

Les Liens Invisibles: »A fake is a fake. Anyway.«
 »We can only guess that fake publishing will mark the dawning of a new information era.« **The Financial Times**

Walter Benjamin: »The difference between author and public, maintained artificially by the bourgeois press, is beginning to disappear.«



Free | Vol. 1, No. 1, 2011 | darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces



NYHEDSAVISEN

Public-Interfaces

PEER-REVIEWED NEWSPAPER



TALKAOKE is an open and mobile talk show format developed by The People Speak. It uses the media spectacle to propagate activity. People can express themselves publicly, listen to each other and develop new perspectives on the world.

URBAN page 2.

When Art Goes Disruptive

Today, the increasing commercialization of contexts of networking, and the co-optation of cultural instances of 1990s hacker culture by proprietary platforms (from openness to do-it-yourself), shows the ability of business to adopt and invade "moral orders" which were once attributed to their opponents.

Tatiana Bazzichelli,
CAPITAL page 22

Why We Should Be 'Discrete' in Public

We should consider that in the last number of years, Continental and Analytic Philosophy has undergone a major revision on a number of unfashionable issues. If we were once spellbound by discourses, social practices, texts, language and the finitude of human epistemology, then today's scholars choose to orient their thoughts towards the independence of reality itself.

Robert Jackson
ART page 12

Understanding Software Cities

♦ With the development of new digital media, 'the media event' is in the process of returning to the public urban domain.

CHRISTIAN ULRIK
ANDERSEN &
SØREN POLD

The main question is in what way does this happen? Does digital media merely provide new forms and new public spectacles in the city, or does it also propagate public activity? Evidently, digital media changes the cityscape with media facades, urban screens, mobile screens, computer generated architectural forms, etc. However, it

is not only media that is introduced to the city but also software. Today's media cities are software cities. A distinct characteristic is that the representations of media are always connected to underlying computational processes that change the complex life forms of the city.

To understand the life forms of software cities we

must compare the city with software. A possibility is to include the architect Christopher Alexander's idea of a 'pattern language', that has influenced both common user driven software interaction design and wiki editing, and argue that we must pay attention to the patterns urban public interfaces imply. This means that we must pay

attention to the activity software fosters rather than the form it imposes. In order to induce accessibility and not only use of software cities, one must look in new directions, in the direction of software art and aesthetics.

URBAN page 2



BEAM IT ~~IT~~ **TK** It's not that kind.


<http://www.itsnotthatkind.org/software/beam-it>
RUI GUERRA

BEAM IT is an electronic screen meant for public space that is open for user generated content. Simple text messages, photos or videos can be uploaded to the screen via an online interface and observed online via live video streaming.

From surveillance technologies to server-client architectures, the project questions who is watching and who has access to what? What happens when information that is typically exchanged in an online context is beamed to a public space? How do online social platforms question the notion of public space and vice versa?

BEAM IT is developed by INTK and it is integrated into long term research and development focused on technology and local communities.

Urban

Editors: Christian Ulrik Andersen, Geoff Cox, Jacob Lund
 Published by Digital Aesthetics Research Center & Center for Digital Urban Living, Aarhus University, Aarhus, March 2011
 Design: Ida Knudsen, Geoff Cox, Christian Ulrik Andersen
 Print: Avis-Tryk A/S, Hornslet
 CC license: 'Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike' 
 ISBN: 87-91810-18-3 / EAN 9788791810183
 This research and publication has been supported by The Danish Council for Strategic Research, KINO, grant number 2128-07-0011

Nyhedsavisen Public-Interfaces

Emerging from ongoing research around interface criticism in the Digital Aesthetics Research Center and Center for Digital Urban Living, the aim of this newspaper is to broaden the topic to encompass the changing concept of the 'public'.

The newspaper is organized into three thematic strands: ART as public interface; the public interfaces of URBAN space; the public interface and CAPITAL.

Like others, we think the interface is a cultural paradigm. In the case of computers, interfaces mediate between humans and machines, as well as between machines and between humans. Interfaces thus involve an exchange between data and culture. In this sense, the computer interface can be described as a cultural interface combining cultural content (images, text, movies, sound) with machine/media control (buttons, menus, filters, etc.) and networks (the Internet). As a cultural paradigm the interface affects not only our creative production and presentation of the world but also our perception of the world.

We recognize that in the past decade, interfaces have been expanding from the graphical user interface of a computer to meet the needs of different new technologies, uses, cultures and contexts: they are mobile, networked, ubiquitous, and embedded in the environment and architecture, part of regeneration agendas and new aesthetic and cultural practices. In other words, we aim to investigate these new interfaces that affect relations between public and private realms, and generate new forms urban spaces and activities, new forms of exchange and new forms of creative production.

The newspaper brings together researchers within diverse fields – across aesthetics, cultural theory, architecture and urban studies – united by the need to understand public interfaces and the possible paradigmatic changes they pose to these fields.

Although our starting point derives from a concept of the public informed by network theory and the social practices around computing, we aim to expand this view in recognition of the ways in which contemporary power and control are structured.

The following questions operate as points of departure:

»Can the public interface be used as a useful concept for understanding changing relations between public and private realms within aesthetic practices?

»Does the public interface offer a way of examining relational aesthetics, the cultural regeneration agenda and public art?

»Does the public interface provide new understandings of the relationship between creative production, the free market sphere and its critique?

»How does the possible dissolution of the public and private spheres relate to bio-politics and contemporary forms of power?

»Does the public interface suggest new perceptions, borders or even the dissolution of borders between the centre and peripheries of urban settings?

»How do the experimentation and developments in the culture of software reflect emergent and self-organizing public actions?

The newspaper and event was kindly supported by Center for Digital Urban Living, Digital Aesthetics Research Centre, and The Doctoral School in Arts and Aesthetics, Aarhus University, Denmark.

All articles derive from an initial conference and PhD workshop held in January 2011, at Aarhus University. Full papers can be downloaded and further comments made on our website.

<http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>



»The standard image of a software city is somewhere where the media saturation is obvious and clearly visible, like Shibuya in Tokyo or Times Square in New York. However, less spectacular implementations of software in cities, resembling much digital urban living also demand attention.«

The Patterns of Software

♦ **In the history of media and urbanity it has been argued that the urban has lost to a suburb 'notably rich in private spaces and poor in public ones' (Philip Kasinitz qtd. by Scott McQuire).**

CHRISTIAN ULRIK
ANDERSEN &
SØREN BRO POLD

The urban media theorist Scott McQuire argues that with the development of new digital media, 'the media event' could possibly return to the public urban domain and he sees art as playing an important role in this development. But in what way?

Evidently, digital media changes the cityscape with media facades, urban screens, mobile screens, computer generated architectural forms, etc. However, it is not only media that is introduced to the city but also software. Today's media cities are software cities. The representations of media are always connected to underlying computational processes that change the complex life forms of the city.

To understand the life forms of software cities we must compare the city with software. In its understanding of systems as inhabited structures, interaction design has been influenced by architectural theory and Chris-

topher Alexander's idea of a 'pattern language'.

Design patterns address the public in different ways. In one perspective, they exist to pay attention to the user, and as such they are used to make software usable to a public. From another perspective, they do not always make the mechanisms behind the software public accessible.

When software is implemented in cities one must pay attention to the patterns they imply, the activity they propagate rather than the form they impose. It is the object of this article to explain the movement of pattern languages from architecture to software and back again in order to account for these patterns. Furthermore, to induce accessibility and not only use of software cities, one must look in the direction of software art and aesthetics.

According to Alexander a successful environment depends upon an ability to combine physical and social relationships.

A pattern language

"[T]owns and buildings will not be able to come alive, unless they are made by all the people in society, and unless people share a common pattern language, within which to make these buildings, and unless this common pattern language is alive itself" (x).
 'A pattern' is a way to

summarize experiences, individual practises and practical solutions in a way that makes it possible for others to re-write and re-use them. Alexander's book comprises of 253 patterns that each has its own context, problems and solutions that sometimes helps complete larger patterns or need other patterns to be completed.

As an example, Alexander uses the pattern 'accessible green'. People need open green places to go; but when they are more than three minutes away, the distance overwhelms the need (305). Consequently, green spaces must be one build "within three minutes' walk [...] of every house and workplace" (308). In this view, the pattern helps fulfil larger patterns such as 'identifiable neighborhood' and 'work community' (xiii).

Alexander includes quite extreme patterns in his book, as for instance the "Carnival": "Just as an individual person dreams fantastic happenings to release the inner forces which cannot be encompassed by ordinary events, so too a city needs its dreams." Therefore, one should "[s]et aside some part of town as a carnival-mad sideshow [...] which allow people to reveal their madness" (299-300). The pattern language is a way of democratising architecture and planning by letting the pattern language respond to the needs and desires of the inha-

bitants in a language that is common and non exclusive to architects. Accordingly, as seen in the case of the carnival, combining physical with social relationships often challenge prevailing hierarchies of control and experience.

Design patterns

Software design patterns deal with both technical issues and formal user issues, they may address how a coding task is handled or how much information can be handled in a window. Like Alexander's patterns, they are often subject to collaboration between programmers and designers. In order to support this, Ward Cunningham in 1995 developed the WikiWikiWeb, a forerunner of the Wiki. Ward's Wiki is a simplified form of code management and versioning systems (like Concurrent Versioning System (CVS)). Ward's Wiki is a user-editable web page dealing with design patterns.

However, as noted by software artist Simon Yuill, design patterns in computing "are almost exclusively applied to formal and technical issues, how software mechanisms operate internally, rather than how software functions as a human 'inhabited' environment" (Yuill p.n.p.). Combinations of physical infrastructures with social and human factors, as found in the carnival, are left out, but must be invigorated. Within computing this happens, as



I think we are still stuck with this idea of the street and the plaza as a public domain. I don't want to respond in clichés, but with television and the media and a whole series of other investigations, you could say that the public domain is lost. But you could also say that it's now so pervasive it does not need physical articulation any more. I think the truth is somewhere in between. **Rem Koolhaas**



Cities

Yuill observes, in the FLOS movement (Free/Libre Open Source) that explicitly combines the technical structures to individual freedom and refusal of intellectual copyright.

How are physical and social relationships combined, in the software design patterns of urban computing?

Software city patterns

The standard image of a software city is somewhere where the media saturation is obvious and clearly visible, like Shibuya in Tokyo or Times Square in New York. However, less spectacular implementations of software in cities, resembling much digital urban living also demand attention.

Investigating the digital layers of the mid-sized Swedish town Lund we have found that software is embedded via 'log-in spaces' and 'iSpaces' paired with a 'hypertextual connectivity' connecting physical space with virtual networks (Andersen and Pold). Public participation in the city as software is mostly characterized by either surveillance or configuration.

As a general pattern, surveillance is not only visual but also structural, following seamless transactions: When logging on to a network, transferring money, using personal identification numbers to keep records, etc. As a

way of interacting with software, configuration means to change a system on a user level, including as diverse actions as image editing, setting software preferences or shooting monsters in a computer game. Configuration patterns are found when we use the software city to play games, find weather reports, use a GPS for creating routes, etc.

In this sense, inhabiting the software city is like inhabiting *The Sims*.

You are given the inhabitant's right to configure the system, your actions are registered by the system, but you are never given the right of a citizen to negotiate the system itself.

Surveillance and configuration patterns both reflect a particular view on the public sphere. When public Wi-Fi networks are restricted and its users tracked it is to avoid violations of copyrights, illegal conspiring, terrorism etc. Hence, a surveillance pattern fulfills a need to protect land and property. When I, using my smart phone apps, can find information about the place I am, connect to my friend anywhere in the world or track my whereabouts and share them in public, the configuration pattern fulfills a need to support the exercise of the individual. The ability to perform, as an individual in this environment, is equal to the sum of acquired gad-

gets and applications.

The software city does not allow its inhabitants to actively negotiate the relation between the physical and the social. It is for instance in many places not legal to create patterns that challenge copyrights by opening Wi-Fi networks. What seems to be lacking is a pattern for agency, for writing and supporting people's ability to express, develop and negotiate values and aspirations for their lives and their environment. In a city dominated by software and patterns of surveillance and configuration, patterns of writing become increasingly important.

Writing the software city

Writing patterns relate Roland Barthes' notion of 'writerly' a particular way of reading associated with the open texts of modern literature, addressing the reader as an active producer of meaning, rather than a passive consumer (Barthes 10). Also drawing on Barthes, Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* compares writing to walking and the lived experiences of the pedestrian.

One example of how to write a city is found in the works of the British Artist collective The People Speak. The People Speak develops media platforms for public and civic conversation and decision-making. In 2009 we conducted a series of experiments setting up one of their platforms, Talkaoke in Denmark. Talkaoke is a public talk-show, highly mediated, mimicking a television studio, using lights, cameras, screens, live internet broadcasting, twittering, video annotation, post production/editing and online archiving (See <http://vimeo.com/darc/videos>). Talkaoke uses the media spectacle to propagate activity. In an inviting, entertaining and informal way, people can express themselves publicly, listen to each other and perhaps even develop new perspectives on the world.

Analysing the conversations we found that people often reproduced official arguments (e.g. discussing climate changes, city surveillance, EU elections). They actualized an argument, relating it to the location and to personal experiences, testing and contextualising it. Quite often, they also reproduced the stories and arguments that fitted with the public image of themselves. No doubt, the discourse sometimes got stuck in clichés or personal stories. Other times, however, the participants re-

flected on the predefined patterns of the discourse itself. In such situations, the roles and arguments transgressed assumed expectations and became a matter of concern for the participants. E.g. in a public park there was an ongoing thread about the experiences of a middle aged woman from Greenland. In Denmark, Inuit people have a reputation of heavy drinking, often taking place in public parks. Her story demonstrated a much more nuanced and lived life exceeding the stereotypical self-presentation and in many ways 'narrativized' the park to the participants.

To conclude, understanding and reacting to the complex life form of software cities we may choose to benefit from their patterns of surveillance and configuration. We may choose to feel safer in a city where health records, money transactions and potential terrorists are tracked; we may choose to use the applications on our smart phones in meaningful ways, like home banking or traffic updates; or we may choose to have fun using their gadgets and games. Change, however, cannot appear from mere participation.

To have a dynamic software city that includes an awareness and debate about its complex life forms, we need access to the software city; we need to be able to write the software city.

Art and aesthetics may not revolutionize the software city and automatically overthrow existing patterns of public, urban participation, but platforms like Talkaoke may foster the first steps to think differently about the kind of problem a software city is.

Works cited

- Alexander, Christopher et. al. *A Pattern Language: Towns – Buildings – Construction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977. Print.
- Andersen, Christian Ulrik, and Soren Pold. "The Scripted Spaces of Urban Ubiquitous Computing – the Experience, Poetics, and Politics of Public Scripted Space." 2009. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970. Print.
- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. Print.
- McQuire, Scott. "The Politics of Public Space in the Media City." *First Monday* Special Issue #4 (2006). Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. "Literature, Politics, Aesthetics: Approaches to Democratic Disagreement (Interview with Solange Guenoun and James H. Kavanagh)." *SubStance* 92 (2000): 3-24. Print.
- Yuill, Simon. "spring_alpha: a social pattern book". *Media Mutandis: a NODE.London Reader: Surveying Art, Technologies And Politics*. Eds. Marina Vishmidt et. al. London: Mute, 2006. Web 16 Dec. 2010. <<http://publication.nodel.org/node/78/print>>

Building-Sized Interfaces

MEDIA ARCHITECTURE AND
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CITY

TOBIAS EBSEN

In his 1984 book *The Lost Dimension*, Paul Virilio described the modern city by its new types of visual imagery and new modes of access to interior and exterior spaces. He saw the contemporary transformations to the functions of the city as parallel to the developing concept of "the interface" with its communicative surface and the affordance for action and control. At this early point, Virilio identified the increased virtualization of urban architecture by both functions and the superimposition of images for commercial advertising. Places like Times Square in New York City, Piccadilly Circus in London and Shibuya Square in Tokyo are the peaks of such transformation where architecture is replaced with images – dislocated and decontextualized from their origin. "Public image yields to public image," as Virilio wrote. Both visually and functionally, the city is gradually reduced to an interface through which all public interaction occurs.

Recent developments in media architecture have resulted in entire building facades covered in luminous screens as seen on Kunsthau Graz, Uniqa Tower in Vienna or the Ars Electronica Center in Linz. These media-buildings may be seen as extensions of urban virtualization where space becomes synthesized, dynamic and persuasive. Once walls are replaced with screens, architecture disappears in the virtual image, Virilio argues. The dominance of screens in urban spaces may have been anticipated by various dystopian fiction films like *Blade Runner*, where giant billboard-screens fly around in the urban landscape. The question is, whether media architecture is yet another step towards the complete virtualization of urban space, or there are other approaches to its application that subverts to totalitarian dominance of the building-sized interfaces?

In the discourse of media architecture there are often references to works of various artists that in many ways challenge the visual dominance of architecture. In some cases, artists appropriate buildings in ways that resembles notion of hacking. This may be seen in projects like: *Blinkenlights* (2001) by Chaos Computer Club where an empty office building was transformed into a giant screen, or the *L.A.S.E.R. Tag tool* (2007) by Graffiti Research Lab that allows participants to paint onto buildings using a laser pointer and a video projector. Other strategies have been applied by artists like United Visual Artists, who challenge the physical nature of screens by distributing its pixels into spatial formations, thereby departing from the idea of a single perspective point in the representation. Examples of such strategies can be seen in installations like *Volume* (2006) and *Constellation* (2008).

These are experimental projects where facades and displays are appropriated by intervention and in disregard for commercial interests. Rather, the installations invite to participation in the image formation and present ambiguous expressions that to some extent allows the visual space to be negotiated instead of imposed. In these artistic approaches to the architectural interface, we may find a possibility of re-creating a *public-centered relevance for media technology* in the urban scale. Buildings may become more than mass mediums that impose a certain ideology. Technologies behind projects like *Blinkenlights* and *L.A.S.E.R. Tag tool* are already publicly available as Open Source software. The next step in this process might be Open Source architecture in the recreation of presence and spatiality in the city.

Works cited:

- Chaos Computer Club. *Project Blinkenlights* (2001). <<http://blinkenlights.net/>>
- Graffiti Research Lab. *L.A.S.E.R. Tag tool* (2007). <<http://graffitiresearchlab.com/projects/laser-tag/>>
- Scott, Ridley, dir. *Blade Runner* (1982). Warner Bros. 116 mins. Film. United Visual Artists. *Volume* (2006); *Constellation* (2008). <<http://www.uva.co.uk/work>>
- Virilio, Paul. *The Lost Dimension*. 1984. Print.

No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City*

◆ **Critiques of the instrumentalised role of culture within the current stage of urban development, so-called 'culture-led urban regeneration', are becoming increasingly common.**

JOSEPHINE BERRY SLATER
ANTHONY ILES

A rising crescendo of criticism may finally be denting the blithe confidence of the 'Creative City' formula and its liberal application to all manner of post-industrial urban ills. Criticism, but also and more forcefully, that other party crasher – the global financial crisis – are undermining the blind faith in the power of 'creativity' to heal our cities. Regardless of what the post-crunch strategy for treating urban decline may be, we can begin to see with clarity the contours of a form of urbanism that has developed over the past 20 years. One whose mobilisation of art and aesthetics – and particularly a post-conceptual order of aesthetics – has worked to produce the propagandistic illusion that a substantial regeneration of society and its habitat is occurring. It is, however, one that masks the unaltered or worsening conditions that affect the urban majority as welfare is dismantled, public assets sold off and free spaces enclosed. Since

public art and architecture are not only often complicit within this stage of development, but also offer moments and forms in which power and counter-power negotiate, clash and find articulation, the spectrum of analysis of urban regeneration must necessarily entail an aesthetic one.

To understand the dynamics of cities in their neoliberal capitalist phase, then, it is not enough to look at the structural and economic questions alone – we must also investigate the visual languages and conceptual approaches of the aesthetic activity apparently valued so highly by their elites.

As ever, in order to look forward, it helps to look back to an earlier model of art's use in the (re)construction of community amidst urban upheaval. Roman Vasseur's engagement with Harlow involves 'disinterring' the original thinking behind this petite New Town, as it stands on the brink of wholesale expansion and redevelopment. [1] Vasseur who was appointed to the role of 'lead artist' during the redevelopment of Harlow, a post-war New Town, has spent a great deal of time thinking about how its master-planner, Frederick Gibberd, attempted to forge

community in the aftermath of WWII, and with the fresh canvas of a greenfield site. He is fascinated by how technology – coupled forever with the power of mass extermination after two world wars – is understood not as something that threatens 'Arcadian visions of Britain', but as that which can create them anew. Gibberd used new, mass-produced elements in the construction of the town, introduced the first residential high-rise block into Britain, and one of the first covered shopping malls. But despite this, he wanted to found the new community on the ancient values of religion, family and co-operation – as witnessed by his extraordinarily detailed, Elizabethan-modernist design for the town's St. Paul's church (1959) and the prominent siting of Henry Moore's sculpture of a family group in the water gardens as the visual centrepiece of Harlow. [2] But Vasseur also draws attention to the 'Dionysian' impulses that underpin and threaten Gibberd's 'Apollonian' ordered ambitions for the town. He sees them as relying upon the atavistic forces of religion and the emotive creation of a community spirit centred around the pioneering moment of exodus from the metropolis and, consequently, a static model of inclusive exclusion. As Vasseur points out, Harlow sits in what has been termed

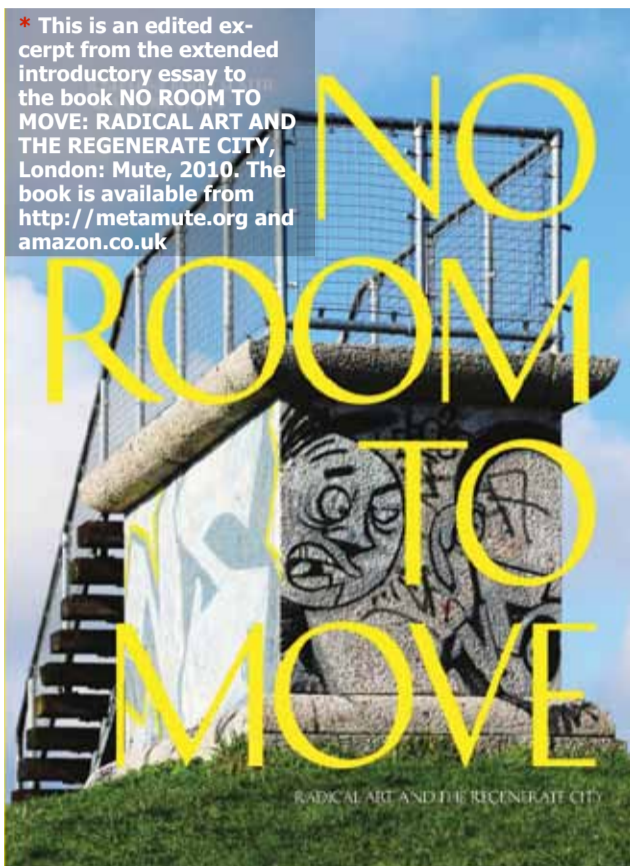
by Rem Koolhaas a 'mega-region'; its positioning making it highly vulnerable to assimilation into the surrounding conurbation. Its residents, says Vasseur, are about to be 'radicalised'. At this juncture, he thinks, it would be wrong to perpetuate the local identity that the town has nurtured for so long. But what is to follow, and what role should art play within this transformation?

The town's unique atmosphere is largely a result of the centre's setting in a parkland of green wedges which connect it to the outlying residential areas. At the heart of this radial and highly ordered design sit a canonical array of public sculptures by post-war British sculptors like Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Lynn Chadwick and Elizabeth Frink. Says Vasseur,

Harlow's distinction is that it employed and embodied culture and in particular sculpture to make an argument for the creation of a settlement away from the metropolis but referencing the Tuscan City State model.

Vasseur's engagement with the town is markedly different from the paternalistic example set by Gibberd who also headed the Harlow Art Trust which selected the town's public art works. It should be noted that Vasseur's role has been consultative and curatorial rather than directly artistic.

* This is an edited excerpt from the extended introductory essay to the book **NO ROOM TO MOVE: RADICAL ART AND THE REGENERATE CITY**, London: Mute, 2010. The book is available from <http://metamute.org> and amazon.co.uk



Nevertheless, his approach could be interpreted as an artistic intervention in its own right, despite his insistence that he is not a 'career public artist'. Indeed Vasseur tends to operate in a more undercover mode; a kind of contemporary version of the Artist Placement Group's 'incidental person', but one actively solicited by Commissions East – one of the regeneration agencies involved – with the agreement of the town council. Unlike APG's

artists however, Vasseur experiments with the strategy of 'overidentification' with the bureaucratic process. For instance, while seeing 'the public' as a phantasmatic entity deployed by government for its own ends, he nevertheless invokes the term within negotiations as a 'reprimand', or a means to rein in full-throttle commercialism. In such a way, Vasseur uses the bureaucratic or commercial body's logic against itself and, in so doing, turns

TEMPORARY SERVICES

BRETT BLOOM
Redfern, Sydney

» **What is your opinion of this sculpture? Why do you think it was placed in this neighbourhood?** «

<http://www.temporaryservices.org/>



Several clipboards were put up within a 3-4 block radius of "Bower". They held single sheets of paper, with questions about the sculpture and its placement in the neighborhood, which people were asked to fill out. We collected both written and emailed replies and presented them in a public exhibition close to the sculpture.

the often crushing process of negotiation into a 'sensual pursuit'.

New audiences for art have grown up in a time in which life in general has become hyper-cultural; the leaden mail-outs from local housing services must disguise themselves as lifestyle magazines, groups of friends advertise and commodify themselves for each other via social networking templates, and even down-at-heel refreshments stalls disguise a shit instant coffee as the more cosmopolitan cappuccino. Half a century of consumer society has produced an insatiable appetite for aestheticisation. So, despite the increasing lock-down and personalised tracking of populations within the cybernetic matrices of the post-9/11 state, the aestheticisation of space reveals that the powers-that-be must choose their mode of address more carefully than ever before. Control must deploy the veneer of health and happiness to get things done. Or, in Foucauldian terms, governmentality uses aesthetics to penetrate the subject more deeply, to tap into our capacity for self-government. In the biopolitical era, discipline meshes with techniques of the body converting 'care of the self' into portals of intrusion and introjection, and hijacking the DNA of pleasure to other ends. The philosopher Maria Muhle has rejected interpretations that take Foucault's term 'biopolitics' to designate a form of power which now takes life as its object, arguing instead that it is a modality which possesses a positive and not a repressive relation to life:

My claim is that biopolitics is defined by the fact that rather than merely relating to life, it takes on the way

life itself functions; that it functions like life in order to be better able to regulate it. (Muhle, 136)

If power has become life-like, it has also become art-like. This is a worry for those concerned with art's need to be distinct from the rest of life, to antagonise or reveal new forms of sensibility. Although New Labour's 12 year rule has been a boom time for art – not least public art – the blanding out of notions of creativity (such as those espoused by Richard Florida and his followers), and the discovery of art's 'social purpose', leave its future in doubt. As Vasseur surmises:

One can envisage a future where artists, or individuals with an extensive training in visual arts and art history will be slowly moved out of this new economy in favour of 'creatives' able to privilege deliverability and consultation over other concerns.

So while avant-garde attempts to negate the privileged role of art and artist are purloined by government and the leisure industry, or applied to pseudo-democratic ends by developers and commissioning agencies, or used ultimately to eject the artist from the culture-society equation – what recourse do artists critical of the 'creative industries' model have to making art in public? Is it even possible to make critical art publicly any more?

Vasseur's approach is influenced by the tradition of institutional critique, especially its later tendency to play with overidentification. Rejecting any purity of revolutionary or artistic purpose, Vasseur comments, "Artists

in my experience are not willing to wait for revolutionary change in order to express their sensuous beings and so are disloyal to communities of politics." But his work in Harlow is not without specific aims or the desire to have some lasting impact. He was drawn to the role because it was advertised as "the first time that an artist would work on a committee selecting a developer-planner". He has also presented an architectural review of some of the proposed redevelopment plans for the local councillors – a potentially very influential opportunity. But, at the recession ridden time of writing, the future of the redevelopment looks uncertain. The 'aesthetics of bureaucracy' are, of course, hostage to the movement of the bureaucratic process itself, its glacial time frames, and the macro-economic picture, all of which can be enough to kill off the initiative and desires of the undercover interventionist. Where Gibberd's art programme can be seen as conservatively retrograde, Vasseur's mercurial approach – in seeking to expose the Dionysian and violent impulses which belie modernism as much as preserving its achievements in the face of junk-space development – seems to lack definition and hence traction within the process of the town's transformation. The town, albeit consulted and invited to participate in a series of events and discussions organised by Vasseur, seem stranded between Gibberd's nostalgic and untenable idea of community, and Vasseur's position of cynical reason that is helpless to assert any alternatives. It is tempting to think of the role of today's regen artist in the mould of Jack Nicholson's ex-cop character

in Polanski's *Chinatown*, who, when asked what kind of police work he did in Chinatown mutters 'As little as possible'. It was the only way to avoid making a bad situation worse.

As art and artists have become more integral to contemporary urbanism, they have also become increasingly astute critics.

Yet moments when artists resist development and gentrification directly have been rare. Art works more often mount an aesthetic resistance or, as Jacques Rancière might say, a 'redistribution of the sensible'. Critical art in urban settings survives development's horrors, maintaining a tension with the context of its production and, in the best cases, amplifying them.

Future generations of artists will continue to face the contradictory bind of being both beneficiaries and losers in the path of capital's movement of creative destruction (each time on reconfigured terms and conditions).[3] During the present recession 'creatives' are regarded as offering landlord-friendly ways to occupy the growing 'slack space' of cities as market demand fails, providing cheap security services for landlords not to mention rent (see Conlin). However government plans to rent empty commercial space at reduced rates to artists can hardly contend with the looming problem of unemployment for a population of 'creatives' that has grown massively since 1989; an increase fuelled primarily by the growth of the financial services industry and the credit it generated to finance the development

schemes, regeneration schemes and creative industries which employed so many. Higher education's increasing dependency on the revenue generated by art and design geared courses should also be noted. This period of expansion has happened in parallel with an attack on the means of subsistence which made it possible to survive as a cultural producer in the absence of a sales model, as workfare has come to replace welfare, short-let housing has been undermined by the government's Decent Homes Standard and cheap, dilapidated zones have fallen under the demolition ball of development. Development of large tracts of cities based on expectations of rising real estate values, the attraction of new middle class residents, and an expansion in retail are giving way to Ballardian visions of luxury developments in a state of chaotic and terminal decline.

Whatever the future of alienated creativity and the city may be, art and artists symbolically and structurally register the tensions between economic realities and corporate-governmental fictions of the post-Fordist city everywhere. The artist has become both aider and objector to regeneration, but also the ultimate capitalist subject, what Agamben names the 'whatever being'. Good for everything and nothing, s/he is without authentic identity – the figure of human 'species being' freed from specialisation, social obligation and physical work, but in distorted form under alienated labour's continuation along flexibilised lines. It is perhaps for this reason too that artists have become such paradigmatic figures within late capitalism, attracting fictitious fantasies of produ-

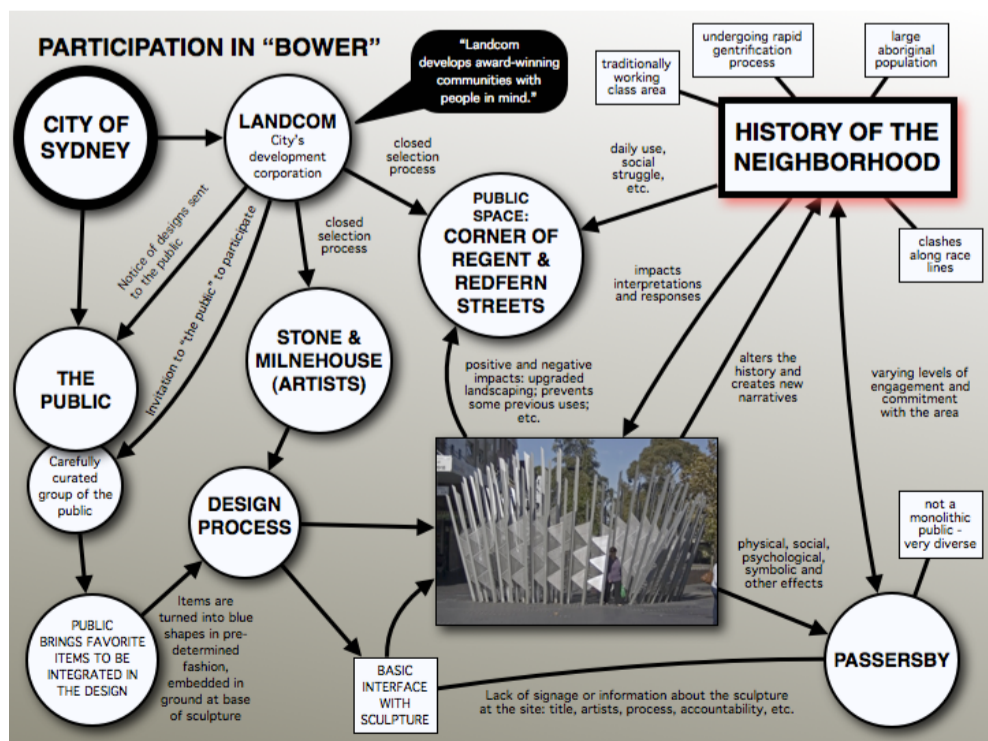
ction whilst also finding it hard to know how to act within such a treacherous climate of cooptation. Neither able to successfully collude due to art's lingering requirement for autonomy, nor to effectively opt out (street art becomes gallery art becomes street art etc.), the artist working in the maelstrom of regeneration registers, either critically or not, the social war it entails.

Notes:

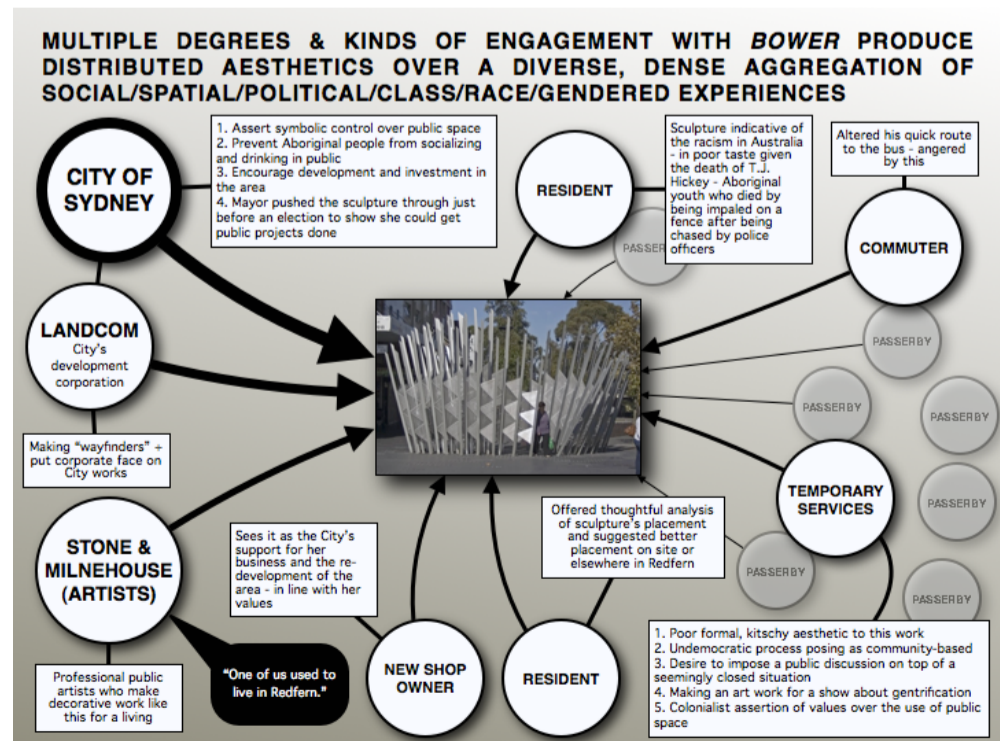
1. The plan is to increase the population of Harlow by 40,000. This could involve transforming the centre of the town, pulling down the old market square and replacing it with a new retail development, building new transport links and expanding the residential areas. The scale of the development is posing a threat to the green wedges that surround the town's centre, and are key to its pastoral atmosphere.
2. After suffering from vandalism, the sculpture was removed and now sits inside the newly built Civic Centre – part of the first and egregious phase of Harlow's redevelopment.
3. On the concept of 'creative destruction' in the context of culture-led regeneration, see Seymour.

Works cited:

- Berry Slater, Josephine & Iles, Anthony. *No Room to Move: Radical Art and the Regenerate City*. Mute: London, 2010. Print.
- Conlin, Peter. "Slack, Taut and Snap: A Report on the Radical Incursions Symposium." Mute. August 2009. <http://www.metamute.org/en/content/slack_taut_and_snap_a_report_on_the_radical_incursions_symposium>.
- Muhle, Maria. "Qu'est-ce-Que La Biopolitique? A conversation on Theories of Biopolitics between Thomas Lemke and Maria Muhle, moderated by André Rottman." *Texte Zur Kunst*. Issue 73. March 2009. Print.
- Seymour, Benedict. "Shoreditch and the creative destruction of the inner city." <<http://thelondonparticular.org/items/creativestruction.html>>.
- Vasseur, Roman. From an interview with the authors, 2009. <http://www.metamute.org/en/content/interview_with_roman_vasseur>. In Berry Slater, Josephine & Iles, Anthony. op.cit.. Print.



Mapping the difference between the official version of the siting of "Bower" and the exclusion of a broad public in the process.



Mapping the layers of personal and institutional engagement and investment in experiencing "Bower" - current aesthetic theorizations exclude or flatten the dense diversity of human interaction with public work.

The Right to the City: Reclaiming the Urban Landscape by Art and Activism

◆ In the countries of former Eastern Europe, the collapse of socialism and the subsequent onset of neoliberal capitalism have resulted in a massive transfiguration of urban public space at the hands of commercial interests.

ZORAN POPOSKI
Skopje, Rep. of Macedonia

Examples include the proliferation of outdoor advertising that destroys the character of natural and historic urban landscapes, commercial events that restrict access to parks and squares, the design of retail kiosks and storefronts in and around public spaces that does not respect the local context (sending a signal that it no longer represents the local community). Instead of public space where people interact freely, without the coercion of state institutions - the productive, democratic public space - there is space for recreation and entertainment where access is limited only to suitable members of the public, "a controlled and orderly retreat where a properly behaved public might experience the spectacle of the city" (Mitchell, 51). The image of the public thus created by this pseudo-public space is one of the public as passive and receptive, where the potentially dangerous social heterogeneity of the multitude has been homogenized. The public is turned into the ideal consumer, and public space is thus reduced to a commodity, making the privatization by commercial interest the new public space.

Advertising in Skopje

As an illustration, in Macedonia's capital Skopje, the

uncontrolled spread of outdoor advertising has created problems so serious that the city authorities were at one point considering banning huge billboards around the city square and reducing their number in the streets near in the centre of the city, removing most of them to the periphery (which, in itself, is a move loaded with issues of social inequality). However, this has not happened yet.

My research showed that billboard licenses in Skopje are awarded through a tender process with five-year licenses awarded to two companies, for a total of 400 billboards. However, that number has obviously been surpassed. According to media reports, the city authorities estimate that at present in Skopje there are over 600 billboards. Most billboards are located on the main streets, primarily in the centre of the city. The proliferation of billboards can be attributed to - among other things - the low fee advertisers pay for their placement. The communal fee for putting up a billboard is less than \$40 a year - the price of a one-day black-and-white ad in a daily newspaper in Macedonia! On the other hand, the price of renting a billboard ranges from 250 to 1000 EUR per month. Despite such low fees, many billboards have been placed illegally. There are even claims in the media that as many as half of all billboards in the city have no license. The maximum allowed size of billboards is 12 square metres, but according to media reports they are often bigger than 15 square metres. Bigger billboards require a construction permit from the Municipality, but most of them lack such a permit. Jumbo billboards on buildings should be placed at least 3.5 meters above the ground and 8 metres

away from any crossroad. This regulation, however, is rarely followed. The fact that billboards in Skopje are far larger and much greater in number than the regulations allow has created a host of problems for citizens, ranging from decreased visibility on the main roads and intersections to physical injuries (and even death) to unsuspecting passers-by.

In an attempt to personally identify the scope of the problem, I decided to focus on a city block in the centre of Skopje, as an indicator of the overall situation. I took photographs of all billboards within that particular block, noting down their (estimated) size and location. I think it's safe to say that the administration's estimates are far too conservative when compared to the actual number. My identifi-

cation showed a total of 81 billboards and city-lights in just one city block. If this is any indication of the overall situation, then Skopje is definitely congested with outdoor advertising, to the point of semiotic saturation.

Reclaiming public space

Artists in post-socialist countries are trying to reclaim this public space in an attempt to transform everyday urban experience by rewriting the body of the city with messages other than those emanating from the centres of power, capital, and privilege. In a series of citylights which form the project *Bosnians Out! (Workers Without Frontiers)*, 2008), developed in collaboration with three migrant workers from Bosnia employed on the renovation of the Museum of Modern Art in Ljubljana, *Andreja*

Kulunčić (Croatia) focuses on four topics chosen by the workers themselves - working conditions, life in workers' hostels, poor nutrition and separation from their families. Employing a tactic of overidentification and focusing on what Michael Warner terms "counterpublics", that is, of those subaltern segments defined in opposition to a "dominant public", *Kulunčić's* city lights in the streets of Ljubljana explore both the stereotypical portrayal of Bosnians in Slovenia, as well as present their poor living and working conditions to Slovenians.

In *Living in Media Hype* (2002), Sašo Sedlaček (Slovenia) researches the possibilities of living in billboards and other outdoor advertisements. With their enormous sizes and access to electricity, for the artists billboards are in a way perfect for inhabitation by different social groups. This kind of housing could exist in a symbiotic-parasitic relationship between the host (billboard), providing living space and electricity, and the guest engaging in different types of activities inside the advertising space. This project calls to mind Henri Lefebvre's distinction of how urban spaces often start as "representations of space", but through its use people appropriate it, socially produce it into "representational space" (39). Spatial practices, concerned with the production and reproduction of material life, rely on representations of space and representational spaces to provide them with the spatial concepts and symbols/images necessary for spatial practices to operate.

In my own project *Abstract Politics* (2008), I installed my work on a couple of billboards (3x4 m in size each) on the busiest streets of Skopje (one right in front

of the Government building). They showed an abstract, non-representational image (aggregated from Google search images associated with news titles, thus infusing advertising discourse with covert political content) and a website address www.public-space.info, with the idea of attracting passers by to visit the site where they could learn more about the issue of privatization of public space. The aim was to create conditions for public deliberation and democratic discourse in the public sphere, where citizens who are informed, active, rational and knowledgeable can engage in communicative action and communicative rationality, defined by Jurgen Habermas as "non-coercively unifying, consensus building force of a discourse in which participants overcome their at first subjectively biased views in favor of a rationally motivated agreement" (315). Furthermore, the project was funded with a grant sponsored by corporate money. The project is still ongoing, nowadays in the form of public debates and round tables on the issue with the aim of involving an increasing number of stakeholders.

This particular project was informed by the series of billboards, posters and banners installed in public inner-city spaces in Eastern Europe and South America which form the project **Alternative Economics, Alternative Societies**, in which Austrian artist Oliver Ressler reclaims the means of outdoor advertising to present alternatives to the existing social and economic system.

In large and visible type, Ressler's billboards appeal



MEDIA SCREENS

Interface Design for Shared Spaces

TOWARDS A MORE **AFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP** BETWEEN PEOPLE, PLACES AND INFORMATION

NINA VALKANOVA

Researchers from media theory, HCI and interaction design have been involved in the analysis, design and evaluation of large displays in public spaces. These studies have focused on social aspects of urban screens and how interaction evolves in different public contexts. Artists have also explored experimentally the potential of large urban screens as interfaces that can trigger emotional response, enhance communication and promote reflection beyond purely aesthetic qualities.

While insights from these different disciplines are very valuable in themselves, they still do not provide a comprehensive framework for centering the design of public interfaces on increasing their potential for discovery and engagement with content beyond the initial fascination.

Exploring cross-disciplinary strategies by **combining scientific and artistic design knowledge and practices** may lead to more engaging urban media, which could promote and sustain a more affective relationship between spaces, the people inhabiting them and the related information.

(excerpt) Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>

AmbientNEWS originally targets the newsroom space of a broadcasting company. It mimes recent news and developing stories from the web and visualizing the online news landscape related to the topics journalists are working on. The temporal evolution of information is shown by a dangling flowers animation, which represents the continuous flow and development of the topics by causing the flowers to emerge, grow, proliferate petals, or vanish subtly in response to changes in the online news landscape.





Zoran Poposki, ABSTRACT POLITICS, 2008

to questioning existing power relations and offer alternatives that would be “less hierarchical, based on ideas of direct democracy and involve as many people as possible in decision-making processes”, as the artist explains on his website. Rather than unidirectional information designed to promote consumption, these billboards are intended to serve as a basis for discussion over what kind of society is desired and should be created by the people living in it.

The approach taken by these art projects is the one Michel de Certeau calls a tactic. Without a place of

its own, a tactic operates in isolated actions, takes advantage of opportunities and depends on them, reacting immediately. Tactics are characterized by mobility, speed, and smaller goals. De Certeau likens it to poaching: “It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers... It creates surprises in them... In short, a tactic is an art of the weak” (37).

Realizing public space

The new economic practices of reappropriating and restructuring public space, coupled with the absence of a truly public sphere defined

by critical dialogue, increase the necessity and the urgency for alternative discourses to the official one dominated by advertising. And this is where public art, of the activist or politically engaged type, can offer powerful resistance to the power structures, both through its critique of commercial abuse of public spaces as well as through refashioning the urban landscape beyond the old spatial hierarchies and segregation. In this, politically engaged public art comes close to realizing the ideal of public space—an arena where citizens meet to confront opposing values and expecta-

tions in public deliberation and discourse.

Works cited:

- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Print.
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity; Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990. Print.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991. Print.
- Low, Setha, and Neil Smith, eds. *The Politics of Public Space*. New York: Routledge, 2005. Print.
- Mitchell, Don. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford Press, 2003. Print.

What is the Potential for Interactivity with Façade Media?

◆ When we today stand at a bus station or sit in a metro or when we walk through the city, we mostly have at least one technical device with us, our mobile phone.

CHRISTIAN RHEIN

The smart phone as our permanent companion, or a new part of our body, is in this sense not only an extension of man, like McLuhan said, it is an expansion of private life in public. The meaning of “home” changes; home is no longer implicitly connected to a special place.

This “De-Territorialization” or “De-Limitation” of home through new media and through the immediacy of interpersonal actions over long distances make a physical presence no longer necessary. We could see this delimitation of privacy in public space in a negative way, but if we want or not, “social life in the 21st century is increasingly life lived in media cities”, as Scott McQuire says. “The old television *set* has morphed from a small-scale appliance – a material object primarily associated with domestic space – to become a large-scale *screen*; less a piece of furniture than an architectural surface resident not in the home but in the street outside”.

Both, permanent public media like façade media, urban screens or out of home-displays and temporary public screens installations, as for instance, those for soccer championships, lead to new forms of public viewing. But what influence do these forms have on public space? How can pervasive media change its dynamic?

(excerpt)

Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>



One, Other and the Same

THE PUBLIC AS MONUMENT

MALCOLM MILES

Antony Gormley's participatory art project *One & Other* took place in the summer of 2009 on the empty fourth plinth in Trafalgar Square, London. A different person occupied the plinth each

hour, day and night, for 100 days. The 2,400 occupants of the plinth – plinthers – were selected from more than 34,500 entries following a national invitation. 1,210 were men and 1,190 were women, aged from 16 to 84. Applicants could do anything within the law, and were not required to submit a plan. Gormley applied twice but was not selected.

Gormley claimed that *One & Other* offered “a ‘composite picture’ of Britain” (Higgins, 1). Is such a picture viable in a period of global mass communications and migration, or in a city in which more than 300 languages are spoken every day? In the last year of the New Labour regime, did 2,400 individuals represent such a divided and complex society? The work's effort at coherence was tested in the opening ceremony when, as the artist and the mayor of London made speeches to the press, “a white-haired middle aged fellow”, Stuart Holmes, jumped unannounced onto the plinth holding a poster: “Ban tobacco and actors smoking. One billion deaths this century!” (ibid.) He asked for a microphone but was told he should have brought his own. The mayor and artist carried on, punctuating their speeches with polite requests to Holmes to come down so that Rachel Wardell (aged 35), a housewife, could take her place as the first official plinther, holding up a poster for a children's telephone help-line.

Which one, which other?

With an allowance for a breach of the rules, then, there were 2,401 plinthers. To ask if this matters is to ask whether the composite picture of the nation depicts a society that is defined according to the rules of representation, which extend those of the public monument as a device by which citizens are reminded of the values they are required to uphold (in effect a device for social control as well as an ordering of public space), or whether a more direct, unlicensed participation might carry a content of diversity more akin to the nation as it is, which may no longer be a nation at all.

A further question is whether Gormley, as the project manager who made the initial proposal, secured required permissions, and found funding for the work, retained its authorship, implying that the work remains situated in an aesthetic terrain; or allowed its determination by participants (which seems unlikely outside the licensed system of the ballot by which they were chosen, and by which they appeared in random order), or was himself the tool of the sponsor, Sky Arts, who screened images produced from a web-cam in the square (the only good images available), screening them in real time

British artist Antony Gormley at the opening of his art installation ONE AND OTHER at the “fourth plinth” at Trafalgar Square in London. The work consisted of 2,400 randomly selected members of the public who each spent one hour on the plinth between 6 July and 14 October 2009.



on monitors in the nearby National Portrait Gallery, supplying these to the press, but otherwise retaining control over their use. Or was *One & Other* reality television, its global audience able to contribute to as blog which carried only positive or at worst neutral messages?

Ties that Bound?

Gormley's international status framed the project. Yet its aim was to state identity – a socio-political, economic construct which is instrumental in determining questions of belonging in a time of mass migration. If public monuments are designed to produce social ordering, was *One & Other* a reinvention of the monument to promote a picture of a nation whose

Mapping the Unmappable,

◆ Recent discourse recognises the city as a multi-layered construct, whether as the “layered city” or “many cities in one city”.

ROBERT BROWN

Further deliberations range from considerations of the nature of social space through perception as occurring through a series of filters. (Borden; Lefebvre) Evolving urban histories echo these pluralistic readings, as do emerging discussions in ecology and landscape urbanism. (Czerniak; Girardet; Huyssen) Each understands the city as comprised of a plurality of layers formed by cultural, ecological, economic, political and social actions, agents, forces and structures. Within this context traditional notions of the city as a collection of people inhabiting contiguous space and having common concerns are suspect. What was once spatially constituted locally has been subject to significant shifts in connectivity brought on by physical and virtual networks of exchange; concurrently, both mobility and diverse, disper-

sed opportunities have fostered disparate groups overlapping across multiple spaces. This multi-layered condition is not a predetermined absolute, static, homogenous or singular, but rather constructed, changing, heterogeneous, and operates at multiple scales simultaneously. Nor do these layers exist as distinct stratum; rather they interrelate, with overlaps, gaps, adjacencies, conflicts, connections and fusions that exist or lie potent between them.

This conceptualisation affords a joined-up approach to the city's making. This attitude, grounded in community development and urban regeneration, recognises that synergies are achieved through a multi-layered approach. (Brown) Such practice echoes other emergent shifts towards ‘pluralistic’ and ‘organic’ strategies for... urban development as a ‘collage’ of highly differentiated spaces and mixtures, rather than pursuing grandiose plans based on functional zoning of different activities.” (Harvey, 40)

Working within this condition presents however two notable and interrelated challenges. Firstly, the city's

spatial and temporal complexity render it unmappable and hence unknowable. The danger is of course that the subject falls back into totalizing conceptualisations. While recognising that we can't map or know the city in toto, in order to operate in this context we need some mechanism that allows us to frame the city as a space of simultaneous multiplicity, and from which one can both construct knowledge and carry out subsequent action. Secondly, the conventions that we have inherited are based on a Cartesian geometry – one that is fixed and singular. What are needed are new tools that will enable us to operate within the city's dynamic nature. In this paper I will consider these questions, drawing upon recent work from the University of Plymouth Master of Architecture design studio to explore a praxis of multiplicity called *palimpsest*.

Inherited practice

Urban representations have historically operated within a dialectic of the strategic and experiential. The strategic is characterised by pictorial representations and diagrammatic drawings, enabling a panoptic perspective and

a sense of meta-cognition. The experiential in contrast is marked by graphic mechanisms that convey intimate and immediate spatial experience, notably as encountered through vision or touch. While also using the pictorial and diagrammatic, the primary intention is to simulate the richness of the actual experience of place.

This dialectic, while offering useful frameworks within which to operate, poses significant limitations. Inherently exclusive of the other, more significantly each fails to engage with the multiplicity that the city represents. The panoptic overview tends toward reductive visions, prioritising selected viewpoints and marginalising others. The immediately experiential meanwhile is fragmentary, limiting connectivity between individualising narratives. Each equally fails to engage fully with the temporal; their depictions are static, delimiting their validity. Such a representation “automatically freezes the flow of experience and in so doing distorts what it strives to represent.” (Harvey, 206)

In juxtaposition, place is subject to multiple interpretations from multiple per-

spectives. Further, these are malleable and permeable, shifting and evolving dependent upon the subject's viewpoint and underlying attitudes and values. No totalizing nor fragmentary representation therefore can truly capture and express the manifold interactions occurring between people and place accumulated over time. Like comparable observations on the fluidity of culture, actions and events within the city are not part of singular condition, but rather exist as multiple strands which are in a constant state of flux.

A wider conceptual framework is needed in which to formulate discussion. Yet in so doing we are confronted by a vast plurality, a challenge echoed by Fredric Jameson in questioning whether a comprehensive knowledge remains elusive.

How then to make sense of this condition and articulate some accessible account?

How can we build upon this to generate a field in which we can act and which will inform the design process?

These are concerns raised by practitioners and theorists, who have called for a reconsideration of traditional praxis, and new “techniques that engage time and change, shifting scales, mobile points of view, and multiple programs.” (Allen, 40)

Constructed practice

As Denis Cosgrove suggests, though it is impossible to represent all spatial-temporal conditions, mapping as a tool allows us this illusion. He further contends that it provides a fertile way of knowing and representing the world. The goal of the mapping as proposed here, i.e., palimpsest, is not however a singular representation. Rather, it embraces and aims to give presence to plurality, and so intrinsically engages not only with spatial form but more ephemeral considerations of meaning perspectives. This is not however so much a matter of getting any supposed reality “right”, but is more of a process of knowledge formation; that is, it is a way of ‘constructing forms of knowledge that can cope with multiple realities.’ (Kahn, 289)

There are several aspects key to the process of mapping in *Palimpsest*. First is



Photo: Simon Lee

in the 1820s after clearance of dense habitations seen by the authorities as dens of crime – to purge the social body of its dirt. I wonder if the antics of the plinthers also purged the site of something more subversive: contested space masked by dressing up and having fun. Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian's* art critic, wrote that *One & Other* was not “a celebration of the creativity of ordinary people [...] but] a diminishing, isolating image of the individual’ when ‘people will try anything to get their voices heard’ (Jones). To me, it seems the isolation of each plinther (in web-cam images against the grey façade of the National Gallery) rendered them like pictures in a white-cube space, de-contextualised and de-politicised, unable to form alliances or coalitions which might have suggested something of a nation asking itself what it is. Or, another comparison might be the Millennium Dome, with its bland exhibitions of technology, humour, faith, and other categories universally failing to construct a unity for a nation which no longer has a national narrative of any currency. But was the nation ever more than fiction?

Benedict Anderson writes of the emergence of the

nation-state as counter to private interest. The nineteenth-century liberal state sought to improve the lot of the deserving poor, both for philanthropic reasons and to prevent insurrection. Anderson reads this a shift to the state as community of common cause, bound by common ties: “regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail [...] a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7). The fantasy was enforced in a proliferation of public monuments and memorials: personal loss was subsumed in national mourning, as were personal stories in the national narrative. The greater the uncertainty, the more monuments tended to adopt old and grandiose architectural styles. Materials such as bronze and stone implied a timeless inevitability it would be futile to oppose. As Jon Bird writes, “Legitimacy became the crucial operation for the hegemonic structuring of civil society, and the public domain the site for the exchange of symbolic values” (30).

Liberalism also used art, as in the opening of the Tate Gallery in 1897, where the poor could be educated in taste and manners by mixing with the educated middle class. Brandon Taylor observes “an obsession with de-

portment and the pleasures to be gained from regularity and order” (21) in Tate’s press in the 1890s. To admit the lower classes, he adds, stated a fantasy of “a mixed audience at ease with itself, variegated and occupied” (23). Was *One & Other*: a picture of a nation at ease with itself, desperately denying the pressures driving it apart? Was it an oblique re-run of Matthew Arnold’s argument that, when a nation’s ties (such as common faith) unwind, only culture has the agency to bind? For Arnold, art’s value was universal; faced with insurrection, the state turned to culture. Arnold wrote, “the whole scope of the essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties” (viii). As such, culture required the adherence of its producers to “Establishments” (ibid.) (middle-class, professional society). Arnold wrote of “the love of our neighbour, [...] the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery [...]” (5-6). Gormley seems to share this liberal sentiment when he recalls driving through the urban periphery with its arid malls and housing blocks, paralysed by fear that the culture which requires us to “produce more, be seen

more” is unsustainable; arguing that “It is through art that we communicate what it feels like to be alive.” But whose culture?

In “Cosmopolitan Urbanism: a love song to our mongrel cities”, Leonie Sandercock writes, “We all grow up in a culturally structured world, are deeply shaped by it, and necessarily view the world from within a specific culture.” (47) She adds, “some form of cultural identity and belonging seems unavoidable” and that cultures, in the sense of beliefs and practices, can be critically revised from within (ibid). Similarly, from theatre studies, Catherine Belsey argues that culture is the structure in which meanings are made socially. She emphasises the function of language in consciousness, and that language, like any structure, changes. Hence, “we can choose to intervene with a view to altering the meanings – which is to say the norms and values – our culture takes for granted (5)”

**But
how?**

Works cited:

Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities*. London, Verso, 1991. Print.
Arnold, M. *Culture and Anarchy*. London: Smith, Elder & Co, [popular edition] 1889. Print.
Belsey, C. *Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.
Bird, J. “The Spectacle of Memory”. In *Michael Sandle* [exhibition catalogue]. London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1988. Print.
Gormley, A. “Art’s lost subject”. *The Guardian*, 13 February, 2010. Accessed on-line at 12 April, 2010. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/feb13>>
Higgins, C. “Oyez! Oyez! the plinth has come: Gormley begins his picture of Britain”. *The Guardian*. 7 July, 2009. Print.
Jones, J. “The forth plinth: it was just Big Brother all over again”. *The Guardian*, 9 October, 2009. Accessed on-line 12 April 2010. <www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2009/oct2009>
Sandercock, L. “Cosmopolitan Urbanism: a love song to our mongrel cities”. In *Cosmopolitan Urbanism*. Binnie, J., Holloway, J., Millington, S. & Young, C. (eds). London: Routledge, 2006. Print.
Taylor, B. “From Penitentiary to Temple of Art: early metaphors of improvement at the Millbank Tate”. In *Art Apart: Art institutions and Ideology across England and North America*. Poynton, M. (ed.). Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994. Print.

troubles are no more than personal idiosyncrasies? Does art displace and diminish claims for space, voice and visibility, a right to the city? Perhaps it was appropriate to use a plinth to represent a picture of the nation to itself, much as statues present a nation’s publics with required hierarchies.

The site of *One & Other* – Trafalgar Square – is a monumental zone designed

Knowing the Unknowable

an analysis within differing thematic and/or attitudinal viewpoints (i.e., various layers within the city). Though this focus can have limitations if uncritically considered; it does enable a more incisive view and can also reveal hidden conditions, whether dormant, marginalized or neglected. A second key move is a juxtaposition of these individual mappings. This operation’s intellectual roots lie in Edward de Bono’s arguments on lateral thinking. It offers an engagement of seemingly known information and phenomena with a fresh perspective, and is particularly useful ‘as a way to restructure existing patterns of thinking and provoke new ways.’ (de Bono, 11) As he further suggests, this approach raises awareness of alternatives, including those that may not be so obvious. Juxtaposition equally owes a debt to discourse on “unlearning” and “transformative learning”, which enable an exposition of the constraints and limitations of our existing attitudes and ways of working. Moreover, it aids us, as Saskia Sassen might suggest, to reveal the connections of the seemingly unconnected. The

third key aspect is the use of narrative.

Stories help us to remember and make sense of our experiences in time and place, the wider forces at play and those places themselves.

They make accessible patterns, linkages and contingencies that inform the relationship between personal thought, action, experience and memory, and broader, shared narrations. Most significantly, these stories can be mapped, revealing boundaries, trajectories, intersections and fields occurring in time and place. (Potteiger and Purinton) The use of multiple media plays a distinct role in this mapping, including film, photography and writing to record the diversity and flux that marks inhabitation of place. Various digital and graphic techniques further support this juxtaposition; this creative play affords a simultaneous manipulation at both strategic and tactical levels, allowing various permutations and possibilities to be revealed.

Palimpsest is the subject of an on-going investigati-

on with three primary aims: firstly, to explore the city as a multi-layered representation. Secondly, to test the means by which we represent this construct. Thirdly, to frame discussion for later project work (not discussed here). This exploration maps and tests how the city’s different layers synthesise, overlap, touch, reflect, displace, and/or erase each other. In one recent project sited in Riga, students investigated specific neighbourhoods reflecting particular approaches towards city planning in place at the time of their inception. These were examined within a framework of ecological, political, socio-cultural and socio-economic layers. Two neighbourhoods investigated are briefly discussed here. One study of the gridded 19th Century Jugendstil “new town”, revealed convergent and divergent strata of cultural, economic, political and social forces, less strategically planned but no less present within the current landscape. In some areas an overlapping of high levels of car ownership and high car values, a predominance of Latvian and English signage and even menus, and well-refurbished street facades was identified.

In other areas where Russian signage and text was found, fewer cars and of lesser value were present, and the building frontages were in a noticeable degree of disrepair. This condition not only reflected pro-Latvian government strategic policies, but equally revealed the extent to which the underlying intentions had permeated through even to non-government related actions and spatial conditions. Another study of the medieval Old Town unearthed a similar convergence of the cultural, economic and political. Most notable was a coalescing of “tourist-friendly” shops, restaurants and bars, officially sanctioned by the government tourist board, with “suggested” tourist routes. Seemingly omitted from the authorised narrative were the inhabitants of Riga, whose connections with the area were limited to acts of consumption (whether as buyers or sellers). Together these conditions reveal a shift from a once-diversified city fabric to a singular space of tourist, leisure and retail consumption, reflecting the city’s long-term strategic agenda for the Old Town.

These two projects reveal an urban conception that

embraces the simultaneous multiplicity present there. By bringing together distinct observations, and working with them through juxtaposition and a narrative framework, they prompt us to look again. Manoeuvring around any singular, reductive formal representation and attributed meaning, they direct our focus to the linkages between layers of time and place.

Some conclusions

In positing *Palimpsest*, what is proposed is not some unitary theory or ‘new meta-disciplinary category’ as Greig Crysler warns us against. Rather, it shares more in common with de Certeau’s notion of tactics, i.e., a calculated action in the context of a terrain that already exists, in which it is but just one of many different operations. It is also critical to highlight that the working methodology proposed is not a positivist model. Echoing Marc Treib’s critique of Ian McHarg’s *Design with Nature* methods, analytical overlays might help to reveal certain criteria but they do not autonomously generate subsequent design strategies. Nor is this approach intended to reveal some sense of an absolute truth. It recog-

nises that any approach carries with it a certain bias; as Corner observes, “how one “images” the world literally conditions how reality is both conceptualized and shaped.” (153)

***Palimpsest* does not mean to deny that the city is ultimately unmappable and unknowable as a totality, but rather that the city consists of a multiplicity of narratives, each composed of a range of performances, perspectives, processes and relationships.**

It acknowledges that these at times coalesce and at other times conflict in place. The intention is to explore how these layers relate, and the potential their convergences and divergences offer as site of design. Ultimately, it is not about defining some singular vision, but rather ‘the primary aim...is to pull out the positive threads which enable a more lively appreciation of the challenge of space.’ (Massey, 15)

Art



The utopia of art is a correlate of citizen-based utopia. This utopia of art is a utopia of possible communication, a utopia of 'cultural communism,' or at any rate of the cultural community. The world is not irremediably split between the most civilized and the most uncultivated precisely because there exists this formal universality of judgments of taste. **Yves Michaud**

Sensus Communis and the Public

◆ **Drawing upon the analyses of French philosopher and art theorist Yves Michaud and the Belgian art theorist Thierry de Duve, this article is an investigation of the potential and topicality of the Kantian concept of "sensus communis". This suggests one possible theoretical framework for discussing community, publicness, and public interfaces.**

JACOB LUND

Taking a historical approach Yves Michaud detects a crisis in contemporary art, or rather in the concept and representation of art, and speaks of "The End of the Utopia of Art". In this, he understands the *sensus communis* to form a part of the utopia of art which refers to a universal human community of taste. Today, there are no universal aesthetic criteria, and art in reality only gives rise to relatively small and limited communities of taste. Any group and any individual is endowed with a right to pass a legitimate judgement of taste, and this occasions a multiculturalistic fragmentation of taste. In other words, the idea of the communicative function of art and a universal community of taste has been challenged by a democratic generalized pluralism or multiculturalism that does not profess to the ideal of a universal community which was a cornerstone of modern art and of Kantian inspired aesthetic theory.

The utopia of art appeared at the same time as what Michaud calls "the utopia of democratic citizenship", of equality and liberty. They were both established along with the emergence of the concept of a public and a public sphere in the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Michaud the democratic and capitalist societies since then have developed around these two utopias together with that of labour. The public came to play a new mediating role in the previously "private" relationship between the artist and the commissioner of the work. "The public", however, has from the outset never been statically defined; it is produced by different conflictual discourses with which different sectors of the public identifies – different

social groups appropriate for themselves different forms of artistic representation (141f.). The aesthetic question of criteria of taste arose because of the plurality of the public's judgements of taste and the confrontations of these in the public sphere.

Kant's *Critique of Judgement* is a response to this question in that it seeks to provide rational foundation for those types of universal claims arising from aesthetic judgements. What is communicated in the judgement of taste is, in Kant's own words, "the mental state in which we are when imagination and understanding are in free play". What is actually communicated is the communicability of feeling, so to speak, that is, the effect the free play of the faculties of cognition – of understanding and imagination – has on the mind. Aesthetic communication is the universal communicability of a feeling we all know through the very nature and free play of our faculties. It is, in other words, a process in which everyone participates, an inter-subjective community.

Michaud's aim is to draw out the implications of Kant's theory for what he refers to as the utopia of art.

The Critique of Judgement addresses in particular the question of communication and intersubjectivity: The passing of a judgement of taste is an aesthetic act, in which the person affirming the universality of his or her sentiment goes beyond his or her ego and merges with others. It is a passage from "I" to "we". According to Michaud this intersubjectivity should not be given an ahistorical character, but should instead be seen in its historical context, namely the French revolution and the idea of freedom and equality amongst the citizens: The formal universality of judgements of taste and the social communication that supported them not only anticipated the coming equality which was the actual future of the utopia of democratic citizenship, it actually participated in its realisation: "The utopia of art is a correlate of citizen-based utopia. This utopia of art is a utopia of possible communication, a utopia of 'cultural communism,' or at any rate of the cultural community. The world is not irremediably split between the most civilized and the most unculti-

vated precisely because there exists this formal universality of judgments of taste." (146).

Thus, the judgement of taste signifies that the world is shared, a common, and aesthetic experience reinforces the equality of citizens postulated elsewhere.

The program of Kant and the early aesthetic thinkers was a democratic program.

This utopia of art has now come to an end, Michaud claims. Kant formulated his program in the context of the utopia of citizenship by giving the concept and the reality of a public sphere of communication around artworks a theoretical form and a rational foundation (149). Kant was not very concerned with the artworks in themselves; the most important was the establishment of communication in the aesthetic experience. Aesthetic experience should not be reserved for an elite of refined *connoisseurs* leaving the lower classes to their uncivilized crudeness, excluded at the same time from political freedom and equality. The utopia of art is a utopia of communication, democracy and civilization: it is integrated in the program of an education (*Bildung*) of humanity into sociability (*ibid.*).

But, according to Michaud, already in the nineteenth century the utopia of communication turned out to be an illusion. Under the influence of capitalist and democratic development the enlightened and public critical sphere of the eighteenth century became the sphere of public opinion as well as of the division between classes and social groups (151). Even though art appeared to provide the principle of aesthetic communication, in reality no one agrees. Everyone is sure of the universal relevance of his or her experience, but no one is able to convince any one else when they disagree. In reality the Salon exploded into a series of competing salons, and the aesthetic community is characterised rather by disagreement. It turns out to be a myth, Michaud claims. Despite different attempts to obstruct the reality of this disillusionment, utopia is truly dead. According to Michaud art stands for a motive for believing in sympathy and

communication, that is, in the Kantian sense, in a principle of sociability and community that is not based on religion, the nation, national language, family, commercial interests etc. But the community cannot be founded on such an imaginary principle:

Art continues to be presented as a source of legitimation and motivation able to reenchant social life – but it is merely a mirage.

One can imagine the importance of being attentive to other more modest and less lofty forms of legitimation and motivation. The crisis of art raises the issue of new concepts which have to be formed in order to think through radical democracy. (156)

Contrary to Michaud Thierry de Duve defends – in a more analytical approach – the belief in or principal hope for a *sensus communis* even though it only exists as an idea, or a presupposition. When passing an aesthetic judgement, for example "This rose is beautiful," or "This urinal is art," or "This code is art," we say "you ought to feel the way I feel, you ought to agree with me". According to de Duve, Kant understood better than anyone else that this call on the other's capacity for agreeing by dint of feeling is legitimate. Thus, the faculty of taste is only important in so far as it testifies to a universally shared faculty of agreeing, namely *sensus communis* – it is not important in itself. ("Do Artists", 141).

De Duve sees *sensus communis* as a kind of cosmopolitanism that is not founded politically, but aesthetically. Therefore it would be illegitimate to actually found the cosmopolitan state upon it, "because an actual aesthetic community extending to all world would be a monster." ("The Glocal", 685). For the existence of *sensus communis* as a fact cannot be proven, and civil society cannot be constructed on the basis of the faculty of agreeing. The only actually existing fact is that we pass aesthetic judgements and that we do this by dint of feeling, and that we, at least implicitly, claim universal assent for these feelings. To Kant it does not matter whether taste actually is the faculty of agreeing of all humans, or whether taste merely signals

this faculty. The decisive point for de Duve is that regardless of whether *sensus communis* exists as a fact, we ought to suppose that it does.

History has taught us to think that *sensus communis* is definitely *not* a natural endowment of humankind and therefore must be a mere regulative idea: we have realised the "fact" that we do not possess the faculty of spontaneously empathizing with the human in us all. The name of the demonstration of this lack of empathy with the human in us all as a "fact" is Auschwitz (*On Negativity*). But, the fact that *sensus*

communis is not a fact is only a fact in the empirical, verifiable sense, de Duve remarks. What we must not do, de Duve contends, is to conflate and confound Auschwitz as a fact of reason and Auschwitz as a fact of nature. The empirical fact of nature is that Auschwitz did take place. The fact of reason is that Auschwitz ought never to have happened – "Auschwitz never again," the moral law reads. This is the reasoning behind de Duve's claim that *sensus communis* does not exist, but it ought to exist.

According to de Duve *sensus communis* refers to

Encyclopedic Public

◆ **Broadly received and frequently quoted, Paolo Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude* has become a primary entry point to an understanding of current changes in the means**

of production, organization of labour and the crisis of the public sphere.

LARS BO LØFGREEN



Martin Howse performing PSYCHOGEOPHYSICS in Aarhus 2010

» For a long time, the fact that nothing binds the reader to his paper as much as this avid impatience for fresh nourishment every day, has been used by editors, who are always starting new columns open to his questions, opinions, protestations. [...] The reader is indeed always ready to become a writer, that is to say, someone who describes or even who prescribes. **Walter Benjamin**

Kevin Carter,
LANDSCAPE-PORTRAIT,
Gateshead, UK (2007).
Photo: Karin Coetzee.

- see next page

a faculty of global empathy, and in spite of his profound pessimism regarding human nature, Kant saw that we cannot renounce the idea, the undemonstrated postulate, that we humans are endowed with *sensus communis* without renouncing our own humanity, and that aesthetic judgements are the place where we automatically make this postulate. This small hope is the only one, Kant is ready grants us – “and it is not much compared with the promises made by the many utopias born out of the Enlightenment,” de Duve remarks (“The glimpse”, 7). In Kant the hope stems from the fact that human beings are inclined to see beauty in nature. In de Duve natural beauty is replaced by art:

» We need art in order to retain that glimpse of hope that religion or politics can no longer promise, let alone guarantee.«
(de Duve, 8).

The question that is still begging to be answered in this context is whether it is still possible – and advisable – to argue for some kind of shared feeling and community in our present state of affairs, i.e. in a late capitalist biopolitical society of control? And if it is: Which works and interfaces are able to provoke and facilitate such a *sensus communis*?

Works cited:

- de Duve, Thierry. “Do Artists Speak on Behalf of All of Us?” Diarmuid Costello and Dominic Willsdon, eds. *The Life and Death of Images*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2008. 139-156. 141. Print.
- de Duve, Thierry. “The Glocal and the Singuniversal: Reflections on Art and Culture in the Global World.” *Third Text* 21:6 (2007). 681-688. 685. Print.
- de Duve, Thierry. *On Negativity in Kant's Third Critique*. Lecture given at the annual conference of *The European Society for Aesthetics* in Udine, Italy, May 29, 2010.
- de Duve, Thierry and Lund, Jacob. “The Glimpse of Hope that Religion or Politics can no Longer Promise...’ An Interview with Thierry de Duve”. *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*. 36-37 (2008-2009). 6-10: 7. Print.
- Michaud, Yves. “The End of the Utopia of Art”. Bartomeu Mari and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, eds. *Think Art: Theory and Practice in the Art of Today*. Rotterdam: Witte de With, 1999: 131-156. Print.



Virno's use of this concept, however, is not without its issues. In particular, Virno's reading of the multitude as an absolute rather than as a figure of approximation, seems problematic (40). In doing so, little room is left for any possible dialectics between the state of things that are to come and the state of things that already exist.

The following is an attempt to read a dynamic out of this concept. Using two examples, displaced in time as well as focus, the aim here is to point to some general characteristics of opposition within this concept.

When parts don't fit

One often tends to forget that there are two sets of enlightenment thought emerging out of the 18th century. Two ways of distributing knowledge, two sets of organising theoretical and practical philosophy, two projects for the education of man, two notions of the public sphere, publicity, Öffentlichkeit etc., two sets and not one.

The one of these two, is the one that is easy to remember. The one born out of an increased engagement with rationality, and trivialised in Kant's *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung* (1783) with the almost in constitution written credo: “Sapere aude! Habe Mut, dich deines eigenen Verstandes zu bedienen!”. In short, it is a project engaged with solving the deficiencies in rationality through a critique of rationality. A project that emerges out of a French intellectual climate only to be given its final layer of coating in a German setting as a project of bridging the gap between the various forms of reason itself. From Kant to Hegel, Habermas and Luhmann – this project

of unity-seeking mediations and dialectics is a project of continued relevance.

In characterisation it is a project resting on the belief in the possibility of true translations. A project resting on the power of representation and metonymic relations. A belief made into system where widely diverse political stances are trusted to be represented fully in the account of the elected member of parliament, where complicated misdeeds of the individual are trusted to be translated into rightful execution by a legal system. In short: a belief in the consistency of language itself. True, these are all examples that can be contested. But pointing to the many exceptions and examples of the limits of representation, conversion and translation in current society and pulling out the scepticist's argument, would here be to miss the point. The point is here not that every part can magically fit, be translated into or be represented by the whole, but rather that there in the attempt to make these translations and representations manifest, is a clear primacy of the whole over the part. This primacy is the inheritance of the first project of enlightenment.

Now, the second project emerging out of the enlightenment is a project of the opposite. A project resting not on processes of mediations and dialectics (i.e. they play a role, but a less than dominant), but on the irreducible significance of the singular parts. As such, in effect: the multitude. This project takes on a peculiar shape in a paradox perhaps best illustrated through the pinnacle of this second project of enlightenment - the *Encyclopédie* of Diderot

and D'Alembert from 1747 to 1758 (where D'Alembert leaves the project) and completed in 1773. The paradox, however, is here neither the relationship between the editors, nor the 26 years in the making of the *Encyclopédie*, but rather the apparent discrepancy between the intent and the scope of the project. Looking up the word encyclopaedia in the *Encyclopédie*, this paradox becomes apparent (my emphasis):

“We will say only one thing about this ordering considered in connection with the whole encyclopedic material, which is that it is not possible [...] to introduce as much variety into the construction [...] into all the parts of its distribution, as the encyclopedic order allows. It [the order] might be created either by relating our different kinds of knowledge to the various faculties of the soul (this is the system we have used), or by relating them to the entities they take as their object; and this object may be one of pure curiosity, or a luxury, or a necessity. [...] It is therefore impossible to banish arbitrariness from this broad primary distribution. The universe offers us only individual beings, infinite in number, and virtually lacking any fixed and definitive division [43]; there is none which one can call either the first or the last; everything is connected and progresses by imperceptible shadings; and if throughout this uniform immensity of objects, some appear [...] and rise above it, they owe this prerogative only to particular systems, vague conventions, certain unrelated events, and not to the physical arrangement of beings and to nature's intention.” (Diderot)

Striking is here the lack of any mechanism of exclusion. Everything is potentially relevant, the categories are provisional, and the only thing putting an end to the otherwise infinitely recursive project of analysis and description, is the steady publication of volumes pushing the editors from letter to letter and finally draining the financial resources.

Read in the light of these discrepancies, the *Encyclopédie* may very well be the true project of the multitude.

A project where the individual particles holds a primacy over the whole, where abstraction from the singular article to the whole of the *Encyclopédie* exists only in the means of a register, and where the acceptance of non-integratable elements, omissions, uncertainties and fractions are a primary condition.

Unreliable interfaces

Taking place in random, urban locations and aimed at non-specific, non-guided exploration of the area around, the work of Martin Howse, does more than to just follow in the line of the situationist practice of psychogeography and the *dérive*. Although Howse's practice of psychogeophysics comes with neither the bold manifestos nor full blown ideology of The Situationist International, it does provide an interesting take on the unreliable interface of the multitude. Even though presented by himself as having no goal other than mere exploration and no aim other than the loosely defined “discussion and intervention” in the city, psychogeophysics has at its core a very focused agenda that quite exceeds what

Howse himself presents confusingly as a “practical investigation of urban geophysical archaeology and spectral ecologies”. This second agenda follows not just from the setup, but also from the staging of the event itself.

Imminent before the walks, Howse spends a great deal of time presenting the equipment and the interface. Confronted with clear readings from previous walks, numbers increasing and decreasing, it is clear that something is indeed being measured. But just as vocal and clear as he is about the data measured, how it is stored in the ram of the devices, copied onto his laptop and then transformed into well-shaped curves of a graph, as silent is he when it comes to the questions about what exactly these readings hold of significance. This lack of a purpose is by no means made up for during the walks. Devices are handed out, but little direction as to their use is given and it is thus up for each and everyone to try out their own interpretation. At play is here not just the production of random observations, but rather an intensified sensibility towards the near surroundings. Scribbles on the walls of old barracks, garbage on the street, signposts and open electrical wiring are all being tried interpreted through devices blinking and sounding off with no apparent consistency.

The experience of the participants here lead to more than just mistrust in the readings of his equipment, more than just a sudden suspension of cause and effect, and to more than an experience of the limits of interpretations etc. Central to the experience of the psychogeophysics of Howse is the slow accep-

tance of artefacts as singular, non-synthesisable, objects. The particles are a mass and points in all, but one direction.

As such, and on this level, Martin Howse's practice holds an interesting take and commentary on how the public interface might look like from the viewpoint of the multitude, this second enlightenment project.

Not with the abandonment of reason and discernability as a consequence, but as a display of the difference between deductive and inductive reasoning. Representations are either broken down or made impossible, metonymic relations are brought into question and abstraction made difficult, in a process where the singular part always holds primacy over the whole and the interface is reduced from transparency to a cause for concern.

Works cited:

- Diderot, Denis. *'Encyclopedia' The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert Collaborative Translation Project*. Translated by Philip Stewart. Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office of the University of Michigan Library, 2002. Web. <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0000.004>. Trans. of “*Encyclopédie*,” *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, vol. 5. Paris, 1755.
- Kant, Immanuel. “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”. *Was ist Aufklärung? – Thesen und Definitionen*. Ehrhard Bahr ed. Stuttgart: 2004: 9-17.
- Virno, Paolo. *A Grammar of the Multitude – For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.

Hybrid Public Art Practice

◆ The overarching aim of my research is to explore how production of a public art that combines both traditional and digital art practices may lead to a revised conception, a hybrid public art practice, that is inclusive of the physical and virtual as both site and material for the creation of public art works.

KEVIN CARTER

In producing practice based research my aim is the development of a ontology of digital practices that might, when synthesised with particular public art practices, expands methodologies and methods available to artists and practitioners working within a public art practice across online and offline sites. I would like to think about the possibilities that social media platforms appear to offer, and discuss, with reference to two examples, concerns that have arisen from the production and consumption of these works. "What we could call 'art' in the context of Web 2.0 is certainly what most reinforces our belief in the potentials of the connected multitude, in its possibilities for the free production of critical thought and new life." (Prada)

Arguably examples of this *free production* might include the Google mashup of British National Party (BNP) membership data that was created after a BNP membership database had been leaked into the public domain via Wikileaks. The works creator, Ben Charlton, in discussion with his peers on Twitter, converted the data and uploaded it to a Google map, creating a spatial representation of BNP membership, filtered by postcode, upon a rendering of the real space as represented by Google maps. More recently, the *C.H.R.I.S.* website and related Facebook page made use of a database of convicted pedophiles to provide an online resource where users could view convicted pedophiles living in their area. The dataset is compiled and kept up-to-date by the sites author Chris Witter and users of the site. The impetus for the work resulted from the UK government's abandonment of their own plan to publish a similar database due to concerns about vigilanteism.

In thinking about these works through the rubric of Kwon's models of public art practice both artifacts might be understood as indicative of the "Art in the public interest" model, Kwon further divides this model into three main methods: 1. Communities of 'Mythic Unity'; 2. Sited Communities (Existing); 3. Invented Communities (Temporary/Ongoing).

»I would argue that both relate to the third definition – "Invented Communities (Temporary/Ongoing)" – a method that is reliant upon the practitioner forming a community of collaborators around the production of the artwork; a community that may be already existing or specifically set up to produce the work.«

In locating these works within a tradition of public art practice I am not trying to claim them as public artworks, or attempting to resuscitate a moribund public art practice within the novelty of new technologies, rather it is to see if there is a correlation between certain historical public art practices and a vernacular use of social media. Thinking about these examples from an information design perspective,

it is interesting to note that Charlton withdrew the map soon after its publication due to fears about misplaced vigilanteism resulting from the efficacy of the dataset, which it might be argued, was one of the reasons that the *C.H.R.I.S.* website was first set up in the first place.

With my own work *Landscape-Portrait* [see page 11] this replication of the efficacy of market research was challenged by the use of non-objective data collection techniques. Post-code based demographics are derived from objective datasets, produced from census data. By attempting an inversion of the questions used by the census questionnaire, for example asking "How do you get on with the people you live with?" as opposed to "How many people do you live with?", a subversion is produced at the site of the data construction, corresponding to Kris Cohen's observation that "whoever makes data makes the publics that data purports merely to describe."

Landscape-Portrait can be seen as a critique of this demographic viewpoint by offering different views of person and place, which are then juxtaposed with the reductive portraits provided by demographics, problematising their unquestioning use, for example in the formation of strategies responding to business, social and environmental planning.

Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>

Why We Should Be 'Discrete' in Public

OBJECT ORIENTED ONTOLOGY – ENCAPSULATION AND THE PRIVATE LIVES OF OBJECTS

◆ It is admirable to demonstrate that the strength of the spirit transcends the laws of mechanical nature, but this program is idiotic if matter is not at all material and machines are not at all mechanical. (Latour, 124)

ROBERT JACKSON

There is a strong case for suggesting that in our contemporary epoch, interfaces play more of a fundamental role than ever; to consider the countless mediations of digital programs, collective groups, corporate fundraisers, phone apps, mobile platforms and social practices, is to consider many interlocking communicative systems and assemblages.

But why should we suggest that interfaces have played less of a role than they do now? This is not a historical interjection, but an *ontological one*. Digital interfaces may allude to boundaries between data and flesh, nature and artifice, platform and software; but

this affords less of an interface as such, but more of a distinction between one boundary and another. The problem becomes bigger when we consider the bolstering of 'culture' onto the interface. Surely it is human culture that has special access to a specialised domain of meaning here? Or at best a post-human one?

We should consider that in the last number of years, Continental and Analytic Philosophy has undergone a major revision on a number of unfashionable issues. If we were once spellbound by discourses, social practices, texts, language and the finitude of human epistemology, then today's scholars choose to orient their thoughts towards the independence of reality itself (Bryant, Harman, and Srnicek, 13)

Of the recently disbanded collective 'Speculative Realism' (a group comprising of the philosophers Quentin Meillassoux, Ray Brassier, Iain Hamilton Grant and Graham Harman), it is Meillassoux's criticism of the anti-realist term 'Correlationism' which has become the

antithetical lynchpin of contemporary Philosophy.

As Meillassoux succinctly puts it, correlationism is the idea that 'we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other' (5). The speculative mode of enquiry is to access the properties of reality, materialism in-itself or objects of enquiry, without succumbing to a subject always-already relating to it. Arguably correlationism has been with philosophy since Kant, but it has leaked into many disciplines in many guises, not least studying media and its vicissitudes. Perhaps correlationism exists in its most potent form as the interface between human minds and the mirror of culture.

In the forthcoming publication *The Democracy of Objects* (forthcoming, 2011), the philosopher and Media Theorist Levi Bryant coins the view, 'Malkovichism' as influenced from the famous scene in the film *Being John Malkovich*. This view pertains to an 'erasure of alterity', such that the objects

of our concern (in this case digital media) are mere vehicles of culture, meaning, perspective, ideology; in short they reflect our own concerns or the interests of a fractured, complex society.

We do not merely see PHP code in its own way or witness a search engine peruse data; we would rather interpret it as an interface that affords communication between a human witness and communicative informational output. We would rather see it as an attempt to address the ideological connotations inherent within the form of executable code that society produces and is 'captured' by (or as Richard Rogers recently called 'back-end politics').

These positions rely on the correlationist attitude that the inherent reality of things can never be disclosed and the world of digital media can only ever operate *for-us*, not for itself. The paradigm of interface plays a particularly ambivalent part in this argument by siphoning off platforms, software protocols and objects by way of a representative intention.

As a referent, we should note Andersen and Pold's introductory premise to *Interface Criticism: Aesthetics beyond the Buttons*, in so far as their investigation of the interface does not stop at the computer's surface but it progresses; "...beyond the buttons and reaches 'back' into history, and 'through' to the human senses and perception, 'behind' the concept

Self-Service Broadcasting

REENACTTV.NET

◆ The interface can be interrogated in terms of the potential for active participatory audiences to evolve at the site(s) of new television. Further, it can be examined how this evolution is closely aligned to technological developments and tools that might engender 'free cooperation' and then collaboration, 'emancipating the spectator' (Rancière), and creating agency and empowerment.

PHIL ELLIS

Inherent in a convergent culture, the possibilities multiply for active participants to act as both 'semionauts' and tactical media practitioners to exploit the political tensions between empowered viewer/users and the needs of the broadcast industry to 'monetise' the viral *feedback*, exemplified in such tactics as the mash-ups of remediated broadcast.

David Joselet suggests that through the act of *feedback*, as producers and viewers of the ubiquitous media of new television, we can "learn the system and counter it – make noise" (171). He sees this as a viral act in a potentially open circuit, reminiscent of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (or alienation effect) in terms of its political activation of the receiver where, in relation to the political point, (s) he is "conscious of the social situation that gives rise to it and desirous of acting in order to transform it" (Rancière, 8). Where Brecht's theatre audience is akin to the new television audience is in the availability for activation – the former through the removal of the fourth wall and the latter through the recognition of user production in the interfaces of new television. Rancière proposes a Brechtian media exchange "without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive vo-

years" (4). This has further potential as an open circuit if the work itself adheres to Umberto Eco's principles of the *Open Work*, where "every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and a *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself" (4)

Mash-ups and similar acts of resistance can be seen as key acts of agency and affect (Gray 2008) and a new type of 'flow' sited at the intersection between the DIY tools such as Wirecast, Ustream, Stickam etc and prosumer culture.

Such a bricolage of ideas of collaborative/cooperative, open, networked, viral participatory flows are the structural and thematic underpinning of the forthcoming *reenacttv.net* arts practice contextualized by this area of new television as self-service broadcasting.

reenacttv.net harnesses the collaborative nature of webcam chatsites to



Webcam image processed through collaborator Gary Millard's 30 line emulation software. This will be used for the reenactment from 133 Long Acre.

reenact early television experiments and seeks to interrogate the public interface of new television and opportunities for self-service broadcasting; specifically the reenactment of *The Man with the Flower in his Mouth* by John Logie Baird with the BBC in 1930.

The reenactment will facilitate active engagement with the material of the play through the residents and

of the interface, 'down' into the machine, 'out' into society and culture" (10).

We should note that at first glance, only one fifth of their investigation actually delves 'beyond the buttons'. The intention here is not to disregard the human senses, perception, history and culture, but to remind ourselves that in reality, it is not 'just' these points that are worth pointing to. To start off with, it would perhaps be better to suggest the alternative stance; interface is not a concept.

Of the original four thinkers that comprised Speculative Realism, it is Graham Harman who is currently influencing some media scholars into pursuing the speculative enquiry, and with one discrete reason that relates to interface.

Unlike many thinkers who wish to subvert correlationism from the inside, Harman suggests that, ontologically speaking, the relationship between a human user and an entity is different only in kind from any other relationship. The interface between human and browser is different only in kind to a USB stick and its interface to hard drive or even an interface between laminate flooring and trainer.

Harman argues for an ontology that suggests speculating on different kinds of interfaces between objects themselves. It is what he terms an Object Oriented Ontology.

Instead of focusing on the multiplicity of interfaces surrounding human culture, Harman launches a challenge to the humanities; what relations are occurring between the discrete objects that we often occlude?

Rather than accounting for Javascript keywords, LCD displays, ethernet cables and API's as tools that society use to communicate (or miscommunicate), Harman thinks the humanities should offer speculation on these objects themselves and their own boundaries and firewalls.

Those of you will already be aware that the term shares two thirds with another paradigm, perhaps even more closely related to interface; Object Oriented Programming (OOP). Even though this computational paradigm has many key differences between a speculative enquiry, it holds one key similarity; Discreteness.

Perhaps the American videogame scholar Ian Bogost is the most vocal media theorist to advocate Object Oriented Ontology. Alongside his own forthcoming publication (*Alien Phenomenology*, 2011, forthcoming), he also cites Harman's work in his first book *Unit Operations* (2006). This is a reply to his own version of the 'unit' which is "a material element, a thing. It can be constitutive or contingent, like a building block that makes up a

system, or it can be autonomous like the system itself" (5). Both scholars seek to underscore the discrete reality of units and objects, both as ordinary things or complex, abstract and conceptual structures. For Bogost, the merging of computation and ontology into an aggregated unit framework is pitched against the usual understanding that digital expression utilises systematic, network thinking. Although Bogost makes it clear that,

...the relationship between units and systems is not a binary opposition [...] Unit-operational structures might also reaffirm systematicity, even if they deploy the most discrete types of unit functions. [...] The difference between systems of units and systems as such is that the former derive meaning from the interrelationship of their components, whereas the latter regulate meaning for their constituents." (4)

This key ontological insight sets the groundwork for analysing media as a complex set of discrete figurative units, and not as a totalising system that regulates and orders to one principle alone. Whilst its use has been considerable in videogame studies (it is after all, an approach to videogame criticism), its framework has been sorely lacking in researching digital aesthetics.

Immanently connected to our speculative notion of object interface is encapsulation, one the four properties given to the Object Oriented

Programming paradigm, alongside Abstraction, Inheritance and Polymorphism. For a system to be considered object oriented it must be discrete. Non- OOP systems do not have the luxury of encapsulation, and as such modifications of data structures can be accessible from any part of the program, making bugs and glitches an almost certainty. OOP's dominance is closely related to Graphic User Interfaces (GUI's) for this very reason. Minimise buttons, XML files and entire SQL databases are objects composed of more fundamental objects, with an equal intrinsic structure.

Encapsulation is the notion that objects have both public and private logics inherent to their components. But we should be careful not to regard the notion that private information is deliberately hidden from view, certain aspects of the object are made public and others are occluded by blocking off layers of data. The encapsulated data can still be related to, even if the object itself fails to reveal it.

Interfaces reliance on OOP does not just reach the visible practice of moving and operating folders, programs and browsers, but also reveals the inherent interfaces between computational objects themselves. Other objects adhere to the interfaces of objects without the need to understand their complexity. The Malkovichism view that public arena reflects human activity needs to be flattened,

and not just with the enquiry into mechanical entities, but of units within all sorts of complex phenomena.

Finally, how does the interrelationships between units impact on artworks - especially those that befriend computation? Perhaps, a starting point would denote a re-appropriation of artworks that intend to visualise human use within different visualisations. Mary Flanagan's famous work *Digital Unconscious* (2000) highlights the already evident correlationist attitude. But instead of the application mining unconscious human use, consider the interface we witness - the application that mines the system it thrives on. The hidden layers of hard drive brought forward from the mines of encapsulation.

But even contemporary conceptual art can express the configurable. The German artist Florian Slotawa is well known for his transgressionary re-contextualisation of objects. For the work *Hotelarbeiten [Hotel Works]*, (1998-1999), Slotawa painstakingly reconfigures units within European hotel rooms and documents the outcome. The interrelationship of the room is reconfigured into an operation and then it is put back into its original position, as if nothing happened. The discrete encapsulation of the objects are not exposed but adjusted contingently. Chairs lie on mattresses and doors prop up tables alongside walls.

Nothing is really transformed, but instead it is radically composed. In the 2004 piece *Kieler Sockel*, (2004) at Kunsthalle zu Kiel, Slotawa placed the museum's sculpture collection on bespoke plinths made from their office equipment - heads resting on bins and cabinets. For the museum, this led to a rather ambivalent position where it had to purchase objects that it already owned.

Configurability is not strictly the domain of computation, but the domain of units. Although it has been noted by commentators (Chilver, 37) that Slotawa subverts conceptual art's composition into something radically contingent, I would argue that it offers a speculative transgression onto the interface of objects.

Works cited:

Andersen, Christian Ulrik and Pold, Søren Pold. Eds. *Interface Criticism: Aesthetics Beyond the Buttons*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010.
Bogost, Ian. *Unit Operations*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.
Bryant, Levi. *The Democracy of Objects*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011.
Bryant, Levi, Srnicek, Nick, and Harman, Graham, eds. *The Speculative Turn*. re.press: Melbourne, 2010.
Chilver, John. "Contingency & the Paradox of Composition: Florian Slotawa." In *Art Papers*. Vol.32/No.5, Sept/Oct 2008: 32-37.
Latour, Bruno. *We Have Never Been Modern*. trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.
Meillassoux, Quentin. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. trans. Ray Brassier. New York: Continuum, 2008.

The prototype interface for reenacttv.net

workers of Long Acre London, Baird's studio from where the play was first broadcast, as well as the participatory audience - opening a dialogic relationship between past and present technologies and conditions as fully participatory authors and actors.

In the spirit of a 'free cooperative open work', the user is free to create whatever flow they choose to create with the work, hence the authorship of this artwork is problematised. The artwork can be articulated as part of "growing online participation and content provision" and the artist can be described as what Trebor Scholz calls a "cultural context provider, who is not chiefly concerned with contributing content to her own projects.

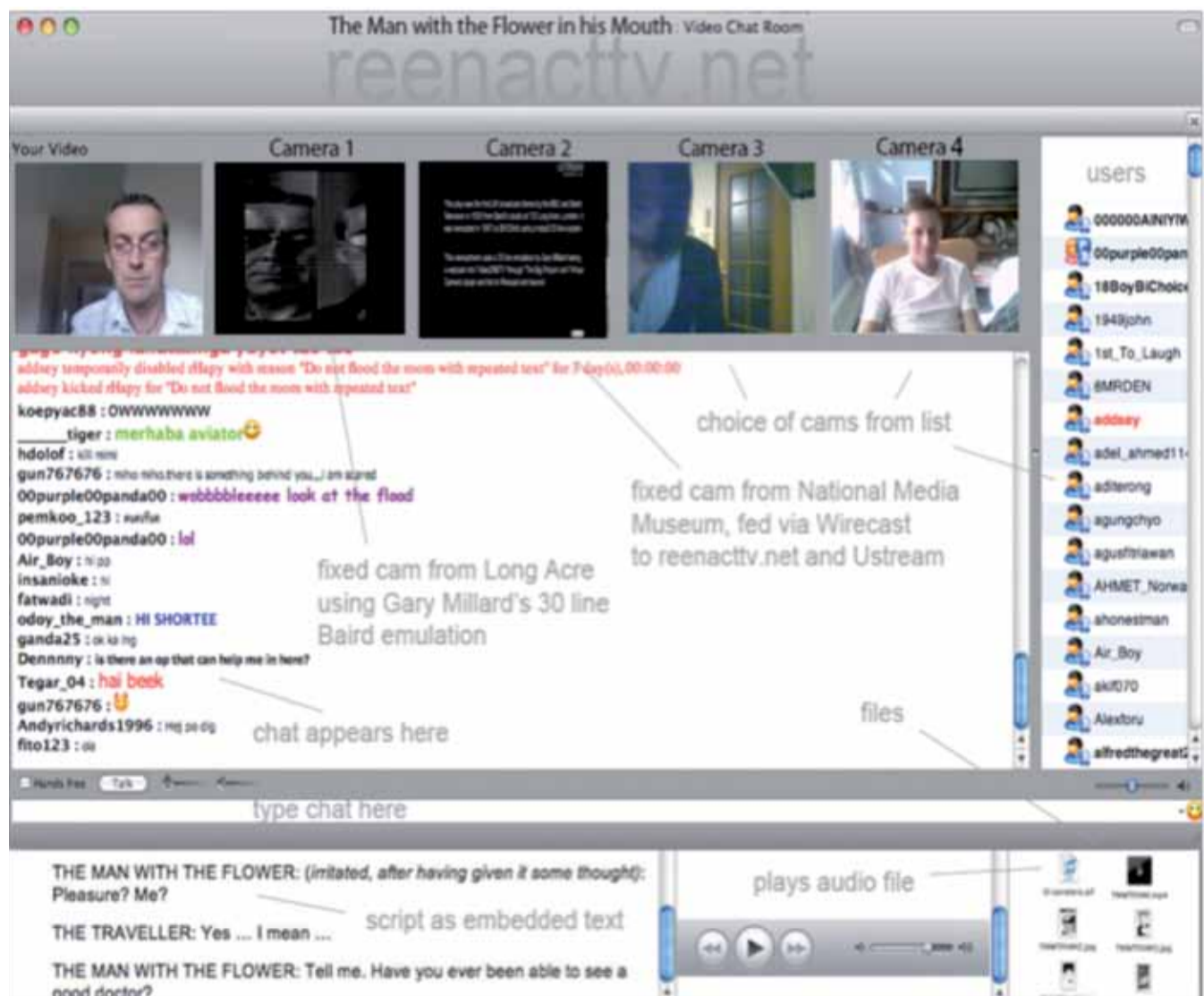
Instead, she establishes configurations into which she invites others... a catalyst of performative online acts". The work has therefore created a toolbox of interpretive possibilities for creative acts in the reenactment, opening a space for the audience

that potentially "transforms them into active participants in a shared world" (Rancière, 11).

The dialogic process between participants and contemporary and historical television systems, in terms of technologies and uses (the political and social implications of the user-producer), aligned with their modes of distribution and reception, allow for a critique of the contemporary position of broadcasting through the process of reenactment.

Works cited:

Gray, Jonathan. *Television*. London & New York: Routledge, 2008. Print.
Joselet, David. *Feedback: Television against Democracy*. Cambridge Mass. and London: MIT Press, 2007. Print.
Millard, Gary. *Early Television Techniques*. 2010 <<http://users.tpg.com.au/users/gmillard/nbtv/nbtv.htm>>.
Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*. London, New York: Verso, 2009. Print.
Scholz, Trebor. "The Participatory Challenge". In *Curating Immateriality*. Krysa, Joasia. (Ed). New York: Autonomedia, 2006. Print.



SOUND

iPublic Interfaces

◆ **Musical management** can be understood as a way of controlling personal moods, bodily energy levels and the experience of public space.

NINA GRAM

The iPod user can make the tedious urban commute more entertaining and captivating, or he can simply create a listening space in which time seems to pass a bit faster.

As such the iPod user often has an agenda when adding a private soundtrack to his experience of a public urban space. [...] When controlling one's personal experience in public the listener seems to find himself in a space that is not entirely either private or public. [...] The term *ipublic* should indicate the ambiguous spatial character of the mobile listening space. I acknowledge the fact that the users often feel as though the mobile music creates a private listening space through which they can experience and stage their surroundings. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that this staged experience is a result of a synergy between the music and the surroundings – between the private listening space and the public urban space. According to David Beer, the iPod user ‘tunes out’ of the public space as he turns on the music. I would like to expand this idea and suggest that the listener constantly tunes both in and out of the private and public realms, and I believe that it is exactly this ambiguous shift between a private and public frame of mind that constitutes some of the attraction of the mobile music player. The term *ipublic* interface indicates the possibility of being situated in a private and a public space at the same time. [...]

The architect Rem Koolhaas presents another more general description of this complex spatial dichotomy as he describes it as a contemporary tendency caused by the media:

I think we are still stuck with this idea of the street and the plaza as a public domain. I don't want to respond in clichés, but with television and the media and a whole series of other investigations, you could say that the public domain is lost. But you could also say that it's now so pervasive it does not need physical articulation any more. I think the truth is somewhere in between. (Rem Koolhaas)

The iPod understood as an *ipublic interface* with certain controlling qualities seems to represent that ‘somewhere in between’. The private soundtracks become tools for staging and making sense of our experiences in public space. In referring to Steven Felds notion of *acoustemology* (226), which refers to the epistemological qualities of acoustics, the iPod becomes an interface for making sense of and staging public space.

Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>

Touched Echo – a feel of a Ghost

MORTEN BREINBERG

Sound unfolds in time and disperses in space. It arrives from a distance and resonates in the body of the listener.

Hereby sound represents the presence of an absence, something that is and is not, something more than a spirit but yet without a body. In short a ghost.

I discuss the urban art installation *Touched Echo* by German artist Thomas Kison in order to reflect upon the ghostly nature of sound and how echoing sounds of the past, in this case the sound of the allied bombing of Dresden in February 1945, interferes with both private and public life, with reality as history (known, objective and factual) on one side and as something lived (remembered, recalled and experienced) on the other. The relationship between the remembered and the known, between the subjective experience and the historical fact that *Touched Echo* touches upon, echoes today's political debate of this incidence as an act of war or an act of terror: A debate that concerns a haunted place, the land of a ghost.

Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>

The Interface and the Machine

◆ **This article examines the relationship between the machine and the interface in a media archaeological perspective that hopefully will point towards the physicality of the machine, in contrast to the symbolic ordering that is prevailing in the current understanding of interface.**

MORTEN RIIS

It is stated that “in the case of computers, interfaces mediate between humans and machines, between machines and between humans” (Andersen et al), so the interface should be understood as something that is in-between the user and the machine, but I propose a deeper understanding of the term interface, something that can be seen as tentative mini archaeology of the interface, which tries to avoid the political and social aspects of the phenomenon, to focus on a more rudimentary and philosophical understanding of the machine and interface. This media archaeological perspective draws heavily on the ideas outlined in Zielinski's *Deep Time of the Media*, but initially, the reflections on the interface originate from my own artistic practice with music machines as a composer and sound artist, in which especially the piece *Steam Machine Music* questions the role of the musical interface.

I will argue that the interface is what lies at the core functionality of the machine, thus, something physical that to some extent is impossible to make perfect, because of its physicality. The interface can be regarded as something that utterly defines the essence of the machine: to modify and transmit motion and energy.

Machine and interface

The media archaeological music piece/performance *Steam Machine Music* consists of a home-made me-

chanical musical instrument, build mostly from vintage *Meccano* parts. The instrument is driven by a steam engine that provides the whole machine with energy. A way of interpreting this instrument would be to point towards the instability of the entire mechanism, which is extremely noticeable, and displays and reflects the physicality of the machine to an extreme degree. Everything is imminently about to go wrong, a cogwheel that jams, a screw that loosens itself, a chain falling off, water running out, the loss of steam pressure, gas running out. One could state that this is physical and mechanical glitch music, but in contrast to its digital counterparts, *Steam Machine Music* questions the whole practice and conceptualizing of machine music in a historical perspective that points to the fact that machines always have been malfunctioning, they have always broke down, there has always been a ‘real’ physical mechanism that challenged the predetermined functionality of the machine.

When working with this steam machine, that is free of the traditional interface metaphors of the graphical user-interface in modern computers, many questions arise, questions about where the interface starts and the machine begins.

In the steam machine one could claim that all is machine, and that there is no interface because of its strong focus on functionality, but then again, I - as a performer - still interact with the mechanism, starting and stopping various elements of the machinery based on compositional and aesthetic choices. But this interaction happens at the ‘cogwheel level’, thus, there are no handles between core functionality and symbolic messages; so, how does that relate to the definition of the

interface as being something that is in-between the user and the machine? Maybe we should try to define the interface in a broader sense and look into similarities and points of rupture in the relationship between the interface and machine. If we for instance turn to interface theory, engineers distinguish between user-machine interface and machine-machine interface (Zielinski, 54).

Besides the interface definitions found in (Andersen and Pold, 9; Cramer and Fuller, 149) one in particular comes to mind: “An interface is a contact surface. It reflects the physical properties of the interactors, the functions to be performed, and the balance of power and control” (Laurel and Mountford, xii).

This contact surface correlates well with the experience of interacting on a ‘cogwheel level’, but by examining some rudimentary definitions of what a machine is, interesting similarities emerge regarding the essence of the machine as the modification of motion. From the simplest lever to the complex and un-transparent modern computer, the core functionality of the machine is the modification and distribution of motion and energy. As Kittler claims in relation to the constant focus on the symbolic meanings and relationship between the symbolic user-interface and the computers functionality: “All code operations, despite their metaphoric faculties such as ‘call’ or ‘return’, come down to absolutely local string manipulations and that is, I am afraid, to signifiers of voltage differences”. Furthermore, engineer Robert McKay states in 1915: “A machine modifies and transmits energy to do some special work” (3). And “A machine is an assemblage of parts that transmit forces, motion and energy in a predetermined manner. [...] A machine has two functions: transmitting definite relative

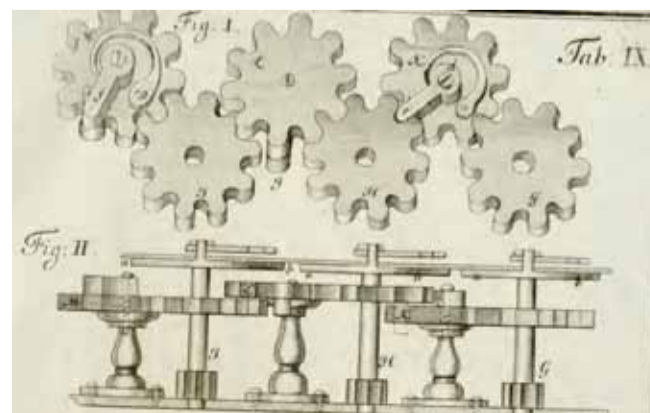
motion and transmitting force” (Onwubolu, 364). Transmission seems to be the key word, to move energy from one part of the mechanism to another, a kind of perceptual exchange between the most rudimentary elements of the machine.

Trying to implement this perceptual exchange into a philosophical content requires the introduction of pre-Socratic philosopher Empedocles and his theory of perception.

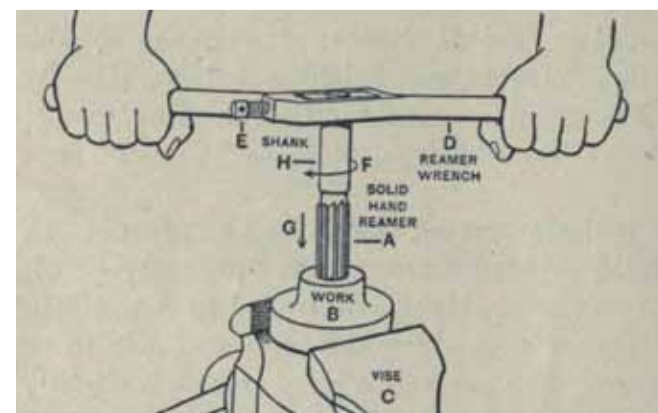
Zielinski and Empedocles

Empedocles theory of perception is built upon the notion in which all objects is constantly emitting ‘effluences’ (streams of minute particles). These, flowing out from objects, are essential to the explanation of perception, and consequently these particles will emit from the perceiving organ and go to the pores of the object of perception. Perception is one such instance of interaction between bodies, and takes place if and only the effluences are of a shape and size appropriate to the receiving pores. Thus to perceive an object is to receive from it effluence a kind that fit the organ of perception (Long; Parry).

Zielinski interprets the theory of Empedocles through a media-technological perspective in which the effluences is interpreted in a media-heuristic understanding as a theory of the perfect interface (53-54). He states: “The porous skins are ubiquitous; they are a material element of all things and people and thus move with them. Every person and every thing has received this gift” (55). The constant quest for the perfect ubiquitous interface resembles in many ways the theory of Empedocles, but this quest is an utopian dream that will never happen, thus “[...] because it is perfect [the interface], building it will never be possible” (55) - an account that in many ways resembles the theory of Wittgenstein and



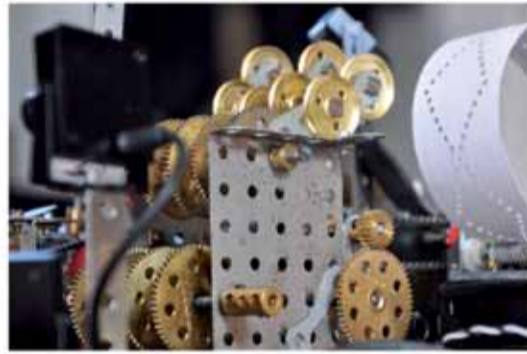
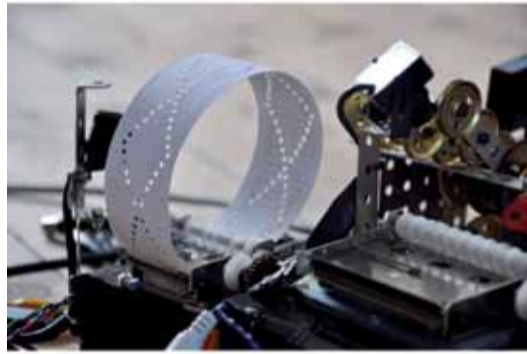
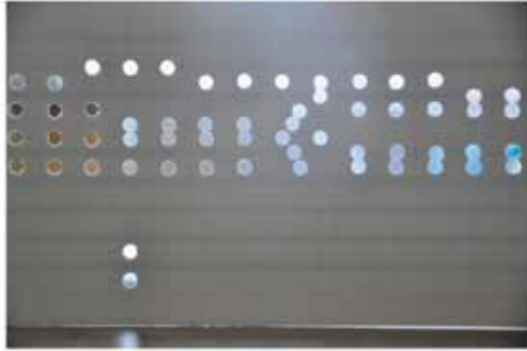
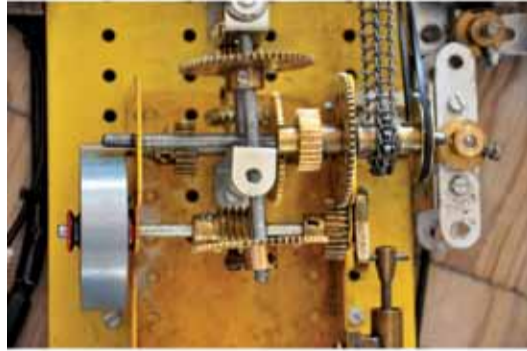
Machine-machine interface, taken from (Leupold Fab IX)



User-machine interface, taken from (Smith, 414)



Pictures of STEAM MACHINE



Works cited:

Andersen, Christian Ulrik, and S. Pold. *Interface Criticism: Aesthetics Beyond the Buttons*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2010. Print.

Andersen, Christian Ulrik, Geoff Cox, and Jacob Lund. "Public Interfaces - Background". Aarhus: University of Aarhus. 4 Jan 2011. <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/?page_id=7>.

Cramer, Florian, and Matthew Fuller. "Interface." *Software Studies: A Lexicon*. Ed. Fuller, Matthew. Leonardo Books. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008: 149-52. Print.

Fuller, Matthew. *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software*. New York: Autonomedia, 2003. Print.

Kittler, Friedrich A. "There Is No Software". 1995. *CTheory.net*. Eds. Kroker, Arthur and Marilouise. 2/11 2010. <<http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=74>>.

Laurel, Brenda, and S. Joy Mountford. *The Art of Human-Computer Interface Design*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990. Print.

Leupold, Jacob. *Theatrum Arithmetico-Geometricum*. Leipzig: B. C. Breitkops, 1774. Print.

Long, A. A. "Thinking and Sense-Perception in Empedocles: Mysticism or Materialism?" *The Classical Quarterly* 16 2 (1966): 256-76. Print.

McKay, Robert Ferrier. *The Theory of Machines*. London: E. Arnold, 1915. Print.

Onwubolu, Godfrey. *Mechatronics - Principles and Applications*. Oxford: Elsevier Butterworth-Heinemann, 2005. Print.

Parry, Richard. "Empedocles." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Zalta, Edward N. Fall 2008 Edition ed, 2008. Print.

Riis, Morten. "Steam Machine Music". 5 Jan 2011. <<http://vimeo.com/16995143>>.

Smith, Robert H. *Text-Book of Advanced Machine Work*. Boston: Industrial Education Book Company, 1910. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. Ed. Anscombe, G. E. M. (Repr.). ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976. Print.

Zielinski, Siegfried. *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*. Electronic Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

his notion of the machine as symbol, in which he expose the idea that the possible movements of the machine are somehow already present, when the machine is treated as a symbol - a symbol that is an expression of an ideal condition, where the components of the machine only can move in a predetermined manner. And if we consider the components of the machine as figurative or

symbolic representations, the movements of the machine will be no more relevant than the movement of the piece of paper it is drawn upon (Wittgenstein, 77-88). The stride for the perfect interface is thus impossible and something that will only exist in the drawing and diagrams of the symbolic machine. Compatibility and exchange between elements is something that is immanently present in modern digital rea-

lity, and regarded in this way the interface is something that is integrated into every mechanism every machine and every human. It is not something that is external to the machines functionality, thus the interface becomes the glue that holds the machine together. In the electric current passing through the registers in the microchips in the central processing unit, and in the cogwheels distributing the energy of the

steam engine, the interface is at its core something physical and therefore something that can break. Furthermore, it will inherit the possibility of error or glitch - a way of stating that the perfect interface doesn't exist, but nevertheless it is this distribution or modification of energy that is the core element of the machine and society as we know it. The meeting between the two different states or objects will have the pos-

sibility of failing. Thus "in my understanding, Empedocles' philosophy is definitely not a concept of failure, but a world-view oriented towards succeeding, precisely because it is aware of the possibility of failure" (Zielinski, 41).

Illustration by Chad McCail



obedience doesn't relieve pain



The photo shows Claude Shannon (US) during the 3rd World Computer Chess Championship that was staged in the course of the Ars Electronica Festival 1980. Credit: LIVA – Linzer Veranstaltungsgesellschaft mbH

spite enormous strides forward in technology since Information Theory was at the ‘cutting edge’, its legacy is one of literally millions of interfaces based on its reductive logic. At this scale, the question of what is noise and what is signal, what is an appropriate spectrum of possibilities to be communicated, and how signal and noise is differentiated is thrown into stark relief, drastically altering our experience of technology, culture and biopolitics.

Marx’s notion of ‘real abstraction’ (found in his “Fragment on General Intellect”) explores the notion that material means can embody ideas, social relations and so on. This can occur in very direct un-technological ways but technology does this overtly. Even today, the operational logic of software does not seem to stray far from Shannon’s assertion that it should be programmed to “operate for each possible selection” from “a set of possible messages”. Interfaces operating within the overall system (both at, above, and below the level of the Graphical User Interface) set appropriate types and ranges of interaction and input.

Moving briefly beyond the scope of Information Theory to focus on the characteristics of the interface itself, one might invoke the process of ‘encapsulation’ within Object Oriented Programming (OOP). Encapsulation allows objects to hide their internal methods such

that only those methods that need to be accessed outside the object are ‘public’. In effect an interface is the public face of a (set of) process(es). Therefore one can argue that whilst interfaces offer particular functionality, they also imply making other kinds of interaction impossible, hiding away the workings within the black box.

Interfaces then, act as filters blocking out certain messages, whilst privileging others for relay.

If there is an informational quality to contemporary culture, then it might be not so much because we exchange more information than before, or even because we buy, sell or copy informational commodities, but because cultural processes are taking on the attributes of information – they are increasingly grasped and conceived in terms of their informational dynamics. (Terranova, 7)

Whilst encapsulation is a function of Object Oriented Programming specifically, and interfaces in general, it is Information Theory that first provided a way for *any message* to be translated into digital ‘information’. It is as ‘information’ that human relations are most effectively subsumed in technology, and therefore as information that they become subject to the filtering and relay processes of interfaces. Whilst Information Theory is intended to operate at a micro level, encoding the constituent parts of messages (such as letters or waveforms); one might argue its logic results in a kind of scalar symmetry whereby operations at a macro level of communication mimic its reductionism (such as the

Noise at the Interface

◆ **The notion of noise occupies a contested territory, in which it is framed as pollution and detritus even as it makes its opposite a possibility.**

ANDREW PRIOR

Noise is always defined in opposition to something else, even if this ‘other’ is not quite clear. I am interested in exploring noise in the context of ‘the interface’ and draw historically on information theory which defines noise in opposition to signal.

The fundamental problem of communication is that of reproducing at one point either exactly or approximately a message selected at another point. Frequently the messages have meaning; that is they refer to or are correlated according to some system with certain physical or conceptual entities. These semantic aspects of communication are irrelevant to the engineering problem. The significant aspect is that the actual message is one selected from a set of possible messages. The system must be designed to operate for each possible selection, not

just the one which will actually be chosen since this is unknown at the time of design. (Shannon, 1)

In ‘A Mathematical Theory of Communication’ (written in 1948), Claude Shannon outlined a way in which any communication might be encoded mathematically, stored numerically and decoded back into its original form. Information Theory developed out of this to encompass the mathematics *and* the material means, the electronics, logistics etc. Its initial focus was on strengthening signals for the improvement of mass-media

systems (telephone networks in particular), but clearly developing a means to deal with information digitally has impacted far beyond this initial remit. The issue of signal strength is about overcoming noise, reproducing a message *despite interference* that may intrude within a communications system. Thus noise is fundamental to the concept of Information Theory and predetermining an appropriate spectrum of possibilities to be communicated (through resolution bandwidth, and encoding), a necessary stage in defining what is and isn’t noise. De-

CURATING Interfacing the Commons

CURATORIAL SYSTEM AS A FORM OF
PRODUCTION ON THE EDGE

MAGDA TYZLIK-CARVER

At the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century the commons are everywhere. Or to be precise, the struggle over the commons, as well as the ideological appropriation of the concept of the common by the market, is all around us. Movements such as edu-factory or a recently launched project of co-research, Uninomad2.0, current students struggles in UK to protect access to free education, or global discontent with methods

and forms of state control as exerted over WikiLeaks site in recent months, are only the Western examples of struggles over what is considered to be a common good, in these cases education, knowledge, and information.

We can observe an increased interest of art and curatorial projects in the commons as a subject (Carpenter; Dragona; Pelhjan and Biederman).

Starting from the assumption that curating is always linked to some form of collaborative production,

especially when taking place with the use of socio-technological networks, my proposition here is to think of curating as facilitating forms of collaborative production which, when taken together, are part of some common yet unenclosed activity.

Specifically my focus is on the ways in which immaterial labour is mobilised in such a context. What Lazzarato says about immaterial labour has been applied to the field of curating and curatorial systems (Krysa). Relevant here is Lazzarato’s description of immaterial labour as “the interface” which links it to the “immaterial commodity”, enlarged and transformed by the process of consumption. It is exactly that place of intersection and transformation where many curatorial systems using social technologies in the production of events, situations and forms of knowledge,

operate. By proposing to think of the curatorial system as an interface I want to analyse how curating is a practice on the edge – as it precariously balances between the struggle over and appropriation of the commons it facilitates.

From the abundance of various definitions of the commons, I want to start from the definition of the commons articulated by Massimo De Angelis in an interview for e-flux. He recognises three elements which are part of the commons where “the third and most important element in terms of conceptualising the commons is the verb ‘to common’ – the social process that creates and reproduces the commons” (An Architektur). The concept of ‘commoning’, which De Angelis takes from Linebaugh’s *Magna Carta Manifesto*, I understand as referring to constantly negotiating and learning how to share and produce common resources. And it is in that sense that

this concept is most useful when considering how networked art or curatorial projects engage with the issue of the commons – not just as a subject but as a practice in common.

The Free Software movement, peer-2-peer networks or Amazon’s Mechanical Turk are examples of different approaches to processes that create social and capital relations. At the same time they fall under two categories described by De Angelis as two sides of the same coin. Enclosures, argues De Angelis, are a “continuous characteristic of ‘capital logic’” and “a *force* with totalising drives that exists together with other forces that act as limit on it” (60). He says “it is either capital that makes the world through commodification and enclosures, or it is the rest of us – whoever that ‘us’ is – that makes the world through counter-enclosures and ‘class struggle’” (61). Certainly a project like the Free Software Founda-

tion initiated in response to early attempts of limiting open and free access to free software, is an example of the latter. What’s interesting is that it organises access to resources through the use of free software licenses (GNU GPL) and at the same time propagates certain practices of engaging with free software which ensure freedom to run, copy, distribute, study, change and improve. As such, the Free Software Foundation or indeed the Free Software movement in general, is an example of a social process that creates the commons, and an interface that frames the forms of contact that have to be engaged in order to access those resources. A similar capacity of organising forms of interaction is a feature of a curatorial system. And my argument is that exactly this faculty makes it possible to think of a curatorial system as an interface.

So what is a curatorial system? Firstly, we need to

example of a call centre), not only resembling it at the level of metaphor.

Information & Semantics

Digitality brings to media, and relations mediated by technology, a leveling effect in which *all becomes information* (which in terms of information theory, means bits of information – binary digits, 1's and 0's); and as such all becomes subject to the assumptions that determine digital information. Once media are encoded as information there is little ontological difference between sound, text and visual media, or for that matter software. In 1949, Warren Weaver suggested adaptation of Shannon's signal/noise opposition to account for 'Semantic Noise', his assumption being that mathematics could overcome not only problems of engineering noise but also those of semantic meaning – allowing technology to faithfully communicate a message without itself modulating the meaning. This notion of a transparent technology overlooked the notions of real abstraction and the encapsulation processes of the interface, the way in which the design process must necessarily premeditate the role and flexibility of the realization to optimize its performance. To some extent these assumptions produce an interesting power reversal in which the user, as presumed controller of the interface becomes subject to it: "Software has traditionally been understood to place the user as its subject, and the computational patterns and elements initiated, used and manipulated by the user as the corresponding grammatical objects." (Cramer & Fuller, 151)

The affordances of *media as 'digital information'*

mean that on the one hand the possibilities to manipulate content multiply drastically, whilst on the other encapsulation of the interface easily obscures the restrictions and boundaries of functionality. The filtering tendency of the interface therefore has a homogenic, normative result on our experience of media by reducing the breadth of possible interaction into prescribed choices through a kind of aesthetic quantization. In combination with the propensity toward repetition underwritten by media *as information*, such homogeneity is magnified manifold.

Filtering is not only relevant to the signal that gets through – everything that isn't input is bypassed as unacceptable, creating a kind of modulus situation whereby non-compliant input is automatically recast as NOISE.

Noisy Tactics

One obvious way around this normative effect is to go beyond, or beneath, the interface – beyond with actions that break or subvert it (for example, through circuit bending); beneath it by invention of new interfaces through programming, electronics or physical design, a situation in which the 'tool becomes the message' (Cascone).

Interface design involves decisions around what functionality will or will not be provided, acceptable ranges of interaction and so on. Through this process, interfaces become representations of the operational logic of the systems they act upon. Despite the tendency for interfaces to exclude unwanted noise, obsolescence means they soon become the source

of new noise, embodying outdated assumptions, giving realized form to fragmented schema. Nevertheless, whilst broken or obsolete interfaces may represent dislocated knowledge, once repurposed they also offer the possibility of bricolage and revitalized meaning, outflanking homogeneity even in the act of repetition.

The recent interest in glitch art, whilst part of a long tradition of the aesthetic possibilities of chance, failure and openness, is in one sense a response to the suffocating, self-correcting hydra of informational dynamics. Beyond the repetition of information, the normative qualities of the interface are a result of filtering, quantizing the breadth of possibilities through which interaction can occur. Glitches and failures overcome the seeming inevitability of systemized communication.

Nevertheless, even such strategies as these have the potential to be derailed. Glitch as an aesthetic is always recuperable, monitizable. Whilst this is by no means the fault of aesthetics, the role it has come to play makes this trajectory to some extent inevitable.

The claims toward progress under a late capitalist, post-modernist, informational society mean that the nature of revolutionary, antagonistic, or noisy aesthetics is always to provide new territories for domination and control.

"[T]he popularization and cultivation of the avant-garde of mishaps has become predestined and unavoidable [...] The procedural essence of glitch art is opposed to

conservation; [...] to design a glitch means to domesticate it." (Menkman, 6)

Interfaces are arbiters of noise and signal. Their influence when operational is toward standardization, and when broken towards fragmentation and dislocation. Their ubiquity demands attention, scrutiny and challenge. In "Glitch Studies Manifesto", Rosa Menkman argues that only through focus on failure as *process*, rather than outcome, can such tactics overcome the normative trajectories of culture and economy. Attali's metaphorical noise is often misread to equal signal noise – interference, distortion, dissonance – yet, all these prove to be as pliant and accommodating vessels for commodification as consonance, harmony, clarity and so on. The trouble with difference is that it implies an eternal connection to the very thing it negates.

Works cited:

- Attali, Jacques. *Noise – The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
- Cascone, Kim. "The Aesthetics of Failure - 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music". In *Computer Music Journal*. 24, 4 (Winter 2000).
- Cascone, Kim. "The Failure of Aesthetics". *Share Festival*. Lecture. <<http://vimeo.com/17082963>>.
- Cramer, Florian, and Fuller, Matthew. "Interface". In *Software Studies – A Lexicon*. Fuller, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008. Print.
- Marx, Karl. "Fragment on Machines". In *The Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*. 1858. <<http://thenewobjectivity.com/pdf/marx.pdf>>.
- Menkman, Rosa. "Glitch Manifesto". 2010. <<http://www.slideshare.net/r00s/glitch-studies-manifesto>>.
- Shannon, Claude. "The Mathematical Theory of Communication". In *The Bell System Technical Journal*. Vol. 27. 1948: 379–423, 623–656.
- Terranova, Tiziana. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. London: Pluto Press, 2004. Print.
- Weaver, Warren. *Recent Contributions to The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949.

Works cited:

- An Architektur. "On the Commons: A Public Interview with Massimo De Angelis and Stavros Stavrides." *e-flux* 17 (2010): n. pag. Web. 10 Jun. 2010. <<http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/150>>.
- Carpenter, Ele. *Open Source Embroidery*. 2005. Web. 29 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.open-source-embroidery.org.uk/>>.
- De Angelis, Massimo. "Separating the Doing and the Deed: Capital and the Continuous Character of Enclosures." *Historical Materialism* 12 (2004): 57–87. Print.
- Dragona, Daphne. "esse, nosse, posse. common wealth for common people." 2010. Web. 19 Aug. 2010. <<http://www.emst.gr/commonwealth/>>.
- Krysa, Joasia. "Software Curating. The Politics of Curating in/as (an) Open System(s)." 2008. Web. 5 Jun., 2010. <<http://www.kurator.org/wiki/data/main/files/JoasiaKrysa%28PhD%29.pdf>>.
- Lazzarato, Maurizio. "Immaterial Labour." *Radical Thought in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997: 132–146. Print.
- Linebaugh, Peter. "Some Principles of the Commons." *CounterPunch* 8 Jan. 2010. Web. 29 Dec. 2010. <<http://www.counterpunch.org/linebaugh01082010.html>>.
- Pelhjan, Marko, and Matthew Biederma. "ARCTIC PERSPECTIVE INITIATIVE." 2007 ongoing. Web. 29 Dec. 2010. <<http://arcticperspective.org/>>.

identify various elements that are part of this system. Curating is one of them, but also online platforms, networked tools, software, and public as users/producers/immaterial labourers. However, the notion of a curatorial system also recognises the interactivity among all the elements, the relations generated and forms of production mobilised within the system. If a curatorial system is a collection of contingent elements (technology, networks, users/producers, curating, immaterial labour) understood as different forms of agency which interact with each other within it, then the system becomes an interface that facilitates and frames a way to access those elements also from the outside. Similarly, the organisational functions of curating, also understood as immaterial labour, become operative in such a system as they "manage social relations" and extract "social cooperation" (Lazzarato, 138).

Joasia Krysa's notion of immaterial curating recognises the political dimension of curating by situating it within the context of immateriality and she considers the immaterial curator as "akin to the figure of the manager, or in Lazzarato's terms 'facilitator'" (31). Furthermore, paraphrasing Lazzarato, she identifies the curator as "central to the new forms of participatory management" (31).

Immaterial labour is an interface of "a new relationship between consumption and production", which instead of being based on consumption of commodity and in consequence its destruction, "enlarges, transforms and creates the 'ideological' and cultural environment of the consumer" (Lazzarato, 138). The appropriate question to ask next would be how this relationship is interfaced not just within, but by a curatorial system? I would argue that in a networked art context, a curatorial system is an interface which translates

this process of ideological transformation and communicates it to the public. And this takes place through engaging workers' subjectivity as a productive force that turns consumption productive, this "real and proper social process that for the moment is defined with the term *communication*" (141). What is being produced and in effect what is "communicated" by the curatorial system is exactly the point here: namely if it is possible to access each element of the system and in what way.

If one is interested in curating as a form of agency that can redistribute power relations, or as the case might be, facilitate environment for production and reproduction of the commons, then there is a need to re-consider immaterial labour in its potential to become an emancipatory practice that doesn't end at the point of reproducing capital relations but actively develops immaterial practices of 'commoning'.

Curating as (Public) Interface to the Art Market

◆ The article explores the expanded concept of public interface by establishing a link to the field of curating, in particular curating in the context of technological systems (or what commonly is referred to as 'online curating') and the art market.

JOASIA KRYSA

The suggestion is that curatorial and technological apparatuses combine to reveal detail on the art market and its inextricable link to capitalist logic that is ever more adapting itself to the demands of the immaterial economy. The article speculates on how the curator can be understood as an interface between the public and the art market and indeed the broader immaterial economy that lies behind it. Perhaps this has always been the case, but the significance is that new paradoxical models of curating exist for online contexts that both affirm and contest its logic.

"In an art world dominated by the curatorial" – states Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the chief curator of the forthcoming Documenta 13 – "to act without a pre-defined curatorial plan offers a possibility to both repeat the network of connectivity of the digital age, while also reflecting on its shortcomings and implications from a critical viewpoint".

The online environment is also dominated by the curatorial in much the same way albeit in new forms, but it can be argued that curating, and to some extent the practice, is different not least in the way it has entered the everyday and broken its specialisation. With the pervasive use of popular technologies, such as the social web and networking platforms, users have assumed roles of curators of their own lived experience.

Even technology developers now liberally use the term curating, for instance in referring to the selection of 'Apps' for an iPhone as 'curating' them. Wikis, list servs, existing social networking sites all become platforms for curating; tagging and blogging becomes curating, in addition to the proliferation of curatorial software and custom-build curatorial platforms.

By curatorial platforms, I don't mean online sites where material is simply displayed in virtual exhibitions, what I refer to is a more complex socio-technical system that facilitates curatorial process with various degrees of participation and interaction of multiple human (the public at large) and non-human agents (software, network); that stand in for curator, and that automate and distribute other elements of the curatorial processes. In this way, the various agents of the network are involved in a system of curating. [...]

It can be argued that curators have always acted as interface (between the public and art market or art world), so what is different in relation to online curating? In the case of online platforms, both the technological system (software) along with the curator and the public becomes the interface; a 'distributed interface' one might say. What is also significantly different is that the whole network participates in these processes, and the specialised role of artist, curator and public becomes indistinct. Rather than simply operate as an interface for artists to become validated as part of the art world, curating can also be understood as a mechanism for the public to produce. In this way, the 'interfacing' with the art market and system of value-making is made more overt. [...]

In recognition of the ways in which information and data are traded and the ways in which participation has become a necessary part of the production of value, new models of online curating make the relations between curating and the art market more overt and in tune with contemporary informational capitalism. In such ways, curating is inextricably linked with the interests of the art market and the divergent economies that underpin it, but once understood can also be reimaged in alternative and critical terms. The figure of the curator becomes central to this, as the paradigmatic contemporary worker, and operates in a suitable position to attest and contest the logic of the art market.

Read full article at <http://darc.imv.au.dk/publicinterfaces/>

Capital



L'or et le plaisir. Prenez ces deux mots comme une lumière...
Gold and pleasure. Take these two words as a light...
Honoré de Balzac

The Creative Public: Democratic or Productive?

◆ In the mid-90s Yves Michaud pronounced “the end of the utopia of art”.

JAN LØHMANN STEPHENSEN

By this he was referring to the waning of a historically significant understanding of a privileged relationship between on the one hand: art and its discourses; and on the other: “the utopia of democratic citizenship”. According to this belief, art was thought to have a particularly benevolent influence on interpersonal communication, and was thus perceived as “a correlate to citizen-based utopia [...] a utopia of possible communication, [...] of ‘cultural communism,’ or at any rate of the cultural community” (146). However, looking at the actual state of affairs, even when it comes to judging or discussing art, “the aesthetic community” – that is: the contemporary art world – appears to be nothing but “skirmish and strife” (151). Given this the coupling between art and democratic discourse and citizenship seems rather far-fetched, Michaud argues, thus announcing the end of its reign.

The reports of the death of this utopian idea could be greatly exaggerated. In fact, it would rather seem that this utopian coupling has been restored in recent years, although in a somewhat transformed form, which now is marked by discourses on “networks”, “collaboration”, “projects”, and not least: “creativity” (which appears as a “stand in-term” for “art”, one might say, with an emphasis on its productive aspects, rather than those related to reception and taste). This new discursive figuration also includes the third grand utopia around which the Western democratic societies have developed since the 18th Century, “the utopia of labor” (135-40), which like the other two utopias has also been in a profound crisis, especially since World War II and in particular the 1960s.

Today, this new coupling forms a hegemonic vision of what might be termed the “creative productive public”, which as a general rule is presented as the historical overcoming of a number of problems and ills, pointed out by previous critiques of capitalism (Boltanski & Chiapello; Stephensen).

This tendency is found in a quite elaborated form in Charles Leadbeater’s book entitled *We-Think: The Power of Mass Creativity* (co-authored with 257 other people), as well as in Tapscott & Williams’ *Wikinomics* (2006) and *Macrowikinomics* (2010). But perhaps most obviously it is found in Yochai Benkler’s *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), in which so-called “social production” or “commons-based peer production” is thought to have had a profound transformative effect on not only markets, but also on the realm of human freedom (both on a political and individual level). Although the term “creativity” itself does not quantitatively speaking appear all that central, Benkler nonetheless insists that the core of the networked information economy is the combination of nonmarket production and the democratization of creativity (425). He furthermore emphasizes that the type of social relationship the commons-based peer production processes initiate get their “social valence by... the shared experience of joint creativity they enable” (374-5). And at the end of this, Benkler, of course, interlaces the creativity performed in social production with the rise of the so-called “networked public sphere”, which is explicitly described as a phenomenon “attenuating, or even solving, the most basic failings of the mass-mediated public sphere” (465).

This last phrase is, as already mentioned, a recurrent theme in the introduction of these ideas of “participation”, “produsage”, “social production”, “collaborative creativity” etc., namely: the celebration of these as a successful cure for a number of major, societal ills of Modernity – especially, of course, of Capitalist Modernity. One crucial aspect of this has to do with the degree or level of activity which is being assumed, emphasized, and no doubt often exaggerated. This should obviously be seen in contrast to the passiveness of the consumer-citizen previously associated with the fall of the public sphere at the hands of commercial mass media once suggested by a broad range of theoreticians from Adorno and Habermas to Guy Debord. Now, even the act of consumption is increasingly thought of in not only far more active terms, it is also

emphatically perceived as a creative praxis in its own right, meaning that we are now faced with a discourse that almost completely blurs the distinctions between production, consumption, and democratic citizenship.

The de-alienation through co-creativity

Another aspect of this historical overcoming of certain core problems of Capitalist Modernity, has to do with that cluster of ills, which have often been subsumed under the concept of “alienation”.

The first kind of alienation supposedly done away with now, by way of the insistence on these collaborative, co-creative aspects, is, of course, social alienation. Which in essence, at least in the Marxist tradition, is fundamentally thought to spring from the second kind of alienation, that this discourse on specific practices claims to overcome, namely: the alienation of labour. Which then ultimately is closely interrelated to man’s alienation from himself and his truly human function, his so-called “species being” (*Gattungswesen*). The overcoming of which especially since the 60s – inspired by the reappearance of the early writing of Karl Marx – has routinely been portrayed as being equivalent with the “creative praxis” or similar concepts, as if the Romantic belief that – in the words of Matthew Arnold – “the exercise of a creative activity is the true function of man” also perfused Marx’s critique of alienated labour as some kind of implicit counter ideal. This is a theme which is frequently found in the writings of Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, and Cornelius Castoriadis, just to mention a few, and which constituted a central trajectory in the countercultural, anti-capitalist/work discourses of the period. Given this history it is hardly much of a surprise, that these ideas of “collective creativity”, “mass creativity”, “co-creative labour”, etc. now become endowed with huge political and social potentials within quite a broad range of discourses.

Recursive ‘publics’?

These themes are also working as a subtext in more critically inclined contemporary texts like for instance Christopher Kelty’s analysis of the so-called “recursive publics” of the Free Software movement. In *Two Bits*, Kel-

ty for instance defines these recursive public as “publics concerned with the ability to build, control, modify, and maintain the infrastructure that allows them to come into being in the first place and which, in turn, constitutes their everyday practical commitments and the identities of the participants as creative and autonomous individuals” (7). The role of human creativity in all this is thought in dual terms: it is both the means, that is: what constitutes and maintains this recursive public through “running code”, dodging the restraints of proprietary software producers, IP-law, attempts at state regulation, etc. But in this conception of recursive publics, creativity is also the end, aim or *raison d’être* of the whole “enterprise”.

It is thus a fundamental part of the social imaginary of the Free Software movement as a recursive public that it liberates the creativity of its users and – perhaps especially – its own contributors.

What makes these recursive publics differ from the public sphere in the Habermasian sense is at least to facts: 1) that a substantial part of its publicness is devoted to the maintenance and consolidation of its own infrastructure; and 2) that it is not only concerned with the constitution of autonomous individuals (in the tradition of Enlightenment thinking of the public sphere, democracy, etc.), but creative ones as well. This last aspect has a number of consequences for the access to and openness of these publics, and raises a number of questions concerning the actual publicness of these publics.

What seems to be happening in these recursive publics is that one’s democratic access to and “speaker’s rights” within these recursive publics varies according to one’s ability to actually contribute to the maintenance of their infrastructure.

A criteria of performative citizenship, one might say, where the worth and impact of one’s voice becomes closely related to one’s ability to perform the privileged kind of praxis within these publics, namely: to “run code”

on quite a sophisticated level and thereby “propose changes by actually creating them” (222), while everything else is being dismissed as “just talk” (58). Or as Kelty also puts it: “the only argument that convinces is working code” (58); hereby defining technology/free software – and by implication: (productive) creativity – as a “more powerful political argument because ‘it works’” (92).

Here, especially one question seems pressing: Does this insistence on these advanced and often highly technical, infrastructural aspects of Free Software really constitute such an open invitation, as it is often made out to be, that makes it plausible to speak of it in terms of “publicness” at all?

I, for one, must admit that I actually find these software issues pretty complicated to comprehend, and can only begin to imagine how others, less new media-interested citizens will find themselves deprived of meaningful access. Here, the publicness of these publics to a troubling extent seems substituted for the closed circuits of networks, adding to the often discussed digital divide a “creative divide” as well. So one might, in fact, wonder whether Kelty’s anticipatory defense against critiques like the ones just raised – that Free Software “can also exclude, just as any public or public sphere can” (310) – is not down-playing the extent of

this problem a bit too much. But this is, of course, not to argue that these interventions and practices are not sympathetic, interesting, important or any of those things. It is just to say, that recursive publics like those of Free Software are not and perhaps should not be perceived as – as Kelty suggests they might (23) – great role models. In other words, it seems like it is the part about democratic citizenship, which has the least weight in the prevailing utopias of creative productive publics.

Works cited:

- Benkler, Yochai. *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006. Print.
- Boltanski, Luc & Chiapello, Eve. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso, 2005. Print.
- Kelty, Christopher M. *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- Leadbeater, Charles. *We-Think: The Power of Mass Creativity*. London: Profile Books, 2008. Print.
- Marx, Karl. “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844).” In *Writings of Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*. Easton & Guddat, Eds. New York: Anchor Books, 1967.
- Michaud, Yves. “The End of the Utopia of Art.” In *Think Art: theory and practice in the art of today*. Bartomeu Mari & Schaeffer, Jean-Marie, Eds. Rotterdam: Witte de With, 1998. Print.
- Stephensen, Jan Løhmann. *Kapitalismens ånd og den kreative etik*. Aarhus: DARC, 2010. Print.
- Tapscott, Don & Williams, Anthony D. *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything*. New York: Portfolio, 2006. Print.
- *Macrowikinomics: Rebooting Business and the World*. New York: Portfolio, 2010. Print.



EDITED BY CHRISTIAN ULRIK ANDERSEN
& SØREN BRO POLD

Interface Criticism

Aesthetics Beyond Buttons

AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS



Alexei Shulgin & Aristarkh Chernyshev, COMMERCIAL PROTEST, Mediaobject (2007). Credit: Electroboutique.

Digital Art and Culture After Industry?

TOWARDS AESTHETIC BUSINESS STUDIES

SØREN BRO POLD & CHRISTIAN ULRIK ANDERSEN

that break apart, contain paradoxes or contradictions in relation to business?

When art is combined with business we often see rather traditional, mainstream and some times even pre-modern view on aesthetics far from the ruptures of contemporary art and aesthetics. A central example would be the concept of experience economy as Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore launched in the late 1990s. If one looks at Pine and Gilmore's concept of aesthetics it borders on the escapist and is characterized by immersion and passive participation. Their head guidelines are "Theme the experience", "Harmonize impressions with positive cues", and "Eliminate negative cues" (102-103), and their primary examples are Disneyland, Las Vegas and Hard Rock Café.

However perhaps art's most valuable contribution is not the icing on the cake or the aesthetic harmonizing of contradictions, but exactly the opposite: the ruptures, disruptions, clashes and breakdowns – all the ways that contemporary art explores things, situations and constellations

In many ways this seems to be the drive when net-art becomes web design or software art invades the app store. Furthermore, when cultural content industries such as the music industry are in crisis and their business model is deteriorating both new and major acts bypass the industry by doing the marketing and distribution themselves using the web and social networks. Instead of an industry of major record labels handling the relationship between artists and audience, this becomes part of the artistic work defying industrial standards and forming instead less standardized and industrialized relations between artists and audiences. In fact, the business model, including how to finance, market, distribute and profit from the content, becomes part of the artwork and it becomes part of the artistic statement to question common models. Instead of arguing that art might be a means to serve economic ends, we should ask whether the economy could in some ways potentially become artistic?

Aesthetic business studies

Consequently, art's relation

to the market and economy is part of the artistic development and innovation, but this also means that art becomes 'about' the economy in a more direct way. How should we interpret this, how do we learn from it, and how do we develop aesthetic business studies?

In order to look into this, we first need to introduce a few theoretical concepts from early Marxist art theory, because here we can find positions that discusses how art can potentially play a critical, constructive, progressive, if not revolutionary, role. In the 1930s materialist art theoreticians such as Georg Lukács and Walter Benjamin were discussing how the change in the base or "Unterbau" of reproduction technologies affected the superstructure or "Überbau" of culture, economy and thinking and how art could respond to this. Lukács analysed how Honoré de Balzac's *Illusions perdues* is a novel about the commodification of literature and the capitalization of the mind ("Geist"). It is an example of a conscious, artistic exploration of a new discourse economy, exploring how material changes influence the formal conditions of the artwork (II 474-89).

With his concept of "Tendenz" (tendency) Benjamin also argues for a formal relationship between art and the

production process in a way that might help elucidate how art can function as a probe for investigating change. Media technological revolutions lead to fractures in the art works and -history, which make the deep "Tendenz" visible (II.2, 752). In this way, the normally hidden, deeply layered fractures, constellations or contradictions become observable if probed by art.

In continuation of this it is important that art seeks a conscious, reflective and critical exploration of its economy and media. Contrary to the view on art and aesthetics promoted by Pine and Gilmore we should look for art which focuses on the fractures that reveal deeper tendencies (Tendenz) when doing aesthetic business studies. Or, in other words, as suggested by the quotation from Balzac [page 18]: Follow the money; if not to collect then to see which new routes it takes and to observe the creatures and creations it passes by.

Let us start our aesthetic business studies and look briefly at some relevant art. Under the concepts "Media Art 2.0" and "Electroboutique" a group of artists including Aristarkh Chernyshev and Alexei Shulgin have made a series of art works – each produced in a "limited number of copies (like Ferrari)" and sold "at af-

fordable prices (like Sony)" – which they show and sell at galleries, festivals, museums and on-line often installed in a shop-like environment (Chernyshev and Shulgin). The intention of the project is to create opportunities at galleries and museums for new media art, which have often neglected it because of technical difficulties, and its immaterial character that makes it difficult to exhibit and sell. Furthermore, many of the *Electroboutique* works also perform a humorous and poignant criticism of the (art) market and the relations between art and design.

One of these pieces is "Commercial Protest", which is a flat TV-screen equipped with a live camera contained in a shopping cart showing the captured images – e.g. images of the viewer – as company logos.

It is obvious, also from its presentation that it is a criticism of consumerism, which is paradoxically packaged as a nice, fairly priced art object for galleries and collectors who can see themselves as live logo portraits. The irony is of course an integral part of the art work where the artist realize that "criticism in art becomes an aesthetic category and eventually acquires itself the features of a consumer project" (Shulgin in Obukhova 128), and as such, critical art becomes a brand in the art market. However, it is not only ironic but also a comment to a situation where software art is not accepted by the large institutions that still need objects though the experimental and experiential dimensions of software have become an important part of the market, e.g. in smartphone app-stores. Much commercial design is driven by innovations in art, however, especially in the copy-paste culture of new media, often the artists do not get a share of the revenue. In the line of this, *Electroboutique* openly copies concepts from art history, including Russian Constructivism, media art in the traditions from Nam June Paik or Jenny Holzer, but also from design icons and re-launches them as new art works – a good example is the huge distorted but still functioning iPod, *wowPod* or the various distorted re-makes of television.

Of course many other examples could be made pointing towards these and

In short, we will point to the following tendencies guided by **Electroboutique**:

1. The recuperation of critical art by design and the market, which *Electroboutique* answers to by recuperating the commercial aesthetics and rhetorics

2. Fractures between the immaterial and the object or between software and hardware in the art market and in the general economy – in this case handled and highlighted by constructing object-based software art. As such *Electroboutique* smuggles software art into the art world disguised as artistic objects.

more contemporary tendencies, but we hope you get the general idea: Art has the potential to simultaneously question and develop the economy. There is a straight line from *wowPod* to iPad and to the future sculptured and visually attractive entertainment centres from Apple that will replace our TVs and HiFis, or from *Commercial Protest* to the narcissistic self-promotion through ones iPhone and the many branded platforms on Web2.0 (just start watching how portraits mix with brands and logos on an average Facebook page...). As already Piero Manzoni demonstrated with his *Merda d'Artista* in 1961, which was 30 cans of artist's shit sold at the equivalent price of gold, the artist is the modern day alchemist making artificial gold. However the smell of it, or its non-existing traditional use value, also casts a critical light on the virtual foundation of our money-based capitalistic economy. The main point is to focus on how art develops an artistic economy and thereby reflect critically on the current economy while developing alternatives. As Shulgin puts it himself: "Contemporary art has got one more function. It finds out the possible borders of consuming." (Shulgin in Obukhova 129).

Works cited:

- Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Werkausgabe. ed. 12 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980. Print.
- Chernyshev, Aristarkh, and Alexei Shulgin. *Electroboutique*. Ed. Gallery, XL. Moscow, 2008. Print.
- Lukács, Georg. *Georg Lukács Werke 6 - Probleme des Realismus III - Der historische Roman*. Neuwied und Berlin: Luchterhand, 1965. Print.
- Obukhova, Alexander. "Critic/Pop (Electroboutique, Chernyshev, Efimov, Shulgin)." Ed. Art, Moscow Museum of Modern. Moscow: XL Gallery, 2008. Print.
- Pine, Joseph, and James H. Gilmore. "Welcome to the Experience Economy." *Harvard Business Review* July-August (1998): 97-105. Print.



◆ **If language is beautiful, it must be because a master bathes it - a master who cleans shit holes, sweeps offal, and expurgates city and speech to confer upon them order and beauty.** (Laporte 7)

GEOFF COX

In the article, I develop a critique of pervasive technologies in terms of what they expurgate from the public realm. The proliferation of privatized social networking platforms and current developments in cloud computing have profound consequences and are characterized by the commodification of social intellect.

Publicness has largely fallen into disrepute

There has been much recent interest in revisiting Hannah Arendt's ideas in relation to a

reconceptualisation of publicness. She states (in *The Human Condition*, written in 1958) that the political realm arises out of acting together, in the sharing of speech and action. In Paolo Virno's work, further recognising the linguistic and performative dimension of capitalism, this is emphasized because of the relative ineffectiveness of political action today. He laments the current depoliticisation of action, which explains the current "crisis of politics, the sense of scorn surrounding political praxis today, [and] the disrepute into which action has fallen" (51). Can the same be said of publicness?

What is at stake for Virno is clear, that "if the publicness of the intellect does not yield to the realm of the public sphere, of a political space in which the many can tend to common affairs, then it produces terrifying effects" (40). Proprietary technology arguably plays a significant role here in distancing speech from affect in a situation

Public Interfa(e)ces

where action and words have lost their power (to echo Arendt).

To put it differently, in Christian Marazzi's writing on the relations between economics, language and affect, there is little hope for effective action when people have become incapable of maintaining concentrated attention on the same object for a long time. Extended to intellectual and social behavior, Franco Berardi calls this a catastrophe of modern humanism, where we no longer have sufficient attention spans for love, tenderness and compassion. As language and affect become increasingly economicised, social attention is captured with dire consequences in terms of the subjectivities being produced (and this is the terrifying effect of the so-called attention economy). According to Berardi, only the autonomy of intellectual labour from economic rule can save us from the forces of capitalism (or 'semio-capital' as he calls it). The

point is emphasised in the current attack on Universities – although of course this is part of a broader neoliberal assault on public services, the welfare system, and public education. Moreover, Berardi is invoking general intellect and the social function of intellectual labour, what Virno refers to as the "know-how on which social productivity relies" (64). The point is that intellectual labour is no longer separated from general conditions of labour; that there is no longer a separation between ordinary labour and intellectual activity that was once considered to be of a superior kind. Aspects of socialism and general intellect are incorporated into what Virno calls the "communism of capital" (110). In other words, the social potential has been stolen from the public realm and commodified.

Again, Arendt is inferred through her assertion that publicness should be understood in terms of plurality not singularity per se. This

is evident in speech and action in that it both represents the capacity for equality and distinctiveness (176). To Arendt, action is bound with the expectation of the unexpected that results from the sameness and uniqueness of human plurality leading to the creations of publics and counter-publics. The political realm arises in this way, out of acting together in this way, but crucially this is expressed as a collective activity, preempting Virno's description of the many tending to common affairs.

Publicness is expressed in paradoxical forms and actions

But what of communications technologies more specifically (given the context of addressing the interface), in as much as software can be seen to represent both expression as in speech or writing (or word and deed) but

also something that performs actions? For Christopher M. Kelty, again referring to Arendt, the free software movement is an example of emergent and self-organizing public actions. Underpinning this is the sharing of source code, rooted in the history of the UNIX operating system and its precarious position between the public domain and commercial enterprise characterized by the parallel developments of free software and open source in the late 1990s. The history reflects the paradoxical forms mentioned earlier in which technology's social potential has been captured. More optimistically, the cultural significance for Kelty is captured by the term 'recursive public' to account for the ways in which the public is: "vitaly concerned with the material and practical maintenance and modification of the technical, legal, practical, and conceptual means of its own existence as a public; it is a collective independent of other forms of consti-

The Control Society After 9/11

◆ **Twenty years ago Gilles Deleuze published the short five pages text »Postscript on Control Societies«**

MIKKEL BOLT RASMUSSEN

Deleuze's text is an analysis of the arrival of the control society that according to him is replacing the disciplinary society. "We are moving toward control societies that

no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication." (174) Deleuze's text describes how the institutions of the modern disciplinary society withers and are replaced with a new kind of control that is no longer rooted in these institutions but is spread throughout the social body. As Deleuze phrases it the striated space of disciplinary society is replaced by the smooth space

of the society of control. Control is now everywhere and is no longer only exercised in the delimited space of disciplinary power.

The institutions of the disciplinary society which Deleuze's friend Foucault analysed are today in a state of crisis. The closed spaces are falling apart and the production of subjects has acquired a new form, it has become fluid, Deleuze writes. Now normalisation is no longer restricted to the closed room of the institutions but take place everywhere.

Deleuze's sketch-like analysis has been hugely influential for the way postmodern or late capitalist society has been mapped by critical theory. The text has been important for a certain post-structuralist and post-marxist analysis of how power has become ever more decentralized and is now no longer in any straight forward sense connected to easily locatable institutions and exerted by centrally placed actors but is rather spread out in extremely complex structures and networks where it is not possible to excavate the origin or place of power.

A long row of books has drawn on Deleuze's short text. One of the most influential ones is *Empire* by

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. The two authors explicitly refer to Deleuze's control society thesis in their analysis of the transition to a new kind of sovereignty transcending former national actors in a new transnational network capitalism, called Empire. According to Hardt and Negri, the nation state has lost much of its former importance and has been superseded by a stateless empire existing everywhere and nowhere. This new global sovereignty has no territorial limits and functions like a decentralized power continually transforming the world to a smooth space of desires and investments where it is not possible to distinguish between politics, economy and culture. The arrival of this empire has to do with developments within capitalism. Today the capitalist means of production no longer needs the nation state system – in which the geopolitical competition took place and was regulated – in order to function. Today profit is no longer only made at the factory and cannot be measured according to the individual worker's working day. Production has become a part of life taking place as a kind of bio-political production where the communicati-

on state's political sovereignty in favour of different ideas of networked power.

9/11: Sovereignty and imperialism

These different analyses equipped us with useful means in the mapping of the control society but all of a sudden something happened:

Confronted with 9/11 it seemed as if Deleuze's description of the wavelike movements of power and Hardt and Negri's diagnosis of the global factory without walls paradoxically appeared to be too fine meshed.

Suddenly George W. Bush made all the decisions. The invisible micro power structures and internalised mechanisms of interpellation were replaced by a sovereign who decided to launch an indefinite war against evil.

9/11 and the war on terror constituted a real challenge for the Deleuze-inspired analyses that seemed capable of critically accounting for the changes going on in how the highly developed societies were governed but now post-9/11 looked uselessly postmodern or overly optimistic because they prematurely had skipped the notion of the

After 9/11 the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben analysed George W. Bush as the sovereign who declared a state of emergency. The war on terror was thus understandable as a generalised state of emergency where the sovereign suspends the law and creates 'empty holes' where undesirable subjects are placed deprived of juridical and civilian rights. The national political community is according to Agamben constituted on the exclusion of people that are refused the status of citizens. The American Guantanamo base on Cuba is the prime example of such a space of exclusion/inclusion. Here the US president detains more than 500 people that have not been tried or convicted of any crime. The sovereign power has simply excommunicated them, reduced them to what Agamben terms naked life, a biological body emptied of political content and exposed to the force of pure political power. Agamben's account of Bush as the sovereign who makes the decision of suspending the law had a great analytic as well as polemical relevance and it effectively destroyed the idea that it is

tuted power and is capable of speaking to existing forms of power through the production of actually existing alternatives” (3).

For Kelty, the collective technical experiment of the Free Software movement is an example of a recursive public that draws attention to its democratic and political significance and the limitations of our understanding of the public in the light of the restructuring of power over networks. The intervention is to extend a definition of a public grounded in discourse (as with Arendt) - through speech, writing and assembly - to other legal and technical layers that underpin the Internet in recognition of the ways in which power and control are structured - to include both discourses and infrastructures (50). In this way, recursive publics engage with and attempt to modify the infrastructures they inhabit as an extension of the public sphere (his example is the case of Napster). Thus publicness is constituted not simply by speaking, writing, arguing and protesting but also through modification of the domain or platform through which these practices are enacted.

Publicness is founded on the management of human waste

The intervention of Dominique Laporte, in the *History of Shit* (first published in French in 1978), is to verify that modern power is founded on the aesthetics of the public sphere and in the agency of its citizen-subjects but that these are conditions of the management of human waste. He insists that in parallel to the cleansing of the streets of Paris from shit, the French language was similarly cleansed of Latin words to establish official French without “foreign leanings” (according to an edict of 1539). Both public space and language were cleaned and policed in parallel, as purification requires submission to the law (as the Laporte quote at the beginning of the article asserts). Thus he contends that language was purged of its “lingering stink” to become purer and invested with authority: “Purified, language becomes the crown jewels, the site of law, of the sacred text, of translation and exchange. There the muddled voices and their dialects are expurgated of their dross, losing their pitiful ‘remnants of earth’ and the vile fruits of their dirty commerce. Guttersnipes and merchants cannot sully the virginal emblem of power, for the King’s language does not wash them of their sins. But neither does it abandon them to their sinful state. Rather, it cleanses the fruit of their common labor, elevating it to the divine place of power freed from odor.” (18)

The desire for clean language, as well as clean cities, sublimates shit and demonstrates an expression of new biopolitical forms of control over subjectivity (including the bodily functions of speaking and shitting) and one where the market is sovereign (rather than the State or King). Can we say the same of clean code, and that the kinds of technologies that are found on the streets (installed in mobile devices and such-like) are similarly cleansed? Is it that the technologies made available to us are simply not shit enough?

Service-based platforms (or so-called cloud computing) provide an example of a purified form in a similar way, disputing Kelty’s statements about free software as there is no code to share, as software and network services merge into one platform through which people access the internet using their mobile devices and tablet computers. This is the Apple paradigm of software development with specially conceived proprietary “apps” (for iPhones and iPads) that close off users from the underlying impurities (‘stink’) of code (through the cleanliness of iTunes for instance). These developments are crucial for an understanding of the suppression of political expression in the public realm and the ways in which general intellect is becoming ever more privatized through the use of pervasive technologies and free market logic.

Publicness of the intellect is a political issue

But perhaps all is not altogether expurgated. The paradoxes around these developments are also evident as counter-publics emerge in parallel with rather more messy intentions. For instance, Dmytri Kleiner/Telekommunisten’s *Thimbl* is a free, open source, distributed micro-blogging platform. It uses common server software called Finger and adapts it to the principles of the open web, the publicity stating: “The most significant challenge the open web will need to overcome is not technical, it is political.”

The challenge addresses the private interests and profiteering of the social web by returning to the best principles of sharing in the public domain. With *Thimbl*, the client owns their webhost rather than be served through the authoritarian client-server architecture of a platform like Twitter. The concept and source code of *Thimbl* are explained in detail on the website positioning it in relation to the legacy of the social project of the early Net and peer to peer organisational forms. To Kleiner, this is “venture communism”.

Similarly, the argument of the paper is that the commodification of social potential evident in the applications that currently pervade our lived experience might be

open to further transformation - this is what used to be referred to as expropriating the expropriators. Kelty describes the radical possibilities of “argument-by-technology and argument-by-talk” (58), and this seems to be exemplified by the work of Telekommunisten. Taking the Hegelian move from in-itself to for-itself further, via class consciousness or class for-itself in Marx’s adaptation, Virno combines it with Gramsci’s concept of the organic intellectual to characterise “mass intellectuality”. The interlinking references help to assert Virno’s line of argument that the publicness of the intellect is not a positive public force unless it is at the same time recognised as political. Repeating another earlier point to conclude, only the autonomy of public intellectuality in its separation from the free market can save us. Clearly it is possible to conceive of

technological development in similar terms.

Works cited:

- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press., 1998 [1958]. Print.
- Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’. *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the pathologies of the post-alpha generation*. London: Minor Compositions, 2009. Print.
- Kelty, Christopher M. *Two Bits: the Cultural Significance of Free Software*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- Kleiner, Dmytri. *Thimbl*. Telekommunisten Collective, 2010 <<http://www.thimbl.net/>>. Software.
- Laporte, Dominique. *History of Shit*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000 [1978]. Print.
- Marazzi, Christian. *Capital and Language: From the New Economy to the War Economy*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008. Print.
- Virno, Paolo. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2004. Print.



possible to make a clear distinction between democracy and totalitarianism showing how the liberal democracy was capable of the bio-political tendencies visible in Guantanamo and other secret prisons where enemy combatants were detained without a trial and subjected to different kinds of sanctioned or not sanctioned torture.

Not only Agamben with his analysis of the continued existence of sovereignty in modern politics but also more classically Marxist oriented thinkers like David Harvey and Alex Callinicos seemed to have a better grasp of the development after 9/11 with their revised imperialism take that drew on the classical imperialism works of Lenin, Bukharin and Luxemburg from the early 20th century arguing that the rising geopolitical conflicts had to do with capitalism and its inability to create profit as well as inter-state rivalry. The imperialism analysis made it possible to explain why the US had gone from a policy based on consensus to one based on direct force and plundering. Bush and his conservative administration were according to Harvey motivated by the possibility of controlling not only Iraq’s oil but the entire region’s oil

stock. Not just because of strict economic interests but also because control of the oil of the Middle East would equal control of large parts of world economy. Harvey’s and Callinicos’ analyses were thus that the US-led invasion of Iraq and the war on terror was an attempt to handle the ever returning contradictions of capitalism - how to handle the surplus that is constantly produced - through territorial expansion opening new areas for what Harvey following Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation calls accumulation as dispossession where capitalism suspends people’s right and access to natural resources.

Old and new: Preventive anti-rebellion

Both the different imperialism analyses as well as the sovereignty have been able to explain important aspects of the development after 9/11 where the US has followed an aggressive and explicitly unilateral policy aimed at securing American hegemony and the interests of the American bourgeoisie even at the risk of alienating former traditional political partners and in complete disrespect of the enormous suffering it causes for the wretched of the earth. On the face of it these analyses have been better equip-

ped to critically account for the present historical situation than the Deleuze-inspired analyses with their descriptions of the invisibility and ‘democratisation’ of power in de-central networks. But it is precisely the contemporaneity of both invisible, speeded up and de-central control and bombastic gestures of sovereignty where people disappear or are bombed to pieces that characterises the present conjuncture.

After 9/11 we have witnessed how a genuine police or war regime has been put in place not only aimed at handling military affairs and concrete events but having political, economic, juridical, ideological and cultural consequences for the whole of society. The war is precisely not just military; it affects both base and superstructure and it is characterised by the absence of a distinction between inside and outside. The war is invasions, occupations and massacres from above as well as the implementation of a repressive security apparatus. The security arrangements have taken shape as suspension of civil rights and criminalisation of former accepted political protests forms now staged by the state as terrorism. The war on terror has also meant the

construction of camps where people are reduced to bare life and is left at the whim of the prison guards. It looks as if not only the disciplinary society and its closed spaces but also sovereignty are back and have merged with the molecular power forms of the control society creating what we might term a police society governing through specific, differentiated and permanent interventions in the behaviour of the population and public opinion. We are confronted with the arrival of a preemptive anti rebellion regime whose logic seems to be that we are confronted with a number of inevitable disasters and treats like terrorism, biospheric meltdown, economic collapse or food shortage that are all unavoidable but that can be directed and cannot be allowed to develop into grand politics in Nietzsche’s sense where the rich becomes poor and vice versa.

As Frédéric Neyrat writes in *Biopolitique des catastrophes*, the war on terror is thus just the first stage in a comprehensive transformation where a vast number of crises and treats are considered inevitable but governable. As an integral part of this preventive anti rebellion regime flexible networks of

micro conflict solution is joined with sovereign exclusion/inclusion and disciplinary training in an as yet unseen system that not only aims at handling the present but also structuring the possible and wipe out potentiality. There is in other words an epistemological insecurity at work that not only has to do with an absent knowledge but also has to do with the condition that the treat does not yet exist and has not yet acquired form but nonetheless has to be removed. The future has to be modulated even before it exists; it is necessary to act before something completely different happens.

The present therefore makes it necessary to use both the Deleuzian control society thesis as well as the sovereignty and imperialism analyses in order to be able to account for the processes going on after 9/11.

The Beginning

It is indeed strange times where the joining of stoppage and metamorphosis, the old and new makes it difficult to grasp and often plays a trick on our perception and praxis. As Retort writes in *Afflicted Powers*: “The past has become the present again: this

is the mark of the moment.” (9) Control society and gun boat diplomacy in one. In what forms the resistance against this regime will manifest themselves remains to be seen. It is difficult to see a ‘dialectical’ alternative to the present order, not to talk of Marx’s subversive world subject preparing to press, rebel and abolish this order. But nonetheless the protection of the already established is well underway and is being tested continually.

Works cited:

- Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Callinicos, Alex. *Imperialism and Global Political Economy*. Cambridge: Polity, 2009.
- Deleuze, Gilles. “Postscript on control societies”, trans. Martin Joughin. *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995: 177-182.
- Deleuze, Gilles. “Control and Becoming”, trans. Martin Joughin. *Negotiations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995: 169-176.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge, MA & London: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Harvey, David. *A New Imperialism*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Neyrat, Frédéric. *Biopolitique des catastrophes*. Paris: Éditions MF, 2008.
- Retort. *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War*. London & New York: Verso, 2005.

» A recursive public is vitally concerned with the material and practical maintenance and modification of the technical, legal, practical, and conceptual means of its own existence as a public; it is a collective independent of other forms of constituted power and is capable of speaking to existing forms of power through the production of actually existing alternatives. **Christopher M. Kelty**

When Art Goes Disruptive

THE A/MORAL DIS/ORDER OF RECURSIVE PUBLICS

TATIANA BAZZICHELLI

This article reflects on the notion of recursive publics proposed by Christopher M. Kelty in the book *Two Bits*:

The Cultural Significance of Free Software (2008), analyzing the consequences of disruptive dynamics both in so-called underground artistic networks and in the business context of the digital eco-

nomy. Public interfaces are contextualized through the analysis of disruptive actions in collaborative networks, showing that the vulnerability of networking dynamics in recursive publics might be an

opportunity to create political criticism, while the act of generating a/moral dis/order becomes an art practice. This analysis questions the methodology of radical clashes of opposite forces to generate

socio-political transformation, proposing more flexible viral actions as relevant responses to the ubiquity of capitalism. The strategy of disruptive innovation as a model of artistic creation becomes a challenge for the re-invention and rewriting of symbolic and expressive codes.

On Social Imaginary and Recursive Publics

As Kelty pointed out in his investigation about geek communities and what binds them together, “geeks share an idea of moral and technical order when it comes to the Internet; not only this, but they share a commitment to maintaining that order because it is what allows them to associate as a recursive public in the first place”. What Kelty defines as moral and technical order, which could be easily related with the hacker ethics even if Kelty prefers the term “geek” to that of “hacker”, is a common social imaginary about technology and the Internet. Geeks share a moral imagination of the Internet, which lives through hardware, software, networks and protocols, and which shapes everyday life practices.

The geek community is a recursive public since it works on developing, creating and maintaining networks, and at the same time it is the network and the social infrastructure it maintains.

Geeks speak and argue about topics, which they directly create and bring to existence: therefore, they are the developers of their own social imaginary.

But even if Kelty’s concept of recursive public adds a new layer in the analysis of social imaginary – since it is not only interpreted as a shared background but as a tool of creation and autonomous development – the concept of “social imaginary” still has to be questioned. Describing the imaginary shared by geeks, Kelty brings the example of Napster’s collapse and its battle against the musical industry. A battle strongly supported by hackers and geeks worldwide, who found a common goal expressed by the openness of information, the freedom of exchange and the right to use decentralised technologies in opposition to monopoly. This is one possible way to analyse the matter; but if we adopt another perspective, we might discover a different meaning.

A business enterprise like Napster managed to attract the will and the energy of many activists to follow a cause with a deep commercial purpose. Napster was able to get so many followers because it managed to absorb their values turning them into its business. It was a business, which decided not to follow the moral order shared by its “recursive public”, the one given by the economy of monopoly. Napster opened a (new) cycle of appropriation of values and ethics, moving them from the so-called underground culture to the business field, just like many of the new generation of social media and Web 2.0 companies have been doing since the middle of the 2000s.

It demonstrated that the idea of social imaginary as cohesive moral order could be disrupted, and the change could be done exactly by being strategically a/moral – thus adopting values that were apparently in contradiction to its own set of relations and practices.

This explains how today it might be reductive describing network dynamics only through a singular point of view, and that not only the notion of moral order, but also the one of a/moral dis/order might be a valid perspective to analyse recursive publics, both in the business and in the technological field.

A/Moral Dis/Order as an Art Practice

An example of a strategy of disruption as a method of political criticism beyond clashing of moral orders, is given by a Neoist prank which followed an intervention by Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz at the Club der polnischen Versager in Berlin, during the *rebel:art* festival in 2004. This intervention shows that the notion of social imaginary as a comprehensive order of values is not always effective to interpret collective dynamics, especially referring to underground communities that work staging a meta-critique of themselves. Even if the idea of sharing moral orders and social imaginary might be effective for explaining the activities of some independent groups (as Kelty demonstrated), it becomes questionable when referring to groups that practice negation, appropriation and cooptation of their very own values as a form of art. When

NEOISM MANIFESTO

neoism has no manifesto



Monty Cautou
may 81 1979

Richard Stallman, founder of the GNU Project and free software advocate, Oslo, Norway, 23 February 2009.
Photo: Anders Brenna.

the act of disruption becomes art, it reveals the weakness of a mono-dimensional opposition as socio-political resistance. And, at the same time, it might open the path for more invasive and effective interventions in the field of art and politics.

The *rebel:art* festival in Berlin brought together underground activists and artists, apparently connected together under the notion of "rebel art" and the topics of culture jamming, hacktivism, media art and urban interventions. Among them, Alexander Brener and Barbara Schurz were giving a lecture, "Texte gegen die Kunst", under the heading "Demolish Serious Culture", also the title of one of their books.

Alexander Brener, originally from Kazakhstan, but internationally known as a Russian performance artist, become popular in the art field for the act of defecating in front of a painting by Vincent Van Gogh at the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and for drawing a green dollar sign on Kazimir Malevich's painting *Suprematisme*, for which he was jailed in 1997. His radical writings and actions, often created in collaboration with Austrian activist and researcher Barbara Schurz, have inspired many subcultures, from Neoism to NSK. Proposing the concept of technologies of resistance, then reformulated into anti-technologies of resistance in 2000, Brener and Schurz claimed a radical critique of the art world and of capitalism, through "familiar and traditional methods of political struggle and cultural resistance, as well as individual 'transgressive' techniques".

Such techniques of resistance are what they proposed in Berlin in the Club der polnischen Versager performing their poem "Texte gegen die Kunst". Denouncing the compromise of the rebel art festival with the art system, they started asking for the director of the festival, holding a basket full with eggs. Actually, the rebel art festival was a small underground event, managed by only one person, Alain Bieber from rebelart.net, with the support of all of us, contributing with our networks and ideas. The presenters were basically the main public of the festival, a "geek recursive public", apparently sharing the same "moral order" of activists, hackers and independent artists, which in our mind also included Brener and Schurz. In their view, however, we were just part of the art system. While Bieber

was running away after receiving threats from Brener, a member of the audience suddenly stood up, claiming to be the director of the festival. Brener and Schurz's response was an egg in his face, met in turn by screams from the audience and demands for them to leave. Brener and Schurz now stood there visibly surprised and embarrassed, slowly realizing having been fooled by an imposter, who explained his actions simply: "Because I am Monty Cantsin and I love you".

Disruptive Actions Between Art and Business

It is not a case that such an artistic act of disruption came from Monty Cantsin, the open-pop star of the Neoist network, Neoism being "a parodistic -ism"; a subculture that constantly negates itself and whose definition is constantly disputed – this constant disputation being still another side of the Neoist art practice. "The best product of Neoism is anti-Neoism" is the favored aphorism of the Neoists, a detournement of a famous saying by Amadeo Bordiga (WuMing1, from December 1999). This self-negation and a/moral disruption of dis/orders is also a mirror of a multi-dimensional approach that might be considered an inspiration to reflect on contemporary forms of socio-political criticism.

Today, the increasing commercialization of contexts of networking, and the co-optation of cultural instances of 1990s hacker culture by proprietary platforms (from openness to do-it-yourself), shows the ability of business to adopt and invade "moral orders" which were once attributed to their opponents.

Napster was one of the first examples of this. Similarly but with a different purpose, the Monty Cantsin disruption of the Brener and Schurz intervention in Berlin, might be seen as the example of an a/moral reaction to the notion of resistance as a whole, corrupting the mechanism from within, showing the crisis of encompassing political intents and strategies. Monty Cantsin demonstrated that the challenge lives in the encounter with the symbolic dissolutions of powers.

A path to follow today is to deconstruct power structures in the digital economy. Analyzing artistic practices in the time of social media implies



to acknowledge the strategy of being constructive and destructive at the same time. Innovation becomes possible by disruption and disruption becomes critical when it is transformed into an art form.

The point of departure is to apply the concept of disruptive innovation in the art field, and at the same time to open up a critical perspective to business.

To reach this objective, it is necessary to analyze the marketplace adopting a "hacker perspective" trying to understand how the market works after de-assembling its strategies and mechanisms of production.

This is the challenge for artists and activists who want to deal with networking in the configuration it has taken today, ruled by corporate models of profit. Not clashing against them, but developing within them, while challenging them critically – and ironically.

Works cited:

- Alexander Brener, B. S. "Anti Technologies of Resistance". In *Euro Art Web Magazine*. 13, Fall 2010. <<http://euroartmagazine.com/new/?issue=20&page=1&content=54>>
- Kelty, Christopher. M. *Two Bits: The Cultural Significance of Free Software*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008. Print.
- rebel:art festival, 2004. <<http://www.rebelart.net/f001-02.html>>
- WuMing1. "Flesh and Blood, One Person After Another: Muddled Reflections In Articulo Mortis on the L***** B***** Project and on Neoism". December, 1999. <http://www.wumingfoundation.com/english/g_digest0.html>

Interface Criticism

Aesthetics Beyond Buttons

Edited by Christian Ulrik Andersen & Søren Bro Pold



Interface Criticism critically investigates the aesthetics of interfaces in ways that transcend the iconic surface of the graphical user interface and goes beyond the buttons. It aims to develop interface aesthetics as an appropriate paradigm for a critical discussion of the computer. Among the contributors are Inke Arns, Christoph Bruno, Geoff Cox, Florian Cramer, Erkki Huhtamo, and Dragana Antic & Matthew Fuller.

Aarhus University Press, 2011
296 pages
42,85 euros
Illustrated

www.unipress.dk

CONTRIBUTORS

CHRISTIAN ULRIK ANDERSEN (DK) is chair of Digital Aesthetics Research Centre, Associate Professor in Digital Design at Aarhus University, researching games and digital urban living.

TATIANA BAZZICHELLI (IT/DK) is active in the Italian hacker community, founder of the AHA: Activism-Hacking-Artivism, PhD Fellow at Aarhus University.

BRETT BLOOM (US/DK) is an artist who works with the art group Temporary Services and senior lecturer at The Jutland Art Academy in Aarhus.

MORTEN BREINBJERG (DK) is Associate Professor with a PhD in computer music aesthetics at the Department of Information and Media Studies, Aarhus University.

ROBERT BROWN (US/UK) is Associate Professor in Architecture, Master of Architecture, Programme Leader, School of Architecture, Design and Environment, University of Plymouth.

KEVIN CARTER (UK) is an artist and PhD fellow at the University of Westminster, London.

GEOFF COX (UK/DK) is a researcher in Digital Aesthetics as part of the Center for Digital Urban Living Research, Aarhus University, Associate Curator of Online Projects, Arnolfini, Bristol, and adjunct faculty, Transart Institute, Berlin/New York.

TOBIAS EBSEN (DK) is a PhD fellow within Digital Design at Aarhus University.

PHIL ELLIS (UK) is an artist and lecturer in BA Media Arts, Programme Leader in BA Television Arts and the forthcoming MA Media Convergence at the University of Plymouth (UK).

NINA GRAM (DK) is a PhD Fellow at the Department of Aesthetics and Culture, Aarhus University researching *Sound Mobilisation in Urban Space*.

RUI GUERRA (PT/NL) is an artist and lecturer in The Netherlands, involved in open source culture, and initiator of self-organized communities such as INTK in Utrecht and unDEAF in Rotterdam.

ANTHONY ILES (UK) is a writer based in London, editor of Mute online and quarterly print magazine, and a regular contributor to current debates about the urban regeneration around the London 2012 Olympics, flexible architecture, indeterminacy, participation and regeneration.

ROBERT JACKSON (UK) is an arts practitioner, writer and PhD Fellow for the Kurator/AST Research group, researching early computer algorithmic art, generative art and mainstream American art criticism from 1960 to the mid 1970s.

JOASIA KRYSA (PL/UK) is a curator, founding director of KURATOR and Associate Professor (Reader) at the University of Plymouth, and part of the curatorial team for Documenta 13 (Kassel, 2012).

LARS BO LØFGREEN (DK) is PhD Fellow at the Department of Information and Media Studies at Aarhus University, researches locative media art and the philosophy of aesthetics.

JACOB LUND (DK) is Associate Professor at the Institute of Aesthetic Studies, Aarhus University and editor of *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*.

MALCOLM MILES (UK) is Professor of Cultural Theory at the University of Plymouth, UK, and author of *Urban Utopias* (2008), *Cities & Cultures* (2007), and *Urban Avant-Gardes* (2004), amongst others.

SØREN BRO POLD (DK) is Associate Professor of Digital Aesthetics at the Department of Information and Media Studies at Aarhus University, head of the Interface Aesthetics Research Group, and researches electronic literature, net art, software art, creative software and digital culture.

ZORAN POPOSKI (Rep. of Macedonia) is PhD Fellow in Philosophy and Gender Studies at the EuroBalkan Institute in Skopje and an artist exploring issues of liminality, territory and public space.

ANDREW PRIOR (UK) is a digital/sound artist and musician, member of the Kurator/Art & Social Technologies research group at the University of Plymouth, and researches noise and the transformative potential of media and technology.

MIKKEL BOLT RASMUSSEN (DK) is Associate Professor at Department of Arts and Cultural Studies, University of Copenhagen.

CHRISTIAN RHEIN (DE) is PhD Fellow at University of Siegen affiliated with the mediatecture company ag4 researching the mediatization of public space through digital façade-media.

MORTEN RIIS (DK) is an electronic music composer and performer and PhD Fellow at the Dept. of Information and Media Studies at Aarhus University and The Royal Academy, where he explores mechanical instruments and machine music.

JAN LØHMANN STEPHENSEN (DK) is External Lecturer at Aarhus University, teaching and researching the cultural reception and theoretical understanding of a 'creative public'.

MAGDA TYŻLIK-CARVER (PL/UK) is PhD Fellow at the KURATOR/AST research group at University of Plymouth, associate curator at KURATOR, and Research Assistant at University College Falmouth.

NINA VALKANOVA (BG/ES) is a PhD Fellow at the Interaction Group at the University of Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, and researches urban media interfaces and the intersections between scientific and artistic design knowledge.



Tired of ineffective petitions?

Discover repetitionr

Democracy 2.0: Just a click for one million signatures.

**Tactical media
meets data-hallucination**

Repetitionr.com is the ultimate social petition platform that grants the success of every campaign proposed, thanks to an automatic increasing of millions of self-generated fake signatures indistinguishable from the real ones. This new work by Les Liens Invisibles investigates the hallucinatory effects of activist/hacktivist/artivist practices in the age of media democracy.

Try now.



It's free.



www.repetitionr.com

ARNOLFINI