and I know that I already am. Welcome, Simon, and thank you for joining us.

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Thank you very much, I'm honored. This is also the room where I last met Jacques Derrida, oddly enough. There is a story connected with that which we can discuss later on. We did radio programmes in the room next to here for *France Culture*. Fond, fond memories. I thank the MA students in the Stony Brook Manhattan Program, Alyssa in particular, and I'm sorry she can't be here.

Collectively is a great theme for a conference. The issue of collaboration and collaborative practices in relation to contemporary art and politics is one that engages me in numerous ways. So that's how I understand the title. I'm going to talk about collaborative practices in relationship to art. I'm not going to give a philosophy talk.

If I get the time, I would also like to talk about all the collaborative experiments that I've been involved with. The idea of working collectively is something I'm hugely interested in, something we do too little. And I've tried to do various experiments over the years. One is the International Necronautical Society, which I urge you to find out about—it's about ten years old—which functions as a sort of headless collective. Not in some sort of hippie way, but in a deeply reactionary and offensive manner. The INS mimics the authoritarian collectivity of the Futurists. The model that we used was the Futurist Manifesto from a century ago. We've established a committee structure where we collectively make decisions, issue denunciations, and work on a number of platforms simultaneously. I can tell you more about that if you like. The last thing we did was a "Declaration on Inauthenticity," at Nicolas Bourriaud's ultra-modern exhibition at the Tate Britain in 2009, where the INS General

Secretary Tom McCarthy, author of *Remainder*, and the Chief Philosopher—me—were played by actors. We thought that would be the best way of being inauthentic, to train actors. It took an enormous amount of work **to train them...[NOISE]** We're currently preparing a surveillance project in Berlin within the Ministry of Propaganda called *Berlin: World Capitol of Death*. So that's a way of working collectively—there is no authorship to our documents, they're always issued anonymously, or pseudonymously, or heteronomously, as Husserl would say.

Another collaborative project that I'm involved with, which I want to talk about as my focus for today, is with the Paris-based artist Philippe Parreno. If you don't know Parreno's work, you should do. He has a big retrospective show which is the full retrospective that began at the Centre Pompidou last summer, and the fourth one is up at Bard College in that fantastic new space they've got up there, which opens in June. And I recommend you go and take a look at what Philippe is going to do.

Philippe and I are working on a book, or something together, it's not clear that it will be a book—we like books, so it might be a book. We're going to continue this experimental conversation in June. I want to talk about Parreno's work because it's brilliant, and also because he works and has worked for his entire career collectively. That's how I understand the title—what does it mean to work collectively in relation to the arts? He has also used the practice of collaboration extensively and only really “come out” as an artist in the last few years—it's a phrase he uses.

I have eight titles for this talk—you can pick whichever one you like. One, “No Amount of Effort Can Save You From Oblivion.” Two, “Sensate Ecstasy.” Three, the advertised title, “No Ghost, Just a Shell.” Four, “Philoso-fugal Versus Arto-petal, Arto-petal Wins.” Five, “She Left Because She Understood the Value of Defiance.” Six, “The Survival of Fireflies.” Seven, “Perhaps It Would Be Better If We Worked in Groups of Three.” Eight, “She Died of Darkness, Mother Pig, But the Void is Not Your Enemy.”

I want to begin with some more methodological remarks about how I see the relations between the arts and theory, at the present moment, and the way out of a dilemma that might allow us to work collectively. I think a certain understanding of the model of the relationship between art and theory has broken down. This is what I would call a “top-down model,” or a “theory as legitimation of the artist model.” I think this has grown old, and it's a good thing that it's grown old. Without wanting to insult anybody in particular—well, actually we can run this movie now. This is a way to see, as I'm talking, because it's more interesting to look at than I am—this is a movie by Philippe called *The Boy from Mars* (2003), which I will keep running on a loop as I'm talking—it was shot in Thailand—as there are some things that I want to say about it. I'll talk about it as it moves—it's an 11-minute piece.

Without wanting to insult anybody in particular but wanting to give a practical example, I saw this top-down model of theory in relation to art in action at places like Goldsmiths College in London in the 1990s, where students of the famous BFA and MFA programmes with more celebrated artists than in most recent years were cowed into submission, and in some cases even to distraction and quasi-nervous breakdowns, where they lost all confidence in their artistic practice through what I would call a certain terroristic model of theory. They were simply made to feel stupid by their inability to master Theory, capital T. By this is usually meant a stack of texts, usually translated from French, with authors often beginning with D, sometimes with F, or B. And they were usually terrified of writing the papers that they were made to write, because they usually had no experience with doing it. The worst of it to my mind, and I don't want to sound arrogant, was that people who were teaching them theory weren't that good. People like me used to go into Goldsmiths or wherever and be expected to explain Lacan or Deleuze at a fairly high level, to teachers that didn't have that much of a clue, and in front of students who were simply nonplussed and intimidated by the whole thing. I didn't enjoy

the experience much and neither did they. It seemed as pointless at the time as it still does.

What was really good, however, was that once I got past the “Bodies without Organs” or the “Trauma of the Real” or “Being” blah blah blah, to work with the artists in their studio visits, things got much more interesting. What I really liked, and what I still do a bit up at Columbia when I still get the chance, was to sit down with cups of tea in an artist's studio for three hours, usually somewhere cold in South London, and they'd want me to tell them about theory. Of course I would quietly refuse to do that, and then try to turn the conversation around to their work, and to try and get them to talk in an honest way about their practice. And they would begin to draw out the theoretical consequences, if there were any.

I'm always interested in people that do something I don't do, and can't do. I'm interested in heart surgeons, cartographers, and tap dancers. But I'm also interested in artists, particularly those who are anxious about the word “artist.” The issue here is with different modes of articulation, different modes of thinking. My conviction is that art thinks, just like film thinks, or music thinks. Philosophy, as a largely conceptual enterprise, is thinking *about* thinking. The question is trying to find a way or method—though of course there is no *method*—of approaching how and what art thinks in its own medium in a way that doesn't drown art in theory. That seems to be the question. Let me explain this point a little. To try to understand or read whatever it is we call art from the standpoint of some theory is invariably to miss the phenomenon. It is to reduce the visual or spatial or medial language through a theoretical metalanguage. It is usually to engage in some sort of cult-philosophy, full of useless jargon, and is meant to intimidate the uninitiated. Many theoretical discussions of art are simply sadistically intended to do exactly that—to intimidate, to befuddle, to cow, to obscure. To put this in Stevensian terms, this is to reduce art to ideas about the thing, and not the thing itself. What has always interested me is the thing itself, the thing itself in its truth,

and how the specificity of the thing—an installation, a performance, a film—might be approached in its own terms and not translated into the blah blah blah of some theory. By “the truth of an artistic thing” I do not obviously mean propositional or empirical truth, but truth as creation. The creation of a singularity whose reach, appeal, or revealing power extends beyond itself. So by truth in relationship to art I want to talk about truth as the creation of a singularity whose reach extends beyond itself. This is what I want to call, in a little while, in relation to Parreno's work, “anarchic creation.”

If a work of art is the illustration of a theory or the example of a theory, then it is either bad art or, more usually, bad theory. We could get into the whole question of exemplarity in art's relation to theory if we liked, which has haunted philosophy from Hegel's obsession with Sophocles to Merleau-Ponty's obsession with Cezanne, Badiou's obsession with Beckett, and so on. Philosophers love their examples. I love my examples, too—I just slipped in an allusion to Stevens a few seconds ago. But it's important to see how limited and limiting they can be. To see an artistic thing as an illustration of a theory is to engage in a bit of what we might call—and here's a bit of terminology—“philoso-fugal” uses of theory, where the theory spins out from itself to try and cover the artwork. What we should be attempting, I think, is an “arto-petal” approach, where theory is drawn into the orbit of the thing, and whatever theoretical reflections are pulled back into the artwork's center of gravity. So in place of a top-down philoso-fugal model of the relation of art to theory, I would like to suggest an arto-petal model, where theory finds some affluence, some contact, with the thing, and the thing finds some contact with the theory that is being used to elucidate it. Broadly, I see the relation between art and theory as dialectical. Art needs a theory that needs art. I don't see art as standing alone or being for its own sake. I guess we still have the model of theory's bullshit artist the artist, who works by sheer intuition, or heroic macho-laddish

intoxication, the idiot savant, the unknowing genius, or whatever. But I don't want to go there, it's just too dumb. The active elucidation of reflection, of conceptualization, is essential. All art is conceptual, we might say. But art is not *simply* conceptual, and the concept should not exhaust the percept. It shows the concept lead from a moment of sensuality, or better *spatiality*, which stands apart from the concept. Art needs a theory that needs art. It's a two-way street with all the traffic in the middle.

Maybe artists are less entranced with theory than they were a generation ago, in the heyday of top-down theory, when no exhibition catalog was complete without a quotation from Derrida. But of course we should not ever underestimate the vanity of artists or their desperate need for legitimation from philosophers and theorists. But of course I'm vain too and also a prostitute all too happy to legitimate artists in exchange for the appropriate amount of flattery, money, or both. The less said about that the better. But let me look at things from another perspective. So that's how I want to see the relationship between art and theory, which is, you know, something one can *say*. The claim I want to make now, which touches on the question of the conference, is that we could think about another way of conceiving the relationship between art and theory—not as a relationship between those *two* terms, but as those two terms having a relationship to a third term—that the relationship between art and theory has become a *ménage à trois*. Art and theory might be said to get together *collectively* around a third term. We have to learn to count to three, or “maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three.” (I'm quoting somebody there.)

An obvious third term here that I'd like to discuss—and here we begin to approach the theme of the conference—is politics. Not in the sense of governmental politics, but in the sense of “the political.” Where so much art is and has been concerned with the problem of community and the question of being-in-common. And in particular, with certain experiments of community that belong to the

memory and in some cases the presence of radical politics. It's extremely interesting, if you're interested in what's been going on in contemporary art in the last 20 years, to note how this figure of community has been so central—collaboration. Where forms of what Hans Ulrich Obrist calls “collaborational promiscuity”—it's a nice term—responds to the question, how does one give a community of artists a social structure? It seems to me that much contemporary art is concerned with this question of community and how we might think about social structure. One thinks, for example, of projects like *L'Association de Ton Libéré (1995)* or *Utopia Station (2003)* in the Venice Biennale, and many other examples that were assembled in Nancy Spector's show at the Guggenheim here in New York in Fall 2008, called *theanyspacewhatever*. Hopefully you saw that. It was a very good retrospective of the artists I've got in mind here. Of course Parreno was a part of it, along with, I think, 11 other artists.

Another interesting show in that regard—and it's important to talk about shows in this context, otherwise it just gets too abstract—there was a great show at the Power Plant in Toronto, curated by a very brilliant curator called Nina Möntmann, called *If We Can't Get It Together*. The book has just come out, linked to that exhibition, called *New Communities*, which has got a wonderful text by Nina, and a very interesting text by Emily Roysdon, an artist whose work you might know, you should know. She is also doing lots of interesting stuff in relation to feminist performance art around the theme of ecstatic resistance. There is an absolutely decisive text by Maria Lind, a curator, called *Complication: In Collaboration, Agency, and Contemporary Art*. This is one text you could read that gives you a wonderful overview of the history of collaborational practices in the last 20 years set against the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century art, by Maria. Maria is a *force*.

In the work of artists like Philippe Parreno, Pierre Huyghe, and Liam Gillick, or curators like Hans Ulrich Obrist or Maria Lind or Nina Möntmann, there is a deeply-felt quasi-Situationist nostalgia for ideas of collectivity, action, self-

management, collaboration, and indeed the idea of the group. What does it mean for there to be a group? In many ways Parreno's question, which is a question that keeps coming back, is the question how are we to behave? How are we to behave *as a group*—that becomes the question of his practice. And for me, I'm very interested in the anarchist tradition. The anarchist tradition is about nothing more than the question of how we are to behave. In relationship to art practice, this whole approach has been obviously very successfully branded by Nicolas Bourriaud as Relational Aesthetics. And that's not wrong, it's a brilliant piece of branding—he's a great brander. "Ultra-modern" is the last concept from last year.

What goes together with this whole question of collaborational practices in contemporary art is also the figure of the curator, which is interesting. The figure of the curator is, as it were, the *thinker* of collectivity. And what is a curator—a theorist, an artist, or neither? Someone that understands space? Obrist's view of this approach to what Bourriaud calls Relational, he says that art is the acting out of a situation in order to see if something like a collective intelligence might exist. And for me that's fascinating. Thinking about that in relation to the shadow of different forms of radicalism, in particular in my case, an interest in Situationism. But there are other shadows there, autonomous of all the rest.

As Liam Gillick notes in an interesting text, to reveal the source of my plagiarism, maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three. That would be my point. Maybe we can get over the art-theory dichotomy, the art-philosophy dichotomy, in relation to a third term, like maybe the political. Then it becomes a question of working together, collectively, in a different way. So for example, at the moment, right now, today, I'm working on beginning to curate a show in TriBeCa that will be in June, which is around the World Cup. I'm trying to think that with Liam Gillick who is very interested in football, and we're thinking about forms of visual display connected with that. The point being that

this is a way of working collectively. If we begin with the idea of the philosopher or the artist, two ships never meeting in the night, you're never going to get anywhere, there just has to be a different way of thinking about *work*. The problem with these experiments in collectivity is two-fold. So, I'm happy with this idea of collective intelligence, but the problems are obvious. On the one hand, such experiments in working collectively are only enabled and legitimated through the cultural institutions of the art world, and thus utterly enmeshed in the circuits of commodification and spectacle they seek to subvert. That's the first obvious objection. What makes this collaboration possible is the Guggenheim Museum or some downtown Chelsea gallery or whatever it might be.

On the other hand, the second problem—and maybe it's not a problem at all—is that the dominant mode of approaching the experience of the communal or the collective is through the strategy of reenactment. Reenactment has become the hegemonic artistic strategy. One does not engage in a bank heist, one reenacts Patty Hearst's adventures with the Symbionese Liberation Army in a warehouse in Brooklyn. Situationist *détournement* is replayed as obsessively-planned reenactment. You could work for months getting the details of that reenactment of the Patty Hearst heist right, right down to its last detail, positioning of the surveillance cameras or whatever—and then “action,” you do it. Fascinating as I find such experiments and the work of the artists involved, one suspects what we might call a “Mannerist Situationism.” Where the old problem of recuperation that you find, say, in Debord, doesn't even apply, because such art is completely co-opted by the socioeconomic system which provides its lifeblood. I like the phrase “Mannerist Situationism.” I mean Mannerist in the way Caravaggio stands to Raphael, exaggerated and bloody, decadent, compromised, and slightly nihilist, and of course much more attractive. (I like Mannerism.) So it's not just a criticism.

Despite these obvious critiques, there is something to the idea about the relationship between art and theory

becoming orientated around a third term. Despite the whole business of art fairs—and I've been to too many of them of late because, like I said, I'm a cheap intellectual whore—despite that, and despite the art market, and despite the commodification of art, I think the art world is becoming *a* key space in culture for the thinking through of the nature, the possibility, and the limitations, and most importantly the *memory* of resistance. So despite, or maybe *because* of the way in which the art world is so compromised, I think it has become for me a key space for thinking through the question of resistance. Did you know, he said, that Jean-François Lyotard who famously curated a huge exhibit at the Pompidou in 1985 called *Les immatériels*, a hugely influential exhibition, was planning a second exhibition before he died called *Resistance*. Parreno has the idea to try to find his notes to do a posthumous show, which I think is a great idea—to construct a posthumous show from somebody else's notes and then curate it as a sort of reenactment that never really took place. Anyway, someone should do it. Maybe one of you should do it.

So in my humble view, the hugely compromised space of the art world, at least in certain localities, is much more interesting than what's taking place, say, in universities. Maybe because what's happening in the art world *is* so compromised. What I've always liked about the art world is the nakedness of its mediation by capital. Yet because of this nakedness there is also the possibility for the aesthetic articulation of some outside of the logic of capital, close to Hakim Bey's idea, already quite old, of temporary autonomous zones. And I've been thinking about this in relationship to Liam Gillick's work recently. Because the question here is, are contemporary artists just slaves to capital? That's the thought. So he's come up with the idea of semi-autonomy. Not, as it were, autonomy in the old modernist sense of the autonomy of the artist, a separate sphere of value entirely, but a semi-autonomy. He's also tried to construct a cultural axis between contemporary art which he thinks *is* compromised by this current system of

qualification, and what he wants to call “current art,” which is still able to maintain a certain criticality. It's a thought.

The outside of capital is always mediated by an inside, compromised by it, recuperated by it, but resistance should always persist with its logic, and persist with its ever-compromised creation of enclaves, of pirate utopias or whatever. The artist is a pirate, both as a will distant from the law and wholly parasitic and wholly dependent on it. The pirate is a doomed character, to quote Netchaïev. Both [the artist and the pirate] try to entertain a distance from the law and are wholly complicit with the law. That is the domain of semi-autonomy. It's a domain of piracy. Of course, to stay with the idea of reenactment, maybe the metaphor here is that this isn't an objection at all—maybe art was always reenactment. What was the Renaissance? They found all this great Greek and Roman stuff and said, Let's do it again! Look at these domes, let's do that! Plato's Dialogues, awesome, let's do that! The Renaissance is a reenactment, that's exactly what it is. The history of the Left is a history of reenactment. Think of the way in which the history of 20th-century radicalism—Lenin, to anarchism, to Maoism, to May 1968, to contemporary insurrectionism like The Invisible Committee—turns on the status of their relationship to the figure of the commune. And not just the figure of the commune, but the figure of the Paris Commune of 1871. So, in many ways, you could think that maybe this category of reenactment has something more to it than that. The Left has always been about a certain strategy of reenactment—the question is, *to whom* does that memory belong? To whom does the memory of the Commune belong? Does it belong to the Leninists, does it belong to the anarchists? This is what Lenin is polemicising about in *State and Revolution*, for example. Maybe new wine is always poured into old wineskins.

Staying with the idea of the third term, maybe there are other third terms. Again, I'll mention another collaboration, which is another format for trying to work collectively. Maria Lind and I this year tried to organize a series of seminars at the *Goethe-Institut* around the question

of work. What does it mean at this point in history to think about the notion of work, as such? But isn't it interesting at this point, in thinking about the question of work, the artist has become the exemplary worker. The artist defined by creativity, unconventionality, flexibility, appears to be the role model for the contemporary entrepreneur. How does one think about that? So we set up a series of seminars, get an artist or a cultural producer of some other kind, and then we engage in some carefully rehearsed and managed activity—again, thinking about the seminar as a means of collective production, rather than me talking to people (what I'm doing now, really). The question this raises and which we're trying to investigate in these seminars on work—the last one was a couple weeks ago with Michael Hardt and Carlos Guerra from Barcelona—was to try to think about the *good* of work, and to think about the category of work—in a post-Fordist mode it's as if the formal and informal characteristics of work versus play have completely broken down. We no longer know what work is and we no longer know what play is and we no longer know where to draw the line between them. We're constantly at work. Work has become completely informalized. It's the Googlization of the workplace. The Google offices are in New York, which I recommend if you get the chance to go there, it's very interesting. You see a rigorously rhizomatic, informalized workspace, where work looks like play, play looks like work. We want to try to think about that as a new form of ideology and a new form of oppression. But I think what has to be thought about at this point and *can* be thought about by artists, and thinkers, and cultural producers of different kinds, is what meaning there is to work, and also how we might think about the incredibly interesting tradition of the refusal of work. There's something that's interested me of late which is the medieval traditions of Mendicancy, the Franciscans, the critique of work, and so on. That's just another example of the way one can work collectively. A concept—work.

Another example of a third term around which things could be thought about I think is questions of

didacticism, pedagogy, and education. And if Maria and I get the chance to do this again we'll try to organize this event around the question of education. There's been an explosion of interest in relation to the question of pedagogy in relation to contemporary art. I think this is rather interesting. The debate here finds a theoretical reference point in Ranciere's *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, but there's work to be done here. There was a very interesting little show at the Cabinet Space in Brooklyn around these movies that this New Zealand documentary maker—and I think another issue here is about how to draw the line between art and documentary, as documentary practice has also become a hegemonic form—documentary films looking at filming what was taking place in schoolrooms in England in the 1970s. And these things, 40 years on, take on the character of artworks. What that invites us to think about as another third term around which one can work collectively is the question of education, of pedagogy, of didacticism. I think that's something that we should be thinking about, and that people are thinking about. For me the question of the relation between Art—capital A—and Theory—capital T—misses the point entirely. These terms are just too big and too clunky in relation to the work I try and do, in the way I try to think and look and write. I'm not a huge gallery rat, I'm not in any way a connoisseur. I have very poor taste, and I wouldn't impose that on anybody. But the way in which it gets interesting for me is in working *with* someone, collectively. So what I've been trying to do with Parreno lately is an example of this—when I talk to him, or look at what he does, it's clear it's not what *I* do. His mode of articulation is very different, but our concerns are tightly related, and we're reading the same books and looking at the same things. There's a sort of exchange which takes place there at the level of reading and thinking, but the mode of articulation is different. When I was writing recently on his films, I wasn't trying to impose a theory on them, I was trying to listen, to attend to something that I thought was going on there, and then begin to articulate it in my way. So it becomes this question of being attentive to different modes of articulation.

Now, with that in mind, I now have seven themes in Philippe's work—I'm only going to mention two, maybe three—the first is “No Ghost, Just a Shell,” the second is “Anarchic Creation,” the third is “Fireflies,” the fourth is “The Natural and the Artificial,” the fifth is “Poetic Construction,” the sixth is “Football.” The most famous piece of work that Philippe Parreno has done is the film *Zidane*, which he made with Douglas Gordon, which came out with fantastic good fortune the month before the World Cup in 2006, where Zidane headbutted Marco Matarazzi. And the last theme is “Heroism, Melancholy and Humour.”

[Film viewing – Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno's film *Annlee*]

*“My name is Annlee. You can spell it however you want. Doesn't matter. No, it does not. I was bought for 46,000 yen. 46,000 yen paid to a design character company ... I ended up, I ended up like some others in a catalog. Proposed to cartoon producers and comic book editors. Yeah, dropped dead in a comic book. Some other characters had the possibility of becoming a comic book hero. They had a long psychological description, personal history, and material to produce the narration. They were really expensive, and I was cheap, designed to join any kind of story, but with no chance to survive any of them. I was never designed for survival. It's true. Everything I'm saying is true. Some names have been changed to preserve the guilty. I am a product. A product freed from the marketplace I was supposed to fill--dropped dead in a comic book. I will never forget. I had just a name and an ID. My name is Annlee. My name is Annlee. Spell it however you want. Doesn't matter, no it does not.*

*“[Change of voice] After being sold I was redesigned. Funny, I can even say now, look, that's how I used to look and this is how I look now. It's like when you point out an old photo. Oh yeah, I forget to tell you, the voice in which I'm talking to you now was never my voice. I have no voice. Her name is Daniela.*

*She is looking at me now. She is a model. She is not used to speaking. She is an image just like me. She is an image just like me. She is used to selling products when I've got nothing to sell. And I will never sell anything. How can I? Because I am the product. I was bought, but strangely enough, I do not belong to anybody. I belong to whomever is able to fill me with imaginary material, anywhere out of the world. I am an imaginary character. I am no ghost, just a shell.*

*“[Change of voice] I can imagine you. It's easy. I can see you and I can see her. I am looking at an image facing an imaginary character. She is a passive I, an extra. She was designed just like that. Nobody planned that she would ever have to speak. Given no particular ability to survive, she would probably be dead by now. A fictional character with a copyright designed by a company and proposed for sale. That's it. While waiting to be dropped into a story, a theoretical life, she has been diverted from a fictional existence and has become... what she is now. A deviant sign. She says, I have less than two minutes. Two minutes of your linear time. It's more than what I would have spent anyway in a story before being forgotten. In less than two minutes, I'll be gone. My name, my name is Annlee. Annlee. I'm a common name. I was a frozen picture. An evidence submitted to you. I become animated, however, not by a story with a plot. No. I'm haunted by your imagination, and that's what I want from you. You see, I'm not here for your amusement. You are here for mine. It was pretty...[coughs]*

*“[In a child's voice] It was pretty neat. All the paintings were really nice but... I saw one. This one painting really caught my eye. It was called Water Lilies. I looked at it and I gazed at it, and then I looked at the painting next to it. It really was astonishing. And I forgot everything else that I had ever known. I couldn't even look at the name of the painting. All I saw was the girl in the boat. I looked at her. I wondered what she was thinking. I don't know. Maybe she was... suffering. Maybe she was hurting. I looked at it. I looked at it. I couldn't*

*think. I couldn't breathe. I don't know what happened. I was stuck. I saw a strange light. I didn't know what it was. Then I felt a beam on my shoulder. I felt something stronger on my shoulder. It hit me, and it hit me, and it... hurt. And finally, I saw a light and it was getting bigger and bigger and bigger until I could see nothing else. Finally, I felt nothing. I was gone."*

[End of film]

Let me tell you what we've been looking at. I don't know whether you know this, if this is familiar territory for you. Between 2000 and 2003, Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe exhibited in different forms this Annlee character—she was the shell (“No Ghost, Just a Shell”)—that Philippe and Pierre bought for 46,000 yen after picking her up from a catalog in Tokyo. Different artists as well as musicians, and even an immunology researcher, were invited to occupy the shell and basically do what they liked. The results were assembled into different exhibitions and a beautifully produced book. Pierre Huyghe in his film that we just saw describes her as a deviant sign around which a community has established itself. We have a shell, a manga character—“I am a product”—around which community takes form. A figure who is a product, fictitious, but the product is freed from the circuit of commodities she was meant to feed, dropped dead in a comic book and freed from one market into another market, the art market. *No Ghost, Just a Shell* is fascinating because it is a project that is clearly inscribed in the art market, but frustrates it at the same time. Annlee was declared dead in 2003, and Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe established an Annlee Foundation in her name for the price of 1 euro, and all proceeds go to the Annlee Foundation. These were two elements of a much broader range of works.

What *No Ghost, Just a Shell* allowed was a shift, maybe, in the very paradigm of an exhibition, an exhibition not as a static display, but an exhibition as a dynamic, evolving system. Again this is another way of thinking about

working collectively, displaying collectively, *exposing* collectively, as Adam said [during the previous panel]. What is a museum? A museum is a laboratory, for allowing dynamic new life forms to emerge. Artists and post-Fordist workers function in that laboratory collectively, and maybe thinkers are too. It allows for a polyphony of collaboration, and I guess that's what's interesting. If we think about that at the level of intellectual production as well—what would it mean to give up your bourgeois individuality? As an author of papers, or a graduate candidate, author of a dissertation, to give that up and to move in some different direction, work heteronomously and collectively and indirectly. This allows other forms of creativity. It's interesting what happens when you no longer use your name. It's quite peculiar.

Of course Annlee isn't just this manga character. If I had another hour, which I don't, I'd talk about the Shakers. Of course Ann Lee was also the founder of the Shakers. She was the female principle to the male principle of Jesus Christ, in those wonderful people. Of course, if you're going to believe in one god why not believe in two gods, and if one god is male, then why shouldn't the other god be female? And why shouldn't that god be a factory worker from Manchester? It makes perfect sense to me.

Let me just say, in conclusion, thinking back to *The Boy From Mars*, or even to this little film I just showed now called *A Dream of a Thing*, there is a strange process of creation in Philippe Parreno's films. Things are not created, rather a frame is established that allows something to happen. What interests me is the attention to things in their mineral quality, in their sheer materiality. By focusing intensely on a particular, by following the course of that particular in its randomness with an intense, Cyclopean cinematic eye, something necessarily comes to pass. If we think back to that film, there is something happening if you watch it closely, where the order of intentionality I think begins to flip around, and things are somehow “thing-ing” irrespective of our will. Philippe calls this magic, in a process of nonauthoritarian creation. Parreno deliberately points the

camera towards things, but the camera is not the subject that inspects objects. On the contrary, it becomes the subject of the object's gaze. Things turn to look at us.

In films like *The Boy From Mars*, the seemingly random beauty recalls a cinematic tradition of oblique images. Think about Antonioni's *L'Eclisse*—the ellipsis, transcendence, absence—where Antonioni just lets things happen. There's a concern in Phillippe's work with nature in its sheer, massive physicality, in a way that rubs up against the grain of the sheer artificiality of the situation of the fact of art. One reason why me and Philippe began to work together was a common interest in Malick, and Malick's cinematic attempts to deal with this question of the reversal of intentionality. Parreno's films are about the happening of an atmosphere, a space of breath, where some kind of pause is possible in the turning world; a calm, an ataraxia of sorts is being cultivated here. Nothing mystical, or quasi-Buddhist—it's more Epicurean. It's simply the attempt to track material particulars in their course, to return authority from the author to the contingent massiveness of nature. Anarchic creation. So anarchic creation is the attempt to track material particulars in their course like moths, like fireflies, like the balloons with candles inside, and to return authority from the author to things in the happening of their truth. At the level of association, this is what Werner Herzog calls “ecstatic truth,” as opposed to the documentary truth of *cinema vérité*, ecstatic truth where something happens on film if you wait long enough. This means giving yourself up to another order of temporality—that's the key thing. What's going on here is a certain attempt to arrest or slow down or alter the passage of time. In Phillippe's films there is a deliberate slowness, an attempt to track things in their slowness. In relationship to the movie *Zidane*, the way this works is that he has the frame of a 90-minute football game, Real Madrid against the Villarreal, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2005, 24 cameras trained on Zidane for 90 minutes—that's the discipline, that's the frame. And the arrangements that made that possible are horribly complicated. And then the game starts, and a different order

of temporality kicks in. Anything could happen, Zidane could have got injured after five minutes. He didn't, he played a quite good game and he got sent off in the 89<sup>th</sup> minute. It was the end, it was a remarkable piece of luck. But it works because there's the establishment of a huge formalistic frame with great extraordinary to detail and attention, and then one lets chance have its effect, and one submits oneself to that law of chance.

The question of politics has become the question, obviously, of the survival of the fireflies, which begin to disappear from Europe in the 1950s. Fireflies disappear, along with the collective ideologies that were pursued in that period. They disappear, along with pollution and the collapse of the political imagination. Fireflies are tiny markers of resistance, the suicide bombers of the insect world. If Lyotard's *Resistance* were ever to be brought into being, it would to involve fireflies, lots of them. It would be a posthumous show about something that no longer exists or is disappearing, about something that does not yet exist. It would also involve lightbulbs, lots of them, a whole marquee of them. And balloons, sometimes. I like balloons.