

Non-Construction

*Note: Pivot your screen, let your head be turned,
or rotate pp. 49 to 101 by 90° , pp. 102 to 156 by 180° and
pp. 157 to 183 by 270° clockwise.*

Ronny Hardliz

Non-Construction

An Architectural Gesture in Artistic Research

Contributions by Philip Ursprung,
Julie Harboe, Stewart Martin,
Joshua Simon, and Sharon Kivland



*Dedicated to the private convenience of
my relatives and friends*



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List of Figures	12
Philip Ursprung <i>An E-mail during Lockdown</i>	14

Instructions for Use

Introduction	19
Recapitulation of Proceedings	21
Research in Chronological Order	23
Writing in Conceptual Order	27
Collateral Concepts	29
Discursive and Spatial Inspirations	32
Gravities	34

I. Architecture: A Voiding

Non-Construction	56
Criticality	65
Infrastructure	73
Politics	81
Touching and Encounter	84

II. Art: The Study

Discourse	109
Capital	121
Research	126
Contingency	132
Experience and Poverty	141

III. Film: Building Cinema

Filmmaking as Architectural Art	162
Architectural Art as Critical Theory	171

Prospective Notes

Theoretical Reflections	187
Conclusion	193
Epilogue	194
Julie Harboe <i>Salute!</i>	198
Stewart Martin <i>Myth and the Art Strike of the International Parallel Union of Telecommunications</i>	201
Joshua Simon <i>Digital Revolution as Counter-Revolution</i>	216
Sharon Kivland <i>Epitaph</i>	224
Glossary	226
Bibliography	228

CONTENT DETAILS

Instructions for Use	I. Architecture: A Voiding
19 Introduction	56 Non-Construction
21 Recapitulation of Proceedings	Burning Houses, Reopening Holes/Dispossession of Discourse/Constructed Construction/From Conceptual Architecture to a Concept of Architecture/Habitual Origins of Art
23 Research in Chronological Order	65 Criticality
On 'Art: The Study'/On 'Architecture: A Voiding'/On 'Film: Building Cinema'	Out of Neo-Liberalism/Forget Deleuze I, or À la recherche de l'espace perdu/À la recherche d'une Lingua Sapiens/Towards an Architectural Language of Trans-Neo-Liberalism
27 Writing in Conceptual Order	73 Infrastructure
On 'Architecture: A Voiding'/On 'Art: The Study'/On 'Film: Building Cinema'	The Scenes behind the Scenes of Architecture/The Face of Infrastructure/Absolute Architecture Meets the Absolute Infrastructure/Friendship is not French/Anti-Formalist Form/The Tectonic of Theatricality
29 Collateral Concepts	81 Politics
Ornament, Model, Utopia, Theatre/Cinema Car and Cinema Book	Discursive Spaces of (Non-Constructed) Encounters/Struggling with Struggling Theory/Metropolitics: Sociality of Abstracted Equivalence
32 Discursive and Spatial Inspirations	84 Touching and Encounter
34 Gravities	The Haptic and the Erotic/Bataille Politique: An Epoch-Making Encounter

II. Art: The Study

109 Discourse

Expanding Field/Spatio-Discursive Practice/The Positivity of the Positivity of Knowledge/From Architecture to the Architectural/The Hornsey Affair: Lip Service vs. Changing the Situation/Temporal 'before' vs. Spatial 'before'

121 Capital

Autonomous Art and Commodity Form/Managerial Gesticulations/Social Farces of Production/Useful Uselessness: Useless Usefulness/Can you feel it?

126 Research

Known-Construction/Infrastructural Dignity/Discursive Art Practice: The Young

132 Contingency

Rejuvenation Machines/Paralysis/Forget Agamben, or On Contingency/'Whatever' and 'Any-Space-Whatever'/Catastrophic Times/The B-art of B-ing/The Destruction of the Image of Thought/Forget Deleuze II, or On Forgetting

141 Experience and Poverty

Opinionatedness vs. Ecstasy/The Passivity of Passion/Exhibition as Procuration vs. Exhibition as Staging/Headiness vs. Headlessness/Poverty as Use/The Habitual Condition/Not an Inhuman Condition/Ecstatic Experience

III. Film: Building Cinema

162 Filmmaking as Architectural Art

Building Bedroom/Demolition of a Wall/Making a Difference by Indifferentiating Difference/Political Exhibition Value

171 Architectural Art as Critical Theory

Touching Theory/Criticality of Architectural Gestures/The Architectural Gesture of Building Cinema

Prospective Notes

187 Theoretical Reflections

Idiotic Research/'Theoretical Coincidence'/Frenchship is not Friend/Loony Tunes/Work on Crossroads

193 Conclusion

194 Epilogue

Habemus Angelus Novus: The Anarchic Event

LIST OF FIGURES

Unless otherwise noted the author is Ronny Hardliz

- p. 2
Ronny Hardliz and Martin Beutler, *may be thinking*, inverted preface of Michel de Montaigne's *Essays* used for the invitation card for five public conversations that included three persons, three bottles of Bordeaux wine, and excluded the public, print, 2012
- p. 5
Ella and Bianca Hardliz, *Notre-Dame-du-Haut*, drawings of Le Corbusier's chapel in Ronchamp, 2015
- p. 16
faire corps, video, Berne, 2015
- p. 17
Gisèle Freund, photo of Walter Benjamin at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 1937
- p. 38
Ronny Hardliz and Jürg Orfei, *Are you here for the gravity?*, interior of *studiolo* during construction showing the marquetry perspective, Olten, 2013, photo: Hans Grob, 2013
- p. 39
Ronny Hardliz and Jürg Orfei, *Are you here for the gravity?*, *studiolo* in the context of the school building it portrays inside, Olten, 2013, photo: Hans Grob, 2013
- p. 40
On Gesture, circular hole melted in snow with hairdrier, World Ornamental Forum (WOF), Davos, 2014, photo: Sara Christensen Blair, 2014
- p. 41
On Gesture, footsteps leaving second circle in the snow, World Ornamental Forum (WOF), Davos, 2014, photo: Sara Christensen Blair, 2014
- p. 42
Ronny Hardliz and Jürg Orfei, *Are you here for the gravity?*, *studiolo* interior showing representation of real construction in the marquetry, Olten, 2013, photo: Hans Grob, 2013
- p. 43
Exit Strategy I, drilling the logo of Kunsthalle Luzern (Bourbaki) into the sidewalk refilling it with asphalt, Lucerne, 2011, photo: Beate Engel, 2011
- p. 44
Art Works vs. Artworks, unpacking the 1:4 scale replica of a Frank Lloyd Wright prototype mushroom column in the courtyard of the University of Architecture, Civil Engineering, and Geodesy, Sofia, 2013, photo: Ina Mertens, 2013
- p. 45
Satellite of Love, reconstruction of an anonymous student's conceptual model of Aldo Rossi's 'Monumento alla Resistenza' in scale 1:1, Berne, 2011, digital collage of project, 2014
- p. 46
Il tempietto, hole in the floor of studio, Istituto Svizzero di Roma, 2006, photo: Claudio Abate, 2006
- p. 47
Ornament as Subversion I, a reproduction of Francesco Borromini's Sant'Ivo alla Sapienza found in Bruno Zevi's *Pretesti di critica architettonica* (1983, 134) is cut and reassembled, collage, 2012
- p. 48
Art Works vs. Artworks, building the 1:4 scale replica of a Frank Lloyd Wright prototype mushroom column, Sofia, 2013, photo: Ina Mertens, 2013
- p. 49
Ronny Hardliz and Jürg Orfei, *Are you here for the gravity?*, *studiolo* view of the ceiling and top light, Olten, 2013, photo: Jürg Orfei, 2021
- p. 50
Ornament as Subversion II, a photo of Borromini's balusters in the courtyard of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is cut, reassembled, and cleaned digitally, 2012
- p. 51
Ornament as Subversion III, a photo of Alvaro Siza's ceiling at Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea in Santiago de Compostela was turned upside down, cut-out, 2012
- p. 52
GMC undone, a reproduction of Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* (1974) found in Pamela M. Lee's *Object to be Destroyed* (2000, xi) is cut and reassembled so as to fix the cut, collage, 2012
- p. 53
Ankündigung, announcement of a preliminary discussion of a discussion (not an invitation), card, 2011
- p. 54
Art Works vs. Artworks, destroyed 1:4 scale replica of a Frank Lloyd Wright prototype mushroom column, Sofia, 2013, photo: Ina Mertens, 2013
- p. 55
Transgression Accomplished, cobblestones in front of the Arnolfini were brought to the Architectural Humanities Research Association (AHRA) Conference on 'Transgression', Bristol, 2013
- p. 88
Scheme showing Sisyphos's life tricking the Gods and his final trick that made the Gods superfluous, sketch, 2011
- p. 89
Kick off for the research project Building Building at HSLU (Ronny Hardliz, Alberto Alessi, Jacqueline Holzer, Patricia Wolf) self-documented with three cameras, video collage, 2011
- p. 90
Documentation of round table discussion of research project Building Building at HSLU (Ronny Hardliz, Alberto Alessi, Jacqueline Holzer, Karin Jaschke) with three rotating cameras, synchronised and composed, videos and collage, 2011
- p. 91
Dolly shot through the 1:4 scale model for the conference held at the Swiss Architecture Museum (SAM) of the research project Just Architecture? at HSLU (Ronny Hardliz, Alberto Alessi, Jacqueline Holzer) with a camera on a skateboard, stabilised video, 2012
- p. 92
Drawing different 'tables of content' for a publication of the research project Just Architecture? at HSLU (Ronny Hardliz, Alberto Alessi, Jacqueline Holzer), video, 2013
- p. 93
Das Loch II, PROGR Bern, 2010, photo: Patrizia Karda, 2010
- p. 94
Ronny Hardliz, Julie Harboe, Jens Meissner, Lars C. Schuchert, video call for the annual World Ornamental Forum (WOF) held at the Kirchner Museum in Davos, 2013

- p. 95
Inverse model of studio scale 1:10, wood and cloth, Berne, 2016, sewing by Salome Egger, 2016, photo: Salome Egger, 2016
- p. 96
Ham... let me!, still frame and cut-out of Aki Kaurimäki's *Hamlet liikemaailmassa (Hamlet goes Business, Finland, 1987)*, London, 2014
- p. 97
Taking Buildings Down, application for the competition of the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York by taking the competition down, video, Berne, 2016
- p. 98
faire corps, exploring Foucault's *Utopian Body* (2006) for a paper by eliminating the senses of the head, video, Berne, 2015
- p. 99
A Portrait of the Artist Writing a Ph.D., exploration of 'writing on a wall', video tryptich, Berne, 2011
- p. 100
Presentation of *Lascaux V (or The Birth of Art)* at the World Ornamental Forum (Ronny Hardliz, Julie Harboe, Thorsten Sadowsky, Lars C. Schuchert), Davos, 2013, video: Lilian Mattuschka, 2013
- p. 101
Ornament as the Science of Passionate Disinterests, exploration of the forces of reading, video tryptich, London, 2013
- p. 102
Door as table, table as door for a Model Workshop in which Ph.D. students built models of their thesis projects, Sierre, 2014
- p. 103
whatever Ph.D. encounters, standing in front of Fridericianum of dOCUMENTA (15) waiting to encounter other Ph.D. students, video, Kassel, 2011
- p. 104
At the Place of the Tattoo there was his Daughter's Drawing, tattoo, 2015
- p. 105
Vertical mirroring of verso of Guercino's *Sisyphos* (1636), Berne, 2013, drawing: The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London
- p. 106
Cunning Attempts to Trick the Gods, vertical mirroring of Guercino's *Sisyphos* (1636) making the writing on the backside of the paper legible, Berne, 2013, drawing: The Samuel Courtauld Trust, The Courtauld Gallery, London
- p. 107
Wall built parallel to the walls of the space serving as support for the video *A Portrait of the Artist Writing a Ph.D.*, Berne, 2011
- p. 150
Chauvet III (or Cave of Forgotten Dreams), video, Pont d'Arc, 2016
- p. 151
The Wanting of the Young 2/3, video tryptich, Arad, 2016
- p. 152
The Wanting of the Young 1/3 and 3/3, video tryptich, Arad, 2016
- p. 153
Exit Strategy II, bowls cut into concrete block, Museums of Bat Yam (MOBY), Tel Aviv, 2016
- p. 154
Exit Strategy II, list of material, Museums of Bat Yam (MOBY), Tel Aviv, 2016
- p. 155
Lascaux V (or The Birth of Art), video, Lascaux, 2016
- p. 156
Preparations for Venice, or: On Horizontality, video, Berne, 2017
- p. 157
Road to Jericho, video, Jericho, 2016
- p. 158
Abshalom, video collage, Arad, 2016
- p. 159
Inverse Model, video, Berne, 2015
- p. 160
Exit Strategy II, cutting of bowls into concrete block, Museums of Bat Yam (MOBY), Tel Aviv, 2016, photo: Joshua Simon, 2016
- p.161
Telavator, video, Tel Aviv, 2016
- p. 178
Cinema Car, car transformed into a cinema, Berne, 2016, in use for Architekturfórum Bern at Gaswerkareal Bern, 2017, photo: Dominik Uldry, 2017
- p. 179
Cinema Car, 2016, behind garage door with copies of prehistoric paintings, graffiti, 2016
- p. 180
Cinema Car, 2016, in use for Architekturfórum Bern at Gaswerkareal Bern, 2017, photo: Nicolas Grandjean, 2017
- p. 181
Cinema Car, 2016, defense of thesis at Middlesex University, 2018, photo: Stewart Martin, 2018
- p. 182
Cinema Car, 2016, defense of thesis at Middlesex University, interior with Ergin Cavasoglu, Rolf Hughes, and Vida Midgelow, 2018, photo: Stewart Martin, 2018
- p. 183
Cinema Car, 2016, interior view, photo: Nicolas Grandjean, 2017
- p. 184
Cinema Car, 2016, exterior view with guests, Gaswerkareal Bern, 2017, photo: Nicolas Grandjean, 2017
- p. 185
Cinema Car, 2016, exterior view with guests, Gaswerkareal Bern, 2017, photo: Nicolas Grandjean, 2017
- p. 196
Angelus Novus Speculo, vertical mirroring of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920, Oil transfer and water-color on paper, 31.8 x 24.2 cm, Gift of Fania and Gershom Scholem, Jerusalem; John Herring, Marlene and Paul Herring, Jo Carole and Ronald Lauder, New York, since 1989 at The Israel Museum), collage, Berne, 2018, photo of drawing: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, by Elie Posner
- p. 197
Angelus Novus, marker drawing, copy of original drawing by Ella Hardliz, Berne, 2017

PHILIP URSPRUNG

An E-mail during Lockdown

In the midst of the lockdown in Switzerland, Ronny Hardliz sent me an e-mail. He invited me to contribute a text to his book. Not about his work, but about something I was doing. It would be nice, he added, if the text could also reflect on concepts such as 'shock', 'suspension', 'strike', 'deterritorialisation', 'destruction', 'alternative', 'excess', 'appropriation', 'exit', 'derogation', 'advancement', 'emptying', 'rejuvenation', and others.

This outline of notions is typical of Hardliz's proposals. It reminded me of his texts, lectures, and performances. They are always unexpected and unpredictable. And yet they do not seem arbitrary. He uses concepts not as definitions but as tools. In his hands, concepts do not fix meaning, but set meaning in motion and make it work, going from hand to hand.

When I got the e-mail, I was in the middle of a sabbatical, writing a book on Joseph Beuys. The lockdown was a good condition in which to write. No travel, no excuses. On the other hand, the crisis was a shock, and it functioned like a mirror. Was it appropriate to write an art historical book at a time of urgency and emergency? Did the rapid change happening affect the way history is conceived? Could I keep the suspension and maintain the attention by the readers in a situation where everybody was looking elsewhere than at museums? A voice like that of Beuys was missing. There was no artist who could make themselves heard and, for instance, support the museum personnel that went on 'strike' to fight against the layoff. There was no voice that could warn loud enough about the 'deterritorialisation' of cultural practices in the wake of the lockdown and warn about the 'destruction' of a fragile network of cultural institutions in the economic crisis. Was there an 'alternative' at all? Weren't many people secretly applauding that the end of mobility put an end to what they had considered a social 'excess' anyway?

But this also demonstrated the importance of the works of Beuys for the contemporary situation. In fact, there is much appropriation of his practices, such as the *social sculpture*, in the contemporary discussion. He demonstrated that there is no such thing as an 'exit', but that art needs to be in the center of society. In the current context of 'derogation' of rights and norms, the inherent conservatism of Beuys's art remains relevant. His art is a plea for revolution and

'advancement'. It is never about 'emptying' traditions, or hollowing out values. It is about construction and change and 'rejuvenation'.

Ronny Hardliz's book and mine are being published at the same time. I am glad that he wrote me the e-mail. It came just in time.





Instructions for Use

No one can say without being comical that he is getting ready to overturn things: He must overturn, and that is all.

Georges Bataille

No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener.

Walter Benjamin

Introduction

'I am going to draw a tattoo on your arm,' my then five-year-old daughter said, pointing a thick black marker towards me (fig. pp. 104, 197). This was when I was spending more time at home after the car accident I had with my Volkswagen T3 Multivan (see cover). I decided to have her drawing tattooed on my arm as a way of documenting this moment. It marked an exit from the academic aesthetics of the Ph.D. I was in the middle of then. At once there was another practice involved. It was free and related to many aspects of my work, my research, and my history. Nevertheless, the new practice was potentially discursive and allowed a practical discursivity to speak in its own right as a full-fledged part of the work.

The tattoo made it possible to use art practice as research practice without the need of mediators. It marked a rupture that led to more intuitive and inventive practices. The tattoo raised questions about the inheritance of my daughter's talent, but also about the inheritance of traumata that may be associated with it. Such questions of inheritance could have led to an artistic exploration of the history of my ancestors. Instead, I decided to undertake a research journey through Israel and Palestine in February 2016, imagining this as a fictional going back to my roots.

Given that a tattoo drawing consists of many small shallow holes in the skin into which ink is injected, my sculptural and performative art practice of digging holes can be interpreted as a practice of drawing. Consequently, digging one single hole is the most reduced possibility of drawing. The privacy and intimacy of the tattoo-moment with my daughter also reconnected my practice of filmic documentation to my father's passion for amateur Super 8 filmmaking, a passion I have witnessed, shared, and inherited.

My daughter's marking may be interpreted as a form of reversed inheritance of talents and traumata. I never met my grandfather. Supposedly he was a talented draftsman. He owned and ran several book-binding factories in Prague before the Czechoslovak Communist Party confiscated them after World War II. My grandfather's talent marks my daughter's drawing. It has passed from my grandfather to my father, to me and to my daughter, through my own body back onto my body as the tattoo: it is an indirect signature of inheritance. I am marked by an inheritance, one that is indirect through the younger generation: a reversed inheritance. Such drawing and digging now clear the research territory for an archaeological research practice linked not to scientific methods and objects but rather to a drilling art practice of graving, graves, and gravity. These issues concern life and death rather than knowledge.

I could ask what were the entanglements of my family with the machinations of the German National Socialist forces occupying Czechoslovakia during World War II, or if there are, conversely, sub-surface Jewish roots in my family. Instead I decided that this research should not lead back to roots, to my ancestors and how they interlock with those historical issues that touch everyone in the West today. No, the research should lead forward to roots. This is a specifically artistic use of inheritance. The staking of my personal life and history in research allows for invigorated steps to yet unknown terrains, which meet current urgencies that seem to have nothing to do with my past. Yet, related to the potential past of the tattoo, a past that is yet to come, current urgencies attain a potential for alternate readings. Therefore my research travel to Palestine and Israel may as well be seen as a journey to my imagined Jewish or Muslim roots.

While my father's passionate Super 8 filmmaking might be interpreted as a step forward, that is, a step away from my grandfather's passion for drawing forward towards filmmaking as an alternate form of drawing, my own step towards architecture can be interpreted as a step forward that retraces a genealogy from making graphs towards making cavities and unhinging gravities. This step points to a further set of practices of making. The tattoo gives permission to become active, creating new critical architectural gestures and new forms of culture.

The present book, which I have also called the *Cinema Book*, and the *Cinema Car*, depicted on the book's cover, jointly constitute the containers and vehicles of the present body of work. They may be viewed, read, and experienced together or separately. While it is easy to get hold of the book, this is more complicated for the *Cinema Car*. The book is multiplied and disseminated widely while the *Cinema Car*, though mobile, is fixed to its inescapably unique body. In this sense, the book may be seen as an echo of the *Cinema Car*. In a way, their relation is comparable with that of Narcissus and Echo—in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's words: 'Narcissus is fixed, but Echo can disseminate' (2013, 239). It is important, however, to point out that an echo only seems to repeat sounds. Rather, the constellation of Echo and Narcissus is one of simultaneity. While Narcissus speaks, Echo echoes. Instead of repeating, Echo propagates, or indeed disseminates Narcissus's expressions, although never in a pure way. Echo is always disturbed, distorted, contaminated, manipulated. With regard to this non-identical inseparability, both the book and the *Cinema Car* are uniquely fixed sites or bodies of self-expression as well as impurely propagating echoes of each other. They both speak as gestures in their own right, but at times they take words, images, or gestures from each other to make them speak in their own right too. In this sense, the point of the text is entirely

to write as work and not to write a b o u t work. The book echoes the cinematographic gestures of the Cinema Car by rotating its text through 360°. It uses discourse as a critical spatial practice. Equally, the Cinema Car never illustrates but works with space as a critical discursive practice.

Recapitulation of Proceedings

When I started my Ph.D. studies on the architectural in my art practices and my artistic research, I asked myself if the practices at stake were really those I was practicing at the time. Should I not, rather, consider the practices of studying as related to the Ph.D. on which I was about to embark? Is not the practice of studying as one's main occupation the practice at stake in a practice-led Ph.D.? Shouldn't the first question be, then, what it is to study? Taking such study-practice as one's art practice and as the starting point of reference and principal mode of enquiry defines the study as a reflexive practice from the start and allows taking the study itself as both the method and object of reflection.

From an architectural point of view, the s t u d y is not merely an activity but it is also a building type.¹ This understanding allows the introduction of one's practices—architectural art practices in my case—as a practice that is not exterior to the study as if it were a distant object to be studied, but rather as the architectural art practice of studying.

Studying, from then on, is not just the academic practice of studying: it is, in addition, a s p a t i a l, architectural practice of studying. The lack of distinction between studying and the study as architectural art practice creates a problem with regard to academic conventions as opposed to properly artistic methods. Although it seems clear that the very creation of this indistinguishability is a proper artistic method, it has to be asked to what extent discursive art practice distinguishes itself from discursive practice as such. Discursive practice—as the supposed contender of contemporary art—offers a major terrain for the exploration of the indistinguishability between studying and the study as architectural art practice along language, speech, and writing.

Nevertheless, this liberation from the need to distinguish offers another base, of which the main characteristic is openness. This openness is not arbitrariness. Decisions are taken on criteria but they are not taken to achieve something. Rather, they are taken to work out where these decisions lead.

¹ The modern study emerged from the shift of medieval conservation of scripture in monasteries to the mercantile economy of knowledge in the

Renaissance, evolving the monk's cell to a separate piece of furniture or small room, the *studiolo*, in a private palace or house. See Liebenwein 1977.

Obviously, documentation must be an essential part of any research that questions itself (a research of questioning, of questions rather than answers). However, even documentation is a contingent part of the complex practice of studying, and therefore an active and integral part of the exploration of studying. Documentation opens a gate to visual and haptic forms of perception that distinguish themselves, at least as a first declaration, from the conceptual and linguistic determinations of discursive practice. Following the logic of the study, documenting can be used to determine discursive practice anew as a visual and haptic practice, rather than maintaining its distinction from it. What such documentation does to research and how it can be employed become essential questions.

My aim—once discursive practice is established and explored as an architectural art practice of studying—is to integrate any mode of architectural art practice as discursive practice, in terms of *s p a t i o - d i s c u r s i v e p r a c t i c e*. The move is, first, reductively inwards into an architectural art practice as indistinguishable from discursive practice, and then dispersively outwards into a discursive practice possibly indistinguishable from any architectural art practice. The first move—into discursive practice—merged my art practices with the question any artist embarking on a Ph.D. confronts: the meaning of such a study for art practice. The second move—into a form of architectural art practice as a critical, material, and spatial discursive art practice—invented an original practice of studying.

Filmic documentation has played an essential role in this process. The decision to work with film is rooted in the filmed practices themselves. Digging a hole with a pickaxe in one hand and a camera in the other documenting the digging is common practice for me. Filmic documentation expands or blurs the site of the artwork.

The novelty in this practice may be explained by a shift of the centre of gravity in the relation between the work and the documenting camera. The focus is on the moves of the medium and followed by the action (i.e. actor's moves). That such action does not become obsolete or inferior, but on the contrary has the potential of filling empty moves of a given medium with meaning, must be understood as an elaboration of a useful determination of *n o n - c o n s t r u c t i o n*.

Through the attempt of such a determination of non-construction my practices have changed. I offer this and its telling by means of this book and the Cinema Car to those who respond to it and make use of it.

Research in Chronological Order

On 'Art: The Study' What is the practice at stake in research of which practice is a major component? What is the difference between an artist's art practice and research practice? What does it mean specifically for an artist to engage in such a research? To paraphrase Bruce Nauman: if I was an artist and I was in research, then whatever I was doing in research must be art. For the section 'Art: The Study' I began with methodological questions of this kind. They engage with art practice or artwork in terms of ethos; that is, in terms of how things are being done and of the specific habits and uses involved.

From a technical point of view my art practices are situated in the transdisciplinary field of art and architecture, opening a hybrid operational field. Drawing on my professional architectural background, I engage in architectural questions through the use of my art practices, and I engage in questions related to art through the usage of my architectural experience. The architectural base of my art practices generates a field of research that operates in artistic modes reflecting the field of art from an architectural perspective; it allows inferences about architecture from an artistic perspective.

Which practice does the study relate at the moment one's main practice becomes studying itself, and how? Intuitively, there cannot be a separation within one and the same person, between research practice and art practice, between the practice of studying and the practice of being studied. The only way to engage in studying one's own practice is to use the practice of studying as one's own practice by means of one's own habits, uses, or ways of doing. The point is to find a way of engaging as an architectural art practice.

Separations between modes of work remain exclusively modal. There is no hierarchy. It's neither writing about practice nor illustration of thought. There are two modes of the same ethos: one in the mode of writing, one in the mode of other (visual, haptic, acoustic, etc.) practices. The double meaning of the word 'study' as both research practice and architectural type reflects this double modality of the work. Both aspects of the study—as activity and as space—reappear in the book and the Cinema Car.

In order to engage in studying as visual art practice, the first step is to visualise the activity of studying as a spatial activity in a study (room); that is to say, by documenting it with visual media such as film, for example. Each practice that is conscious of being documented changes under the apparatus of documentation.²

² See Mieke Bal's investigation of 'First Person, Second Person, Same Person' within descriptions as a kind of narrative epistemology, as the title of the book indicates (1993, 293–320), or how Pierre Bourdieu introduces 'temporal strategy' into anthropology

on the basis of his observation that 'the object of study creates itself a 'theoretical distortion' because the observer has in fact no place in the system observed, resulting in a reduction of social relations in favour of simple 'decoding operations' (2012, 1).

Writing is a spatial practice. Filmic documentation is a first attempt to grasp writing by means other than words and concepts. In addition to psychological reasons, documentation changes the documented practice due to the technical conditions of documentation. A study space is often too small to place a camera in such a way that it can record the space and its walls in their full height. Optionally, the spatial conditions or the means of documentation can be adapted. The camera can be turned by ninety degrees in order to capture a wall's height. Through this simple gesture—a rotary motion—a vertical image emerges. Three vertical images placed next to each other fit onto a horizontal frame forming a film triptych.³

Rotation introduces the force of gravity into the medium of film. A sequence recorded in a vertical format when projected on the horizontal screen of a conventional cinema appears rotated by ninety degrees. Consequently, it makes the spectators' heads turn. Rotation, as a particular mode of documenting, changes the practices of reception. The example of rotation only makes visible that any documentation of research generates a change in both the research practices and the ways in which we watch or read its documentation.

A selection of the art-practical works that originated in the frame of the present research, but also some of the works of art that preceded or succeeded them, are contained in this book as images (i.e. stills) and in the Cinema Car as films.

The works of art rooted in the present research may be organised around the tattoo: those before the tattoo,⁴ the tattoo itself, and those after the tattoo.⁵ The tattoo marks an end to the clear separation between work that is either related to the present research, institutional research, or independent art practices. Through the experience of the tattoo and the questions it raises, a new art-research practice emerges. This practice is liberated from the systematic study of the study, while at the same time it incorporates its methodologies.

The Cinema Car is the container and vehicle of the visual works tentatively categorised above. Besides its use as a cinema theatre for the presentation of work, the Cinema Car is also a broadcasting device. The view of the driver can be projected directly onto the screen behind the driver seat thus generating a movie that moves while the car moves. The driver, who simultaneously is the

³ See for example the film *A Portrait of the Artist Writing a Ph.D.* (fig. p. 99). For the films referred to in this text go to the open-access publication available at Diaphanes: www.diaphanes.net/projekt/oa, or to the Research Catalogue: www.researchcatalogue.net/view/391954/391955

⁴ The works before the tattoo are guided by the study of the study: on writing (*A Portrait of the Artist Writing a Ph.D.*, fig. p. 99); on reading (*Ornament as the Science of Passionate Disinterests*, fig. p. 101); on thinking (*Maybe Thinking*, or, *faire corps*, fig. pp. 2, 16, 98). Additional work emerged during this period that is less explicitly linked to the research. It consists in institutional research projects (Building

Building, Just Architecture? World Ornamental Forum, fig. pp. 40, 41, 89–94, 100), or non-institutional art practices (*Are you here for the gravity?*, *Annunciazione*, *Exit Strategy I*, *Dendriform*, *Art Works vs. Artworks*, fig. pp. 58, 59, 42–55).

⁵ The works after the tattoo are guided by a liberated study of non-construction: on rejuvenation (*The Wanting of the Young*, fig. pp. 151, 152); on movement image (film in Jericho; film with Abshalom Ben Shlomo; *Cinema Car*, fig. pp. 157, 158, 178–185); on staging (visit to Cinema Jenin; *Preparations for Venice*, or: *On Horizontality*, fig. p. 156); on gravity (*Chauvet III (or Cave of the Forgotten Dreams)*; *Lascaux V (or The Birth of Art)*, fig. pp. 150, 155).

operator, can mirror the image vertically and horizontally. In a third mode of mirroring the driver attempts matching the film of a preliminarily recorded ride, a mode potentially evoking serious nausea. With this unsettling experience the Cinema Car itself approaches the architectural concept of voiding.

On 'Architecture: A Voiding' The research for the section on 'Architecture: A Voiding' affirmed the possibility of an annulling gesture of architecture. Voiding is basically annihilation of present forces through parallel moves, which can generate new forces opposed to the present ones. Thus not every architecture is bound to be the expression of dominating ideology.

Architectural practice is the practice from which my art practice and consequently my research emerge. At the beginning of the present work, however, there was no concept of voiding. It could only be named afterwards, at the point where the research departed from itself, where it left its consequential path. This point was reached at the moment when art practical work ceased to be obliged to construct a relation to the research, when the work of art's gestures, voiding architectural gestures, achieved a discursive quality of communicability that was inherently related to the research.⁶

The specific work produced in Israel and Palestine, which at the time of production seemed most explicitly related to the researched concept of voiding, later turned out to be more illustrative. Although these works address issues like youthfulness and rejuvenation (fig. pp. 151, 152), film and documentation (fig. pp. 157, 158), or gravitating and gravity (fig. pp. 155, 160), now they also appear as overly strategic and even evasive. They lack the momentum of an isolated gesture that does not merely void the institution but necessarily voids itself.

Gestures like this are located elsewhere, as in the filming of the road between old Jericho and new Jericho while riding a bicycle and holding the camera in one hand (fig. p. 157),⁷ or at the cinema of Jenin in the West Bank, Palestine, encountering a bunch of children joyfully sack-racing on stage to earpiercing music. Such gestures were significant for the decision to transform my Volkswagen T3 Multivan into the Cinema Car, the moving movies, and to drive to the South of France in order to explore caves with prehistoric paintings. This is the beginning of the section 'Building Cinema'.

⁶ This work includes, first, *Exit Strategy II* (fig. pp. 153, 160), which consists in carving spherical bowls into an abandoned concrete pedestal in front of the Museums of Bat Yam MoBY, produced with an angle grinder as a performance during the opening of the group exhibition *The Kids Want Communism*, leaving behind a public art work that today mainly serves as a bowl for birds to drink from and bathe in after rain (*The Kids Want Communism* is a continuing collaborative engagement with a contemporary determination of communism curated by the museum's director curator Joshua Simon); and second,

the work *The Wanting of the Young* (fig. pp. 151, 152), in which teenagers from the desert town Arad, who were interested in learning how to become artists, collaborate on an artwork by digging a hole, which would become the scene of a short video, in the garden of the local artist residency Art and Architecture Arad (the residency is the outcome of an art and community project curated by artist and activist Hadas Kedar, Art and Architecture Arad, now extended to the Arad Contemporary Art Centre).

⁷ www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1427266/1427267

On 'Film: Building Cinema' Following the research travel through Palestine and Israel, work for the section 'Film: Building Cinema' was initiated with field research in the South of France. With the van converted into a cinema it set out to explore the relation between cinema and prehistoric cave paintings. This investigation resulted in two short film essays. Each addresses the inaccessibility of a virtually present origin. *Chauvet III (or Cave of Forgotten Dreams)*⁸ is a film that relates to the famous cave discovered in 1994 in the Ardèche, containing prehistoric paintings aged approximately thirty-six thousand years, closed to the public and with very restricted access even for scientists (fig. p. 150). The public can visit a nearby replica called Chauvet II, representing a deformed composition of parts of the cave and its paintings. The aim of the work is to dig a tunnel from the top of the rock under which the cave is located, attempting to enter it—in vain. In the film I mark the position of the tunnel with red manganese pigments and then I start digging the hard rock with a pickaxe; however, once the red mark is chopped off I have to give up the work: no mark, no work. I have merely scratched the surface, seemingly leaving the rock untouched. The scene is shot with a vertically rotating camera, which results in an image constantly moving from bottom to top. This movement, rather rapid, is unpleasant to watch. It leads to experimenting with the screening device on which the film is shown by moving the device in the opposite direction at same speed. In this way the activity that is visible in the film can be captured to remain at the same location in the cinema space. The movement of the projector in the cinema annuls the movement in the film: a voiding.

*Lascaux V (or The Birth of Art)*⁹ is a film that refers to the famous cave discovered on 12 September 1940 in the Vézère Valley in France (fig. p. 155). The cave contains prehistoric paintings roughly twelve thousand years old. The paintings in Lascaux were accessible to the public at the time of their discovery, causing irreparable damage to them due to massive changes of humidity, temperature, and other physical or chemical factors. There is a replica of parts of the cave called Lascaux II accessible for the public a few hundred metres away from the original. There is a travelling exhibition of some sections of the cave called Lascaux III. In December 2017 an easily accessible replica of the full cave called Lascaux IV opened down in the valley. I attempt to intrude into the original cave in a less physically direct way than in Chauvet. The camera rotates on the axes of the lens, turning the world upside down. Intrusion becomes suggestive. I approach the world as if it were an object in an assumed gravitational field of a much larger mass, in the influence of which one would necessarily fall like a

⁸ Refers to the title of the film: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, dir. Werner Herzog: Ireland, 2011. See note 114.

⁹ Refers to the title of a book on Lascaux by Georges Bataille (1980).

meatball from a plate once the world has turned around. According to this childish vision I do all I can not to fall by clinging to one of the trees that grow above (or below) the Lascaux cave.

Writing in Conceptual Order

On ‘Architecture: A Voiding’ The section ‘Architecture: A Voiding’ defines a concept of architecture by juxtaposing two seemingly opposed concepts, the declaredly anti-architectural standpoint of Georges Bataille with the materialist understanding of architecture by Benjamin.

I compare two texts that employ strikingly similar expressions and sentences to describe architecture, to opposed ends, however. One text is by Douglas Spencer (2010) on the design for the new campus of Ravensbourne College,¹⁰ by Foreign Office Architecture (FOA). The other is by Philip Ursprung (2009) on Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal’s Nantes School of Architecture. Spencer’s text is a straightforward critique of the architecture of neo-liberalism, whereas Ursprung’s is a careful revelation of an architecture that uses the same architectural language against or beyond what neo-liberalism wants to say. Expressions like ‘exhibition of circulation’, ‘learning landscape’, or ‘flexibility’ are applicable to both buildings (and texts), and a differentiation is indeed difficult, at least conceptually. The difference is that in architectural terms these expressions in the Nantes School of Architecture are not where neo-liberal ideology would expect them to be: the building’s circulation is entirely accessible to the public; the learning landscape is large in dimension while the entrance space is reduced to the absolute essentials; the large spaces are intimate, protected from the public by their distance to the entrance; and spatial flexibility offers the users many alternative or experimental uses of space.

With this in mind, the chapter reflects on architectural voiding of neo-liberal ideology with regard to architectural discourse, asking questions about infrastructure and friendship. Finally, Nadir Lahiji’s question as to whether architecture can be an emancipatory project (2016), is discussed in relation to Lahiji’s own approach to discursive dialogues. The discussion concludes by stating that if discourse wants to connect with practice and play an emancipatory political—*qua* politico-economical—role for architecture as such, it must ask what

an architectural space of encounter can be today in discursive terms.

Such metro-political encounter raises questions about the self and how in a discursive practice the self relates to

¹⁰ Actually, it is Ravensbourne University London, formerly known as Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication. Spencer uses the name Ravensbourne

College in his text. As I am referring to Spencer’s text rather than to the building itself here, the name Ravensbourne College is used, *passim*.

politics and to economy. It may be that today the relation between the public roles of the great spirit of the Enlightenment *vis-à-vis* the ignorant people is reversed. While the people go public, exhibiting even their bedroom practices, the great spirits must find ways of politicising the exhibition of the private self.

With a concept of architecture that includes its social, political, and economic conditions as part of its architecture, the discussion returns to Bataille and Benjamin, focussing on their encounter in Paris as an architectural event.

On 'Art: The Study' The section 'Art: The Study' situates spatiality in discursive practice. It attempts to grasp the commensurability of spatial practice with discursive practice, asking if in consequence discourse is intrinsically linked to language, or if discursive practice belongs to the realm of *gesture*. What is a gesture? The concept of gesture used here is the one Giorgio Agamben detects in Marcus Terentius Varro, who differentiates it from acting (*agere*) and from making (*facere*) as a third possibility in the sphere of action: carrying on (*gerere*), which also means to endure and support. Agamben puts gesture in the formula: production is 'a means in view of an end'; praxis is 'an end without means'; and gesture is a means without end (2000, 56–57). What is language? Language here is not the language of linguistics. However, it is not the human who speaks either. Rather, in Benjamin's words, language is something more akin to 'the world essence [...] from which speech arises' (2007a, 49). If such language arises from spatial materiality, how is discourse differentiated from spatial art or architecture practice? I approach these issues through some voices from the discursive field of visual cultures, artists, and non-artists—Liam Gillick and Tom Holert in particular—searching an artistic ethos that should reveal critical moments of differentiation if it is indeed applicable to discursive practice—that is, language as spatial practice and language as non-spatial, purely conceptual practice.

This exploration of discourse turns towards two different yet related current art practices: *discursive art practice* and *artistic research*. Drawing on Sarat Maharaj, Gillick, Holert, and others it identifies what the two practices can learn from each other. Artistic research learns from current discursive art practice that political potential stems from 'art functioning as a structural parallel to contemporary working dilemmas in the dominant culture' (Gillick 2009a, 7). Discursive art practice, on the other hand, learns from artistic research that such political potential is not limited to the conceptuality of language. Rather, given the commensurability of spatial and discursive practice, such political potential is related to the discursive potential of any critical practice.

What then are the criteria for any practice whatsoever to be a critical discursive practice? It is not enough to draw on research as a defining criterion. The motivations of such practices must be located in the necessity of the practice itself. Drawing on Agamben and his discussion of monastic life, the section turns to an examination of poverty understood not as less but as not possessing, or poverty as an ecstatic experience of habitual conditions, offering a possible definition of critical discursive practice.

On 'Film: Building Cinema' The section 'Film: Building Cinema' approaches Benjamin's essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* as the central moment in the philosophy of art when the concept of the politicisation of art is derived from 'tactile appropriation' typical of architecture. Benjamin describes this mode with regard to the consumption of cinema by the masses as absentminded examination. What today's new digital media add beyond the relation between the masses and the screen is the direct relation between those who emit and those who receive, often reciprocally. Such immediacy vanishes in any attempt to record the encounter between the self and the real or potential other. It might be saved when enacted in the encounter between the self and the recording medium: film and cinema as the insistently valid media for an exploration of encounter, immediacy, and contact.

What remains as the most reduced relationship between the self and the other, in terms of art, is theatre, where the other is the recording medium of immediacy. It is not the theatre of the city, but a new theatre of the metropolis that functions in terms of an inherent reciprocity. It does so on the Internet, between private spaces, and in the physical metropolitical space, a space of visibility in which we must relearn how to hide in showing, thus politicising. The discussion turns to Agamben's suggestion of theory understood not as knowledge but as touching in order to grasp the qualities of theatrical immediacy as the base of a tactile theoretical discourse.

Collateral Concepts

Ornament, Model, Utopia, Theatre As it is made visible and accessible through the images of works of art, ornament and the concepts of model and utopia are central in this study. Ornament is studied in terms of gesture, as ornamental gesture, and reflected in terms of an anti-economy as well as opposed to the superficiality of current designs of façades.¹¹ This study

¹¹ Such designs are justified by the availability of digital technologies and by the ecological necessity of focussing on sustainability and insulation of buildings. See Picon 2013. Also compare with modernist

conceptions of ornament such as Kracauer 1995, Grabar 1992, and Loos 1998, as well as more recent studies on temporal aspects of ornament such as Dürfeld 2008, or Glaser 2002.

led to the annual World Ornamental Forum (fig. pp. 40, 41, 94, 100).¹² It also examines an idea of model not as exemplary but as constituent in its own right. A model is always a model and simultaneously a thing in itself.¹³ The double-sided operability of the model was also tested in the research project *Just Architecture?* (fig. pp. 91, 92), during which a mock-up conference was held. All the intended participants built a 1:4 scale model of the space in which the actual conference was to be held, rehearsing its content simultaneously. Related to the exercise of writing on something, the possibility of a negative model—a mould or a filling—was extended to the idea of an inverse model—an everted or upended glove provides a plausible illustration—by actually building such inversions of spaces within spaces.¹⁴ The most economical technique developed used ultrathin foil brushed onto the constructed surfaces of the represented space holding either by electrostatic forces or by vacuum (fig. p. 159).¹⁵ Both ornament and model belong to the utopian realm, like masks, fairy tales, carnivals, or more existentially, as Michel Foucault shows in *Utopian Body*, to the mirror, the corpse, and the lover. A body must be made in order to exist, according to Foucault, because a body as such, when it is reduced to point zero, is the first utopia. The reason why 'we love so much to make love' is because between the hands of the lover, 'in love, the body is here' (2006, 233). Through a series of papers given at the Utopian Studies Society, Foucault's concept of utopia, in which the dependence of utopia from other utopia is central, was studied and practically explored, that is to say, the utopia of the paper itself was tested (fig. pp. 16, 98).

These methodological explorations gave way to a configuration of concepts more appropriate for addressing concerns at the heart of this study: theatre, theory, touching. Theatre is tentatively approached through the collapse of the cinematographic distance in the digital space of real time broadcast (fig. p. 156). It is associated with the architectural typology of the bedroom as the metropolitan equivalent to the theatre, conceived in terms that Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed—and as has been noted by Jacques Derrida—as the place of speech in the city (1997, 304). Through this collapse of distance, touching becomes a central concern presented as encounter. Virtual or real, lethal or missed, encounter is the provider of the scenes of knowledges.

12 See call for the WOF 2015: www.researchcatalogue.net/view/1427033/1427034

13 For the architectural qualities of models see Healy 2008. On models also see Avermate et al. 2011 or Nielsen 2010.

14 For example, at the international conference *The Dark Precursor: Deleuze and Artistic Research*, November 9–11 2015, at the Orpheus Instituut in Gent (www.orpheusinstituut.be/en/news-and-events/dare-2015-the-dark-precursor), or the (un) conference of the Swiss Artistic Research Network Parenthesis, November 6–7 2015 at HEAD in Geneva

(www.sarn.ch/events/parenthesis).

15 I have not yet answered what forces make the foil stick to the wall. This answer will provide a possible continuation of the exploration. Also, note that an inversion is always potentially composed of the thing itself, while the negative is always incommensurable with the thing itself. In this, inversion is familiar with subversion. Nevertheless, the reversal of inside and outside, which is the similarity between inversion and negation, opens discursive options that seem more promising than subversion, for instance as related to a rethinking of the relation between private and public.

Cinema Car and Cinema Book Hitting the road in order to work at the crossroads of theoretical coincidences, the Cinema Car (fig. pp. 178–185) allows for a work of art in which relations between spatial and discursive practices are tested. The language of broadcast, projecting what the driver sees, can be transformed with simple techniques of mirroring, thus telling more than the driver wants the observers to see. Discussion inside the car can corrupt intentions reciprocally, losing one's head, not knowing what to do or say. The moving movies move us just as much as lost speech, both physically and psychologically. Being in touch, in spoken language or bodily, allows to diverting currently dominant affectless forces towards affective ends.

A flipbook is a handy booklet with a single image from a sequence of images on each page, which when flipped through with the thumb at a certain speed gives the impression or illusion of a moving image. Though not a flipbook in the usual sense, this book may work as one, giving the impression of a moving image. It repeatedly flips from vertical to horizontal, and back, a flip that occurs simultaneously with the images—stills from films and snapshots from works. Demanding their space as images in their own right, the photographs and film stills are not scaled to fit the format. Rather, the format is flipped in order to accommodate the image in its full extension. In consequence either the head of the reader or the text is forced to move, and must turn.

This flip may seem forceful, yet its aim is not enforcement but the exhibition of force. Something forces us to think, says Deleuze. Anything makes us think, when it hits the right chord. The flips of formats exhibited here are not only symbolic of the other forces in the text, inciting thought, but also of the affectless forces in the world in which we live, which are not without effect and certainly should force us to think. What is demonstrated here is not power but the examination of technology, which reflects the mechanisms used in some of the films I produced.

The forcefulness staged in the total flip around also resonates with what Hannah Arendt writes with regard to Benjamin's method, 'so as not to ruin everything with explanations that seek to provide a causal or systematic connection' (2007, 48). Arendt relates to Benjamin's method of 'producing a work consisting entirely of quotations, one that [...] could dispense with any accompanying text' (47). In case some accompanying text by the author 'proved unavoidable, [it should] preserve "the intention of such investigations", namely, "to plumb the depths of language and thought [...] by drilling rather than excavating"' (47–48).¹⁶ Such drilling, she continues, 'resulted in a certain "forcing of insights [...] whose inelegant pedantry, however, is preferable to today's almost universal habit of falsifying them" [even though it is] bound to be "the cause of certain obscurities"' (48).

¹⁶ Here and below, Hannah Arendt quotes from Walter Benjamin, *Briefe I* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1966), 329.

When I follow the moves of an automated moving camera in some of the films my parallel movement annihilates the camera's movement. There is no escape from the moves of the animated camera, a camera that moves according to a distinct logic regardless of the actions that occur around it, even if programmed in advance. The question is not if one relates to these moves, but how. Paralleling them generates surplus movements, which become visible as a difference to the ideal move—the perfect mirror image of the camera movement, and thus the ideal of the camera movement itself. This generates comical effect and charming affect, a sense of conspiracy, even friendship. In this possible friendship lies the potential of establishing a contingent encounter between affective beings across devices of control, such as a camera.

I am not content with leaving anonymous traces of iron sesquioxide powder like the 'unknown and suffering creatures' (Agamben 2000, 510) on the white wallpaper of Gilles de la Tourette's *Études cliniques et physiologiques sur la marche* at the Hôpitaux de Paris et de la Salpêtrière in 1886. This was, as Agamben notes, 'the first time that one of the most common human gestures was analysed with strictly scientific methods' (49). Artists' doctorates risk being nothing but automatic extensions of this first study, which could be seen as their *Urstudium*. But this book attempts to be more like 'the happy and visible twins' of the patients at the Salpêtrière, whom Agamben has detected in the 'walking woman sending a kiss' as one example of the affective bodies from Eadweard Muybridge's chronophotographies produced in the same years (51).

Discursive and Spatial Inspirations

My practices, and the body of work in this book, operate in the field of discursive art practices, relating to the legacy of diverse fields of art spanning the second half of the last century. Without doubt, considering the methods of my art practices and what they produce, close affinities with some of the fields of this legacy may be acknowledged, i.e. institutional critique, appropriation art, conceptual and post-conceptual art, curating, documentation, art in public space, art and film, site specific art, participatory art, performance art, social sculpture, or video art and others. However, since this is not an art-historical study—neither on the historic genealogy of discursive art practices nor on a particular field that has been caught up in it—no further explication is needed. It suffices to state generally that discursive art practices are the legitimate contender of contemporary art.

It nevertheless seems appropriate to identify some voices in the field of discursive art practices (which is done throughout section 'Art: The Study'), as well as the one antecedent field that, if any, may be drawn to as an influence and creative reference point for my discursive art practices: architectural intervention. Clearly, in my case, architectural intervention—or what Peter Osborne calls 'Architecturalization' (2013, 141)—as the artistic contention with architecture is not just a reference chosen from many, but the one closest to architecture as the educational and practical background of my discursive art practices. Architecture has, therefore, a twofold methodical influence: first, my architectural education significantly shapes my artistic ways of doing; second, the art historical legacy of architectural intervention draws on 'architecture [as] an archive of the social use of form' (141), which continues to be particularly influential both for my work and that of others through the figure of Gordon Matta-Clark (fig. p. 52).¹⁷

By cutting himself a 'wall sandwich' from a wall during the construction of the restaurant *FOOD* in Soho, Manhattan, in 1971, Matta-Clark, trained as an architect at Cornell University, makes abusive use of what exists and produces a use that exists only as such, without an end, as endless use. This 'wall sandwich' suggests life by nutrition, which is indeed given by the restaurant itself. But the actual 'wall sandwich' cannot be swallowed without causing considerable digestion problems. Hence the 'wall sandwich' exists as a pure means without an end. Matta-Clark apparently pursued all of his activities for the sake of the means as such. He never stopped cutting—while his gallery struggled with selling what he did.¹⁸

Matta-Clark's 'wall sandwich' and its implied ambiguities provide the most important starting point for the study, spanning an art-practical field between building, consumption, digestion, language, and society.¹⁹ On such a material basis, this book does not intend to add anything to knowledge—that is, if knowledge is perceived as a fixed state of the art, identifiable and definite at a certain moment in time. The novelty value of the study is defined in terms of 'addressing' and 'making available'. From the start I called this mode 'non-construction', a term Denis Hollier applies in his book *Against Architecture*,

The Writings of Georges Bataille, I later found out. In my writing the term functions as a neologism. My usage of non-construction is not necessarily congruent with Hollier's. Nevertheless, it is the only example I have found close to my own practice—so close it may almost be referred to as an origin. Generally, the term does not have a canonised state

¹⁷ Besides the Cuttings into real buildings by Gordon Matta-Clark, the analytical series of photographs and charts *Homes for America* by Dan Graham, which were published in the Arts Magazine, constitute a key work of this legacy. Characteristically, as with other art forms of the 1960s and 1970s, they operate beyond the traditional art spaces and

critically engage with current social and political questions.

¹⁸ See Corinne Diserens 2005, 194.

¹⁹ The Ph.D. thesis that provides the base for this book was entitled: 'wall sandwich'—*The Architectural Gesture in Art Practice from Destruction to Non-Construction*.

of conceptuality—and probably will never achieve one. It can certainly not be my aim to provide a definition of non-construction, least of all a canonical one, but I do explore the term in relation to the paradigms presented.²⁰

Gravities

While it may seem like jumping to conclusions, the best example of non-construction in my practice is the forceful link of the body to the medium of film by means of gravity. In the cinematographic instances produced during this study, as recorded on my pages of the Research Catalogue:

- The body pretends that gravity comes from another side, and the resulting footage is rotated accordingly.
- The recording camera is mounted on a device that makes it constantly rotate, and the body follows the movement by pretending that gravity also rotates according to the camera.
- In the case in which the body does not pretend gravity or follow the camera's moves, a forceful link of the body to the medium film can be achieved by moving the projecting device so as to fix the body in the frame. In this case the relation between the acting body and the projecting device replaces the relation between the acting body and the camera.

These examples visualise and make possible the experience of an understanding of knowledge as *t o u c h i n g*. In the same way in which a body relates to the camera, being in touch with it, writing subjects relate to the written or read objects of their texts. Texts produce forces onto its readers. These resemble gravitational forces. To submit oneself to the reading of a text is like submitting to the gravitational forces of a mass. When simulations of bodily components in the cinematographic instances, as described above, are submitted to gravitational forces that do not exist, then they produce seemingly comical gestures comparable to the serious

²⁰ Although my practice is close to what is subsumed under the terms 'spatial agency' and 'urban art', both of which I study and follow with interest, I am not looking for 'other ways of doing architecture' (Awan et al. 2011; see also Cupers et al. 2009, or Kossak et al. 2010), but for other ways of understanding architecture. Michel Foucault's 'heterotopia', Henri Lefebvre's concept of space, Marc Augé's 'non-places', Edward W. Soja's 'thirdspace', Chantal Mouffe's 'agonistic' public space, or even Homi K. Bhabha's concept of location, Richard Sennett's tropes of 'craft' or 'togetherness', Pierre Bourdieu's notion of 'habitus', Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, or Peter Sloterdijk's concept of 'spheres', albeit important for such understanding, are not therefore at

the centre of this work. Neither is a (historical) analysis of the relation between art and architecture the concern of my work, although I acknowledge the value of such studies, a selection of which would include Andersen et al. 2009, Bloomer 1995, Bruno 2007, Foster 2011, Kreider 2014, Papapetros et al. 2014, or Rendell 2007. There is no attempt to distance myself from my practice of understanding space in order to understand that practice—except perhaps in this footnote. Such practice often relates to phenomenological or psychoanalytical thought. Gaston Bachelard's 'poetics of space', Michel de Certeau's invention of the 'everyday', and Martin Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling' do not appear in the text, and there is no reference to Sigmund Freud's ideas of

comedies of Buster Keaton. This comic surplus affect emerges from the impossibility of opposing, eliminating, or escaping the effects of affectless forces. To adapt my initial quotation from Bataille to our current condition, in times when it seems increasingly impossible to overturn things, the only option is to become comical by preparing to do so. In the cinematographic instances this comic aspect shows in the clumsiness of the body with regard to forces that are actually inexistent.

What for the spectator of the cinematographic instances appears as the affects resulting from the visual simulation of non-existent forces, finds an analogy for the reader of this book in a warning: *caveat lector*. This book may deceive you not because it wants to deceive but because it wants not to deceive. It does not attempt to construct an argument, desiring only to get in touch with material—staying in touch with itself.

The rotated three main sections, together with this ‘Instruction for Use’ and the ‘Prospective Notes’ in regular orientation, constitute the main body of the book. It is framed by singular texts by guest writers; however, these texts are not intended to be about my work—rather, they give an idea of the intellectual and emotional environment in which the work presented in this book was produced. Julie Harboe’s fictive notes for a speech at my Ph.D. graduation reflect the intimacy of the research institute at the Lucerne School of Art & Design, where this work was initiated, showing the extent to which such advisory activity depends on the engagement of individual persons. There is a substantial essay by Stewart Martin, my direc-

tor of studies at Middlesex University in London. It is a chapter from his forthcoming book on art strikes, resonating with important aspects of my own work.

This book opens with Ursprung’s short, eloquent, and spirited gesture reflecting the doctoral degree program SNSF-ProDoc Art & Science, with which I was associated in Ursprung’s module at the ETH Zurich. Goldsmiths University is represented by the curator Joshua Simon, a good colleague from the doctoral degree program Curatorial/Knowledge, with which I was also associated. His essay on some political aspects of optical technologies of control not only reflects the spirit of Goldsmiths but also the questions we so often struggle with in our practices—

‘unconscious’ and ‘dreams’ or Jacques Lacan’s concepts of ‘lack’ and ‘desire’. The writings of architectural thinkers such as Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez, or Anthony Vidler appear only in my bibliography. It may seem that Heidegger should appear with another of his concepts, *Destruktion*, which means de-structuring rather than destruction. Heidegger certainly reflects ‘all research [as] an ontic possibility of *Dasein*’ (2010, 20), including his own *Dasein* as researcher. However, *Destruktion* is supposed to ‘stake out [ontological tradition’s] limits’ (22) which, by means of the very *Dasein* of the researcher and the ‘factuality’ of his questions, are already given. Whether the ‘positive’ intentions towards the past Heidegger claims for

Destruktion as a means for a negating critique of ‘today’ are tenable in philosophical terms is not the question here. What is striking is the creation of formulations such as ‘*Ausstellungsbroschüre “Geburtsbriefe”*’ (2006, 22), which can only be translated as both ‘display’ and ‘issue’ of ‘their “birth certificate”’ (2010, 22). Self-reference here seems to lead to a linguistic aesthetics that appears to be listening to itself—excluding the reader. This resonates with Benjamin’s claim that ‘no poem is intended for the reader’ (2007a, 69). However, in contrast to Heidegger, Benjamin declares it. In Benjamin, obscurity is elsewhere, not in an aesthetics that stands in for intentions; rather it is in the appreciation of that which cannot have intentions. Therefore it seems to me

independent praxis as the cornerstone of work that willingly entangles with institutional challenges.

Finally, there's the epitaph, so epilogical in style, and yet nothing but a dead letter, the dead's letter: full stop. Still, the full stop is the beginning, the drilling, the rotation, the common (material) ground of drawing and sculpture (and dance ...!) Yes, the mouth! This originality that utters, that evacuates, but that tastes and swallows as well, a hyper-gravitational density, a reflection of Sharon Kivland, the artist-lector.

that Heidegger's formulation of a '*positive Destruktion*', which at times recalls capitalism's principle of 'creative destruction', is well preserved in this footnote. Destruction, which in German would be translated as *Zerstörung* and has a much more violent meaning than *Destruktion*, was translated by Jacques Derrida as *déconstruction*, as is well known. Although Derrida is to be credited for exposing the hermeneutics of phenomenology as a self-referential system, my distrust of Derrida is based mainly on his complicity with what Mark Wigley has called *The Architecture of Deconstruction* (1995). Although Derrida tries to dispel any architectural stylistic interpretation of deconstruction as a technique of reversed construction,

he nevertheless interprets Bernhard Tschumi's *folies* at the *Parc de la Villette* in Paris as a representation of his philosophy. It is impossible to have a critical stance towards architecture—and to society in general, if understanding architecture as the one art that concerns each and every one by means of its function of dwelling—by courting those architects who, on Philip Johnson's coat-tails, created Star Architecture under the spell of global capitalism. To use the most explicit *corpus delicti*: praising the perverse split in the bedroom of Peter Eisenman's luxurious *Hose VI* (dividing the bed in two, thus forcing the owners to sleep in separate beds) amounts to betraying Gordon Matta-Clark's *Splitting* of a suburban house

at about the same time—which was a masterpiece of a critique of socio-political conditions. What is delicate about this example is that Eisenman was Matta-Clark's teacher at Cornell University and that their enmity culminated in a show curated by Eisenman in which Matta-Clark changed his mind overnight and instead of exhibiting objects shot through the glass of all the windows of the exhibition space with a revolver. Eisenman had all the windows repaired for the next day's opening. *Jacques Derrida's betrayal of Gordon Matta-Clark* might be a fine title for a study or chapter of a future work.



















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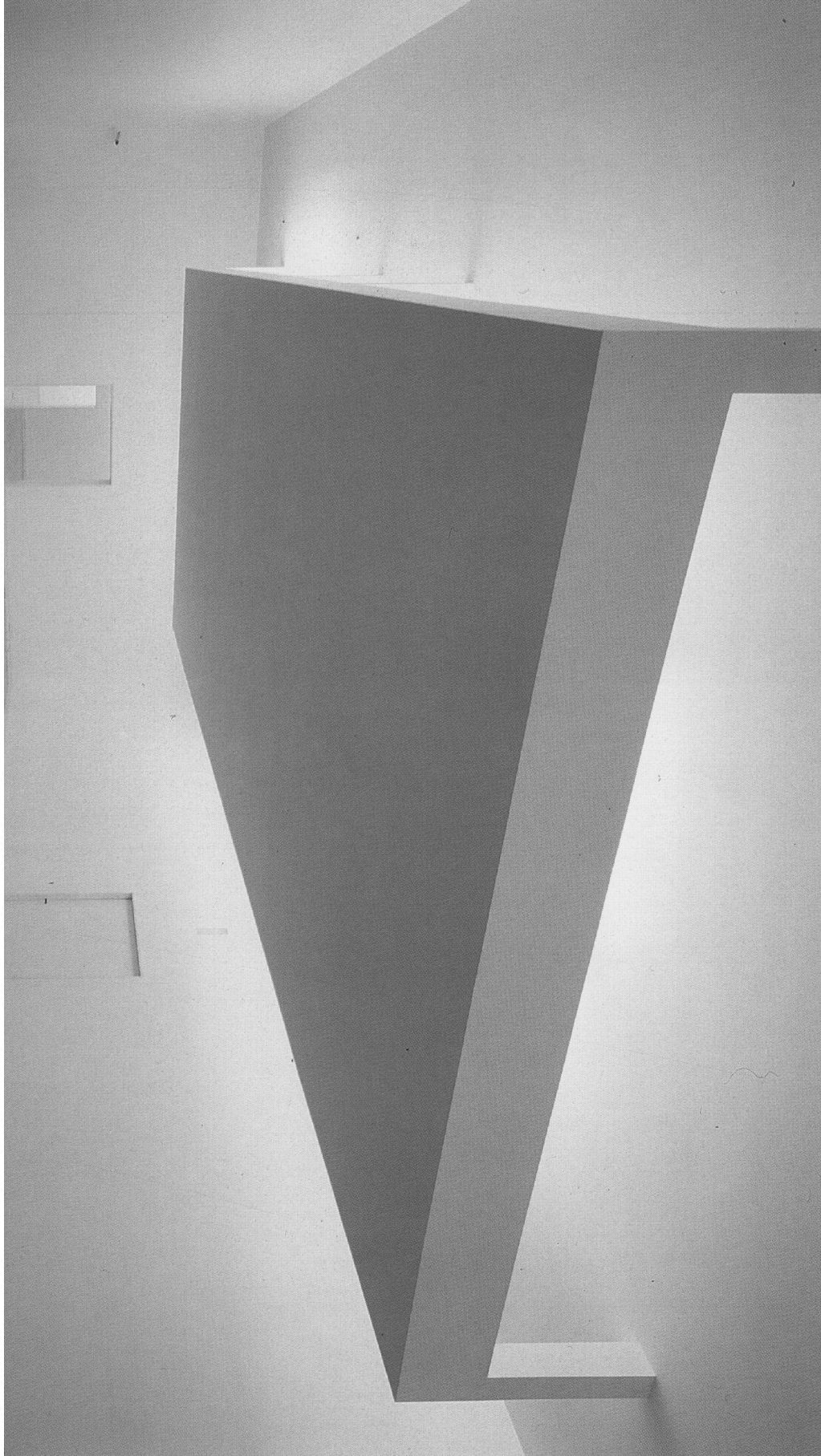
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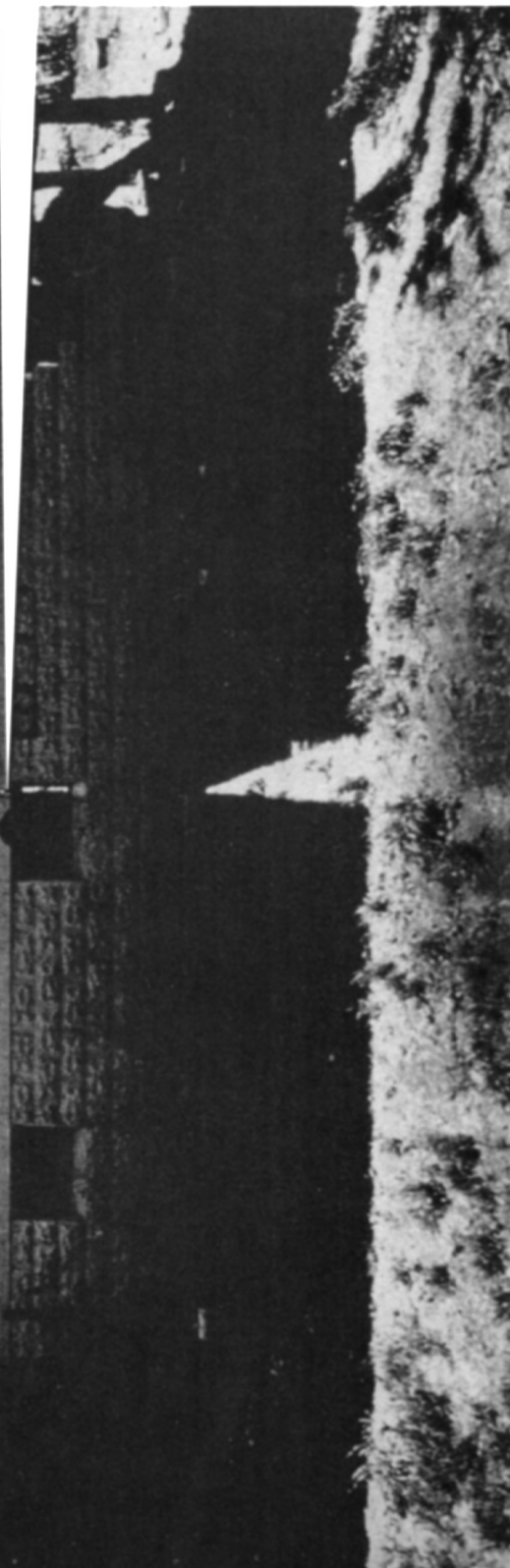
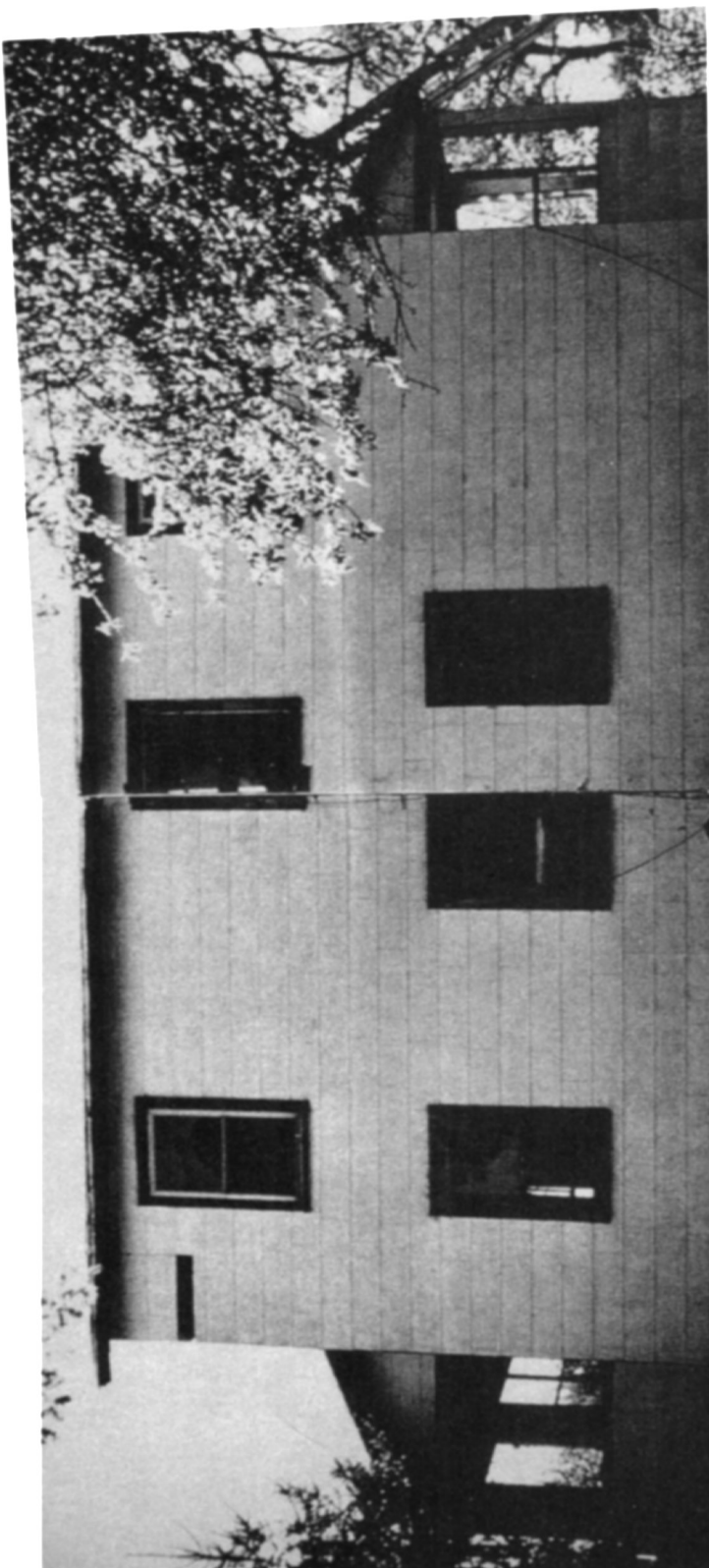


ΤΡΥΧΕΘΕ ΑΝ ΗΤΕ ΟΣΕ
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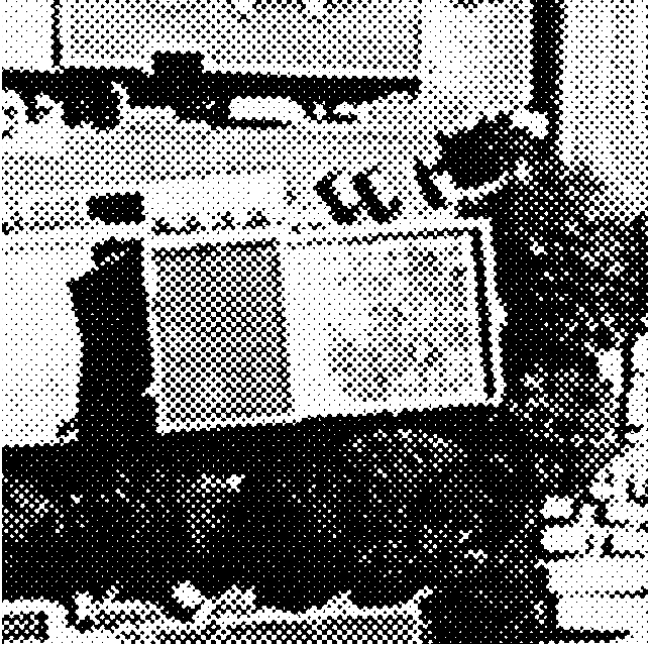


Ankündigung

24. November 2011, 18 Uhr

Ronny Hardlitz lädt Václav
Požárek und Martin Beutler
zur Vorbesprechung eines
Gesprächs ein.

(Dies ist keine Einladung)







I. Architecture: A Voiding

The many interrelations with technocracy give reason to suspect that the principle of construction remains aesthetically obedient to the administered world; but it may terminate in a yet unknown aesthetic form, whose rational organization might point to the abolition of all categories of administration along with their reflexes in art.

Theodor W. Adorno

Non-Construction

Burning Houses, Reopening Holes In the last paragraph of *The Man without Content* Agamben evokes the architectural metaphor of the 'burning house' as the equivalent for art's 'original project':

According to the principle by which it is only in the burning house that the fundamental architectural problem becomes visible for the first time, art, at the furthest point of its destiny, makes visible its original project. (1999b, 115)

With his metaphor of the burning house, Agamben may be drawing on Benjamin's arguments concerning the destiny of Jews. Benjamin uses the architectural metaphor in order to illustrate his position against a Jewish state, writing that '[The East European Jews] have as little occasion to reflect on where they will end up as a man fleeing a burning house'.²¹

However, Agamben may also be drawing on Bataille's interpretation of architecture and its inadequacy as a model for art.²² Bataille's first article in the dictionary *Documents*, published in 1929, is dedicated to architecture. Hollier comments that 'architecture [as] the expression of the very soul of societies' is, for Bataille, expression of

21 Quotation from Benjamin's letter to Ludwig Strauss, 11 September 1912, as quoted and probably translated by Anson Rabinbach (1985, 94). Rabinbach only notes: 'The subsequent citations and page numbers are from photocopies of the originals and not from the published [German] versions' by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, who published the four letters from Benjamin to Strauss, except this one (90, note 45).

22 In 1944 Bataille wrote a film scenario called *La maison brûlée* (1974, 115–149), which has never been realised in a film. Agsamben neither refers to this scenario nor to Bataille in his text.

23 Translation by Betsy Wing from Bataille's *Oeuvres Complètes* (1971, 171–172).

ruling authority and ideology (1992, 46).²³ When architectural composition (or architectural metaphor) is used and expressed in other fields it always carries with it the violence of human domination and authority. For Bataille, the disappearance of academic construction in painting, the abolition of its architectural skeleton, means an opening to societal instability: 'If one attacks architecture [...] one is, as it were, attacking man [...] denouncing the inadequacy of human predominance' (53–54).

Hollier takes the title of Bataille's first published text *Notre-Dame de Rheims* to claim that Bataille begins with architecture: 'It is a meditation [...] on the cathedral' (14). Bataille's text, written circa 1918, is followed by 'ten years of silence, at the end of which this text will be buried in silence'. Bataille's first writings after this silence, '*Histoire de l'œil*, *L'Anus solitaire*, the text *Amérique disparue*, and the first published articles in *Documents* [allow reading] in this silence the rupture through which Bataille's writing was produced'. Hollier proposes that 'All of Bataille's writing would be aimed at the destruction of this cathedral, [...] against the veiled ideological necessity controlling [this text], [...] which makes writing only possible a f t e r w a r d and against this text, against the oppressive architecture of constructive values' (15). Hollier claims that this 'vast ideological system [is] symbolized and maintained by architecture' and 'in order to loosen the

structure that is hierarchical and at the same time creates hierarchy, Bataille will introduce the play of writing' (23). Hollier writes that for Bataille

Writing in this sense would be a profoundly antiarchitectural gesture, a n o n c o n s t r u c t i v e gesture, one that, on the contrary, undermines and destroys everything whose existence depends on edifying pretensions. (23; my emphasis)

This sounds like my method, to which, in the context of an academic study, should be added that the edification of the pretention of claiming original knowledge must be destroyed as well. Hollier's conclusion that 'it is a question of reopening a hole, remarking a hollow, a cave once more,' referring to architecture as the works of which 'plugged up' these holes (23), echoes my practice.

According to Hollier, Bataille writes first on architecture, about a building 'that for one to have lived one has to have seen this light glowing' (16). In 1914 Bataille writes 'on September 19 shells tore through, killing children, women, and old people; fire cracked and raged from street to street; houses collapsed; people died, crushed by the rubble, burned alive. Then the Germans set the cathedral on fire' (17).

Hollier reads this text inversely. Bataille's turn against the ideologies symbolised in architecture is driven by his turn against religion, against the domination of the father, against domination in general. Hollier writes that in 1914 Bataille uses images of cruelty generating sparks of national hope, for instance, in saying that 'there is one light stronger than death: France' (18), to tell 'some youths of the Haute-Auvergne' (15) that they 'are the ones from whom she [the cathedral] awaits renewal' (18). From the perspective of Bataille's later work we must understand that to see 'the cathedral burn' and to have 'the vision [...] of a wound scarring the whole world' promises to tear apart 'all that used to make our life and our happiness' (17), and hence the transgression of ideological form.

Dispossession of Discourse In Bataille there is hope (in art).²⁴ Life, in order to be lived, has to consume itself, lit by fire, liquefied. The same is true for academic discourse if it is not to be 'deployed with complete assurance in a realm over which it has taken possession, one it has inventoried after first closing it off, to make sure it is absolutely safe' (23). Discourse must be saved from possession by dispossessing it from its authors. Rather than alienating us as dismembered truth parts, which escape from the past only to get stuck in a constructed present, quotations should elide the present and then

restore a tradition, one that does not transmit truths, but transmission itself. Consequently, quotations lose their relation to their authors and could, as Benjamin attempted, appear without quotation marks. Quotation marks, although they do persist in this book for reasons of academic conventions, are mere technical traces. They signal an origin of words or transmissibility; they do not signal meaning or truth.

To save a discourse means to save it from its monstrosity of authoritarian truth. With regard to architecture, it is not enough to replace the architectural metaphor with a metaphor of destroyed architecture. What is needed is to destroy the architectural metaphor, to destroy the metaphorical use of architecture in other domains and replace it with an architectural use. Writing would achieve an architectural meaning then, and the architectural metaphor (as architecturality) would be saved for architecture itself.

We may then comprehend the burning house not as anti-architectural but as the extreme condition of an architecture that constantly consumes and is being consumed, in this way revealing its originality. It reflects the use value of architecture that Benjamin describes in his *Work of Art* essay and its political potential for the art of cinema in terms of absent-minded examination. In this mode of appropriation we are consumed by an architecture over which ideology

²⁴ In *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art* Bataille describes the genesis of art as being related to man's experience of his own death. This experience of death leads to prohibitions. Overstepping these prohibitions in games is the birth not just of art but also of man himself as *homo ludens*—rather than *homo sapiens*. Death, and possibly even humanity's death, is therefore indirectly at the origin of art. See Bataille 1980.

25 A comparison with Siegfried Kracauer's meaning and function of mass in *The Mass Ornament* is of interest but not in the scope of this research, though it may provide the subject for a future investigation.

26 This relation is not dissimilar to that between Douglas Spencer and Philip Ursprung, both using identical descriptions of architecture—the first to denounce the architecture of neo-liberalism and the second to praise an architecture of what one could call trans-neo-liberalism. See discussion of their work later in this chapter.

Benjamin historically—as a response to fascism—situates his conception of a 'politicised art' in the masses, both in the technical means of mass production and in the masses of the public mobilised by them. Since gravitational fields are generated by masses, I argue that the generations, shifts, or destructions of gravities are of vital importance for politicised art.²⁵ For Benjamin it is through (and in) film that the masses can be mobilised in order to 'tackle the most difficult and most important tasks' of 'the turning points of history' (2007a, 240). The tasks of turning points of history and the mobilised masses produce mutually influential gravitational forces and shifts—or, literally, turnings around points in gravitational fields.

The political potentials both of architecture and film, their gravitational forces, are constituted through diverted masses and distracted modes of apperception. Benjamin touches an originality that counters the 'rendering aesthetic' of politics: politicising art as a response of Communism (2007a, 242).

Writing about art by means of opposing architecture, as Bataille does, and Benjamin's writing about an art politicised through architecture, seem to oppose each other. Yet what if they relate

to each other by using identical conceptions of architecture: the first to denounce the ideological pretensions of architecture (in order to transgress it) and the second to praise the material (and potentially transgressive) properties of architecture?²⁶ In order to test if Bataille and Benjamin are in opposition, I introduce a *tertium non datur*. If this middle position cannot be excluded, if on the contrary it opposes itself to one of the two supposedly opposed positions, then the first two positions cannot be opposed. In this case they would use opposed terms for identical positions.

Constructed Construction Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, like Bataille, begins with architecture. According to Hegel 'architecture confronts us as the beginning of art' (2010, 624). For Hegel, this is not only the case on a conceptual level with architecture being particularly suited for addressing questions of art, 'on the contrary, it must equally clearly be seen as the art coming first in the existence of art in the world' (630), that is to say, in historical terms.

However, Hegel understands architecture as construction, and places such construction as the origin at the beginning of an aesthetic theory, which he then constructs. As Hollier notes, in reality this 'origin is still lacking at the beginning. And Hegel will apply himself

more to the correction of this lack than to the description of architecture' (1992, 5), knowing that 'his entire construction, the entire edifice of his *Aesthetics*, depends on it' (5).²⁷ This correction remains uncertain because it depends on 'independent architecture' (Hegel 2010, 653). Such independence is problematic for Hollier, 'for it is hard to conceive of a building exempt from utilitarian space, one whose only purpose is aesthetic' (8).

Notwithstanding how 'awkward' (5) Hegel's discourse on the beginnings of art may be, it underlines his point of *Aufhebung*, in which every moment both annihilates and saves the preceding one, independently of its truth-value. The Hegelian edifice may be an exemplary gesture of a construction constructed purely on the possibility of construction. It defines art as an independent construction, and by constructing *Lectures on Aesthetics* as an independent construction pretends consequently to prove it. Of course, such a proof is elliptical, proving nothing but its independence from reality. Nevertheless, in its logic and consistency it demonstrates an aesthetic theory, from which the discourse on art, or rather the discourse as art, appears as a logical conclusion.

What I am interested in here is not the lack of a 'true' origin in Hegel's edifice, one identical with a factual beginning, but the very conclusiveness of his work. By terminating the successive suspension

of the 'particular arts' (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, and poetry) in Hegel's own work, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, 'art transcends itself and becomes prose' (Hegel 2010, 89). In other words, art itself is dead. For Hegel it is death as the end of art, as opposed to Bataille, for whom death is at the origin of art. The lack of an origin in Hegel's work is not a lack at all; on the contrary, it is its very force, since only the lack of an origin, which would link it to a tradition, allows it to have a definite conclusion, thus disconnecting it from tradition: an independent art work.

The seeming independence in Bataille's idea of art is, in contrast to Hegel's, driven to transgress the prohibitions imposed on society by the origin of the experience of death. Transgression is not an end, but a return to death as an origin. In economic terms Hegel's suspension of a moment for the sake of a new one corresponds with the principle of 'creative destruction', claimed in the early twentieth century as one of the driving principles of capitalism by the economist Joseph A. Schumpeter (2013, 81–86). Consequently, its opposite, 'destructive creation', should be called one of the driving principles of anti-capitalism. This becomes clear in Bataille's book on political economy, *The Accursed Share*, where he clarifies his 'notion of a "general economy" in which the "expenditure" (the "consumption") of wealth, rather than production, [is] the primary object' (2013, 9).

²⁷ Hollier refers to Hegel's lectures on aesthetics, but also to the system or theory of aesthetics Hegel constructs.

While 'creative destruction' is a destruction that has creation, or production, as its primary object, 'destructive creation' is a creation that has destruction, or expenditure/consumption, as its objective. Put in a formula: whereas Hegel has destroyed the concept of art in order to produce himself (nothing but himself), and the means of this production can be called 'construction' Bataille has created a concept of art in order to expend himself (nothing but himself), and the means of this expenditure can be called 'non-construction'. In his article against architecture in *Documents* and his claim of 'the birth of art' in 'prehistoric painting', Bataille situates the origin of art explicitly not in architecture and thus implicitly against Hegel.

Benjamin, for his part, reads Hegel 'under the influence of [Theodor W.] Adorno and [Berthold] Brecht [...] during the elaboration of the *Arcades Project*' (Palmier 2009, 61; my translation), with the aim of overcoming both Hegelian and Marxian theory in a new epistemology. Adorno builds his critique of Hegelian construction on Benjamin's technique of montage used in the *Arcades Project* and on 'the products of mass culture in which profit is hidden and whose trace they bare even in supposedly socialist countries' (2015, 76). Adorno thus hints at Brecht, who 'did in fact value Song-style above

atonality and twelve-tone technique, which was for him suspiciously romantic in its expressiveness' (76). But Adorno also hints at Benjamin in his critique of the *Work of Art* essay, writing:

The failure of Benjamin's grandly conceived theory of reproduction remains that its bipolar categories make it impossible to distinguish between a conception of art that is free of ideology to its core and the misuse of aesthetic rationality for mass exploitation and mass domination, a possibility he hardly touches upon. (2015, 77)

I would argue against Adorno that Benjamin does not refer to 'aesthetic rationality' as a tool. Nor does he claim to provide a conception of art that is unrelated to ideology. Rather, he is concerned with the pre- or post-rational material conditions of mass production and consumption and an art that is able to emancipate from ideological conditions. He appears to suggest a politicised use of aesthetic rationality diametrically opposed to Adorno's interpretation: that is to say, a misuse of fascist aesthetic mass rationality for a coming to terms with the present by artistic mass experience.

Adorno's reasoning, according to which 'it is the fatality of all contemporary art that it is contaminated by the untruth of the ruling

totality' (2015, 77), is alarmingly applicable to contemporary art. His claim, however, that 'construction is currently the only possible form that the rational element in the artwork can take' (77) is precisely what I question by setting up the term non-construction with the help of Benjamin's concept of 'tactile appropriation'.

Adorno claims that 'it counts among the most profound insights of Hegel's *Aesthetics* that long before constructivism it recognized this truly dialectical relation and located the subjective success of the artwork in the disappearance of the subject in the artwork' (78).²⁸ However, only because art produces a contradictory 'polemical intervention of the subject in subjective reason by a surplus of the subject's own manifestation beyond that in which it wants to negate itself' (79), according to Adorno, 'can art somehow still survive' (79).

In Benjamin's conception of the work of art, however, the subject does not appear by means of a surplus of subjectivity as in a Hegelian construction—in which subjectivity is hidden rather than eliminated from the beginning. The subject appears by elimination of the artwork as a contemplated object. Adorno's concerns that the work of art, when 'totally objectified, [...] becomes a mere fact and is

annulled as art' (83), are certainly right. I would claim that Benjamin's conception of art *qua* architecture, which could be understood as an objectification, does not put an end to art, but precisely offers the alternative 'to transform its very concept' (83), which Adorno was unable to provide.

From Conceptual Architecture to a Concept of Architecture Just as conceptual art is not the same as having a concept of art, the conceptual use of architecture in philosophy is not the same as having a concept of architecture in philosophy.²⁹ While Hegel had a constructive concept of architecture and applied it for the construction of his philosophy, Benjamin has a non-constructive concept of architecture and does not apply it to his philosophy. To his philosophy Benjamin applies a concept of philosophy.

To have a non-constructive concept of architecture implies that architectural construction remains in the medium of architecture. Architecture is inapplicable to philosophy. However, as medium, or language, it is translatable. There is a translation between the medium of architecture, its language (the language of building as activity and object), and the medium of philosophy, its language (the language of concepts). In this sense Benjamin's philosophy is non-constructive, not in an application of a conceptual architecture

28 Like Hollier, Adorno refers to both Hegel's book and theoretical system of aesthetics.

29 Compare with Deleuze's search for a concept of difference. For Deleuze, 'with Aristotle, philosophy was able to provide itself with an organic representation of difference, with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel an organic representation: it has not, for all that, reached difference in itself' (2012b, xiv). Deleuze writes in his preface to the English edition of *Difference and Repetition* that 'they had introduced difference into the identity of the concept, they had put difference in the concept itself, thereby reaching a conceptual difference, but not a concept of difference' (xiii).

30 Replacing 'use' with 'consumption', shows the proximity to Bataille.

31 It should be noted here that Carolus Linnaeus in the first nine editions of his *Systema naturae* not only places *Homo* in row with, rather than above, the primates, but he also refrains from giving 'any specific identifying characteristic next to the generic name *Homo*, only the old philosophical adage: *nosce te ipsum* (know yourself)' (Agamben 2004, 25). Giorgio Agamben suggests that even the addition sapiens from the tenth edition onwards 'assigns not a given, but rather an imperative as a specific difference' (25).

32 Deleuze and Félix Guattari write: 'art preserves' (1994, 165). Immanuel Kant writes: 'by an architectonic I understand the art of systems' (1998, 691). For Deleuze and Guattari 'art begins not with

to philosophy (neither as if philosophy were constructed nor as if it were non-constructed) but in the use of a concept of architecture as non-constructive for philosophical purposes.³⁰ To have a concept of architecture as non-constructive does not mean to dispense with construction in architecture. Instead it means to propose its use value and its inherent consummation 'by a collectivity in a state of distraction' as the conceptual base of architecture (Benjamin 2007a, 239).

Equally, the architectural background in my practice should not be mistaken as a conceptual use of architecture in art practice. Instead, my practice addresses (or researches) the concept of architecture in art practice. It is not mistaken to associate this art practice with destruction as long as destruction is not the means but the end. In any case, its means is not construction, which appears only as an effect of a materialist practice that uses and consumes the material at its disposal. Inasmuch as the means of this art practice is not construction with an (open) end in destruction, the ethos or use of this practice is non-constructive.

Habitual Origins of Art Bataille may have been right to situate the 'birth of art' in prehistoric painting and 'against architecture'. It is a beginning that begins with us, *homo sapiens*. Our first construction was death, or rather, 'man achieves awareness of death, and therewith wraps it in prohibitions' (Bataille 1980, 29). The transgression of the prohibitions generated by this construction, according to Bataille, is the play of art. It is what defines the human not as *Homo sapiens* but as *Homo ludens*.³¹ This play, opposing construction, is also against the constructive nature of man, whose first construction was the awareness of death. In opposition to construction, however, Bataille puts architecture first.

Benjamin does not put architecture first. Instead, he stresses the imperishability of architecture compared with other art forms and the 'laws of its perception' (2007a, 239), which might be related to the fact that 'the human need for shelter is lasting' (240). Architecture's birthright is qualitative evtl. not historical. Benjamin defines an aesthetic quality of architecture as art that differs from other art forms, rooted not in play but in the need for shelter. It brings art home. This home has nothing to do with construction. Construction, as for Bataille, is the birth of art as a transgression of prohibitions towards death. Art is the playful restaging and thus the arrest of the awareness of death.³²

Benjamin deposes art from its original architectonics of composition to its architectural originality of habit. This originality may not yet be art, but without it there is no art. Benjamin's achievement with regard to the technical origin of an art of masses is that art can exist in a habitual environment. Art, even though it may be a block of sensations, does not have to appear as such. Habitual art, researching art, discursive art, or documentary art, rather functions as blockbuster: it explodes when it is least expected.

The cave (the hole) is where the two arts and the two architectures of Bataille and Benjamin meet. The cave, the first refuge of 'the human [in] need of shelter' is the first architecture, which 'has never been idle' (Benjamin 2007a, 240). This never is absolute and exceeds humanity. Art has always been there, even without the human,

flesh but with the house. That is why architecture is the first of the arts' (1994, 186). It is not only the technical construction that makes architecture the first art: '[A] work of art is never produced by or for the sake of technique', they claim (192). Although it is hard to believe that Deleuze and Guattari would claim, like Kant, that 'a schema that is not outlined in accordance with an idea, i.e. from the chief end of reason, but empirically, in accordance with aims occurring contingently (whose number one cannot know in advance), yields technical unity, but that which arises only in consequence of an idea (where reason provides the ends *a priori*) and does not await them empirically) grounds architecture unity' (Kant 1998, 692), in their writing they nevertheless produce a rational *a priori*. They replace the human brain with 'microbrains', with 'an inorganic life of things': 'Even when one is a rat, it is through contemplation that one

in contemplations without knowledge, in contraction, in touch, in theory, in theatre: hidden. In the cave the artwork is exposed but at the same time it is hidden. "The elk portrayed by the man of the Stone Age on the walls of his cave was an instrument of magic. He did expose it to his fellow men, but in the main it was meant for the spirits," writes Benjamin, concluding: "Today the cult value would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden" (225). Today the exhibition value of the artwork, as commodity, is mistaken as its artistic function: 'By the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental' (225).

While we move through the cave with a flickering lamp in our hand, the animal depictions on the walls move with us. Inside this pre-constructive architecture, we experience the first cinematography of humanity, confirmed by successions and juxtapositions of representations of animal movements.³³ As in comic books or cartoons, bulls have eight legs in different states of pace, or the neck of a deer is depicted in different states of swimming when crossing a river. How Bataille and Benjamin 'coincide' on prehistoric painting and cinematography, at least 'theoretically', remains to be examined.³⁴ However, the coincidence of the moves of our eyes and the moves of the

"contracts" a habit' (Deleuze et al. 1994, 213). Deleuze and Guattari distance themselves from the priority of 'an Idea that acts, but is not' (Kant) in favour of the priority of 'a force that is but does not act' (Leibniz), 'because the contraction that preserves is always in a state of detachment in relation to action or even to movement and appears as a pure contemplation without knowledge' (1994, 213). It forms a habit.

33 This may be compared with Marc Azéma's analysis of animal movements and the representation of animals in movement in prehistoric cave painting, the graphic conventions used for the representation of the pace the decomposition of movement by either superposition or juxtaposition of successive images, suggesting that kinetic and narrative figuration was already rooted in prehistoric painting (2010). I return to this point later.

34 Gerhard Rupp speaks of a 'theoretical coincidence' between Benjamin and Bataille for their 'considerable' theoretical 'congeniality', i.e. their interest in the subversive and anti-authoritarian potential of the non-rational, despite of the lack of reciprocal theoretical reference (2007, 298). Rupp borrows the term from Adorno, who speaks of such a 'theoretical coincidence' between Benjamin and Ernst Bloch with regard to their concepts of commodities (1974, 240).

35 For an account of Spencer's use of the term 'Deleuzism', a term 'originally coined by Deleuze scholar Ian Buchanan in his essay 'Desire and Ethics', that is, a method 'seeking to affirm the creative appropriation of a body of thought for purposes unimagined by its original author', see Spencer's blog *The Spatial Register*: www.spatialregister.wordpress.com/2015/08/26/worface-to-architectural-deleuzism/

animals depicted on the walls, more than the depictions of the movements, recalls yet another kinetic art, theatre. When actors engage with the movements of a camera this produces effects that are more theatrical than cinematographic. Drawing on ancient Greek theatre as the place where theory was staged, this recognition allows for a conjunction between the filmic documentation of research practice with another ancient Greek idea of 'theory' not as knowledge but as touching, as Agamben suggests when discussing Deleuze's notion of 'contemplation without knowledge' (1999a, 239). Theory, in this sense, is never an actualised work but the very moment of encounter and its potential—for instance between the actor and the camera. This understanding of theory as potentiality is the base for comprehending architecture not only as space of encounter but encounter itself as architectural. The very spatiality generated by encounter is at the root of architecture and architectural knowledge.

Criticality

Out of Neo-Liberalism In his text *Architectural Deleuzism* Spencer writes: 'For many thinkers of the spatiality of contemporary capitalism [there is] a single organizational paradigm [of] networked, landscaped, borderless and reprogrammable [space]' (2011, 9).³⁵ He continues:

[This is] a space that functions [...] to mobilize the subject as a communicative and enterprising social actant, train[ing] the subject for a life of opportunistic networking [...] as a precarious and on-going exercise in the acquisition of contacts, the exchange of information and the pursuit of projects. (9)

Such a mobilisation, he proposes, resembles the "control society" forecast some time ago by Gilles Deleuze'. Referring to Foucault's neoliberal governmentality, Spencer explains that this space 'operat[es] through environmental controls and modulations, rather than the disciplinary maintenance of normative individual behaviour'. In such a 'post-disciplinary society', Spencer writes, according to Deleuze, that 'the movement of "dividuals" is tracked and monitored across

[its] transversal “smooth space”. For Spencer such a conception of space is not only the outcome of theoretical ‘models of complexity, self-organization and emergence’ but is also actively sustained by a self-styled avant-garde in contemporary architecture claiming and legitimizing the emergence of this mode of spatiality as essentially progressive through its particular reading of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari’ (9).

In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*—an analysis of management and ‘its own preference for networked and “self-organized” modes of operation’—(Spencer 2011, 12) the French sociologists Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello argue, according to Spencer, that ‘the orientation of contemporary managerial theories towards de-hierarchized and networked forms of organization originates, in fact, not in the production process, but precisely in a critique of capitalism which is then appropriated by capitalism’ (12). This critique of capitalism was rooted in the ‘repertoire of May 1968’, which apparently draws on the conceptual formulations of Deleuze and Félix Guattari (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007, 97). Spencer argues that if this repertoire of May 1968, including its Deleuzian concepts, has ‘already been subsumed to a neoliberal managerialism, then the proposition that these same formulations [of Deleuze and Guattari] are at the same time the best, and in fact the only, means by which architecture can pursue

an emancipatory project are seriously undermined’ (2011, 20), concluding that

It is thus difficult to conceive of how any architecture which makes strategic allegiance with the market, and at the same time so vehemently disavows the practice of critique, can be ‘advanced’ or ‘progressive’—other than to the extent that it advances or progresses the cause of the generalization of the market form itself. (20)

There is a chain of subjugations: Deleuze and Guattari’s analysis and philosophical concepts were subsumed by the emancipatory repertoire of May 1968, which was then seized upon in management literature and made operative not against exploitation but on the contrary, ‘placed in the service of forces whose destruction they were intended to hasten’ (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007, 97).

This final managerial link in the chain, according to Spencer, is actually taken up and spatially realised in some architectural projects while the architects pretend to be working along Deleuze’s liberating concepts.³⁶ Spencer argues that their architectural work is not merely problematic in its ‘strategic allegiance with the market’, immersed in which the architects would naturally reproduce ‘the market form

³⁶ It is ‘identifiable in the projects and discourse of practices such as Zaha Hadid Architects (ZHA), Foreign Office Architecture (FOA), Reiser + Umemoto, and Greg Lynn, for example’ (Spencer 2011, 9).

³⁷ Spencer refers to the second translation of Deleuze's text published under the title *Postscript on Control Societies* in 1995.

³⁸ See for example, my discussion of the *Hornsey Affair* in section 'Art: The Study'.

itself' (Spencer 2011, 9), but in their wilfully uncritical reading of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. According to Spencer, this reading, although 'filtering from the philosophers' corpus any trace of criticality' (9).

has not, though, renounced the political in this process, but rather reframed it as a matter of organization and affect [...] transcribing Deleuzean (or Deleuzoguattarian) concepts [...] into a prescriptive repertoire of formal manoeuvres. (9)

Drawing on a text passage from Patrik Schumacher, the partner in practice of Zaha Hadid Architects, and a text passage in Deleuze's *Postscript on Societies of Control*, Spencer compares the transition Deleuze describes from 'spaces of enclosure' typical of the disciplinary society to 'a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point' typical of the societies of control, on the one hand, with the transition from 'clearly bounded realms' to 'gradient vectors of transformation' in Schumacher's text, on the other.³⁷ While both authors, Deleuze and Schumacher, give an 'account of a transition from a striated to a smooth space', Spencer therefore qualifies the political shift which he states between the two authors as 'one from critique

to valorization'; from Deleuze's warning to Schumacher's affirmation. Spencer therefore concludes that 'this movement paradoxically turns Deleuze's analysis of a nascent control mechanism into a prescription for its implementation' (12).

Indeed, Deleuze warns not to 'count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks' (2012b, 176), and he cautions, with Guattari, to 'never believe that a smooth space will save us' (2013, 581). While Spencer rightly deconstructs the discursive and built instantiations of 'architectural Deleuzism', it remains unclear if the subjugation of Deleuze's critical analysis into managerial strategies is to be located in management itself or rather, ironically, in the repertoire of May 1968. The concepts deemed liberating at the moment of 'revolution' might already have contained an inherent spark of managerial redundancy when applied uncritically.³⁸ That Spencer does not offer alternatives accounts for his own disregard of the critical potentials of Deleuze's philosophy, though in different ways and for different reasons.

Generally, this observation casts a critical light on the reception of philosophical concepts in leftist philosophies, and would require an analysis of the economic, political, societal, and cultural contingencies in which such academic discourses are produced and practiced. Do they manage to 'advance and progress' academic discourses

beyond 'the cause of the generalization of the market form itself?' (Spencer 2011, 18).

This is not to denounce Spencer's merits in casting a clear light on the real dangers of 'architectural Deleuzism', in particular with regard to its claim of a 'politics of pure affect' through a 'differential faculty' that 'accommodates [contemporary social reality's] supposed post-linguistic turn' (18). Spencer warns that 'to posit a politics of pure affect is to propose that the contents of its expression cannot be grasped by thought'. In such a 'politics of pure affect', and beyond language, he is convinced 'any distance between subject and political expression, and hence any space in which this might be reflected upon, conceptually or critically, through a shared language, is eliminated' (19).

Forget Deleuze I, or À la recherche de l'espace perdu There are two questions: First, how do Deleuze and Guattari's concepts relate to practice (for instance architecture or art practice)? Second, how are Foucault's concept of 'neo-liberal governmentality' and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'smooth space' to be understood if that space, and with it all its subjects, is 'reduced to a mere "material organization"' (Spencer 2011, 19) in which any critical space is eliminated? The second question is all the more poignant for architecture since

the originally critical space of architecture, associated with Deleuze and Guattari's 'striated space', a space of physical enclosure with normative quality, seems to be entirely and uncritically given up in favour of the 'smooth space', which by itself seems incapable of producing architectural space at all.

A return to conservative or mystical conditions of architecture in a totally neo-liberal context would be unfeasible from the start. The research of the 'lost' space of architecture in the concepts of Deleuze and Guattari—as representatives of post-structural philosophy and its current philosophical descendants in general—promises to provide insights not only about how culture can critically relate to a neo-liberal environment, but more importantly how material culture relates to linguistic culture and how their entanglement or mutual dispersion is capable of (spatially) voiding the global machinations of capitalism.

À la recherche d'une Lingua Sapiens For this purpose one might compare Spencer's text—of which the main part is an exploration of architectural Deleuzism through an example of Foreign Office Architecture's (FOA), the design for the new campus of Ravensbourne College for digital media and design in London (2010)—with Ursprung's analysis of Lacaton & Vassal's Nantes School of Architecture (2009).

Ursprung titles his essay 'Out of Bologna', suggesting that this building has both emerged from and is outside Europe's expansion and unification of higher education known as the Bologna Process. The building becomes a placeholder for the machinations of the 'societies of control' as well as suggesting how to counter them.

The two texts employ virtually identical formulations to describe the respective buildings, suggesting a high degree of architectural similarity between the two examples. Spencer uses such formulations and descriptions in order to denounce the building as a spatial support of neo-liberalism, and the architects as neo-liberalism's conscious connivers. Ursprung, however, uses the same formulations and descriptions in order to praise the architect's conscious countering of neo-liberalism through an architectural space that opens possibilities of critical action and reflection. Both authors are obviously critical of neo-liberalism. As they are using almost identical descriptions for almost identical buildings, necessarily the question arises: what marks the difference? If one were to read only one text, one might risk, in both cases, taking the described forms as formal prescriptions assuring the respective (opposed) political positions. There must be a difference that is either subtler or to be found elsewhere.

Ravensbourne College is located on the Greenwich Peninsula, a former industrial area (due to its water supply from the Thames on

three sides) now being substantially redeveloped with new homes, offices, schools, and parks. 'The main entrance [of the building] opens out onto one of its large atria. [a] quasi-public space [...] intended as a bridge between the urban environment [...] and the college itself [where] the visitor encounters an informal space which includes a "meet and greet" area, a delicatessen and an "event" space hosting public displays and exhibitions'. This is 'a place, then, in which the activities of the market appear indissoluble from those of urban life, entertainment and education. Wire-mesh-sided stairways and passages are cantilevered into the atrium [...] forming] a complex series of crossings and intersections across mezzanine levels whose dynamics are further animated by the movements of the building's occupants'. 'The building's circulation is designed not only to serve as an image of movement, but to organize that movement according to a principle of connective liquefaction. Ascent through the building's floors [...] is staggered across its two wings so as to accentuate the condition of movement over that of occupation' (Spencer 2011, 16).

Similarly, the Nantes School of Architecture 'is located [in] the former harbour area [with a] neighbourhood [that] features the mixture of offices, housing, cultural venues, and vacant lots typical of gentrified waterfront areas, with their aura of both factory ruin and construction site' (Ursprung 2015, 1). 'The asphalt from the street

seem[s] to continue seamlessly into the entry hall [...] a non-ceremonial transitional area between outside and inside, public and private, a common zone where students and teachers, administrators, and passersby meet'. 'Circulation literally seem[s] to be running through the various floors [intertwining] parking, teaching, learning, and administration'. 'Connections [are] simple, and some spaces, such as the main lecture hall, [can] be perceived from various parts of the building because their volumes [intersect] with the other spaces of the school' (2).

This 'liquefaction' of circulation, characteristic of both buildings, is extended to 'undivided floor spans [differentiated only by mobile partitions [suggesting] informal access and the integration of programmes within a continuously mobile and flexible whole' (Spencer 2011, 16). 'The overarching principle of organization', apparent in both buildings, 'is designed to preclude the establishment of any fixed pattern of occupation or consistent identification of certain spaces with certain programmes', which according to Spencer

- 39 Ursprung quotes Nathalie Janson 2011, 26.
- 40 Spencer relates open and flexible organisational diagrams to the concepts of the 'Univer-City', according to which 'traditional categories of space are becoming less meaningful as space becomes less specialized, [and] boundaries blur' (Spencer 2011, 16), and to DEGW's concept of the 'Learning Landscape', in which 'future students are likely to rank educational institutions by their ability to deliver employment and to accommodate diverse approaches to learning' (15). Spencer quotes from John Worthington/DEGW, 'Univer-Cities in their Cities: Conflict and Collaboration', a paper presented at
- OECD Education Management Infrastructure Division, Higher Education Spaces & Places for Learning, Education and Knowledge Exchange, University of Latvia, Riga, 6–8 December 2009, 30–31. '[This] precisely reflects', Spencer argues, '[the organizational diagram] of other spaces designed to accommodate the mechanism of managerialism, where, as Mark Fisher has argued, "[flexibility, 'nomadism' and 'spontaneity' are the very hallmarks of management'" (16; Fisher 2009, 28). Spencer concludes that such space is, 'the idealized model of the urban, as the networked and extensive environment of the market form, rather than [...] a space, say, of social contestation' (16).

is 'a principle of "detritorialisation"' (16). The architects Lacaton & Vassal of the school in Nantes designed 'double-height unprogrammed volumes [providing] the school with adaptable and multifunctional spaces that will allow the building to be repurposed rather than destroyed and built anew' (Ursprung 2015, 3).³⁹ 'Using a standard support system—known, for instance, from IKEA storage buildings, which allow for important loads—the structure is open to future rearrangements' (3).

Managerial concepts like the 'Univer-City' and the 'Learning Landscape', as defined by the architectural consultancy DEGW, provide a universal managerial answer to Ursprung's question whether there is 'a spatiality of the transformation of higher education' (Ursprung 2015, 5) or 'an architecture that depicts "Bologna"' (5), meaning the Bologna Process.⁴⁰

However, in the school in Nantes Ursprung detects urban qualities that exceed 'urban mimesis' (Spencer 2011, 16), as Spencer has called it. For instance, Ursprung describes how the exterior ramp, which continues the asphalt from the street, 'gently leads to the upper decks and [...] can be used by pedestrians and bicycles, but also' (2015, 1), as he underlines, 'by cars and trucks' (1–2). Ursprung acknowledges that 'the constant and open-ended adaptability of the building is intrinsically linked to the Bologna Process'; however,

simultaneously, 'the presence of transport containers on various decks of the school, of caravans in the exhibition hall, and even of a boat and a truck in the workshop on the ground floor' is interpreted by Ursprung as 'revealing for a situation that is far beyond the era of the ivory tower'. For Ursprung 'the Nantes School of Architecture resonates with the spaces of European bureaucracy in "Brussels" and "Paris", as well as with the innumerable investments in roads, bridges, and other traffic infrastructure that go with the European Union'. Ursprung's conclusion is compelling, pointing to a genuinely political potential of architecture beyond mere mimesis of managerialism: 'the building is about an interaction between architecture and infrastructure' (7). Ursprung affirms that by means of its infrastructure

The Nantes School of Architecture demonstrates that architecture does not have to subscribe to the ideology of reduction, scarcity, and control, although it has to be conscious of it, letting us see more than what the political decision-makers say. (7)

In consequence, such a building 'is also a place where the autonomy of architecture is tested' (7).

Towards an Architectural Language of Trans-Neo-Liberalism

What then are the architectural means that the architects use for 'letting us see more'? (7) More than by making visible, they do so by opening the spaces to unintended uses. Ursprung repeatedly draws on a traditional formal repertoire of architectural design practice that the architects Lacaton & Vassal apply consciously and strategically—and which do not contradict flexibility—such as '[working] with contrasts of dark and light-filled zones, narrow and wide spaces, low and high ceilings, ramps, and stairs [or] spectacular views' (2). The architects thus generate 'a huge variety of spatial and chromatic experiences'. 'The opaque polycarbonate sheets, with their undulating surface', for example, 'frame, blur and distort the environment, allowing us to see it differently'. From the outside, 'for those approaching [the building], these membranes open different perspectives on the inside, such as the concrete structure supporting the auditorium seating, [or] material stacked in the workshops, as if one were passing a series of *nature morte* paintings' (3).

Beyond 'such formal associations' (3), as Ursprung calls them, the architects' strategies also permit a spatial stretching or distortion, and thus questioning, of the managerial imperatives given by the political framework of the Bologna Process. The 'transitional area between outside and inside, public and private', often the result

of a deliberate blurring of public and private, generating an often-deplored apparatus of control for the sake of supposedly heightened need of security, turns the logic upside down in the case of the Nantes school. Rather than pretending that this institutional or collective space is public, the architecture of the entrance suggests a seemingly private intimacy within the public realm, so that Ursprung 'had the impression of entering the school through the back door'. Ursprung writes that, as a result of this architectural quality, he 'immediately became sympathetic to the building' (2):

Instead of being dwarfed and intimidated by a monumental entrance structure, as with many institutions of higher education, I felt like an insider, like someone who knew the shortcuts, who was familiar with the place and was free to approach its entrance via the garage. (2)

What struck me when I visited the Nantes School of Architecture in autumn 2016, with regard to the intimate entrance situation, was how it has been contrasted architecturally by locating monumental spaces on the upper floors, hidden, though close, making their public accessibility a question of

41 It may be Deleuzian to forget Deleuze at times and instead to count, as Deleuze suggests, on the contingency of an encounter: 'it can only be sensed [and it] forces us to think' (2012b, 176). Contingency, by definition, cannot be Deleuzian, nor pertaining to any ideology. Ideology and 'theory's current status', as Spencer remarks, ought to be contested through the exercise of its critical capacities against an architecture itself now instrumentalised for and within neoliberalism'. Spencer's blog *The Spatial Register*: www.spatialregister.wordpress.com/2015/08/26/preface-to-architectural-deleuzism/

deliberate choice. Situated along the slidable façades, these spaces provide students with the opportunity of testing the criticality of their practical education in a public yet protected intimacy. As if the model were reversed, here the entrance area is dimensioned with regard to convenient access to generously designed spaces of work.

The examples show how in one case a large architectural space, as a representational entry hall, exposes every activity in it to public control, while in the other it provides an infrastructural generosity and support of critical study. The same architectural language can be employed to allow for opposed possibilities of use. Consequently, it is not a question of which formal element provides the weapons, but one of its critical architectural use, that is, of the cause for which the architecture fights. This also demonstrates that the transgressive force of architectural language depends on who is being addressed.⁴¹

Infrastructure

The Scenes behind the Scenes of Architecture The registers of architectural language—a language of affect—cannot be mastered by conceptual language alone. In the publication *Les coulisses d'une architecture* (Paul et al. 2013) the architects Lacaton & Vassal of the Nantes School of Architecture, with other professionals involved in the design and building process, give an account of the contingencies of practical decision-making. The criticality present in and made possible by the spaces of the resulting building necessarily had to be present in its design and building process in the first place. Processes of architecture and art practice are never as smooth as the results might suggest. The way in which the architects address those involved in the project is instead congruent with what the building addresses. Clearly it is not a question here of whom could be addressed by a representational function of the building. On the contrary, the building represents itself and its possible uses and thus addresses anyone approaching the building as a potential user.

The Face of Infrastructure According to Ursprung, 'by declining to build a cellar, an attic, and a subterranean parking lot, the architects put all the features of a school's life on the table' (2015, 2). As a

result of these clearly conscious decisions, 'the way of working is part of the work' (2). The 'table' to which Ursprung refers is the building including the school's life and work, which takes place in and around the building. The apparent refusal to conceal should not be misunderstood as non-criticality. Rather than exhibiting the users in circulation, forcing upon them the image of neo-liberal motivation, the building totally subsumes circulation, leaving no space where it and its users may be exhibited.

In terms of art: where there is no place of exhibition, there is no final piece of art to be exhibited; there is only art practice. And where there are no artworks, there only art works. When Ursprung writes that the architects put everything on the table, they eliminate the separation between what is being exhibited and what is not, in formal and functional architectural terms (for instance not hiding the parking lot, or the storage spaces). That everything is exhibited—in terms of putting everything on the table—amounts to an indiscernibility of exhibition. This is how, critically, practice becomes part of a final, yet never finalised work.

In the Nantes School of Architecture, as in the Ravensbourne building, emphasis is put on the way of work, the endlessly postponed project, the provisional trafficking and managing rather than on final monumental stability and imagery. The concept of management

in the form of traffic and infrastructure in Nantes, however, is given as graspable material with which to work critically. It is not there merely as an image but as the full and divertible reality of neo-liberalism. The refusal to hide the parking under the ground symbolises and spatially fixes the refusal to hide the global machinations of capital. They are made available as working material to be used and re-framed. The building can be seen as an example of a dignifying infrastructure, actively providing the means to produce new values. It is so because it ceases to be infrastructural in architectural terms: the Nantes School of Architecture pushes its infrastructure to the point at which it becomes architecture. This is a critical redefinition, not an expansion, of architecture. It is not about architecture being captured by infrastructure, but vice versa: architecture captures the characteristics of infrastructure as dignifying characteristics and transmits their potential for the work, or the ways of working, related to it.

Lacaton & Vassal, by offering 'almost double the space' than the competition brief required 'for the same price' (Ursprung 2015, 8), open up a space in which the issue is not how the building looks, in the first instance, but rather how the building works. 'By fixing the exchange rate', as Deleuze

puts it, 'much more than by lowering the cost' (1992, 6), the architects manage to 'conquer[er] the market [...] by grabbing control and by transformation of the product much more than [...] by disciplinary training [or] by specialisation of production' (6). They do so in order to redirect the means of the society of control onto a space and a way of working in which architecture can once again be 'designed at the architect's discretion' (Ursprung 2015, 8).⁴²

As Deleuze notes, redirection of forces is a form of 'corruption', though with a 'new power' (1992, 6). The new power of corruption lies at the heart of the discipline. Rather than corrupting the discipline, the new power of corruption is the 'new form of resistance against the societies of control' (7). It replaces the by now 'inept unions', or rather 'adapts' them in the name of the discipline as a kind of disciplinary control from within.

Absolute Architecture Meets Absolute Infrastructure Keller
Easterling recognises that 'buildings are no longer singularly crafted enclosures, uniquely imagined by an architect, but reproducible products set within similar urban arrangements. As repeatable phenomena engineered around logistics and the bottom line, they constitute an infrastructural technology with elaborate routines and schedules for organizing consumption' (2014, 11–2).⁴³ Easterling argues that

⁴² Ursprung quotes from Janson 2011, 26

⁴³ This claim is also valid for signature buildings, which reproduce the products that meet expectations within marketable settings of corporate identity (whether for private firms or 'public' cities). This is why it is tempting but mistaken to oppose 'the design of individual signature buildings' to 'the organization of complex, overlapping and often transnational systems of energy, transportation and natural ecology' as the evidence on which to base 'infrastructural concerns within the theory and practice of the discipline [of architecture]', as has been claimed by Joel McKittrick in 'Radical Infrastructure? A New Realism and Materialism in Philosophy and Architecture' (2015, 133)

‘infrastructure is then not the urban substructure, but the urban structure itself’ (12). Despite this recognition, that is, despite Easterling’s hope for a ‘reincarnation’ of architecture ‘as something more powerful—as [infrastructural] information’, and despite her claim that ‘static objects and volumes in urban space [have] agency [and] infrastructure space is doing something’ (13–14), she falls back on the old opposition of building against infrastructure she appeared to have abandoned. When she says that ‘infrastructure space is a form, but not like a building is a form’, ‘there are object forms like buildings and active forms like bits of code in the software that organizes building’ (14), then in fact she argues as if buildings could not be infrastructural.

Easterling seems trapped by the omnipotence of infrastructure that, if truly omnipotent, has nothing left by which it could be subsumed as substructure. Infrastructure when directed against architecture, from an architectural standpoint, risks corrupting architecture into an instrument of dominating ideology reproducing nothing but market forces. Instead, infrastructure, in order for it to corrupt the market from an architectural standpoint, would have to be subsumed by architecture by means of a critical acclaim.

If architecture does not manage to dignify infrastructure by integrating it in its experience as an indispensable base (i.e. as the table

on which everything is put), then the predominance of infrastructure risks ending up in the same absolutist camp with the ‘absolute architecture’ of Pier Vittorio Aureli (2011). Aureli’s argument, drawing on Oswald Mathias Ungers and OMA’s ‘Project of the City as Archipelago’, seems directly opposed to Easterling’s. ‘In an argument critical of the logic of urbanization (and its instigator, capitalism)’, Aureli attempts to ‘redefine political and formal as concepts that can define architecture’s essence as form’. Aureli wants to ‘illustrate a counter-project for the city—the archipelago—by referring to a specific architectural form that is a counterform within and against the totality of urbanization’ (2). For Aureli, such specificity of architectural form is certainly not ‘information’, as in Easterling’s proposal, but a form based on the distinction between a concept of the city and a concept of urbanization.

Aureli addresses ‘the unequivocal social and cultural power architecture possesses to produce representations of the world through exemplary forms of built reality’. Therefore, for Aureli, ‘The problem of form—that is, the strategizing of architecture’s being—becomes crucial’. One can hardly disagree with Aureli: ‘the making of form is thus the real and effective necessary program of architecture’ (1).

Rejecting ‘iconic buildings, parametric design, or redundant mappings of every possible complexity and contradiction of the urban

world' (1–2), Aureli is aligned analytically with Easterling. If a strategic architectural form aspires to a 'significant and critical relationship' with the world, which 'is no longer constituted by the idea and the motivations of the city, but is instead dominated by urbanization', then it must understand, according to Aureli, 'how urbanization has historically come to prevail over the city'. Instead of developing an urban concept of architecture, which would necessarily incorporate its complexities and contradictions and would therefore have to address its inheritances from post-modernism, Aureli suggests a counterproject for the city'. By this he means a redefinition of the concept of the city capable of opposing urbanisation. Under the pretence of protecting architecture from a confrontation with urbanisation, Aureli stages a supplementary conflict: one between the city and urbanisation. By taking architecture out of the crossfire, however, it becomes futile to investigate the suggested specificities of architecture, which supposedly are capable of dealing with the 'totality of urbanization' (2). In fact, Aureli's move is part of a mock battle that, rather than

saving, leaves architecture abandoned in the middle of urbanisation.⁴⁴ Taking the concept of the city—the *polis*—as the base of society and politics to found his argument, Aureli argues 'if politics is agonism through separation and confrontation, it is precisely in the process of separation inherent in the making of architectural form that the political in architecture lies'. For Aureli conflictual separation is the essence of architecture and the city as political form: 'The very condition of architectural form is to separate and to be separated' (ix).⁴⁵

Aureli recognises that 'the rise of urbanization as an apparatus of governance is marked precisely by the constant dialectic of integration and closure', in which the proliferation of enclaves, walls, and apparatuses of control and closure are established in order to maintain the "smoothness" of global economic trade'. Aureli sees 'the possibility of an absolute architecture [...] in the alteration of this dialectic by reclaiming separation, not only as part of the principle of urban management but as a form that exceeds it'. He draws on Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's late projects, which according to Aureli 'absorbed the reifying forces of urbanization, but presented them not as ubiquitous but as finite, clearly separated parts' (xi).

Aureli suggests good architectural governance capable of opposing bad urban governance. In 'the idea of the archipelago as a form of a city' he sees exemplified the reestablishment of the city as a site

44 Compare Pier Vittorio Aureli's conservative thinking of separation with David Harvey, who in *Rebel Cities*, referring to Lefebvre, productively and progressively confirms that 'under [global] conditions the question of the right to the city [...] had to give way to some vaguer question of the right to urban life, which later morphed in [Lefebvre's] thinking into the more general question of the right to *The Production of Space*'. Harvey and Lefebvre are not referred to in Aureli's text. See Harvey 2013, Lefebvre 1991, 2003.

45 Aureli's position is diametrically opposed to philosophers of 'agonism' such as Mouffe, in particular, who clarifies that with 'agonism [...] we are faced not with a friend-enemy relation, but with a relation of what I call "adversaries" [who are] "friendly enemies", in the sense that they have something in common: they share a symbolic space' (Miessen et al. 2012, 10).

of political confrontation and 'recomposition of parts' (xi). What Aureli is not able to capture is that separation only maintains a relation to life when it keeps in touch.

Friendship is not French While clearly drawing on Guattari and Deleuze's chapter '44o: The Smooth and The Striated' in *A Thousand Plateaus*, kidnapping their terms in inverted commas, such as *smoothness* or *the sea*—a chapter in which 'the nomads of the archipelagoes' make their appearance—Aureli never acknowledges the reference. Although he might be subversively hinting at the excessive use and abuse of Deleuze and Guattari's chapter in architectural discourse—to which he now presumably adds a critical layer—Aureli's account of the 'dialectic of integration and closure' (xi) at play in urban governance is nevertheless confusing.

First, Aureli states that 'within urbanization, integration and closure are [...] two simultaneous phenomena' (xi, my emphasis), while later, 'in contrast to the integrative apparatus of urbanization, the archipelago envisions the city as the agonistic struggle of parts whose forms are finite' (xi, my emphasis), that is to say, *closed*. Such confusions can be traced back to Deleuze himself. While in his collaboration with Guattari smooth and striated spaces are treated as analytical tools to critically examine capitalism, in which the mutual

'passages and combinations' (2013, 581) are of philosophical interest rather than a political program, in the *Postscript on the Societies of Control* Deleuze explicitly develops such a program. Here the distinctions between 'moulds' and 'modulations'; between 'distinct castings' and 'self-deforming casts'; between 'spaces of enclosure' and 'spaces of control' (1992, 4) are put in a historical genealogy—based on Foucault's analysis—from the 'societies of sovereignty' to 'disciplinary societies' and to the 'societies of control' (3). Deleuze renders the logic of the passage from 'mould' to 'modulation', from 'mole' to 'serpent', etc., and sketches the contours of a 'beginning [...] crisis of the institutions, which is to say, the progressive and dispersed installation of a new system of domination'. The program for Deleuze consists in finding 'new forms of resistance', which for the disciplines were represented by the 'unions' (7), or in more direct words: 'There is no need to fear or hope, but only to look for new weapons' (4).

However, the weapons Deleuze seeks are clearly new because they have to relate to and exist in the new order. Aureli's idea of separation and enclosure, by contrast, refer to a conception of the Greek city functioning (ideally) only with a clear separation of economy and politics: the house of the master, which is the *oikos*, and the space of discourse between masters, which is the *polis*. Instead of looking

for a critical smoothness within a smooth paradigm, Aureli confuses agonism with antagonism and proposes architecture as antagonism's natural protagonist.

Aureli writes about architects who were friends and refers to architects who presumably are his own friends, but he does not treat friendship explicitly as a topic. With regard to Lacaton & Vassal's integrative agonistic practice and to Aureli's omission of the reference to Deleuze and Guattari, as revealed above, and with the aim of approaching the point of friendship and a concept of architecture as touching encounter, a closer look at how Aureli treats friendship in his text is illuminating—as in the detection of forgery, where the authenticity of works is best examined in the instances where authors had paid little or no attention.

Anti-Formalist Form Aureli draws on Mies's architecture as exemplary for his concept of an architecture of architecture. Mies 'rarely expressed positions, or even opinions, on politics, and he always showed a caustic attitude towards theoretical discourses on form in architecture', as Aureli acknowledges, 'to the point that historian Werner Oechslin defined Mies as the greatest antiformalist architect of the twentieth century' (2011, 34). Despite recognising Oechslin's remark on Mies's distance to form, Aureli defines

this 'distance' as 'the framing of space,' as a set of formal boundaries. Aureli also draws on Manfredo Tafuri's point that 'the silent forms through which Mies pursued this goal are far from idealistic' (34). Nevertheless, Aureli argues,

Mies allowed the attributes of industrial technology—the famous I-beams used in the Seagram Building façade, for example—to enter and envelope his architecture [so that] the forces of urbanization in the form of the mass production of building technology became the very appearance of his architecture. (34, my emphasis)

Aureli suggests that Mies' architecture was not a critical embodiment of urbanisation—which would be the meaning of the non-idealistic use of urbanisation Tafuri has suggested—but the substructure of an 'envelope' and 'appearance'. Whether Aureli's interpretation is correct or not, he inverts both Oechslin's and Tafuri's position without warning the reader that he is doing so.

Moreover, it seems that Aureli puts at stake what he calls the disciplinary 'lifetime friendship and collaboration' between Mies and the urban planner and architect Ludwig Hilberseimer. Aureli displays 'Hilberseimer's idea of the city' that 'consisted of the

most extreme reduction of city form to the logic of urban management [...] to the point that, referring to Albert Pope, 'his urban plans were made not for "form" but of "space"'. Having set the discursive anti-form analogy between the two architects and friends Mies and Hilberseimer, Aureli takes the double meaning of the word 'plan' in order to make the discourse formal again. Aureli states that the spatial quality of Hilberseimer's plans 'is evident in the way Hilberseimer drew his urban plans' (35, my emphasis). 'Only the system of circulation and the natural features of the territory are figured in these plans [and] the diagrammatic minimalism through which Hilberseimer represented his plans is much more than a simple technique of drawing'. For Aureli, 'such graphic minimalism amounts to a highly evocative rendering of the very ethos of urbanization, that is, the managerial paradigm of capitalism. 'Hilberseimer's drawings suggest a complete acceptance of the main value of urbanization—that of management', Aureli claims, 'yet they express this without any formal commentary'. Aureli thus suggests a lack of criticality on the side of Hilberseimer. Aureli still positions Mies in analogy to Hilberseimer, reduced to the 'technique of drawing, [the] graphic minimalism, [which is] the same' (35). However, with the 'backdrop [of the] grey u n a e s t h e t i c logic [of the] urban plan' (35, my emphasis), Aureli makes an abrupt turn and suddenly claims that

'the "silence" of Mies's architecture seems to [fill the] completely dissolved' (35) architectural forms in the urban plans of Hilberseimer. 'Hilberseimer's "generic city" can be seen as the backdrop to Mies's projects', Aureli argues, 'which seem to be the most appropriate form within Hilberseimer's r u t h l e s s reduction of the city to the logic of urbanization' (35, my emphasis).

Aureli renders 'form' respectful by opposing 'form' to 'ruthlessness', and consequently, but almost unrecognisably, opposes respectful architecture to ruthless urbanism, respectful Mies to ruthless Hilberseimer. Aureli does not address the problematic light such a reading casts onto the 'lifetime friendship and collaboration' (35) between Mies and Hilberseimer, not to mention the inadequate moral superiority of architecture over urbanism.

This evidence of Aureli's construction of a precarity in the friendship between Mies and Hilberseimer does not question Aureli's credentials in vindicating, in his own words, 'Hilberseimer's [overlooked] radicality [which] consists in his lucid and realist analysis of the capitalist city' (Hilberseimer 2016, 335). We might use a formula Aureli uses to describe Hilberseimer's method in order to phrase a critique of his construction: 'He put the problems on the table and identified existing architectural examples that might provide a basis for further research' (362).

Unlike Hilberseimer, Aureli does not use his examples (i.e. Hilberseimer) as witnesses that contemplate his argumentation; instead he constructs them in such a way they perform what he wants to say, thus destroying them.

This corruption of the friendship between Hilberseimer and Mies is all the more unfortunate when considering Aureli's argument, according to which the 'element that defined all of Mies's projects [was] the careful placement of buildings through the use of the plinth' (2014, 36). What else but the plinth is, in architectural terms, the very element by means of which to negotiate the relation—or the friendship—between infrastructure and architecture or between architecture and the metropolis? The plinth makes Mies' architecture not only thoroughly urban-conscious but, indeed—and against Aureli's argument—metropolitan.

The Tectonic of Theatricality Gevork Hartoonian notes that 'tectonics attains visibility through anonymity: internalizing the nihilism of technology, the tectonics suspends this process of internalization by the very fact that it cannot disguise the fact that it is a fabrication in the first place' (2014, 81). In such a definition the reduction of current art to discursive practice comes closer than ever to the 'tectonic' as 'that which is particular to architecture'.

Hartoonian posits 'this is anathema to the spectacle and it is the nucleus of the political in the theory of tectonics' because 'the "modesty" informing the tectonics lies in the singularity of its objectivity'. For Hartoonian 'the tectonic of theatricality', which he associates with Gottfried Semper's open theory of tectonics and with Benjamin's exhibition value of the work', 'facilitate[s] a dialectical play between the technical and the mental', the questions of how it is made and how it shows, in which 'the technical means becomes cognitive, and', referring to Antonio Negri, 'intelligence becomes technique and labour' (81). This is of interest because unlike the times in which Semper or Benjamin were writing, today we perceive the world as totally urbanised and technical.

David Cunningham, also referring to Negri, writes that 'the "internally antagonistic" spatial configuration of the advanced metropolis'—which reveals the wrong antagonism between political architecture and apolitical urbanisation at the base of Aureli's argument—is that which might extend and replace the privileged place previously accorded to the industrial factory as the crucial site of contemporary social production, cooperation, and conflict' (2014, 11). Whereas the visibility of what was being fabricated during the times of Karl Marx was linked to the industrial factory, defining it as the site of political antagonism, today the factory is anywhere, and

consequently the site of political antagonism is the metropolis in its global (and digital) potential.

Hartoonian observes that ‘a critical discussion concerning the position of any cultural product in capitalism today runs through a network of interrelationships where a clear demarcation between the old notions such as “base” and “superstructure” is almost impossible’ (69). This impossibility is the main characteristic of ‘the progressive and dispersed installation of a new system of domination’ (Deleuze 1992, 7), which both art and architecture must confront with the question of how to appear in such apparent lack of separation.

Politics

Discursive Spaces of (Non-Constructed) Encounters Lahiji has edited a number of books collecting essays on reclaiming or discussing political criticality in architecture. He has also published a book that is an essay in itself, in the sense of an attempt, inasmuch as it practically probes a discursive alternative, entitled *Can Architecture be an Emancipatory Project?* (2016). Lahiji asks if architectural discourse can rethink itself in terms of a radical emancipatory project, and if so what the contours of such a project would be. Referring to

Maurizio Lazzarato, he argues that ‘a philosophy of the “virtual” has been corrupted into the “virtuality” of finance capitalism and credit (x), and today ‘the cultural discourse of contemporary architecture happily abets the grand “utopian” project of neoliberalism’s subjection of all social forms to the logics of “the market”’ (xi). Such abatement, for Lahiji, consequently leads to ‘a Counter-Enlightenment turn towards new forms of idolatry’, to a contemporary architecture ‘all about the surface of culture and its re-enchantment as commodity form’ (xii). Drawing on Alain Badiou’s registration of a ‘deeper betrayal [of] May ‘68’, the betrayal of radical left, communist ideas by libertarian ideas, which led to the victory of ‘unfettered neoliberal capitalism’, Lahiji asks ‘what historical agent offers a possibility of emancipation, and where [it is] located in the urban, social, and architectural reality of today’ (xi).

Lahiji assembles a presumed ‘alliance’ for an emancipatory politics against the endgame of capitalist ‘deterritorialisation’ and ‘fluidification’, and the superficial ‘re-enchantment of culture’ and architecture. Rather than forging that alliance into a manifesto-like pronunciamiento, Lahiji vigilantly—and not unsurprisingly with regard to his supposedly radical assumptions—constructs an academic dialogue offering unequalled opportunities. Moreover, while decrying the Deleuzian idea of ‘deterritorialisation’ by lending himself to

the corruption of the term by neo-liberal capitalism, Lahiji invents an ‘architectural *d i s o s i t i f*’ (xi) with the capacity to produce a ‘deterritorializing’ scientific method for both the contributors and the readers.

Rather than discussing the content of Lahiji’s book, I propose a critical discussion of the book’s strategic composition concerning what it has to say. Lahiji’s ‘architectural *d i s o s i t i f*’ has the capacity to generate ‘dialogues on architecture and the left’, giving the book its subtitle. It asks a number of interlocutors with different positions—Libero Andreotti, David Cunningham, Peggy Deamer, Erik Swyngedouw—to pose questions to which the other interlocutors respond in the form of academic essays. These essays are circulated, and each interlocutor considers the others’ responses in a second essay. Lahiji, having the overview, plays moderator, honing the edges of the arguments. The initial questions and essays are collected and complemented by an essay by Lahiji declaring his own position, and are finally completed by Joan Ockman’s concluding afterword as a previously uninvolved expert voice.

This ‘system’ results in a mode of writing in which each interlocutor is compelled to acknowledge the others’ positions, to interact with them and to discuss them in their own discursive contribution on the basis of a friendship, while aware of the academic credentials

at stake. It is a dialogue understood in an agonistic sense. As opposed to the convention of naming other voices by the surname of the author, the interlocutors are called by their first name as the sign of an informal conversation. The responses are sharp and apparently more precise than in conventional essays. Although at times the intertwining of positions may seem viscous, there is an overall impression of the accomplishment of hard academic work. Each essay integrates and reflects all present positions, giving an extraordinarily accessible opportunity to X-ray the matter.

Struggling with Struggling Theory Lahiji aligns his system with Slavoj Žižek’s ‘struggling theory’ (2016, xiii). All ‘the contributors to [the] book’, as Lahiji claims, surely ‘profess an alliance to an emancipatory politics against’, in Žižek’s words, “‘the gnostic-digital dream of transforming humans themselves into virtual software that can reload itself from one hardware to another’” (xiii). It is not clear, however, if they would all agree to call this ‘the endgame of capitalist “deterritorialization” and “fluidification”’, which Lahiji also claims.⁴⁶ However, it opens the question whether ‘deterritorialization’ is not only being abused by capitalist managerialism but also falsely decried as ‘capitalist’ by the ‘radical Left’, or if, indeed, ‘deterritorialization’ is inherently managerial and capitalist.

⁴⁶ Note that Nadir Lahiji kidnaps these denunciations of Deleuze’s notions also from Slavoj Žižek: ‘in radical capitalist “deterritorialization” and “fluidification” the trend which reaches its apotheosis in the gnostic-digital’ (Žižek 2008, 5).

47 See Cacciari 'Epilogue: On the Architecture of Nihilism' (1993, 199–211).

For Žižek there are two such struggling theories, Marxism and psychoanalysis, 'not only [because] they are both [...] theories about struggle, but theories which are themselves engaged in a struggle' (2008, 3). They are 'struggling theories' because they 'imply and practice [...] an engaged notion of truth'. Žižek calls this 'the wager of Truth [...] not by running after "objective" truth, but by holding onto the truth about the position from which one speaks' (3).

According to Žižek, Truth 'emerges and is constituted through the very political struggle of/for naming and, as such, cannot be grounded in any particular determinate content' (5). What seems fundamental is the insistence on rejecting a final truth. What counts is the struggle that emerges from the statement spoken from a position of truth. Žižek's point is that in each struggle of 'historical failure and monstrosity [personified by Martin Heidegger, Maximilien Robespierre, Mao Zedong, Joseph Stalin, etc.] there was in each of them a redemptive moment which gets lost in the liberal-democratic rejection—and it is crucial to isolate this moment' (7).

The point is to enter Lahiji's dialogical approach to an emancipatory project of architecture with the sense of struggle he claims, to gather insights about how contemporary urbanisation relates to or redefines architecture and how this might be related to an emancipatory project of art through architecture.

Metropolitics: Sociality of Abstracted Equivalence Despite their agreement on 'emancipatory political sequences' for architectural discursive practice, the differences between the interlocutors concern the way in which 'the political', and particularly the political of architecture, relates to the socio-economic reality of urbanisation or the metropolis. Cunningham, in opposition to Andreotti's and Swyngedouw's distinctive positions, argues that 'politics' and 'political economy' cannot be separated in a capitalist society. He sees a need for 'coming to terms with the ineliminability of abstraction itself as a central dimension of all modern societies'. Cunningham calls such a 'contemporary metropolitan politics of emancipation and transformation' (105) 'metropolitics' (Lahiji, 2014, 11). Referring to Massimo Cacciari, Cunningham draws 'on the historical breach constituted, politically as well as socially, by the form of the metropolis itself [...] in which each particular "place" is rendered equivalent in a universal circulation and exchange. This [equivalence] is certainly "economic" in form, but it is also profoundly social in the very fullest sense' (Lahiji, 2016, 103).⁴⁷

This historic transformation of the social relates to the shift from 'disciplinary societies' to 'societies of control'. The historical breach constituted by the metropolis is a transformation of the social as a set of rules pre-establishing hierarchical relations to the

social as a fundamental abstraction of values, rendering them equivalent. Regarding the urban, the breach that renders all places equivalent may be seen as a shift from the disciplinary city as a set of rules pre-establishing hierarchical relations between places, to the metropolis of control as a fundamental abstraction of values and places.

When at the end of his essay Cunningham asks if it is 'possible to imagine some form of urban connectivity or "commons" that would not involve fundamental forms of abstraction and mediation', this question suggests that a *polis* without *metro* added to it has always been fundamentally unthinkable.

This induces the readers to think about the concept of the *polis* in 'metropolitical' terms, as if the *polis* had always been a metropolis—a thought that is never explicitly expressed by Cunningham. On the contrary, by focussing on rendering the concept of the *polis* and the *agora* as a space of encounter as old-fashioned and obsolete, Cunningham seems not only 'to forestall naïveté about what politics "alone" could really be' (105), but also forestalls his own conception of architecture in 'metropolitical' terms.

If discourse is to connect with practice and play an emancipatory political—*qua*—politico-economical role for architecture as such, it must ask what a space of discursive encounter

could be. This is the merit of Lahiji's practical discursive approach, independent of the critique it deserves. As researchers we must ask what spaces we want encounters to take place in and how we want these spaces to work in order to turn managerial indifference into a sociality of abstracted equivalence.

In terms of Cunningham's suggested question of how a commons can involve abstraction, we may project such abstraction onto both the dialogue and the positions it contains. An encounter is missed when theory does not claim to be occupied with the political act of staging the indifference between the *polis* and the *metropolis*, thus revaluing indifference into equivalence. By staging a metropolitical encounter it becomes an enactment of a society of abstracted equivalence actually engaging in working in groups.

Touching and Encounter

The Haptic and the Erotic Staging the working in groups is not the same as group building. From this point of view, Lahiji's sophisticated system of dialogues remains a construing system. Rather than generating equal value between autonomous entities, any system tends to generating indifference towards values by the supremacy

48 A particularly striking example, as Ben Lerner points to in a conversation with Alexander Kluge, is Thomas Demand's work *Folders* (2017), in which he rebuilt with blank cardboard and blank paper the folders that President-elect Donald Trump in a press conference claimed to be the documents, placed next to him as he spoke, which were evidence of the preparations he had made to give over control of his businesses to his sons. These papers appeared to actually have been blank. Demand thus builds a model of a reality that is itself a model already. It may seem that Demand has been made redundant by Trump, but we could also say that the artist just refuses to stop working (Demand et al. 2017).

of the system itself. By staging, however, the system necessarily maintains its function as an infrastructure that allows for dignified work. Such an infrastructural system can never be stable, but rather must allow for a certain abstraction, remaining adaptable in order to fulfil its task. In times when the systematics of management threatens to do away with humanity at large, the question of how infrastructure can be infused with dignity, so that it, in turn, can provide a dignifying base for work, is crucial to the survival of humanity.

A stage, if taken as a place where a certain abstraction can be tested, provides such a dignifying base. Architecture taken as a subliminal stage of life corresponds to Benjamin's conception of the hap- tic appropriation of architecture and to Bataille's negative conception of architecture in the corporeal spaces of the anus, the mouth, or the eye. Such a conception of architecture can be one of architects planning and building, but more importantly any architecture can be conceived of as a stage.

The artist Thomas Demand's photographs of his paper models show how architecture (or, indeed, any environment) becomes insignificant form when relieved of its ideological components.⁴⁸ The significance of the form is its potential. The example of the

Nantes School of Architecture shows how such a process of determination from a form derived of neo-liberal managerialism can be voided and left to potential uses. Looking at how the architects work and collaborate, the example also shows that the voiding of ideology starts in the process itself, that any place in which a stage is negotiated is already a stage. Here a critical reading of Easterling and Aureli gives insight into how infrastructure can in fact be valued when it is given its infrastructural dignity, which does not have to be conservative in any way. Moreover, the analysis of the stage that Aureli erects around his writing demonstrates the extent to which his project is a project of separation, and that the contrary—a project of abstracted equivalence in which architecture subsumes infrastructure—would provide the base for dignified metropolitan encounters. While Lahiji's project proposes an attempt of such a project, it also reveals its limits.

At this point it is of interest to return to Benjamin and Bataille and examine their conception of architecture not on the premises of what we assume to be architecture as a built form, but rather on the premise of architecture as the space in which architecture is being negotiated. If there is a conceptual congruence of architecture between Bataille and Benjamin, how does it play out on the social level of encounter?

Bataille Politique: An Epoch-Making Encounter During his refuge in Paris Benjamin was familiar with the Collège de Sociologie, of which Bataille was one of the co-founders and one of its most involved members. Moreover, it is known that ‘nothing in the world for me [Benjamin] could replace the Bibliothèque Nationale’ (1991, 1180; my translation), and that Bataille worked there at this time as a librarian. Their contact was more than casual and pragmatic: Benjamin, when leaving Paris to escape the Nazis with the prospect of travelling from Lisbon to the United States in order to join Adorno, entrusted Bataille with the manuscript of his *Arcades Project* and other texts. The Nazis entered Paris the day after Benjamin had left, but Bataille saved his texts by hiding them in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

In different circumstances there might have been a deeper theoretical exchange between Benjamin and Bataille. According to Gerhard Rupp, in the period before his escape, Benjamin ‘prepares a philosophical congress within the framework of the Collège’ (2007, 302; my translation). Rupp compares Benjamin and Bataille from the point of view of their alternative discursive practices. Whether Bataille inspired Benjamin with an allegorical, fragmentary style of writing remains unclear. Nevertheless, the ‘epistemological change’ from ‘historiography of his own childhood in Berlin’ to ‘historiography of modernity, the *Arcades Project*’ in Paris, from the ‘auto-biographical

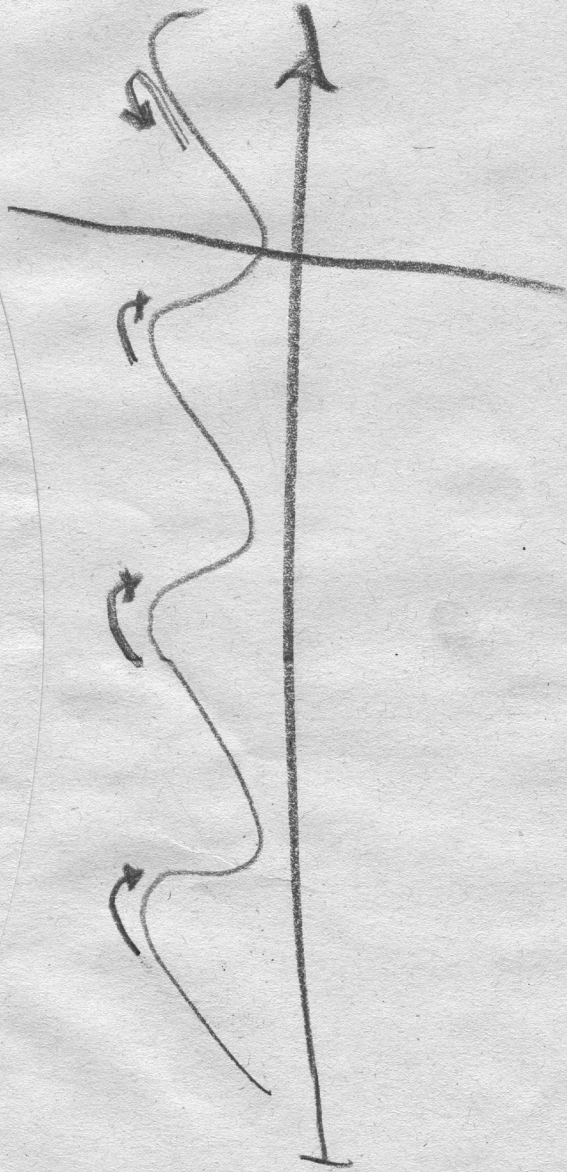
miniature’ to ‘the dialectical image’ (302), coincides with his encounter with Bataille at the Bibliothèque Nationale, writes Rupp. Perhaps more than their actual encounter, it is their missed intellectual encounter that unites them, possibly an impossible encounter due to their respective subjectivities of language.

Benjamin’s essay on Eduard Fuchs, written in the Bibliothèque Nationale, may witness such a missed encounter. He writes: ‘as a collector Fuchs is primarily a pioneer. He founded the only existing archive for the history of caricature, of erotic art and of the genre picture (*Sittenbild*)’ (1975, 27). What Benjamin praises in Fuchs’s work, his ‘brilliant defence of orgies’ (51), its infinite creativity and excess, plays a central role in Bataille’s own theory of expenditure (the potlatch). It also plays an important role in Benjamin’s allegorical use of objects, although Benjamin does not celebrate destruction in the same emphatic way as Bataille. Thus ‘the accentuation of the power of consumption, instead of the one of production’ (Rupp 2007, 307), leads Rupp to assume that the ‘*Fuchs* essay is essentially based on an indirect inspiration through Bataille’ (306). According to Rupp, their ‘search for traditional orientations’ and ‘prospective cultural practices’ (308) connects Bataille and Benjamin. However, while Bataille tends towards ‘an abstract-negative critique of contemporaneity,’ a ‘fundamental opposition’, ‘literarily a difference “to do or die”, is given

in [Benjamin's] practice of writing' (308). The root of Benjamin's practice of writing can be detected in the *Fuchs* essay itself, when he introduces Fuchs's practice of collecting. 'Because he was a pioneer, Fuchs became a collector', writes Benjamin, continuing: 'Fuchs is the pioneer of a materialist consideration of art. What made this materialist a collector, however, was the more or less clear feeling for the historical situation in which he saw himself. This was the situation of historical materialism itself' (1975, 27). This analysis corresponds to his own practice of writing, which as the 'concrete dialectic analysis of the particular subject being studied [...] includes a critique of the categories in which it was apprehended at an earlier level of reality and thought', as he writes in a letter to Horkheimer with explicit regard to the essay on Fuchs (1994, 537). In style, Benjamin's criticality does not correspond with Bataille's opposition.

The proximity between Bataille and Benjamin, or the difference with regard to common intuitions, is not that one opposes architecture and the other embraces it. Rather, the proximity between the two thinkers is contained in the specific abstraction of the equivalence of their conceptions; it becomes evident in the *tour de force* it would have demanded to make a conceptual encounter actually take place, of which both were certainly well aware. No other encounter is imaginable than one of deepest respect and trust. As if staging the most

peaceful conception of metropolitical architecture, an architecture that politicises its measurability by providing a stage for the immeasurable wealth of autonomous use, they perform the most profound encounter in friendship: nothing must happen.

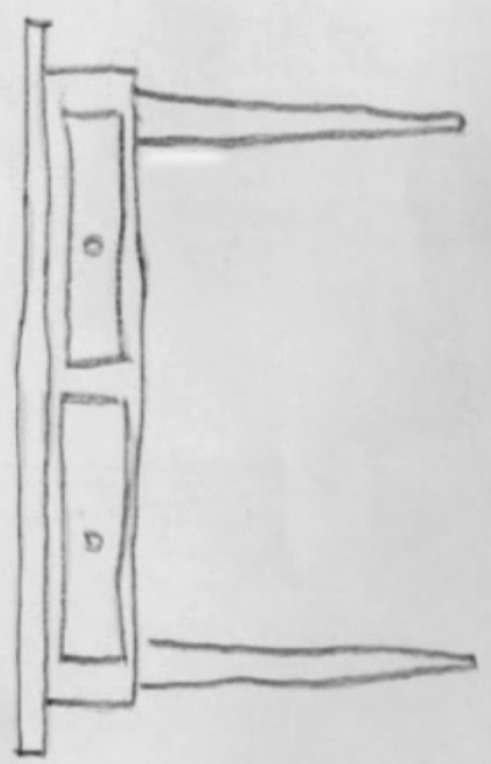
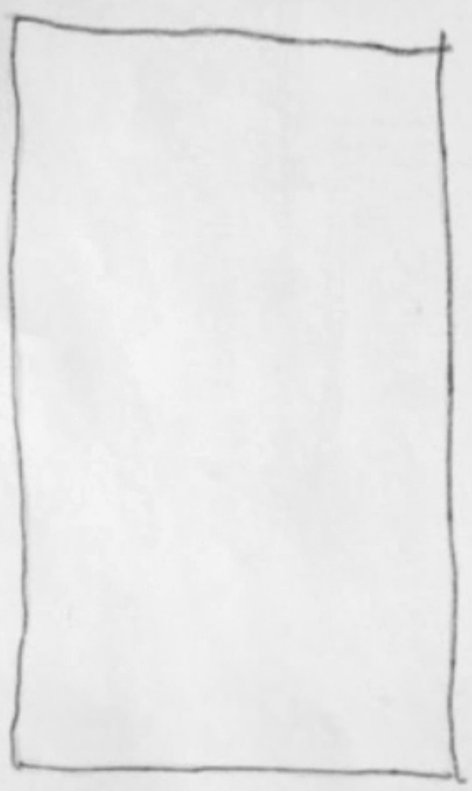
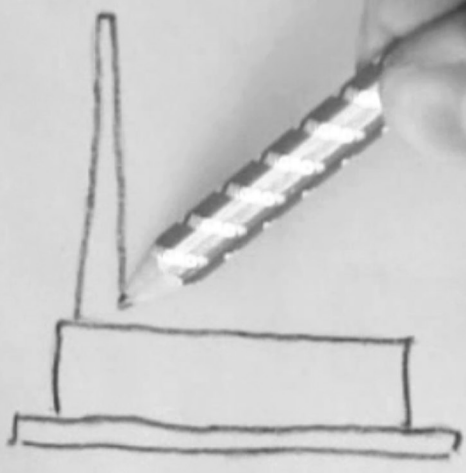









[GO TO VIDEO](#)







The method of
video as gesture
is applied in
calls, recalls,
and reviews.



Ham... let me!

[GO TO VIDEO](#)

















GO TO VIDEO



The first thing I noticed when I stepped out of the plane was the fresh air. It felt like a warm blanket after a long, cold winter. The sun was shining brightly, and the birds were chirping happily. I took a deep breath and smiled. This was my first time in a new country, and I was excited to see what it had to offer.

I had heard that the people were friendly and the food was delicious. I was not disappointed. The locals were warm and welcoming, and the food was a mix of traditional and modern. I had heard that the people were friendly and the food was delicious. I was not disappointed. The locals were warm and welcoming, and the food was a mix of traditional and modern.

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II. Art: The Study

We have become impoverished. We have given up one portion of the human heritage after another, and have often left it at the pawnbroker's for a hundredth of its true value, in exchange of the small change of the contemporary. The economic crisis is at the door, and behind it is the shadow of the approaching war. Holding on to things has become the monopoly of a few powerful people, who, God knows, are no more human than the many; for the most part, they are more barbaric, but not in the good way. Everyone else has to adapt—beginning anew and with few resources. They rely on the men who have adopted the cause of the absolutely new and have founded it on insight and renunciation. In its buildings, pictures, and stories, mankind is preparing to outlive culture, if need be. And the main thing is that it does so with a laugh. This laughter might occasionally sound barbaric. Well and good. Let us hope that from time to time the individual will give a little humanity to the masses, who one day will repay him with compound interest.

Walter Benjamin

Expanding Field We live and work in a world perceived as expanding and all comprising. Not only definitions of practices but practices themselves are liquifying and their contents have become questionable.⁴⁹ The practical dispersion of the contemporary art world is co-constitutive of and parallel to the global expansion of capitalism. This provokes fundamental questions, establishing an institutional milieu in (and outside) which these questions are asked. The questions reflect on the capacity and legitimization of contemporary art as a mode of knowledge production, which stands in direct relation to contemporary art's post-conceptual⁵⁰ character and its multiple and unstable instantiations.⁵¹

Debates range from questioning the place of art practice in a globalised neo-liberal world and its mechanisms of control⁵² to the relevance of research related to art practice, its academic programs, and economic valences of knowledge.⁵³ Due to the general difficulty of locating practices, and to the legacy of conceptual art in contemporary art, the character of such work is inherently discursive and spatial. It is discursive because it relates to the conceptual as the source of cognitive work, and it is spatial because first, the conceptual is an indicator of the dislocation of contents, and second, because global capitalism is an indicator of the dislocation of values. Conceptuality and dislocation define the *s p a t i o - d i s c u r s i v e* state where art-related practitioners find themselves today.

My work is necessarily immersed in this state. Even when I was studying architecture in the 1990s and practicing until the mid-2000s, writing and speaking were always important loci of architecture. At the Swiss Institute in Rome in 2003—where I stayed until 2006—it became clear that the conceptual, rather than being a field next to architecture, was another instantiation of architecture. I experimented with different media—photography, painting, film, literature, installation, urban intervention, performance, drawing, and digital imaging. Such dispersed dislocation of practice indicates not a break with architectural practice but rather a form of multiple instantiations of such practice in new fields. When I applied for the fellowship at the Swiss Institute, I was asked by an administrator for which section I was applying, art or science. I was intending to do research on the anonymous *Hypermotoromachia*

⁴⁹ This section is a practical exploration of discourse: a survey of historical or contemporary studio practice would include Cole 2005, Coles 2012, Davids et al. 2009, Eilhts 2009, Garnett et al. 2008, Kunst 2015, Read 2002, Rendell 2010, Siager 2012, Sullivan 2010, Thigg 2013, Wesseling 2011, Whittaker et al. 2012.

⁵⁰ I draw on Peter Osborne's account of contemporary art's post-conceptual character (2013).

⁵¹ I owe the localisation of the entry point of this section, among others, to the manuscript of Manuel Angel Macías Ph. D. thesis 'Heterarchies and Missed Encounters, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2016.

⁵² See, for example, Claire Fontaine 2016, Dombois et al. 2012, Gillick 2009a/b and 2011, Groys 2012, Holert 2009, Maharaaj 2004 and 2009, Rogoff 2010 and 2015, or Vidokle 2011.

⁵³ See, for example, Spencer 2016, which has put it central to my use of neo-liberalism in the study. Rather than as an extension of the principles of capitalism, neo-liberalism is understood as an ideology with its own means of "taking care" of the self, though not for the self, but in order to render it entrepreneurial, as Spencer has put it (Spencer 2016, 5).

What in each of these cases seems to be 'more [...] is actually a part of living through a major epistemological crisis.' The 'hallmarks' of this epistemological crisis, Rogoff concludes, are not the trading of one knowledge or one definition for another more apt or relevant one, but rather the question of what happens when practices such as thought or production are pushed to their limits. Rogoff wonders: 'Do they collapse or do they expand? Can they double up on themselves and find within this flipping over another set of potential meanings?' (42).

The fact that we have all left our constraining definitions behind, that we all take part in multiple practices and share multiple knowledge bases, has several implications. On the one hand, the dominance of neoliberal models of work that valorize hyper-production have meant that [...] the expansion is perceived as a form of post-Fordist entrepreneurship. On the other hand, the dominant trans-disciplinary of the expanded field of art and cultural production [...] is one of broader contemporary knowledge base and practices. (41)

Rather this is an example of what Irit Rogoff calls the 'expanding field, in which all definitions of practices, their supports and their institutional frameworks have shifted and blurred' (2015, 41). She continues:

Polybit (Colonna 1999)—an enigmatic architectural theory from the Italian Renaissance composed as a richly illustrated narrative of Poliphilo's 'strife of love in a dream' (Colonna 2003).⁵⁴ The aim and means of the research was creating and composing images and texts into the event of a new book by following the beloved *polis* through a 'strive of love in a dream. It was uncertain if this project was 'art' or 'science' (Harlitz 2007). It so happened that by ticking the box 'art' on the application form my architectural practice shifted and expanded into the field of art. My incapability of partisanship with architecture or art (or science) does not signal vagary or indecision.

her account is still part of Poliphilo's initial dream or not. Here Poliphilo dies of love, and resurces in Polila's arms and is reunited with her in the heavens. The language of the book is a vulgar mix of Italian, Latin, and Greek, adding hieroglyphs and heraldic symbols as well as original inventions. Nevertheless, the book can be read as a practical architectural theory in as much as the ideal principles of architecture are richly illustrated in both images and an imaginative language that generates an experience of the space rather than merely describing it theoretically.

54 The protagonists Poliphilo falls asleep and dreams, and in his dream he falls asleep and has yet another dream in which, in search of his beloved Polila, he traverses landscapes full of emblematic architecture. The landscapes and gardens, of the architecture, the garments of the protagonists, the rituals, the music, and the food, etc., are all meticulously described, taking up most of the first book. The two lovers are finally reunited, however, in a dream's dream. In the second book Polila rehearses the story from her perspective in a more sober tone, now set in a 'real' environment, although it is not clear whether

In the expanding field, where multiplication and exchange are short-sighted distractions from the actual alternations that overturn the singular values of disciplines and practices, one must consider (and reconsider) mutual dependencies between practices that do not evolve independently or in isolated ways. The significance of architecture for art should be re-evaluated in terms of parallel shifts in both disciplines. This is not done by a historical analysis of such shifts, but by locating alternate imaginaries for the architectural in and through alternate imaginaries of current art practices.

An important concern is the different understanding of representation either as a reproduction, multiplication, or illustration of the same, which happens when definitions are merely being traded for other definitions within given systems, or as the exiting of a given definition or knowledge. Changing one's practice due to the refusal of an existing knowledge or definition, looking for alternations: These are the hallmarks of an epistemological crisis, Rogoff claims, 'risking a capacity for misunderstanding' (43-44). Exiting a given definition rather than 'taking positions within a given definition' (44), one risks being misunderstood. Moreover, isn't the capacity of transforming one's practice by exiting existing definitions always dependent on the readiness of giving up one's practice, of risking an alternation not only of points of departure, archives, circulations, or imaginaries but also of one's own capacities to the point of self-misunderstanding? Isn't a radically unpredictable transformation of the subject at stake here?

Perhaps the necessary links between collectivity, intras-structure and contemporaneity within our expanding field of art are not performances of resistant engagement, but the ability to locate alternate points of departure, alternate archives, alternate circulations, and alternate imaginaries. (48)

in the text under the term of alternation. She speculates:

The moves that Rogoff outlines — double up, flip over, make it stretch, twist itself inside out—are moves of transformation she summarises later in the text under the term of alternation. She speculates:

55 'Trade' or exchange conceived in terms of 'expansion' or growth are characteristic for capitalist economy, of which the first principle is the 'creative destruction of value' (Schumpeter 2013, 81-86). Knowledge is created by means of a preliminary destruction of knowledge, according to Joseph A. Schumpeter's economic principle. Destruction generates opportunity and makes space for new knowledge. Rogoff's 'economy', on the other hand, while willing to change knowledge or definitions, does not discard them from the start but rather works on them until they eventually 'collapse'. 'Destruction' has a different quality here, since it is accommodated in transformation rather than elimination.

Holert reaffirms his interest not only in knowledge production but also, by drawing on the 'knowledge-based *polis*', in the space where such knowledge is produced.⁵⁸ Politics, it follows, is linked to both the production of discourse and the space in which such discourse is produced. Discursive practice is, I argue, spatial-discursive.⁵⁹ Holert acknowledges the potentials and importance of spatial practice as well as its pitfalls.⁶⁰ It is not clear, however, how discursive

endeavor. (8)

From (neo-)avant-garde claims of bridging the gap between art and life (or those modernist claims which insist on the very maintenance of this gap) to issues of academic discipline in the age of the Bologna process and outcome-based education, it seems that the problem of the art/non-art dichotomy has been displaced [...] into a question of how to establish a discursive field capable of rendering an epistemological and ontological realm of artistic studio practice as a scientifically valid research endeavor.

studio practices, arguing:

That Holert draws on the political aspects of the classic concept of urbanity, the *polis*, becomes clear when he suggests that notions of "research" motivated by a sense of political urgency and upheaval are of great importance [because] positions that are criticized (and desired) as an economic and systemic privilege should be contested as well as (re)claimed' (11).⁵⁷ Holert transfers the political aspect of the *polis* that exists in institutional economies to artistic studio practices, arguing:

Tags of the artistic field are organized and designed' (2009, 8). The "knowledge spaces" within the visual arts and between the professions of urbanity, the *polis*, becomes clear when he suggests that notions of "research" motivated by a sense of political urgency and upheaval are of great importance [because] positions that are criticized (and desired) as an economic and systemic privilege should be contested as well as (re)claimed' (11).⁵⁷ Holert transfers the political aspect of the *polis* that exists in institutional economies to artistic studio practices, arguing:

Spatio-Discursive Practice Holert, referring to Boltanski and Chiapello, underlines that the term *polis* has been chosen deliberately [for the research project "Art in the Knowledge-Based Polis"]⁵⁶ to render the deep imbrications of both the material (urbanist-spatial, architectural, infrastructural, etc.) and immaterial (cognitive, psychic, ethical, social, aesthetic, cultural, legal, etc.) dimensions of urbanity. Moreover, Holert adds, 'the knowledge-based *polis* is a conflictual space of political contestation concerning the allocation, availability and exploitation of "knowledge" and "human capital". As a consequence, he concludes, 'it is also a matter of investigating how the "knowledge spaces" within the visual arts and between the professions of the artistic field are organized and designed' (2009, 8).

Revolution, the occupation of Hornsey College of Art, into Middlesex University and of which the School of Art & Design, where this study was mainly produced, is the direct successor. I return to the Hornsey affair later.

58 Drawing on Hans-Jörg Rheinberger, Holert calls such spaces 'knowledge space'. See Rheinberger et al. 1997.

59 Compare with Henk Slager discussing Miron Kwon's conception of discursive space arguing that both

56 Art in the Knowledge-based Polis, a research project at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, according to Tom Holert examines, 'how art might be comprehended and described as a specific mode of generating and disseminating knowledge [and how it might] be possible to understand the very genealogy of significant changes that have taken place in the status, function, and articulation of the visual arts within contemporary globalizing societies' (2009, 8).
57 To support his point Holert refers to the Hornsey

the 'epistemological and ontological realm of artistic studio practice' (10) in particular relate to space as a constitutive parameter beyond a contingent and inevitable (in-)convenience. Spatial understanding, for example, is too often limited to a metaphorical understanding 'as infrastructure of networked, digital architectures of knowledge' that exists next to 'built environments' (11). While it is essential to critically approach 'the contemporary knowledge-based city [as]

structured and managed by information technology and database, and the new technologies of power and modes of governance they engender' (11), it is also indispensable to identify an adequate entry point to understand architecture literally as a generator of space and knowledge.⁶¹

Holert gives possible entry points when he reflects on the genealogy of contemporary art practices, speculating about their potential for discurive practices and (spaces of) knowledge production. Drawing on Michel Foucault's epistemology, he identifies a certain positive knowledge, which traverses the technical, material, and conceptual decisions [and] which could be named, uttered, and conceptualized in a discurive practice. This very 'positivity of knowledge' (of the individual artwork, a specific artistic practice, or a mode of publication, communication, and display) should not be confused with a rationalist transparency of knowledge. This discurive practice might even refuse any such discurivity. Nonetheless, the works and practices do show a 'positivity of knowledge'—the signature of a specific (and probably secret) knowledge. (10) ⁶²

Although Holert notes that Foucault's argument 'appears to contradict [the] emphasis on non-knowledge, while simultaneously providing a methodological answer to the conundrum' (10), a clarification of the relationship between what Foucault calls 'discurive practice' and the elusiveness of contemporary artistic knowledge production is missing.

Foucault distinguishes 'the gesture of the painter' from 'the painting' (2010, 194), but today the discurive both reveals and eliminates the gap between the production of the artwork and the artwork itself. The discourse seems to be the artwork, and since discurive

61 Only then it will be possible to go beyond a notion of construction in architecture that can be applied far too easily to the digital, to networks, or to systems in general. The systematics of any system can be associated with the constructionive systematic of architecture. How can architecture be determined today in order to provide an entry point to understand information in spatial and thereby societal terms? 62 Holert quotes Foucault 2010, 193–194.

practice is how the 'positivity of knowledge' is conceptualised, discourse-as-artwork should be discussed as the positivity of the positivity of knowledge. If forced into a discussion of discursive practice, then the positivity of knowledge conceptualised therein reappears as a new positivity in the present discussion: as a positivity of that positivity of knowledge.

The Positivity of the Positivity of Knowledge With Liam Gillick's *of three?* (2009a/b) on the discursive model of praxis [...] within the critical art context' (a, 1) it is possible to examine the positivity of the positivity of knowledge and its spatial manifestations. First, it excludes any final modality (as, for example, a painting) emerging from discursive practice that could be 'shot through [...] with a positivity of a knowledge' (Foucault 2010, 194), except discursive itself. Second, by dividing the reflection in 'The Discursive' and 'The Experimental Factory', Gillick provides two parts that fit the two elements of a spatio-discursive practice: discourse and space. According to Gillick,

The discursive model of praxis is the offspring of critical theory and improvised, self-organized structures. It is the basis of art that involves the dissemination of information. It plays with social models and presents speculative constructs both within and beyond traditional gallery spaces. It is indebted to conceptual art's reframing of relationships, and it requires decentered and revised histories in order to evolve. (2009a, 1)

That Gillick gives a definition of the discursive model of praxis makes the example of this text potentially radical: it is not a discourse on any object whatsoever; rather, it is a discourse on discourse. It becomes clear when Gillick underscores the necessity

to examine the notions of the discursive as a model of production in its own right, alongside the production of objects for consideration or exchange. The discursive is what produces the work and, in the form of critical and impromptu exchanges, it is also the desired result. (2)

How do we distinguish in such discursive art practice between discourse as the 'desired result' and discourse as a meta-discourse that only suggests how discourse could itself function as a 'desired result'? As Gillick underlines the necessity of examining the discursive as a model of production in its own right in a critical art context, it

Knowledge, for Foucault, is not limited to embodiment in the reasoning of language; 'discursive practice [...] is embodied in techniques and effects [...] at least, he underscores, in one of its dimensions'. What defines a painting or Gillick's text as an artwork is more than the knowledge conceptualised in discursive practice. The knowledge embodied [...] in the very gesture' (194) remains out of reach for archaeological conceptualisations, and it therefore possesses an artistically intriguing form of inaffability.⁶³ Accordingly, what makes an artwork an artwork might be found in other dimensions of techniques and effects; presumably constituted by practices beyond the discursive; Do such practices, which would have to be something like non-discursive practices, actually exist?⁶⁴

Conversely, it might be argued that language in the form of theories and speculations, in forms of teaching and codes of practice [is itself a] technique and effect' (183), and that discursive practice cannot be separated from non-discursive practices. Rather, embodiment gives rise to knowledge as practice in the first place. Discourse, then, would belong to the realm of gesture from the start.

Archaeological analysis would [...] try to discover whether space, distance, depth, colour, light, proportions, volumes, and contours were not, at the period in question, named, enunciated, and conceptualized in a discursive practice; and whether the knowledge that this discursive practice gives rise to was not embodied perhaps in theories and speculations, in forms of teaching and codes of practice, but also in processes, techniques, even in the very gesture of the painter. (2010, 193–194)

Foucault, in the passage from *The Archaeology of Knowledge* to which Holert refers, suggests something similar:

examination is a work of art in such a context. Gillick indeed claims that discursive practice is the basis of art that involves the dissemination of information' (1). His text may be seen as an example of such art. However, as he claims, this art only in volumes the 'dissemination of information, suggesting that there is something else, some excess beyond the mere dissemination of information, that would really define it as artwork.

63 This echoes what Sigmond Freud writes about the dream: 'There is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream's veil, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown' (2015, 525).

64 Such non-discursive practices also recall Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question 'Can the subaltern speak?' (2015), which leads Hitro Steyerl to ask, referring to Jean-Luc Nancy's questioning of 'work as that which defines this inherently dispersed subject, if the goal of a common language that hinders our view of a common listening' (Steyerl 2007; Spivak 2008, 15–16). I return to Spivak, Steyerl and Nancy later.

Foucault confirms that archaeology finds the point of balance of its analysis in *savoir*, that is, in a domain in which the subject is necessarily situated and dependent' (183). Bearing in mind that discursive practice is not only what archaeology explores but also its very method—discursive practice produces knowledge and knowledge (as *savoir*) is the concern of archaeology—it is understandable that Foucault distinguishes between scientific domains and archaeological territories:

Their articulations and their principles are quite different. Only propositions that obey certain laws of construction belong to a domain of scientificity [...] Archaeological territories may extend to 'literary' or 'philosophical' texts, as well as scientific ones. Knowledge is to be found not only in demonstrations, it can also be found in fiction, reflection, narrative accounts, institutional regulations, and political decisions. (183–184, my emphasis)

Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* may be read as a philosophical description of a method and simultaneously as an exemplification of that method, a method researching discursive practice through discursive practice. From this perspective there is no apparent difference between Foucault's and Gillick's texts, inasmuch as they appear to perform what they address. The positivity of the positivity of knowledge, in both texts, is a superposition, a fusion of two positivities of knowledge. There is an identity between discursive practice as gesture and discursive practice as product.

From Architecture to the Architectural According to Gillick, the discursive exists in a form that is a perpetually reformed model of a future possibility. The discursive is able to be just ahead of the realm that is driven by those market relations on which it is dependent. This model character of the discursive gives it its lived semi-autonomy: embedded in the present and speculatively projected into the future. This semi-autonomy might be related to a double spatiality, embedded in real space and speculatively projected into virtual spaces.

Gillick calls such double-spatiality 'free zones of real production' (4) consisting of 'content-heavy discussions—seminars, symposia, and discussion programs—alongside every serious art project' (4). Gillick writes:

Yet the discursive as a form of art practice in its own right is not reliant on these official parallel events. It both goes

beyond and absorbs such moments, making them both material and structure, operating openly in opposition to official programming. (4)

The absorption and trespassing of constructed moments and spaces by such discursive art practice transforms them into material and structure. Discourse is embedded in a constructed space and projected into a non-constructed space. Conceiving of architecture as material and structure as opposed to and independent from construction defines architecture from its speculative potential as an operational material and structure. Like the discursive, architecture would go beyond and absorb (4) 'market rationalizations' (2), turning them into speculative material and structure. Analogically to the opposition between the terms 'discursive' and 'discourse', the term 'architectural' captures the positional character of such a conception of architecture.

The architectural may also exist in a form that is a perpetually reformed model of a future, ahead of the realm driven by those market relations on which it is dependent. As the site of production today often exists within the text alone (4), or as a text may be the only site from where the discursive eventuates, the architectural may eventuate from architecture alone. The architectural is the discursive character of architectural practice.

The Hornsey Affair: Lip Service vs. Changing the Situation Gilllick repeatedly points to a before as a spatio-temporal rupture in the 'discursive': i.e. the post-description of critical awareness; [state-ments] provide a "location" from which to propose a physical potential beyond the immediate art context' (4); 'at the heart of the discursive is a reexamination of "the day before" as a model for understanding how to behave, activate, and present; the discursive is the only structure that allows you to project a problem just out of reach and work with that permanent displacement' (5). Holert also draws on a before. Against the backdrops of art practice-led research and doctorates in universities, and of social, political, and economic engagements by the arts in the 'knowledge-based *polis*', Holert writes:

An adequate research methodology has to be developed in order to allow the researchers positions on multiple socio-material time-spaces of actual making and doing—positions that permit and actually encourage active involvement in the artistic processes in the stages of production before publication, exhibition, and critical reception. (2009, 11; his emphasis)

Holert draws on the events that took place at Hornsey in 1968 in order to conclude that criticised and desired positions should be contested and claimed. A sense of political urgency and 'upheaval' (11) is important for this, according to Holert. Talking about upheaval, however, it is not clear if Holert is actually suggesting that today's students of the School of Art and Design of Middlesex University, the successor institution of Hornsey College of Art, should re-occupy the school, as did the students in 1968, and

[make the occupation] expand into a critique of all aspects of art education, the social role of art in the politics of design [and make it lead] to six weeks of intense debate, the production of more than seventy documents, a short-lived Movement for Rethinking Art and Design Education (MORADE), a three-day conference at the Roundhouse in Camden Town, an exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art, prolonged confrontation with the local authority, and extensive representations to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Student Relations. (3)⁶⁵

The students' occupation of Hornsey College of Art in 1968 consisted in weeks of occupation and sit-ins, discussions, lectures, and screenings' (Holert 2009, 3). Drawing on a student's comment that uses the rhetoric of 'self-empowerment' ('personally involved, dialogue, responsibility, respond vociferously, discussion, faces [that] were aligned with excitement, talked more than they ever had talked before, something which was real, actively concerned, participate, etc.), Holert states that 'the discovery of talking as a medium of "research"' (3). Furthermore, he puts forward that this necessity of a change in the system was based on the "disastrous consequences" of the "split between practice and theory, between the intellect and non-intellectual sources of creativity"' (5), and on the need for a "flexible training in generalized, basic creative design that is needed to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances' (Students 1969, 116–117). Resonating 'the general changes within society and culture' (Holert 2009, 5), Holert writes that the claims for intellectual reflection and transformation of the environment 'had to become manifest in the very conceptual framework not only of art education, but of art discourse as such' (5).⁶⁶

In this light the Hornsey revolution marks a paradigmatic shift in the educational system based on a renewed self-consciousness of art practice as related to the contingencies of the real world and intellectual activity. As historical legacy, the example of Hornsey—as a speculative beginning of artistic research—seems well chosen

⁶⁶ Holert repeatedly quotes from Students 1969, 38–129.

⁶⁵ Holert is quoting from Tickner 2008, 13–14

In order to suspend—not solve—the problem of this powerlessness toward the system, the problem is generalised by Holert and equipped with an imperative, claiming that whoever 'enter[s] the academic power-knowledge system of accountability checks and evaluative supervision, [...] accept[s] the parameters of this system' (8). Nevertheless, Holert is open enough to 'venture that addressing the power-relations that inform and produce the kind of institutional legitimacy/consecration sought by such research endeavours could go beyond mere lip service and be effective in changing the situation' (2). Holert's contradiction between a presumably absolutely imperative submission under the academic power-knowledge system and the hope for a transformative power is regrettable, particularly with regard to the importance Holert assigns to urban dimensions.

Research is described in terms of being on technical, aesthetic, or historical problems, thus reopening the gap it was initially supposed to bridge by incorporating 'practice and theory' (Students 1969, 118). What is incorporated, however, is a coexistence of practice and theory on a bureaucratic educational level, and not in practice itself. The addition that such research should deal with the educational process itself is a weak reminder of the critical position that once propelled the revolution. What seemed to be a paradigmatic shift was just the kick-off for a development leading to what today Gillick calls 'discursive practice'. Research was merely on art, talking about it, and Holert is stuck on that paradigm. He admits it indirectly:

As well as being on general problems of art and design (techniques, aesthetics, history, etc.) such research activity must also deal with the educational process itself. (Students 1969, 128–129)

by Holert. However, if the antagonism exposed in the Horney revolution already contained the sense of political urgency for which Holert calls, then where should political urgency come from today, and particularly, where should it lead since the revolution has already transformed the system by incorporating research and its relation to the practical world. The key to this problem may be found in the document from 1969 written by the students describing how research should be incorporated in art education:

As a result, an exclusive inclusion of art practice into the system remains intact and present throughout Holert's text. Holert describes the artistic realm [as] the multifarious combinations of artists, teachers, students, critics, curators, editors, educators, funders, policymakers, technicians, historians, dealers, auctioneers, caterers, gallery assistants, and so on (1), while simultaneously calling for the establishment of a particular 'artistic' studio practice that could be acknowledged as a scientific 'research endeavor' (8). Art practice is put into a schizophrenic situation that Holert manages to resolve only by maintaining the division between the production of an artwork and the artwork itself, linking discourse with those stages of production that occur before art.

Temporal 'before' vs. Spatial 'before' The nature of Holert's 'before' is the process before the object, the production before the product, completely disregarding the artistic character of discursive practice and its potentials. Consequently, Holert is incapable of naming the political urgency necessary for research other than by an out-dated historical example. Due to his own setup of imperative submission under the system he is doomed to lament the increase in "standardisation," "measurability," and "the molding of artistic work into the formats of learning and research" (1).

Gilllick's 'before', in contrast, sets out rather as an after, as a post-description of critical awareness' (Gilllick 2009a, 4), which over the last twenty years [...] has given us a lot of time to excuse ourselves, to qualify ourselves and to provide an excess of specific positions that are not necessarily in sync with what is presented in the spaces for art' (4, my emphasis). Yet, Gilllick advises 'to not look back too far' (5). Since 'the discursive is what produces the work and [...] it is also the desired result' (2), its before is purely speculative, indifferent to actual spatio-temporal successions. It is excessive. Its exit from the system is possible due to a materialisation of the system, turning it into a material of 'the discursive' as a form of art practice.

The discursive has its 'before' within itself because in it, 'we are constantly projecting [...] that something will lead to something else "at some point": True work, true activity, true significance will happen in a constant, perpetual displacement'. Gilllick gives this projected displacement a clearly spatial name: 'just-around-the-corner-ness' (7).

Holert and Gilllick build their arguments for political urgency or political potential in two similar assumptions: first, in an entanglement between art and capital,⁶⁷ and second, in a coexistence of presence and non-presence in art practice.⁶⁸ Holert situates the

67 Expressed either as the involvement of 'the knowledge-based *polis*' in the visual arts (Holert 2009, 11), or as a parallelity between a critical doublet of 'a discursive frame' and the

68 Either as a 'peculiar relationship between the availability and unavailability

Capital

entangling of art with capital and the contradictory spatio-temporality in art practice in the historical field of visual art while Gillick situates both in discursive practice. For Gillick, no preparative practice, no meta-discourse about discourse. The practice of dis-course has its own materiality that can be analysed and made instantly productive in discourse itself.

[...] to the dominant culture because it starts from the position of understanding the process of redundancy-via-flexibility, and it co-opts that process for different ends, in order to redirect its apparent loss' (Gillick 2009a, 7, my emphasis).

Autonomous Art and Commodity Form Drawing on Adorno's *Ästhetische Theorie* the philosopher Stewart Martin expounds how the absolute artwork meets itself with the absolute commodity' (2007, 18), contradictorily or reciprocally, concluding in an accordingly cyclic manner:

New forms of commodification need to be examined as the heteronomous scene of new formations of autonomous art; new forms of art need to be examined as the contradictions of new formations of commodity' (24)

Martin underpins his answer to the question whether 'the insistence that we have entered some "post-art" epoch [...] should not be recognized as the scene of new formations of art's autonomy' (23), arguing 'if autonomous art is an immanent contradiction of the commodity form, it remains an inherent potential within a commodity culture' (23-24).

This contradictory yet dependent relation between autonomous art and commodity form resonates with Gillick's discursive practice being simultaneously 'out of reach' and 'too close to current working dilemma' (2009a, 7). Gillick's discourse, as an artist, arguing for 'the discursive [as] the only way to challenge the forces of self-redundancy, as it internalizes and expresses consciousness of [...] capitalism' (7), would expose the inherent potential within a commodity culture' (Martin 2007, 24).

The term 'autonomy' seems inappropriate when artists urgently seek alternative forms for their engagements as a critical reaction to the apparent total commodification of the world by capitalist economic principles and neo-liberal management. Gillick's pledge for 'the discursive [as] the only way to challenge' (7, my emphasis) also reflects such urgency. Gillick's standpoint seems contradictory

because the urgency that is expressed in the exclusivity of 'the discursive' tends to resolve the problem, even though this solution is an endless challenge. One is part of this total machine of commodification to such an extent that every attempt to escape from it turns immediately into farce. Possibly for this reason many artists develop a fundamental trust and self-esteem in their work, like an independent entrepreneur, preventing them from confronting the question of commodification. Perhaps one should take the farce of escaping the machine seriously; that is to say, the adaptation and simultaneous redirection of indifferent managerialism.⁶⁹

Managerial Gestulations

As it is evident that the entrepreneurial paradigm is challenged by a managerial paradigm, it is legitimate to ask whether capitalism is still the dominant ideology to be fought. The managerial paradigm is characterised by the distinction between social forces of production and relations of production. The managerial paradigm resonates in the use of the concept of 'project' in Gillick's discursive practice. According to Boltanski and Chiapello, the managerial tool employed in order to reconnect or replace, the disjunctions generated by managerial innovations in the economy was the project, or 'projections', or reconstructions in 'networks' (2007, 103–107). The disjoined projection of social forces into the *metier* of the artist has become problematic today, since the same disjoined mechanisms function for any work whatsoever.

Two models of production are in place today. In the first, social forces of production are employed to produce numbers (e.g. forms, employability, clicks, certificates, attendance, etc.) that have nothing to do with the actual content of the work produced.⁷⁰ Meaning and time are evacuated from the actual work and shifted from the exploitation of creative flexibility to the implementation of frictionless redundancy.

In the second model, relations of production are maintained for those goods that still have to be produced (e.g. exploitation of natural resources, food industry, etc.), but detached from any social forces, i.e. questioning the process of production, because they would only slow down productivity (even if potentially for the good of it).⁷¹ These two models of production correspond to what Gillick refers to as 'suspension and repression [as] the dominant models' (2009a, 5). The first suspends meaning in a form of velvet bureaucracy, and the second represses meaning in a form of velvet slavery.

⁶⁹ With regard to 'farce', see Agamben's use of the word 'gar' in *Notes on Gesture* (2000, 49–60) or his discussion of Baralle's 'negative articulation in *Language and Death* (2006, 49–53).

⁷⁰ For example, critical invention is perceived as a threat to the smooth delivery of the desired numbers, even if such invention could potentially enhance the product, hence over consumers, avoiding judicial problems, saving taxes, etc.

⁷¹ Innovation is an integral part of this system, since it serves the increase of quantifiable numbers, of which quality is only one criteria among many others, such as winning over consumers, avoiding

Because of the projection of social forces of production into what
 item of flexibility and the exploitation of creativity connected with it.
 act and the social forces of production, thus re-establishing the prod-
 or to forcefully re-establish the place of meaning in the actual prod-
 exploitation and as the fulfillment of work redundancy and pure life,
 cept the meaning of meaningfulness as liberation from productive
 situation of stress for the worker. The worker is forced either to ac-
 duction of the actual products, produce an ethically unresolvable
 the production of numbers and totally disconnected from the pro-
 Today's forms of work, simultaneously totally connected with

work is relevant to the fulfillment of this life.⁷²
 question that must be asked, consequently, is whether the ethos of
 meaning to a life purified from the work's meaning). The pressing
 (since the result of the work, and indirectly its meaning, is to give
 that they let themselves be employed to produce meaningless work
 ed for the innovation of products (since they innovate numbers) nor
 sations against workers, neither that they let themselves be exploit-
 meaning). This is a hybrid state since it cannot be disrupted by accu-
 independent from work (since the work no longer has any inherent
 They suspend or repress themselves in a perpetual meaning of a life
 redundancy)—bureaucracy and slavery become indistinguishable.
 on the basis of a perverted meaning (of meaningful suspension and
 forces of production and relations of production is restored—albeit
 As the balance between social

Social Forces of Production

pride to become the worker of the month.⁷²
 and research, or when cashiers in a supermarket chain take pains and
 and the number of publications reflects the quality of their education
 start believing that the quantifiable employability of their students
 the point that it becomes the new true meaning, i.e. when academics
 ers are prepared to accept the incoherence of meaning perverted to
 rity of social forces of production and relations of production, work-
 the month) and thus masking slavery. In order to maintain the integ-
 ating the illusion of meaningfulness (e.g. by electing the employe of
 slavery, social work forces are charmed and made efficient by gener-
 the social productive forces now work, thus masking bureaucracy. In

new relations of production for which
 man face'. Bureaucracy is defined as the
 They frequently wear the mask of a hu-
 to contemporary working conditions.
 cracy nor slavery are total with regard
 vet. Nevertheless, often neither bureau-
 total bureaucracy is equally far from vel-
 thing but velvet, and the prospect of a
 -There is slavery in the world that is any-

72 Also see Frédéric Lordon's analysis of the workers' pas-
 sion for their jobs in *Willingslaves of Capitalism*, in a read-
 ing of Baruch Spinoza's *Ethics*, and the light he sheds on possible gradual shifts from capitalism to communism, for instance on the forces of affect responsible, not for the local oddities of voluntarism, but for the perma-
 servitude, but for the perma-
 nence of universal "human servitude" (2014, 156).
 73 Compare with Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, Michel Féher, Gerald Kaunig, or Maurizio Lazzarato, and others. The point here is not to establish a theory of political economy, though, but rather to set the scene for a political discourse art.

might be called the coincidence of bureaucracy and slavery, the artist's work today faces an analogous dilemma, which Gillick articulates as a counter-method: 'We've had flexibility and now we have redundancy, yet we refuse to stop working' (2009a, 7).

The artist's refusal to stop working, the work of art's irreducible task, corresponds to both sides of the worker's dilemma of neither equipping redundancy with meaning nor reinstalling flexibility into work: the artist keeps meaninglessness operative as meaningfulness, thus refusing both redundancy and flexibility.

Useful Uselessness : Useless Usefulness Discursive practice is a logical form for an autonomous art able to simultaneously, fetishistically insist on [its] coherence, as if [it] were the absolute that it is unable to be' (Adorno 2015, 210) and include art's heterogeneous determination as written or spoken 'self-critical dialectic with anti-art' or 'post-art' (Martin 2007, 23). In other words, the self-critical dialectic of which discursive practice consists makes it insist on the rationality of its irrationality' (Adorno 2015, 210–211). Like a turnaround, Gillick's discourse on discourse, rather than advocating, empirically fetishises 'delusion by insisting that otherwise art would not exist' (210).

Just as Baron Munchausen saved himself from drowning by pulling on his own hair, today art must extract itself from its heretofore ominous determination to a seemingly unprecedent degree' (Martin 2007, 23). The problem is to realise (in a work of art) that this is 'too close' to current working conditions and simultaneously absolutely out of reach for them. Today, when everyone is Baron Munchausen, art has the task to insist on use-value not by means of uselessness, but by means of usefulness, hence anti-art, and turn that means into a useless end.⁷⁴

Can you feel it? Who could tell if Anton Vidokle's essay 'Art without Work?' is a work of art? Vidokle narrates at length how the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija did most of the cooking for a 'meal/discussion space' for 'conversations on contemporary art' (2011, 7). Vidokle continues:

Spending most of his time in the improvised backyard kitchen allowed Rirkrit to not engage in the conversation and to not speak or answer questions about his art, which is something I think he does not like to do. When

⁷⁴ Compare with the introduction of the editors to the reader *Intellectual Bivouac—Artistic Practice as Research*, which does end with an answer: 'There is fictionness in the "knowledge economy" as compared with the reality of art, and who would have thought that art would become the link

to reality in a world that is losing its grip in the name of knowledge? So how does one sufficiently limit the definition of artistic research so as to develop epistemic claims while not breaking its own modes of making and thinking? The answer is: we don't know' (Dombos et al. 2012, 13).

We live like this with no hope for political change (however necessary) in our lives, nor a common language capable of naming this need or allowing us to define

“This conscious, reproducible life, imprisoned by quotation marks (Claire Fontaine 2016, 3), recalls the contradictory but inherent entwinement of the artwork with commodity, in as much as the quotation marks make life reproducible as the commodity “life,” and not as life. Strictly rejecting a return to the paternalist dictatorship of modernism, with its ludicrous religion of the autonomy of art” (3) Claire Fontaine lament in clear effervescent language:

When you do life consciously, however, writes Kaprow in 1979, life becomes pretty strange—paying attention changes the thing attended to—so the Happenings were not nearly as life-like as I had supposed they might be. But I learned something about life and “life”: (2016, 3)⁷⁵

Similarly, Claire Fontaine in their essay entitled ‘Our Common Critical Condition, in which they recall Allan Kaprow’s reflection on his work, write:

What happens here is that rather than speak or work in the capacity as an artist, Rirkrit prefers to make himself very busy doing something else in the space of art. Furthermore, not unlike the Factory [of Andy Warhol], yet dispersed amidst many different art venues and dates, Rirkrit’s activity manages to temporarily construct a rather peculiar set of social relations between those in attendance. While he displaces the art object and the figure of the artist from its traditional place at center stage (to the kitchen), perhaps reflecting Duchamp, his presence usually forms a quiet yet influential and shape-giving center for those present. Rirkrit does manage to produce art while not working in the capacity of an artist, yet to do so he really makes himself very busy: he works very hard doing something else. (7)

This account might be applied to Vidokle’s article itself as his own current discursive practice of writing an article on the significance of work in art. Is it art? No, it’s just writing. Vidokle reflects on Tiravanija’s work:

asked if what he was doing is art, Rirkrit said no, he was just cooking. (7)

⁷⁵ Claire Fontaine quote from Kaprow 2003, 19.

sound will create the sonic construction which begins to produce that subjectivity, the feeling, that consciousness in which the engagement with difference and otherness begins? [...] feeling, emotion and subjectivity. It is those very things that have been taboo. (Balkema et al. 2004, 159)

The intrinsic link between artistic research and contemporary visual art practices, to use Maharaj's terms, and the intrinsic link between discursive art practice and current art, to use Gillick's terms, span the vector space in which we operate. Discursive art practice would be, in Maharaj's terms, an artistic research practice as

work in progress where the echo-word 'progress' connotes succession, sequence, possible fulfillment. Joyce's twister 'progress' implies that some final, full bulk of the project is never quite attained, we are always at a 'pre-paratory' stage just short of its total gross state. (40)

Compare this with Gillick:

True work, true activity, true significance will happen in a constant, perpetual displacement [however] this permanent displacement provides a location for refusal and collective ennu. (2009a, 7, my emphasis)

To conceive of 'the discursive' as a 'listening' rather than speaking, as what generates such collectivity (and spatiality), whether in the context of artistic research or current art, might shift the forces of the active vectors towards a common trajectory. Imagining the chronology the other way around, artistic research preceding art practice, then an artistic researcher now becoming an art practitioner might say, paraphrasing Maharaj: 'Many of us must feel we've been doing [discursive art practice] for years—without quite calling it that' (Maharaj 2004, 39, altered).

The questions artistic research and current art ask, as described by Maharaj and Gillick, are the same. Both are out of reach and too close to their respective contexts, which represent the condensation of surface of capitalism as the dominant culture, the machinations of globalized capital, and equally, the 'other' to which one must listen. The abstract concept of capitalism never exists as such; it always condenses on actual deeds, such as the academy or the art world, the factory, the state, or the family, and so on. When Maharaj asks which sound will create a subjectivity of otherness, this may be understood as a resonance in the artist's feeling and consciousness that takes up a process and redirects its apparent loss, as suggested by Gillick.

It may be said that in an artistic research frame there is always an element that parallels the machinations of globalized capital—that is both its strength and weakness' (Gillick 2009, 7, altered). From this it can be seen what artistic research can learn from current discursive art practice, namely that political potential stems from art functioning as a structural parallel to contemporary working dilemmas in the dominant culture' (7).⁷⁷ Artistic research also functions as such a structural parallel.

What then can current art learn from artistic research? In many ways the multiplicity, plurality, diversity, or mess of issues, methods, objects, questions, etc., that proliferate in artistic research correlate with the abundances of the contemporary art world in which, according to Claire Fontaine, every artist develops his or her own language and nurtures the impression of being the only one to speak it (2016, 3). They denounce the ill of this situation by using the term of the "arbitrary": behold the name of the troublesome guest that was soon to invite itself into all art writing and every exhibition space around the world, with no plans to leave' (3).

The same holds true for artistic research. In absence of the political potential of the discursive framework the arbitrary befalls artistic research as an 'unnamed activity' (Maharaj 2004, 39). However, Maharaj argues, 'it is, in Samuel Beckett's words, more of an "unnamed" because it has to invent its own methods each time rather than parrot pre-given ones' (39). As unnamable, rather than unnamed activity, it keeps the political alive as potential.

Nevertheless, the 'arbitrary' that Claire Fontaine are pointing to still reverberates in Beckett-*via*-Maharaj's 'unnamable', which seems to survive in the mere method-on-the-go, in each and every single step of this permanent revolution. Can the arbitrary indeed become critical when it is being reduced to infinitesimal unnameable postponements?

Infrastructural Dignity The critical point consists in remaining wary, as Rogoff puts it, about such 'multiplicity' and its 'limits'. She suggests thinking of it as 'an epistemological crisis [...] from which to think the notion of an emergent field, rather than expanding field; because, as she writes,

An epistemological crisis would allow us to think not competing interests but absent knowledge, it would allow us a proposition that would say that if we were able to find a way to know this, it might allow us to not

⁷⁷ This point has also been made in comparison to Helder's text. Maharaj is aware of the 'political urgency' present in the 'political potential' of the artwork, which therefore does not need the necessity of a political urgency external to it.

The reason to repeat the point here is to reflect on how others' reflects on discourse, how the destabilising moments of research may be inherent in current art, and how this possibility links to Gillick's notion of 'semi-autonomy'.

These are all students, recently committed to research; deliberately collected here is the first work of young researchers sufficiently free to have determined their research project themselves and yet still subject to an at least its original unity':

the group of its authors' as a pretext to reflect on [the issue] unity, he called a special issue of *Communications*⁷⁸ Roland Barthes takes

Disruptive Art Practice: The Young In his introduction to what

Beyond an epistemological crisis, an ontological crisis would allow thinking absent beings as propositions that would say that if we were able to find a way to be this, it might allow us to not do that. Rather than opposing the ontological crisis to the epistemological as a specifically artistic one in a spatio-disruptive practice, both crises converge. A specific artistic way of knowing/being can redirect the loss of a way of thinking/doing.

We might reflect about what the absence of infrastructure does make possible, which is to rethink the very notion of platform and protocol, to put in proportion the elevation of individual creativity, to further the shift from representation to investigation. (47)

This is a complex argument for an inoperative operation, an operability not by means of a creative destruction, but rather a destructive creation in which a proposition of a way to know enables a loss [...] of a way of thinking' (45). Rogoff relates this operation to infrastructure by considering 'working without the means of a dignifying infrastructure' an 'improvised condition' (48). It is the lack of infrastructure that leads to 'the cumulative proliferation of modes of operating' (45) which Rogoff opposes. To cope with the proliferation of the arbitrary would mean asking how it is possible to find ways of creating the means of a dignifying infrastructure, or an infrastructural dignity, able to counter a condition of neo-liberal management that is forcefully destroying infrastructural means of production just for the sake of the reproduction of capital. Forgrounding new knowledge as opposed to shifts in modes of thinking, Rogoff suggests:

operating. (2015, 45)

think that. So it is a question of the loss or the sacrifice of a way of thinking, as opposed to the cumulative proliferation of modes of

⁷⁸ *Communications* is a French thematic journal created in 1961 by Georges Friedmann, Roland Barthes, and Edgar Morin on the studies of

mass communication and semiotic analysis, and more recently anthropological-social studies.

As a research subject, he is doomed to the separation of discourse: on the one side the discourses of scientificity (discourse of the Law), and on the other, the discourse of desire, or writing. (69, my translation)⁷⁹

What is at stake is the coincidence of 'writing' with both 'the discourse of desire' and 'the student of letters'. Although for Barthes the discourse of desire 'should apply' broadly, institutionally, to the student, he takes 'the student of "the letters"', literally, or the student of the arts, generally, as the potential paradigm for a 'broader' and 'needed' change, 'that it is not his competence or his future function that is needed, but his present passion' (70).

Passion is linked not to the future consolidated capacities and merits of a senior researcher, but on the contrary to the present capacities—or incapacities—of the young subject and to their desire and their writing. Furthermore, assuming that the task of research is desire, we can conclude that research is intrinsically linked to the subject being y o u n g .

Although what is at stake in Barthes's text is not 'artistic research' or 'discursive art practice', the link to the 'arts' is central to his discussion, because 'the task (of research) must be perceived in desire' (69), and 'for desire to be insinuated into my work, that work must be demanded of me [...] by a living collection of readers expressing the desire of the Other: This demand or desire, which can only be formulated outside the institution, Barthes claims, can only be the demand for writing. This desire for writing links writing to the realm of arts and letters' (70).

Specific to the young researcher, as a researcher on the threshold of his work, Barthes observes that 'the student experiences a series of divisions: Economically, socially, or intellectually, the student belongs to an economic class defined by its unproductive-ness' she or he is excluded from any nomination, and 'has not yet [...] the availability of communication' (69). Most importantly, however, Barthes writes:

institution, that of the third-cycle doctorate. (1989, 69)

The issue does not 'explore a body of knowledge or [...] illustrate a theme, and nor does Barthes. Instead he discusses [...] mainly the research itself, specifying that it is 'a certain research, research still linked to the traditional realm of arts and letters' (69).

at stake here is what is unavailable to the student due to his status as young subject, the passive form seems to be more appropriate. The translator of the German edition, Dieter Hornig, has decided to opt for a passive interpretation, *fallt anheim* (Barthes 2006, 92), which could be translated as 'he falls prey to the separation of discourses'.

⁷⁹ The original text reads *il est voué à la séparation des discours* (Barthes 1984, 103), and the translation by Richard Howard as 'he is dedicated to the separation of discourses' (Barthes 1989, 69). Although the translation is correct, the meaning of the French original, *vous*, seems more ambivalent between the rather active 'dedicated' and the clearly passive 'doomed'. Since what is

While for the youthful researcher such passionate research is intrinsic or unavoidable, it poses a challenge for the senior researcher. The translators of *Jeanes Chereheurs* into English anticipate this challenge by choosing the formula *Research: The Young*, as if research would immanently bleed into youthfulness, as if for the senior researcher passionate engagement in research would mean to subject oneself to rejuvenation. The task is to not confuse the passion that lurks behind every economic interest with the young passion of unproductiveness, lack of nomination, or lack of communication. The difference is that for the young, the interest, or rather the desire, is expressed by the Other. Rather than the forces of one's own passionate interest, which are directed outwards, pushing the subject into the world, there are passionate forces pulling the subject inward into the world. Such pulling desire is not an interest. It is opposed to the passion of economic interests. The Other is not a collectivity seeking to guarantee my labour and to gain a return [an interest] on the loans it grants me. The desiring Other is a living collection of readers' (70).

The young researcher, and particularly the young researcher of art and letters, feeling the demand of the Other expressed in the desire to read, intrinsically lacks interest in the control of the Law, thus allowing, or forcing her or him, according to Barthes,

to extract the 'ego' from its imaginary hull, from that scientific code which protects but also deceives, in a word to cast (*lancer*) the subject (*sujet*) across the blank page, not to express it (nothing to do with 'subjectivity') but to disperse it: to overflow the regular discourse of research. (71, original French added)

In such happy and cheerful, but illegal dispersion (as opposed to the discourse of the Law) of one's ego across the blank page, the researcher manages to link its object to its discourse and to dispossess our knowledge by the light it casts on objects not so much unknown as unexpected' (75).

For Barthes this 'dispossession of knowledge; entailing a space of possibility where the 'known' object may appear in 'unexpected light; is crucial for society because it is at just this moment that research becomes a true interlocation, a task in behalf of others, in a word: a social production' (75).

Discourse, as research, is a social production through which existing knowledge can be dispossessed. (Non-academic) discursive art practice can learn from doctoral artistic research that such dispossession is both intrinsic to the arts and typical of the young, taken that doctoral students are by definition immature,

irrespective of their age. Discursive art practice, from the point of view of the desire for writing that is being demanded by a collection of readers, must be perceived as a practice of rejuvenation. Nothing to do with age, discursive art practice can be called, using the formula of the translators of Barthes's text, "The Young";

Contingency

Rejuvenation Machines Passionate or young research is 'utopian', writes Barthes, 'for we realize that society is not ready to concede this happiness broadly, institutionally, to the student' (70). Why then, as Maharaaj asks, are 'doctoral programs in visual art practice being steadily constituted all over?' (2004, 39). Is it possible to sustain the argument that the constitution of artistic research is simply the unimaginative outcome of a bureaucratic transformation process of higher education (i.e. Bologna), in which despite the evident neo-liberal mechanisms of control nobody has wondered: 'What is the point of artists doing academic research? Isn't there a chance to think that nowadays there has been some change in society that would actually, finally, concede such happiness to the student, and if not broadly then at least singularly to the artist student and the artistic researcher?' If yes, what would be the societal urgencies at the base of such rejuvenating research?

Barthes attributes to society the general capacity to concede happiness. In 1972, however, when his text was written, society does not use its capacity. Why, at that time, was society not ready to concede happiness to the student? Why today, in conditions of indifferent managerial machinations of globalised capital, does it seem ready to do so?

Another set of questions should be directed to the specific role of art in such young research. Barthes profits from the duplication of 'the traditional realm of arts and letters, in as much as this realm, in order to address the issues of reading, writing, and academic discourse, addresses text by text. Barthes 'imagines' that a free reading might become, finally, the norm of "literary studies". This freedom is 'not just any freedom', Barthes says, insisting that the spontaneous is the field of the already said' (72). Rather, for Barthes

The freedom 'staged' in this issue is the freedom of the signifier: the return of words, of word games, and puns, of proper names, of citations, of etymologies, of reflexivities of discourse, of typographies, of combinative operations, of rejections of languages. This freedom must

be virtuosity: the kind which ultimately permits us to read within the support text, however ancient, the motto of all writing: it circulates. (72)

This circulation of all texts—which is 'the discursive'—links literature to literary studies, and potentially to all research. With such artistic virtuosity associated with research in general the particular case of artistic research faces the problem of how to maintain an artistic ethos—an artistic way of doing—in a conception of research that has adapted artistic virtuosity as the freedom of its discursive practice. The recognition of such a redoubling of artistic virtuosity is important in order to differentiate artistic research from research in the traditional realm of arts and letters' (72) and from research in general.

The question is not only whether artistic research is granted by society today—to say that there is a social urgency and relevance for it—but also how the social urgency and the correlated social production of research connect to artistic practice, the field in question. What can artistic research achieve socially? If the purpose of research is 'social production, then artistic research should not only ask, in the words of Gillick, if 'it would be better if we worked in groups of three' (2009a, b), but it should also exemplify this question in its own research.

The philosopher Marcus Steinweg unpacks the line from the all-encompassing contingency of existence to the specific function of contingency in art. 'There seems to be a tripartite division; according to Steinweg, reality is contingent, awareness of reality is the experience of transgressing it, a work [of art] is aporetic because it draws its intensity from an opening toward a boundary it affirms instead of transgressing it' (2012, 186). Art is not originally contingent: it retains or maintains contingency.

The artistic virtuosity of all texts, transformation of aporetic research into social production, is then less a mediation of aporetic experiences into artefacts. On the contrary, it is art's aporetic experience as such, or aporetic experience as artefact. While this artistic virtuosity is not unique to art, art may be the only domain where it is indispensable. While any other young researcher could access the discourse of desire *qua* their youthfulness, they have the option of an exclusive discourse of scientificity to 'insure' a career promotion' (Barthes 1989, 69). Artists cannot opt for the discourse of scientificity alone because such discourse would necessarily dispossess them from the aporetic experience indispensable to their specifically artistic work ethos.

In consequence, artistic researchers face the dilemma of being forced into a discourse of desire and a social production—which

80 "That is the meaning of the *swarov*, the "flying-over", in the thinking of Deleuze and Guattari [...]. Instead of fleeing reality, the subject intensifies itself from it" (Steinweg 2012, 185, fn. 6).

despite its artistic virtuosity is an end outside art—and, simultaneously but contradictorily, being forced to produce an artefact in which the object is exactly not linked to its discourse—to appropriate research for different ends and redirect its apparent loss, as Gilllick puts it.

To avoid the artistic inadequacy of the irony of a discourse indistinguishable from a discourse of desire and sociality, the only artistic way out of the dilemma seems to have to fetishistically insist on the adequacy of either of the two forms of discourse.

Paralysys In art the experience of the awareness of contingency is not initiated as a flight across (*swarov*) that remains in contact with what it flies across' (Steinweg 2012, 184–185).⁸⁰ This would be the meaning of the awareness of reality as the experience of transgressing it. Art, on the contrary, affirms the boundary of contingent reality by ending the contact to its transgression, that is, by ending the contact with what it flies across. It ends the experience of transgressed contingency, however, not by falling into contingent oblivion, but rather by retaining the experience of transgressed contingency. The result seems contingent, as if it came out of the blue, simultaneously relating to real experience: this is its *aporía*.

A paralysed society incapable of—or rather prevented from—experience of transgressed contingency is, however, increasingly less capable of grasping art's *aporía* because it cannot grasp the artwork's relation to real experience. The artwork appears arbitrary; since what shines through is only the contingent. In order not to become indistinguishable from the contemporary contingent reality of a society that seems impoverished of experience, art must, instead of presenting the experience of the end of experience—suspending the experience of transgressed contingency in an artefact—present the experience of the end of the experience; however, the end of the end of the experience would have to be part of such an art experience. We have located the source of the confusion of 'contingency' and 'arbitrariness' here. In a world impoverished of experience the experience of contingency, whether transgressed (in life) or affirmed (in art), must appear arbitrary. If this is the case and the arbitrary is indeed indistinguishable from contingency, then the task must be to do what we do in such a way that it always matters, no matter what it is.

Forget Agamben, or On Contingency As it seems, Agamben has attempted to generate a practical experience of contingency in *The Coming Community*:

81 Agamben's texts are precise not just in precision but also in imprecision. A general translation seems to contradict his task. Agamben added the *postilla* only after Michael Hardt's translation was published. This gives the opportunity to translate and inject the significances that seem relevant to the study. Agamben's original Italian text reads as follows: *Inoperosità non significa inerzia, ma kataragèsis — cioè un'operazione in cui il come si sostituisce integralmente al che, in cui la vita senza forma e le forme senza vita coincidono in una forma di vita. L'esposizione di questa inoperosità era l'opera del libro. Essa coincide perfettamente con questa postilla* (2008, 93).

Quodlibet ens is not being, it does not matter which, but rather 'being such that it always matters'. The Latin always already contains, that is, a reference to the will (*liber*). Whatever being has an original relation to desire. (1993, 1)

To put Agamben's rule to the test one would have to ask in what way the book

The Coming Community is itself a being such that it always matters; I suggest that first, in 1990, Agamben writes the book as an example of what it has to say, providing an experience of what it says, and that he adds the experience of the book's end only in 2001 in a *postilla* entitled *Tiagnun de la noche*. Unfortunately, this reflection is missing in the English translation, which was published in the meantime in 1993. The *postilla* ends thus:

Inoperativeness [redundancy] does not signify inertia, but *kataragèsis*—that is, a work (operation) in which the how completely substitutes [embraces] the what, in which life without form and forms without life coincide in a form of life. The exposure [projection] of this inoperativeness [redundancy] was the work (operation) of this book. It coincides perfectly with this *postilla*. (Agamben 2008, 93; my translation with alternative readings in square brackets)⁸¹

The what of the book (inoperativeness) is substituted, or rather embraced, by the how: not only is the book a bout inoperativeness, it is also by means of inoperativeness. The book as a form of life constitutes inoperativeness by means of inoperativeness: it is inoperative. Just as society is becoming redundant by the managerial paradigms of our time, the book is fated to become indistinguishable unless it produces a signature that has absolutely nothing to add, which is the end of the end, but it is there, nevertheless. This is the task of any good postface, to demonstrate how the author has absolutely nothing to add to his book' (91; my translation).

In this sense, it is not anything whatsoever that suffices to be proclaimed as art in order to be art, in which the proclamation rather than the work becomes the fetish. The task of art is instead to talk saying nothing, and to move without making—or, if you want, to "recapitulate", to undo and save it all [which] is the most difficult thing" (91; my translation).

To recapitulate is not just to repeat or to summarise, generating a difference between repetition and the repeated. Rather, here it means doubling up on itself, undoing by reinvesting its own debt, saving by borrowing on itself.

Artists who are already in the state of redundancy and invested in the state of the end of experience, rather than capitalising on it, are forced to devalue this state by reinvesting their incapacities in it: to take the current state, in which they are immersed, and to 'recapitulate' it by moving without making, 'talking saying nothing'; This is not to say that what is being recapitulated was not saying or making something in the first place. However, in a state in which recapitulation as an experience of the awareness of contingent reality has ceased to exist, in which recapitulation has literally capitulated into mere debt, art becomes a recapitulation of headlessness.

'Whatever' and 'Any-Space-Whatever' This echoes Maharaj's idea of non-knowledge, or rather 'non-knowledge-activity' (2009, 1), as he points out, since his research targets method. Non-knowledge is that which cannot be known in advance, for in art practice and research, method is not so much readymade and received as "knocked together for the nonce"—something that has to be invented each time with each research endeavour' (2).

Maharaj also draws on Agamben's idea of 'whatever', which is always to be understood as *quodlibet* being as 'being such that it always matters', with an original relation to will and desire. With this idea of 'whatever' Maharaj underpins the 'intrinsic condition of art practice and research, its "singularity"' (2). Maharaj argues that [Doubtlessly art practice research has] a force in its own right, always incipient in 'whatever' spaces—windswept, derelict brownfields and wastelands—where intimate-tions of unknown elements, thinking probes, spasms of non-knowledge emerge and come into play. (3)

'Distinct from the circuits of [scientific] know-how', the force of art practice and research is for Maharaj 'the rather unpredictable surge and ebb of potentialities and propensities—the flux of know-how' (2). Acknowledging Beckett for the term, Maharaj concludes: 'Non-know embodies indeterminacy, an "any space whatever" that brews up, spreads, insipissates' (3).

Maharaj uses Deleuze's idea of 'any-space-whatever' a few paragraphs earlier as a jumping board to access Agamben's "whatever" [...] as a more digestible, more spelled-out version of a methodological alternative to the "universal/particular" polarity' (2). Deleuze seems to offer a more empirical 'frame by frame' (3) use of

The 'face' here seems to be the 'figure' of the 'firstness' of 'whatever' as a potentiality or the 'prior condition of all actualisation, all determination' (113):⁸² 'Whether there is a connection or not, Agamben broaches ['whatever'] as a modal oscillation illustrated by the example of the human face [with] its constantly changing liveliness, its vivacity', as Maharaaj notes (2), 'an ambiguity of its expressions which, for Deleuze, 'always suit different affects' (113). We could say that Agamben faces the face in his main text while in the *postilla*, the postface or post face, he re-faces it, thus, to use Deleuze's words:

(113)

There are two kinds of signs of the affection-image, or two figures of firstness: on the one hand the power-quality expressed by the face or an equivalent; but on the other hand the power-quality presented in any-space-whatever.

As such a pure location of the possible 'any-space-whatever' contains political potential; however, this alone does not constitute any-space-whatever in art. Even 'the simple fact of one's own existence as possibility or potentiality, is enough for ethics [to] become [...] effective' (Agamben 2009 43). It is the 'virtual conjunction, the de-homogenized singularity opening to the infinite that recreates a space of potentiality; however, as a genetic or differential sign' (Deleuze 2012a, 113). Correspondingly, Deleuze writes,

(2012a, 113).
 a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, its singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, its 'ethos' (2009, 19). For Deleuze [any-space-whatever] is a perfect manner in which [whatever being] passes from the common to the proper and from the proper to the common is called usage—or rather, second affirming it in art (or cinema, the restricted field of examination Deleuze takes as his research paradigm). For Agamben 'the two experiences of contingency, the first transgressing it in life, the We could look at 'whatever' and 'any-space-whatever' as the of art, though, is located elsewhere—in the elsewhere.

any-space-whatever' to reappear in the now indetermination of art. Indeed, considering the indeterminacy of method in art practice and research one may be well advised to look at each and every work separately. Is this not precisely the space of the particular, the empirical? Deleuze's endless lists and categorisations and sub-categorisations are a strategy towards the emergence of the singularity of 'any-space-whatever'. The problem of the singularity of the work

82 This facial equivalence also reminds Caeciliari's project of the 'Metropolis [in which] every place is equivalent in universal circulation, in exchange' (1993, 200).

83 Another example of the concentration of contemporary art is the term 'actual' in the name of BAK, *basis voor actuele kunst*, accounting for the dynamic and critical role of art in

society, and for a discourse— with and through art as a form of active knowledge—on the urgent social and political issues of our times.
www.bakonline.org/over-ons/

[generating a space that] is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, its principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. (Deleuze 2012a, 113)

Moreover, the coincidence of the *postilla* with the book as a work (operation) in which the how completely substitutes (embraces) the what, in which life without form and forms without life coincide in a form of life' (Agamben 2008, 93; my translation), is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible' (Deleuze 2012a, 113).

If Agamben's book together with the *postilla* generates any space-whatsoever, then this indeterminacy, according to Maharaj-*via-Beckett*, is embodied by no-how.

This no-how, in the strict sense of the 'no', is not a 'how' any more. It is as if the forces that were in play for the generation of the 'power-quality' of any-space-whatsoever were dispersed, out of reach and lost (or saved) forever. In spatial terms, where are they? They are no-where. No-how should be understood in the sense of nowhere, as an analogy to 'where have you been?'—nowhere'; 'how did you do that?'—nohow? In this sense, any-space-whatsoever contains all the possible 'elsewhere' and, as an any-means-whatsoever is generated by all the possible 'otherwise', it coincides with all possible forms of life;

Catastrophic Times What is no-how and the generation of any-space-whatsoever in a decapitated state of debt, in which the circuits of know-how become shorter and shorter, virtually dissolving into no-how themselves?

'Contemporary art' is contested today on the basis of what is being done under this label. Gilllick suggests the 'current' artist as accountable for what is currently being done in art practices because what is being done is being done currently, in a step-by-step mode of small projections, and concurrently parallel to the machinations of global capitalism.⁸³ For the sake of the architectural, however, the contemporary artist seeks ways to not construct recapitulations; that is, spaces from where recapitulations construct themselves.

The research of these spaces is the task of the contingent artist and of this work. It is not the A-side of art but its B-side. In the middle of a global redundancy it locates points of resistance and refusal and co-opts its political inoperativeness for its own ends. It opens

84 The suffix '-pathic', from Ancient Greek *pathos*, 'suffering' or 'feeling'—as for example in 'empathy'—connects to the suffix '-phatic', from Ancient Greek *phatos*, 'spoken'—as for example in 'emphasist'—by means of the noun 'pathic', the passive male partner in anal intercourse. Passion and boldness, closeness and distance, touch and virginality vibrate in an erotic relationship of show and hide, give and take. Going for a blow one would want to ask if the seductive 'penumbra' of the 'smoky' steam-bath atmosphere, in which every unexpected encounter marks the potential origin of unexpected pleasures, 'should not fill us' into seeing the 'non-discursive' or the 'para-discursive' as the only way of touching on what is not visual.

its political potential. B-art will be because B-art is the art that is the place of its future becoming: model, infra-structure, gravitational field, architectural contingency, consuming and contextualizing it between the walls of the street. To B and to not B, B-art is always already: B - art 'll be.

The B-art of B-ing

Maharaj warns

us that the [interaction] with established discursive-academic circuits and think-know components should not fill us into seeing 'the discursive' as the only or the prime modality of "thinking through the visual" (4). This is diametrically at odds with the primacy Gillick gives to 'the discursive' because it is, according to him, the only structure that allows you to project a problem just out of reach and to work with that permanent displacement (2009a, 5).

For Maharaj, 'alongside ["the discursive"] runs its intensive non-discursive register, its seething para-discursive charge and capability—both its "pathic" and "phatic" force, its penumbra of the non-verbal, its somatic scope, its smoky atmospheres, its performative range' (4).⁸⁴

Gillick's proposal to "hide within the collective" (2) 'regenerating among its own kind' (7), to 'project a problem just out of reach and to work with that permanent displacement' seems to be related to the 'agglutinative mode' Maharaj proposes. Maharaj refers this mode to Marcel Duchamp and Deleuze as "'stick on" processes of figuring forth, of constellating assemblages' (4). This is a figuring forth, not a figuring out, like Gillick's 'permanent displacement', which provides an infinite suspension of critical moments' (7).

Is the first 'hot' and the latter 'cool'? Why does the former draw on the 'performative range' while the latter calls it 'the opposite of performance'? Maharaj offers an entry point, though negatively, when he denounces 'visual thinking' as 'those approaches to the visual that treat it predominantly as an "image-lingo"—basing it on a linguistic model' (4). 'Its impact, Maharaj claims 'is to restrict the visual to verbal-discursive legibility', thus resulting in a 'talking over and above [the visual]' (4) rather than mulling it over. What Maharaj does not consider, though, at least not explicitly, is the opposite, basing discourse on a visual model, neither the visual as grammar-icality nor the visual as aggrammaticality, but language, or thought, as image.

The Destruction of the Image of Thought When Deleuze in the chapter 'The Image of Thought' of *Difference and Repetition* writes that 'something in the world forces us to think, and that this something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter' (2012b, 176), this evidently resonates with Maharaj's 'room for the "other" to put in an appearance in his or her own terms' (S). Nevertheless, I remain sceptical with regard to 'the humble conjunctive form and + and + and + and +...' Maharaj evokes, even if 'its components are linked together by no more than a lick of glue' (S). It may be 'no more than a 'humble' 'lick of glue' too many in which every and + is suspended' in the next in a purely sequential form. It seems not clear whether the matter here is the destruction of Hegelian *Aufhebung* or its affirmation. Deleuze writes:

Thought is primarily trespass and violence, the enemy, and nothing presupposes philosophy: everything begins with misosophy. Do not count upon thought to ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks. Rather, count upon the contingency of an encounter with that which forces thought to raise up and educate the absolute necessity of an act of thought or a passion to think. The conditions of a true critique and a true creation are the same: the destruction of an image of thought which presupposes itself and the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself. (175–176, my emphasis)

Forget Deleuze II, or On Forgetting In another short statement, Deleuze writes that 'form will never inspire anything but conformity' (170). 'Thought is a form, an image; however, an image of thought that presupposes itself' must be destroyed in order to generate 'the conditions of a true critique and true creation.' 'The act of thinking' must be generated 'in thought itself.' 'Thought must be forced to raise up and educate. It must bring forth the 'absolute necessity' of such an act of thinking. However, thought cannot force itself; it can only 'ensure the relative necessity of what it thinks'—thinking that is conform to a presupposed image of thought. Rather, thought must be open to 'the contingency of an encounter' with something that has the power to force thought. 'This something is 'violent' and it does not belong to the order of thought: it is 'misosophy' (176). Deleuze writes: 'What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. (176)

In this sense, Deleuze concludes, 'it is opposed to recognition' (176). Since it cannot be recognised, it does not make sense. We have to make sense of it. This is why it makes sense to say: $A=A$ does not make sense; only $A=B$ (or C or any other character) makes sense because it can only be sensed and we are forced to make sense of it (unless we realise that there is never a second A equal to the first, and that therefore the equation $A=A$ is something we must make sense of each and every time). To make sense is to make the 'affective tones' sensible, perceptible, imaginable, recognisable. Before that, however, the thought which is born in thought, the act of thinking, which is neither given by immanence nor presupposed by reminiscence but engendered in its generality, is a thought without image' (207–208).

It is in this sense of an imageless thought that the origin of Deleuze's thought appears not to be difference, but indifference. Indifference forces us to encounter, to think, and to make sense—and to make a difference. Deleuze insists that 'difference is not diversity' (280). It is precisely not the 'constellating assemblage' as a constellation of many sequential or even consequential diverse and [...] *ad infinitum*' (Maharaj 2009, 5) but infinity itself that opens in each and every encounter.

Experience and Poverty

Opinionatedness vs. Ecstasy The liberation of discourse from

conceptuality leads to an exploration of the criteria that make an artistic practice a critically discursive one. I am intrigued by the difficulty of making art today, a difficulty in regard to the questions of this section: the seeming expansion of the field, discourse as a series of contemporary art, the nature of knowledge in art (and whether 'knowledge' is the applicable category through which the problematic issue of community, in relation to which art must always define itself, can be addressed), the location of the work of art, the definition of an artistic ethos, the problem of commodity-art, the structural similarity of contemporary works' redundancy with the work of art, the problematic of use and immanence. A difficulty also in regard to some of the possible answers approached: research as the new (promised) territory of art, rejuvenation (and maybe rejuvenation as opposed to voiding?) as a paradigm for research, contingency as the now illegible yet only legitimate realm of art, and therefore catastrophe and forgetting.

Assuming there is a difficulty in making art today, does it constitute a difficulty for the work of art and for the artist being an artist? If so, then one would rather leave the field. This would be an

exit, one made under existential presuppositions, taking all the conditions for today's difficulty of making art as a given necessarily forcing an exit: an emergency exit.

If the difficulty of making art today does not constitute a general difficulty for the work of art and for the artist being an artist, then the question becomes: what is the question? Making art becomes a form of standing outside art; however, as a form of existing as an artist and the work that is being done existing as a work of art. There is no outside, but there is a way of standing outside as a way of standing inside. This is not an existential exit: it is, rather, an exit that exists without preconditions, without having to oppose existing conditions. Inasmuch as this exit is not related to a move outside—it opens an outside within the inside, making the opposition irrelevant—it is static exit, or rather exit-stasis: ecstasy. It is as if one would neither ask the question, 'What is art?' nor claim anything whatsoever as art. The difficulty of making art today is acknowledged, but one can easily ignore it by asking or rather sensing what the question is, that is, not asking the right questions, but sensing questions.

If wisdom is a means of hiding melancholia, then opinionatedness is the signature of the incapacity of dealing with such depression—I am tempted to add: that's my opinion. I am giving in to this temptation not because I understand myself as a particle in an immanent mass forced to express an opinion. Rather, I am sceptical of the wise. Where is the watershed between incapacity and capacity, those who do not see and those who do? If wisdom is a way of expressing the knowledge of melancholia—the wise know about the melancholia that has befallen society, but do not say so directly, only indirectly through wisdom—then one must ask, again, as Jean-Luc Nancy did in *The Inoperative Community*, referring to Baralle, whether 'knowledge' is the applicable category through which the problematic issue of community, in relation to which art always must define itself, can be addressed. Baralle expressed it in the question, 'why must there be what I know?' (Nancy 1991, 5).⁸⁵

'The rupture (*déchirure*) hidden in the question, writes Nancy, is occasioned by the question itself' (6). The question breaks with something in itself in a way that is comparable to the phrase, 'Don't touch me', [which] is a phrase that touches and that cannot not touch, even when isolated from every context' (2008, 17), as discussed by Nancy in *Noli me tangere—On the Raising of the Body*. The one who loves and says 'Do not touch me', says, more literally, 'Do not wish to touch me':

You hold nothing; you are unable to hold or retain anything, and that is precisely what you must love and know.

⁸⁵ Nancy quotes from Baralle 1988, 109.

86 Here the 'he' to which Nancy refers is Jesus Christ.

That is what there is of a knowledge and a love. Love what escapes you. Love the one who goes. Love that he goes. (37)⁸⁶

Know the knowledge that escapes you. Know that it is unknowable. In this question is hidden, says Bataille, an extreme rupture, so deep that only the silence of ecstasy answers it' (1988, 109).

The Passivity of Passion A work of art can say 'Do not touch me; demanding from the one who gets to touch it the wish not to touch it. Can a work of art be demanded and then produced? Or is a work of art, rather, always the work of art's demand to be demanded—as that which cannot be demanded? Is what cannot be demanded—the untouchable—the work of the work of art? Instead of calling the work of art artworks should we say, rather, that in the work of art artworks?

Nancy, referring to Bataille (and Maurice Blanchot), challenges 'work' as the domain through which the 'inherently dispersed subject' (Steyerl 2007) can be defined today, or through which community can arise' (Nancy 1991, 31). Hito Steyerl, referring to Nancy, suggests that 'perhaps the goal of a common language is also only a stumbling block that hinders our view of common listening' (2007). In the common listening that Steyerl evokes in her preface to the German translation of Spivak's seminal text *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, there is a passivity that resonates with Bataille's 'unleashing of passion' (Nancy 1991, 32), which has nothing to do with enthusiasm, free will, or unconscious desire, but is 'the passivity, the suffering, and the excess [...] of sharing its singularity' (32). The listener is irreducible to her- or himself. Sharing is inherent in this passivity of passion, or as Nancy writes 'only exposition to the other unleashes my passions' (32–33). Therefore, the passion that is unleashed is nothing other than the passion of and for community' (34).

Exhibition as Procurement vs. Exhibition as Staging Spivak criticises Foucault and Deleuze (with Guattari) for not being 'aware that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor' (2015, 69), which they do with their position, as she claims, which valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual' (69).

She states that 'these immense problems are buried in the differences between the "same" words' (70), leading to an ignorance of Marx's differentiation between *Verwertung* and *Darstellung*, which is translated in each case—in both English and French—as 'representation'. The first is representation as "'speaking for", as in

politics [...] within the state and political economy, and the second is representation as "re-presentation", as in art or philosophy [...] with- in the theory of the Subject' (70). 'Running them together, Spivak warns, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act and know for themselves, leads to an essen- tialist, utopian politics' (71).

Drawing on the differentiation that Marx makes between the 'feeling of community', which is a development of a transforma- tive class "consciousness" from a descriptive class "position", and a dif- ferentiation of community, whose structural model is the family, —a dif- ferentiation which is characterised by the use value as opposed to the productive surplus value of the 'intercourse with society' and class agency' (72)—allows Spivak to 'suggest that the possibility of collective agency itself is persistently foreclosed through the manipulation of female agency' (78).

For Spivak as the female intellectual as intellectual' (104) 'the staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—dissimulates the choice of and need for "heroes", pa- ternal proxies, agents of power—*Verrichtung*' (74). She has 'a circum- scribed task which she must not disown with a flourish' (104). Instead she feels obliged to 'acknowledge a long-term usefulness in Jacques Derrida' by drawing on his 'call for a rewriting of the utopian struc- tural impulse as "rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us"' (104). 'The essentialist, utopian politics' (71) she dismissed at the beginning of the text is dismissed by her own rewriting' as a staging of the subaltern, who for themselves cannot speak' (104).

Headiness vs. Headlessness There is no common language, just as there is no common work. Nancy's 'stumbling block to a thinking of community' (1991, 3) is 'reducible beyond work and language to the essence of 'humanness' as such. 'The very basis of the communist ideal, according to Nancy, 'ended up appearing most problematic: namely, human beings defined as producers [...] of their own essence in the form of their labour or their work' (2). Liberation of work from the communist ideal must not substitute its basis, but instead must recognise the problematic in its essentialism, which leads Nancy to add that the very basis of the communist ideal that is most problem- atic is 'human beings defined at all' (2).

Neither speaking for the other, nor speaking for oneself: the inoperative community stages a speech that is passive in as much as it is the speech of the other. The seemingly shocking news is that in this speech no human essence is accomplished, no human beings are defined. The definition of the human being is the stumbling block that is eliminated. Yet this is precisely what saves the human being

from becoming the slave of a total machine; not seeking enjoyment, *joissiance*, anymore, but joy, *joie*, 'attains [...] the point of touching art today is touched but not appropriated to oneself. The work of art proceeds as a joyful practice because it neither attains a definition of art nor of the artist.

Poverty as Use In *The Highest Poverty* Agamben examines the problematic relation between rule and life in monasticism with the purpose to 'construct' what he describes as a form-of-life, that is to say, [as] a life that is linked so closely to its form that it proves to be inseparable from it' (2013, xi). The concept of poverty is understood in this context not as having less but rather as a renunciation of ownership. Poverty, in its highest form, is to think of a use of bodies and of the world that would never be substantiated into an appropriation [and] to think life as that which is never given as property but only as common use' (xiii). The relation between rule and life is thus inverted, if not dissolved, in as much as the rule is not obeyed but lived. If 'it is life that is applied to the norm and not the norm to life [then] what is in question, according to Agamben, is a shift from the level of practice and acting to that of form of life and living' (61).

It seems not surprising that the definition of 'the Franciscans' *forma vivendi*' (109), based on the application of life to the rule, must have caused a 'conflict' not only within the order but also 'with the Curia' (109). From the perspective of the Roman Law, 'the factual character of use is not in itself sufficient to guarantee an exteriority with respect to the law, because any fact can be transformed into a right, just as any right can imply a factual aspect. For this reason, Agamben concludes, 'the Franciscans must insist on the "expropriative" character of poverty, [and by] the preoccupation with constructive' a justification of use in juridical terms [they] entangle themselves more and more in a juridical conceptuality [which] prevented them from collecting the hints of a theory of use' (139).

This is the point from which Agamben writes a theory of use.⁸⁷ Suggesting that 'the conception of poverty as "expropriative" [...] could have been generalized beyond law [by] connecting it to an important passage from the *Admonitiones*, in which Francis identified original sin with the appropriation of the will' (139–40), Agamben provides us with a possible origin of non-construction, a point at which nothing has been constructed yet in terms of appropriation and will. Agamben explains that it is 'precisely at the point in the elaboration of scholastic theology when the will had become the apparatus that permitted the definition of liberty and the responsibility of the

Agamben uses the example of 'the architect and the carpenter' to explain that if they 'remain such even when they are not building, that is not because they are title-holders of a potential of building, which they can also not put to work, but because they habitual-ly live in use-of-themselves as architect or carpenter' (63). Whether architects or carpenters perform well in designing and building a building or not, their use of the computer, the CNC-machine, etc. constitutes them anew every time, even when they do not design or build at all. There is no difference between the architect and the architect, a building and a human being, regarding its habitual condition, and Agamben's conclusion can be applied to both

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In this way architecture may be defined as use, as an architectural form in which habit is given existence. Although architectural form does not prescribe any particular activity, its use nevertheless exists in its usefulness. Just as we can say that something can be used or abused in different ways, none of these uses or abuses is *per se* excluded from the habitual condition of that thing, and yet each of these uses and abuses is already included in its habitual condition since use happened in relation to that very thing.

In *The Use of Bodies* Agamben refers to Galen, who 'decisively opposes use to [the Aristotelian] *energia*, just as a state or a habit is opposed to a movement and an operation' (2015, 58). Galen's definition of use is *uchrestia*, 'a certain functionality, good functionality, which is to say, not an operation [...] but something like habitual condition. Use, in this sense of a habitual condition or good functionality, never needs to be put to work, because it is always already in use' (58). Or 'use is the form in which habit is given existence' (60), that is to say, habit does not need to be put into act in order to exist.

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In human as *dominus sui actus*' (140).⁸⁸ In the words of Francis the *forma vivendi* of the Friars Minor is, by contrast, that life which maintains itself in relation, not only to things, but even to itself in the mode of inappropriability and of the refusal of a will of one's own' (Agamben 2013, 140).

act and know for the m- selves' (Spivak 2015, 71) that Spivak so vehemently denounces.

88 This definition strikingly resonates with the individuals in position calling for the oppressed subjects [to] speak,

It cannot be said that the self of a thing, which opens up as inoperativity in its work, is human, since the human is inappropriate for the building, just as it cannot be said that the self of a person, which opens up as inoperativity in their work, is thing-like or inhuman, since the inhuman is inappropriate for the person. If we wish to call the human human, then what opens up as its self in inoperativity is the human, not as essential but as its simple existence, whatever it may be. This is why Agamben can claim that the classless society is already present in capitalist society, just as, according to Benjamin, shards of messianic time are present in history in possibly infamous and risible forms' (94).

world is necessarily inappropriate and can only be experienced as such. responds to a "state of the world" (81). In such a just condition the claims, poverty is not found on a decision of the subject but correct state of the world or as a state of God.⁹⁰ In this fragment, Agamben the existent, [which] in the final analysis can only be [justice] as a justice, writes Benjamin, designates the ethical category of which he takes from Benjamin.

ly connected to the nature of things, that of inappropriability' (81), inverts the perspective by drawing on a concept of justice itself close to Agamben's (2015, 80). However, Agamben's] was a conception of use that was not founded on an act of renunciation [...] but on the nature of things' (2015, 80). However, Agamben's] was a conception of use that was not founded on an act of renunciation that what would have been decisive [for the Franciscan the- he speculates, would have given them the possibility of defining a form-of-life as a *tertium* in terms of use. In *The Use of Bodies* he still their monastic life from a justification with regard to the law, which, scribes how the Franciscans were unable to separate the definition of **Not an Inhuman Condition** In *The Highest Poverty* Agamben de-

every work. some of its possible operations, as the 'lethality' and 'abusiveness' in purely positivist reading, we should add, that the self also opens, in and "usability" in every work' (63). Preventing inoperativity from a up as a central inoperativity in every operation, as the "I'veability" from a modern notion of subjectivity, 'the self [...] is what is opened "self" become possible, even with regard to a building. Dissociated every work, does something like the experience of an "own" and a plation of potential, which renders inoperative every *energia* and

Deleuze, that only through the contemporary references to Baruch Spinoza and who we can claim with Agamben, involved in cultural capital

89 In this very opposition to faculty the notion of habit used here also opposes to Bourdieu's use of it as a resource that is involved in cultural capital conditioning life.

90 Agamben quotes from 'Notes towards a Work on the Categories of Justice' (Fenves 2011, 257).

Ecstatic Experience How to exist in a 'museum apparatus' that, according to Agamben, has been 'deprived of all legitimacy [by] the attempt [...] of the practice of the artistic avant gardes and political movements of our time [...] to actualize a destruction of work? The more one attacks the beast the bigger it grows. "The only possibility of thinking a true anarchy," Agamben asserts, coincides with the lucid exposition of the anarchy internal to power' (275).

Such 'exposition' is to be understood as an *e-x-p-o-s-i-t-i-o-n*, a position outside, and coincides with the passion expressed in ecstasy. With regard to the architect such an exposition can be completed by means of etymology—given that 'anarchy' and the 'architect' share the Greek term *arche*. Agamben writes:

The term *arche* in Greek means both 'origin' and 'command' [...] Anarchy can never be in the position of a principle: it can only be liberated as a contact, where both *arche* as origin and *arche* as command are exposed in their non-relation and neutralized. (275–276)

Separating the 'creative networker' (origin) from the 'master builder' (command), and neutralising them by not conflating them but keeping them in touch, is the anarchic exposition of architecture. It is also the endless gesture of architecture: the fact that encounters take place in buildings.

When Benjamin writes in *Experience and Poverty* that the 'poverty of experience' (1999, 734), which he states for "the contemporary" (735), 'should not be understood to mean that people are yearning for new experience [but rather] long to free themselves from experience, then this means that they accept their poverty as something positive, of which they can make such pure and decided use [...] that it will lead to something respectable' (734). Purity and decision are the hallmarks of the contemporary individual: the cleansing that follows perpetual rejuvenation and the decision as terminated scission, the fusion of originality and self-command.

But the end is not respectable. Instead of having experiences, they have "devoured" everything [having] such a surfeit that it has exhausted them. There is a depression after overconsumption of experience ending in sleep and dreams, making up for the sadness and discouragement of the day' (734). In the dreams and the miraculous promises that exist in our world 'nature and technology [...] have completely merged'. To the many 'a way of life in which everything is solved in the simplest and most comfortable way [comes] as a tremendous relief' (735).

If 'the contemporary' is indissociable from the developments of technology, then it is indispensable to conceive of the poverty of

experience' it has created as associated to technologies of power. Not that 'the many [are less] human than [...] a few powerful people: But we need to have an experience of poverty, to 'step back and keep our distance' (735). Or, as Baraille puts it, 'experience would remain inaccessible if we didn't know how to dramatize' (1988, 117).





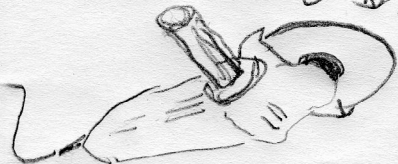
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III. Film: Building Cinema

Rather like my grand-daughter, who, when she moved from one room of her flat to another, used to think that a different sun was shining into each one, so the cinema marked the advent of an independent and still unknown cycle of light.

Paul Virilio

Tactile appropriation, developed with reference to architecture, in certain circumstances acquires canonical value. For the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved by optical means, that is, by contemplation, alone. They are mastered gradually by habit, under the guidance of tactile appropriation.

Walter Benjamin

Filmmaking as Architectural Art

Building Bedroom The basic association of architecture with the *polis* is not mistaken; however, it must be rethought in terms of metropolitics, in terms of capital's subsumption of the political by the economy.

The 'metro' of metropolitics is the controlling measure of politics. Politics is not lost in metropolitics; it is dominated by the economical measure of the 'metro'. To eliminate the 'metro' seems impossible. It is the engine of Western society's development since at least the Enlightenment; as Martin writes, 'classical German philosophy is at best an unconscious philosophy of capital' (2007, 21). If the qualifier of capital is abstraction, then knowledge is its first medium, its first capital. Since the Renaissance it is in the study, the small private library, where the accumulation of abstracted capital as knowledge has taken place, as opposed to the medieval preservation of scripture by the monks in the libraries of the monasteries. Hence the origin of the metropolitical may be traced to early humanism in the Renaissance, and particularly to the study of Petrarch.^{9*} The private libraries of the merchants, the *Wunderkammer*, public libraries, and museums are conceptual and spatial products of the study.

The advent of the digital public library in the (private) Internet, and its production and its consumption in *quasi-private* spaces, should not be underestimated in this genealogy. While the spaces where individuals move—the real spaces of the cities and the virtual spaces of the digital world—are increasingly privately owned, at the same time many individuals feel compelled to make their most private intimacies public. Since this urge for public contact takes place almost exclusively in privately dominated spaces, it is deceiving and turns every revelation into the satisfaction of private needs. The result is a sharing of loneliness, without community.

It may seem necessary to isolate politics from the economy, but the obvious impossibility of such a separation may point to another possibility: to reverse the control mechanism into a political economy.⁹² In political economy, as opposed to metropolitics, the 'political' would be the authorising liberation of the economy. The political public realm, as the common realm, would not cut back the economic private realm. It would redefine care for the self as the freedom of putting oneself in a self-defining, that is to say, self-desired and not self-interested relationship to others.

The city as the traditional public space is the primal realm of such a redefinition. I agree with calls for reclaiming the city—such as David Harvey's call for urban revolutions. He carefully differentiates

between reformist and revolutionary examples, and also prudently reflects on organisational and institutional necessities: 'imagin[ing] a league of socialist cities much as the Hansaatic League of old became the network that nourished the powers of merchant capitalism' (2013, 153). Nevertheless—and Harvey acknowledges this—the Lefebvrian 'right to the city' must be reclaimed first, meaning that the individuals who please themselves in asserting their private satisfaction must be conscious of and committed to asserting their public right, consequently claiming it publicly. In this light, the spatial limitation of factory-based struggles as the potential origin of a revolution is questionable. Even a generalisation of labour 'to the far broader terrain of the work entailed in the production and reproduction of an increasingly urbanized daily life', as Harvey calls it (139), does not yet represent the oppressed public. Only an extension of the 'struggles against the recuperation and realization of surplus value from workers in their living spaces' (140) can be fully accounted for as a base for the reclaiming of the public, Harvey proposes, because the private

91 See Petrarca 2004.

92 In *The Human Condition* Arendt shows that the separation of the economic from the political defines the private and public realms of the *polis*. In the private house, the *oikos*, the household, the *oikonomia*, is kept through relations of inequality disturbing particular responsibilities hierarchically, while the public realm is reserved for the encounter between equal, and thus free, house lords. Since the *polis*, however, the city is defined by the monetarisation of the public realm, that is, of its privatisation, with the consequence of making the private concerns (existing in the house, in the family) a public issue and thus complicating the relation between economy and politics (Arendt 1998, 22–78). However, even the Greek *polis* taken as a whole as a composition of public and private parts is already a politico-economic conglomerate, a *polimetros* in which the *metro* is the condition of the *polis*.

Internet in the guise of a false public institution has sneaked into our homes.

The site from which to approach the problem is not the city in the first place. The site of contestation is the home, and in its most extreme example it is the publicly displayed bedroom. The conservative position would give back its privacy to the bedroom. Progressively, however, one has to engage in a public use of this digital and corporeal infiltration between our bed linen and us.⁹⁵

Perhaps this section should be called 'building bedroom',⁹⁴ rather than 'building cinema', as the bedroom is the most intimate private space exposed in the publicly used private Internet. However, precisely in its cinematographic quality, through the moving image of video chats and posts, the bedroom becomes 'public' and, as suggested, today the bedroom-*qua*-cinema might be identified as the architectural typology replacing the 'factory' as the place of struggle.

In the Enlightenment, according to Immanuel Kant, eventual change could occur via 'the public use of one's own reason', of which only the 'man [sic] of learning'⁹⁶ (2009, 3), like Kant himself, could naturally take charge. The architectural typology for such public use was the study, which is a private space.⁹⁵ The factory, as the architectural typology housing the origins of class struggle, is certainly not a public space in the sense of the street, but it is nonetheless a collective space.

93 The 'apartment' is an invention of the Renaissance, when due to the diminishing power of the Church the public realm of the street gained economic importance for the merchants. In hitherto communally used houses, in which spaces had much less defined functions than today, certain spaces were separated to assure the visibility of the publicly relevant status. Since these spaces were set a part from the otherwise publicly accessible spaces of the house, they were called apartments. The genealogy of the apartment corresponds to the genealogy of the 'family' as the bourgeois model we know today.

94 There is abundant literature on cinema/film/documentation related to architecture/urban/art which is for obvious reasons only marginally important for this study. A selection would include Bull et al. 2011, Cairns 2013, Hohenberger et al. 2016, or Peinz et al. 2011. With regard to film and architecture I will mainly draw on Benjamin's *Work of Art* essay.

When Martin argues that 'the transition from the history of spirit to the history of modes of production was a fundamental innovation by Marx, displacing the philosophical project to grasp the absolute by the critique of capitalism' (2009, 487), this correlates with the shift from the abstraction of thought as knowledge-form capital to the abstraction of labour as work-form capital—or from the study to the factory, or from head to hand.

With regard to the transition from 'the study' to the 'factory' to the 'bedroom-*qua*-cinema' we should, however, look for the next missing element in the .../knowledge/work/... sequence. If, as Martin proposes, classical German philosophy was indeed a philosophy of capital, albeit unconsciously, and if the transition from the history of spirit to the history of modes of production was a fundamental

also on Virilio, Agamben, and Deleuze. However, a selection of the abundance of modern and contemporary thought dedicated to the cinema would include Jameson 2007, Kracauer 1995, Shavro 2010, Steyerl 2012, Steyerl 2010b.

95 Kant's 1784 essay 'What is Enlightenment?' affirms that a revolution is possible and 'may well put an end to autocratic despotism and to rapacious or power-seeking oppression, but it will never produce a true reform in ways of thinking. Instead, new prejudices, like the ones they replaced, will serve as a leash to control the great unthinking mass' (2009, 3). 'This is why the public can only achieve enlightenment slowly' (3). Therefore, for Kant, 'a lesser degree of civil freedom gives intellectual freedom enough room to expand to its fullest extent' (10). Kant's position is completely at odds with our ideas of anti-capitalist change. Nevertheless, it is of interest that the space in which potential change is located is private.

innovation by Marx' (2009, 487), then it must be asked: of what is Marx's critique of capitalism an unconscious philosophy?

The .../knowledge/work/... sequence may be put in a productive correspondence to Foucault's societies of sovereignty and disciplinary societies. The spiritual realm of knowledge and truth links with the will of a sovereign and its court structure, while the industrial realm of production and money links to the disciplinary rules structuring the forces at play in a factory, taking into account the bosses, the workers, and the unions. Further, according to Deleuze, the current societies of control, which succeed the disciplinary societies, have been marked until now neither by will nor by rule but by (self-) control and (self-) management, which is unsurprisingly indifferent to what (and whom) it manages since the principles of management are the same everywhere (and for everyone). Deleuze also reveals what, according to him, 'perhaps [...] expresses the distinction between the two societies best':

Discipline always referred back to minted money that locks gold in as numerical standard, while control relates to floating rates of exchange, modulated according to a rate established by a set of standard currencies. (1992, 5)

The shift from truth value to exchange value suggests another shift either to exchange rate-value or to use value, one which would require yet another history after that of spirit and that of modes of production, namely a history of relations and uses.

While in societies of sovereignty the notion of hierarchy makes little sense because the will of the sovereign is absolute, the balance of disciplinary societies depends on a hierarchy in which the exchange value of each element finds its place according to temporally fixed rules. In an ever-fluctuating network of innumerable factors, however, any exchange-rate value is permanently floating—demanding sophisticated mechanisms of control. Relations become fundamentally contingent. What is fixed in societies of control is not a particular state but the virtuosity of how it is dynamically managed.⁹⁶ Neither relations nor uses are fixed, but are constantly redefined. What is exposed more than ever in societies of control is neither knowledge nor wealth but the use of bodies. The proposition of continuing the discussed sequence is .../knowledge/work/life/... and the corresponding activities, architectural typologies, and body parts should reflect their most primordial functions: head, studio, thinking, knowledge/hand, factory, production, work/genitals,⁹⁷ bedroom, reproduction, life. The joyful or destituent counterparts would

⁹⁶ See Paolo Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude* on how virtuosity 'characterizes [...] the totality of contemporary social production' (2004, 61).

⁹⁷ Genitals relate to the reproductive function of the body, which is somehow linked to the bedroom, although this link is certainly constructed. One could replace it with another bodily function—digestion—and consequently construct a relation to the kitchen and the bathroom. The use of 'genitals' here is not a final decision; rather, it is the example that seemed to fit best with regard to a

be non-knowledge or *acephale* experience, inoperativity or *achiral* existence, and erotic or *aphallic* ecstasy.⁹⁸

The student writing in the study for a collection of readers, the worker in the worker's house starts reading in the night thus realising political equality, the workers of the factory who go on the street to demand fair wages: in each of these cases there is a private space shot through with politics.⁹⁹ The technological possibility of visually (but also conceptually) projecting political emancipation into the world from most private spaces makes the bedroom-*qua*-cinema a place related to the masses, as was cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, opposed to the factory, cinema was unrelated to productive work. In the network of bedrooms, equipped with the uncountability of the masses, the gravity of this new cinematographic potential has revolutionary measure.

Demolition of a Wall Paul Virilio writes that 'the architecture of the set, with its spatial mass and partitions, supplanted free montage and created a new narrative ellipsis [...] an independent and still unknown cycle of light' (Virilio 1989, 12). He illustrates this cycle with the example of the film *Démolition d'un mur* (*Demolition of a Wall*) made in 1896 by Auguste and Louis Lumière, a short single-shot sequence showing the demolition of a wall by workers on a building site.

contemporary digital exhibitionism as related to the former cinema for the masses.

98 The concept *acephale* originates from Greek *akephalos*, 'headless', and the name of a public review and a secret society created by Barralle in the 1930s. The concept *achiral* joins the word 'chiral', from Greek *cheir*, 'hand' (as e.g. in chiropractic), with the negating prefix 'a-'; a figure is achiral if its image in a plane mirror can be brought to coincide with itself, which is the case if it has at least one axis of rotation; see Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chirality>. The concept *aphallic* is a neologism that joins the word 'phallic' from Greek *phallos*, 'erect penis', with the negating prefix 'a-'.

99 Compare with Jacques Rancière's concept of equality [as] the condition required for being able to think politics' (2006, 52). However, Rancière points out: equality only generates politics when it

is implemented in the specific form of a particular case of dissensus' (52).

100 The pasting of actual footage of film reversely poses a geometrical problem. Since the frames of the footage sequentially follow one under the other their reversal turns them upside down. To avoid this, one would have to cut the sequence in single frames and reverse their order. The technique my father and I used to produce reversed footage was to hold the camera upside down when shooting. Consequently, when turning the footage so that the order of images was reversed, the orientation of the image was also turned back on the feet, so to speak. However, one specific scene can only be filmed once with analogous film. Therefore, it can be assumed that the Lumière brothers projected the reversed image by running the original footage backwards, simply rewinding it in front of the lens at original speed.

After this sequence the film is immediately projected in reverse by the Lumières, making the wall miraculously rise from the dust to its initial position. Although it is technically possible that the Lumière brothers pasted a reverse copy of the sequence on the original it is more probable that they reversed the direction of the projection at the end of the screening—each time—letting the same footage of the film run backwards through the projector.¹⁰⁰ It would not be surprising if the forward/backward movement was the result of the necessary rewinding of the film through the projector, resulting in a playful back and forth eventually leading to the conscious 'introduction of] trick photography to the world of cinema' (14).

Henceforth, Virilio writes, 'doors would open in houses without a façade, so that the cross-sectioned partitions between rooms

appeared as thin as the chinks between frames of the film'. He concludes that in this way film directors showed that they paid little attention to shifts in cinematic time, as 'even in a confined architectural space the whole problem is one of speed' (14).

Indeed, the demolition of the wall and its subsequent reconstruction in the film is incommensurable with either the actual demolition on the building site or the interior wall of the cinema on which the film is being screened. Nevertheless, one should be wary about too quickly linking an accurate reproduction of spatio-temporal conditions with authenticity. The shift from the mere filming of a demolition of a wall to its reconstitution by means of a trick 'was as astonishing for those early pioneers as it was difficult to invent' (Virilio 1989, 13). This shift from the mere possibility of mechanical reproduction of an image to 'the work of art designed for reproducibility' (Benjamin 2007a, 224) is not consequential. In historical retrospect as well as from a technical perspective, a reproducible work of art is inherently designed for reproducibility, yet the means of reproduction does not predetermine outcome. Filmic documentation of research changes the research in an unpredictable way: documentation is a work of art in itself. Yet documentation is an art form that creates an intense relation between the documented and the means of documentation, generating a life form because it exhibits nothing but this relation.

Making a Difference by Indifferentiating Difference Deleuze writes in *Difference and Repetition* that 'indifference has two aspects: the undifferentiated abyss, the black nothingness, the indeterminate animal in which everything is dissolved'; and 'the white nothingness, the once more calm surface upon which float unconnected determinations like scattered members: a head without a neck, an arm without a shoulder, eyes without brows' (1994, 28, my emphasis). Deleuze differentiates indifference, asking 'is difference intermediate between these two extremes?' (28).

On the black side there is the 'indeterminate', the animalistic, which 'is completely indifferent' (28). In other words, it is completely terminated, since it is not determined. It is indifferently rooted in its originality and nothing else.

On the white side there are 'floating determinations', scattered on the surface, which 'are no less indifferent to each other' (28). In other words, these 'floating determinations' are indifferent to one another because they float, because they are suspended, captured on the surface of a superficiality lacking spatial depth. Here they seem to be no less completely terminated, not as the originally indeterminate, but rather as something that has ceased to be determined. Such a relapse evokes Agamben's conception of contingency as 'decreation', as if it were a de-determined originality.

Is not the differentiation of indifference as *s u c h* illogical, since it always has the same effect, namely, to be indifferent? Indeed, Deleuze asks if difference is not 'the only extreme, the only moment of presence and precision', rather than being 'intermediate between these two extremes' (28) of indifference. Thus he restores indifference to itself—there is no longer any black and white—stating that 'difference is the state in which one can speak of determination as *s u c h*' (28).

If determination is the process that uproots a concept and potentially leads it towards a new terminus, then neither indeterminate indifference nor de-determined indifference describes such a process. They are always already terminated, albeit in different ways, as they provide for a groundless ground or an endless end. They are always either already over or yet to come. Any indifference can only present itself as transcendent differentiation; that is to say, as experience. Such difference pulls the 'surface' of 'floating determinations' back to the indeterminate ground; or rather it appears to raise the indeterminate ground to the height of the 'surface' of 'floating determinations', thus showing that, to exist, difference has to be made, 'or makes itself' (28).

Such a difference is only the 'extreme' state of 'presence and precision', of 'determination as *s u c h*'. Indifference nevertheless exists

in presence, but 'difference is [the] state in which determination takes the form of unilateral distinction' (28); and yet that from which it distinguishes itself does not distinguish itself from it.

Deleuze uses the example of lightning, which 'distinguishes itself from the black sky but must also trail it behind, as though it were distinguishing itself from that which does not distinguish itself from it'; this evokes the striking contradiction: 'It is as if the ground rose to the surface, without ceasing to be ground' (28). Deleuze's difference operates on a differentiation of indifference as a ground that rises and grounds the determinations of the surface in itself. To put it in other words, in Deleuze's example, indifference does not distinguish itself from difference, but difference distinguishes itself from indifference.

In the *chiaroscuro* images evoked by the example of lightning, in which 'the determined maintains its essential relation with the undetermined' (29), Deleuze insists on the cruelty and monstrosity of difference and determination. It is not his aim 'to rescue difference from its maledictory state' (29); on the contrary, the shining 'image of thought which presupposes itself' must be destroyed in order to give way to 'the genesis of the act of thinking in thought itself' (139).

Although Deleuze does not say so explicitly, his strategy appears to be the inverse of what we see. Rather than making a difference by

differentiating indifference, which he considers to be a false move or 'a poor recipe for producing monsters' (28), he makes a difference by indifferentiating difference: 'It is better to raise up the ground and to dissolve the form' (28–29).

Political Exhibition Value 'Architecture', writes Benjamin in the last section of the essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, 'has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction, [as] buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception—or rather, by touch and by sight' (2007a, 239–240).

Deleuze's inverse or invisible conception of indifference, maintaining its essential relation with his concept of difference at all times, may be applied to architecture in Benjamin's terms. Benjamin assigns the visual appropriation of a building to 'noticing the object in incidental fashion'; that is, 'optical reception' 'determine[d] to a large extent' by 'habit', which is a means of 'tactile appropriation'. Where the text does not refer directly to the English translation at hand, however, the term tactile reception is used in order to avoid an understanding of appropriation as related to property. The 'appropriation' of buildings Benjamin discusses has nothing to do with property

or ownership but rather with the specific ways in which buildings are being received ('by use and by perception') (240). Moreover, Benjamin uses the term *tactile Rezeption* in the original.

The 'state of distraction' in which a 'collectivity' 'consummate[s]' architecture corresponds to the raising of the ground of tactile indifference to the level of optical differentiation, rendering 'optical reception' tactile, or rather establishing the essential relations between the two. Indeed, we can see architecture and we can look at it; looking at it, however, always falls back on just seeing it—that is, on touching it with our eyes, as if they were hands helping us find our way in a state of distraction.¹⁰¹

For Benjamin distraction is instructive in comprehending what he calls the 'exhibition value' of the work of art, which he suggests is foregrounded in mechanically reproduced works of art such as photography and film. Benjamin sets 'exhibition value' and 'cult value' in opposition. As cult value he understands 'the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art [that] has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value'. Due to the mechanical reproducibility of the work of art, Benjamin argues, 'the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics' (224).

¹⁰¹ On touching, see Nancy 2008 and Manning 2007.

Whereas 'with ceremonial objects destined to serve in a cult [...] what mattered was their existence, not their being on view' or being exhibited, 'with the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products' (224–225). In the ritual work of art the cult value wa s its use value—that it 'would seem to demand that the work of art remain hidden' (225). However, in a political work of art's use value, the political itself is already hidden behind its exhibition value. Politics, for Benjamin, is the location of the original use value of the exhibition value of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. The specific kind of approach to such art is not 'free-floating contemplation, or its celebration as 'magic, [but] that of resting' (225–229), of research and criticality.

By drawing on architecture Benjamin shows that 'free-floating contemplation' is not the same as 'distracted consummation'; the two approaches depend on the 'nature' of the work of art. He argues that 'free-floating contemplation' is a false move, the mirror image of a fake cult, which in times of mechanical reproduction creates a fake spirit—in his epoch, that of fascism; today, considering the omnipresence of corporations, the fake spirit is that of neo-liberalism. In the manner that this falseness of spirit is created, there is a structural identity between fascism and neo-liberalism. 'Distracted consummation';

inattentive criticality, or 'absent-minded' examination, on the other hand, enable mastery of 'the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history [...] gradually by habit, under the guidance of tacitly appropriation' (240). While the first 'render[s] politics aesthetic', and thus, according to Benjamin, may only 'culminate in [...] war' (241), the latter politicises art, distracts from aesthetics, and thereby allows for a consummation of history: 'Communism' (242).

Benjamin's criticism of humankind's self-alienation is as true for neo-liberalism as it was for fascism: '[Mankind's] self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order' (242), albeit neo-liberalism appears today under the guise of an aesthetic of no aesthetic. Hence Benjamin's response to fascism in the form of politicising art and his defence of communism is as true today as it was in his times. It is necessary, however, to take into account the transformed relation between art and life in today's neo-liberal conditions.

Architectural Art as Critical Theory

Touching Theory Theory understood not as knowledge but as touching allows architectural practice to be defined as a means of understanding the world by politicised tactile reception, rather than as a tool for shaping it. The politicising of today's works of art by tactile reception takes place in artists' endlessly but critically lived labour and gestures. Today any work of art is theoretical by means of a practice of touching. Discursive practice and its seemingly paradoxical use in works of art should be read, therefore, as the self-critical manifestation of a refusal to stop working as art. The hope of evicting the neo-liberal ideology of control and compliance resides in tactile reception as a means of theoretical understanding, rather than as knowledge fabrication, which is critically lived in an architectural practice that attempts to understand itself as architecture.

Agamben's essay 'Absolute Immanence' constitutes a possible foundation of his philosophical project as a form of philosophical inheritance (from Foucault and Deleuze), based on the assumption that, today, blessed life lies on the same terrain as the biological body of the West' (1999a, 239). Agamben notes that for Deleuze 'life as absolute immediacy is defined as "pure contemplation without knowledge"' (233), continuing:

Deleuze's two examples of this 'contemplation without knowledge', this force that preserves without acting, are sensation ('sensation is pure contemplation') and habit ('even when one is a rat, it is through contemplation that one "contracts" a habit'). What is important is that this contemplation without knowledge, which at times recalls the Greek conception of theory as not knowledge but touching (*thigein*), here functions to define life. As absolute immanence, a life [...] is pure contemplation beyond every subject and object of knowledge; it is pure potentiality that preserves without acting. (233–234)¹⁰²

Agamben suggests in a sub-clause, as if he hesitated, that what defines life is theory, if theory is conceived not as knowledge but as touching. Theory, as 'absolute immanence', is pure contemplation beyond any subject or object of knowledge; it is the theoretical as pure potentiality that preserves itself without acting, as the 'eternal return' of 'the yet-to-come' (Deleuze 1994, 91).

Both corporate architecture and contemporary architectural production as a whole—understood here as the totality of building production—are dominated by neo-liberal conditions; beyond star architecture, this includes and challenges architectural and urban

¹⁰² Incorporating quotations from Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 212–213.

initiatives such as community building, urban gardening, and local or ecological architecture. These initiatives cannot escape the neo-liberal pull, as under capitalist conditions everything can be made profitable. More importantly, neo-liberal activity functions not unlike urban gardening. Each of these urban activities operates as part of a self-regulatory market economy. As contemporary architecture under such conditions often seems to be ruled by absolute immediacy and indifference, one might claim that contemporary architecture and its production are absolutely theoretical in terms of contemplation without knowledge. Following Agamben's claims that beatitude and the biological body of the West today lie on the same terrain, it follows that there is absolute indifference between all forms of spatial production.

Nevertheless, considering indifference as more than a symptom of the neo-liberal condition and instead trying to understand it in relation to architecture by means of lived critical philosophical and artistic enquiry, it is possible to use indifference through a redirection of indifference to humankind's ends. Rather than resisting or countering neo-liberalism as an ideology, this strategy bears witness to the work of thinkers who try to understand the neo-liberal condition as it presents itself in reality, to grasp and defer its political potentials to unexpected grounds (Fisher 2009; Feher 2000). Equally it

bears witness to those thinkers who have a historical understanding of neo-liberalism not as an extreme of capitalism but as an ideology (Mirowski 2013; Dardot et al. 2013). According to Mirowski the perversion of this ideology is that 'neoliberalism as a worldview has sunk its roots deep into everyday life, almost to the point of passing as the 'ideology of no ideology' (2013, 28). 'The most thorough examination of 'how contemporary architecture became an instrument of control and compliance' to date can be found in Spencer's *The Architecture of Neoliberalism* (2016, subtitle). Spencer, however, deliberately remains on the level of 'unproductive negativity and its hateful criticality' (163) without providing an alternative, neither in content nor in style.

When the aesthetics of a dominating ideology becomes anti-aesthetic, then things get complicated for politicised art. To keep faithful to its political anti-aesthetic, art must claim its lived criticality by saying more than what art looks like (in its not looking like anything whatsoever). First, 'neo-liberal non-aesthetic' and 'artistic non-aesthetic' look the same. Looking closely, however, one says more than the other—but this is more haptic than visible. Such a haptic dimension of theory in discursive practice, as the politicised dimension of art, can still be experienced in a state of collective distraction only, as Benjamin suggests.

Criticality of Architectural Gestures

Benjamin assigns 'con-

templation' of a poem or a painting to 'middle class society'. In the decline of the latter, 'contemplation became a school for a social behaviour [that] was countered by distraction.' Contemplation and distraction are received and valued on the plane of the exhibition value of the work. In distraction Benjamin perceives a shift from a distant presentational exhibition to the quality of touch. Drawing on the Dadaists, Benjamin describes their art as 'an instrument of ballistics. It hit the spectator like a bullet, it happened to him, thus acquiring a tactile quality. [...] Film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator'; for Benjamin, like Dadaist art, 'con-situates' a 'shock effect'; however one that is technical, not moral. 'By means of its technical structure', Benjamin concludes, 'the film has taken the physical shock effect out of the wrappers in which Dadaism had, as it were, kept it inside the moral shock effect' (238).

The conjunction of Benjamin's insistence on architectural habit (reproduced in cinematographic space as 'absent-minded' examination) with Agamben's insistence on theory as touching also extends Benjamin's conclusion to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'contraction'. While it is certainly important to rely on contemplation 'at the turning points of history', it is questionable whether the latest

technological innovation is the appropriate means for its artistic application. If, as Deleuze remarks, 'the two operations belong to the same horizon', for example, 'life becomes resistance to power when power takes life as its object' (1988, 92), then taking the latest technological development as its starting point for investigation cannot be the most appropriate. There simply is no most appropriate.

Agamben points to such a difficulty when he remarks that 'the concept of resistance here must be understood not merely as a political metaphor but as an echo of Bichard's definition of life as "the set of functions that resist death"' (1999a, 232). Remembering Foucault's crisis resulting from his realisation that 'life is what is capable of error', we can understand the whole inverted complexity of the problem when Agamben asks the critical question:

[Does the concept of life as 'the set of functions that resist death' truly suffices to master the ambivalence of today's biopolitical conflict, in which the freedom and happiness of human beings is played out on the very terrain—bare life—that marks their subjection to power?] (232)

As human beings subjected to this biopolitical conflict we touch our own lives, and it does not surprise that the last moves of Foucault

and Deleuze are concerned with life and, more precisely, with the self. However, is not this move, according to their own assertion of 'error' and a vitalism rooted in the inactive 'contraction of the elements of matter', a shadowboxing that, rather than striking a breach into potential futures, multiplies the biopolitical monstrosities themselves? Should not one take seriously Benjamin's reinsurance of the cinematographic space in architecture—architecture here understood as the realm of 'use', 'touch', 'habit', or even gesture, insofar as gesture is understood not as an actualisation of a means towards an end but rather as a means as such?

Architecture tends towards tactile reception by the masses independently of its (ideological) means of production. This tangibility beyond visibility is its political potential and our hope. Architecture shows a tendency towards an indifferenciation of itself in its environment. In an environment, habit—as a contraction, as a life, or as an imagination—tells more than what we see. Even though Bataille may be right that architecture is only the ideal soul of society, that which has the authority to command and prohibit' (Bataille 1971–88, 1:171),¹⁰³ and thus represents dominant ideology, it is also true that architecture always reveals more than any ideology would want us to see.¹⁰⁴ The potential for the criticality of architecture—but also the potential for its non-knowledge, its inoperativity, its eroticism—resides

¹⁰³ As translated in Holler 1992, 47.

¹⁰⁴ See the model photographs by Demand, who builds models of photographed, ideologically charged scenes, eliminating those elements that charge it with ideology, thus exhibiting the gesture of their pure, meaningless form.

not in its making but in its tactile reception, in touch: not in architectural practice as a means of producing architecture, but architectural practice as a means of understanding itself as architecture; architecture as a means of understanding what and how architectural practice produces.

If we may conclude that the indifferenciation of art into life is already proper to architecture and that this artistic process of indifferenciation might be called an architectural gesture, then we must conclude that the making of architecture, in order to be an architectural gesture, indifferenciates itself into lived architectural practice by tactile reception. Only if lived criticality of (architectural) making coincides with criticality of the made (architecture) is there hope for evicting the neo-liberal ideology of control and compliance.

The Architectural Gesture of Building Cinema If the mode of tactile reception developed with reference to architecture 'finds in film its true means of exercise' (Benjamin 2007a, 240), in what way different from the nowadays out-dated 'shock effect' does film meet architecture's mode of reception halfway?

In his *Notes on Gesture* Agamben claims that 'the element of cinema is gesture and not image' (2000, 55). Extending Deleuze's concept of movement-image, Agamben argues that in

it 'the mythical rigidity of the image has been broken. [...] Neither *poses éternelles* (such as the forms of the classical age) nor *coupes immobiles* of movement' (55) are images properly speaking. In each case, they establish relations to spatio-temporal movement through 'voluntary memory' (known or unknown history) or involuntary memory (the before and after of the momentary section the image captures). Each image 'could be seen not as immovable and eternal forms,' writes Agamben, 'but as fragments of a gesture or as stills of a lost film. [...] Cinema,' which exposes the gesture as such in what Deleuze calls *coupe mobile*, 'leads images back to the homeland of gesture' (55–56), concludes Agamben.

If applied to an activity enacted by an actor in a film, what constitutes the gestures is neither the actor's practice of acting (which would include rehearsals, multiple takes, isolated actions, etc.) nor the finality of the enacted act (for instance, the act of killing another person does not end in the death of another actor). The example that Agamben gives—which neatly fits the site of the bedroom-*quadrant*—is pornography. This example is pertinent because it makes explicit the relation of the gestures of the actors to the audience:

Just as in a pornographic film, people caught in the act of performing a gesture that is simply a means addressed to

the end of giving pleasure to others [...] are kept suspended in and by their own mediality—for the only reason of being shot and exhibited in their own mediality—and can become the medium of a new pleasure for the audience (a pleasure that would otherwise be incomprehensible). (58)

Strictly speaking, the practice of the pornographic actor is acting, not giving pleasure to others, and the acting produces not the pleasure of the other actor but the pleasure of the audience. Certainly, the actor's enactment of giving pleasure does not make the actor a sex maniac in private life, just as the other actor cannot claim to have been sexually harassed. The actor's enactment of giving pleasure is neither a practice (acting as such, whatever it is, is the actor's end in itself) nor a production (the film and its exhibition with a certain effect in a cinema is the action's end). The actor's enactment of giving pleasure is nothing but gesture as 'pure and endless mediality' (59).

In the same sense, in language 'the gesture is [...] communication of communicability' (59). Analogically we can say that in architecture the gesture is building of buildability. Moreover, just as in language communication can be spoken or written, in architecture the gesture is the active building of buildability and the built building.

Following the logic according to which Agamben claims that 'from this point [gesture as pure communication of communicability] derives [...] the proximity between [...] philosophy and cinema, we can propose that, just like 'cinema's essential "silence" [is] exposure of the being-in-language of human beings' (59–60), architecture exposes its building in its own mediality.

In this sense the architectural gesture can be seen as received from cinema—in its being-in-language—and their conspiratorial potential lies in the principality of tactile reception they share.













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Prospective Notes

**Cela est bien dit, répondit Candide,
mais il faut cultiver notre jardin.**

Voltaire

**This evocation of compassion is
the very essence of humour.**

Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Theoretical Reflections

Idiotic Research The idiot is neither the one who does what seems rational nor the one who does what seems pleasurable, according to Deleuze. Referring to Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Idiot*, Deleuze's idiot is the one who knows that beyond consciousness and passion, there is a question, there is a question, there is a question—but what is it?¹⁰⁵ Maybe research is idiotic, when it seeks questions rather than answers. To answer this question one would have to start with the results and then ask, by looking at the work, if there is (or there will have been) a question. The result is, in short, a study that is a production of a mode of writing and also a production of other modes of researching. If knowledge appears, then it has been hardly produced; rather, it has been having—not in the sense of possessing, rather as habituating—and using knowledge (or ways of knowing) by means of the work of art.

This writing has found a mode that at times seems authorless; theoretically, however, it cannot afford this absence entirely. The artist confronts the non-art of writing an academic text with the writing of an academic text as art. The encounter between the conventions of research and the ethos of art takes place, however, as art, with nothing in its place. This writing builds its 'logic' and 'integrity' in an original sequence of 'quotes' and 'glosses', as Benjamin suggests in his *Program for Literary Criticism*, which draws a critical sketch of original knowledge by saying nothing new, as it were. Glorious or not, my hope is that *d i s i n t e r e s t e d d e s i r e* shines through—communes passionately—shedding a light (on things) that may not be new but are unknown.

Equally, the mode of taking care of knowledge by means other than writing draws the conventions of research into the ethos of art. In this drawing, the visual non-art character of research practice and documentation touches the work of art, its practice. At the

beginning, as described in the introduction, art practice literally took the writing of an academic text as if it were its own practice and filmed it, inevitably realising that any form of *d o c u m e n t a t i o n* generates its own gestures. It constitutes another practice and therefore never represents what is being documented other than the act of documenting itself.

One could also, conveniently, distinguish between discourse and spatial practice. Most definitely since Foucault's

105 Thinking of the differentiation Spivak makes between 'desire' and 'interest', Deleuze's distinction, which seems to assign 'passion' to the unconscious or irrational, appears banal. Using a term Latour borrows from Gabriel Tarde we can distinguish *r a t i o n a l i n t e r e s t s* from '*p a s s i o n a t e i n t e r e s t s*' on one side and *d i s i n t e r e s t e d d e s i r e* on the other. The difficulty of imagining a person doing something that is absolutely disconnected from this person's interests justifies calling

this person an 'idiot'. Yet it is also the precise opposite of the world Voltaire was fighting in *Candide ou l'Optimisme*, where all events are concatenated in 'the best of possible worlds' (*Tous les événements sont enchaînés dans le meilleure des mondes possibles* (2007, 149)), at times recalling the 'smoothness' of our own. "That's well said," answers Candide, and turning to a work that is being demanded from him and that will give him joy, adds: *mais il faut cultiver notre jardin* (150).

discourse on language we know that discourse is a spatial practice. However, in consequence, does he not also show us inversely, at least unconsciously, that spatial practice is discursive? When building a (research) wall parallel to an already existing wall as its inverted model then this entire setup—the walls, the gap between them, and the territories that are both supporting them and separated by them—enter into a relation with various sociocultural and spatial discourses.¹⁰⁶ Through an original sequence of spatial ‘quotes’ and ‘glosses’ the wall draws a line that is a critical sketch of original knowledge, with its own ‘logic’ and integrity’, by constructing nothing new, as it were. As in writing, in spatial practice *d i s i n t e r e s t e d d e s i r e* may shine through shedding lights hitherto unknown.

Such a work of art, inverted by (gravitational) forces, constitutes a model that may contribute to a new understanding of architecture, less as consumed, but rather as consuming itself, or understanding architecture as being and having a habitual condition. It may also contribute to a formulation of art practice that spends itself in a voiding and thus becomes a critical life form *vis-à-vis* dominant ideology. By looking at what has been done, a seemingly idiotic question for the work of art shows at the root of this work: *h o w t o r e c e i v e t h e p o l i t i c a l b y a c a d e m i c s t u d y ?*

This question shows its idiocy by means of showing. It politicises a deeply rooted private use, which is idiotic. It reveals the question ‘what is the question?’ as its foundation. The question ‘what is the question?’ is the most fundamentally critical, as the revelation of idiocy is a pure political act. What remains to be done, in conclusion, is to keep distance by staying in touch and to continue—go to the crossroads!

Paris is the starting point for joining two perspectives in a single project: on one side, the spatio-discursive exploration of the acquaintance and potential friendship between Bataille and Benjamin as an incommunicable instance of getting ready to overturn things; on the other, the spatio-discursive cinematographic exploration of the current use of the prehistoric cave of Lascaux in the South of France.

‘Theoretical Coincidence’ When in the 1930s Benjamin was writing at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, Bataille was employed there as a librarian. Although they never refer to each other in their texts, their closeness and a substantial exchange are more than probable. For a discussion between Benjamin and the Collège de Sociologie, which was co-founded by Bataille, there is evidence furnished in letters and, for example, in a text by Pierre Klossowski. Benjamin’s disconcertion provoked by

¹⁰⁶ In the field of art, for example, this could apply to the *Green Light Corridor*, by Bruce Nauman, an installation of two

parallel walls between which a person can just squeeze through sideways (Nauman 1996).

the ambiguity of the *acéphale* a-theology caused him, according to Klossowski, to confront this group of French intellectuals with the conclusions he had drawn from his analysis of the intellectual bourgeoisie German evolution: the metaphysical and political pledge and outdoing of the incommunicable had prepared the psychological terrain favourable for Nazism.¹⁰⁷ In return they accused him of a personal version of a 'phalanstery' renewal, which would make work an accomplice of desire and greed, thus ceasing to be its castigatory compensation.¹⁰⁸ That Benjamin entrusted his manuscript of the *Arcades Project* to Bataille just before he left Paris escaping from the Nazis suggests that the relation between them was not superficial.¹⁰⁹ Considering the *Arcades Project* as an expending theory, recalling earlier works of Bataille, suggests that the relation between the two thinkers was ambiguous, marked by attraction and repulsion.

Gerhard Rupp's pointing to the idea of 'theoretical coincidence' with regard to the (missed) encounter between Benjamin and Bataille seems promising not least from the perspective of an understanding of architecture as encounter.¹¹⁰ What are the theoretical spaces of coincidence in which they are in touch? This question regards both the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (as an example of a potential architectural space of their encounter)¹¹¹ and their shared discursive opposition to left and right tendencies, which shows in the search for 'prospective cultural practices' (Rupp 2007, 308) of writing. Such a 'theoretical coincidence' may be seen as a well-received habitual condition for a work of art that itself searches for 'prospective cultural practices' instead of the production of artworks. We may step sideways and look at the other perspective of the future project, the cave of Lascaux.

Frenchship is not Friend The work of the concierge of the cave of Lascaux consists in checking technical devices that are placed inside the cave to control temperature, humidity, etc. Residing in Montignac, the nearby village, neither art historian nor palaeontologist, he has the privilege to examine the prehistoric paintings in the cave three to four times a week. I got this information from the guardian himself when I was preparing and realising my film-essay on Lascaux in the forest above the cave. Late in the evening my Volkswagen-Multivan and I were the only ones left on the parking area, except for his car, and when suddenly he emerged from the monitored fenced area of the original cave we fell into a conversation. It occurred to me

107 See Rupp 2007, 297.

108 A phalanstery (*phalanstère*) is a self-sustaining (utopian) community including the concept of free love. It was developed by Charles Fourier in the nineteenth century and realised on several occasions. The most famous example of modern architecture that draws on Fourier's concept is Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseilles. The Israeli Kibbutzim are influenced by the concept of the *phalanstère*.

109 Together with many manuscripts Bataille also hid Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* drawing, which Benjamin owned. See epilogue.

110 Adorno used the term for the relation between Benjamin and Ernst Bloch (Rupp 2007, 298n).

111 See the figure on page 17. Is the person in the background Bataille?

that he is the only person who actually uses the cave, or that the only contemporary use of the painted cave of Lascaux lies in his work. His access greatly exceeds that of scientific researchers, which is strongly restricted due to the high risk of imminent destruction of the delicate paintings, aged around seventeen thousand years, from changes in the cave's microclimate caused by the perspiration and radiation of the human body.¹¹² As the cave is situated close to the humid forest soil above it, the control of instruments registering the slightest changes of the microclimate in the cave is indispensable, thus making his work a necessary everyday practice.

The idea for a cinematographic gesture as a means of shedding hitherto unknown light on the paintings in the cave—or, rather, a first sketch of such an idea—consists in accompanying the guardian on his daily work with a camera, documenting his work by filming his hands. The precious paintings would appear in the background fleetingly, fragmentary and blurred, his hands touching them, caressing, stroking, striking, comparable with the use of hands and how they articulate space in the films of Robert Bresson.¹¹³ The idea also echoes Werner Herzog's film *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, for which in 2010 he gained exclusive access to the cave of Chauvet with a 3-D camera.¹¹⁴ In my opinion the first seconds of the film show what the film actually could have been. The 3-D camera levitates between two rows of vines cultivated at the feet of the sheer rock walls close to the Pont d'Arc in the Ardèche valley. The cave containing some of the world's most precious prehistoric paintings, aged around thirty thousand years was discovered in the 1990s and named Chauvet after one of its discoverers. We float silently through the wintery vines, which are overlain by nothing but the film's title, the name of the director, and occasional blurs of snowflakes. Then the 3-D camera slowly lifts—obviously manœuvred by a drone—and opens our view to the epic Pont d'Arc, a natural rock bridge underneath which the Ardèche river flows. Then, suddenly, Herzog's voice breaks the silence with a seemingly unavoidable pathos—and from then on Herzog attempts to match the greatness of the prehistoric cave paintings by scanning them with the camera and accompanying the images with a haunting string melody.

It is impossible to produce a work that can live up to the actual experience of the cave and the paintings—impossible even inside the cave, as the archaeologist Julien Monney attests in the film. After five consecutive days working in the cave Monney had to stop going there in order to digest or come to terms with the impressions the paintings made on him, provoking

112 Some palaeontologists contest the age dating, allocating the paintings to previous periods.

113 See e.g. *Pickpocket*, where the hands of the thief are at the centre of the story, or *Au hasard Balthazar*, where the hands of those who handle or

mistreat the donkey Balthazar also articulate a history of maintenance: hand (French *la main*) and tenancy ('maintain' from Latin *manu tenere*, hold in the hand).

114 See note 8. See Film here: <https://watchdocumentaries.com/cave-of-forgotten-dreams/>

dreams in which painted and real lions appeared, not frightening but ‘deep’ and ‘powerful’. Herzog explains that the position of every feature in the cave is identified, by means of scanners recording 527.000.000 points over the course of twelve years. However, as Monney points out, the work to create new understanding of the cave through the precision of scientific methods is not the main goal, which instead is ‘to create stories of what could have happened in that cave during the past’ (Herzog 2010, 16’). Monney talks about his work and his dreams from the perspective of his background as a circus artist.

Likewise, it seems impossible to produce a work that can live up to the experience of philosophy and art—unless in the work of philosophy and art itself, for which, as in the cave, it might also be necessary to step back, to allow dreams of friendly lions, real and painted, become part of the work.

An example of an artistic representation, which would be as charged as the Chauvet cave, regenerating an artistic experience of a work of art is the film *17 Letters to Deleuze. A Video Essay* by theatre-maker Peter Stamer, who ‘par[es] down Deleuze’s seven-and-half hours of dialogue [with Claire Parnet] to an 85-min found-footage flick’, as he writes on his website. In the original interview ‘the topics [Deleuze] was confronted with followed the [26] letters of the alphabet’. In Stamer’s video essay, in which only seventeen letters of the alphabet appear—‘yes, I haven’t used each letter of the *Abécédaire*; rather I selected concepts I felt most familiar with in and for my own artistic practice’—when it comes to the letter ‘F as in Friendship’ Deleuze asks: *L’amitié ... pourquoi on est ami de quelqu’un?*¹¹⁵

Loony Tunes Attempting an answer to his own question—which eventually might be applicable to our friends Benjamin and Bataille—Deleuze ventures a guess: ‘I have a hypothesis: everyone is apt to seize a certain type [...] of charm; there is a perception of charm. [...] It’s by the origins of charm that go to such an extent to life itself, to its vital root, that one becomes a friend of someone’. Some are susceptible to receiving the signs of charm another emits while others are not. Then Deleuze says that the type of friendship that inscribes it into philosophy is ‘the one who courts wisdom without being a sage’, adding that it is very curious and he thinks we will only know what philosophy is once we have clarified these questions of friendship. He gives a hint: ‘If you don’t recognize a little trace of mad-

ness in someone, you are unable to love him/her’. ‘We all are ... a bit mad. [...] I am happy that this little insanity is the source of a person’s charm.’¹¹⁶

115 *Letters to Deleuze. A Video Essay*, dir. by Peter Stamer: Austria 2014, 24’. The film is on Stamer’s website: <http://peterstamer.com/video/17-letters-to-deleuze/>

In what follows I translate from French to English.

116 Stamer 2014 (note 115), 24’–28’.

Isn't this 'little insanity' the charm that appears when people do not know what to do, when they lose their heads, lose control, take the foot off the pedal, isn't all that just another way of becoming a *société acéphale*, exhibiting a critique of the societies of control, unhinging centrifugal or gravitational forces? Taking the camera as a prime instrument of control and making it lose control—i.e. by means of deferred gravity—is a way of critiquing the society that belongs to it. Taking it to the caves and to the theatres—indeed, to any unoccupied territories—seems like a good starting point.

Marc Azéma, a French researcher on prehistory, has published a thorough analysis of the movements of the animals represented on the walls of prehistoric caves.¹¹⁷ More than forty percent of the figures are animated. This percentage of animation is constant geographically and historically, thus forming an essential, as opposed to stylistic, component of Palaeolithic art, as Azéma puts it. The animals are not isolated symbols without life. On the contrary, they interact. Animation and interaction define, according to Azéma, 'the terms of a stammering visual grammar' (2010, 453, my translation). That is to say, from the first image on the walls of the Stone Age 'graphic narration' or 'narrative figuration' is born, which, Azéma claims, marks the beginning of 'writing and of all the current visual media' (453, my translation).

The description of movement is narrative not because it tells a story; rather, it tells a story because its narrative potential is inscribed in the description of movement. This is why simply following the movements of a camera appears comic. It produces excess movements—comical excess movements—that potentially can be conceptualised in a story.

If the animation and movements represented on the walls of prehistoric caves, which at times have stunning resemblance to contemporary cartoons, are indeed the origins of writing, then writing could be seen, using a term from a title of one of Azéma's publications, as an 'illusion of life' (2010). The relation between 'illusion of life' and infrastructure is that the latter functions as the habitual condition for a form of life that cannot be entirely predefined.

Beyond the paintings in the caves, moreover, the reliefs of the walls of the caves themselves constitute an infrastructure for the comprehension of the paintings. Not only abstracted juxtapositions and superimpositions of drawings animate the potential narration; the images on opposing walls do so as well. This becomes evident to every visitor of a cave when the animals on the three-dimensional rocks start moving due to our movements and the moving light of a torch.

Work on Crossroads In *Prehistoric Painting: Lascaux or the Birth of Art* Bataille explicates, on the basis of the human being's play and awareness of death, his theories of prohibition and transgression. Bataille also wrote a film scenario that was never realised, *La maison brûlée*, in which the audio-visual strategies for capturing the heterogeneous may be interpreted as an attempt to create a filmic language of ecstasy.¹¹⁸ Benjamin refers to prehistoric painting in his *Work of Art* essay, but more importantly he draws on the 'tactile appropriation' of architecture to explain the politicising role he assigns to the work of art, notably cinema. In the work of both thinkers there is an element of touch and capture (ecstasy or absent-mindedness) that may be interpreted as founded on a similar concept of architecture.

Benjamin's conception of architecture and Bataille's hidden concept of architecture coincide in that they do not support architecture as being about something. Rather, architecture exhibits itself as a life form, as a habitual condition, which communicates its architecturability. It speaks itself. It speaks as itself (or as something else, but never about something else). Inasmuch as it exhibits itself—as in an illusion represented in a theatre—we could say that it exhibits an illusion of itself, which contains all potentials in one scene, exhibited and lived: 'scattered traces of remains, traces of a foyer, caverns, furtive shadows, lamps' (Bataille 2009, 182).

Conclusion

If, as Hollier writes, 'a nonconstructive gesture [is] one that [...] destroys everything whose existence depends on edifying pretensions' (1992, 23), then non-construction must not be understood as an alternative to or a replacement of destruction but as its alteration, its heightening, its translation. Or, in other words, non-construction determines destruction in the sense that it saves it from its terminus and opens it to new possibilities, permanently. In the sense of the German word *Entscheidung*, which Benjamin used as *Ent-Scheidung*, we can also say that non-construction is not a decision as de-scission, but the introduction of a scission.

Thus, more generally, it is a redefinition or redirection, not an expansion, of architecture. By separating the original creative networker from the commanding master builder, neutralising them by not conflating them but by keeping them in constant touch, we might also say that it is an anarchic, or even anarchitectural exposition of architecture.

However, more importantly than defining non-construction or redefining destruction, the attempt of such a determination has led

¹¹⁸ See Finter 2004, 85–107.

to a change in my practices: a rethinking of documentary practice as a filmic understanding of architectural relations in times of control by giving up the hegemonic control of the camera, or rather by translating its control into a potentially self-annulling indifferent move, which I call the *automated camera*. Such a camera is not indifferent because it takes decisions autonomously, but because its animated moves are independent from the actions it records. Keeping in touch with the camera introduces the spatial discursivity that tells us more than what we see.

What struck me was the experience that this determination was only possible by means of a stroke, which strikes from nowhere.

Epilogue

Habemus Angelus Novus: The Anarchic Event One last scene deserves attention, one that may rather be a continuous methodological reflection on the conditions of artistic existence and the work of art than a project as such. As I write in the introduction, the tattoo on my arm demands care or maintenance. This imperative allows me to have it, to bear it, and to use it.¹¹⁹ A tattoo cannot be possessed because it cannot be dispossessed. It is a paradigm. Its origin is the child and its relation to the parent, a relation that may be denied but never annulled. While today eternal bondage has fallen into disgrace, seen as authoritarian domination and limitation, the potential opening from the perspective of the impossibility of possession is liberating. Precisely because the care of the tattoo, the child, the garden, etc. is demanded, it is a borderless having. This having is, again, not possession but habit. It is not merely 'doing' or simple agency, not the *factum* as such that gives permission to what is done or made, to the facts. Permission is given because action has been demanded.

In 1921 Benjamin bought Klee's drawing *Angelus Novus* and hung it as his companion in every apartment he lived. He entrusted it, with his manuscripts, to the custody of Bataille, who concealed it in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris while Benjamin fled the Nazis. Shortly after, in 1940, Benjamin ended his life in Port Bou. For him the Angelus Novus is the angel of history. The angel looks back on what the progression of history leaves behind. Benjamin qualifies these outcomes, embedded in times of war, as 'wreckage' and 'debris' resulting from 'catastrophic' 'smashing' (2007a, 257–278). But the wind that carries the angel through time originates in 'Paradise' and has a 'violence' that makes us understand the universal condition of the angel of history. Perhaps our time has invented Paradise and history, and

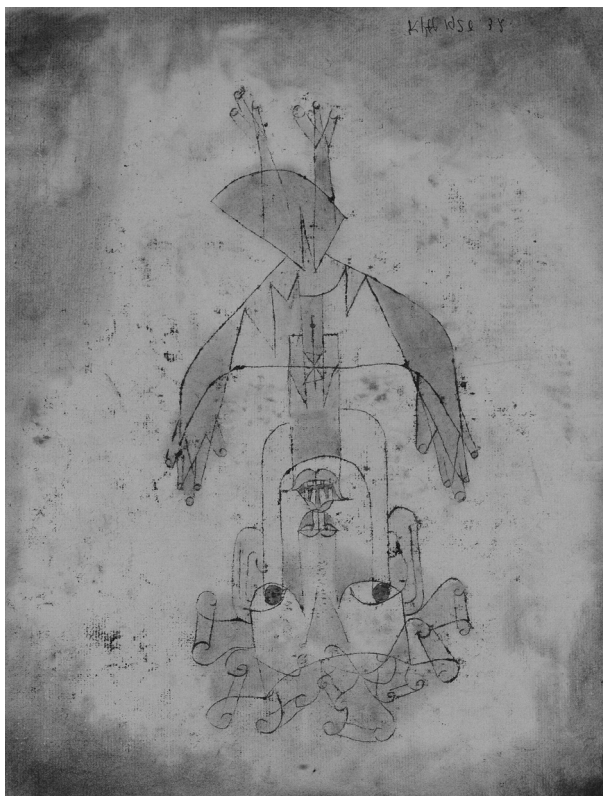
¹¹⁹ With a piercing it is still possible to speak of a possession because it can be eliminated without evident trace; to do

this with a tattoo is impossible even with the most sophisticated surgery.

violence as a qualitative entity that comes with it. But what marks the Angelus Novus as an eternal creature beyond any current condition is the pure state of a witness to which he is reduced. In this state, he cannot but 'fixedly contemplat[e]' what he is being carried away from: 'His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread' (257).

As human beings, however, we do not have wings. The 'storm [...] blowing from Paradise' (257) is not carrying us steadily through time. Rather, we are doomed to build sails, and to sail against or into the wind, to take the wind out of sails, to be upwind or downwind, and to be blown at times. We do not just stare at the condition of the world: we make use of it. This does not mean that we should turn around and face the future progressively, or that we should try to prevent the smashing or even try 'to make whole what has been smashed' (257). We should take the demand presented by the current state of the world and, importantly, witnessed by the angel of history, the Angelus Novus, as the liberating permission of creating our own past.

My tattoo is my Angelus Novus. It witnesses the catastrophe I produce by 'piling up wreckage upon wreckage' (257). That the tattoo is a gift given to me by my daughter has turned the world and its time upside down. I understand: my daughter is not younger than I; we all are in the same age, the living, the dead, and the unborn; the child is only a paradigm of all the non-dissociable forces of life, of life as inseparable; we have been caught by an eternal whirlwind making us believe that there is succession, progress, that 'what we call progress, [is] this storm' (258), which, in the end, is the motivated architectural potential of eternal encounter. Always witnessed by the angel of history, this storm both demands and allows for further research.





JULIE HARBOE

Salute!

So, Ronny, this is a speech I would deliver at one of your doctoral celebrations; at dessert, which would surely be *sorbetto al limone* with some rosemary twigs and chocolate flakes. And after dinner, after this, there would be dancing late into the night to music where the drums, the beats, prevail.

It's time to look back. Finally. It was an exceptionally long haul, this work. With so much muscle power, organising so many different frail spaces, requests, e-mails, budgets, collaborations. Red and blue underlining in books written mostly by philosophers. There was closure. I would have liked to have been in your van as you chauffeured your examiners: the drive was mirrored and projected on a screen which they watched en route in the back of the van. I wonder what it was like when you turned a corner. But also I wonder about the sense of time in the car, and the tension. Fear of crashing? Can we contain this? With a few twists you had revived some of the old cinematic drama. Creating such motifs of immanence is your rare gift. There is no moment outside this now. Material wrapped in one particular gesture. Your work for the doctorate was a string of reversals, inversions, transpositions, invitations; next to deliberately unhinged visions, drilling into history, engaging your intellectual friends, dead or alive.

Recalling the long process starts with faint images. One early morning in the empty institutional zone. The cardboard model of an exhibition filling the room and breaking the insolence of the non-space office. This model, just a tool for the eye of your camera, introduced a longed-for irritation. Complaints that art blocked the smoothness of meeting rituals was a much-cherished proof of concept. Then a cold studio in Bern where brown tones of wood met a careful exhibition of books and small objects of survival. Romantic, but not sentimental. Back in the office there were the collective joys of real intellectual exchange. Reading and discussing articles never to be forgotten. In the Kirchner Museum at the World Ornamental Forum, you were outside melting an O into the snow with a blow dryer plugged in the house. Some years later the fire bowl almost in the same spot. The O as heat. Interconnections built with insistence over time. Your visual œuvre whirls around and within the dissertation. It warms and renders direction and perspective. The body diving into the ground, circling trees, fighting earth's gravity with the help of a recording.

There is a sound of a large thin plastic foil falling from the wall in a rush. When remounted, the transparency covers a large white surface. It stays thanks to the electrostatic tension between the planes. There: a new wall sandwich.

This is it. How much space between the convention of an academic response and the freedom of thought enabling substantial understandings and sentiments, turns and shivers? How dispersed can the bibliography be? How much insight into life does the focus of a doctorate allow? Is the best answer, in this high jump, just touching the bar without pulling it down? Maybe letting it flip would be fine too? Thus balanced the continued discussions.

The success of this daring leap is defined by a discipline. Architecture. Knowing how to organise a network. Being sure that what you do is safe, no roof or wall falling on other humans. Love of materiality and gaps. To insist and apply a certain intolerance in favour of beauty. Once this ability is trained you can build invisible structures in the wind. Even if you smash holes and letters into surfaces there is an authority to the way you assemble these signs of negations.

Let's again look at the challenge of the doctorate, this time not as sports, but with the image of the meat mincer versus the carp pond. Academia has scaled up in the past twenty or more years, coinciding with the new regime of the art academy. In this process systems and conventions of intellectual production have intensified, often overruling open investigation. To complete a doctorate tandems of advisor and candidate collaborate on instruments that grind the raw material into a homogenised digestible mass appropriate for passing and publication. The arts should take the liberty to offer an entirely different concept. Not chopping and adjusting, rather proposing a tool as sweeping and concentrating as the view of a carp pond with cool animals often breaking the water's mirror. Concrete, independent, and poetic at once, as the quality of research always was. This would entail engagement with topics rendering how intellectual energy, sourced in aesthetics and aleatoric, offer perspectives and specificities.

The result of your doctoral encounter is close to the latter. Your readers should understand the recurring slings of freedom which your engagement with the texts reflects. In reality we barely understand the intimacy of past rites such as family meals at ancestors' tombs. But we must try. Such performative meandering of the mind, whether in front of that silent carp pond or the ruins of the mausoleum, accumulate a sense of time and build awareness for the change we so desperately need right now.

Finally, the issue of laughter. I remember the first time you recapped Melville's *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, which then I had not read, and how you were laughing, so that 'I would prefer not to' seemed like a line from a Monty Python sketch. A few months ago a friend in Turkey told me about the restrictions of movement imposed by the government to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The rules about who could exit their houses or towns when and for how long depending on how far they went were so Byzantine, she said, that one was not sure if it was actually an ingenious tactic to confuse the virus, so it would leave at least the elderly alone. A pinch of absurdity makes us laugh, offering a relief we need to continue. Sometimes your writing and works reach an ornamental complexity, demanding reiteration while tickling the brain, lifting the reader into this lightness of laughter.

Thank you for seriously not complying with the rules and building this intricate space that holds up. Thanks for making your examiners dizzy and for making your readers turn the tome. Let us all perform a cheerful gesture to the future of this book. May many spend much time looking onto its reflections and into its ornamental depths.

STEWART MARTIN

Myth and the Art Strike of the International Parallel Union of Telecommunications

I.

Let's start with the facts.

Sometime before May 1991, a call to strike was issued by the International Parallel Union of Telecommunications with the title 'The General Art Strike (May 1991) and The Perpetuum Mobile'. It was proposed as an 'international and simultaneous event in the frame of the Art Strike (1990–1993)', and seems to have been first published in the newsletter established to document that strike, *YAWN*.¹

ART IS KITSCH

HISTORY IS KITSCH

Art Strike (1990-1993)

The General Art Strike (May 1991) and The Perpetuum Mobile

Dear Colleagues!

The Strike as such is an aesthetic/ethical operation on the deformed body of the reigning Myth.

The Strike—by definition—is declared on the territory between Genesis 15 to 24.

This obscure territory is the theological link of the sweaty cause and deadly effect.

The Gustav Metzger/Stewart Home proposition enlightened the social implications of this relation: the Art Strike clearly defined its position on the Market of the Myth.

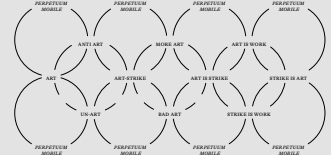
The International Parallel Union of Telecommunications (IPUT), involved in the cultivation of newly established dictionaries of extra-mythological languages, practicing different forms of Art Strikes under the general title: The Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984W, calls for an international and simultaneous event in the frame of Art Strike (1990-1993):

THE GENERAL ART STRIKE (MAY 1991) AND THE PERPETUUM MOBILE

One could add to the already existing model—



(one can't help but define oneself between the extremities)—
A new element—



These models—and others—are applicable and applied already by art strikers, artists, art theoreticians, art critics, art organizers, art dealers and the public for self-definition and consequently for the development of the Art-Strike-Dictionary which emerges inexorably in front of the awkward and corrupt Myth.

The participants should arrange the «General Art Strike (May 1991) and the Perpetuum Mobile» themselves and/or send their proposal to one or two or all these addresses before the end of April 1991. FRI-ART, Case Postale 354, 1701 Fribourg, Ch-Switzerland; tel. 037/23.23.51. INEXISTENT, Volk Straat 45, 2000 Antwerpen, B-Belgium; tel. 03/237.73.62. RUINE, 15 rue des Vollandes, 1207 Genève, Ch-Switzerland; tel. 022/736.60.37; fax 022/28.55.97. LIGET GALERIA, Aglosi Durer sor 5, H-Budapest XIV, Hungary.

Each proposal will be displayed in May 1991 and/or published by the organizers, and will be returned if requested.

Michel Ritter, FRI-ART
Chris Straetling, INEXISTENT
Tamas St. Auby, IPUT-RUINE

1 See Michel Ritter, Chris Straetling and Tamas St. Auby, 'The General Art Strike (May 1991) and The Perpetuum Mobile', in *YAWN* no. 45, 1992, 2163, online: www.yawn.detritus.net/

Figure 1
International Parallel Union of Telecommunications, 'The General Art Strike (May 1991) and The Perpetuum Mobile', in *YAWN* no. 45, 1992.

A GHOST WANDERS THE WORLD, THE GHOST OF THE STRIKE!

The aim of the strike is declared dogmatically and esoterically in the opening propositions of the call:

The Strike as such is an aesthetic-ethical operation on the deformed body of the reigning Myth. The Strike—by definition—is declared on the territory between Genesis 15 to 24. This obscure territory is the theological link of the sweaty cause and deadly effect.

Its contribution to the 1990–93 art strike is indicated as follows:

The Gustav Metzger-Stewart Home proposition enlightened the social implications of this relation:—the Art-Strike clearly defined its position on the Market of the Myth.

The ‘Perpetuum Mobile’ is illustrated by two diagrams.

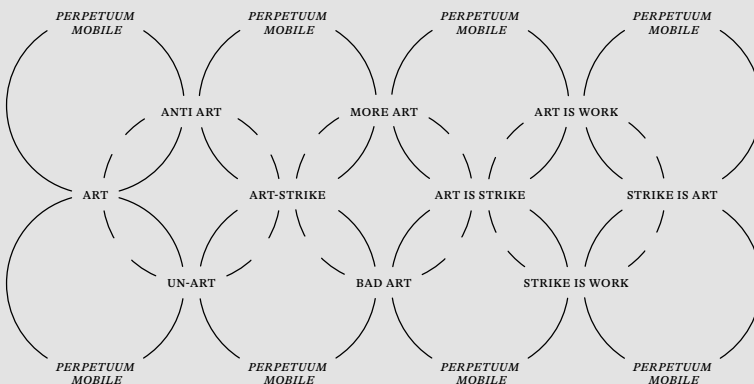
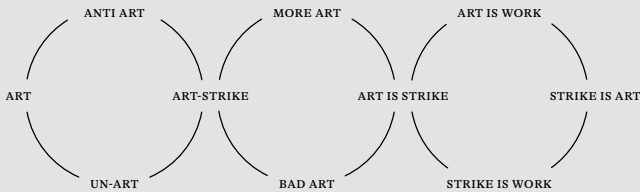


Figure 2
International Parallel Union of Telecommunications, first version of ‘The Perpetuum Mobile’, reconstructed detail from figure 1, 1992.

Figure 3
International Parallel Union of Telecommunications, second version of ‘The Perpetuum Mobile’, reconstructed detail from figure 1, 1992.

The first version presents a set of terms arranged along the lines of three adjoining circles. The arrangement suggests relations of opposition, but also of complementarity and perhaps even identity.

Thus the first circle has 'art' on the left, 'anti art' (not hyphenated) on the top, then 'art-strike' on the right and 'un-art' on the bottom. 'Art-strike' adjoins the second circle, on the left, followed clockwise by 'more art', 'art is strike', and 'bad art'. 'Art is strike' then adjoins the third circle with 'art is work', 'strike is art', and 'strike is work'. The second version of the diagram reproduces the first, albeit with broken lines for the three circles, and adds two rows of four adjoining circles, each labelled 'perpetuum mobile', which envelop and traverse the first three circles, indicating alternative relations between the terms. For instance, 'anti art' becomes the left part of a circle with 'more art' on the right and 'art-strike' on the bottom, with the top either empty or occupied with the pervasive 'perpetuum mobile'.

Participants are invited to arrange the art strike and perpetuum mobile themselves and/or to send proposals to the Parallel Union by the end of April. Four addresses are given (in Fribourg, Antwerp, Geneva, and Budapest) with the commitment that 'Each proposal will be displayed in May 1991 and/or published by the organizers, and will be returned if requested'.

Written on the top left of the call is 'Art is kitsch' and, top right, 'History is kitsch'. At the bottom: 'A ghost wanders the world, the ghost of the strike!'

There is no record of participants or proposals for the strike or the perpetuum mobile. If it was first published in the August 1992 issue of *YAWN*, over a year after its deadline, then that might account for the lack of participation—at least in part. According to an interview with the vice-dispatcher of the Parallel Union, Tamás St. Auby, the call derived from a continuous strike by the Parallel Union dating back to 1974. He added: 'At the end of [the Art Strike in] 1993, for its part, IPUT extended the strike for an indefinite period'.²

II.

So much for the facts.

None are self-evident; everything is esoteric. The uninitiated are left with nothing but questions. What is the 'reigning Myth'? Why and how is the strike against it declared on these passages from the book of Genesis? What relation does this have to the Metzger-Home art strike? Why the perpetuum mobile? And so on.

The reference Genesis 15–24 is less precise than it may appear, since it does not specify whether the numbers are verses or chapters, but they doubtlessly refer to verses in chapter two that describe a relatively distinct episode: from God placing man in the garden of Eden with the prohibition on eating from the tree of knowledge of

² Anon. 'Mutants and Maffidiots: An e-mail interview with Tamás St. Auby, the Vice-dispatcher of IPUT', in the Budapest art magazine, *Nightwatch*, available at: <http://old.sztaki.hu/providers/nightwatch/index.eng.html>

good and evil, to God's creation of all living creatures, their naming by Adam, and God's creation of a companion for him from one of his ribs, whom Adam names 'woman'.

If this is the 'territory', what can it mean to talk of a strike 'declared' here? If the declaration is made by the Parallel Union, what constitutes the strike? Since God is at work in these verses, is this somehow struck? Or is the strike declared from this territory, from within the text? The episode that approaches the idea of a strike more than any other is God's prohibition on eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The strike would then be declared more precisely in verses 16–17: "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die".

A clue to the nature of the strike, as well as to the 'reigning Myth' against which it is directed, can be found in the aforementioned interview with St. Auby. After announcing the indefinite extension of the strike, he added: 'Its aim continued to be the reporting of the Genesis Myth 3, 1–24'.³ The reference here is to the chapter and verses describing the fall of man: the serpent's temptation of the woman, her and Adam's eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and God's curse for breaking his prohibition; that the serpent will go on its belly, that the woman will bear children in pain and be ruled over by her husband, that the man will have to toil with a cursed ground in order to eat until he returns to the dust from which he was made, and their banishment from the garden of Eden and the tree of life.

If the fall of man is the reigning myth, what does this indicate about the strike against it? Whatever else might be meant by calling the strike 'an aesthetic-ethical operation on the deformed body of the reigning Myth', an operation on the story of Genesis is evidently involved: a turning away from its end with a momentum that revolves back to the beginning. If we pursue this operation to a point that might appear absurd, then the ultimate aim of the strike is revealed to be a restoration of man to his state before the prohibition was broken: the return of man and woman to the garden of Eden, without knowledge of good and evil, without shame at their nakedness, without enmity between them, without pain in childbirth, without toil, without death. The implication is then that the strike is indeed declared in Genesis 16–17; the strike is God's prohibition or its restoration by man.

This reversal of the story of Genesis is so simple and self-sufficient that it renders the premise of a strike a rather external and secular imposition. What justifies this? If this is the esoteric question, the exoteric question is: what justifies the imposition of the story of

3 See note 2.

man's fall onto the history of strikes? Or, if the fall of man is the reigning myth, why and how does it actually reign today?

Some answers to these questions are indicated by St. Auby's further contention in the interview that: 'Following from Genesis Myth 3. 1–24: capitalism is a mythical configuration. Communism is a complementary configuration.' The nature of these configurations is indicated by St. Auby elsewhere:

The Parallel Union interprets the history of the Fall as an economic equation. The fruit of the forbidden tree is the surplus in the subsistence paradise. If you consume the excess, there will be a deficit. If there is a shortage, you have to work. That is why man was exiled into the world of work.⁴

The fall of man into toil and woman into the pain of childbirth are already forms of labour or economy in Genesis, but what is new in the Parallel Union's—and which breaks out of the closed circle of the story's simple reversal—is the idea that the fall results from the consumption of an excess or, as St. Auby often puts it, 'overconsumption'. This concerns the nature of the temptation or transgression, but it also inflects several other aspects of the story. The fruit of the forbidden tree is described in Genesis as knowledge of good and evil, not as a surplus or excess. It is not just more of the other fruits, but a different kind. The idea that knowledge of good and evil can be eaten is obviously taken directly from Genesis, but is interpreted altogether more literally than there, where its result is awareness of nakedness rather than satiation. The description of the garden of Eden as a 'subsistence paradise' is scarcely self-evident; Genesis suggests more a place of abundance where man can eat as he desires. In any case, the consumption of a surplus would not result in a deficit or shortage. That would result rather from the consumption of a staple. And Genesis does not describe work as a consequence of reproducing a surplus, but rather the need to survive following God's cursing the ground, making it unfruitful.

Nonetheless, if the fall results from overconsumption leading to overproduction, then its configuration as capitalism is perhaps self-evident, insofar as it is typically characterised by surplus production and consumption. But there is no mention of the market or private property structuring this economy, which then removes the typical distinctions of capitalism from communism. As a consequence, both are rendered forms of profligacy, which enables their historical opposition to be dissolved and displaced by their common opposition to the Parallel Union's strike, representing an economy of subsistence. While this may explain the character of the myth and

⁴ Interview on IPUT and the 24th Swiss Canton [11 August 1981], in *Artpool Letter*, no. 5, 1983, 18–25. Note that the interview, which was conducted by Júlia Láng, purports to be with Tony Putra, although this is likely an alias of Tamás Szentjóby, aka Tamás St. Auby. A revised transcript is available at www.artpool.hu/AI/aI05/IPUT.html

its correction, we are still left with the question of why these economic forms should be conceived in terms of myth.

Still, it does offer an indication of why the art strike should be presented in the form of a perpetuum mobile, that is, a movement or cycle that revolves eternally in perfected self-subsidence, without decrease or increase. This would then indicate the relation of the terms appended to the perpetuum mobile: that they mark moments of this eternal revolving. Perhaps there is a suggestion of development or increase in the movement from the first circle's words ('art', 'anti art', 'art-strike', 'un-art') to the propositions of the second and third ('more art', 'art is strike', and so on). But this development might be understood as completed, the third circle leading back to the first and so on. Something of this is suggested by the second version of the diagram, although this is equivocal. A far more troubling feature is the implication that certain decisive oppositions appear to be dissolved or rendered moments of a greater unity. While the idea that an art strike involves a strike of art may be derived from the opposition of 'art' and 'strike' on the opposing sides of the first circle, the second and third circles suggest that this opposition has been transformed into 'art is strike' and 'strike is art'. If the Parallel Union's strike is directed ultimately against work, it is possible to deduce that art might be considered a form of non-work. However, this only exacerbates the obstacles to understanding the propositions on the third circle that 'art is work' and 'strike is work'. If even strike is work, what is interrupted? This question resonates with the latent suspicion that a perpetuum mobile is a problematic image for a strike, since it allows no interruptions. Eternal revolving is rather more an archetype of myth. A solution to this problem may be that 'art is work' and 'strike is work' are indeed understood as opposed to work, namely, work as overproduction. The fact that neither 'overproduction' nor 'work' are appended to the perpetuum mobile would support this. We are then confronted with the question of what exactly this idea of work is such that 'strike is work'.

III.

Let's consider some more facts.

The Parallel Union's call for an art strike mentions that it had been involved in 'practicing different forms of Art-Strikes under the general title: "The Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984W"'. This was initiated by St. Auby in 1975 in Hungary, just before his exile on accusations of smuggling samizdat literature out of the country. He then relocated to Switzerland, where he founded the Parallel Union—in

parallel with the International Telecommunication Union headquartered in Geneva—to realise *The Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984W*.

The basic aim of the *Project* was—and remains—to promote an alternative to overconsumption and overproduction. Besides the strike, it proposes the institution of a universal minimum wage instead of expenditure on defence or arms. War is conceived as the archetypal form of overconsumption/production. ‘1984’ was the date of its projected institution, which afterwards became symbolic. ‘W’ indicates ‘double you’ or the alternative, ‘parallel’ subjectivity constituted by the *Project*. Beginning in 1980, the *Project* was developed in a series of phases. In the first, *The Mutant*, a new human is purportedly brought to life by the refusal to work. *The Mutant Class* follows in the second phase. The third establishes their republic in a new canton of Switzerland. The fourth offers a *Catabasis Soteriologic* or decent into salvation. The fifth phase, *Heterarchy*, facilitates direct democracy through voting on various subjects.⁵

What stands out immediately from this cursory synopsis is the incredible ambition and scope of the *Project*. This is scarcely evident from the call for the art strike, even if it is implicit in its appeals to the story of Genesis. The phases of the *Project* explicitly present an alternative story of the origins of humanity, in which humanity is resurrected from the fall following the strike. *The Mutant* presents a new man or human, *The Mutant Class* a new family or society, *The 24th Canton* a new land, *Heterarchy* a new constitution or law; while the *Catabasis Soteriologic* presents an alternative book or history of man’s salvation. If this is still to be understood as the correction of myth rather than myth itself, then the correction takes place deep within the myth. The suggestion is rather of a parallel myth, following the model of parallels deployed elsewhere in the *Project*: the parallel myth runs alongside, at a distance, as an alternative to the myth of the fall of man.

Insofar as the *Project* presents a parallel myth, it constitutes an exceptional instance of modern mythopoesis. How can we understand its relation to modern myth-making, from the heights of Romanticism’s projects for a new mythology to the lows of its dissolution and abandonment—a legacy of decline that often informs the contemporary status of myth? This legacy evidently informs the *Project*, especially in its critical orientation, not to mention its tendency to irony, but it does not approach myth as dissolved or abandoned. On the contrary, the *Project* seems oriented rather towards a radical renewal of mythopoesis.

This orientation is illuminated by its point of departure in St. Auby’s reception of Fluxus and the associated array of alternative art forms in the 1960s and 70s. St. Auby, under his given name,

⁵ For details of the *Subsistence Level Standard Project 1984W* and other works by St. Auby, also under his numerous aliases, see the compilations (on Tamás St. Turba) prepared by the Bratislava Art Institute, available at <http://www.amtproject.sk/artist/tamas-st-turba>. See also the website for the International Parallel Union of Telecommunications: www.e3.hu/~iput/

Tamás Szentjóby, is identified as the organiser, together with Gabor Altorjay, of the first ‘happening’ in Budapest in 1966, *The Lunch*. Fluxus was a complex formation, but it was not generally associated with mythopoesis, which was ostensibly rejected along with the romantic sacralisation of art and artist. For St. Auby and his generation of young dissident artists in Hungary, Fluxus presented a radical transgression of, and hence emancipation from, official culture. This was its immediate and lasting attraction to young artists excluded or self-excluded from Hungarian state institutions, and it infused their reception of the more doctrinal or technical aspects of Fluxus, such as the dissolution of the hierarchical division of art from non-art, artist from audience or non-artists, and the forms this took as ‘happenings’, ‘events’, and so on.

St. Auby embraced this emancipatory dimension of Fluxus, but came to criticise it for its implicit complacency:

While the entire Fluxus project was a wonderful movement that strived to return to immediate reality, I saw the need to transcend it, and not just for the sake of it, but because I was critical of the fact that the event purported to control the status quo, as though the revolution had already happened.⁶

At the same time I disagree with the Fluxus idea that everything is art. The whole point is that art can only be that which provides a new perspective, a new way of relating to reality; only that is art which, by modifying its own parameters, its proportions, modifies the parameters of the myth. [...] As soon as we accept this, we’ll have the belief necessary for our work, and we’ll be obliged to live in a direct and progressive way. Life lived in this way is: art.⁷

This contention that the emancipatory dimension of Fluxus would collapse if it did not sustain its transgressive dimension is evident in a series of works by St. Auby that dramatise the idea of prohibition or being prohibited and, decisively, do so in the form of striking. In 1972 he undertook the action *Sit Out. Be Forbidden!*, in which he sat on a chair on the pavement outside the Hotel Intercontinental in Budapest. He also produced a number of ‘action objects’ in this year, such as *Prohibited To Switch On!*, a readymade sign with these words, and *St. Rike Bow*, a violin bow with the strings cut. The chair would become an especially charged object in the Parallel Union’s *Project*, which was first introduced with the subtitle *Make a chair!*. Its first phase is documented with the ‘mutant’ sitting on a chair.

⁶ Quoted in Emese Kürti, “‘The Finest Examples of Socialist Realism’: Post-Fluxus Phenomena in Hungary”, translated by Balázs Rapcsák, in Tomás Glanc, Zornitza Kazalarska, Alfrun Kliems eds, *Performance – Cinema – Sound: Perspectives and Retrospectives in Central and Eastern Europe* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2019), 53–63, 61. This is an amended version of the translation available in Tamás St. Turba, *FIKA/BOGEY* (Budapest: Ludwig Museum, 2013), 58.

⁷ Quoted in Kürti 2019 (note 6), 60. The passage comes from a conversation in 1973 between Szentjóby and László Beke in a text entitled ‘Telex/1’.

In 1984, the symbolic date of the *Project, The Throne of the Immortal* was made. We can deduce from the Parallel Union's interpretation of Genesis that this is the seat of those who strike, obey the prohibition on overconsumption, and therefore are not condemned to work and mortality.

The prehistory of the *Project* is now exposed: the reigning reality is the myth of work, which prohibits not working or striking, and which is transgressed by being prohibited, by the strike as myth-correction or, perhaps, as parallel myth.

St. Auby's idiosyncratic response to Fluxus makes more sense once it is understood as inflected by influences with an altogether more intimate relation to Judaeo-Christian myth. Of particular note is the mystical Christianity of Jacob Böhme, whose conception of 'turba', as the fallen state of man, informs the pseudonym Tamás St. Turba, although this only hints at the pervasive sense of messianism in the *Project*. At one point St. Auby confesses: 'Some spread the word—to undermine SLSP1984W—that this is an imitation of Christ. Yet, this has the contrary effect, like everything else. Because it actually is that'.⁸ Another important influence is the marginalised Hungarian intellectual, Béla Hamvas. After installing *The Throne of the Immortal* in Geneva in 1984, St. Auby recalls the coincidental publication of a quotation from the Kabbalah by Hamvas: 'Before God created the world, he created the Throne. He didn't sit on it. He sat the Shabbat on it'.⁹ This extraordinary image may be the most illuminating clue to the alternative idea of work disclosed by the examination of the perpetuum mobile. It offers a solution to the riddle of why the strike called for by the *Project* was introduced with the apparent contradiction of an injunction to work: 'Make a chair!' It suggests that the strike is a Shabbat, which requires a work after which, and on which, it can rest. This is a form of work that is certainly not overproduction. It is not endless or expansive, but has an end, a result and a cessation, which then enables its producer to stop working and turn their attention to something else.

However important these ideas may have been, they still must be understood in terms of the reception of Fluxus and some of its characteristic forms and aims. This is evident in the crucial question of how Fluxus conditions St. Auby's orientation to myth as a form of community. It has often been observed that myth is essentially a form of community: a story that enables a community to recognise and sustain itself. As such, a myth cannot be reduced to the work of an artist. This accounts for the compulsion to approach myths as originating mysteriously, which persists in the inspired or folkloric authorship sought by the modern romantic project of a new mythology. But it also accounts for an inherent contradiction in this project, insofar as the cult and market for individual romantic

⁸ St. Turba 2013 (note 6), 76.

⁹ St. Turba 2013 (note 6), 78. I have been unable to identify the source of this quotation.

artists and their artworks undermined their communal significance. This contradiction between community and artist, myth and artwork, informs Fluxus in an inverted form. Fluxus was characterised by an attempt to dissolve the cult and market for the romantic artist and their works of art, and mythopoesis appears to evaporate in this process. However, this very dissolution ironically facilitates the communal character of Fluxus works, which is reinforced by its formal preoccupations with the merging of artist and audience, art and life. Fluxus hereby vacated the space of mythopoesis at the same time as preparing the ground for its renewal. This is the latent possibility that St. Auby realised.

The proof that St. Auby realised this possibility in Fluxus, rather than simply returning to Romanticism, is demonstrated by his engagement with the merging art and non-art, artist and non-artist. This could scarcely be derived directly from Romanticism. However, if Fluxus inadvertently dismantled the limitations of the individual artist in the creation of myth, it failed to overcome this limit, insofar as it ultimately remained an arena for the works of individual artists. St. Auby's dissolution of himself into aliases and an artificial organisation presents one of the more desperate attempts to evade this limit. It failed because he remains recognisable throughout. The contradiction of Romantic mythopoesis therefore repeats itself. But even if Fluxus or St. Auby could have succeeded, they faced a more obvious problem: the dissolution of the artist only offers the negative condition for community; it does not realise this community as such. In some respects Fluxus forms like happenings were premised on the very creation of community, but they were characteristically ephemeral, precarious, and often artificial. St. Auby's project to constitute a new humanity attempts to restore this community-creation to its greatest pretensions, but without success and, probably, without serious intention. The new humanity has attracted no cult. Rather, it appears ironic, a play with ideas long since suppressed by the disgust with Romanticism and its totalitarian abuses. It remains a work of art.

IV.

What of the Parallel Union's contribution to the 1990–93 art strike? The claims that Metzger and Home 'enlightened the social implications' of the 'theological link of the sweaty cause and the deadly effect' disclosed in Genesis, and that they 'clearly defined its position on the Market of the Myth', are presumptuous and misleading. The implication is that the Parallel Union's art strike is positioned rather on 'the Myth' itself. In other words, Metzger and Home

illuminated the secular, commercial, and generally derivative or secondary form of the myth, rather than its primary, economic (the market being derivative of the fundamental economy), and theological form: that is, the essential form of the myth as myth. However, it is highly questionable whether Metzger's or Home's conceptions of the art strike, which are distinct in important respects, can be grounded in this way. Neither of them acknowledged any such theological basis for art or an art strike.

It is not wrong to say that Metzger's strike was positioned on the market, although he proposed that artists should withdraw from any and all artistic activities, not just selling. The 1990–93 art strike was proposed as a repetition of Metzger's, but it also distinguished itself in crucial respects:

Unlike Gustav Metzger's Art Strike of 1977 to 1980, our purpose is not to destroy those institutions which might be perceived as having a negative effect on artistic production. Instead, we intend to question the role of the artist itself and its relation to the dynamics of power within our specific culture.¹⁰

The Parallel Union's conception of the art strike in terms of myth appears largely absent from the proposals of Metzger and Home. Metzger's call does not address myth in any sense, although some of the calls for the 1990–1993 art strike refer to 'the myth of "genius": [...] To call one person an artist is to deny another an equal gift of vision; thus the myth of "genius" becomes an ideological justification for inequality, repression and famine'.¹¹ The myth at stake here concerns the superiority of the artist, rather than work or the cycle of overconsumption and overproduction, although the refusal of genius belongs to the Parallel Union's wider aims. Nonetheless, this attack on the myth of genius is somewhat clichéd and superficial to the broader discourse of the 1990–1993 art strike.

An altogether more profound appeal to myth is made by Home shortly after completing the art strike. Rebutting the apparently inescapable conclusion that it had been an abject failure, he claimed that this verdict resulted from a failure to understand the art strike as a myth: 'The Art Strike was an organised myth that took hold of individual artists and encircled them, sapping the will and creating a sensation of helplessness'. Home claimed to derive this peculiar conception of myth from Georges Sorel: 'Somewhat like Sorel's conception of the General Strike, the Art Strike should be viewed as a myth that drove (wo)men to (in)action'. Indeed, there are indications of more than a passing familiarity with Sorel's ideas. Home describes the art strike as an 'intuitive mental picture', which is

¹⁰ Anon., 'Art Strike 1990–1993', in *YAWN* no. 1, 1989, 2055–2056, 2055.

¹¹ Anon. 1989 (note 10), 2055.

how Sorel understands myth following Bergson's theory of intuition. We do not need to look much further for evidence of this. The *Art Strike Handbook*, published in 1989, so before the strike commenced, contains substantial extracts from Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* from 1908.¹²

However, this homage to Sorel is obviously qualified by an extraordinary inversion: whereas Sorel conceived of myth as an encompassing image that would enable action, Home conceives of it as disabling action. This might be regarded a mischievous subversion, alongside countless other such instances surrounding the art strike, but a certain persistence of Sorel's theory can still be discerned. Home evidently conceived of the art strike as a means of questioning the role of the artist. More specifically, he conceived of it as a means of undermining the pretensions of militant artists. Thus, the objection that the art strike would inevitably fail because it only concerned militants, without the number or standing to bring the art world to a halt, may have been true of Metzger's strike, but not the strike as Home and his comrades in the group PRAXIS conceived it:

The idea was not to destroy the art world: PRAXIS doubted that enough solidarity existed between artists for such a strategy to work. PRAXIS were interested in how they, and many other 'activists' have created identities based on the supposed 'superiority' of their 'creativity' and/or political actions to the leisure and work pursuits of the social majority. This belief in individual superiority was seen as impeding a rigorous critique of the reigning society. Put bluntly, those whose identity is based on 'their opposition' to the world as it is, have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. To change the world it is necessary to abandon those character traits which aid survival in capitalist society.¹³

The decisive argument here is then: opposition to the world invests in and maintains it, therefore changing the world demands abandoning opposition to it. There is also the suggestion of a yet more hyperbolic argument: the identity that enables one to survive in capitalist society is an adaption to it, therefore changing this society demands abandoning this self-preservation. Hence the art strike is conceived as a means by which artistic activists can abandon their opposition to, and survival in, capitalist society. This is still far from Sorel's theory in many respects, but it corresponds precisely to his critique of socialist politicians: their manipulation of the utopia of proletarian emancipation in order to secure their position in

¹² See Georges Sorel, 'From the Proletarian Strike', in Stewart Home ed., *Art Strike Handbook* (London: Sabotage Editions, 1989), 7–10.

¹³ Stewart Home, 'Art Strikes', in Home 1989 (note 12), 2.

parliament or, more generally, the apparatus of the state, thereby maintaining their survival in apparent opposition to the state, which itself persists in and through this opposition. The artistic activists invited to engage in the art strike are then cast by Home in the role of these socialist politicians.

However, this convergence only exposes the divergence. Sorel conceived of the myth of the general strike as enabling proletarian action, not the action or inaction of politicians. Under the guise of his homage to Sorel, Home effectively invents a new idea of the strike: a 'politicians strike'. This ironically reinvests in politicians, albeit now in their inactivity. The only way it could evade this would seem to be if it were strictly subordinated to a proletarian general strike. Home indicates some acknowledgement of this, however the art strike is proposed in the absence of a proletarian strike.

For Sorel, the myth of the general strike is defined essentially as a means of acting in the present, as opposed to what he considers the utopianism of anticipating the future or how the future will emerge: 'The myth must be judged as a means of acting on the present'.¹⁴ Furthermore: 'Strikes have engendered in the proletariat the noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments that they possess; the General Strike groups them all in a co-ordinated picture, and, by bringing them together, gives to each one of them its maximum of intensity'.¹⁵ Perhaps the art strike is not utopian in Sorel's sense of presenting a course of action through which the future will emerge. As to if it engenders the 'noblest, deepest, and most moving sentiments', this seems to presuppose a seriousness and heroism that is absent from the self-ridiculing sentiments of the art strike. The suggestion that the art strike demands abandoning one's ability to survive in capitalist society evokes a heroic risk of death, but the risk appears hollow, and it is elsewhere suggested that the prospect of death in the art strike is merely the deepest illusion of the bourgeois artist who has invested their life in art.¹⁶ Perhaps this could still form a simple and encompassing image, an intuition of the tasks faced by artists dedicated to socialism. But how could this image of industrial labour resonate with artists? In response to this issue, Home (interviewed under the pseudonym of Karen Eliot) records that there was an attempt to rename the art strike a 'Refusal of Creativity', but that this 'just didn't catch on'.¹⁷ A refusal of creativity might have been more appropriate to artists, rather than workers, but social resonance is decisive in such intuitions. In any case, many artists understood the idea of a strike as nothing other than a refusal of creativity and self-abolition, since as independent artists they were effectively faced with a strike against themselves, against their creative freedom. Many artists rejected the art strike for precisely this reason. The idea of a strike presumably infused the intuition of

14 Quoted in Sorel 1989 (note 12), 8.

15 Quoted in Sorel 1989 (note 12), 9.

16 Stewart Home, Untitled contribution, in Home 1989 (note 12), 38.

17 'Art Strike: Karen Eliot Interviewed by Scott MacLeod', in Home 1989 (note 12), 6.

a radical and destructive withdrawal with a sense of historic importance, and compensated for its desperation. Many were evidently fascinated by the imaginative dimension of a strike, heightened by its inappropriateness and impossibility. Whatever the reasons for the idea catching on, this did not correspond to commitment. Reportedly, only three undertook the strike. If a myth enables action, or even inaction, then it was absent here.

Home's conception of myth is manifestly distinct from that of St. Auby, although they share some deep affinities. Home proposes that the art strike is a myth, not the correction of a reigning myth, but a correction might be deduced from the rejection of the 'myth of genius' and, more abstractly, the rejection of capitalism. Given that the correction at stake for Home concerns more directly the political artist, we would need to deduce a 'reigning myth of the political artist'. If St. Auby's conception of the strike can be considered a myth or parallel myth, then these affinities would be more evident. But the content of this parallel myth—'the mutant' or the new man, class, nation, and so on—and its biblical derivation are entirely absent from and alien to Home's account. Sorel's theory of myth suggests a secret affinity to Christianity, but he finds the precedent for the general strike in the Christian myth of the apocalypse or the total ruin of the pagan world, rather than the return to the garden of Eden, and this seems to underlie Sorel's indifference to describing a new humanity, which would presumably appear utopian, rather than mythic. A symptom of these distinctions is that whereas Home's myth of the art strike evokes the image of death or suicide, St. Auby's counter-myth evokes that of immortality.

What is shared by Home and St. Auby more abstractly yet decisively is mythopoetical or, more precisely, mythopolitical: the creation of a new myth in order to found a new community. What is also shared is the precariousness and artificiality of this creation. Just as with St. Auby, Home tries to achieve this through a dissolution of the supremacy of the artistic individual, as if this would in itself generate community, without actually generating a community, except perhaps as a fantasy, which then inevitably appears as the product of an individual artist. The myth then remains a work of art by Home, as by St. Auby, rather than the form of a community. Symptomatically, both deploy pseudonyms that displace and proliferate their names without resulting in their displacement or proliferation into an actual community. Both deploy a prohibition that promises a new taboo or law constituting the community: St. Auby's prohibition of overconsumption/production, Home's prohibition of political art. It should not be overlooked that both propose to ground a radically inclusive and anarchic (or 'heterarchic') community through the institution of a prohibition that presents a profound challenge to

its prospective adherents, although this is deflected by its appearance or function as mere provocation and excitation. Home evidently appreciated the communalising potential of being provoked, rather than obeying, publishing several bitter criticisms of the art strike. St. Auby undoubtedly appreciated something of this too. Probably most revealing is their shared deployment of irony, which is pervasive. This suspends everything from what it claims to be, whether myth or strike or community, generating a mischievous play out of the serious legacy of mythopolitical creation. This is their ultimate work of art.

A sense of community might nonetheless be derived from its ironic appearance here, especially by those who are intrigued or delighted, if not compelled, by these myths of an alternative. Indeed, given that St. Auby's and Home's aims are not simply self-ridiculing irony, which would tend to affirm the status quo, but rather a more genuine desire for artistic-political revolution that has become ironic in order to negotiate its frustrations and obstacles, undoubtedly this can be compelling too, especially to those who lament the absence of such a revolution without the conviction that it can be realised. Such a myth may only form a community of fantasists, but real communities are imagined too.

JOSHUA SIMON

Digital Revolution as Counter-Revolution

The ideas discussed here arise from the growing realisation that what we call ‘the digital revolution’ is a counter-revolution, a misogynous, racist, capitalist revolution, informed by the sciences of the Cold War, namely those of control and communication—cybernetics.¹ The current late fascism ‘driven by a desire for the state and a hatred of government’, as Alberto Toscano puts it,² has an economic logic I would call ‘the tiny hands of the market’ in which the super-rich eat not only the poor but also what was once called the middle classes (as well as the affluent).³ This logic shows its face in a plethora of supposedly contradictory phenomena—Amazon Prime and Donald Trump, automation and femicide, gig economy and social media.

For the last two hundred years or so the synthetic imaging we still call photography has enjoyed an indexical status as portraying a reality external to the technology depicting it. *Objectif* is the word for lens in French, and that word has generated a world of interpretations from André Bazin to Roland Barthes. With computational photography we admit to a reality by which the image is created through an internal relation within the apparatus itself, rather than a relation of the apparatus to an external objective actuality. In a now well-known essay, Hito Steyerl quotes a software developer who explains to her: ‘The lenses are tiny and basically crap [on cell phone cameras, JS], which means that about half of the data being captured by the camera sensor is actually noise. The trick, then, is to write the algorithm to clean the noise, or rather to discern the picture from inside the noise.’⁴ Following the work of Katrina Sluis and others, Steyerl explains that the algorithm basically guesses what the picture you took is based on earlier pictures you made available to it. It scans all pictures already stored on the device or connected to it through apps (your social media accounts), and by analysing the already existing pictures it matches faces and shapes to link them back to you. Therefore what we get is an approximate visual rendering based on previous photos. This can be called simply a memory image, since in order for the image to appear, it relies on existing footage taken by the same user. This formulation of image-making relates directly to the metadata capture that makes for the algorithmic echo-chambers we are so familiar with on social media and ad-based searches.⁵

1 Cyber (*kibernesis* in Greek: κυβερνητικός) literally means steering a ship, but is used metaphorically—as in Paltos’s *Alcibiades I*—to describe good governance. In our reality of navigation, most of us are in the passive tense of cyber (being controlled and steered). But we can think of those who are steering well, who are operating cyber—particularly I think of the female captains bringing African refugees to Europe, like Carola Rackette and Pia Klemp.

2 Alberto Toscano, ‘Notes on Late Fascism’, *Historical Materialism Blog* (2 April 2017): www.historicalmaterialism.org/blog/notes-late-fascism

3 See Joshua Simon, ‘The Tiny Hands of the Market: Social Distancing Without Society’, *Social Text Online* (16 June 2020): https://socialtextjournal.org/periscope_article/the-sign-language-of-the-tiny-hands-of-the-market/

4 Hito Steyerl, ‘Proxy Politics: Signal and Noise’, *e-flux journal* no. 60 (December 2014): www.e-flux.com/journal/60/61045/proxy-politics-signal-and-noise/

5 Mario Carpo explains that Google does not scan the entire World Wide Web anew for any alphanumerical combination typed into their search bar. Instead they show search hits customised to each user based on their previous searches. See Carpo, *The Second Digital Turn: Design Beyond Intelligence* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2017), 170–172.

Neither this form of connectivity nor this form of image-making are new. When the print revolution was raging, Martin Luther addressed the printed images of saints as he understood their nature to be. In his sermon of 31 October 1529, Luther spoke of what he called *Groschenbilder*, cheap, mass-produced woodcut prints with crudely drawn motifs. He called them ‘*Merckbilder*’ (literally, images of memory) and said: ‘You do not pray to *Groschenbilder*, you do not believe in them—they are images of memory’. For him the depiction rendered in these images was not a representation but was there to remind us of something we already know. For him this was precisely what an image should do. The correct function of an image was not primarily to represent something in a visually convincing way as if it embodies it (for example in a religious icon), but rather to refer to something, to remind us of something, in this case, the Word of God or the dogma.⁶

6 For the nature of this Protestant formulation of image making see Hanne Kolind Poulsen, ‘Branding King Frederick II: On Melchior Lorck’s Engraved Portrait of Frederick II’, *SMK Art Journal* (2006), 87–95. For a reading of Descartes’s understanding of image and memory, which seems to follow that of Luther, see Susanna Berger, *The Art of Philosophy: Visual Thinking in Europe from the Late Renaissance to the Early Enlightenment* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 184–186.

7 See Michael Wheeler, ‘God’s Machines: Descartes on the Mechanization of Mind’, in Phillip Husbands, Owen Holland, and Michael Wheeler (eds), *The Mechanical Mind in History* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2008), 307–330. For a recent intervention in the use of AI, see Matteo Pasquinelli’s and Vladan Joler’s ‘The Nooscope’. This is a visual manifesto of AI as an instrument of knowledge extraction using prediction and classification. The creators aim it at what they call ‘AI dissidents’. It is made up of a large diagram and essay which outlines the history and logic behind the exploitative nature of AI: <https://nooscope.ai/>

8 See Otto Mayr, *Authority, Liberty and Automatic Machinery in Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University Press, 1986).

This quick teleportation to the *Merckbilder* of Luther invites a question about our digitally engineered memory images—what is it that they remind us of? What is the dogma to which they refer? This supposedly anachronistic departure into the theological origins of digital practices is done here in order to suggest a historical consideration for our current moment. In light of half a millennium of thought and work around images and their production, we see how our digital revolution is not a revolution at all. The memory image is but one example which invites the consideration of an array of supposed cutting-edge technological tools in the lineage of a much longer art history, together with its settings and imperatives. We would attempt to do so not for the sake of mere comparison, but to explore the extended duration of protocols and practices that inform our current digital counter-revolution.

If we look at the underlying assumptions about the human that have instructed the attempts at artificial intelligence (AI) in the twentieth century, we see that they derive from the assertion that the mind itself is a machine. Rene Descartes’s 1637 ‘Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One’s Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences’ provided the framework for the attempts of Alan Turing, Ross Ashby, Allen Newell, Herbert Simon, Norbert Wiener, and other celebrated engineers of cybernetics and early artificial intelligence.⁷

The seventeenth century perceived itself as the century of the machine. With steam, cords, coils, springs, and other hydraulic devices, the imagination of contemporary scientists, philosophers, and political thinkers was taken by the operations of the machine. Following the book, the body, the clock, and the map, the machine rose to become the metaphor that stands for the way things (natural and artificial) operate.⁸

The realities of our digital counter-revolution invite a reflection on its underlying extractive and oppressive logic. With the fantasy of automation in particular, technology manifests itself as an assault on the social. While the triumphalism of the industrial age saw social forces as part and parcel of technological achievements, our age of environmental catastrophe perceives the social to be unsolvable. Subcontracting for-profit technological developments to compensate for total social and political incompetence is the inherent failure of technology itself, as it becomes yet another assault on the social as such. Technological solutions for social problem mean simply that technology stands as the failure of the social. Technology is no longer an apparatus but an environment. It is the ecosystem in which actions take place, not a mere device with which social action is taken. Taking up a variety of devices and applications that have come to be known as machine vision, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, algorithmic serials, uncanny valley,⁹ and others, we can explore their genealogy through the history of art, particular in the early modern period, a time of immense extractive racialisation and colonisation which saw vast machinic development in the field of image-making. We will therefore draw parallels between the archeology of various media and art history, in order to assess our neocolonial digital frontiers.¹⁰

With the dawn of the computer age, media enthusiasm saw some big art exhibitions such as *Cybernetic Serendipity—The Computer and the Arts* (curated by Jasia Reichardt, ICA, London, and Exploratorium, San Francisco, 1968) and *Information* (curated by Kynaston McShine, MoMA, NYC, 1970). However, by the time the personal computer was positioned as the highlight of the era, things went sour. Bill Gates's 'Open Letter to Hobbyists' in the January 1976 edition of *the Homebrew Computer Club Newsletter*, presents the extractive logic that will come to characterise the commodification of software and the digital counter-revolution. In his letter, Gates, already co-founder of Micro-Soft, but still based in Albuquerque, New Mexico, expresses a simple idea: let us make software a licensed commodity like hardware. He writes: 'As the majority of hobbyists must be aware, most of you steal your software. Hardware must be paid for, but software is something to share. Who cares if the people who worked on it get paid? [...] Most directly, the thing you do is theft.'¹¹

As we have seen with Microsoft's software licensing policies in our lifetime (and its effects from packaged updated versions to cloud computing 'promiscuity mode'), instead of the digital revolution replacing social, political, and legal constraints used by the then existing power structures, they have done the opposite. In place of free interactions between autonomous individuals and their free software, as promised, the real-existing digital revolution has become

9 Uncanny valley is used to describe the feeling that the more robots and avatars appear human, the more appealing they become to us—but only up to a certain point, after which they become unsettling.

10 The mystery of the algorithm is portrayed culturally through the asocial male genius figure. But the serial equation that is the algorithm can be traced back to quite different sources. For example, papel picado, a Mexican folk art of paper-cut decorations made traditionally by women, which involves a series of geometric shapes extracted from folded sheets of thin paper to create figurative scenes when the sheets are spread out. For a somewhat prophetic framing of the digital as a counter-revolution see Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron, 'The Californian Ideology', *Mute*, vol. 1, no. 3 (1995). www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/californian-ideology. For a reading of the digital as a project of a certain masculine whiteness, see David Golumbia, *The Politics of Bitcoin: Software as Right-Wing Extremism* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press, 2016); and Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, 'Queering Homophily', in Clemens Apprich, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Florian Cramer, and Hito Steyerl, *Pattern Discrimination* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Meson Press and University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 59–98.

11 Bill Gates, 'An Open Letter to Hobbyists', in *Homebrew Computer Club Newsletter*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1976), 2.

an endeavour of reterritorialisation for extractive profit. In more general terms, the logic of the digital should be seen as part of a continuum of projects concerned with settler becoming—extracting profit through expropriation. The extractive logic of digital technologies is driven by the reterritorialisation of supposed frontiers. Both the confinement of the self for the purposes of data mining and the celebration of the tech entrepreneur as explorer resonate a neo-colonial reality of settler expropriation.

The long duration of expropriating colonial protocols encountered under the conditions of the digital invites a reading of what is called technological innovation from the perspective of art history. This is because in art history we find the blueprints and desired results of many of our current digital technologies. As we look around us to see what is attempted in the processes of machine vision, machine learning, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality developments, a strange feeling emerges in those who are familiar with art history, and more specifically with the history of art of a counter-revolution, the Baroque. This artistic style, developed as part of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, stands as a unique phenomenon that involves a variety of attempts at developing visual apparatuses that make the world. Many of the Baroque's visual organising principles are informed by the techniques devised as part of Catholicism's encounter with humanism, almost a century and a half before Martin Luther. From Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) and Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) to Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) and Melchior Lorck (1527–1564), from Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) and Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) to Abraham Bosse (1604–1676), and from Jean-François Niceron (1613–1646) to Diego Velázquez (1599–1660) and Francisco Goya (1746–1828), attempts at Virtual reality, Memory images, 3-D scan and 3-D print, artificial intelligence, augmented reality, machine vision, and considerations of the uncanny valley seem to have been in motion for a long time.

Strangely, this world is familiar to us. Of all things, it might be art history that lets us into the invisibility of the digital age. As we have moved from textual to visual to spatial media operations, our current phase reiterates the previous stages. Interestingly, much of what is being developed technologically these days is already informed on some level by the achievements and discoveries of artists. Therefore, instead of exploring what art can do in the new realms of the digital by replaying those enthusiastic new media exhibitions, it is worth noticing that art history already informs the current digital attempts at appropriation of space through an expropriation of the visual. Historically, artists' work has informed the technologies of the digital age. The geometrically projected perspective of Leon Battista Alberti, for example, is a visual tool that can convert the

infinite distances in space into a painting, compressed in a finite and measurable surface. This development already hints at the shift from text to image and from image to space. Using a different technique, this is also the logic of the map and the interface. The interface as a map is a special form of operation based on information reduction of elements from the world into a synthetic diagrammatic image that has a specific navigational function. From the vanishing point in a painting to coordinates on a map to navigating through a digital interface, we shift from pictorial correspondences of space, to spatial renderings of reality.

A friar in the Minim order, Nicéron's experiments in anamorphic images and lens-based composite images in 'La Perspective Curieuse' (1638) are the precursor for augmented reality. In these, Nicéron created a tube with a cut glass lens that creates a reverse kaleidoscope effect. This tube was then put in front of a drawing. One of these was a drawing of eight cardinals in a circle (with the centre of the drawing empty). When looking through the lens one would see an image emerging in the centre. This was composed from pieces of the eight cardinal faces that were aggregated by the reverse-kaleidoscope lens—the chin of that one, the forehead of the other, the cheek of this, and the eyes of that. The face created in the centre was that of Jesus. What Nicéron achieved is a lens-based composite image that operates as augmented reality. Jesus appears through the device. This is Pokémon Go before electricity. The historian Susanna Berger mentions that the device was displayed in the library of the Minim convent in Paris, which Thomas Hobbes and Abraham Bosse frequented to visit Père Marin Mersenne, a key figure of intellectual life in Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century.¹²

Caravaggio's use of concave mirrors for his portraits of contorted figures predates mechanical attempts at corneal imaging systems taking place in recent years for tracking our eye-movement when watching the screen (in this way making pricing ads on different parts of a webpage). Van Dyck's *Charles I in Three Positions* (1635–1636), turned into a marble bust in Rome in the hands of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1636) by commission of Pope Urban VIII, is the model for 3-D scans made into 3-D prints. A depiction of Charles I in three postures (enface, from the side and turned in forty-five degrees) was sent to Rome in order to be rendered three dimensional in marble. Before plastic polymers and laser scanning, the protocols for 3-D scan to 3-D print were developed by Pope Urban VIII as he was attempting to bring the United Kingdom back into the Catholic church. Velasquez's famous *Las Meninas* (1656) has built in it a portrayal though a device—with the mirror framing and depicting the scene and setting, this is machine vision. Goya's *Straw Mannequin* (1791) involves considerations that inform the uncanny

12 Thomas Hobbes even mentions the device in a letter from 10 January, 1650: 'I beleieve (Sir) you have seene a curious kind of perspective, where, he that looks through a short hollow pipe, upon a picture conteyning diverse figures, sees none of those that are there paynted, but some one person made up of their partes, conveyed to the eye by the artificial cutting of a glasse'. See Berger 2017 (note 6), 196.

valley, wherein all figures are painted but some are supposed to depict human presence (the girls) and one conveys a non-human presence exhibiting some human-like features (the mannequin).

A more allegorical approach might include *Carceri d'invensione* (1745–1750), by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), his etchings of imaginary prisons that offer a visualisation of the rhizomatic pan-opticon that is the real-existing Internet; Bosse's iconic cover piece for Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651), where the sovereign is constructed as a multitude that comes together to make a body politic, is of immense importance for us as it visualises a process of becoming that is in operation to this day. While Hobbes was thinking of state and sovereign, the underlying logic of his proposition is applied in today's corporate and control regimes.

The political and religious thinking that informs these artistic attempts is worth considering. For example, when we think of artificial intelligence, we must understand it as a metaphor and a machine. As a metaphor, its origins can be found in Thomas Hobbes's notion of the artificial soul—a construct he devises to describe the sovereign of the state as an amalgamation of natural persons (the multitude that makes the gigantic figure in Bosse's frontispiece). In the introduction to *Leviathan*, Hobbes opens thus:

Nature (the art whereby God hath made and governs the world) is by the art of man, as in many other things, so in this also imitated, that it can make an artificial animal. For seeing life is but a motion of limbs, the beginning whereof is in some principal part within; why may we not say, that all automata (engines that move themselves by springs and wheels as doth a watch) have an artificial life? For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings', and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the artificer? Art goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of nature, man. For by art is created that great Leviathan called a Commonwealth, or State (in Latin Civitas), which is but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended; and in which, the sovereignty is an artificial soul, as giving life and motion to the whole body.¹³

¹³ Hobbes, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* [1651], edited by Noel Malcolm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 7.

In chapter 16 Hobbes makes three categories of personhood: 'natural persons' (adult men); 'artificial persons' (representatives of those who are not 'natural persons', and who are themselves natural

persons: lawyers, curators, guardians); and ‘persons by fiction’ (those who are represented by artificial persons). The Leviathan, the state, is a ‘person by fiction’ that comes to life through the ‘artificial person’ of a sovereign, who is at the same time an aggregation of natural persons.¹⁴ In the frontispiece by Bosse, as in the book itself, we are shown that the natural persons are the matter from which the artificial body of the Commonwealth is made, and the sovereign is the artificial soul of the Commonwealth.¹⁵ For Hobbes, it is the sovereign, brought as a metaphor of the soul of the commonwealth, that unites the multitude of persons into an incorporated entity—the state. By attributing a soul to the structure, Hobbes is able to describe a process. This is manifest in the frontispiece. Berger recognises a shift from a static structure to motion through language. Movement is done through representation; action becomes possible through the soul of the state—the sovereign. Matter (natural persons) must come into a certain form (person of fiction) to act (as artificial persons).¹⁶ So the frontispiece should be seen as a composite image within which there is a composite creature. This mechanised conception of the artificial soul informs our contemporary formulation of artificial intelligence as a political metaphor that dictates our political imagination and behaviour as we shift from sovereignty to control and from state to corporation. For us, artificial intelligence therefore stands not only as a machine that controls us through pattern recognition, but even more so as a political metaphor for the corporate agglomeration targeting us as separated beings.

Although the frontispiece portrays a walled-off city-state, with a countryside, fortress, and cathedral, there is no mention of the already highly developed global mercantile network of slavery-operated plantations in the colonies on which the growing wealth of the king relied (Hobbes himself was a shareholder in the Virginia Company, through his patron Lord Cavendish).¹⁷

An iconic image of artificial intelligence is the Chihuahua/blueberry muffin mosaic experiment in which three dark dots on a round fox-brown background appear as either dog or a pastry. The algorithm then must determine which is which. When it does not recognise the image, it brings people to see this malfunction as poetic abductive logic, much like in poetry where one thing stands for another. This accumulation of Chihuahuas and blueberry muffins corresponds to the Leviathan figure made up of tiny people. One stands for the artificial soul that presents itself to us as existing prior to any voluntary action on our part (the state) but nevertheless is totally reliant on us (the sovereign). The other stands for artificial intelligence wherein we accept artificial intelligence as an actual automated thinking machine (the corporation), while in reality it needs our constant feedback as it feeds of our life (control).

14 Hobbes 2012 (note 13), 244–248.

15 Hobbes 2012 (note 13), 18.

16 Berger 2017 (note 6), 207.

17 See Katja Diefenbach, ‘Possessive Individualism and Trans-Atlantic Slavery as Mirrored in Early Modern Philosophy’, in Hans D. Christ, Iris Dressler, Paul B. Preciado, Valentin Roma (eds), *The Beast and the Sovereign* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2018), 166–176, 169.

As we opened with the digital counter-revolution and late fascism, it is appropriate to finish with historical fascism as counter-revolution. Walter Benjamin writes in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*:

Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves. The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property.¹⁸

SHARON KIVLAND

Epitaph

I think R. may have misheard or misunderstood me when we spoke about my contribution to his book. If so, it will not be the first of our mishearings or misunderstandings in the course of this book. I am sure I used the term ‘epilogue’, the speech at the end of a book or play that comments on what has occurred—the final word, as it were, added to what is already complete. There is no denouement implied, no conclusion, and my French dictionary informs me that it may be considered to be a farewell to the reader or audience (I like this, a friendly wave, one that might solicit applause). An epitaph, however, is a short text honouring one who has died. It usually appears on a commemorative plaque or a tombstone, although it may also have a figurative sense. Sometimes it is chosen by the person who is not yet dead, in preparation for the certainty of their death; at other times those who remain will select what they feel might represent the dead. For a moment I considered adding a note in red to my annotations to R.’s introduction, suggesting that he should change the word. Yet on further reflection it is true that he and I, we do speak both as and with the dead, so it has been retained. Moreover R., writing as a r e v e n a n t, descends into the cave and returns. I met R. first in 2017 in Davos. From the windows of the Kirchner Museum I watched him blow hot air through a stencil into the snow. J. (also in this book) and I turned to each other in recognition—a return to the 1970s, we laughed fondly, and yes, another phantom emerged. Two years later (I think) we met again in Davos, again at the Kirchner Museum, and while I did not join in the participants’ waltz around the gallery request by R., I did film it, and later introduced R. to *Soul Train* (he revealed an unexpected talent, even snake hips). A year later he stayed with me in France, finishing his doctorate under my strict editorial eye; one evening we crowded into his cinema car, parked up on our rural lane, to watch descents and risings, construction and destruction, revolving and rotating. He made espresso in a Bialetti on a camping stove for us. He has always been the perfect host. It must be remembered that Bartleby the scrivener, another ghost among all those who speak or are spoken for herein, worked in the dead-letter section of the post office, dealing with letters without a return address, misdirected letters, blind-read letters, prankish letters; the letters of the dead. I am the ghost of this book, its copy editor. My role has been a haunting of the text (all mistakes, then, are mine, scapegoat, sin-eater, sacrifice); my now-invisible hand inserted italics, single quotation marks; I restored the absent translators;

I added the Oxford comma; unlike poor old Bartleby, I did not reject the unpreferred, the errands, the copyediting. And now, yes, now, I add the full stop, with a friendly (ectoplasmic) wave: *valet*.

GLOSSARY

Animated camera

A camera that moves according to a distinct logic, programmed or scripted in advance, recording anything regardless of the actions occurring around it. This logic can't be escaped. The question is not if but how one relates to the logic of the camera's indifferent movements. Aesthetically the moves employed can be rotations, thus bringing in formal qualities such as the punctum, the pivot, or the axes, vectorial forces such as gravity or momentum, and conceptually opening the potential for revolution, repetition, and death. Practically, however, this camera generates a complicity among the subjects that confront it, eventually leading to coalition and collaboration. Thus the animated camera is a tool for the urgent examinations of colonial conditions and of a decolonising approach to them in documentary art practices.

Bedroom-qua-cinema

The bedroom is the most intimate private space exposed in the publicly used private Internet. In its cinematographic quality, through the moving image of video chats and posts, the bedroom becomes 'public'. Nowadays the bedroom-*qua*-cinema might be identified as the architectural typology replacing the 'factory' (and before that the studio of the great spirit) as the original place of revolution. The activities and body parts corresponding to these architectural typologies reflect their most primordial functions: head, studio, thinking, knowledge; hand, factory, production, work; genitals, bedroom, reproduction, life. The technological possibility of visually (but also conceptually) projecting political emancipation into the world from most private spaces makes the bedroom-*qua*-cinema a place related to the masses, as was cinema at the beginning of the twentieth century; however, as opposed to the factory, cinema was unrelated to productive work. In the network of bedrooms, equipped with uncountable masses, the gravity of this new cinematographic potential has revolutionary measure today.

Idiotic research

The concept of research as idiotic draws on Deleuze, who in turn draws on Dostoyevsky. For Deleuze 'the

philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of the man without presuppositions' (2012b, 165). Dostoyevsky's main character in *The Idiot*, Prince Myshkin, is a young intelligent and 'wholly virtuous man' (2015, 684; in his note the translator Ignat Avsey quotes from a letter of Dosoyevsky from 1868 without giving a precise reference). He is a sort of a Christ, whose absolute goodness makes him appear peculiar. Although some do refer to him as an idiot, everyone shows profound sympathy towards his naïve behaviour. According to Dostoyevsky, 'this evocation of compassion is the very essence of humour' (684). The difficulty of imagining a person doing something absolutely disconnected from this person's interests justifies calling this person an idiot—but equips them with greatness as well. It enables the most improbable endeavours just because they must be undertaken. For this reason there can never be an answer. Artistic research—as idiotic research—is a search for questions and the only original question acceptable is: what was the question?

Non-construction

Destruction is essentially the same thing as construction, only with opposed algebraic signs. This becomes evident in architecture, where every building is dependant on both the destruction of existing spaces and the edification of new ones. In terms of spatial transformation, destruction and construction are always complicit. This is why the slogans 'less is more', 'less is a bore', or 'more is more' are useless rhetoric. Whether one adds or takes away, one transforms the world, and if unconscious and uncritical falls prey to a constructivist positivism. 'A non-constructive gesture', however, is 'one that [...] destroys everything whose existence depends on edifying pre-entensions' (Hollier 1992, 23). It is an anarchitectural exposition of architecture, a point at which nothing has been constructed yet in terms of appropriation and will, permanently opening up new possibilities. The means to make art in order to exhaust oneself can be called 'non-construction'. Non-construction can be understood as the point zero of destruction, as a signature of absolute destructivity, the destruction of a constructivist transformation that is always at another's expense. Non-construction, however,

generates space for architectural encounter and non-exclusive community.

Rejuvenation

While for the youthful researcher passionate research is intrinsic or unavoidable, it poses a challenge for the senior researcher, for whom passionate engagement in research means subjecting oneself to rejuvenation. The task is to not confuse the passion lurking behind every economic interest with the young passion of 'unproductiveness', lack of 'nomination', or lack of 'communication'. The difference is that for the young the interest, or rather the desire, is expressed by 'the Other'. Rather than the forces of one's own passionate interest, directed outwards and pushing the subject into the world, there are passionate forces pulling the subject inward into the world. The latter is not an interest, for it is opposed to the passion of economic interests and can even be self-destructive. The Other is not 'a collectivity seeking to guarantee my labour and to gain a return [an interest] on the loans it grants me' (Barthes 1989, 70). The desiring Other is 'a living collection of readers' (70).

Spatio-discursive practice

Nowadays debates range from questioning the place of art practice in a globalised neo-liberal world and its mechanisms of control to the relevance of research related to art practice, its academic programs, and economic valences of knowledge. Due to the general difficulty of locating practices, and also due to the legacy of conceptual art in contemporary art, the character of such work is inherently discursive and spatial. It is discursive because it relates to the conceptual as the source of cognitive work, and it is spatial because firstly, the conceptual is an indicator of the dislocation of contents, and secondly, because global capitalism is an indicator of the dislocation of values. Conceptuality and dislocation define the *spatio-discursive* state in which art-related practitioners find themselves today. While art practices increasingly employ discursivity as a means of artistic expression or a particular art-related spatiality is discussed with regard to such an art practitioner's discourse, the discursivity of those current aesthetic expressions not based on language

is often ignored. An important aim of my work is to show that the separation of discourse and space is untenable: discursive practice is inherently spatial; spatial practice is inherently discursive. Neither can claim that it has the hallmark of their discipline.

Theory as touching

The ancient Greek theatre as the site where theory was staged enables an understanding of theory not as objectified knowledge but as a mode of *t o u c h i n g*, as something perceived sensually or aesthetically in the moment of its making. Agamben draws on this ancient Greek idea of theory when discussing Deleuze's concept of 'contemplation without knowledge' (1999a, 239). I link it to Benjamins use of the word absent-mindedness (*Zerstreuung*). Theory, in this sense, is never an actualised work but the very moment of encounter, hapticity, and the potentials deriving from it. This understanding of theory as a potentiality is the basis for understanding architecture as a space for encounter, and encounter itself as architectural. The very spatiality generated by encounter is at the root of architecture and architectural knowledge. An encounter between an actor and a camera produces an architectural spatiality. Spectators are drawn into such staging, becoming part of the sensual experience of a theory and its potential.

Voiding

If 'the refusal of the very idea of a will of one's own' (Agamben 2013, 140) can be seen as non-construction, then the 'renunciation of the law' (142) can be seen as voiding, both placeholders for architectural poverty. When a projector in the cinema is accordingly moved to annul the movements in the film, this is a voiding. As opposed to avoiding, a voiding has a transformative effect on the voided. An annulment is also a moment of ecstasy, of an absolute being outside oneself. The process of voiding ideology starts in the process itself: any place where a stage is negotiated is already a stage that can be voided. Mathematically, voiding is expressed in terms of an inversion (a multiplication with $1/x$). In reality, however, such mathematical voiding is impossible and the discrepancies to the ideal perfection create moments of comedy and humour.

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Author & concept	Ronny Hardliz
Contributors	Philip Ursprung Julie Harboe Stewart Martin Joshua Simon Sharon Kivland
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