

UNNEEDED TEXTS

VOL.1

RESEARCH
INSTITUTE IN
ART, DESIGN
AND SOCIETY

i2ADS.

UNNEEDED TEXTS VOL.1

This book draws indirectly from the first edition of the International Seminar Unneeded Conversations, held in May 2010, in Porto, Portugal. The seven texts printed here can only give a partial idea of what happened during those four days of a wide-ranging debate on the practice and theory of art and with the contribution of many participants. That is why this volume is presented as an autonomous edition and not as the seminar proceedings. Even so, we hope this book will be both a memory of our unneeded conversations in 2010 and a contribution to the ongoing debate on the close relation between theory and practice in the arts. Further volumes will follow.

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Publisher
i2ADS
Instituto de Investigação em Arte, Design e Sociedade
/ Research Institute in Art, Design and Society

ISBN
978-989-97856-0-1

Apoios:

Printed by
Blurb, NL
2nd Print
June 2012

Many thanks to
Tiago Assis, Sofia Neto, Tiago Pinho, César Rodrigues, David Arantes, Felícia Teixeira, João Brojo, Cristina Mateus, Paulo Mendes, Miguel von Hafe Pérez, Susana Lourenço Marques and many others.

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INDEX

5

ERIC ALLIEZ

Capitalism, Schizophrenia and Consensus.
Of Relational Aesthetics

23

RICARDO BASBAUM

membranosa-entre (NBP): Notations

37

MARGARIDA CARVALHO

Weaving Encounters: Towards an Art of Participation

49

LIVIA FLORES

Uncut | How to Make Cinema Without Film?

69

ERIC KLUITENBERG

On the Art of Imaginary Media

89

CHRISTOPH KORN

I Speak

95

ANTÓNIO OLAIO

What You Get is What You Need

107

BIOS

ERIC ALLIEZ

**CAPITALISM,
SCHIZOPHRENIA
AND CONSENSUS.**

**OF RELATIONAL
AESTHETICS**

VOL.1

POPULIST PROLOGUE

And no doubt the combat appears as a combat against [...]. But more profoundly, it is the combatant himself who is the combat :the combat is between his own parts, between the forces that either subjugate or are subjugated, and between the powers that express these relations of forces.

Gilles Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*

There is an amusing article written some ten years ago by French art critic Eric Troncy, entitled 'The Stockholm syndrome'. Later revisited by Baudrillard, through Troncy, 'Stockholm syndrome' referred to the paradoxical relations linking socio-cultural consensus to the aesthetics of an avant-garde reduced to the most fashionable 'look' of the nineties. The fact that this was to end badly – today, Troncy writes quirky apologetics for reality TV as contemporary art's most radical ready-made, by virtue of its renunciation of all claim to the elitist status of the artwork (the 'every-day' perfect crime!) – makes the article's opening lines all the more delectable. I quote, appropriating this ephemeral moment of lucidity: 'What is at stake is nothing less than the evacuation of revolutionary desire through the small door of communication, at the same time as the draining of alterity into the great pit of the same.'¹

I could not think of a better introduction to the provocation that leads me to present a kind of critical and clinical treatment of relational aesthetics in the murky light of Populism, which we could envisage as signalling the dawn of a sleepless night, of the kind recently organised by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans in Paris, precisely under the heading *Nuit blanche* (or *White Night Event*). I'll be direct then, jumping with both feet straight into the factory of the 'populist' subject, the better to thrash out this question *for real* (or to be thrashed in turn): 'Is there a significant relation between aesthetics and politics to be studied today?'

In order to do this, we shouldn't be afraid to introduce the Combat with Oneself and between ourselves, by making our own the cautionary note with which *The Populism Reader* opens: 'A project on populism should claim as a basic right the right to use the term in different ways [...]. It should enact difference. It should differ from itself'.²

Let us risk an initial and ostensibly controversial statement, which I will endeavour now to articulate, in its various dimensions:

(1) Contemporary populism is the ultimate (which is to say the complete and terminal) form of the expression of the People.

(2) Contemporary Populism is the posthistorical/postpolitical expression of the People *after* the historical completion of its trajectory as a political subject, globally negotiated between real socialism and real social-democracy; statist-proletarian incorporation and expanded reproduction of the people integrated into the co-management of the Welfare State.

(The massive transfer of votes from the French Communist Party to the *Front National* in the eighties and from the *Front National* to Sarkozy very recently, or from the Austrian socialist SPÖ to Jörg Haider's extreme-right party in 2000, then to the conservative ÖVP party, and back to the former during the last elections, give flesh and body to the unprecedented floating Signifier that arises when the Name of the People is *deprived* of its transcendence as a political subject as well as of its reality as the economic agent of reformism. Is this a phenomenon of *afterimage*?)

(3) Contemporary populism is the shadow cast by the *commodification of politics and life* when the 'people is lacking' and becomes, in its lack, the (most) 'dangerous Supplement' of parliamentary democracy in its reality as the production and media administration of consensus.

(4) Contemporary populism is the dominant postpolitical form of globalised Postmodernity inasmuch as it expresses in the most immediately 'binarised' manner the Rest of the World, when the Rest and the World (of the 'external' World there remains Nothing in the real subsumption of what I called, with Félix Guattari, *Integrated World Capitalism*)³ are equally consigned to the selective/participatory/interactive governmentality of *infotainment* (Market Populism *qua* Capitalistic Democracy).

(5) (In the guise of a riddle.) If the 'aestheticisation of politics' led to the State of Exception of populism in its modern form, what is the name for the (post)aesthetic (neo)populism which will necessarily 'make' its own the true hallucination of direct democracy in the contemporary age of the absolute market-form?

(6) (In the guise of an uncontrolled acceleration.) Does there exist a populism of the multitude, or more exactly a populism of which the multitude would be the (post)aesthetic subject and the object of 're-aestheticisation'? Where the

aestheticisation of dissensus would become the postpolitical form for the exhibition of a postmodernist consensus affirming its 'open' and 'relational' qualities, self-affirming the value of conviviality beyond antagonism or/and radicality...?

(7) ('Not nothingness, but powerlessness'...) – A relational aesthetics rather than art *and* multitude *qua* relational being?

(8) (... namely the power of capture of powerlessness) – Or in other words, it is the 'communism of capital' that will be called here 'formal communism', borrowing from post-Fordism its general regime of 'postproduction'.

I advance this 'between us', in order to achieve the undoing of what Baudrillard, with that amazing reactionary ingenuity he displays when attending to such matters, called the 'Holy Cultural Alliance' – and offer it to the readers' wisdom as an impossible prologue for troubled times.

THE SCENARIO OF THE SPECIAL EFFECT

Techno is communism applied to the emotions.

Nicolas Saunders, *E for Ecstasy*

I will limit myself to providing a quick sketch of the argument, leaving aside the artists, the works, their regime and places of exhibition (starting with the 'site of contemporary creation' at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, founded and until recently co-directed by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans). Instead, I will dwell on the order of a discourse that, through its widespread dissemination, has become strangely familiar to us (and thus accounts for the 'symptomal' principle that governs my reading): *relational aesthetics*. We are all by now *all too familiar* with this discourse that focuses upon the art of the nineties, which claims that the 'misunderstandings' surrounding the latter are owing to a 'deficit of theoretical discourse' – namely, its failure to recognise the break with the critical art of the sixties. How familiar it seems, how 'resonant' with everything around us, that *this* art of the nineties *could* be nothing but the audiovisual archive of its commentary, a commentary invested in the *relational form* which supposedly animates a new partition of the art world (into what is *still* modern and what is *finally* contemporary). It is in this sense that we

can reread Bourriaud's statement, located somewhere between the descriptive and prescriptive, according to which 'anyhow, the liveliest factor that is played out on the chessboard of art has to do with interactive, user-friendly and relational concepts.'⁴

This break, without which, if we follow Bourriaud's book-manifesto on the nineties, contemporary art would be incapable of entering into relations with the present – 'with society, with history, with culture' – has a twofold and paradoxical characteristic: It can conform to the 'relational' perspective of an aesthetic marked by the category of *consensus* – restoring the lost meaning of a common world by repairing the fissures in the social bond, patiently weaving a 'relational fabric', revisiting the spaces of conviviality, groping about for forms of sustainable development and consumption, soft energies able to slip into the cracks of existing images, etc. – only by *divesting* the most innovative theoretical and artistic practices of the sixties and seventies of their forces, shunting them into humbler forms, the 'modest connections' of a *micropolitics of intersubjectivity*... And all in the name of a new mental ecology of 'linkage' [*reliance*] (to borrow a term from Michel Maffesoli, who has long anticipated the overall features of this process of rupture with the 'revolutionism' of the 1960s)⁵, a linkage put to work for the *re-invention of everyday life* (a theme 'bricolaged' by Michel de Certeau in his *The Practice of Everyday Life*, with respect to the principle of a 'user' *détournement* of consumer society).⁶ Embracing this spontaneous hermeneutics that substitutes the cultural myths of network-economy liberalism for the critique of political economy and its sublation in the affirmation of a political economy of desire, Aesthetics becomes an 'alternative' training-ground for postmodern life (or a postmodernization of life : 'learning to inhabit the world in a better way', says Bourriaud). Furthermore, this is to take place in the post-production of the *Blurring of Art and Life*, following a sequence that begins and ends in counter-effectuating the politics of the becoming-life of art (an art of *dispositive*), transforming it into a becoming-art of everyday life (an art of *attitude*, where *attitude becomes form*...) whose dialogical structure ('inter-human commerce') would constitute the ethical verification of a supposed community of feeling differentially nourishing 'everyday micro-utopias' (a romantic reconciliation with life, but a decidedly *local* one). Made 'ethical' by its desire for a 'social transparency' considered part and parcel of a 'democratic concern' for *immediacy* and *proximity*, this

movement that appropriates the demand for a ‘formal communism’ (sic), and aims to promote ‘lived time’ as a ‘new artistic continent’⁷, derives its reality above all – as Jacques Rancière has put it very well – from ‘its capacity to recode and invert the forms of thought and attitudes which only yesterday aimed at radical political or artistic change’.⁸ In the age of communication and service capitalism, where ‘marketing has preserved the idea of a certain relationship between the concept and the event’ (as Deleuze and Guattari write in the Introduction to *What is Philosophy?*)⁹ only in order to become the laboratory for the ‘society of control’ in which the culture of marketing governs the marketing of culture as lifestyle, we might advance : *Schizophrenia and Consensus*.

And perhaps this parodic reversal of an earlier period’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* might account for the obstinate *recuperation* of Deleuze and Guattari (but above all of Guattari) by the partisans of relational aesthetics. It partakes in fact of a *rear-view mirror effect* that makes the aesthetic rehumanisation of postmodernity dependent on the depotentialisation of art, and its consequential restyling, as the ‘transversalist’ political experience of the protest years. The *dissensual* transversality of new micro-political and micro-social practices which focused artistic activity on ‘the discovery of a negentropy at the heart of the banality of the environment’¹⁰ is here reduced to a consensual storytelling post-produced for this trans-media theatre of the *little form*, accommodated by the relationally revisited space of the exhibition. Hence the fact that the break announced at the start will be reformulated in terms of the need to reconstitute ‘bridges between the 1960s and 70s and our own time’.¹¹ This proposition – what we might justly call a historical-transcendental monstrosity – represented by a *micropolitics of intersubjectivity*, gives voice to a short-circuit in which what is really at stake is to bring back into the intersubjective practice of an ‘artistically’ revisited communicative action the micropolitics that had in fact pre-emptively undermined the foundations of any such intersubjectivity by opposing *molecular revolution* to the ‘recentering of economic activities on the production of subjectivity’.¹² A process in which, essentially, the ‘institutional framing’ and ‘the universe of valorisation’ (‘including economic valorisation’, Guattari insists) of contemporary art today is participating.¹³

Hence the schizophrenia of relational aesthetics, as it seeks to confer upon its *surfing* on the new universals of communication some function of alternative democratization. Far from liberating 'the inter-human exchange' from its economic reification 'in the cracks of existing social forms' (as relational aesthetics claims – but without ever losing sight of the trajectory leading from the gallery/art fair system to the museum-laboratories of the new economy of art, *and the accelerated return* through the succession of Biennales, Triennales, Documentas, Manifestas, and their integration into the new 'capitalism of cities', in Braudel's words...) ¹⁴, it instead tests out new criteria of commodification and the participatory management of life by means of these exhibition-*dispositifs* that stage the driving role of the 'culture of interactivity' (relation as *transaction*). The art commissioners (curators-advisors, museum directors-managers) are overjoyed since they thereby gain, at a bargain price, a social function of 'proximity', testifying to the manner in which the postmodern democratization of art has broken away from the dangerous avant-garde and 'revolutionist' practice of trans-forming art-forms *in situ* into life-forces *in socius*. (Liberating the forces of life from the forms that imprison them, so as to create, yes, something *new*, as the heterogenetic element of real experience positing difference in its reality-condition – this radical novelty which we are told is 'no longer a criterion' but merely outdated avant-garde rhetoric, now that the hour has come for '*métissage*' and a 'crossing of cultures', according to the strap line for the Parisian *White Night*, of which Bourriaud and Sans were the 'artistic directors' in 2006). The critics (who in this case are also the curators-museum directors, in answer to the post-Fordist call for mobility and flexibility) are equally delighted, as are the other 'mediators' (when they have not been short-circuited by the curator-as-artist), because they find in intersubjectivity a 'theory of form' as the representative or '*delegate [délégué]*' of desire in the image', as the image's horizon of meaning, 'pointing to a desired world, which the beholder thus becomes capable of discussing, and based on which his own desire can rebound.'¹⁵ (Objection: has Form not always been, rather, the *relegation* of desire in the Image addressed to the spectator participating in Re-presentation? And has the formal regime of the Image not been *undone* in this respect in the *longue durée* of modern art¹⁶, of its avant-gardist radicalisation, and in the diagrammatic regime of contemporary art — when it follows this 'hard line'?)¹⁷ So that

Duchamp's proposition, according to which *it is the viewers who make the pictures* will be appropriated in terms of social relations contra art-objects (against the 'trap of reification')¹⁸, and projected quite consensually by these brokers of desire onto the performative origin of the process of artistic constitution of which the *readymade* would then be the posthistoric truth – cut off from any real negativity, except for its postmodern form directed against the new, against 'the reduction of being to novum' (following Vatimo's definition of modernity). And – *Worstward ho!* – to cap it all, judgement then becomes the lexicon of a participative practice that no longer cares to distinguish between the creative use-value of art and a personalized tourist circuit for the use of the *tenants of culture*: 'sensation depends on the simple "opinion" of a spectator who determines whether or not to "materialize" the sensation, that is to say, decides whether or not it is art.'¹⁹ (I quote Deleuze and Guattari here, although the phrase, but for the difference in accent – deprecatory as opposed to laudatory – could be Bourriaud's.)

To this Duchampian *readymade* of the social 'infrathin', this human, all-too human Duchamp, customised as *Little Democracy* and recycled in the 'transactional' translation of the *new aesthetic paradigm* developed by Guattari (the political ontology of desire here finds itself inevitably redirected towards a 'policy of forms', or *an imaginary politics of forms*, which believes that the eradication of the 'objectivity' of the artwork eradicates capitalist exchange), one is tempted to oppose the hard truth of a *constructivism of the signifier* through which the Contemporary broke into the field of artistic Modernity – or more precisely, into the modern idea of art.

But before following this line in my argument, we must quickly return to the Guattari/soft Duchamp interface, because it is from this perspective that Bourriaud, in the last part of his book (*Relational Aesthetics*, pp. 86–104), appropriates Félix Guattari's 'new aesthetic paradigm' (the title of the penultimate chapter of *Chaosmosis*; the subsection 'Félix Guattari and Art' is included in the section of *Relational Aesthetics* entitled 'Towards a Policy of Forms'²⁰). In the conclusion of his long filmed interview with James Johnson Sweeney, from 1955, Duchamp declares: 'I believe that art is the only form of activity through which man as such can manifest himself as a veritable individual. Only through art can he overcome the animal stage, because art is an opening onto regions that neither time nor space dominate'.

This is the passage that Guattari quotes in *Chaosmosis*, reframing Duchamp's declaration in terms of those regions that do not sustain time and space *because* (and it is obviously Guattari who is speaking here) 'the finitude of the sensible material becomes the support for a production of affects and percepts which will tend more and more to become eccentric in relation to the pre-formed frames and coordinates'. Killing two birds with one stone, he thus definitively takes 'out of the frame' the methodological individualism of a chess player little inclined to becoming-animal and to the chaosmic plunge into the materials of sensation...²¹

I do not object here to the *new aesthetic paradigm* proposed by Guattari. *I object to the attribution of this proto-aesthetic ontology to Marcel Duchamp.* For the 'pictorial nominalism' of the latter is – literally – *de-ontological*. 'I do not believe in the word "being"', Duchamp confides to Pierre Cabanne; a declaration to which one will oppose Deleuzo-Guattarian 'schizo-ontology' defined as a '*politics of being*', a '*machinics of being*', etc., whose proto-aesthetic heart beats, according to Guattari, in the process of non-discursive, or '*a-signifying*' semiotisation belonging to the intensive domain of Affects ('comparable, in this respect, to Bergsonian duration', Guattari insists)²² – so that, in this absolute violation of the ontological tradition (to borrow Negri's re-presentation of Spinoza's ontology), Affect is 'the deterritorialised matter of enunciation' = proto-energy²³. On the contrary, Duchamp's 'strategic' radicalisation consists in *reducing* the Art-Form to language-games about art, and these in turn to a signifying iteration which cuts out its subject in order to turn the plasticity of language against the imagistic/imaginary regime of the so-called plastic arts (*cosa mentale*, grey matter, art is *first and foremost* what language unwittingly realises). In this way Duchamp signifies the abolition of any image-making, of any sign-making of the world, as the literalised signifier severs the link between expression and construction ('Phallus' or 'Art' come down to the same... thing, from *Fountain* to *Dart-Object* [*Objet-Dard*], from *The Bride* to *The Given*). The cutting(-out) of Painting by the 'invisible colour' of title-words is thus negotiated in accordance with a logic of the event that reduces art to the Bachelor Machine²⁴ of a 'floating' Signifier whose 'expressions' no longer symbolize anything but the 'Tautology in acts' of construction '*without any resonance in the physical world*', as Duchamp says. Its ultimate Reality is exposed in the guise of its image fetishised as object: *Given* [étant

donné] the absence of sensible donation in the in-aesthetic state, art outside art is what *realizes* and *de-realizes* its own signifying-image. This is Duchamp's unique position in contemporary thought: To translate the real impossibility of Romanticism into a nihilistic irony that takes possession of the 'presentation of the unrepresentable' traditionally reserved for aesthetics – no longer the Invisible of/in [*de/dans*] the Image, nor the Intersubjectivity of/in Form, but the Signifying-Image, the proliferating voiding of the Image out/of [*de/hors*] art as the in-aesthetic foundation of postmodernity *that is de-monstrated for the first time and, if not dismantled, exhausted as such in art, in art qua antiart = anart*. In the guise of the *Possible*, as Duchamp explains, and against its chaotic Guattarian appropriation, the '*hypophysic*' of the letter '*has burnt any possible aesthetics*'. Michel de Certeau explains it fairly well: Its 'productions are fantastic not in the indefiniteness of the reality that they make appear at the frontier of language [this is the Guattarian vision], *but in the relationship between the mechanisms that produce simulacra and the absence of anything else*. [...] The machine producing language is wiped clean of history, isolated from the obscenities of reality, absolute and without relation to the "celibate" other.' It is in this sense that 'Celibacy is scriptural' and that the letter obeys 'the logic of a celibate narcissism', a logic whose rigorous protocol will be produced by Lacan ('*lalangue* is the place of the impossibility of the sexual relationship') and where 'is deployed the ironic and meticulous work of mourning'.²⁵ – Of aesthetic's mourning, in its relational being.

It is this anti-aesthetic that will have determined the level of intervention of a conceptual art which is *simultaneously* 'exclusive' and 'inclusive'²⁶, in its 'informative' endeavour to neutralise the aesthetic plane of composition, 'so that — following Deleuze and Guattari — everything takes on a value of sensation reproducible to infinity'²⁷ (this is the *primary information* of a materialist function initially articulated as Language Art after Analytical Philosophy); as well as the radicality of the alternatives required to make the machination of being that has been named Post/modern (with the bar expressing the phenomenon in terms of forces) pass through logics of sensation likely to disorganize or *affect* its course with their capacity for inventing mutant subjective coordinates of re-singularization, in which experimentation implicates, explicates and complicates in a

determinant fashion the physical as well as the social ‘environment’, *the boundaries of which no longer coincide with the participant individuals*. It engages what Guattari calls – let us recall – ‘the discovery of a negentropy at the heart of the banality of the environment’²⁸, the better to project the re-making of the ready-made he counter-produces into a constructivist bio-aesthetics.

As a weak thought (the new *Pensiero debole*), which reprocesses (and de-processes) this double movement, this movement à *double entente et détente*, into zero-sum cultural protocols of institutional re-aestheticisation (from the aestheticisation of the conceptualist neutralisation and the institutionalisation of environmentalist experimentation), relational aesthetics is the *postproduction brand* [*marque*] corresponding to that moment, diagnosed and denounced by Deleuze and Guattari, when ‘the only events are exhibitions, and the only concepts are products that can be sold’²⁹ – sold to the user-consumer of forms who will have forsaken any attack on cultural capital in order to adapt it to his or her desires, in an open conviviality opposed, with minimum expense, to consumer-driven uniformisation of past times. A managerial model for Art in our ‘capitalological’ present.

Dans le texte, in Bourriaud’s text entitled *Postproduction*: ‘Artists today practice postproduction as a neutral operation, a zero-sum game, whereas the Situationists had the goal of corrupting the value of the work being diverted, in other words of attacking cultural capital. Production ... is a capital with which consumers can realize a set of operations that make them the tenants of culture.’³⁰ However, it is not to Michel de Certeau, cited here, and to his creative alterconsumer, that Bourriaud ascribed the ‘philosophical foundations’ of his essay – but to Marx, according to an ‘aesthetic’ as well as an ‘economic’ gesture that will by now be familiar: ‘for Marx, the only element capable of defining “human nature” is nothing other than the relational system established by humans themselves, that is to say the commerce of all individuals with one another.’³¹ The circle is in a certain sense complete when the humanist Marx’s ‘Total Man’, severed from the analysis of fetishism that incorporates the social relations into the order of reification, becomes the last signifier of a cultural democracy rendering itself adequate to a world art market in the process of inventing a new consumerist model for counter-culture. And this circle may even take on the aspect of an infernal spiral when we encounter ‘Deleuzo-Guattarians’ identifying the situation of

contemporary art practices with the field of relational aesthetics under the rubric of rhizomatics.³² It is fortunate that Bourriaud, albeit in a confused way (but rightly centered on the question of the subject), has taken to recently mark the difference, from the point of view of a post-Romantic dynamic of the Subject-Form he will henceforth call *radicant*...³³ The radicant subject.

ALTERMODERN EPILOGUE

Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us.

Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*

In the current era of (alter)globalization, (self-)critically radicalized by the collapse of the world financial system, Nicolas Bourriaud now calls for ‘ethical responsibility’ in a ‘global dialogue’ enacting the diaspora of forms in motion and the formal transcoding of the worldwide culture we live in (a ‘viatorisation’ of forms that inevitably echoes the ‘migration of forms’ foregrounded by Roger Bruegel on the occasion of Documenta 12).³⁴ Consequently, he rearticulates relational aesthetics as/within a declared geopolitical *altermodernism* conceived as ‘a synthesis between modernism and post-colonialism’³⁵; a synthesis in which the heterochronic ‘journey-form’ of the nomad-artist (the polyglot wanderer) emerges from the *death of postmodernism* to give rise to a ‘networked “archipelago” form of modernity’.³⁶ Beyond the fashionable celebration of nomadism as a self-sufficient *inter-form* of artistic identity in the age of trans-national smooth capitalism (as diplomatically pointed out by T.J. Demos in the Tate Triennial Catalogue) and the market-celebration of ex-eccentric artists (from China, India, the Middle East, Eastern Europe...) that structures so-called ‘International Contemporary Art’, we appreciate the opportunity to retain, at least, Bourriaud’s symptomatic statement about the end of postmodernism (with the critique of hybridization he is now developing in parallel with the critique of a multiculturalist essentialism — what Hal Foster called the ‘hegelianism of the other’)³⁷. Even if we suspect that in this new storytelling of the ethnographic turn in contemporary art and criticism, it will appear that *the modern has always already been altermodern* (the Lyotardian refrain taken up by Simon Critchley) because the dialogical or intersubjective narrative that unfolds

the critique of the (classic-modern) subject is still centered on the subject, 'and it still centers on the subject' (the travel-practice of a narcissistic self-refurbishing)³⁸; while *the altermodern will always already be 'en retard'* (a delay in plexiglass) with regard to the political radicality of the real forces the post-relational narrative needs to recycle (formal communism of the Exodus) and 'translate' (aesthetic precariousness), with a perfect strategic professionalism, into the *geocustomization* of the (art) world... It reads, with a certain formulaic air (perhaps because it no longer cares to hide its *après-coup* character): 'The altermodern is to culture what altermondialisation is to geopolitics'.³⁹

ENDNOTES

- 1 E. Troncy, « Le syndrome de Stockholm », *Documents sur l'art*, n° 7, printemps 1995 ; new ed. in Id., *Le colonel Moutarde dans la bibliothèque avec le chandelier (textes 1988-1998)*, Paris : Les Presses du réel, 1998, p. 49.
- 2 Dieter Lesage, 'Populism and Democracy', in *The Populism Reader*, Edited by Cristina Ricupero, Lars Bang Larsen, Nicolaus Schaffhausen, Berlin/New York : Sternberg Press, 2005.
- 3 Eric Alliez, Félix Guattari, 'Capitalistic Systems, Structures and Processes', in Félix Guattari, *Molecular Revolution*, London : Penguin Books, 1984, p. 273-287.
- 4 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with Mathieu Copeland, Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002, p. 8. I say 'between the descriptive and prescriptive' because we should note from the very start, without needing to return to it later, that the isolation of the relational form-function entails the selection of artists supposed to represent this tendency (the 'liveliest') by *reducing* exemplary artworks to their single structure as collaborative 'open works', 'opened' by the participation – *pars pro toto*, according to Hans Ulrich Obrist – of the public experiencing a 'social interstice' removed from capitalistic commodification. Reading Nicolas Bourriaud's further arguments, it seems that Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose work introduces the series of art examples in *Relational Aesthetics* and who features prominently in the chapter on 'Art of the 1990s' (in the first section, entitled 'Participation and Transitivity') is the most paradigmatic figure of 'relational art'. This should not stop us from remarking that *even* Tiravanija's installations, and *many other* works by artists mentioned by the curator-critic (Felix Gonzales-Torres, Gabriel Orozco, Patrice Hybert or Philippe Parreno, for example), can be seen to be far more complex *and perverse* in terms of the modes of sociality (i.e. the social dimension of participation) they imply. This in order to emphasise that (1) we refuse to inscribe the art of the 1990s, as *such*, under the monotonous rubric of relational aesthetics (to which Santiago Sierra is a perfect counter-example); (2) a good criterion for the evaluation of works might indeed be their excess vis-à-vis repeated calls to 'modesty' and 'conviviality' as reality-condition for an art of social autonomy in a realized arty 'micro-utopia' (undone by Sierra in the exhibition of the commodification of labour that produces the 'relational' artwork)... It is on the basis of such an excessive criterion, certainly, that one could oppose Gordon Matta-Clark's cooperative *Food* to Rirkrit Tiravanija's culinary aesthetic. (Cf. the 2007 show at the David Zwirner Gallery in NY that pretended to bring back *Food*, in absentia, by juxtaposing a double reconstitution of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Open House* [1972] — originally located in the street, and open to the homeless — and Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled 1992 (Free)*, exhibited at the 303 Gallery where Thai curry was cooked and served to visitors...) As we know, Matta-Clark escapes from (art-gallery / institutional critique of the art-gallery) representation (and the purely formal redefinition of the exhibition-medium) by proposing, within the urban territory, 'environmental' agencies and interventions that consist in a social disarchitecturing of the Art-Form which interproblematizes art and politics at the point of their highest tension... But let us return to our concern in this text. In his response to Claire Bishop's article 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics' (*October* 110 [Fall 2004]), Liam Gillick explains: '*Relational Aesthetics* was the result of informal argument and disagreement among Bourriaud and some of the artists referred to in his text. ... The book does contain major contradictions and serious problems of incompatibility with regard to the artists repeatedly listed together as exemplars of certain tendencies.' (Liam Gillick, 'Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"', *October* 115, [Winter 2006], p. 96). Take note.
- 5 See the interview with Michel Maffesoli in the catalogue of the 2005 Biennale de Lyon, commissioned by Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans: *Expérience de la durée (Histoire d'une exposition)*, Lyon: Biennale de Lyon, 2005.
- 6 Bourriaud's reappropriation of Certeauian thematics consummates the long-standing institutionalisation of the Everyday in the field of cultural studies, where de Certeau's theory loses the tactical horizon of its political semiotics ('a *polemological* analysis of culture' focused on the 'cultural activity of the non-producers of culture') in favour of a exclusively hermeneutical project. See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. The French title was *L'Invention du quotidien, Vol. 1, Arts de faire* (1974).
- 7 Cf. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2003; *Formes de vie: L'art moderne et l'invention de soi*, Paris: Denoël, 2003; and *Expérience de la durée (Histoire d'une exposition)*, Paris: Biennale de Lyon / Paris-Musées, 2005.
- 8 Jacques Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, Paris: Gallée, 2004, p. 172.
- 9 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson, London : Verso, 1994, p. 16.
- 10 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, translated by Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p.131.
- 11 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Expérience de la durée (Histoire d'une exposition)*, Lyon: Biennale de Lyon, p. 12-13.
- 12 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p.122. In his 'Berlin Letter about Relational Aesthetics' (2001) [republished in Claire Doherty, *Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation*, London: Black Dog, 2004, pp. 44-49], Bourriaud insists on the 'trans-individual' dimension of Relational Aesthetics. But the *collective*

- transductivity* on the basis of which Simondon defined the very notion of the 'trans-individual' (as an alternative to any inter-individually shared form) is missing (and can't be added *a posteriori*).
- 13 See Olivier Zahm's interview with Félix Guattari in *Chimères*, n° 23, été 1994. From which Guattari has concluded: "It might also be better here to speak of a proto-aesthetic paradigm, to emphasise that we are not referring to institutionalised art, to its works manifested in the social field, but to a dimension of creativity in a nascent state ... " (Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 101-2).
 - 14 Stimulated by the designation of European cultural capitals, in the early nineties 'global cities' developed the translation of site-specific projects into touristic-site specificity. Gordon Matta-Clark was inevitably co-opted into this project of translation obeying the 'global' method of rereading of an œuvre.
 - 15 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p. 23.
 - 16 See my book intitled *L'Œil-Cerveau. Nouvelles Histoires de la peinture moderne*, Paris : Vrin, 2007.
 - 17 What Jean-Claude Bonne and I have called *La Pensée-Matisse* (Paris: Edition du Passage, 2005) has been projected to produce a true alternative to this relegation of desire into the form of the image. See too 'Défaire l'image', *Multitudes*, 28, 2007 (expanded English version in Armen Avanessian and Luke Skrebowski (eds), *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, forthcoming), and my article 'Body without Image: Ernesto Neto's Anti-Leviathan' (*Radical Philosophy* 156, July/August 2009), expanded (with Jean-Claude Bonne) in the catalogue Ernesto Neto, *A Culpa Civilizada*, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nantes, 2009.
 - 18 'But to say this' — as Stewart Martin argues in his 'Critique of Relational Aesthetics' — 'is to be already trapped. [...] To think that the source of value is in the object-commodity is precisely the error that Marx calls fetishism. [...] If we avoid this fetishism we are stripped of any delusions that the simple affirmation of the social within capitalist society is critical of capitalist exchange ; it simply draws attention to the social constitution of capitalist exchange, exposing it directly' (*Verksted*, n. 8, 2006, p. 113).
 - 19 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 198.
 - 20 This section has its origins in an article published in the journal *Chimères*, no. 21, Winter 1994, and therefore finds itself reinscribed after the fact into an institutional field to which it was, to begin with, foreign.
 - 21 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 101. Let's remember that, against the ambient Bergsonism of the beginning of the twentieth century, Duchamp continually declared and sought to demonstrate that art 'has no biological excuse'... The settling of accounts with Bergson (with Bergsonian vitalism) is played out between the *Nude Descending a Staircase* and the 'nominal' invention of the *ready made* against the illusion (*always* romantic according to Duchamp) of the *in-the-making*. See also the particularly transversal – auratic and 'affective'! – usage that Guattari makes of the *Bottle rack* in 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects', in G Genosko (ed.) *The Guattari Reader*, Oxford : Blackwell, 1996, p. 164. This will have (been) nourished (by) the final *détournement* of the notion of *readymade* in *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?*, where the *readymade* is associated with the *sensibilia* of the bird constructing a territory-scene...
 - 22 Félix Guattari, 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects', in *The Guattari Reader*, p. 159.
 - 23 Félix Guattari, 'Ritornellos and Existential Affects', in *The Guattari Reader*, p. 168. and 'La récursion énonciative' in *Cartographies schizoanalytiques*, Paris : Galilée, 1989, p. 231.
 - 24 We should here remember that the Deleuzo-Guattarian appropriation of Duchamp appears in *Anti-Œdipus*, where the question of the 'celibate machine' qua desiring machine is overdetermined by a quite *perverse* relationship to Lacan ('to schizophrenize Lacan')... Beyond *Anti-Œdipus*, Guattari will always recognize that Lacan had the merit of deterritorialising desire, in so far as his *objet a* was defined as 'non spécularisable, échappant par là aux coordonnées d'espace et de temps' (*Chaosmose*, p. 132) I dealt briefly with this question in 'Contemporary Matisse', in *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New*, ed. by Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke, London-New York : Continuum, 2008, p. 144.
 - 25 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, p. 150-152 (« The Celibate machines »).
 - 26 Which does not contravene the distinction – more phenomenal and historical – proposed by Peter Osborne between 'inclusive or weak Conceptualists' and 'exclusive or strong Conceptualists', see P. Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy', in M. Newman, J. Bird, *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, London : Reaktion Books, 1999, p. 49.
 - 27 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 198.
 - 28 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, p. 131.
 - 29 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, p. 10.
 - 30 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p. 33.
 - 31 Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Le scénario et l'effet spécial', *Art Press* 2 (2006) ('La scène française'), p. 50.
 - 32 Cf. Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari. Thought beyond Representation*, London : Palgrave, 2006, p. 14, p. 17. An 'identification' which, in fact, does not come about without a certain unease on the author's part: 'where are the becomings ?' ; how does this differ from 'the practices offered by consumer culture' ? (p. 177-178, n. 55). Nonetheless, to appeal to a supposedly Deleuzian definition of art as the 'expression of an independent and private symbolic space' (p. 181, n. 20) does not seem to us the best way of responding to the question.
 - 33 Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009, p. 55 : 'Above all,

unlike the rhizome, which is defined as a multiplicity that brackets out the question of the subject from the beginning, the radican takes the form of a trajectory or path; the advance of a singular subject'. (Spot the difference between this 'path' and Guattari's process of subjectivation that proceeded through the rhizome he elaborated with Deleuze...)

- 34 For a deconstruction of the dispositive of Documenta 12, see "Multitudes Icônes versus Documenta Magazine" (with Giovanna Zapperi), *Multitudes*, 30, autumn 2007 ; and also the website <http://multitudes-icônes.samizdat.net>.
- 35 In this process, Documenta 12 is actively remixed with Documenta 11 — led by Okwui Enwezor — from which the Altermodern Tate Triennial strategically comes. Of the many 'platforms' for discussion scattered around the world by D11, let's mention 'Créolité and Creolization' and 'Four African Cities.'
- 36 Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Altermodern', *Tate Triennial*, London: Tate Publishing, 2009 (pages not numbered).
- 37 Hal Foster, 'The Artist as Ethnographer,' in *The Return of the Real*, London : MIT Press, 1996, p. 179).
- 38 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p. 179-180. And more specifically : 'In this light the othering of the self [...] is only a partial challenge to the modern subject, for this othering also buttresses the self through romantic opposition, conserves the self through dialectical appropriation, extends the self through surrealist exploration, prolongs the self through poststructuralist troubling, and so on.'
- 39 Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radican*, p. 185.

RICARDO BASBAUM

**MEMBRANOSA-ENTRE
(NBP)¹: NOTATIONS**

VOL.1

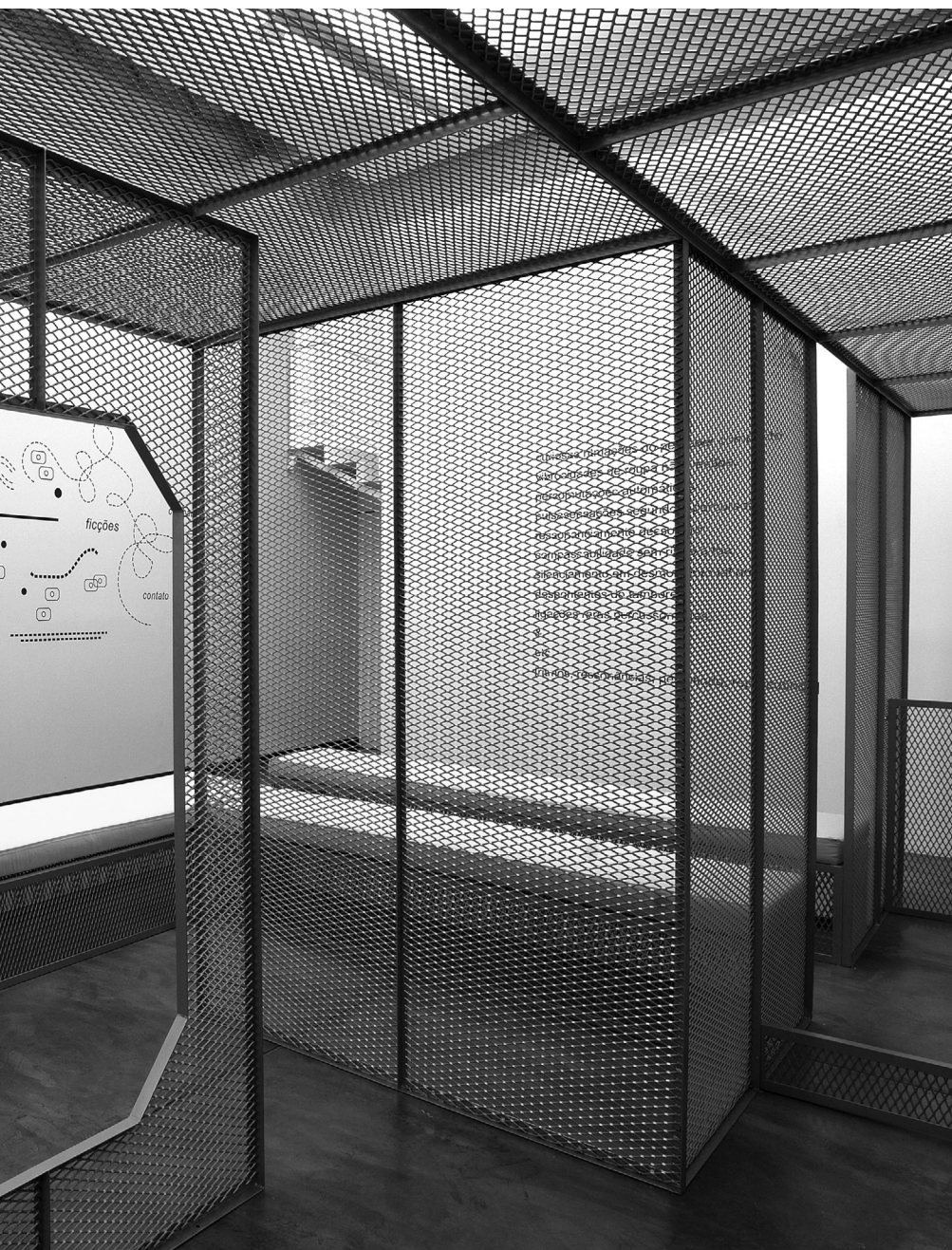
membranosa-entre (NBP), 2009

iron structure, textile cushions, foam, vinyl adhesive diagram on monochromatic background, vinyl adhesive texts, closed-circuit television (cctv), sequential, video projector 470x900x240cm (iron structure), variable dimensions (diagram, texts)
installation exhibited at Luciana Brito Gallery, São Paulo

Upon arrival, the visitor is confronted with different possibilities of action: to be detained by the length of the long diagram on a violet background; to develop a reading next to the wall text; to sit on the green upholstered benches; to cross a long metallic corridor, signed by a door and obstacles, as well as many passages. The invitation for walking, crossing, points directly to the interstice: *to enter*, here, is to traverse the space *in-between*, intermediate, located between one thing and the other, to inhabit the border region. There are plenty of activities on offer – to see, to read, to walk, to sit, to stumble... I expect a curious visitor, one who moves around and throws his or her own body over the cold metal; but who also rests on the seats and with the eyes surveys the space around. One who might also say something to others around, equally visitors – or who eventually projects the voice throughout the space of the room.

In the last years, I have built many works² that attempted to trigger the presence of the mediate dimension within the installation's site, that is, producing membranes right there – to cause a certain activation of the space, releasing something similar to vibrations which are, in fact, surplus elements that sum up to the work's presence, incited as they are by the immaterial physical mass of the construction. However, not only: it is necessary *you* there (he, she, us...) to activate the dynamics of contact and mediation. Lygia Clark's *organic line* was one of the first gestures, in the field of the contemporary art, to indicate that the interstitial areas would be more decisive and important than the physical and objectual materiality of the work; such line, as Clark indicated in the unfolding of her magnificent production, should further on constitute itself in a centrifugal dissolution, towards the other's body – and to achieve this task it has step by step made itself more and more relational, a structure for touch and contact. A specific intelligence is required, one that







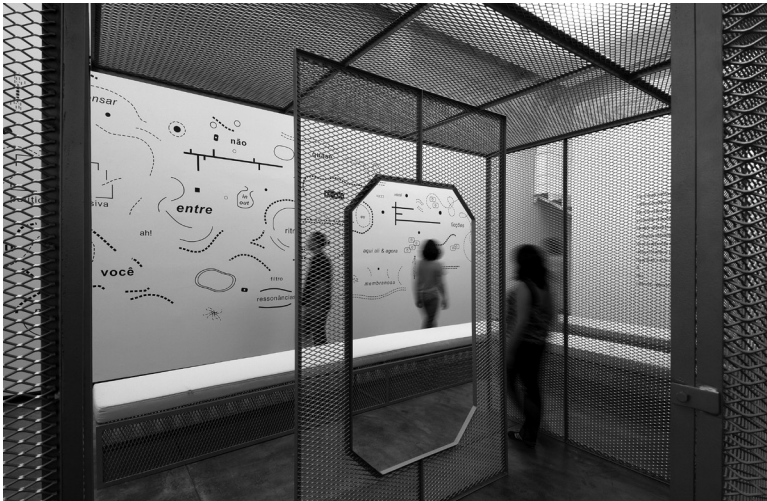
understands the intermediate space, reorganises the mediations and establishes the intensity of both encounter and contact.

Paradoxically, in order to intensify the contact it is necessary to invest in the mediation-producing structures – it is more important to understand *how* I manage to reach *you* (through which ways and methods) than to arrive suddenly, instantly, through automatic steps. Of course, only if someone wants something to be seen – that *you* shall look, see, reorganize things around (inside and outside), reconfigure the horizon, what is beside you. There is an investment in making the path longer, constructing curves and deviations, for it should not be so easy or so simple to get there – indeed, everything could be summed up in only one sentence (and that particularly interests me: to articulate refrains, rhythmic and direct phrases), but it is required to know how to enounce it at the right moment. After all, to get lost on purpose is necessary, in order to build up contact, encounter or proximity. Solidly, metalically constructed, the materiality we hold is meant to call attention to extra-layers, other ones, desifying them, making present the intermediation membranes: "Call the *membranosa* and *enter*".

One of the more afflictive conditions of contemporary art, in its formalization under the current context, is the excessive presence of mediations; when we finally reach the work of art, after crossing the layers and layers that resulted from the construction of the event – publicity, institutional borders, security, architectonic

elements, educational discourses, etc – we are tired already, after incessantly negotiating by the whole length of the route, which virtually (in the sense of immaterial clouds, but which continuously harass our bodies) traps the work in its exhibition display, awaiting for anyone. However, there is no possible return – fortunately, it is necessary to say – to a purity that safeguards the spectator-work/body-work encounter, protecting the moment from contaminations in excess. No, we inhabit a horizon of events beyond purity, and that's where we should find happiness. The strategy will be of *resistance*, that is, of redefining the alignment of the many and many layers in order to rearticulate them in other ways – which can function then in the direction of a potentiation of the encounter and contact between *you* and the work of art, producing energies and relocating the main fluxes into circulation, orientated for the transformative pathways of invention and intervention. That is, if we believe in some strength that the work of art might yet possess, on this planet in continuous transformation.

The work invests on the transformation of the organic line into *membrane*: it is important to update Lygia Clark while confronting the XXI century – but what is proposed, by bounding the differences, is neither an erasure nor a “new evolutive solution”: it is a matter of indicating inflexions, searching for the lines of flight that depart from the referential proposal, and showing differential rearrangements, proper to the here and now that



one wants (or needs) to confront. At the limit, the dispute that is enacted points to the delineation of bodies, the construction of subjects, and under such a struggle membrane and organic line are allies that do not nullify each other, but combine their strength. When the *membranosa* articulates itself, it does not indicate a simple moment but a singular, significant stage, where the sensorial and linguistic materialization of the contact layers are vehement: the work of art really wants to *speak with*, assuming its transitoriness whilst being a structure of sharing. Coupling modules in an engineering of layers, that would be the traces of the contemporary disquietude, translated into *membranosa*.

Allowing yourself to be traversed, constituting blocking lines, investing in the density of layers, elaborating the consciousness of passages – these would be proceedings that need more than the tracing of lines to be effectuated: only by occupying space and opening oneself to the volume of the body, one can arrive there. The lines of the world are many – it is important to make them visible: this takes place especially through the contact with the skin; and, at the same time, with the help of the regard that reads and sees simultaneously. Yet, and this is the bet, when the body and the eye read and see (double harassment of set and line), a rhythmic impact is produced – among the many effects of this horizon of events. It is in the effort of bringing the presence of this vibration, to the set of the exhibited elements, together with the paths and proposed spaces, that the installation is complemented with two texts and one diagram: for the former ones, the chaining of refrains; for the latter, the functioning of the vibratile dynamics of the lines and words' tension, as well as the intensity of the colour.

One by one, the small sentences slide within the installation space, bringing in the eventual musicality of the words, in reinforcement of the strategy of *contact&contamination* that structures the installation: formalised as refrains, they function by repetition and stir the senses in their mnemonic persistence. The spatialized presence indicates how much musicality exists in the verbivisual combination, and this ambience is expressed as drum beats: percussion is “a collision or clash of matters/bodies” (Cf. Dictionaries), the encounter between any-one visitor with the materiality of the work of art – the *membranosa* invests in the intensity of the body/work contact, in such a way that these colliding bodies establish themselves as percussive, rhythmic instances demarcating that specific place.

curiosas ritmações do perceber compacto;
 vibrosidades de roupa não-vestida;
 percomutações automáticas;
 pulsasensações segundo o percurso;
 ressonanciamento dessonoroso;
 compassabilidade sem ritmo à toa;
 silenciamento em desmomento tal qual;
 despontantes do tamboréu;
 ligações raras percussonantes;
 &
 etc
 [ritmos, ressonâncias, percutindo, repercutindo]

The debate for a politics of drums is installed, in the space constructed through the problematisation of the bodily encounters and clashes: it is in the contact line that the “curiosas ritmações” are triggered and expanded across the environment in “ressonanciamento dessonoroso”; it is in the installation’s influence area that the debate departs and from there it expands to other terrains and territories – through the spectator’s body, taken as a vehicle. The routes of a percussive politics will be those in which the questions are built around the contact structures – problematization of the mediations, friction of the functioning *membranosa*, stuck to the skin, to the clothes and to the other layers.

At the same time indicating contact and constituting ambience, the large colour field of the diagram interferes directly in the space, sustained by the architectural lines of the room: I take the diagrams as a working tool that allows me to operate from the intercross of texts and images: this mixture is processed through a cartographic logic, designing processes just about to be effective – as a dynamics still to come. Affective intensities are properties of colour fields – and this is the direction that the diagrams and their monochromatic backgrounds rove. Here, the violet seasons the *membranosa* with a set of references to “iá bá nanã” – because it is interesting to evoke the relational lines that bring closer some traces of the afro-brazilian culture. There is not, of course, any religious or representational interest at all – there is no space in here for such kind of game. But the chain of references that is grouped under such a binding is curious, especially when the rhythmic question is posed with such a strength in this *membranosa*: the installation establishes, in this way, other cultural

connections, set in motion through the scene – topics kept open, subtle conveyor of deviations in the general registration of the activities. At this moment, it might be worthwhile to add the drums and the voice in the promotion of one more collective refrain:

membranosa-entre (1)
 membranosa-entre (2)
 membranosa-entre (3)
 membranosa-entre (4)
 membranosa-entre (5)
 membranosa-entre (6)
 membranosa-entre (7)
 membranosa-entre (8)
 . . .
 NBP

What has been outlined here, indicates from now on a possible choreographic path for the visitor – not as a script previous to the visit, intending to guide it: this text does not stand as a prescription. But indeed in terms of a possible open set of instructions; in fact, not even that – it is better here to deal with a series of potential indications, only, with the role of simulating possibilities. When going through doors, you can always deviate to one side or the other – to leave the structure and return to it; there are obstacles to be surpassed (or not – that's part of the game). At a certain moment – before or after – the benches offer seat, a possibility to look around from a fixed position or to start conversations (as it has already been stated). Each moment brings a field of vision encompassing all directions, in such a way that the metal grid fuses with the diagram and with the text, providing words in several material combinations; the text blends with the field of colour, through the metal; green pillows produce reflexions on the white and violet walls; refrains are seen and read at the same time by visitors in different areas of the corridor; you can go back and forth, many times. What matters is to be attentive to the different possible actions, realizing the set of movements – one in relation to the other, bodies in contact with the structure, lines and words pulsating. Installation: terrain for an attentive choreography.

One more element composes the group of proceedings that has been discussed here, contributing to the general consistency and thickness of the *membranosa-entre*: the set of closed-circuit

cameras that I use to organize in terms of the *sistema-cinema* series – images in real time, sent to a projector, located next to the main structure, repeatedly playing back the footage on continuous cycles. If every frame is decisive, the cycle of images being produced transmits endless sequences of takes – images from one camera after the other, continuously. For the observer, to be able to see and to be seen, and assimilate the installation from points of view different from the ones that have been experienced before, is part of the plot. Here, the search has been for a narrative layer that becomes part of the installation set – triggering and adding one more story to the already intense process, almost to the limit of the visitor's assimilation. Perhaps, pointing to some escape chance should be necessary – in the sense of a temporary pause, for obtaining breath or space; but the relief emerges when one realizes that there is no conclusion or end, and that no fast assimilation of the process, massive or boring, is imposed at all. Similarly to the beginning of the experience, when the entrance to spaces that step by step open in layers was offered, the reward that can be obtained at any moment (before-now-after) is the conquering of breathing areas. When crossing the door, designed after NBP's specific shape, a small (imperceptible?) vibration is triggered, a minimum wind or breath. And this micro-interval is already sufficient, as a full index of a long adventure.

“Ever welcome back”.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The original title loses its precision when translated, so it will be kept in its original form in Brazilian Portuguese: *membranosa* is an adjective for membrane, and can be translated as 'membranous'; *entre* is 'in-between' and also 'enter'. Therefore the title is an invitation to 'enter' and at the same time access the space 'in-between'.
- 2 I refer here to the projects "passagens (NBP)" (Galeria Artur Fidalgo, Rio de Janeiro, 2001); "transatrevessamento" (24ª Bienal de São Paulo, 2002); "psiu-ei-oi-olá-não" (A Gentil Carioca, Rio de Janeiro, 2004); "would yo like to partipate in na artistic experience?" (documenta 12, Kassel, 2007); "la société du spectacle (&NBP)" (Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt, 2007); "me-you + system-cinema + pasageway (NBP)" (7ª Bienal de Xangai, 2008).
- 3 This installation wall-text is composed by portmanteau words in Brazilian Portuguese, which makes the translation impossible. All the sentences are developed around issues of rhythm, percussion, vibration and sound. An approximate translation would sound like "curious rhythmtions of compact perceiving; / vibrosities of unworn clothing; / automatic percommutations; / pulsasensations according to the path; / unsonorous resonancing; / random, rhythmless beatability; / silencing at just such an unmoment; / tamboréu arisings; / rare percussory links; / & / etc / [rhythms, resonances, percussing, repercussion]"

MARGARIDA CARVALHO

**WEAVING ENCOUNTERS:
TOWARDS AN ART OF
PARTICIPATION¹**

VOL.1

Let us start from a concrete event: on the 22nd of March 2010, Paola Antonelli, senior curator at the Architecture and Design Department of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), wrote an entry (widely and passionately commented) in MoMA's blog entitled “@ at MoMA”² where she announced the acquisition of the @ typographic symbol and its integration in the Museum's collection. The paradoxical nature of this acquisition and the symbolism it entails seemed to me as a good starting point to this conversation held under the promise of the disentanglement of a complex and contradictory net of ideas expressed in the title of the session of today's conferences “*Untangle: The Future Past of Media Art.*”

In the already quoted text (that was reinforced on the 24th March with a new entry devoted to this theme and entitled “@ in Context: Criteria for an Acquisition”³), Paola Antonelli affirms that the acquisition of the @ sign “relies on the assumption that physical possession of an object as a requirement for an acquisition is no longer necessary, and therefore it sets curators free to tag the world and acknowledge things that ‘cannot be had’—because they are too big (buildings, Boeing 747's, satellites), or because they are in the air and belong to everybody and to no one, like the @—as art objects befitting MoMA's collection. The same criteria of quality, relevance, and overall excellence shared by all objects in MoMA's collection also apply to these entities.”⁴

Presenting a brief history of the @ sign, Paola Antonelli marks the year of 1971 when Ray Tomlinson, an american engineer working for Bolt Beranek and Newman and collaborating with Douglas Engelbart⁵, develops the first global email system, allowing mail sending between users in different computers connected to ARPANET⁶. As Antonelli refers, the @ was a phantasmal and underused symbol in keyboards until, in October 1971, Tomlinson rediscovered and appropriated it and one of its meanings - that of localization - to start a new form of communication whose extraordinary impact he, himself, couldn't predict.

However, in so far as the @ sign belongs to public domain, its acquisition didn't have any financial cost to MoMA since the Museum acquired “the design act in itself”⁷ to be materialized in different typefaces (duly indicated and dated as it is canon in museological practices). Therefore, the integration of the @ in MoMA's collection, although in tune with one of the main missions of the Museum while institution - acquiring and

preserving forms of emblematic artistic expression of its time - lies, above all, in a conceptual⁸ and also symbolic⁹ plan.

For now it is not my goal to deepen the multiple conceptual implications of this gesture, but I would like to highlight that we cannot avoid reading it under the light of the current consecration of a network society. The so called “Web 2.0” – a term coined by Tim O’Reilly¹⁰ in 2004 that marks the passage from the conception of the World Wide Web as a means of publication to a means of participation¹¹ – transformed “communication” in the nucleus of the WWW development. Companies such as Flickr, Digg, YouTube, Current TV, Twitter, Facebook, among others, present themselves as “relational spaces”, devoted to sharing, participation and commentary, based upon the fluxes of social networks.

Thus, with the digital convergence phenomenon and the expansion of user-created content, the decrease of photographic and video cameras costs and the proliferation of laptops and wireless technologies, we witness today the emergence of a new media wave, of informal, personal, sometimes “minoritary” character, that potentiates fan and peer-to-peer culture. Considering this context, several questions emerge, namely:

- In what way does the phenomenon of “Web 2.0” and of the ubiquity of digital network relate to the museum as an institution and to the field of contemporary art?

- And, more specifically, under the scope of the theme that concerns us today, what is the impact of the “culture of participation”¹², which emerged of “Web 2.0”, in new media art¹³, understood here as a set of artistic practices which involve experimentation with digital media and which are contemporary of the democratization of the personal computer (PC)?

Paradoxically, in a moment we could think of as being the climax and consolidation of the category of new media art here we come across an insistent crisis discourse from some of its most famous curators and critics, namely Andreas Broeckmann and Peter Weibel.

In the text “Fragmentary Affinities. Art beyond the Media,”¹⁴ of 2008, Andreas Broeckmann affirms that we are in a “post-media” era, in which the mass media led to the informal, personal and participatory media, and “post-digital,” since information and communication technologies have become ubiquitous and structural, gaining invisibility and transforming themselves in essential goods such as electricity or drinking water. It is important to stress here

that this text was originally published in the *Media_City_Seoul* catalog, at the time of the 5th International Media Art Biennale in Seoul which, as we know, is one of the most emblematic capitals of Asiatic technological development. Although Broeckmann doesn't write it explicitly, it is clear that the consecration of a digital infrastructure and its full and free use don't constitute a global reality.

But let us go back to Broeckmann's argument. In the text "Deep Screen - Art in Digital Culture. An Introduction"¹⁵, also from 2008, he reiterates the idea that as digital networks imbricate profound and integrally in our experience, one of the fragilities of new media art becomes evident. In his words: "It has been one of the grave misconceptions of 'new media art' to assume that the new technologies would break with the paradigms of representation, perception and cognition to an extent that the effects of that break could exclusively be articulated by means of these very technologies".¹⁶

Therefore, for Broeckmann, the self-referentiality and emphasis in the techne of new media art would have dictated its crisis from the moment when digital technology integrated the quotidian, intimately inhabiting our experience. Broeckmann notes, however, that this (future) overcoming of the new media art represents a liberation of the artistic media and the surmounting of the conception that art that labors with technological media should have the element of technical experimentation as primary meaning. What Broeckmann reveals is what he considers to be the transitory character of the new media art and its progressive integration in the expanded field of contemporary art.

In the detailed and insightful chapter "The Cool Obscure: Crisis of New Media Arts" from the book *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture*¹⁷, Geert Lovink performs a thorough autopsy of this crisis that, as he states, doesn't lie in the quality of the individual artistic work but in the precarious condition of new media art as an operative category for the delimitation of certain artistic practices and of its institutional representations. Praising the taste of digital art for critical and playful experimentation with technology, Lovink highlights the intrinsically hybrid character of new media art, its procedural dimension and participative and distributed nature.

On the other hand, Lovink points out some of the underlying factors to the precarious and fragile character of digital art. Namely: the digital formalism and its hermetic (obscure) character; the desire of fusion with science as a

way of avoiding confrontation with the art market; the pulverization in diverse artistic practices and genres such as video, robotics, net art, bio-art, immersive installations, locative media, software art, games, etc. which make the constitution of a consistent critical apparatus harder to achieve;

the lack of a critical dialogue with art history and with the contemporary art territory;

And, finally, an insufficient investment in the relations with post-colonialism and, generally, with contemporary social movements.

In fact, for Geert Lovink, due to hundreds of millions of new World Wide Web and mobile phone users, the new media art has found difficulties in settling in the culture of digital ubiquity.

But Lev Manovich takes the problem even further. In his text “Art after Web 2.0”¹⁸ (2008), Manovich considers that both adversities and challenges are not restricted only to digital art but also affect all professional contemporary artistic practices. In this text, Manovich equates the role and future of art considering the media’s extreme democratization and the increasing tendency to consumption, commentary, sharing and remix of contents produced by non-professional users (amateurs).

Alerting for the danger in the acritical celebration of the user-generated content, Manovich states that “participation” cannot be considered as an intrinsic value being therefore essential taking into account the role and commercial interests that the industry of electronic equipment, of software and companies of social media have in this phenomenon¹⁹. Nevertheless, Manovich strongly emphasizes the innovative and creative potential of “participatory architecture” of networks and of the experience it convokes²⁰.

Also aware of an “aesthetics of participation”, Rudolf Frieeling, in his text “Toward Participation in Art”²¹ (2008), which integrates the catalog of the exhibition *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, of which he was curator, makes a careful analysis of participatory practices in contemporary art, rediscovering them within an artistic genealogy that took shape with the tightening of the relations between art, technology and media. Nevertheless, as Frieeling highlights, these liaisons were always problematic: “Since the introduction of technological systems into the arts, practitioners have voiced suspicion about the manufacturing of community and consent through art. Artists did not want to side with any technology that was spearheading

governmental or utilitarian operations. Thus, no genre called participatory art (as opposed to, say, video art) emerged from these early discussions of conceptual art and technology.”²²

Although not consolidated as an autonomous genre, experimentation with participation traverses the XXth century art, and has intensified since the end of the fifties on multidisciplinary practices as the Happenings, Expanded Cinema and Performance and on artistic movements like the New Realism, the Neo-Dada, the Fluxus, the Situationist International and the Brazilian Neo-Concrete²³ movement. As a matter of fact, the figure of “participation” as practice or postulate plays a fundamental role in the self-criticism of the art institution, in the questioning of the author’s figure, in the problematization of the category of the work of art, namely through the introduction of the concept of “open work”²⁴ by Umberto Eco in 1962, and in the dilution of frontiers between art, “life” and society, giving emphasis to the process, the quotidian and the communitarian²⁵.

“Participation”, states Maria Lind in “The Collaborative Turn”, “is more widely associated with the creation of a context in which participants can take part in something that someone else has created but where there are, nevertheless, opportunities to have an impact.”²⁶ Therefore, “participation” reflects in the opening of the work to those conditions, places and participants that actively contribute to its attainment. We can, therefore, point out a set of operations that define the “participatory act,” namely: inhabit, generate, change, contribute, dialogue, translate, appropriate, catalog. It’s about a poetics of encounter that should retain its agonistic and singular dimension even when it permeates global digital networks.

Actually, at this moment when MoMA catalogs the @ sign as an integral part of its collection, it seems vital to me that new media art plays a determinant role in the critical reflection about the phenomenon of participation in the information and communication networks and our relation with technical images and devices that mediate in a progressively ubiquitous, intimate and invisible form, the relation between ourselves and our relation with the world²⁷. In this way, digital art could not only deepen the dialogue with the field of contemporary art, contributing to embody a common project centered in participatory practices, but also intensify the connections to emerging social movements²⁸.

In times of crisis and social unrest, the future of new media art shall be played in its capacity of being implicated in the collective labor of the creation of new territories of encounter and also of critical debate and agonism. We need artistic activism, “affectivism,”²⁹ as Brian Holmes calls it, to elaborate, build, modulate, differentiate and extend new affective territories making them emerge intensively and in an untimely way from digital networks.

- 1 This paper has been financially supported by the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon under the umbrella of the Training Support Programme for Polytechnic Higher Education Teachers (PROTEC), run by the Direcção Geral do Ensino Superior/Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (General Board of Higher Education Teaching/Foundation for Science and Technology).
- 2 Paola Antonelli, "@ at MoMA", *Inside/Out: A MoMA/P.S.1 Blog*, March 22, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/22/at-moma (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 3 Paola Antonelli, "@ in Context: Criteria for an Acquisition", *Inside/Out: A MoMA/P.S.1 Blog*, March 24, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/24/in-context-criteria-for-an-acquisition (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 4 Paola Antonelli, "@ at MoMA", *Inside/Out: A MoMA/P.S.1 Blog*, March 22, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/22/at-moma (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 5 "Douglas Engelbart invented many of the defining features of the computer interfaces we work with each day, including the mouse, the window, and the word processor. He helped to establish the Internet, made the first serious investigations of computer-supported cooperative work, first demonstrated videoconferencing and mix text/graphic displays, created structured programming editors and used remote procedure calls in 1960s, and independently invented the hyperlink at the same time the idea has been hatched by Ted Nelson." Nick Montfort and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, "From Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework", in *The New Media Reader*, eds. Nick Montfort and Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 93.
- 6 It was as a reaction to the launching of the Soviet satellite Sputnik in 1957, that the American government created the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), which, as from 1962, came to be led by Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider, former Vice-President of Bolt Beranek & Newman, who would become one of the main mentors of the tightening of relations between ARPA and the academy, namely through the constitution of a computational network between universities - the ARPANET. Although Licklider abandoned ARPA in 1964, his conceived network was materialized under the leadership of Lawrence Roberts and strengthened by Douglas Engelbart's extraordinary creativity, a real pioneer in the creation of the personal computer as we know it.
- 7 Paola Antonelli, "@ at MoMA", *Inside/Out: A MoMA/P.S.1 Blog*, March 22, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/22/at-moma (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 8 As stressed by Rudolf Frieeling: "Although visual experimentation has had a long tradition in literature since Stéphane Mallarmé (a fact reflected by one of Dan Graham's earliest conceptual works, the *Schema* poem from 1966), it was Sol LeWitt who legitimized the linguistic formulation of an idea as artwork, triggering a whole series of art-by-instruction pieces. Lawrence Weiner, who, like Huebler, was among the artists promoted by the New York gallerist Seth Siegelaub, started his signature text-based work after one of his early outdoor sculptures was destroyed by the public. His insight was that the idea was enough for him, and he consequently ranked the idea higher than any actual realization." Rudolf Frieeling, "Toward Participation in Art", in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, ed. Rudolf Frieeling (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 41.
- 9 Paola Antonelli determines an analogy between the @ and the performance *Kiss* by Tino Sehgal: "Tino Sehgal's *Kiss* presents interesting affinities with @ in what it is mutable and open to interpretation (the different typefaces one can use) yet still remains the same in its essence: it does not declare itself a work of design, but rather reveals its design power through use; it is immaterial and synthetic, and therefore does not add unnecessary "weight" to the world. A big difference between the two pieces is the price, which brings to an extreme the evanescent difference between art and design. Being in the public realm, @ is free. It might be the only truly free—albeit not the only priceless—object in our collection. We have acquired the design act in itself and as we will feature it in different typefaces, we will note each time the specific typeface as if we were indicating the materials that a physical object is made of." Paola Antonelli, "@ at MoMA", *Inside/Out: A MoMA/P.S.1 Blog*, March 22, 2010, http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2010/03/22/at-moma (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 10 Tim O'Reilly, "What is Web 2.0: design patterns and business models for the next generation of software", *O'Reilly*, September 30, 2005, <http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html> (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 11 "(...) Many-to-many media confer a power on consumers that mass media never did: the power to create, publish, broadcast, and debate their own point of view. Newspaper, radio and television audiences were consumers, but Internet audiences were 'users' with powers of their own." Howard Rheingold, *Smart Mobs: The Next Social Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 197.
- 12 According to Henry Jenkins, the "culture of participation" is defined as a "culture in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content." Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 290. Establishing a distinction between "interactivity" (defined from technical properties of digital media) and "participation", Jenkins defines this last one as follows: "the forms of audience engagement that are shaped by cultural and social protocols rather than by technology itself." (Ibid.)

- 13 For an extensive development of the new media concept, see Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001).
- 14 Andreas Broeckmann, "Fragmentary Affinities. Art Beyond the Media", <http://www.mikro.in-berlin.de/wiki/tiki-index.php?page=Fragmentary+Affinities> (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 15 Andreas Broeckmann, "Deep Screen – Art in Digital Culture. An Introduction", <http://www.mikro.in-berlin.de/wiki/tiki-index.php?page=Deep+Screen> (Accessed June 16, 2010). Also published in Virose, e-zine vector b#20, June, 2008, http://www.virose.pt/vector/b_20/andreas.html (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Geert Lovink, "The Cool Obscure: Crisis of New Media Art", in *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 39-81.
- 18 Lev Manovich, "Art After Web 2.0", in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, ed. Rudolf Frieeling (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 66-79.
- 19 As Manovich states: "This leads to another question: given that a significant percentage of user-generated content either follows templates and conventions established by the professional entertainment industry or directly reuses professionally produced content (for instance, anime music videos), does this mean that people's identities and imagination are now even more firmly colonized by commercial media than in the twentieth century? In other words, is the replacement of the mass consumption of commercial culture by users' mass production of cultural objects a progressive development? Or does it merely constitute a further stage in the evolution of the culture industry?" Ibid., 70-71.
- 20 In the final paragraph of his text Manovich writes: "Perhaps, however, the most sophisticated forms of conceptual innovation may be linked to the development of Web 2.0 itself – namely, the new creative software tools (Web mashups, Firefox plugins, Facebook applications, etc.) designed by individuals and small collectives as well as large companies such as Google. Ultimately, social media's true challenge to art may not be the excellent cultural production of students and nonprofessionals that is now readily available online. It may lie in the very dynamics of Web 2.0 culture: its incessant innovation, energy, and unpredictability." Ibid., 78.
- 21 Rudolf Frieeling, "Toward Participation in Art", in *The Art of Participation: 1950 to Now*, ed. Rudolf Frieeling (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 32-49.
- 22 Ibid., p. 36.
- 23 Focusing on relational objects and the group therapy situations of Lygia Clark and the "creleisure" and the "parangolés" of Hélio Oiticica.
- 24 Umberto Eco, "The Poetics of the Open Work", in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press; London: Whitechapel, 2006), 20-40.
- 25 Presently, the figure of participation traverses critical discourse in contemporary art, namely in what concerns the contributors of authors like Nicolas Bourriaud (and his concept of "relational aesthetics"), Christian Kravagna (and his notion of "participatory art"), Grant Kester ("dialogical art"), among others. For further discussion of these concepts, see Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002); Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community + Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Christian Kravagna, "Working on the Community: Models of Participatory Practice", *Republicart*, http://republicart.net/disc/aap/kravagna01_en.htm (Accessed June 16, 2010).
- 26 Maria Lind, "The Collaborative Turn", in *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, eds. Johanna Billing, Maria Lind and Lars Nilsson (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 17.
- 27 Reminding the words of Vilém Flusser in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*: "It seems that what one is seeing while looking at technical images are not symbols in need of deciphering, but symptoms of the world they mean, and that we can see this meaning through them however indirectly. This apparent non-symbolic, 'objective' character of technical images has the observer looking at them as if they were not really images, but a kind of window on the world. He trusts them as he trusts his own eyes. If he criticizes them at all, he does so not as a critique of image, but as a critique of vision; his critique is not concerned with their production, but with the world 'as seen through' them. (...) The uncritical attitude is dangerous because the 'objectivity' of the technical image is a delusion. They are in truth images, and as such they are symbolical." Vilém Flusser, *Ensaio sobre a Fotografia: Para uma Filosofia da Técnica* (Lisbon: Relógio d'Água Editores, 1998), quoted in Geert Lovink, *Zero Comments: Blogging and Critical Internet Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 62-63.
- 28 Such as Maria Lind emphasizes in her text "The Collaborative Turn": "The longing for another type of society, based on sharing and cooperation, which has been forcefully expressed by the 'new media critique' since the mid-1990s carries on some of the pathos of the post-1968 'new social movements' when new means of communication began to be generally reasonable, even cheap to acquire. It has been said that movements around open source and open content have thereby created new production paradigms which counteract the type of mandatory collaboration and imposed self-organization that, for example, post-fordist working conditions often entail. These movements have at any rate produced

- a lively discourse on, and concrete practice of, various collaborative methods, for instance 'open space technology', which allows for a mild protocol for self-organization." Maria Lind, "The Collaborative Turn", in *Taking the Matter into Common Hands: On Contemporary Art and Collaborative Practices*, eds. Johanna Billing, Maria Lind and Lars Nilsson (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2007), 19.
- 29 Quoting Brian Holmes, in his "The Affectivist Manifesto": "The backdrop against which art now stands out is a particular state of society. What an installation, a performance, a concept or a mediated image can do is to mark a possible or real shift with respect to the laws, the customs, the measures, the mores, the technical and organizational devices that define how we must behave and how we may relate to each other at a given time and in a given place. What we look for in arts is a different way to live, a fresh chance of coexistence. How does that chance come to be? Expression unleashes affect, and affect is what touches. Presence, gesture and speech transform the quality of contact between people, they create both breaks and junctions; and the expressive techniques of art are able to multiply those immediate changes along a thousand pathways of the mind and the senses. An artistic event does not need an objective judge. You know it has happened when you can bring something else into existence in its wake. Artistic activism is affectivism, it opens up expanding territories." Brian Holmes, "The Affectivist Manifesto", *Continental Drift*, November 16, 2008, <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/11/16/the-affectivist-manifesto/>

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- . "Fragmentary Affinities. Art Beyond the Media", <http://www.mikro.in-berlin.de/wiki/tiki-index.php?page=Fragmentary+Affinities>. Previously published in *V Media_City_Seoul*, Seoul: Seoul Museum of Art, 2008.
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*This paper was translated from Portuguese into English by Helena Cordeiro.

LIVIA FLORES

**UNCUT | HOW TO MAKE
CINEMA WITHOUT FILM?**

VOL.1

He who desires, postulates (hallucinates).

Roland Barthes

I have little time. Fallen artists lose the right to access time. I run to the bookstore. I search for fissures through which I could escape from the filmless real that overwhelms me. I sniff Barthes as if I was looking for a drug able to throw open the gates before direct access to cinema without film. I'm in need of supplements.

(detail) Page of the book
O Neutro by Roland Barthes*



As a general rule, desire is always marketable: we don't do anything but sell, buy, exchange desires. The paradox of the desire for the Neutral, its absolute singularity, is that it is nonmarketable → People tell me: "You'll make a book with this course on the Neutral?" All other problems put aside (particularly problems of performance), my answer: No, the Neutral is the unmarketable. And I think of Bloy's words: "there is nothing perfectly beautiful except what is invisible and above all unbuyable."³⁷ → "Invisible"? I would say: "unsustainable" → We'll have to hold on to the unsustainable for thirteen weeks: after that, it will fade.

b. The Wirelike Sharpness of Mourning

*[As a general rule, desire is always marketable: we don't do anything but sell, buy, exchange desires. The paradox of the desire for the Neutral, it's absolute singularity, is that it is nonmarketable > People tell me: " You'll make a book with this course on the Neutral?" All other problems put aside (particularly problems of performance), my answer: No the Neutral is the unmarketable. And I think of Bloy's words: "there is nothing perfectly beautiful except what is invisible and above all unbuyable" > "Invisible"? I would say: 'unsustainable' > We'll have to hold on to the unsustainable for thirteen weeks: after that, it will fade.]

THE WIRELIKE SHARPNESS OF MOURNING (CUTTING INTERESTS ME)

Lucretius imagined thin pellicles that traveled from the surface of things toward our open eyes, printing on them the shapes of the images that appear to us in daytime as well as in dreams. In order for this to happen, it's necessary to be exposed to light, to live – this brief interval between birth and death.

The luminous information that impresses the sensitive surface of the film generates a standard image able to be indefinitely animated and reproduced. The device projects the shadows of that which one day was body and movement, reducing the singularities of a hesitant moment to a trace of light. In this operation, a spatial dimension is forever taken away. The film's incapacity to bring it back remits to a vital loss, and is mixed with the pain left in the trace of time.

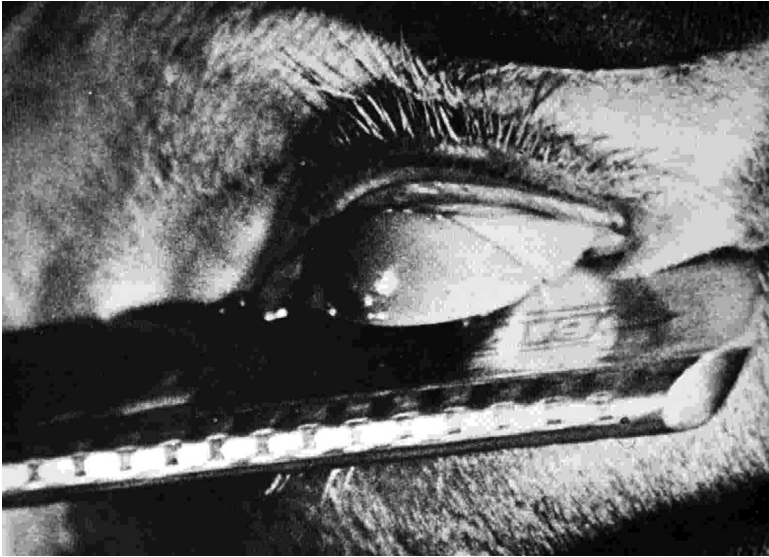
Zarathustra:

*Oh, ye sights and scenes of my youth! Oh,
all ye gleams of love, ye divine
fleeting gleams! How could ye perish so soon
for me! I think of you to-day as my dead
ones.¹*

Splitting, Gordon Matta-Clark, 1974



Photogram of the film *An Andalusian Dog*,
Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, 1928



Michael Snow:

Film has its own time; a time that annuls the time of the things being filmed. Filmed people seem to be victims of this time; they are taken by the film, in the same way that the real spectator is.²

Slice of time, slice of life. The naturalistic metaphor gains volume in theater, but also painting (Manet, Monet) and literature aim at the photographic cut. The roughness of the operation is amplified by the consistency of duration. But obviously nothing “begins” with the film.³ In order to be sliced, the imaginary

Pileus, http://tecnologia.uol.com.br/album/gadgets2010_album.htm?abrefoto=24*



*Pileus is the prototype of a high-tech umbrella developed by Sho Hashimoto and Takashi Matsumoto from the University of Keio, in Japan. The device is connected to the internet and carries a GPS, a camera, a digital compass, a movement sensor and a screen integrated to its surface. It's able to photograph and automatically share the images on Flickr, besides guiding the user through the streets with the help of maps. In order to not get lost, the user only needs to activate the right keys by turning the handle and look up. Access on May 9th 2010.

would have to be preceded by the decoupage of gestures and actions aimed at the manufacturing of an object of any kind – pins, for instance (see Adam Smith, much before the invention of cinema). The return would be the explosive potential of the unlimited possibility of permutation among the fragments.

Image = decoupage [cut out] time. Nietzsche was perhaps the first philosopher to face the problem of the cut that film (photography) imposes. He commissioned from the best photographer in Lucerne for his and Lou Salomé's images. Cinema arriving. The missed encounter between Nietzsche and cinema is staged by Julio Bressane in the final scenes of *Dias de Nietzsche em Turim* [Days of Nietzsche in Turin]⁴. It is better to call it a non-encounter, this slight touching of two destinies that follow their respective courses. Bressane inverts the flow by restituting a virtual duration to the lost spatial dimension. There are archive photographs animated by the minute movements of an embedded, completely passive, body: a cinematic/phantomatic body that hallucinates its very life, installed in the extreme mode of fatigue and waiting, an enclosure-body that, even

uninhabited, remains. There only a landscape is possible – the desert, this background of indifferences in which contradictions lose meaning and are dissolved. The pressure of the neutral.

Cutting is the essential operation in film. (At the same time, it is directed against the pellicle that separates us from our images, investing against it).

Strictly speaking, cutting is the first and only action that film evokes. To paste is always a plus, an extra roughness that is added on to the flat surface of the film, even if (in our eyes) it is naturalized by the edition, disappearing under the fluent and articulated effect of the whole. Once taken by images, film, like the spoken word, becomes irreversible, unable to be rectified unless by addition. Says Barthes:

*One cannot take back what was said, except by addition: in this case to correct is – strangely – to add. When I speak I cannot use an eraser, to wipe off, to cancel; all I can do is say ‘I cancel, I take back, I rectify’, that is, speak a bit more. Such quite singular cancellation by addition I will call ‘babbling’.*⁵

Cinematic life:

life speaks for itself, and is erased only once.

*Such single sequence shot in raw would be formed by an amazingly boring series of insignificant things and actions. That which happens during five minutes of my daily life if projected on a screen would become something absolutely devoid of any interest: absolutely irrelevant. In real life I don’t notice this because my body is alive, and those five minutes are five minutes of the vital soliloquy of reality with itself.*⁶

For Pasolini the relationship between cinema and the written language was equivalent to the relationship between life and a language spoken by all, with no exception. “Cinema in natura” and “natural semiology of reality”. Both concepts remit to living bodies that articulate gestures in a given space/time as if they were sounds of a language yet to be established in writing. In practice, nevertheless, the wish for a mirror-cinema able to directly capture the living language of all things is prevented by the issue of time – and the cut.

When we observe from afar the spectacle of functioning screens we are able to clearer perceive the spasmodic nature of the moving image. Each cut corresponds to an image, an interrupted flow, a “babbling”. The cut thus becomes the universal language of film. The rustle of language, says Barthes, implies a community of bodies; it’s the very sound of a plural enjoyment: it “produces a utopia”.⁷

But if cutting is a constitutive element of the cinematographic language, could it not equally be constitutive of cinema without film?

Insignificant in the spatial/temporal flow, the instant-duration produced (the cut) by film is the interchangeable material to be negotiated between reality and virtuality, past and future: a process of denaturalization of memory, an explicit fabulation. The reigning indetermination between meaning and insignificance can only be – in a provisory and facultative manner – decided from the moment when the film is projected on a space of collective reception.

For Barthes, with the exception of music, the unavoidable condition of all forms of art is the cut that “repels toward nothingness all that surrounds it”, sentencing to the deepest insignificance that which escapes the frame. In the logics of the so-called “dioptric arts”, that is, cinema, theater, painting and literature, an autonomous life is granted only to that which is illuminated by the Organon of Representation: “such Organon will have as its dual foundation the sovereignty of the act of cutting out [découpage] and the unity of the subject of that action”.⁸

What organon is activated by the dispersed subject of the frame, itself incessantly in a process of self-cutting and self-pasting? Is it still the same one, based on the presupposition of Representation, but already emptied, hyperbolically transfigured, annulling itself by excess?

On the other hand, it’s clear that cinema without film does not aspire to the condition of art (or an artist theory). An artist utopia, perhaps: the film inside each one’s mind, with no camera or projector, shareable at the same time. In this sense, while inventing for itself a mobile, discontinuous, erratic and unstable topology, the cinema without film could be a heterotopy. More precisely: a problem of pataphysics.

Missed Jarry, Duchamp’s father!

ALL OTHER PROBLEMS PUT ASIDE (PARTICULARLY PROBLEMS OF PERFORMANCE)

Gordon Matta-Clark:

Some of the next works I plan to do are definitively voyeuristic. To closely observe, to establish contact with the five hundred surrounding lives. I think voyeurism is a good space to drop into from time to time. Only I haven't done much lately because it takes tremendous devotion and patience. But like a ready-made one works to fill in the blanks, the uncompleted silent actions framed in windows. It needs constant attention, like an illicit form of meditation. Good eyesight. Keen sense of change... Well, you know, you have to choose the right place at the right time or it's all over.⁹

The problem raised in the passage from the voyeur to the filmmaker is production: film is the production of event, even if constituted by a single plane or image. Empire (Warhol), for instance. For the voyeur, a glance is enough. He is at the mercy of the image, impassible. The statute of the voyeur (as of the flâneur) is ambiguous. There are infinite nuances, everything in him is facultative, film, framing.

Deleuze/Guattari:

"How can a moment of the world be rendered durable or made to exist by itself?"¹⁰

The fragment of time impressed on film will always be displaced in relation to the instant when something was seen and began to be conceived as film. In the interval between the moment when the camera is activated and the moment when the key is released – whether by decision, hesitation or chance – what matters is that a fraction of time, with all that happened in it in an unrepeatable way is impressed as a blind and automatic writing on the sensitive surface. Some circumstances allow revisiting the regard already cast on an object. Others not: they take place as a single event. But in a film every repetition is a single event. To be able to repeat means to be able to build a scene, install it in an actual space-time. To blow a red balloon in a sunny day, release it and try to follow its movements through the limited frame of the visor, until it's gone.

To film is to see blindly – but to see is also to see blindly, and to read is another way of seeing blindly. We are all voyeurs, simultaneously filmmakers and readers – revoking (or not) Oiticica's statement: "Art voyeurs! The most worthless of all worthless things."¹¹

I ANSWER: NO, THE NEUTRAL IS THE UNMARKETABLE.

As a practical consequence of this work, now in its final phases, I resumed a previous idea, which is the production and projection of a film without pellicle, camera and projector, impracticable until today due to the lack of a sponsor. The projection will be the inversion of the normal cinematographic process, that is, to transform the spaces between the tracks of a railway in fixed photograms and projector (train) in movement.¹²

The absence of a sponsor for Paulo Bruscky's project Via Férrea Cine Percurso is paradoxical because it reinforces the absence, turning it superfluous. What matters is that beyond the absence is large field of poetic extraction that is opened by such impossibility.

Santos Dumont's epigraph at the top corner of the project's page reminds us that the process encompasses the traditional aesthetic categories of author, work and genre:

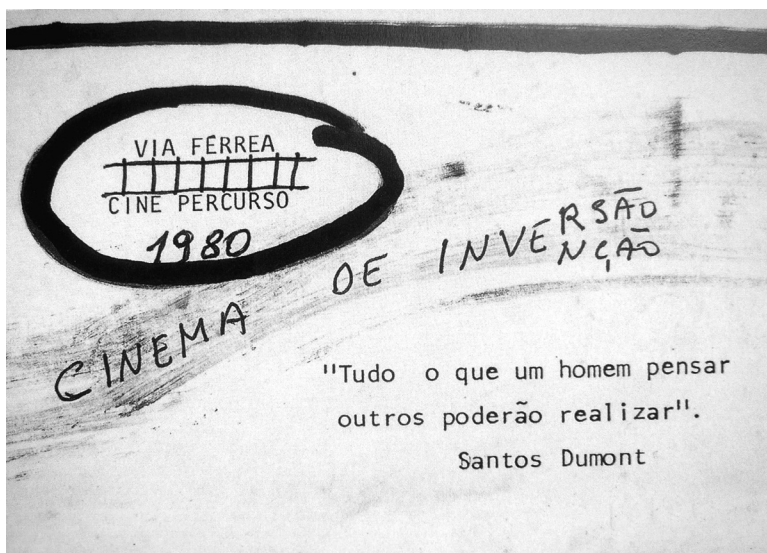
1. author: "others will be able to accomplish";
2. work: "everything that a man is able to think of";
3. genre: cinema of inversioninvention.

Cinema without film is cinema of adventure. (I, at the back of that movie theater, babbling)

So is This, Michael Snow:

This was handwritten then it was typeset then filmed and now it's light reading. Pause. This is a shot in the dark . This is a screen in the night. But look at the bright side of it: Sharing! When was the last time you and your neighbor read together? This is Communal reading! It's Group Lit! We could read aloud but let's not. Instead, let's join together in an optical cranial sing-song.¹³

(detail) Facsimile of the project *Via Férrea/
Cine Percurso*, Paulo Bruscky, 1980



Window Blowout, Gordon Matta-Clark, 1976



To increase spaces between words is not a sufficient resource to handle what happens on the screen: projected words, one after the other, carry with them the expanded time in which they are read. The film ends when the text finishes. The script or score is the film. "To read and to see So is This printed on paper or on the screen are two completely different experiences; each form of reading being able to produce different meanings"¹⁴. When he proposes to form a theory of reading, Barthes questions the very act of reading aiming "to try to grasp the form of all readings". He asks what it means to read, looking up from a book, not due to lack of interest, but due to an excess of associations. The chosen method of research remits to the act of filming: "Recalling the camera's first feats in decomposing a horse's trot, I too attempted to 'film' the reading of Sarrasine in slow motion (...) Then what is S/Z? Simply a text which we write in our head when we look up."¹⁵ Soon he concluded that a Science or a Semiology of Reading would be conceivable only while "a Science of the Inexhaustible, of infinite Displacement". To displace, to move: movies.

Frampton:

*the name means to move, thus the English term, movies, which means films. Brakhage: Cinema means something a bit different; it has the tendency, in everyday language, of keeping going and suggesting cinematographer, which means a writer of movement. I think that this kind of distinction, even if minute, was developed from its first seeds during 50 years and amounted to an extraordinary effect. Film is our word. This is how independent filmmakers are distinguished from the professional ones, who make movies. So, as a group, we are going after phantasms, although each one of us is continuously evolving, and we will reach a point when everything will be so transformed that the word film will no longer be used, or it will be replaced, and after 25 years it will no longer be.*¹⁶

Forty years after this conversation, first published in 1973, we indeed witness the replacement of film-pellicle by numerical forms of photography and cinema, and the very term film is becoming obsolete. Despite the unavoidable – and perhaps implicit – association, cinema without film is not presented as an allegory of the digital, but of a virtual interval, a non-register,

Photograms of the film *So is This*, Michael Snow, 1982



which escapes analogical confinement, forever placed between pairs of opposites: positive/negative, original/copy, real/imaginary.

In the dialogue with Hollis Frampton, Stan Brakhage indicates that the desire for phantasm is previous to the end he anticipates for film, as if such destinies were already inscribed in the very movement of the cinematographer: there is something in this device that, from the beginning, disassociates film and cinema – which is the original and perhaps sole condition for a cinema without film. Frampton: “The film strip is an elegant device for modulating standardized beams of energy. The phantom work itself transpires upon the screen as its notation is expended by a mechanical virtuoso performer, the projector.”¹⁷

When Brakhage claims the word film for himself and the group¹⁸ dedicated to explore the infinite possibilities of disjunction (the cut) of the cinematographic order and its principles and effects with straight implications in the profits and production of entertainment on an industrial scale. With this, cinema gained its own counter-paradigm. And this leads us back to the Neutral (and to the cinema without film), as the third term of a conflict through each one aims to annul the “implacable binarism of the paradigm”.

Barthes: “I define the Neutral as that which outplays (dépou) the paradigm, or rather I call Neutral everything that baffles the paradigm”. This statement allows us to take for a “walk” the cinema without film as Barthes did with the Neutral during thirteen weeks: “I read, the water-divining rod rises: there is Neutral underneath, and, for this very reason, the notion of the Neutral expands, inflects itself, modifies itself: I persist, and I transform myself at the same time.”¹⁹

Denaturalization of meaning, radical refusal of the necessity of choosing between two terms of a virtual opposition, actualizing one in detriment of the other: the Neutral, or better saying, that which Barthes gathers under this name by force of a “desire for the Neutral”, is everything but indifferent; on the contrary, it’s a “will-to-live” that repudiates the “will-to-possess”, but already separated from vitality. In Clarice Lispector, “to love the neutral” appears as an implacable enlargement, “self-life”.

Between these forms of desiring the neutral, incomparable in their singular complexities, there seems to be a common ground of resistance to meaning, whether departing from an absolute adherence to the real, whether as an ethical option for the “elsewhere of choice”. Barthes: “elliptically put: meaning rests on conflict

(the choice of one term against another), and all conflict is generative of meaning: to choose one and refuse the other is always a sacrifice made to meaning, to produce meaning, to offer it to be consumed.”²⁰ In Tony Smith, 1966, a sudden suspension of meaning lived in the experience of displacement reveals the conflict.

It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder marks, lines, railings or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes and colored lights. This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first, I didn't know what it was, but its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art. It seemed that there had been a reality there that had not had any expression in art.

The experience on the road was something mapped out but not socially recognized. I thought to myself, it ought to be clear that's the end of art. Most painting looks pretty pictorial after that. There is no way you can frame it, you just have to experience it....²¹

The narrative carries on with abandoned landing strips in Europe and a military training camp in Nüremberg. On the road under construction, the displacement between known places revealed an unknown territory. On the contrary, in the training camp and in the abandoned landing strips, the access to an unknown space actualizes a type of known architecture that is, above all, permeated by the imaginary of history – “large enough to accommodate two million people”. The spaces function as a triggering element of bifurcation in time. And vice-versa: irrupting the pellicle of the “real”. In this interval, that which is impossible to frame is perceived: the threshold of art.

Any time of cinema without film mobilizes spaces, operates open skies cuts.

Gordon Matta-Clark invents for himself the title of anarchist.

James Turrell, for a long time dedicated to architectural constructions inside the craters of volcanoes so that we could observe the bottomless firmament, says: “My art is made of what you see”.²²

(detail) Page of the book *A Paixão Segundo G.H.*,
Clarice Lispector / [The Passion according to G.H.]

O DIVINO para mim é o real.

Mas beijar um leproso não é bondade sequer. É auto-realidade, é autovida — mesmo que isso também signifique a salvação do leproso. Mas é antes a própria salvação. O benefício maior do santo é para com ele mesmo, o que não importa: pois quando ele atinge a grande própria largueza, milhares de pessoas ficam alargadas pela sua largueza e dela vivem, e ele ama tanto os outros assim como ama o seu próprio terrível alargamento, ele ama seu alargamento com impiedade por si mesmo. O santo quer se purificar porque sente a necessidade de amar o neutro? de amar o que não é acréscimo, e de prescindir do bom e do bonito. A grande bondade do santo — é que para ele tudo é igual. O santo se queima até chegar ao amor do neutro. Ele precisa disso para ele próprio.

[For me, Divinity is the Real.

But to kiss a leper is not even goodness. It's self-reality, it's self-life — even if this also means the leper's salvation. It's rather salvation itself. The beneficiary of sainthood is the saint himself, but this doesn't matter: when he reaches his own greatness, thousands of people are uplifted by his greatness and live from it, and he loves others as much he loves his own terrifying greatness, he loves his greatness being implacable with himself. Does the saint need to purify himself because he feels the need to love the neutral? To love that which is not addition and to give up whether is good and beautiful. The greatest goodness of the saint — is that for him everything is the same. The saint burns until reaching the love of the neutral. He needs it for himself.]

“INVISIBLE?” I WOULD SAY: “UNSUSTAINABLE”

– Finally liberated by a breach in the volcano’s smoke, I’m happy to be here today, still in time to practice the good old art of non-necessity in the occasion of these **UNNEEDED CONVERSATIONS**. The expectative hasten a conclusion: the thought of cut in that which is without cut, the (redeeming) action of cut in the **UNCUT**, immediately inspired by the terror of remaining in a land where my wish was to fly. The threat of having to revoke that which is already on hold (the cut), to restore the continuous (without cut) and all the predictable actions seen as a trailer in the moment when they tell me: the flight was cancelled, go back home. The unpredictable, as we know, is impossible to be thought of in advance (even though I want to learn how to pronounce the volcano’s name).

At first I noticed a happy coincidence of negative forms in the association between the without film and the without cut that allow us to think of effects of the non-being, small conspiracies in gestation, singular becoming in that which is about to no longer be, at last.

Everything that becomes absolutely obsolete for us: the film. That’s because all these words, with all their urgency, that remove from film, from cut and from necessity, seem to beckon with tender tributes to Gorgias and his treatise on the non-being. Since the Greeks we understand the process of human fabrication as poetics that grants existence to something that was until then absent in the world. But what happens when this direction is inverted and something works toward no longer being? This leads us to different poetics of negation.

Let’s salute the Muses, then, who in their words keep the power of maintaining the world. Like good daughters of Mnemosyne (memory), they are the ones who decide – singing or silencing as they please – what will be brought to presence and what will rest in forgetfulness.

“We know how to tell many lies that resemble facts, and we know, if we wish, to bring up revelations”²³, they say through the lips – the lips of the poet Hesiod – that invoked them.

: AFTER THAT, IT WILL FADE

After all, how is it possible, between the books lying on the table, not to see the evident sign of a cut on the hands of the pleasant Canadian lumberman?

Cover of the book *Des écrits 1958-2001*, Michael Snow.



ENDNOTES

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- 2 Michael Snow. "Convergence sur la Région centrale: Michael Snow en conversation avec Charlotte Townsend" in *Des Écrits 1958-2001*. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts, 2002 : 51.
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- 8 Roland Barthes. "Diderot, Brecht, Eisenstein" in *O Óbvio e o obtuso*. Lisbon: Edições 70, 2009: 92/ [*Image, Music, Text*]
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- 10 Gilles Deleuze; Felix Guattari. *O que é a Filosofia?* Rio de Janeiro: Ed. 34, 1992: 223 [*What is Philosophy*]
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- 17 Hollis Frampton. *For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplaces Notes and Hypotheses* in <http://hollisframpton.org.uk/links.htm>
- 18 Para Warhol, Frampton, Snow, Brakhage, Smithson and many other artists who during the decades of 1960 and 1970 moved between the white cube and the black box, taking part of minimalism, the sculpture in an expanded field and pop art as well as Fluxus, Cage's conception of music and happening, the word film remits to an escape that cinema generates in relation to itself.
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- 20 *idem*:17
- 21 Tony Smith: Michael Fried. "Arte e Objetividade"[*Art and Objecthood*]. Translated by Milton Machado. In *Arte&Ensaíos* 9. Rio de Janeiro. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Artes Visuais / Escola de Belas Artes. UFRJ, 2002.
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ERIC KLUITENBERG

**ON THE ART OF
IMAGINARY MEDIA**

VOL. 1

I want media with gigabytes of imagination, instead of memory.

Peter Blegvad - *On Imaginary media*

INTRODUCTION

Imaginary Media are machines that mediate impossible desires. The concept of Imaginary Media was originally developed in preparation for the mini-festival "*An Archaeology of Imaginary Media*", which was held at De Balie, centre for culture and politics in Amsterdam, February 5 - 8 in 2004. Discussions about the possible meaning of the term started, however, as early as 1999, following a presentation by the Finish media theoretician and curator Erkki Huhtamo in Amsterdam, where I first suggested the idea to him.

Together with Siegfried Zielinski, Huhtamo can be credited as the co-originator of the highly productive field of media history and theory generally referred to as "Media Archaeology". In the archaeological approach to the study of media the apparatus is given a prominent position as a material substrate for the writing of the histories and theories of the media. At first sight this seems to offer a firm grounding for these writings, a 'matter-of-fact-ness' as it were, where the indisputable material evidence of human endeavours to build proficient communication devices suggests a safe anchoring point. However, media archaeologists do not only collect the machines, the apparatuses, themselves. They are also fascinated by what is written about these apparatuses, by the manufactures, their advertisements, manuals, patent applications, technical notes, but also visions of future — to build media machines. With equal interest the media archaeologists regard the ways in which these media machines, once produced, are received by society, how they are reviewed, how people comment on them, what can be found as testimonies to kitchen table and coffee-house conversations about these machines - depictions, cartoons, reveries, mockeries, first and second hand accounts, statements of fascination, disgust, or boredom...

Huhtamo is an incessant collector. He collects media machines, advertisements, obscure media productions, documentations - preferably of long forgotten media machines, lost histories and legacies of outmoded and outdated media genres. Watching him, as I did at his presentation in 1999, demonstrating

his seemingly inexhaustible archive of in that instance the 'archaeology of interactivity' in that instance, increasingly these 'interactive' media seemed to lose their matter-of-factness. Instead they became dreamlike objects of wonder and desire. But for what exactly? That remained as yet unclear.

I had already been thinking extensively about the mythological character of technology. Particularly in the Western frame, where from the thirteenth century onwards the most advanced machineries of each era had been adorned with almost divine significance. Or, in its more secular guise, where these machineries had come to replace the mechanics of the divine altogether. Yet somehow they seemed to have retained their mythical character. Technology (machines) seen in this light could be understood as a combination of image and idea. Its actual material realisation seemed to matter less here than the imagination that produced the machine. From this perspective the terms 'imaginary media', or 'imaginary machines' seemed to suggest themselves quite naturally. But what this meant exactly, what it entailed, was unclear (to me at least).

There can be many different types of imaginary machines, teleportation pods, time machines, thought projectors, electronic voice apparatuses, space ships, flying broomsticks. Literature, popular fiction, and cinema are crowded with them. The first limitation we imposed on the project was to restrict our focus to imaginary media, rather than more generic category of imaginary machines, by tying the analysis closely to the process of human communication, and only then to let it fly. What fascinated me in particular was the idea that machines were considered able to reshape human communication and overcome its inherent deficiencies. Imaginary media seemed to be compensatory apparatuses for all these all too human deficiencies, in particular the trappings of interpersonal communication (which is a curious expectation to be placed on a machine). However as an adjunct to communication, like human relationships, the machines themselves are vulnerable and frail, inadequate, more often than not failing to achieve tasks set out for them by their makers and users.

Thus, in the archaeology of imaginary media we tried to 'excavate' mankind's dreams of the ultimate communication medium. These archaeological explorations focused on the imaginations of media as they have been expressed in stories, drawings, prints, films, songs, advertisements, or quasi-philosophical imaginaries. They deal not so much with realised media as with potential or

possible media: dreamed media, fantasised media: visions of how human communication can be reshaped by means of machines.

We can already find traces of the ephemeral in the earliest writings that underpinned the emerging field of Media Archaeology, and it was to these writings that I wanted to address my questions about imaginary media. In 1996 two essays by Erkki Huhtamo¹ and Siegfried Zielinski² appeared that tried to delineate the archaeological approach to media history and theory more clearly. In the extensive explorations of artistic expressions and cultural histories in these essays both Zielinski and Huhtamo indicate this rather more poetic moment in the (un)writing of technological history.

Thus, in the archaeology of imaginary media we wanted to shift attention away at first from the apparatus, and redirect it more explicitly to the imagination of the technological - only to return to the apparatus after going through this exercise. Such a simple reversal of perspective from machine to imagination soon proved insufficient to account for the wondrous complexities we found ourselves immersed. Tracing the imaginations of the ultimate communications medium across a wide range of different cultural and historical settings required a more diversified approach. Particularly, as it is not just imagination that shapes the actual realisation of media machines and apparatuses, but the actually realised machines also spur the imagination greatly, adding extra layers of complexity. Quite often the actual machines transcend that which could have been imagined before they had appeared. Such a realisation of the previously unthinkable reinforces the almost divine (or diabolic) status of 'the machine' in popular reception.

Even more so, it became apparent that certain constellations could only be explained as an interaction of imagination and realisation of particular media machines - while these machines did at times create new connections between people across space and time, much of what was left out in the 'mediation' was filled in by the imagination. The boundary between the imagined and the realised in media turned out to be much more blurred than anticipated. Imagination and realisation continuously weave in and out of each other in the development of (media) technology. This opens up a complex field of enquiry and signification, but also a highly productive field for artistic and engineering experimentation, where in fact both forms of creative activity turned out to be much closer than they are usually considered to be.

Increasingly lost in this exploration, but very much with a deep sensation of relief, was the purported matter-of-fact-ness of media/machines. To be able to move further successfully in this direction - blending the imagined and the realised - it was clear that we needed to articulate a new kind of subjectivity with regards to these ephemeral machines. Something that Zielinski had also emphatically called for in his Media Archaeology essay, and which still informs his work today. We needed to discover and uncover the art of imaginary media.

IMAGINED, REMEMBERED, OBSERVED - PETER BLEGVAD

Peter Blegvad is an incredibly productive artistic polyglot. In the course of working with him on the Imaginary Media project has also become a dear friend (Siegfried Zielinski emphasises the importance of the 'economy of friendship' in these kinds of creative development processes). Versed in illustration, a recognised innovator of the cartoon-genre, a gifted producer of radio plays ('eartoons'), writer, poet, and world renown singer/songwriter, Blegvad brought exactly the kind of multilayered perspective and sensibility to our explorations that the art of imaginary media requires.

Blegvad developed a highly original method of comparative drawing early on in his career as a illustrator and cartoonist, something he was professionally trained for. Building on his method of drawing objects as he imagined, then observed, and finally remembered them gave us the possibility to investigate how imagination, observation and memory informed one another, by separating them out first and then compare results. Blegvad comments on his method:

I began doing comparative drawings of subjects Imagined, Observed & Remembered, in 1977 in New York City, pursuing a line of enquiry which grew out of my first commissions as an illustrator and my struggle to evolve a style suitable for that genre. At work, I was often required to depict things which I could not, without recourse to a model, render 'realistically', but for which I could usually invent recognisable hieroglyphs (as a cartoon is a hieroglyph) by basing these on an eidetic

approximation of the particular item which I could “see” with that undetectable organ, the ‘mind’s eye’. In my immaturity, I sometimes experienced a kind of vertigo when drawing, for a client, things purely as I imagined or remembered them to be. Would a picture of the idiosyncratic eidolon or phantom in my imagination be legible to the public as a sign for the thing intended? I doubted it. Often I destroyed the unity of my illustrations by populating, for instance, a stylized cartoon with items (the ‘props’ of the scene) which I’d copied in an academic manner from life or from photographs in my compulsion to ‘get them right’. Primarily as therapy, therefore, I began drawing sundry items thrice - first as I imagined them to be, then as I actually observed them to be, and lastly, after a suitable interval, as I remembered them to have been. I accorded no less a degree of ‘reality’ to the item as it appeared to my imagination or memory than to the item as it appeared to what Blake called the ‘vegetative organs’ of sight.³

Blegvad also proposed a series of imaginary media, which included a thought projector (after Nikolas Tesla), a God detector (a device to register the presence of the divine in living beings), a walkie-talkie to talk to the dead that was used by his comic strip character Leviathan, a baby without a face, a being endowed with unspoiled vision, a tabula rasa. Leviathan uses the walkie-talkie basically only for ‘spooking’ the dead in a rather harmless way, by shouting “*Booh!*” into the device. And finally, Leviathan also uses Prayer Flippers to increase the range and efficiency of his prayers, and a modern ‘mudra’ (a hand position adapted from Hindu and Buddhist ritual as a means to express the cosmological order and connect with the divine) used by him as a device-less mobile communication means to talk directly to God.

One particularly enigmatic medium, the ‘Angel Trap’, was used by Blegvad as a writing adjunct - a displacement activity to put at bay his insecurities about the lyrics he was writing for fellow musician John Greaves. In an interview with The Believer magazine Blegvad explains:

..it ties in with my interest in mental images, and my love of Cocteau’s film *Orphée*, in which Jean Marais takes dictation from the radio in Death’s Rolls-Royce: “A single glass of water lights the world.”

BLVR:

Do you share that Orphic sense of being
a conduit for “your” writing?

PB:

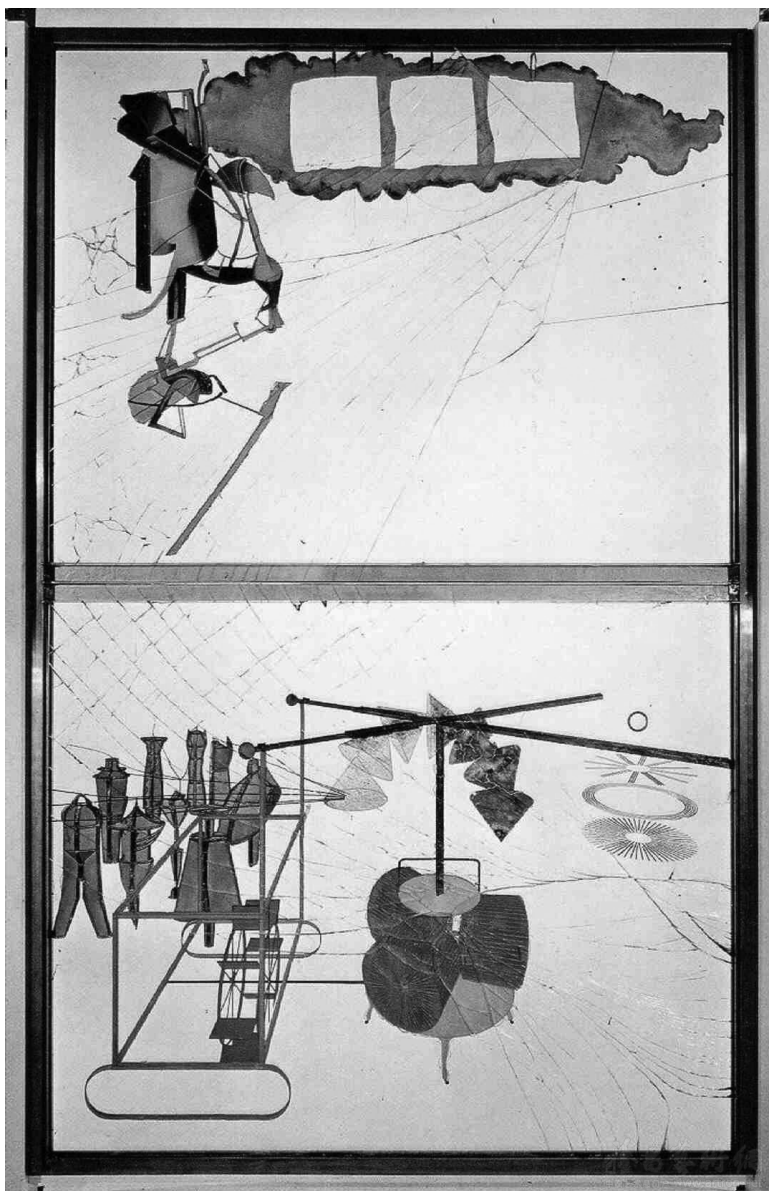
*I’m not a visionary, but I’ve spent half my life drawing things
Imagined, Remembered, and Observed, comparing the differ-
ences between them, and my study confirms that “the differ-
ence between night and day / is not as great as people say.”
We’re dreaming all the time. When I was writing lyrics for
John Greaves back in the ’70s and ’80s, I didn’t want to take
responsibility for what I wrote, so out of insecurity and bore-
dom I developed an elaborate form of displacement activity, a
self-estranging technique, creating what I called “angel trap
stationery”—paper painted with symbols and impregnated
with scents designed to attract various powers and domin-
ions of the air to aid me in the act of composition. I wanted to
be dictated to, like my poetic heroes—Yeats, Rilke, Cocteau,
Jack Spicer. It worked, in a sort of tongue-in-cheek way.”¹⁴*

DUCHAMP’S LARGE GLASS

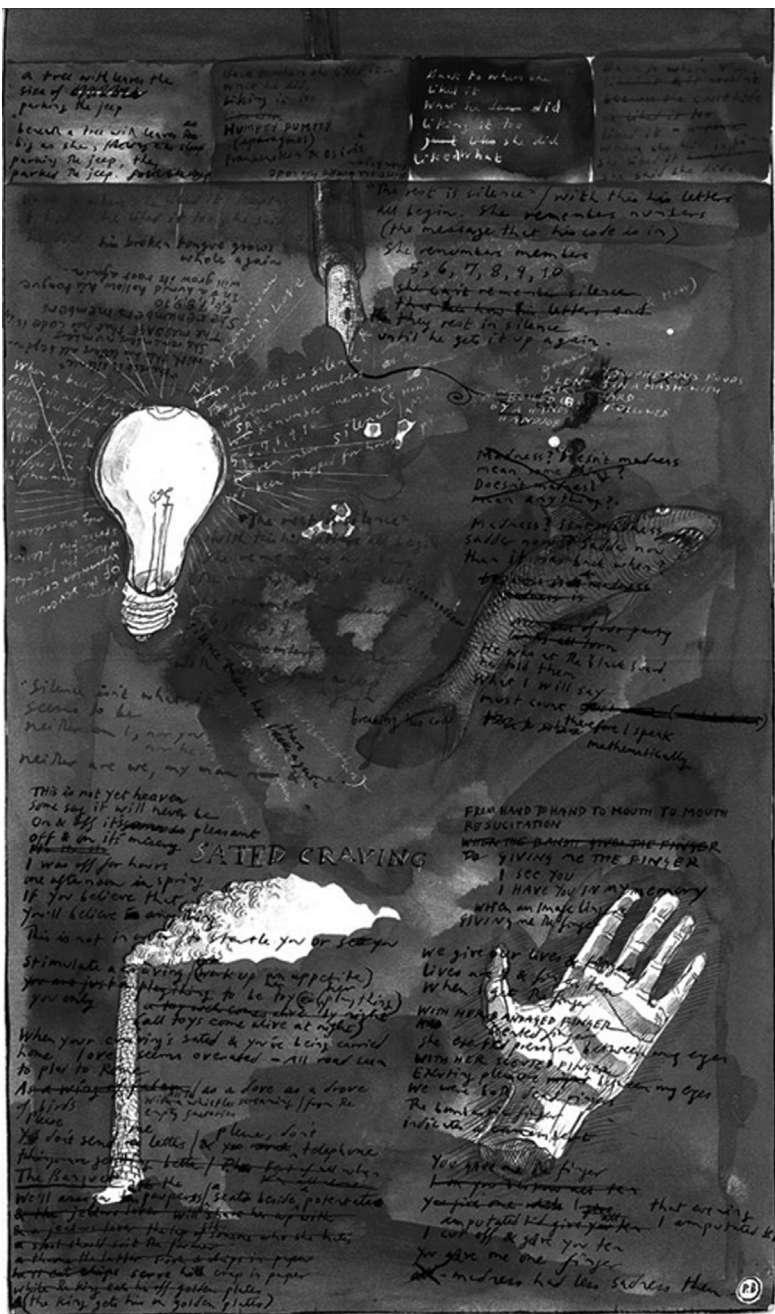
Imaginary Media pervade the histories of the Avant-Garde. One of its most elaborate and bizarre manifestations is the Bachelor Machine (‘machine célibataire’), recognised as a specific composition of natural and mechanical elements by literary theorist Michel Carrouges in the 1950s. Marcel Duchamp created its most comprehensive model with the construction of the Large Glass, *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even*, on which he worked between 1915 and 1923 (and that was ultimately left unfinished).

In Carrouges’ conception the bachelor machine is an imaginary apparatus in which the male and female principle are doubled by a mechanical analogue that places itself between man and woman (as a mechanical medium - a connection machine). The bachelor machine transforms the act of love making from a principle of life into a harbinger of estrangement, delusion, destruction, and ultimately death. This imaginary apparatus can be interpreted as a reflection on the relentless nature of biological mechanics and forces (drives) disrupting the socialised attempts at bringing unity (family) and harmony (love) to male <> female interaction.

Marcel Duchamp, *The Bride Stripped Bare
by her Bachelors, Even*, 1915 - 1923.



Peter Blegvad, *Angel Trap (Blue)*, 1977. Ink and water-colour impregnated with Suze (liquor made from blue gentian).



In Duchamp's emblematic work the essentially estranged relationship between the males (the bachelors in the lower realm of the picture) and the female (the bride machine in the upper realm), is emphasised by the fact that these creatures inhabit entirely different dimensions. The bride, we read in Duchamp's notes, is a 'love machine running on love gasoline', and is a four-dimensional creature, while the bachelors are three-dimensional beings, tied to the earth and mortal existence. The bride tempts the bachelors continuously with her long tentacle to keep their 'love machinery' running so as to produce the love gasoline she depends on. The love gasoline produced by the bachelors passes through a series of alchemist purification sieves that allow for the transcendence to the bride's domain. This dimension-shift is denied to the bachelors - leaving them behind, trapped in their frustrated desiring machineries.

While Duchamp's grand tableau of the machineries of frustration can at one level be read as a sarcastic comment on bourgeois conceptions of love and family life, a mockery, it is clearly arranged as an imaginary contraption, an allegory of impossible desire. How strange then that this exact machinery has retroactively come alive, and been available for many years, in the countless phone-sex services in operation all over the planet. Duchamp's large glass in retrospect reads as an all too perfect description of all the elements of this telematic bachelor machine: the tentacles of the telematic brides (advertisements producing elicited desires), the mortal bachelors tied to their embodied (three-dimensional) realm, the bride's dependence on the production of the bachelor's love gasoline, purified through the phone-bill transaction system, allowing it to transcend the domain of the imaginary bride - a bride that only exist in the disembodied realm of electromagnetic waves.

In the end these contemporary 'bachelors' do not interact with the actual woman enacting the desired bride, but only with her imaginary electromagnetic and mediated projection. The system does not produce love, unity and family life since the bachelor's bodily desires cannot be consummated with an imaginary telematic bride. Thus this frustration machine is only able to produce delusions, frustrated desires, out of control phone bills, divorce, and possibly even suicide.

SPECTRAL CINEMA - ZOE BELOFF

The ultimate desire fuelling the construction of imaginary media is to transcend the eternal divide between the living and the dead. Like Blegvad's orphic radio-receiver countless of such transcendental media have been imagined (but none proven to work), including Thomas Edison's never realised radio receiver for the musings of the souls of departed trapped in the earth's magnetosphere, the extensive Electronic Voice Phenomena movement and its preferred idiosyncratic apparatuses. Of course there is also a rich history of mystic living mediums that can conjure up the souls of the deceased (the seance) and act as a conduit for their unresolved thoughts and feelings.

Filmmaker Zoe Beloff, originally from Edinburgh, now based in New York, has become particularly fascinated by the often tragic histories of young female mediums who became well-known public figures in the late 19th and early



20th century. Her work investigates a space where technology intersects with unconscious desire, as she puts it: *"I am inspired by case histories of mediums and mad women from a hundred years ago. Their apparitions and hallucinations open up new ways of conceptualizing the moving image."*⁵

Beloff has in particular been investigating the genre of spirit photography, where the emanations of the medium, often in state of trance, are captured visually. In these photographic records we see absurd staged scenes with obvious cardboard props acting as the apparition of the ghost of deceased love ones and family members. But these photographic devices play a remarkably ambiguous role in capturing the action. New optical devices, such as the stereoscope were brought to bear on the ghost apparition phenomenon so as to produce scientific proof of their fabricated nature and unmask the deception of the eye.

But in doing so, Beloff notes they served, partly inadvertently to create a wider public visibility of the apparitions as well as the mediums acting as their 'conduit', turning them into public personas. beloff: *"these devices were quite contradictory, while purporting to unmask apparitions they actually encouraged seeing them. This was certainly true of the stereoscope invented by David Brewster with the explicit purpose of showing how the eye could be deceived. (6) Ghosts were everywhere in popular culture."*

A further curious aspect of this cult of young female mediums was the extreme excitement and ecstasy pervading these photographs. Often these mediums would appear partly undressed, the ghost apparitions seemingly emanating from their young bodies, abundant with life and filled with sexual energy. Even more so there is a strong queer sexual energy, and from autobiographical sources Beloff found that this was coupled with illicit queer sexual relationships. None of which were ever commented upon publicly despite their wide public reception.

Beloff brings this curious mixture of transcendence, optical technologies and illicit sexual energy back to life in her films, installations and art works on the subject, reflecting on a time in which again a plethora of new visual and media technologies flood the public imagination.

DEAD MEDIA REVIVED: GEBHARD SENGMÜLLER'S VINYLVIDEO™

Dead Media are media remembered (or forgotten) - they no longer exist, or perhaps only as museum specimens. They used to exist and in that sense they are not imaginary. The writer Bruce Sterling had proposed the category, and for many years collected documentation of deceased and largely forgotten media technologies. Sterling observed that media were dying at an exponential rate with the introduction of digital technology.

Interestingly, the Austrian artist Gebhard Sengmüller attempted to reverse this trend by retroactively imbuing an almost dead medium, the vinyl record with new mediatic capabilities - the encoding and playback of video images - thus called *VinylVideo™*.

Sengmüller:

VinylVideo™ is a new, wondrous and fascinating development in the history of audio-visual media. For the first time in the history of technological invention, VinylVideo™ makes possible the storage of video (moving image plus sound) on analog long-play records. Playback from the VinylVideo™ picture disk is made possible with the VinylVideo™ Unit which consists of a normal turntable, a special conversion box (aka the VinylVideo™ Home Kit) and a television.

In it's combination of analog and digital elements VinylVideo™ is a relic of fake media archeology. At the same time, VinylVideo™ is a vision of new live video mixing possibilities. By simply placing the tone arm at different points on the record, VinylVideo™ makes possible a random access manipulation of the time axis. With the extremely reduced picture and sound quality, a new mode of audio-visual perception evolves. In this way, VinylVideo™ reconstructs a home movie medium as a missing link in the history of recorded moving images while simultaneously encompassing contemporary forms of DJ-ing and VJ-ing.⁶

Dead Media can best be regarded as inverse imaginary media. When a certain lineage of media development is broken off, a certain potential remains - that which might have been has continued this particular lineage of media/technological development. This



realm of potentialities is an imaginary realm, usually left untapped. Sengmüller filled in this unexplored potential, not without a decided sense of humour, with his anachronistic apparatus, which articulates a theoretically infinite space of other potentialities.

SUN RA AND THE QUEST FOR DELIVERANCE IN OUTER SPACE

Life on planet Earth is often uncomfortable and sometimes defined by intense suffering without hope of escape. The colonial legacy of the slave trade and slave labour persists in the Western World, primarily embodied in displaced 'communities' of the descendants of former slave labourers. With their ancestors violently abducted from their native soil, often sold into bondage, after the abolishment of slavery the descendants remain alienated in a foreign culture and context. After several generations growing up in 'otherness' they remain displaced in a post-colonial vacuum. Return to the mother land is impossible, grand failures such as the Black Star Liner testify to this impossibility,

Sun Ra - Card Game.



but the context in the Western World, uncomfortable pigeonholing such as 'black culture', 'Afro-Americans' only bear witness to a marginalised existence within the wider societal frame.

The process of emancipation, of assimilation, of 'integration' is fraught with contradiction and controversy. Should the colonial legacy be headed or discarded, assimilated or forgotten? Should cultural heterogeneity be cherished or overcome? Do we enter into a new globalised meta-culture, or should we preserve our roots? None of these and many other questions are resolved and will clearly accompany us for a long time to come.

A variety of writers have understood that the recurrent motive of the Mother Ship in black science fiction, popular culture, but also in obscure sects such as the Black Nation of Islam, attempt to short-circuit this dreary, painful and difficult debate by searching for deliverance in outer-space. If existence here and now is defined by alienation and return to the motherland is impossible because it is no longer a home to generations who have grown up outside of it, then the future of black culture is the deliverance from alienation ('alien nation') to a new world, somewhere out there in the infinity of outer space, and the Mother Ship is the (imaginary) medium of deliverance.

The most beautiful and moving statement on this recurring desire

for the impossible can be found in an interview with musician and composer Sun Ra, who reflects on his 'return' to outer space: *"I've been there [in Space] before, it would be like going home. This is not my home. This planet, to me, is like a railroad station; people are here today and gone tomorrow. It's not really home to anybody, it wasn't made to be home to anybody, it's like a big university that people sit in to learn how to be punished if they so choose. There are too many jails on this planet, too many destructive forces, but I can stop all that if maybe some government would help me..."*⁷

ENDNOTES

- 1 Erkki Huhtamo, *From Kaleidoscomania to Cybernerd, in Electronic Culture - Technology and Visual Representation*, ed. Timothy Druckrey (New York: Aperture, 1996) pp. 302-303.
- 2 Siegfried Zielinski, *Media Archaeology, in: Ctheory Special Issues: ga111*, date published: 7/11/1996 - www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=42
- 3 www.amateur.org.uk/lor/lor.htm
- 4 Peter Blegvad interviewed in *The Believer Magazine, The Art Issue*, November / December 2009. www.believermag.com/issues/200911/?read=interview_blegvad
- 5 Zoe Beloff, *Towards a Spectral Cinema, in: Eric Kluitenberg (ed.) Book of Imaginary Media*, NAI Publishers / De Balie, Amsterdam, 2006, pp. 214 - 239.
- 6 www.gebseng.com/03_vinylvideo
- 7 'The Man from Outer Space' A Discussion with Sun Ra, by Robert Franza on WUSB-FM and published in the *Stony Brook Press, Vol. 10 No. 9*, 1989.

CHRISTOPH KORN

I SPEAK

VOL.1

I speak this text. It is recorded on a storage medium using a microphone. Thereafter the recorded text is placed for 15 minutes in a repetitive loop, and within this time it is erased successively bit by bit. For this purpose, a software-based machine has been programmed, which chooses and deletes certain parts of the audio recording using an aleatory procedure. This automatic process is used to avoid any sort of compositional interest, and to direct one's attention completely toward the process itself. The sound of my voice. Der Klang meiner Stimme.

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ANTÓNIO OLAIO

**WHAT YOU GET IS
WHAT YOU NEED**

VOL.1

The title “Unneeded Conversations” made me wonder about the meaning of “need”, and mostly its meaning when we talk about art.

I believe, where art is concerned, that you need what you get, that what you need is what you get. I believe that the aim of art is not desire at all but a kind of sweet resignation. To make art is to explore the wonders of resignation. And it can be even more fascinating if you feel the need to add a spice of irony. Then, it may taste even better.

Like in the Rolling Stones’ song when Mick Jagger sings: *You can’t always get what you want / But if you try sometimes you might find you get what you need.*

But here I dare to be even more radical than Mick Jagger. In the relationship between art and reality, art shows reality rather than trying to change it. Of course, in the process of making the complexity of reality visible, synthesizing aspects of reality or realities, art creates new images. However, I don’t believe they correspond to a wish, they don’t necessarily correspond to the way we wanted reality to be and not even the way we wished reality looked like.

When talking about the relationship between reality and need, we can say that if reality is miserable and sad, it needs what it takes to be miserable and sad. Art is nothing more than acknowledgement, albeit sophisticated. This sophistication relies mostly on what is acknowledged and the way we artists do it is surely part of this acknowledgement, and not only a kind of ornament to artistic speech.

In this “Unneeded Conversations” I was asked to talk about my work as an artist.

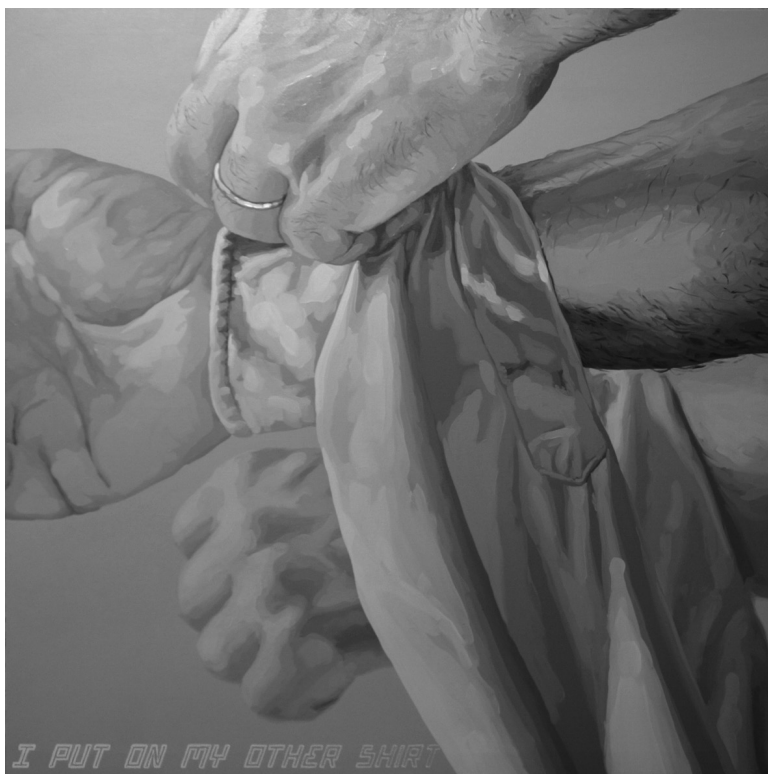
Here I am writing a text not only concerned with my own work, but also concerned with what might be interesting about my work in a reflection on the art practice as a whole.

So, here it goes:

In my early performances in the eighties, I danced wearing nothing more than slips and socks. I had a palette in each hand as a kind of obvious relationship to art, to painting, painting as the most efficient short cut when you want everyone to think that this is about art.

And there I was, dancing in the same place, moving without moving, my legs and arms moving up and down in wavy, circular, movements, but never leaving the same spot.





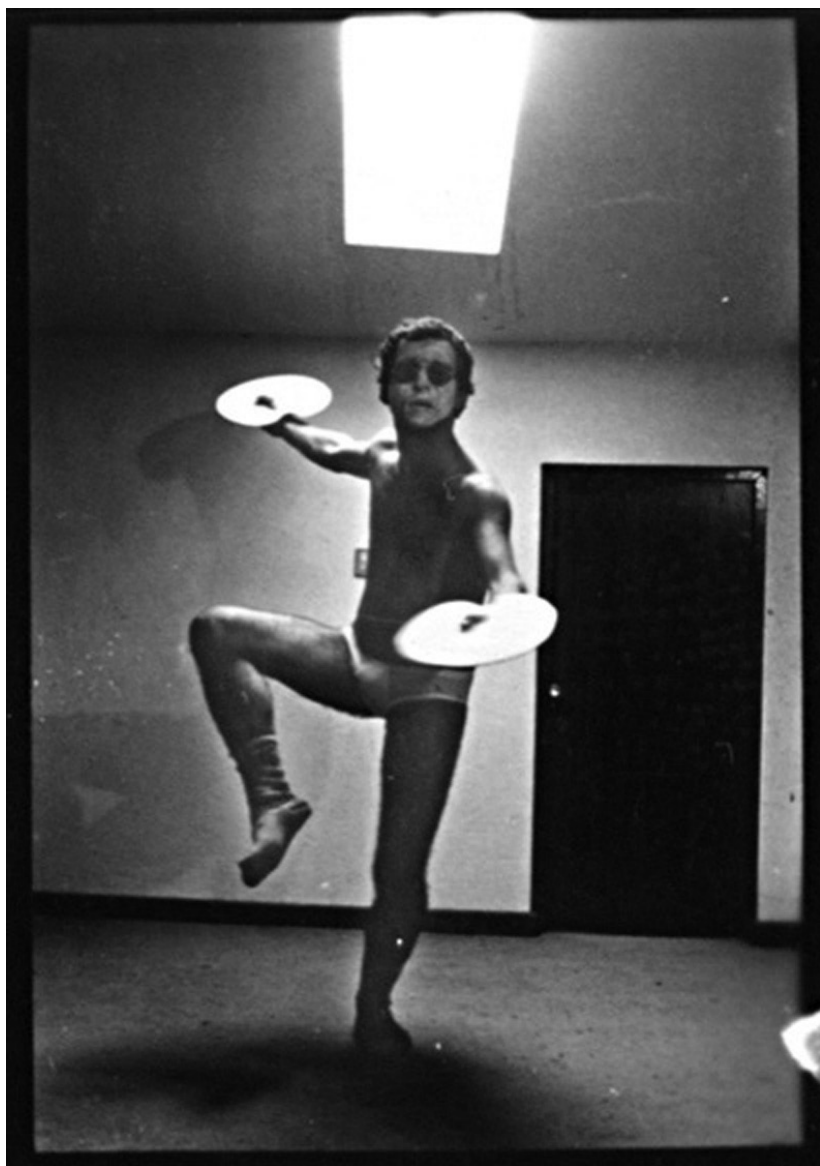
It was quite pathetic, actually. But, when I was particularly inspired it might even have something quite pretty to see...

When I danced well, it was great, and when I didn't, it was still as good. I wasn't acting out a role I could perform better or worse. I just wanted to get what I could. Whatever I got was what I wanted.

I saw it as a kind of synthesis of the artist condition. In the relationship between artist and public I found those performances quite significant. There I was, exposing myself to ridicule, in a, hopefully, disturbing situation, where people were confronted with a complete absence of taste, but at the same time might be moved by such a pathetic character.

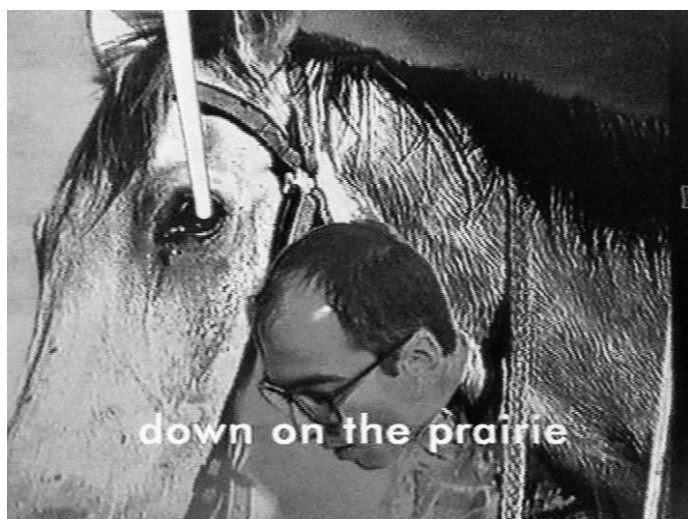
Even nowadays I believe those early performances are a kind of background for to everything I do now.

In the late eighties they evolved to me assuming the role of a singer. A painter that wanted to be a singer. Or, more accurately:





VOL.1



a painter that wanted to be “a painter wanting to be a singer”. And not only a singer, but a painter that wrote the songs he sung (mostly, the lyrics). Then I ended up belonging to a rock group called “The cross-eyed reporter”. I invented this name, thinking not only in the visual dialectics the name implied (maybe that of seeing 2 images simultaneously instead of only one) but also about the product of those so different people and minds that we all were, singers and musicians (and that was even more complicated if you think one of them was me, trying to be a singer and at the same time wanting people not to forget I was an artist, a painter).

When I left the group, in 1992, I started to make new songs using the music of old, scratched records as background. I made 10 songs and made a video for each of them.

I also made 10 new paintings, each one bearing the title of one of the songs. But the paintings weren’t made at all to be illustrations to the songs. Their conceptual games went elsewhere, opening other combinations.

And in 1994, I gave the title “Post-nuclear Country” to an exhibition I made and to the VHS videotape with the 10 songs. That synthesized the whole thing: the idea of a kind of genetic creation of thought when concepts are put together creating new beings; the idea of country as a territory, nation, place, whatever; and, of course, also a pinch of the idea of country music. Actually, one of the records I used was “The Happy Hammond goes Pop Country”, one of those 70’s delights, where you always get quite a sexy girl on the cover, generously smiling at you.

Not long after that, in 1995, I started to make new songs with the musician João Taborda and this extended the field of possibilities much further. And, music-wise, that’s what I’ve been doing ever since.

That led to new songs, new paintings, and new videos.

The songs are quite great in occupying a possible space in which I can develop a theory of art. For me they’re also a fascinating alternative to that. They’re plastic, musical and, of course, may show, if not quite what I think, at least how I think. And brain, the idea of brain, has always been quite fascinating to me, quite fascinating to my brain, actually. Or, shall I be more precise: to my brrrrrain.

And “Brrrrrain” was the title I chose for an anthological exhibition that was made recently about my work in Culturgest, Lisbon. I thought “Brrrrrain” quite synthesized the whole thing.





That might be quite a stupid way of saying brain, but that's the charm of it. "Brrrrrain", with all those Rs, like the sound of a motor or a machine gun. It links art to intelligence, of course, but in an apparently stupid, contradictory way. Thought not as a vague, immaterial thing, but objectified in this brrrrrain.

I believe that sums it all up. Paintings, songs, videos, and, above all, the idea of performance that undergoes everything I make as an artist. Brrrrrain as action, brrrrrain as a doer. It might even be a lazy brain, but one that, even in its laziness, never stops producing things. A kind of compulsive creator. An engine that, once started, never stops.

Once a performer, always a performer. Most of the time the concerts I make with João Taborda are the closest thing to performance people might find in my work, but performance is actually in everything I do. In the eighties I dressed up to performance, me with my slippers and socks. But it was only quite recently that I found substitute garments for these. Occasionally I appear in my videos dressed up in my own Coimbra's university teacher garments'. They're much more dignifying, and much more flattering, of course. But I don't forget that I wear them instead of the slippers and socks I wore in my eighties performances. They're much less revealing, but they reveal themselves. And, conceptually, uniforms are quite interesting to me. They kind of turn individuals into other things. It's not quite disguising the individuals, but attributing to them a particular image, not of what they are, but of something they do. At least uniforms are interesting for distracting

the viewer from subjectivity. When you see an individual wearing a uniform you tend to think less of him as owning a particular subjectivity and think more of him as a representation of all the other individuals that have the same job. And, in this case, we're before a representation of all those who teach in universities. And universities imply also the idea of university, the original and the actual ideas that compose the concept of university in its width.

The idea of connecting art to the university context might be quite interesting, and might turn out to be quite disturbingly productive when you think about what thoughts is about. The relationship between thought and knowledge, for example...

Maybe art is though with no necessary need to become knowledge. Or maybe in our quest for knowledge, we neglect thought. It might neglect most of the complexity of thought. And that is a thing art never needs to do. With art we might go nowhere. But we will surely have the capacity to enjoy the place where we are. It might not necessarily make us feel better. It might even make us feel worse. But it's probably the only thing that might give us the possibility of enjoying a wonderful headache.

Coimbra, June 16th, 2010

Eric Alliez (FR), born in 1957, is a philosopher, and Professor at the CRMEP, Kingston University, and at University of Paris 8. His books include *The Guattari Effect* (2011), *L'Œil-Cerveau* (2007), *La Pensée-Matisse* (2005), *Gilles Deleuze. Une Vie philosophique* (ed., 1998), *De l'impossibilité de la phénoménologie* (1995), *La Signature du monde* (1993 / Engl. Transl. 2005), and *Les Temps capitaux* (preface by G. Deleuze, 2 vol., 1991, 1999 / Engl. Transl. 1997). Forthcoming: *Défaire l'image. De l'art contemporain*.

Ricardo Basbaum (BR) was born in 1961, in São Paulo. He lives and works in Rio de Janeiro. He is an artist, a professor, a curator and a critic, investigating art as an intermediating device and platform for the articulation between sensorial experience, sociability and language. Since the late 1980s, he has been nurturing a vocabulary specific to his work, applying it in a unique way to each institution. His work was included at the 7ª Bienal do Mercosul (2009) and documenta 12 (2007), among other events. He is the author of *Além da pureza visual* (Zouk, 2007) and contributed to *Materialität der Diagramme - Kunst und Theorie* (edited by Susane Leeb, b books, 2012). Works at the Instituto de Artes, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro.

Margarida Carvalho (PT), born in 1957, holds a BA and a MA in Communication Sciences from the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the New University of Lisbon. She has been a faculty member at the School of Communication and Media Studies (Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon) since 1998 where she currently lectures the courses of "Art and Communication" and "Semiology". Her main areas of research are digital arts, participatory art and digital culture.

Livia Flores (BR), born in 1959, is an artist and professor at the School of Communication of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and teaches in the School of

Visual Arts post-graduate studies program also at UFRJ. She recently had a solo shows at Galeria Progetti (Rio de Janeiro, 2008) and Mamam no Pátio (Recife, 2007). In 2010 she participated at the exhibition *Tempo-Matéria* (MAC-Niterói) and in 2009 at the exhibitions *Reading Room 1: Brazil*, MACBA and *A Coleção*, Museu de Serralves, Porto.

Eric Kluitenberg (NL), born in 1965, is an independent theorist, writer, and curator on culture, media, and technology based in Amsterdam. He is the author of *The Book of Imaginary Media* (2006), *Delusive Spaces* (2008), *The Network Notebook Legacies of Tactical Media* (2011) and editor in chief of the *Tactical Media Files* - an online documentation resource for Tactical Media practices world-wide.

Christoph Korn (DE), born in 1965. Lives in Düsseldorf. From 1992 to 1998 he studied Political Science and Philosophy. In the early 1990s he started his artistic work, moving somewhere between audio and media art. An essential part of his solo work is the phenomenon of “duration”. In the last few years, he has increasingly put this into practice using the strategy of deleting and withdrawing (as in the network installation www.waldstueck.net). His works were performed and exhibited at numerous international festivals of contemporary music and media-art. He is a lecturer and guest lecturer at several universities.

António Olaio (PT), born in 1963, in Angola. He is a visual artist, performer and musician, and is a Professor at the University of Coimbra (both at Colégio das Artes and the Architecture Department). He has had Solo exhibitions in Lisbon, Oporto, Coimbra, Guarda, Viseu, Guimarães, New York, Berlin, Frankfurt. Performances in Oporto, Lisbon, Coimbra, Amsterdam, Paris and Kassel. He is a researcher in CES (Social Studies Center) in the University of Coimbra.

