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Sohin Hwang with Pablo de Roulet

Statement

I had an interesting conversation with geographer Pablo de Roulet, who spoke to me about chorèmes. It was inspiring and confusing. Chorèmes describe a very specific kind of subjective and cognitive cartography, which made me wonder, however: how different were these maps from other kinds of cartography that I knew, such as psychogeography? For the cover of this issue I compiled a bibliography for exploring the question of what chorèmes are – this object in itself functioning as a very subjective and cognitive trace of my exploration. To accompany the cover image I created an expanded version of the bibliography, with images and links, which can be accessed online: https://coverforoar1.wordpress.com. The cover work has been and will be the site of my research. This activity seeks to establish an alternative relationship between acts of research and their publication.

<div align="right">Sohin Hwang</div>

My sketch within Sohin Hwang's cover work summarises the concept of an urban layer in the context of the study of the temporary implantation of international aid and its use of space in urban contexts. The concept of an urban layer is used here to denote a variety of spatial practice rather than a space in itself. It includes two major components: built environment and virtual spaces. The part of the layer constituted by the built environment comprises buildings of various orders (housing, work, entertainment) that are used by staff of international organisations. The other part is virtual and represents instructions from the security departments of international organisations regarding where they are allowed to settle, work and more generally go, thus separating the built environment in two, through the invisible line of security evaluation.

As a site of research, this particular urban layer is the starting viewpoint, while the relation between this layer and the local environment constitutes the object of study of my doctoral dissertation. The sketch can be compared to chorèmes, which use graphic semiology as detached from topographical maps. Chorèmes were first employed and theorised by geographer Roger Brunet during the 1980s.[1] The detachment from the map allows an emphasis on spatial relations as much as on the development of generalised models for spatial phenomena.

<div align="right">Pablo de Roulet</div>

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1   Roger Brunet, 'La Carte-Modèle et Les Chorèmes,' *Mappemonde* 86:4 (1986): 2–6.

Sohin Hwang is an artist who makes performance, video, and books. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford.

Pablo de Roulet is a PhD candidate at the University of Geneva. He works on the geography of international aid in countries witnessing political crisis, using mixed qualitative and quantitative methods. The sites of research for his dissertation are the cities of Bamako, Juba and Nairobi.

OAR

OXFORD
ARTISTIC AND PRACTICE BASED
RESEARCH PLATFORM

Issue One, Apr. 2017
Sites of Research

Author generated content

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Submissions

Abstracts for submissions (approx. 300 words) should be sent to editors@oarplatform.com and may propose either a response to this issue or a contribution for future issues. A more detailed call for responses and submissions can be found on the final page of this issue, and at http://www.oarplatform.com/contribute/.

This PDF document contains audio files and is optimised for Acrobat Reader.

Contents

Introduction – Site Visits

Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt, & Nina Wakeford

There is no such thing as 'raw' data. This is a central epistemological claim of numerous disciplines. In proposing that OAR hosts contributions on 'sites of research', we offer the provocation that there is no such thing as a 'raw' *site*. And, indeed, the implications – conceptual, practical, artistic – demonstrated by the contributions published here expand beyond an understanding of site as merely a locus or container of information. Frequently, the most experimental and experiential elements of a researcher's interaction with multiple and shifting sites are suppressed, or vanish altogether, in the production of outputs. Certainly, for many disciplines, there is a heroics in which sites are ideally accessed – a 'worlds apart' culture or location, a difficult material, a tricky affect – yet we have gathered contributions here which propose different sets of criteria. As editors of OAR, our starting point was the need to address research sites to open up possibilities of releasing the concept from any standardised spatio-temporal research routines. As many of the contributions here attest, the site may emerge at various stages of the research – for sure, a site may bring itself to our attention at the outset of a project (as a delimited archaeological dig, or a laboratory, for instance). But, more often than not, the site is fundamentally reconceived as it is encountered and engaged with through materials, experiences, and thoughts. It may even appear to slip away entirely.

We are excited that the contributors to this issue rose to the challenge of addressing the site as not only a traditional field, but as crawlspace, anthem, performance, biro line, composited video layer, residency or, indeed, discipline itself as location. In the set of positions hosted here, a site always exceeds what research is 'about' or where it is 'situated'. As anthropologists and others committed to intense engagement with field-sites know well, to be in a site is to be in the very middle of things: embedded, immersed, overwhelmed, in excess. Moreover, the sites usually considered to be the neutral locations of analysis and reflection – the office, the laptop screen, the whiteboard – are equally site-specific producers of knowledge. Situated subjectivity is often neutralised in such places. Yet as we experience sites (including the latter), the body reflects them, taking on new forms: tracking around the site, crawling in it, performing it, dwelling in it, becoming it.

OAR is itself a site of research. Conceiving practice based research as an epistemological category, it openly attempts to bring about movements within knowledge, across and between

disciplines. For *Sites of Research*, we propose a reading order through the following cross-disciplinary clusters. Listing in itself may be yet another form of site-making. These clusters are proposed as modes of problematising, ideologies of approaching, ways of seeing, reading, and touching a site.

Mapping (The Cover and its Responses)

The artwork on the cover of this issue is a bibliography developed through dialogue with a geographer and cartographer, and doubles as an entrance to an external website, where the research is mapped out. Responding to this provocation are a collaborative essay that explores digital cartography's potential to shape one's experience of space in an area of conflict (namely Aleppo today), and a visual essay experimenting with schizoanalytic cartography. Together, they form the first cluster through which we propose to read this issue: that of mapping.

Peripheries (1–4)

The issue continues with contributions that deal with hierarchies of sites and the processes by which certain spaces are positioned on the margins or outskirts of others. These works can be read as exercises in the blurring and remaking of boundaries: from a quasi-fictional investigation of a council estate, through to the inevitable contamination of the 'message' with its surrounding, to departing from a national archive into its peripheral *banlieue* context, and an exploration of performance writing centred on the figure of the lad.

Borders (5–8)

In a movement from the peripheral to the edges, the following four contributions engage with and at frontiers, borders, limits, and what remains in-between. A contribution exploring the reality of restricted movement and immigration detention is juxtaposed with a film that is an ontological portrait of the U.S.-Mexico border, and with a personal account of almost unlimited mobility – questioning what it means to have been in a place. Addressing institutional borders, the fourth contribution develops a new lexicon towards the discussion of subtle transformations in employee habits through an artistic research programme in a Beijing factory.

Virtual Sites (9–11)

The idea of the interface carries us into the next cluster, with three contributions examining screens the virtual, and simulated site. Starting with an online intervention on the site of OAR (available here), continuing with an essay on the digital and IRL sites of Amalia Ulman's artistic practice, and finishing with a moving image work which addresses video compositing and performance, these provocations raise questions as to how subjects might be produced by and in digital and virtual spaces, and how, in turn, the formation of the subject could undermine the site.

Inhabiting (12–14)

Addressing questions of artistic research into the subject's experience of space, the following cluster of three contributions explore modes of carrying oneself in and around spaces, and conveying a sense of inhabitation. The section moves from the cumulative potential of a performance's interrelated sites, to the possibilities of dwelling inside an artwork as one dwells in architecture, to first encountering the surface of an architectural site through video.

Discipline (15–18)
Notions of methodology, disciplinary, and internal boundaries are explicitly addressed in the penultimate cluster of four contributions. From an epistemological analysis of artistic research on the edge of scientific disciplines; to indisciplinarity as a generative space in itself; to the slips and slides of materials and gender that unfold during the firing of an Anagama kiln; and a challenge to ethnographic claims of 'being there' through an experimental reading of the exhibition *Phantom Europe*.

Return (19–21)
Our final cluster gathers examples of forms of visiting and re-visiting, and constitutes an invitation to do so yourself. From obsessive returns to theoretical proposals for how a site can be re-entered, these contributions are both myopic in their closeness to a singular site and wide-ranging in their analysis as they re-invent places of research. An anthem becomes a site to inhabit and be re-sung; through returns, a rubbish dump in East London becomes a host for an occult audio travelogue. The issue closes with an account of a line, drawn from paper to mouth: revisiting the drawing as an image, an act, a form, a path, a remainder, an artwork, a piece of writing, and a system of knowledge.

*

Through this issue, we suggest sites of research propose themselves in terms of accretion. The site of research where we, the editorial team, have gathered to complete the editorial and production process of this issue, during our a residency at the Bibliothek Andreas Züst in the Alpine mountain pass of St. Anton, Switzerland, is a place where knowledge is accumulated non-linearly. The library is arranged in a system that constantly undermines itself, a site in which data is never raw, but always interpersonal, already and necessarily interpreted, generously offering itself to exploration and imagination. We thank the residency programme, run by Mara Züst and Marilin Brun, for inviting us and giving OAR a temporary home. We would also like to thank Frances Whorrall-Campbell, our editorial assistant, and Julien Mercier, our graphic designer.

Jessyca Hutchens, Anita Paz, Naomi Vogt, Nina Wakeford
St. Anton, April 2017

Looking for the Ocean Estate

Patrick Goddard

Patrick Goddard, video still from *Looking for the Ocean Estate*, SD video, 34'00", 2016.
Available at: oarplatform.com/looking-ocean-estate/.

Patrick Goddard is an artist working in East London. Completing an MFA at Goldsmiths University in 2011,
he is currently studying for a doctorate at the University of Oxford, in Fine Art practice. Creating video, publication,
performance and installation, Patrick's politically loaded and narrative based works undermine themselves
with a self-defeating black comedy. Inverting the position of the aloof cultural critic, the works wrestle with the
complexities of commitment and Patrick's own fumbled attempts to create a personal and political integrity.

'On/Off-Message'

Joey Bryniarska & Martin Westwood
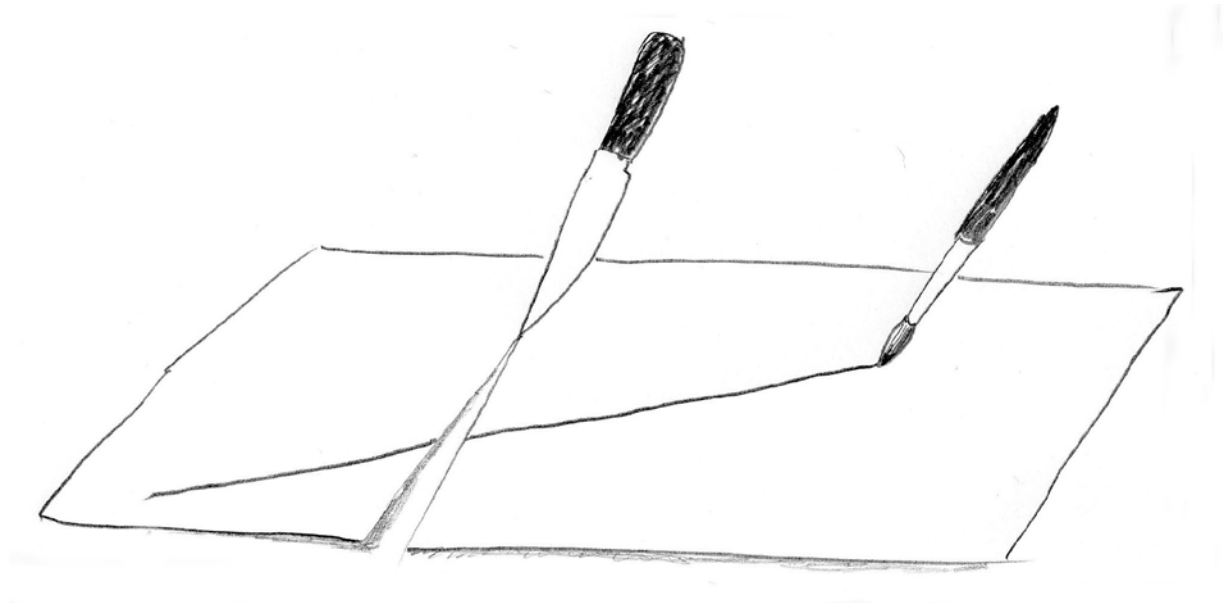
'Crawl-Space' and the crawl space

Between the cracked skin of a concrete pachyderm and a gabled copper hat lies the crawl space. The crawl space has an animal's conception of time; a pace matched by its own creeping metabolism of stone and plaster. The crawl space is not public, nor is it private, but is somewhere porously in between; a century's worth of faeces, spider webs and feathers plus grey sand jet-blasted from restoration works, coats the interior in a fine, consistently grey powder...The basilica's true form is concealed; underneath its A-frame roof in fact lies a colossal cruciform flatworm, segmented and sectioned by the Gothic arches and domes which give it form. Its undulating surface is perforated with small holes the diameter of an eye, each housing a plug which rises up like a nipple. With no head and a brick/plaster skin a maximum of 20 centimetres thick, this architectural monster is bent and buttressed into position through a combination of experimental mechanical engineering and gravity.

July 20th 2016

In the summer of 2016, we spent three weeks in the Gothic Basilique Cathédrale de Saint-Denis,[1] located in the Northeastern region of Paris. The above text describes an attic space set between the concrete roof of the basilica's domed ceiling and beneath the interior created by the basilica's steep verdigris-coloured roof. Despite its vast size, this attic is inaccessible except to a few archaeologists, conservators, maintenance workers and administrators, who all maintain a unique long-term, if not life-long, working relationship with the building. We were given unrestricted access to the labyrinthine and often vertiginous non-public spaces of the basilica, which sit just inside, behind or outside the metre-thick walls. On the periphery of the action (religious, touristic and administrative) which takes place centre stage in the nave of the church, these spaces provide the backstage scaffolding, machinery and support for the astounding architectural pomp of the building, though can themselves be described as anything but mundane.

The basilica finds itself located on the external fringes of the Boulevard Périphérique – the orbital road which divides Paris from its suburbs – in the town of Saint-Denis, whose eponymous icon is a walking, talking, head-carrying cephalophore. A famous French martyr, St. Denis, was purportedly decapitated by the Romans as punishment for his Christianity, at the base of Montmartre in the 3rd century.[2] He then proceeded to carry his head (or according to some accounts, part of his head), cradled in his arms, from his place of execution to the town which today bears his name. Perambulating along the route of the Seine (which now flows under the Boulevard Périphérique), St. Denis' severed head preached a sermon until finally falling silent and dead at the location of the current basilica, thus founding the site of the subsequent medieval town and today's Parisian satellite *banlieue*.

> Up in the crawl space we imagine a glamour-death; one where our dead-weight starts off an unstoppable web of accelerating fissures spreading out across the decrepit domes, causing us to suddenly and without warning burst from the roof. Our prostrate bodies will fall sacrificially right on top of the altar, to be stared at and photographed by unfortunate tourists and worshippers. Matthieu says with a giggle 'Don't Jump!', and we half-laugh along with him.
>
> July 25th 2016

We originally came to Saint-Denis as part of a trans-disciplinary project (NEARCH),[3] bringing together artists and archaeologists. The project had, at intervals, also led us to Gothenburg, Nîmes and Maastricht on a series of site visits and updates. One aim of this article is to explore and unpick a small sample of the encounters we found in this network, through the motif of the crawl space: a space which is, on the one hand, located tangibly in the basilica's attic, whilst on the other hand can also be conceptually located between the disciplines of art and archaeology.

By analogy, we also wish to extend the motif of the crawl space in two more directions. The first is in the severing cut made by St. Denis' executioner which is, as far as decapitations go, a striking representation of the Cartesian split between body and mind by virtue of its violent instantaneity. As such, it can also be extended metaphorically to various social ruptures which occurred throughout Saint-Denis' history – a direct result of political, economic and

technological upheaval. The second explores the way in which this motif can be extrapolated through distinctions made between anomaly and waste, between identification and superfluity – or in more specific archaeological terms: between stratigraphy and the spoil heap. *Crawl-Space,* therefore, simultaneously assumes the position of an empirical motif and a methodological recess. As the space (the gap) and action (the cut) which separates the cephalophore's head from body, it has become a guiding principle for our research and output. In characterising any site as a crawl space, we aim to show how method can be extracted from synchronous interactions with discrete players and co-producing partners, who are not directly yet in relation yet, nevertheless, overlap. For example, an empirically existent place as a motif (the attic space of the basilica), a recess that is the trans of transdisciplinary encounter (between art and archaeology) and the division that is the result of decapitation (St. Denis). Together, these notions of site have developed the nascent principle guiding the performative character of our research and its productions.[4]

> Yesterday late afternoon Matthieu took us up to the belfry, accessible only through
> a series of locked doors and narrow passages that lead behind the pipes
> of the organ, corkscrewing up through the hollow columns that support the remaining
> South tower. The bell itself was absolutely enormous; at the end of its clacker
> was a ball as large as my head, and in a somewhat disembodied state we listened as
> a distant chime entered stage left, almost mocking the huge schlong clacker in
> an act of subordination. It became evident that the Mairie (or town hall) – the adjacent
> building in the main square – had substituted the basilica bell's ear-splitting
> mechanical peels for a series of compressed pre-recordings, sent out by a loudspeaker
> attached to its facade like an old-school public address system. The basilica's
> bell no longer marks time – a symbolic sound of civil order – the municipality does this
> now with an expedient prosthetic substitute. I suppose it's a bit like Denis carrying
> his prosthetic voice in his hands…Later that day I wait dutifully in the square to
> record the 6 o'clock iteration, my eyes fixed on the speaker. A merry-go-round
> is pumping out acid colours, lights and music. I wait for quite a while, sound recorder
> in hand, but nothing happens. I press stop and make my way to Carrefour, slightly
> disappointed.
>
> July 16th 2016

A crawl space as a physical entity is most commonly understood as an inaccessible area in architecture – usually due to human height restrictions – which might conveniently conceal wiring, plumbing or any other number of infra-architectural elements; it is the space between a false ceiling and the interior surface of a roof. Whilst the basilica's attic has no human height restrictions, clocking around twelve metres at its highest point, any visitor is advised – after departing the centrally-located duckboards in order to crawl across its domed surface – to spread their weight as far as possible when negotiating the ten-metre-wide curved hillocks. Below their feet, which rest on twenty centimetres of medieval masonry, is a fifty-metre drop into the cavern of the basilica.

To be in the attic of the basilica was to occupy a liminal zone between worlds. In this forgotten space of trapped birds, we were always distantly aware of the historic town square below,

the architectural structures whose identities and functions had become contorted by and intertwined with historical, economic and political events. The girls' school Maison d'éducation de la Légion d'honneur connected to the South-side of the basilica through the old abbey, which was requisitioned by Napoleon for his new school in 1811. Then, to the West, is the Saint-Denis market, probably the largest and most ethnically diverse in the whole of Paris; and beyond that the Rue de la République, which, most recently in November 2015, achieved dubious media fame for being the location of a shoot-out between police and terrorists after the Bataclan attack. It leads directly from the basilica's square to the Gare de Saint-Denis.

Nipples protrude at regular intervals, concentrated mostly along the seams of a series of convex and concave ribs, which are individually intersected by smooth, barrelled bellies. Look a bit closer and you can see that each nipple is topped with a circular wooden disc approximately 4 centimetres thick and 12 centimetres in diameter, attached from its centre by an umbilical chain a few feet long embedded into the original plaster dermis of its mother. The wooden disc is the perfect size to fit into the palm of a hand which, when it does, is graspable and removable, revealing the disc to be in actual fact a plug of mushroom-like proportions. Each plug conceals a hole (more of a puncture, really) and when the plug is removed a short jet of archaic black-dust erupts upwards in a short, warm exhaled gasp, followed by a few disorientated and stumbling spiders. After clearing away some of the debris with Ikea barbeque tongs, we use a camera lens to telephoto into the space below. We watch this on playback on the camera's tiny monitor, transfixed by the experience of seeing something in detail that our naked eyes cannot see. The camera frames the content of each puncture: miniscule recumbent statues stare back at us; tiny tourists photograph each other and the shrunken architecture; a miniature wedding takes place. This grey attic we are in frames the warm afternoon glow of the basilica's interior and there is something acutely comforting about inhabiting a building with such a prescribed set of functions in this objective way.

July 20th 2016

The Calender and the Dustbin

On the roof of the basilica's North tower, in view of Olivier harvesting honey from his urban apiary, I photograph the mason's markings that Matthieu is showing us. I see this as a good opportunity to capture the recording of the prosthetic town-hall bell – a good time and good proximity. In advance of 12 o'clock midday I press record and continue photographing. 12 o'clock passes and again the bell does not ring. I press stop to save the recorder's batteries. About 10 minutes later the bastard bell rings.

July 17th 2016

In archaeology, stratigraphy is the process of identifying strata within soil: to read matter, to date remains. During excavation, the stratigrapher identifies colourful and textural differences in the soil. From such differences, due to environmental and historical factors, and from the remains (often pottery) found within the strata, the stratigrapher hypothesises dates to the layers she identifies. Items of note, i.e. remains (in negative or positive form), are separated from items with little or no historical value. Items of note are then taken to specialist facilities and analysed, eventually finding their way to various storage depots. The latter – undesirables – are discarded and skipped. This is an activity of counter-production; spoil, waste, debris or residue is matter, which then assumes another role through reemployment in development and commercial industries, thereby re-entering existing socio-political and economic processes. This happens through the basic mathematic axiom of addition and subtraction; what gets dug out or pulled down must somehow get dug in or put inside a storage facility.
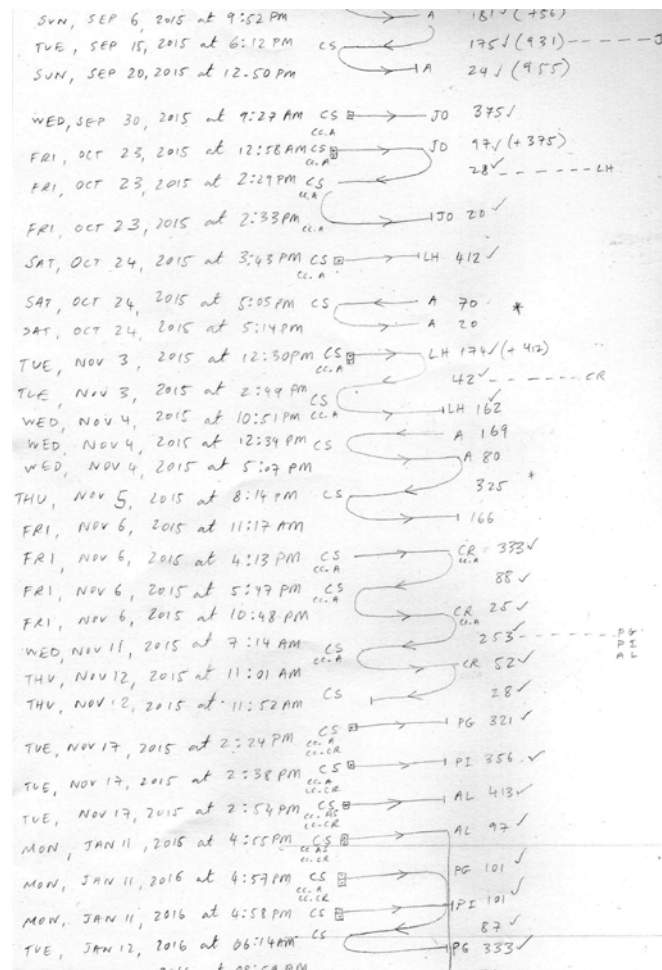
The itinerary of an email communication thread is a tracking device used to quantify word count expenditure and recompense. In this case, its function is to make clear that the conversation is one-sided.

This is particularly true for preventive archaeology, where industrial and commercial development creates contingent moments for archaeology to respond, albeit in an anticipatory and yet partial manner.[5] As a result, it ties a vast amount of archaeology's investigations to economic and social factors which are driven in large part by corporate profit, and in turn it shapes historical data. The motorway and high speed rail link excavations we encountered in Nîmes, undertaken by Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP),[6] were the antithesis of the romantic ruin: megaprojects,[7] irreversibly casting their forms into and across all types of natural and man-made landscape indiscriminately.

We arrive at Gare du Nord and are met by Valérie, a tourism intern from the local tourist office in Saint-Denis. She must be around 18 or 19 years old, with greasy hair and glasses. She is wearing a red t-shirt, short shorts, and trainers. She attempts to speak in English and we attempt to speak in French. We don't really know what the hell is going on or who Valérie is or what we are doing with her. It transpires conversely that Valérie also doesn't seem to know who we are or why we are there or what we are doing here being accompanied by her. She takes us on the train to Saint-Denis... Later, close by the basilica, we order food and sit in La Breton, gently sweating in 32-degree heat. Cow nose in aspic and melon with parma ham arrives. We have just been introduced to Antoine, the stratigrapher, who asks us directly and without preamble what we plan to do in Saint-Denis. We are by now familiar with this type of question from field researchers, administrators and pedagogues. We respond by gently explaining that we can't speculate on output before research (I don't think we know why we are here but, ironically, this is exactly the method of preventive archae-ology that Antoine is engaged in – everything and anything is game). In our case, the gathering of data into information can only be done after the object of research has been fully turned inside out, like a pocket. But instead of being concerned with the contents of the pocket, we are more interested in the fluff which is left behind. Or perhaps more accurately we take the pocket including the fluff attached as the structure of the pocket: pocket plus fluff equals structure of pocket. Main course of roasted rabbit arrives.

July 6th 2016
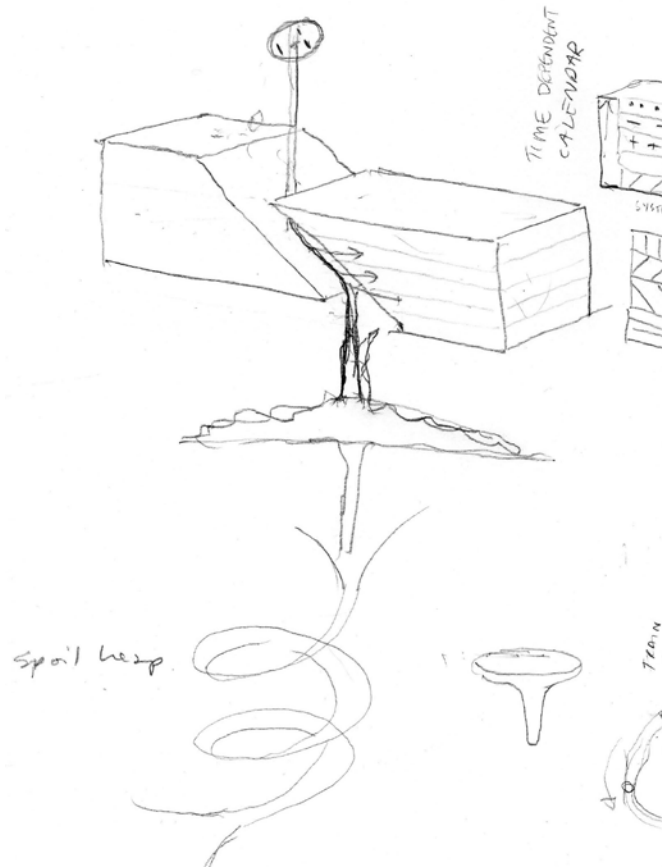
A trans-disciplinary penny waterfall

We met back in March last year when you gave us a fantastic (and cold!) tour of thesite at Gamlestaden…
I hope you will forgive me for attaching this very long email thread, but it seemed to be the easiest
way to explain the communication that we have been attempting to have so far with the council authorities
in Gothenburg, regarding the movement and organisation of waste material from archaeological
sites and its potential reuse in subsequent commercial construction projects. The topic of the depot
and the spoil generated from preventive archaeology has become of real interest to us, in light of other
projects we have been looking into: St. Denis' 10km walk preaching a sermon whilst holding his
decapitated head; the fallen spire of the basilica of Saint-Denis; the ancient landfill site of Monte Testaccio
in Rome; a high-speed rail link excavation in Nimes by INRAP…

However, our pursuit of information regarding the waste and spoil generated by archaeological excavations is
proving difficult. Your name was given to us by the council as the person to contact regarding this matter.
However, as ████████████ has confirmed, we are fully aware that this is in fact a matter for the authorities!
We have repeatedly explained that we have no interest in getting our hands on the spoil itself, but rather
we are interested in the overview; the paperwork, the machine that drives this function. Yet it seems to be a
contentious (or simply inconvenient) request? If you could give us your take on the situation it would be
incredibly helpful for us…

Looking around the corner of art's stratigraphic relation to archaeology is the spoil heap: waste produced and discarded from data production. All processes produce debitage – shrapnel from both ends. The transdisciplinary process is no different: a cow nose in aspic consumed at a Breton restaurant around the corner from the Basilique Cathédrale de Saint-Denis, an email correspondence requesting access to spoil, a car parking ticket as the residue of visiting an underground car park previously excavated by INRAP, encountering an intern rather than an expert, funding proposals, authorisation labels and logs…these events and remainders are equally fundamental in constructing the transdisciplinary encounter, whether we choose to follow the trajectory of a failed email exchange or a spoil heap.

The large-scale excavation of Gamlestaden in Gothenburg, of the medieval settlement Nya Lödöse, started in 2013 and was still ongoing in the summer of 2016. The excavation proceeds at intervals (weather allowing) through the ex-industrial riverside suburb, contrapuntally rotating its jigsaw pieces in line with the timetable set by construction company Skanska, which is required by law to pay for the dig.[8] When we visited the site in March 2015, the second series of excavations were in progress. The first had already extracted the entire contents of a medieval graveyard, been filled in and was covered with grass and tarmac on which we came to stand, in preparation for the new bus depot and a future crop of residential flats. Whilst there, we caught wind of a rumour circulating amongst the students and faculty members from *Akademin Valand* (incorporating the School of Fine Art) – who had been using the recent excavations as a pedagogic opportunity for participatory art projects – that one of the islands of a Gothenburg archipelago was apparently being used as a deposit for waste from the Gamlestaden dig. Baited by the compelling notion of what this might mean for archaeological spoil on an industrial scale, we were curious to try to trace the parallel movement of this spoil alongside the administrative and bureaucratic procedures that were guiding its passage via skips, heaps and holes.

Wed, Sep 30, 2015 at 9:27 AM   Cc. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Dear ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮,

…we visited Gothenburg in March and were very interested in the movement of material from the Gamlestaden site. We understood that the material was to be relocated both around the city and to an island of the archipelago… ▮▮▮▮▮ wrote recently that we would like to work with this material but some clarification seems necessary. What we are most interested in regarding this material is the processes of excavation, relocation and re-assignment for use in the city. Rather than a very direct, tangible interventionist approach, the way in which we wish to interact with this context would be to… look at existing and relevant documents used by the authorities, for example. Though of course seeing the site would be interesting, even if only from the safety of a perimeter fence! It's not essential. Our purpose is not in wanting to use or even touch the material itself, more we wish to understand the process (both physical and bureaucratic) and the politics involved. It's the concreteness and transparency of the decision-making process that is of interest to us… it would be great if you were able to respond to us and possibly send any documentary material you have on this site, both textual and visual. And perhaps you might have the time to be able to meet and discuss these processes when we next visit Gothenburg…

After being put in contact with council representatives and county officials, who put us in touch with the archaeological contractors, who put us in touch with the property developers, who *then* put us in touch with the construction site contractors, we established – during long periods of silence prompting second and third email reminders, eventually leading us back to an unceremonious re-dumping at our initial point of contact on the site – that passing the buck on our question was likely due to ambiguities in Swedish law concerning the use of historical material (defined as material pre-1850). Nobody wanted to enter the ambiguity or complexity (of which we were not aware) of the legal question at hand.[9]

Essentially, it was also true that nobody had the time; many of these players were employees attached to public bodies, or else self-employed specialists working for commercial businesses with only limited and largely self-electing responsibilities to communal questions. It was not surprising that nobody wanted our rather prosaic and inevitably amateur questions to arrest them in their inbox. However, this is stated with the acknowledgement that an information vacuum develops as a result of a switch in guardianship to industrial players and away from the curiosity and generosity of academic players, all of whom are completely aware of the dangers of private control over communal heritage, and yet impotent in the face of them.
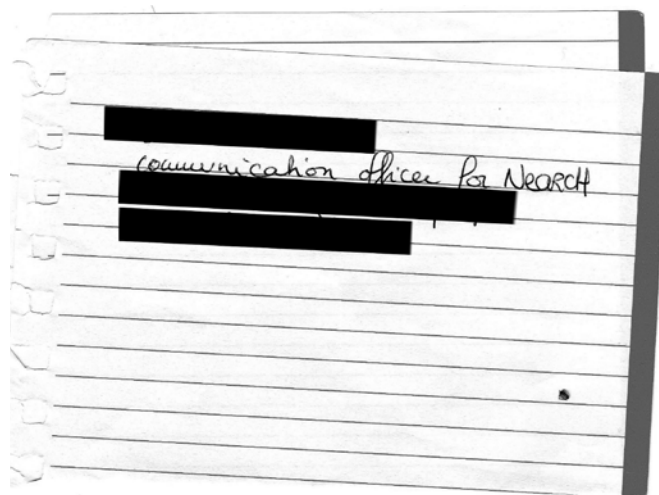
A Communication Officer exists at the boundaries
of companies, groups and communities; even its own.

Our experience in Gothenburg – the wild-spoil-heap-chase and the circularity of email forwarding that only returned us back to our initial point of departure – revealed the extent to which large scale urban archaeological initiatives are fundamentally tied to property developers, and in turn to contractors. Tracing a thread of the archaeological process led to potential participants having absolutely no interest in the collaborative attempt, yet without their input, we realised, all we might be left with were familiar tropes and motifs of an art/ archaeology paradigm.

The network was full of players at the borders of archaeology: the privately employed conservator going from temporary contract to temporary contract, the builder chosen for

his uniquely sensitive touch for a hydraulic excavator digger; the PhD student washing mud outside through a sieve all day in minus two degrees. Yet despite this, it became clear that it was this condition of *peripherality* which called many of the shots. Each player gave birth to another network of players, constellating, compromising and fracturing any possibility of a united whole. When this metastasised network came into contact with questions of legal uncertainty and responsibility, it revealed a Catch-22 situation. In order to progress, the non-specialist must ask the specialist *the* specific question in order to receive *the* specific answer. It appeared that archaeology was only figurable by delimiting its sprawling network to interested parties who were, unsurprisingly, already invested in its narratives and frequently isolated within their specialisms, unless, that is, one took this frustrated issue as paradigmatic.

> My face is tired from all this smiling we have to do. We walk from lab to lab, herded by Anneli, who introduces us to an impressive roll call of science professionals. There is a constant underlying pressure to ask question after question, never knowing if it's the right one. And you do this with the knowledge that these people owe you nothing and that you only have one chance to get it right. Every time. Everyone we meet has that look that I must get when I'm cornered by a wine-soaked, slurring family friend in a panama hat at an anniversary party (not my own) and they want to talk about 'art'. I expect the stupid questions. So, it follows that these archaeologists must do so too. And we do not disappoint. Because, I have started to realise, if you don't end up getting an answer to a stupid question, then you know you've hit on something.
>
> March 20th 2015
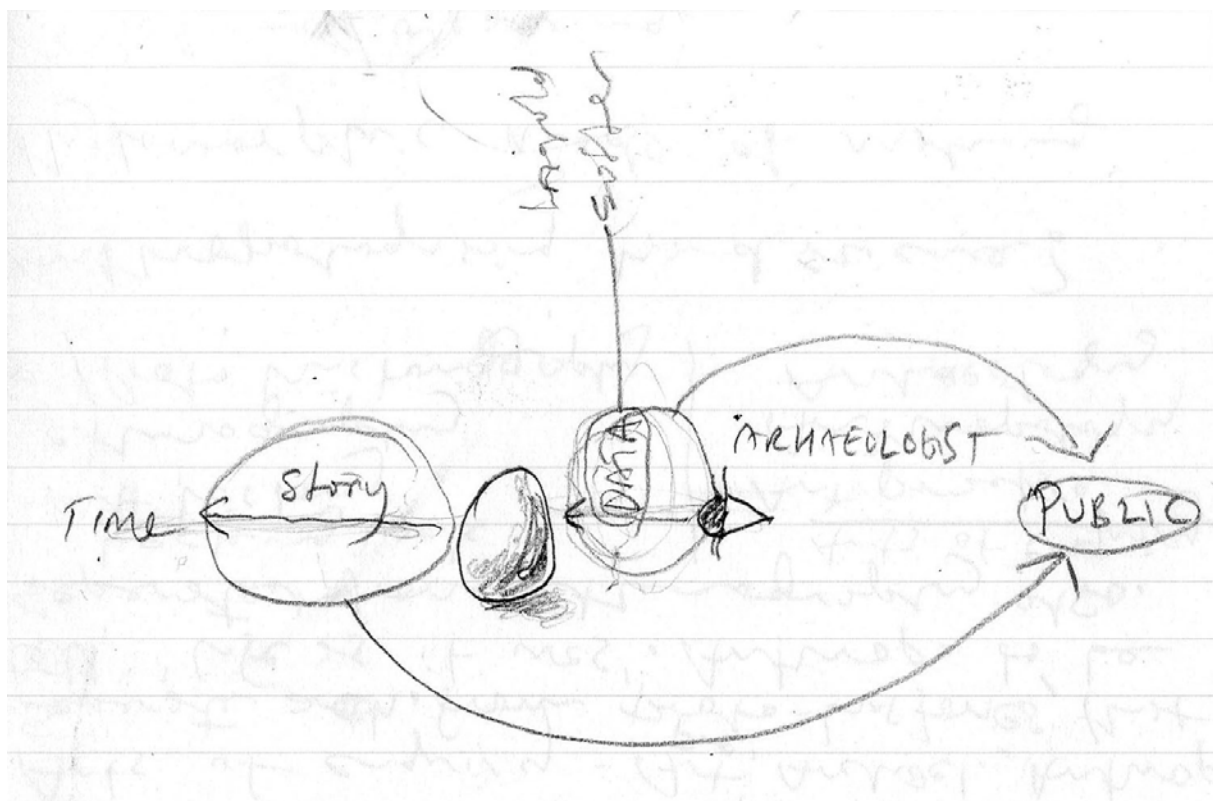
Preventive archaeology is itself a site that does not fit into the received tropes and motifs that mark the relation of art and archaeology. The fact that it is often also called 'rescue' archaeology explicates the tension between a scientific discipline that 'saves' only by virtue of the 'liberation' afforded to it by the development and construction industries. As in many complex relationships, the two must – as a matter, of course – both resent yet need each other in order to exist and thrive. In our extended experience of the Gamlestaden encounter, formal and historical precedents of art and archaeology's own relationship (aesthetic and communicative) could not be found. Instead, a Gordian knot of politics, science, history, economics and bureaucracy framed the site of an emphatically unforthcoming encounter. This frame articulates the encounter as a seemingly shitty spoil heap of uncommunicative waste. However, we came to understand that this uncommunicative process is in fact a preclusion to a valuable spoil heap of archaeological practice, a mine of artefactual riches, if one concentrates hard enough on the *peripheral*.

> I'm back at the town-hall to meet my nemesis. I look at my phone as it approaches 6 o'clock. At 3 minutes to the hour and in case my phone is inaccurate, I press 'record' on the mic. The phone counts 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 15 minutes past the hour. No bell. I press 'stop' and now, total in my defeat, I walk over to Le Khedive for a litre of beer. 20 minutes later, sitting in front of the recently restored West facade of the basilica which now appears glaringly naked without its thick, black crust of industrial-grade pollution, I look at the long arm of the clock – shaped like a meandering snake – as it points to 35 minutes past the hour, when suddenly the recorded bell rings out. I don't care anymore. I have my beer.

> July 18th 2016

Enseigne de pèlerinage représentant la crucifixion,
avec la Vierge à l'Enfant et saint Denis ; XVᵉ siècle.
(Doc. Unité d'Archéologie, cl. J. Mangin)
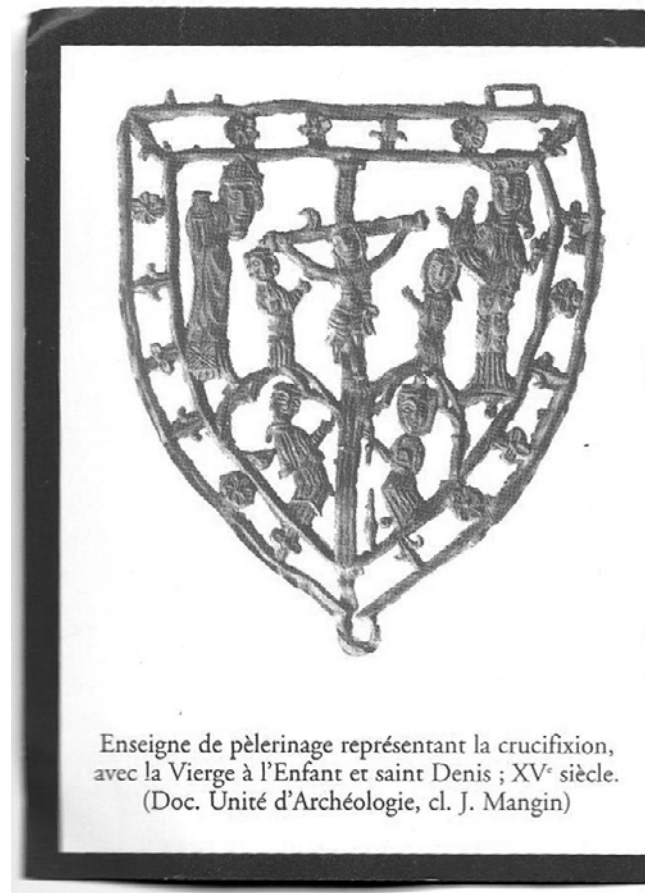
The art/archaeology axis has a history marked by certain modes of looking and reception; distributions of cognition and communication mark their relation and produce a cross-disciplinary history that can itself be considered stratigraphic. The transdisciplinary field we find ourselves in today is immediately predisposed to having contrary implications for the canonical and chronological – intervention, derailment, appropriation and subversion are all transdisciplinary tactics which promote new perspectival shifts and historical reassessments. Together, they pose the insistent and oppositional question of indeed how *not* to reproduce the familiar tropes and modes of looking, form and production, which characterise a historical (and frequently romantic) relation between art and archaeology.

For artistic practice, to reduce (or extend) the concept of stratigraphic markings as a range of familiar archaeological metaphors arising from method makes the mistake of assuming genealogical – and in doing so, continuous heritage – narratives. Although this may provide a helpful streamlining of the past into an accessible data gateway, there is also the risk that, through reiterating what has become a series of conventional modes of relation, challenges to the established narratives and contingencies encountered are displaced or ignored.

The following is an incomplete list drawing attention to a broad range of some of these potential 'conventional modes', which present themselves in some cases as inevitable primary response mechanisms. This is perhaps because of the self-validatory nature of any given discipline where existing methodologies are offered up for adoption to the trans-disciplinarian as she departs the safety of a discrete field – whether they be aesthetic, communicative, political or epistemic – as convenient guides or channels to occupy.

The first is the (1) *political-aesthetics of temporal-romanticism*, an admittedly catch-all (but not, perhaps, catchy) term, although one which, nevertheless, extends in many directions. At an extreme, this approach operates under a (pseudo-astrological) sign, in which a full circle allows an archaeological past to couple with a future, often appearing in popular entertainment's narratives of science fiction as an erudite statement of political agency.[10] This cyclical redundancy of time extends to the entropic in the work of artist Robert Smithson, where the phrase 'ruins in reverse' has often been quoted in order to explicate entropy as a process of construction as well as confusion.[11] For Smithson, the ruin only becomes termed as such dependent on the view from which one might be looking at it, more pointedly in finding a use-value. Despite the epochal horizon that Smithson's views occupied at the time, the 'political-aesthetics of temporal-romanticism' is an approach seeking political agency, yet in being intrinsically non-empirical,[12] –results in an unavoidably hallucinatory and therefore ultimately romantic encounter.

The second 'conventional mode' is equally, if not more, romanticist: (2) *nostalgist mimicries of surface/layer processes*, the most common trope, which can be found in the consideration of the surface of painting as a support for excavatory processes or the valorisation of 'the fragment', alluding to an indexical passing of time. This also finds resonance and contemporary relevancy with some strands of media archaeology, where an exploration into technical vestiges often results in a mediatic escapology into technological patination.[13] This imitative slant can furthermore be extended to multiple (3) *metaphors of the spade and the dig*, which have been recently utilised by artists and curators alike as a broad umbrella under which to fund largescale projects, public artworks and exhibitions.[14]

The fourth 'mode' adopts archaeology as a taxonomical tool to challenge dominant cultural heritage narratives, where (4) *reclassifying the cultural and or social status of objects* is employed to attain a cultural equivalency between the art object and the social artefact. This approach, however, in blurring the political and historical categories of art and social artefact, often neglects (in its conflation of the cultural with the social) to take into account the operational chains that produced that differentiation to begin with. In this 'mode' we may applaud a challenge to dominant hierarchies. However still in fixing its gaze upon what it considers to be sites of cultural relevancy, it might inadvertently obscure and erase its own social production, thereby perpetuating the very possibility of value and status distinctions. If we reverse this 'mode' – for example instances where archaeology uses art as a mirror to look at its own reflection – this is most apparent in (5) *re-imagining field work as land art or performance art.*[15]

The penultimate 'mode' in this list is situated in the arena of identity politics, where archaeology and art become (6) *co-contributors to a narrative of origins*. That is, they become active producers in a performance of heritage and therefore constructors of national identity narratives.[16] To approach this from a critical standpoint, the notion of the past as something which only speaks to a specific set of people attached to a place in time is an obstacle when it comes to communicating a heritage that can be shared, accessed and valued by anyone from anywhere.

And finally, more generally, a strategic mode that employs any of the tactics above (7) *the employment of art as a communicative tool*, deployed under the guise of community outreach/knowledge transfer, seeking a wider public who does not find archaeology an engaging enough *locutor* without these communicative tactics.[17]

If we view the above as a set of potential 'modes of relation' or channels, which historically and bureaucratically, but also politically, epistemically and/or aesthetically precede the transdisciplinary encounter between art and archaeology, this raises the question of how to side-step these primary response mechanisms. An urgency arises, that in situations where art is asked to plug a gap in a predetermination of its role, the real challenge becomes in fact how to articulate an encounter as it is found – warts and all. And an encounter which is vulnerable to, above all, contingency. In this situation, the transdisciplinary encounter itself becomes something which can be addressed and reproduced as an outcome, a net which can be thrown out both spatially and temporally, collecting the remainders of a metastasised milieu. For example, the sprawling deferral of email communications that we experienced in Gothenburg.

In this way, the repetition and continuation of what marks the transdisciplinary past as a past becomes a foil in which neither art nor archaeology risk becoming marked by each other in their encounter. Instead of continuity, stratigraphic topography is a mark, a cut, line or division; it differentiates rather than accumulates. The task, when proposed stratigraphically, is to produce something non-identifiable as collaboration between art and archaeology that is nonetheless a result of their encounter. *Crawl-Space* as site attempts to find the thickness of this cut or line in the para-data – for example, a cow nose in aspic as the debitage of its social encounter – in order to mark that encounter.[18]

> In the carapace-filled basement of the 'temporary' museum storage facility, two rows of Volvo cars – elaborate customisations from 1927 to sometime around the 1960's – perform, model by model, an excerpt of their evolution. The director Linnea says, 'We have no space left, none at all...and now they want us to take 200 corpses!? But of course, we should and we must – in the name of professional ethics, not to mention morally – people get very upset about this kind of thing you know... ah yes, technology is developing at such a pace everything we do now will be considered completely stupid in about 100 years...'
>
> March 23rd, 2015

The headless figure of St. Denis kept returning to haunt us. As a compelling figure of meted violence and fragmentation, we saw evidence of his severing echoed and repeated everywhere, only in new updated versions: the Boulevard Périphérique which carves away the *banlieue* of Saint-Denis from the capital, the town hall's tape recorder divorcing the bell's sonority from the basilica (a heckling imposition on the town square), the digger or cleaner (dustpan and brush) dividing the spoil from the stratigraphy, particles of blasted sand forcing their way between pollution and renewal, *Franciade*, the name French Republicans gave to Saint-Denis between 1793 and 1803 interrupting the continuity of municipal identity. During our site visits, the cephalophore became a kind of talisman for the structured divisions we encountered and increasingly looked for, a kind of prophetic fortune-teller of carvings and subdivisions. Imagined as a type of ventriloquist's doll, he takes on the qualities and demeanour of a satiated zombie.[19] Death and his message, as such, is delayed – in any case the voice box has been cut straight through and rearranged. The message becomes infinite and self-perpetuating.[20]

The cutting tool that severs St. Denis' head is a distributor. And in that act of distribution, a crawl space emerges. Crawling into the space of the cut is not like magnifying a line or plotting the distance between upper and lower cross-sections of a severed neck, but is instead the gloop of the cut's remainders – some of the matter lost to blade and of some of the blade lost to matter – a microparticulate *exchange* of blood for metal on the upper and lower cross-sections of St. Denis' neck. Our crawling space is only as good as the thickness of this exchange, of identifying remainders from the process of distribution.

> We got on the bikes again today and cycled up to where Viale del Galoppatoio
> meets Via Veneto on the outskirts of the Borghese Gardens. This time we
> bring the basilica's mushroom plug with us in preparation. Its shape is coincidentally
> an almost exact double-mirror of the architectural design of Luigi Moretti's
> underground car park;[21] the columns supporting each level assume both a positive
> cast of the stem of the plug, whilst the gridded, shallow, anamorphic domes
> inset into the ceiling at each level look like they have been made by a gigantic hand
> pressing a gigantic plug upwards into the concrete at regular intervals. In this
> space, next to golden-monogrammed golf buggies; we dangle, pose and shoot the
> plug above a series of concrete reinforced holes made by historic scaffolding –
> where it fits like a standard hand into a standard glove. Like muscle memory, we also
> repeat the same physical movements and choreography as we did in the attic
> of the basilica, re-performing those very same actions, now seamlessly.

> August 11th 2016

Between Moretti's storage depot for the cloth-covered Ferraris and the basilica's attic space, an *infrathin* crawl space emerges. Marcel Duchamp's *infrathin* difference between two events; such as the difference between two mass-produced objects cast from the same mold, or separating the smell of cigarette smoke from the smell of the mouth exhaling it, is also perhaps extendable to the difference between two choreographic repetitions;[22] repetitions which take place across two geographically distant and empirically antithetical sites. Even with the

acknowledgment that both the car park and the attic share a morphological and formal detail of design, it is in fact the learnt choreography which translates and relocates their spatial, temporal difference. This choreography osmotically absorbs and then exudes the encounter of body to site and site to body – two habituated performances where muscle memory and motor response provide the transit for a crawl space to emerge.
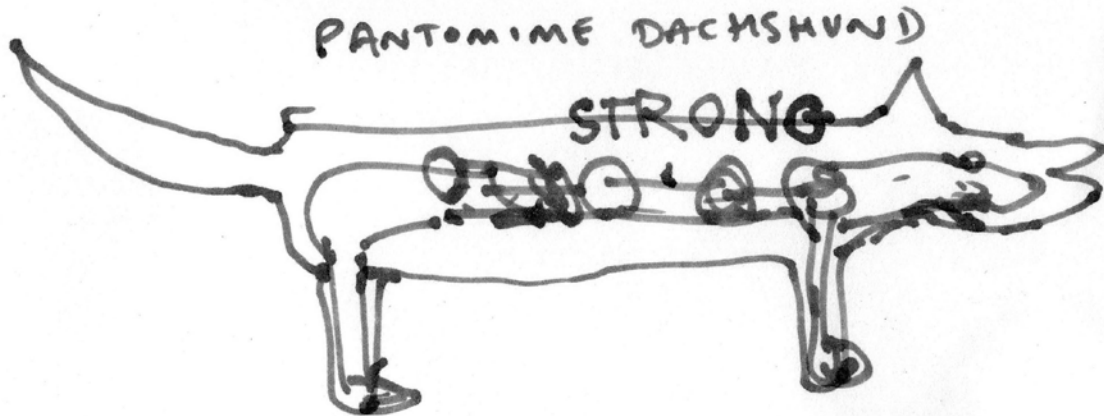
The pantomime dachshund is the sister of the pantomime horse. However, in order to operate, the pantomime dachshund requires three people instead of two; one at its head, one at its rear and, most integrally, one which bridges the mid-point of the dachshund's belly.

We sit in a public garden in front of the Roman amphitheatre in Nîmes, watching the sun dip behind stacked arches. Earlier in the day, Pierre-Simon had said, 'the tools shape the method'. He said these words as we looked towards the incline of a huge excavation overlooked by a mountainous landfill site, where birds circled and dive-bombed behind articulated dump trucks shunting and levelling layers of rubbish. Beneath the landfill, archaeologists in full protective high-vis suits with respirators worked, using vehicles and machinery not dissimilar to those on the rotting escarpment above them.

April 3rd 2016

Archaeological warehouses burst at their seams with bulky material data in storage facilities like a film set's prop store. At the same time as digital archival techniques struggle to respond to the almost incongruous question of their own simultaneously degrading media artefactual status. Racing against technological time? Even oyster shells submitted to oxygen isotope analysis contribute to a gridded and inventoried space that is held together by a notion of 'storage'. Producing historical time? If archaeology and its institutes are increasingly involved as collaborators who coalesce to produce historical time on an increasingly industrial and technological scale, then what are the ramifications for desiring a complete picture of the past? The grid that arranges the data enlarges, the mesh becomes finer and more systematic, the storage warehouse grows larger – filling in the blanks? Perhaps these are not historical blanks of time, but are in fact the technical blanks that produce archaeological method.

In this way, archaeology appears voraciously interdisciplinary – any complete picture is challenged by an appetite to incorporate external disciplinary methods. Scientific, technical methods (geological, biological, chemical) enlist cultural methods (art) to produce relevant narratives from a sprawling data set, but ultimately struggling to connect the two. *Crawl-Space*, in proposing its own site, forms it from a compendium of the slight: bureaucratic and communicative chambers of the exchange between art and archaeology, superfluities existing on the peripheries of that encounter which find analogy with its hagiographic narratives, re-experiencing its backstage architecture through the peripatetic translation of muscle-memory, and in making waste a position from which to reflexively produce method. This encounter does not come from taking a stance in existing fields, but arrives as their surplus. In this surplus, both encountered and extended – a heap of cow nose, a digital waste bin of email messages a bloodied sword – pre-existent imaginaries may loosen and any player might have an opportunity to re-configure their indigenous understandings.

> Pierre-Simon arrives at the INRAP Méditerranée offices in Nîmes in a whirlwind of hair, tight jeans and éclairs. Holding an éclair sideways in front of Carolyn's computer monitor, he gesticulates enthusiastically whilst describing the arduous task of 2 years of excavating and clearing land for the infrastructural development of the high-speed rail link connecting Nîmes to Montpellier, following the route of the ancient Roman road via Domitia. As the only route connecting Southern Spain to Northern Europe and Scandinavia, a general increase in both commuters and goods both coming and going, had eventually strangulated the route with excess traffic congestion. Going deeper into the political intricacies – the path beaten by the rail link can displace people who have lived there for 50-plus years, but not environmentally-protected plants[23] – some cream remains at the corner of his mouth from his delivery of the éclair.

April 5th 2016
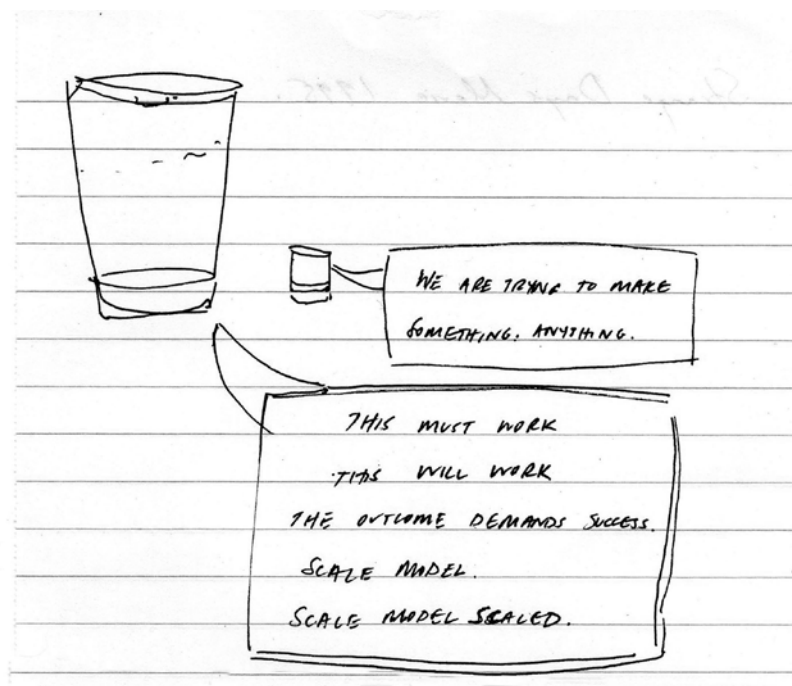
1   The basilica is widely thought to be the first manifestation of the Gothic architectural style in Europe, taken up
    as the template for subsequent Gothic cathedrals, but increasingly put on steroids – as demonstrated through
    the spectacular bombast of buildings such as Chartres, Reims and Orléans to name but a few. The basilica largely
    derives its current form from the 12th century, when it underwent massive renovation and expansion. The man
    responsible for this was Abbot Suger – an ambitious and charismatic monk whose religious zeal was only matched
    by his talent for economic prosperity, self promotion and predilection for all things gold. See Suger, Erwin
    Panofsky and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (1979) for a comprehensive translation of Suger's writings on the 12th century
    renovation works of the basilica. Suger, Erwin Panofsky and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey
    Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

2   Montmartre derives its name from St. Denis' matrydom, meaning 'mountain of the martyr'. Alongside St. Denis,
    St. Rusticus and St. Eluthère were also martyred and subsequently commemorated in the basilica – three
    golden reliquary caskets sit in pyramid formation at the back of the ambulatory, one for each saint.

3   NEARCH is a European Commission-funded project bringing together archaeologists and artists. The *Crawl-Space*
    project engages with four research institutes: Archaeology Department of Göteborgs Universitet; Institut National
    de Recherches Archéologiques Préventives (INRAP), France; Unité Archéologique de la Ville de Saint-Denis (UASD);
    and Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht.

4   The term performative is used to direct attention to the descriptive forms employed in this article – diary entries
    and email communications – which are, on the one hand, forms of recount and document, but are also strategic
    devices that write contingent factors and superfluous information into the project's outcomes. These descriptive
    forms operate with a double-ontology: both as a form of telling and reporting common to many research accounts,
    but also as literary form producing its own temporal stratigraphy and debitage of process.

5   According to the archaeologist Jean-Yves Breuil (INRAP Méditerranée), the birth of preventive archaeology in France
    came about in response to a range of high-profile scandals involving post-war commercial construction projects
    that had failed to properly assess or make provisions for the cultural heritage they might (and indeed did) subsequently
    unearth in the process of construction. For example, when the square in front of Notre Dame Cathedral was dug
    up for an underground car park in 1965, it was perhaps unsurprising that it revealed a rich cornucopia of ancient remains.
    In 1983, a similar thing happened during the underground extension of the Louvre under the aegis of Francois Mitterrand
    (See Bernstein 1984). These were just two of many such cases where a conflict of interests was highlighted between
    government/commercial entities and archaeology in France, leading to a dramatic change in the attitude of the general
    population towards its local cultural heritage, which had previously, along with archaeology itself, been focused on
    post-colonial territories. As a consequence, the Valletta Treaty was passed in 1992, for the first time ensuring proper legal
    protection for archaeological heritage in Europe. As Breuil says, in this sense 'preventive' literally means 'to anticipate,
    to plan, to defer... the heart of the law is not to excavate, but to preserve'. Richard Bernstein, 'Paris's Past Unearthed in Digs
    at Louvre,*' The New York Times*, Dec 4, 1984, accessed 2 April 2017, at http://www.nytimes.com/1984/12/04/science/paris-s-
    past-unearthed-in-digs-at-louvre.html.

6   INRAP (previously, Association Française d'Archéologie Nationale) is a state-run organisation in France numbering over
    two thousand archaeologists. All archaeological surveys must go through INRAP before the sites are put into tender for
    excavation with private businesses and university departments.

7   A megaproject is one which, as its name suggests, is humongous both in scale and expense, with wide-reaching (often
    irreversible) environmental, political and social impacts.

8   Following on from the Valleta Treaty, the 'polluter pays principle' (2001) is a legal form of financial compensation operating
    in most EU countries in which a developer or industrialist is responsible for potential damage to the environment, not
    the taxpayer or government. The principle enshrines the costs of waste into the costs of production. In Sweden, the location
    of Gamlestaden legally operates under the term Extended Producer Responsibility (originally introduced by Thomas
    Lindhqvist in 1990).

9   In contrast to French archaeological heritage laws, the Swedish system has been in place for an additional century or more.

10 Most popularly, the final scene of 1968's *Planet of the Apes* famously depicts Taylor (played by Charlton Heston), discovering
    a beached Statue of Liberty, and cursing the political/economic perpetrators of its fate; in the same year, the opening
    scene to *2001: A Space Odyssey* depicts apes encountering a cuboid monolith. Both scenes are concerned to present an
    archaeological time caught between past and future. Franklin J. Schaffner, *Planet of The Apes* (Twentieth Century Fox, 1968).
    Stanley Kubrick, *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1968).

11 Robert Smithson, 'A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic,' in *Robert Smithson: Collected Writings*, ed. Jack Flam
    (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 72.

12 'The future is an empirical field that does not exist' – we know that the future will unavoidably arrive, but not what that
    future will be. Cornelius Holtorf and Anders Högberg, 'Contemporary Heritage and the Future,' in *The Palgrave Handbook
    of Contemporary Heritage Research*, ed. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 509.

13 How the patina of the media might enter the message is approached interestingly by Håkan Karlsson. Håkan Karlsson,
    'Why Is There Material Culture Rather than Nothing? Heideggerian Thoughts and Archaeology,' *Global Archaeological
    Theory* (NY: Springer, 2005), 29–42. The matter is more generally approached through the aestheticisations of glitch culture.

14 See Dieter Roelstraete's 2009 e-flux article 'The Way of the Shovel: On the Archaeological Imaginary in Art', which provided
    the basis for his 2013 book of the same name. See also the exhibition at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Nov 9, 2013 –

March 9, 2014. Dieter Roelstraete, 'The Way of the Shovel: On the Archeological Imaginary in Art,' *e-flux* (2009). Accessed 2 April 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art/.

15 Michael Shanks is one of many who have drawn parallels between archaeology and land art, however he provocatively compares the archaeological process to a striptease. It could be speculated that Shanks might also retrospectively consider Mark Dion's *Tate Thames Dig* (Tate Modern, 1999) as a drag striptease performance of process archaeology. Michael Shanks, *Experiencing the Past: On the Character of Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 1991), 68–9 and 141–3.

16 See Christopher Smith's discussion of Kitty Hauser's study of O.G.S Crawford. Here, Smith discusses at once Hauser's study ofthe birth of aerial photography in the military industrial complex, its subsequent adoption by archaeology, and the integration of complex national identity narratives in the work of John Piper, Paul Nash and Graham Sutherland in the period preceding and after the Second World War. Generally, Smith's article outlines many of the historic relationships found between art and archaeology over the last 150 years. See: Christopher Smith, 'Beyond Metaphor: Archaeology as a Social and Artistic Practice,' *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 15:2–3 (2016): 270–85; Kitty Hauser, *Shadow Sites Photography, Archaeology, and the British Landscape 1927–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

17 NEARCH, itself an awkward acronym for 'New Scenarios for a Community Involved Archaeology', is often, in its enormous heterogeneity, torn between the desire for collaboration and communication, in addition to a desire for criticality.

18 The art historian and cultural theorist David Joselit introduces his 2009 essay, 'Painting Beside Itself' with a quote from the artist Martin Kippenberger: 'Simply to hang a painting on the wall and say that it's art is dreadful. The whole network is important! Even the spaghettini…When you say art, then everything possible belongs to it. In a gallery that is also the floor, the architecture, the colour of the walls'. For us equally, the entire network of trans-disciplinary encounters between art and archaeology is important. That includes: emails, introductions to gatekeepers, interns, parking tickets, property developers and high speed rail barriers, flies trapped in light fixtures and beheaded Christians. See: David Joselit, 'Painting Beside Itself,' *October* 115 (2009): 125.

19 For a post-Marxist interpretation of the iconography of the zombie in contemporary culture see: Lars Bang Larsen, 'Zombies of Immaterial Labor: The Modern Monster and the Death of Death,' *e-flux* (2010), http://www.e-flux.com/journal/15/61295/zombies-of-immaterial-labor-the-modern-monster-and-the-death-of-death/. In this context, St. Denis is the medieval precursor to the fixation on the Gothic which emerges in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The word 'satiated' is used here to denote St. Denis' paradoxical status; what Nicola Masciandaro terms 'the *double* presence that precedes his head bearing body'. See: Nicola Masciandaro, 'Non Potest Hoc Corpus Decollari: Beheading and the Impossible,' in *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in Medieval and Early Modern Imagination*, ed. Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 34.

20 In serial extension of this ventriloquised displacement, the medieval period sees St. Denis wrongly attributed authorship of the theological texts of Dionysus the Aeropagite, only for these to be later reappraised as the works of a different individual now referred to as Pseudo-Dionysus, the Aeropagite. False attribution and pseudonyms extend this Dionysian chain of broken links.

21 Luigi Moretti (1907–73) was an Italian architect noted for combining innovation and tradition. He is most famous for designing the Watergate complex in Washington DC. Between 1965 and 1972, Moretti's design for a car park beneath the Borghese Gardens was completed. In 1973-4, after Moretti's death, the site hosted the international art exhibition *Contemporanea*, including works by Joseph Beuys, Jannis Kounellis and Mario Merz, alongside music, cinema, design and architecture.

22 Marcel Duchamp, *Notes*, trans. Paul Matisse (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1983), notes 1–46.

23 In a report released by the construction company Bouygues, the presence of a rare hybrid plant called Lythrum thesioides and a species of bird called the Little Bustard affected major changes to the construction works: 'Particular care is being given to the Lythrum thesioides during the bypass project. This flowering plant was first discovered during the ecological inventory procedures carried out by RFF in July 2010 [Réseau Ferré de France was a French company which owned and maintained the French national railway network from 1997–2014]. It is only the second known occurrence of the plant in the world. Lythrum thesioides is therefore extremely rare and protected by both French law and the Bern Convention. Given the importance of this discovery, RFF has been conferring with government departments and environmental protection agencies over the best technical solutions to prevent the Nîmes and Montpellier bypass from impacting negatively on the plant's natural habitat.' See: Bouygues Construction, '*Nîmes and Montpellier bypass: Réseau Ferré de France signs public-private partnership contract with Oc'Via for the construction of France's first mixed freight / passenger high speed line,*' 2012. https://www.bouygues-construction.com/sites/default/files/dp_signature_cnm_28.06.12_eng.pdf.

Joey Bryniarska and Martin Westwood are two visual artists who live and work in London. Their independent practices have formed around the themes and temporal relationships of mediation, technology and reuse. Their collaborative research stems from a mutual fascination in the properties of historical value; how cultural and historical artefacts are produced, mediated and administrated. In 2013 they were awarded a NEARCH Fellowship by the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. Both are currently lecturers in Fine Art at Central Saint Martins in London.

On Leaving the Archive

Avner Ofrath

I.

I first came to the archive in Saint-Denis by underground train from central Paris, racing underneath neighbourhoods, monuments and highways of which I was to remain ignorant for weeks to come. It was, in fact, by mistake that I first tried to join the dots and walked through downtown Saint-Denis to the northern neighbourhoods of Paris, having found the archive closed on a beautiful Saturday morning. Freed from the pressure to exploit every moment of my precious time, I gazed at the archive's building, almost arbitrarily positioned in a compound neighboured by the town's bus terminal, a brutalist campus and a series of dilapidated terraced houses. Reluctant to vanish again in the dark and airless tunnels, I tried to find my way downtown. No sign, no map – let alone an urban flow of any sort – are there to lead you from the new site of the French national archives to its neighbouring urban centre. 'Saint-Denis welcomes the National archives', declares a humble sign installed by the municipality between the metro station and the archive. But there is nothing in the archive's interaction with its surroundings to suggest the feeling to be mutual. In fact, Saint-Denis is not even mentioned in the name of the site, which is instead named 'Site Pierrefitte' after the municipality in whose confines it was built, just on the edge of Saint-Denis. Though officially a mere administrative matter, it is hard not see this as a deliberate attempt to avoid any reference to Saint-Denis – a place more often associated in media representations with criminality and violence, than with its history and culture. In comparison, the neighbouring university, Paris VIII Sain-Denis, has the French capital in its name, even though built far outside Paris's municipal borders.

There is no lack of heritage or sights of historical interest in Saint-Denis. It is, indeed, a most appropriate seat for the modern and contemporary holdings of the national archives, encapsulating much of the country's distant and recent past with its gothic royal burial basilica, the national football stadium, and a long history of industrialisation and immigration from France's former colonies. But it is only this latter facet of Saint-Denis that the attentive visitor will encounter in the archive, where persisting divisions of ethnicity and class determine who will write history and who will hand over the dossiers. Having come to the archive to study colonial Algeria and its reverberations back in France, I had to admit the unexpected closure of the archive on a Saturday morning to be almost as revealing as the long days spent

inside it: a most useful exercise in situating the archive in the context of its built environment, societal order and public memory.

The site's indifference to its immediate environment imposes itself all too effectively upon the visitor. Separated from the street by a high steel fence, the compound is accessed through a narrow gate. Crossing it, one finds oneself amidst what resembles a parking lot, lacking any greenery, shadow or dialogue with the street. As if to enhance this impression, a shallow pool is situated between the cafeteria's terrace and the fence separating the compound from the neighbouring terraced houses. In the quiet of this residential suburb, one hears only a rooster calling from one of these houses' backyards – an almost subversive sound. Complete silence is enforced upon crossing the security check and entering the large reception area of the archive: well-lit and zealously functional – no exhibition vitrines, no pictures on the walls, no attempt to make any use of this vast space beyond what is necessary. A narrow corridor of glass and metal leads from the reception area to the reading room, not before a low glass gate opens at the signal of the reader's electronic card. You're in. You have left behind you the outside world and are now in what strives to be a sterile, neutral space.

Some fifty tables are arranged in orderly rows in this room, each designed for four readers – but one rarely shares a table with more than one person. Each seat is equipped with a trolley with which to move heavy boxes from the main counter to the desk. Practical, undecorated and simple, the reading room resembles, more than anything else, the aesthetics of a Swedish furniture retailer. It first seemed to me like an awkward architectural choice for the site of a state-archive – no intelligible style, no symbolism, no celebration of glory past or present. But in fact, this functionalism appears appropriate in light of what does take place in that archive – of what takes place in *every* archive, judging from what I have observed thus far.

II.

I have so far used the word 'archive' in different ways which are, often, difficult to distinguish. The OED defines 'archive, n. (usu. pl.)' as a 'Place in which public records are kept; records so kept'. The French *Petit Robert* dictionary assigns a similar double-meaning to 'archive', only in the reverse order.[1] In a wider, metaphorical sense, 'archive' (mostly in the singular form) denotes that which constitutes a collective memory, a corpus of knowledge composed and shared by a group of people. Jacques Derrida's seminal essay *Archive Fever* (*Mal d'Archive*, 1995) uses the word even more abstractly, applying it in his discussion of Freud to one's most private realms and the act of unearthing repressed memories; in one of his most daring metaphors, Derrida wonders whether circumcision might be seen as an archive of a sort.[2]

A thorough discussion of how 'archive' has acquired its figurative sense – particularly in critical theory, and much less so in the discipline of history – lies beyond the scope of these reflections. But I dare speculate that this development has been encouraged by the growing critical engagement with state-archives as institutions constituting, preserving and demonstrating power. Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* is but the most pertinent coinage, in this context, of the multi-faceted quest to deconstruct the organisation, regulation and

transmission of knowledge. Inspired by this endeavour – any attempt to mention a representative range of authors or works would be mere namedropping, as I am not sufficiently familiar with many of these – a growing number of historians and anthropologists have started to treat the archive as a subject rather than a source, as Ann-Laura Stoler has aptly phrased it.[3] 'Archive' as an institution has become a highly-charged term, often identified with authority as such, and the very idea that an archive can be a source of knowledge or historical understanding has become highly controversial. This observation may be almost trivial to those working in many fields of critical theory. But many historians are struggling to reconcile critical understandings of the state-archive with the necessities of the discipline, to develop a constructive approach to what is at once a source of authority and the potential to challenge it – as I am seeking to do here.

Strikingly, the Saint-Denis site – both its functionalist architecture and its indifference to its surroundings – embraces the dissolution of the archive as a significant institution. Not evoking any narrative, not laying claim to any authority over historical truth, it seems to withdraw from a long-established tradition of the archive as a pillar of the nation and its memory, succumbing instead to a notion of the archive as a mere depository.[4]

This development is not exclusively the result of the site's architecture. Rather, it is partly due to the rapid digitalisation of archival catalogues. On my first day here, I was advised by an archivist to set the printed inventories aside and type keywords into the catalogue's search engine instead. Indeed, browsing printed inventories often seems to be a waste of time – not a minor concern for visitors on short research trips, or for researchers expected to make quantifiable progress yielding a steady flow of publications. But what is lost when the slow, haphazard search through inventories is dropped in favour of automatic filtering is context: other issues that may surface from the dossiers, or the frequency with which a certain topic is mentioned compared with others. It was by browsing an inventory of a colonial archive while searching for documentation of the settlement of families from Alsace-Lorraine in Algeria that I learned about plans to recruit settlers from Canada, South Africa and China. The significance of this seemingly irrelevant knowledge is immense: it is the difference between the exception and the rule, an anecdote and a case study of a wider phenomenon. Our use of search engines instead of inventories is not unlike the way in which navigation systems have come to replace maps: by optimising our search and minimising our mistakes, we necessarily see less of the deviations and dead-ends around us.

But the site in Saint-Denis embraces the dissolution of the archive in its own particular way. This is most of all the case in the archive's reading room ('*Salle de consultation*'). Despite its name, neither the design nor the equipment of this rooms invites reading. This can be seen most clearly in the lack of reference works – dictionaries, lexicons, atlases, biographical dictionaries – which are abundant in most archives and libraries. Their absence means that scholarly engagement with the sources – their deciphering, understanding and contextualising – must take place elsewhere, where such references are available. Even the black colour of the desks favours photography more than reading. A space for visitors to amass material rather than consult it, this so-called reading room conditions what I think is a major, if subtle shift in the way historians approach sources: the dissolution of the archive as a collection with its own logic.

By reproducing documents, we unmake the archive in which we were working – its classification, prioritisation, hierarchisation – and create our own, alternative archives, arranged according to our own questions. I look at my hard-drive folders of documents photographed at the French national and colonial archives and see, for instance 'Muslims' political exclusion' – not a category or a language one would find in state-archives. In her book *The Archive Thief*, Lisa Leff traces the story of Jewish historian Zosa Szajkowski who, during World War II and in the wake of the Holocaust, stole tens of thousands of documents from state-archives in France and sold them to Jewish research institutes in the USA and Israel. Putting aside the ethical and legal questions around his actions, this extreme example demonstrates how shifts in narratives and arguments were brought about by taking documents from one archive and reclassifying them in another:

> Selecting…only what had to do with Jews, the collector-historian had rearranged these papers for his own purposes. And he had not stopped with merely gathering these Jewish documents together. He had organised them into an archive, dividing them into the folders he had marked according to an idiosyncratic filing system only he understood.[5]

Reproducing is obviously a very different act from stealing, as no archive is damaged when its material is reproduced. But it is precisely this difference that helps see how the blessing of creating one's alternative archive can become a curse. Regardless of how one may judge him, Szajkowski veritably *created* new archives with their own logic, thus conditioning the emergence of new narratives and theses. Digital reproduction, by contrast, does not replace the structure of a state-archive by any other logic. Though it certainly allows for silenced voices and new narratives to be expressed more articulately, creating one's own archive does not confront predominant arranging principles of knowledge.

I do not mean to overestimate the coherence of the archive as a collection, nor do I wish to overlook the problematic nature of state-archives. Gaps, omissions and at times outright erasures occur in every archive. Even more commonly, chaos and arbitrary archiving choices make it difficult to infer any pattern at all. And yet, a collection in the archive may entail information on a source's context which a single document cannot possibly provide. The organisation of records along certain categories or the density of documentation in a certain area can prove particularly illuminating in the quest to understand, say, colonial mentalities and policies. As Ann-Laura Stoler has argued, doing so becomes difficult when the 'grain of the archive' is no longer visible:

> How can students of colonialisms so quickly and confidently turn to readings 'against the grain' without moving along their grain first?…If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premise that archival production is itself both a process and a powerful ideology of rule, then we need not only to brush against the archive's received categories. We need to read from its regularities, from its logic of recall, from its densities and distributions, from its consistencies of misinformation, omission and mistake – *along* the archival grain.[6]

It is precisely this invisibility of the archive's logic that is enhanced by the site at question – a depository avoiding any interaction with its immediate surrounding, not encouraging any dialogue with its own space or any engagement with its bottomless collection as such.

<center>III.</center>

I have started this text by describing the pleasure of unmaking the detachment between the archive and its environment. Indeed, that was the experience that had sparked these reflections in the first place. In the weeks and months since then, I have tried to understand this pleasure, this sense of satisfaction, of doing something significant simply by wandering through a small city to the north of Paris. Writing an early version of this text over a long winter break spent in my childhood room, I could not arrive at anything beyond general observations on history as a living discipline, on exploring the city as a sort of conversation amid advancing social atomisation. I could certainly sense that the setting around me – I was spending my days in West Jerusalem, some ten minutes' walk from the Damascus Gate and the 1967 border – constrained my thought, my insights on the writing of colonial history as a theoretical venture. I was also aware that, by opening boxes unearthed from dusty cupboards and sorting my grandfather's diaries and letters, I was creating yet another archive. What I failed to appreciate was how, with the passing of time, a childhood room becomes an archive itself, with books, posters, CDs and notebooks constituting an uncannily complete collection. What I was missing, then, was distance between myself and the questions at stake. Or, to use a more elegant word: perspective.

After all, historical writing (and any other writing, I would argue – but that is a different question) is all about perspective or, better said, a game of shifting perspectives. Sources never speak for themselves. They gain their meaning form the questions through which they are viewed, the contexts in which they are discussed, other sources alongside which they are read. Archival research, crucial though it often may be, is but the first step in the process of critical engagement with the past. What happens in this process is a transformation of meaningless sources into a series of arguments, a transformation that occurs as we leave the archive behind.

For me, studying the troubled past of colonial Algeria and its presence in metropolitan France, the streets between the French national archives and one of the country's most thoroughly othered *banlieues* was a most fitting setting to allow for this transformation to unfold. At once distant and omnipresent, visible and unintelligible, the enduring presence of the past in this urban seam of Paris-to-Saint-Denis helped me both to reconstitute a dissolved, detached archive and to leave it behind me. As the distinction between the depository and the records is rapidly disappearing and our tailor-made collections follow us wherever we please, leaving the archive – that is, seeing it in perspective – is perhaps less trivial a task than it first seems.

1   The definition in the *Petit Robert* reads: '*Archives. n. f. pl*...Collection de pièces, titres, documents, dossiers anciens...
    Par ext.: Lieu où les archives sont déposées, conservées.'
2   Jacques Derrida, *Mal d'archive. Une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), 39-44. On 'archive' as metaphor for
    memory see: Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2002), 68.
3   Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,' in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social
    Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: University
    of Michigan Press, 2006), 269–71.
4   On the national archives in modern France see: Jennifer Milligan, '"What is an archive?" in the History of Modern France,'
    in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 159–83.
5   Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust*
    (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 15.
6   Stoler, 'Colonial Archive,' 272.

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How does it feel when you put it on?

When they say *you're putting it on*, they mean you're faking. They mean to say your outward sign does not reveal an inward grace but instead belies a deceit, affecting others. *She's putting it on* they say after you, agreeing your accent is plastic.

They call your accent plastic because it is a cheap imitation, and everyone knows a voice from the city-centre is authentic, original, true. It is acknowledged,

universally, as authentic. The accents of the outlying towns might smack of this pure version of voice, they might have a hint of it, but approximations are diluted, untrustworthy, and they must be denounced as such. *You're not from the city, you're putting it on.*

The city is the source.

Of course the city is the source. The canals and railways lead there, were built to carry goods and labour to it. The city's where the power sits, where all the roads lead, and where deals are done and names are made.

The city is a site of industrial prosperity and industrial-scale horror. It's marked in the architectures built on colonial

atrocity. City halls, churches and great houses made of stone, are embellished with and shaped by a steady stream of blood.

And life in the city can still be described as poverty crushed up against prosperity—yes, the city is authentic.

Is it long histories of suffering and conflict that earn the accent from the city its authority? Dialect as a sonic artefact that lays historic claim to geography? Or, the weaponising of an accent, defiant and validated by endless class segregation? If so, it is a confused and powerful nostalgia for origins that institutes its authority.

Vocal affectations result from the need for social cohesion, and are symptomatic of its lack. Accents are influence, become pronounced or are neutralised in the football stand, or the first weeks of college, or when you've moved and come to live in an increasingly nationalistic country.

The sound of your voice betrays your belonging, and can trouble your claim to authenticity, to being an authentic person.

So how does it feel when you put it on?
It feels great (/risky).

INTRODUCTION

Though deserving of its reputation as a masterpiece of ethnographic film-making, Robert Flaherty's 1934 *Man of Aran* reproduces—and indeed initiates—several of the characteristic problems of the anthropological documentary. Primary among these is the

O'Curraidhin (2010) have already produced notable commentaries. Instead, I will suggest that the uncritical valorisation of ethnographic fidelity often forestalls the interpretive

imperative of analysing the ethnographic film as a cultural document in its own right. To

Lads of Aran is a nine-page visual essay composed of photographs, illustrations, text and screenshots. It was initially structured during a performance-lecture and later reworked by transcription and collage, before it was finally formalised with publication design software, Adobe InDesign.

In early 2015 editor Emmy Beber invited me to develop research I was doing on the lad as a figure, for a volume on writers' bodies. I proposed that the lad was not any particular body but instead was a figure that any person might enact by the combination of specific cultural signs. As an organising principle for an investigation of such a cultural figure, I would consider the lad fetish in contemporary gay culture—a fetish drawn purely from the image. Emmy offered to travel up to Leeds from London to talk more about a contribution to the book, and kindly agreed to model for a photoshoot I'd planned. On the day I brought some sports clothes—blues, greys, red, white, black—and we took the bus to Ilkley and hiked up the moor.

The afternoon was an experiment in image making. I wanted to take the typically urban lad figure and plant them out in the vastness of a moorland landscape. The camera was a means to study what I could see—the wind caught, bulbous in the hood of a windbreaker; thin polyester, ruched at the knee, set against wet limestone; whitened, dry mud on trainer toe. The photographic framing of course facilitates a study of detail, but inversely, the act of producing a photograph also evidenced that the image was already before the camera—the scene had been composed.

One set of materials (the lad) had been introduced to another (the moor). Through composition I was forming a text, one that went on to become a film much later. But I wasn't there to make a film, and that isn't really the object of this account.

During the subsequent months I made collages. Still composing but introducing found jpgs of lads to high res scans of pre-Raphaelite landscape, *Cuillin Ridge*, or films stills from Tarkovsky's *Stalker* or Flaherty's *Man of Aran*. The collages were proposals.

I also spent a week in the country reading essays on ethnography, pop culture, gender studies and semiology, and I failed to write any academic prose. But drew many successful research maps. Successful because they articulated my research, they set things in motion, circulating information in non-linear ways. Whatever text was forming, shifting, it would use a paratactic mode of production—placing objects within the same plane, activating reading as a form of composition.

In the bath I realise there's a certain belatedness to this account of a work. The chronology is skewed. Due to editorial and publishing schedules, the book *Lads of Aran* was made for is not yet published, while this account will be published months earlier. You might say the work is still in rehearsal. Still in the dressing room, being pieced together by the designer from collections of image files. *Lads of Aran* has not yet premiered, hasn't lived yet—but it has had a long life. This account is an early eulogy, then. Something ready to go once it has lived, and died.

This bath I'm taking is a break from InDesign. My posture is poor and physical tension becomes visible in rash design decisions and terse prose. Noting this, I often use a manual typewriter in my writing practice, to generate an aphoristic urgency— the laborious action works pain into the finger joints and this bleeds into the structure. But now, in the bath with soap and water, I remind myself this was a method to produce a style. Not all I write must adhere to restriction and pain.

I stretch out, I relax and allow the confusion of times to hang about me as I perform the ritual preparations of bath-time, which is always, reassuringly, the present.

And the image of preparing a body is apt. When the work *Lads of Aran* was in its proofing stage, printed out and pinned to the studio wall, a friend commented on the height of the work as it was designed and tacked up in column. The visual essay was six foot tall, practically lad-sized, so I began to think of the work as a material body, to see where it would get me. I laid it out for exhibition in an oak-stained vitrine, and in the document's head-to-toe arrangement, readers were required to walk backward. Readers looked like creeps at a casket, regarding a body too close, too long. The text was lifeless in that vitrine, the printer's bleed and trim marks pointed toward the life it would have once distributed, in circulation, published.

If its life would be in publication, then it wasn't yet dead in that vitrine. This account is then an overture, to a belated arrival on stage, after long periods of rehearsal. Movement has marked the life of this work; the work has lived in movements. Photographs on Ilkley Moor became collages, became performance, became text, became installation, and will become publication.

Back to just after the collages, it was summer, I'd been asked to perform at an event in Dublin that showcased writing in visual art. I thought to make a performance that would serve to structure the essay, *Lads of Aran*, which was at that time not yet composed.

So with two borrowed projectors and a handful of slides I'd had made back in the UK, I inserted lads into scenes of pre-modern life out on Ireland's Atlantic coast. The stills from *Man of Aran* were dim, grainy screenshots of the 1927 ethnodocumentary and the found jpegs of lads were bright from iPhones on a Saturday afternoon on the town. After hauling the projectors round to obtain adequate sizing and clarity for the collages, I let each new composition sink in. Studying the image would direct me toward notes on an appropriate record card from those spread across the floor like a tarot deck.

Some quoted sections from critic Craig Owens' essay on allegory in art, others detailed James Carney's semiotic reading of *Man of Aran*'s structure, and there were cards full with anecdotes, narrative examples, and my own personal recollections. The operation was to be led by the preliminary compositions to appropriate linguistic material that would build it up. I also took my cues from the visceral shifts of attention in the audience, and it was by this procession that the essay was to be structured— a parataxis made live; everything in the same temporal plane of the performance. This logic would carry on through to the later stages of publication design.

But before I got to design, I went through the motions of making a transcript, neutralising tone and stripping out gesture. The successes of the Dublin performance came from bodily relation to the slide projectors and record cards, and my proximity to the audience. The hypnotic sound of slides changing, my laboured breath in the lapel mic, the differing registers of reading and speaking, and the shape and tension of my body comporting itself around the notes on the floor. This paralinguistic information was absent from the transcript, but making the transcription, and finding it lacking, brought home to me the centrality of articulation in my practice—how things move when brought together, how they might rub and cause discomfort or enable great leaps.

subjectivity;
subjectivity;

subjectivity;

mass media ... In a more general way, one has to admit that every individual and social group conveys its own system of modelising subjectivity; that is, a certain cartography — composed of cognitive references as well as mythical, ritual and symptomatological references — with which it positions itself in relation to its affects and anguishes, and attempts to manage its inhibitions and drives.

. cartography

. cartography
. cartography

discursive patterns. I propose, on the contrary, to treat the heroic temperament as unified in its contradictions and, indeed, as constituted by those very contradictions. The unity of Herakles, then, should be sought less in a biographical narrative—in spite of the interesting work Dumézil has done along these lines—than in an *ethos*: a character, or better, a figure.

A figure rather than a character. Not an interior whose hidden deviations might simply be exposed to the light, but an actor constituted by his acts, the exterior of an exceptional body. By insisting on this defini-

figure

exterior

figure

exterior

figure

exterior
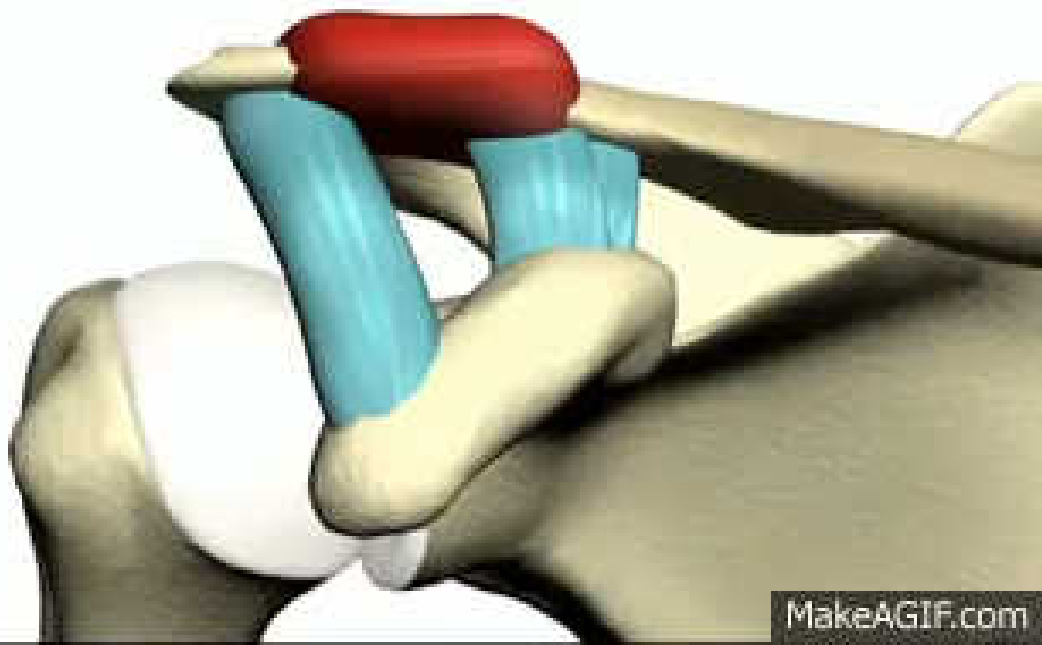
A visitor who had, during their adolescence, hung around with a football casual firm. They had taken a peripheral role in the group violence, and instead made up for it with quick wit. They were a boy trying to not be a fag.

A resident who had, during their adolescence, hung around with a gang of local older lads. They took a peripheral role in sexual activity, and instead made up for it by rolling joints. They were a girl trying to not be a slag.

Normal
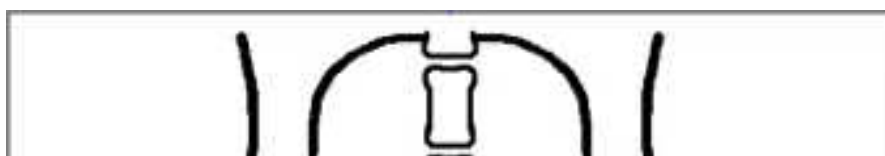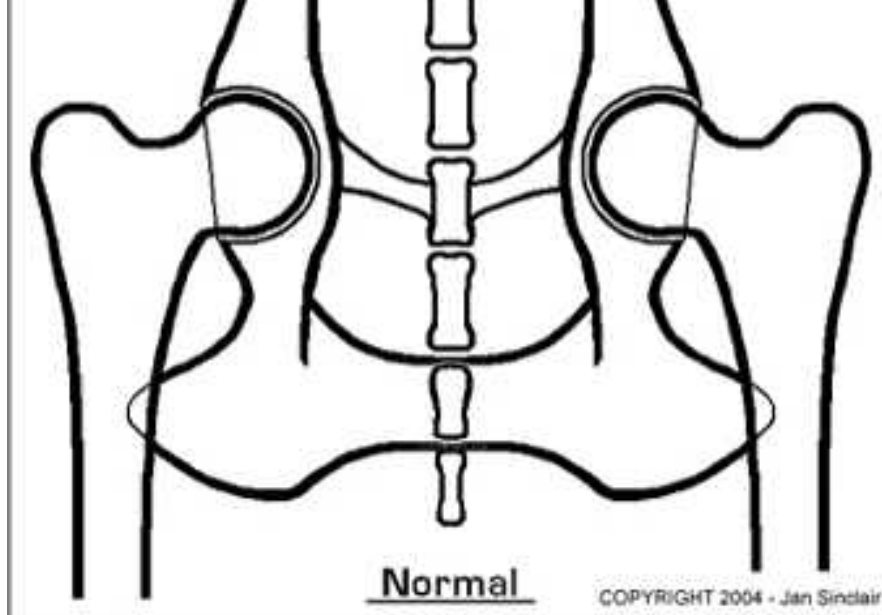
The form was there on the table and it had to be signed. To submit *Lads of Aran* for examination I had to confirm that four thousand words minimum were my own words, or were otherwise accounted for in an appropriate citation system. The text in the visual essay was mostly screenshots, and even when I had entered characters in InDesign's text boxes, I'd only done so for eight hundred words. I hadn't met the standardising requirements, but more importantly my framework was an attempt to democratise and put into circulation all sources and forms of information, while demonstrating my research method and to some extent illustrating the assemblage of the lad figure. A system of citation didn't seem appropriate, and after all I'd been encouraged to develop a critical and experimental approach to writing. I couldn't sign the form in good faith, and I couldn't risk a non-submission on an already too expensive degree.

I conceded to an explanatory appendix ,and brief bibliography but still I felt the appended documents inflected the voice of my text. I was required to put them on, and put them on well, so that the academic accent could be recognised and sanctioned by the academy. The bibliography hierarchised forms of knowledge sources, approving published references and refusing to acknowledge the anecdotal and sensorial coordinates in the visual essay's movement. The appendix explained an essay that illustrated it. The politics of the work felt undone. But perhaps this is part of the academic examination, authenticating what convincingly has its voice, instituting authority through long histories of exclusion.

My submission was accepted and the exam was passed, but more importantly *Lads of Aran* will be published this summer, in the volume for which it was written; it will meet its audience, perform, articulate, move.

Art and Criminology of the Border:
The Making of the Immigration Detention Archive

Mary Bosworth and Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll

Introduction

This article describes a cross-disciplinary art project based at the Centre for Criminology at the University of Oxford, in which the two authors came together to create and work with items produced by immigration detainees. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll joined Mary Bosworth on a year long residency in July 2015 to work with and extend the immigration detention archive that Mary had established in 2013. She ran film and Photoshop classes for detainees, took documentary photographs, video and sound, digitised and catalogued the growing archive at Oxford. Khadija also made a short film using interviews, paperwork and drawings from the collection, and wrote and directed a play inspired by it.

Gathered together as a physical collection, the immigration detention archive contains a range of items including detainee drawings, paintings, papier mâché and mudrock models, origami and jewelry, and documentation. In addition to pieces produced by staff and detainees, the collection includes photographs and fieldnotes made by a small group of researchers directed by Mary. It is part of an on-going long-term research project on everyday life in immigration detention that commenced in 2009, when Mary first obtained permission to enter these sites. Since that time, she has remained the only academic in the UK who is allowed to enter them freely. She is able to extend this access to students and researchers working with her.[1]

The Context

At the time of writing, around 3500 men and women are held each day in one of nine Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs, which are also referred to as detention centres, removal centres and deportation centres) scattered across the UK.[2] Most IRCs are located in the South East of the country, clustered around the two main airports of London. An additional sum of people may be held for brief periods in Short Term Holding Facilities (STHFs), many of which are located in ports and airports. They may also be confined in police stations, mental hospitals and in holding rooms in any Asylum reporting centres. Finally, those who have completed a prison term may be held post-sentence in prison, under Immigration Act powers, until they are either released, deported, or relocated to an IRC.

Although there is a national immigration detention system, there is no sole national provider. Rather, the Home Office contracts out the management of these sites of confinement to different providers. At the time of writing, there are five different custodial businesses running these institutions: HM Prison Service, Mitie, GEO, G4S and Serco.

Foreign citizens may be detained following a prison sentence, or for an immigration violation such as overstaying their visa or entering the country without papers. They may also be detained for identification purposes, or while their asylum claim is underway. The vast majority of those detained (90%) are men, and most are from former British colonies or sites of recent conflict. The top five nationalities of those leaving detention in March 2016 were: Pakistan, India, Albania, Bangladesh and Nigeria.[3]

One of the defining characteristics of the British detention system is that, unlike the rest of the EU, there is no statutory upper limit to the period for which a person can be detained, unless they are pregnant or if they are under 18 and held with their parents. Members of those protected groups can only be held for 72 hours, or, with Ministerial approval, for as long as a week. Although the vast majority of people are either removed or released within four months, and indeed the majority of them go much sooner, each centre houses people for much longer.[4]

In part because of the uncertain duration of detention, IRCs run a limited regime of activities. In a system where around half the occupants leave within a month, it can be difficult to plan a series of sustained workshops or events. Language and cultural barriers, as well as the high levels of anxiety and depression exhibited by the population, can all be obstacles to their participation. Such matters are further compounded by cost-cutting exercises and, most crucially, by the logic of a system of expulsion. If detainees are destined for elsewhere (even when 50% are not removed), it is difficult to justify spending public funds on their education, work or training.

Under these circumstances, IRCs have developed a pared-down provision of services, offering access to the internet, gym, English as a second language, and art and craft. Most also have a 'cultural kitchen', which detainees can book to spend time together to cook their own food. There are usually some limited opportunities for paid work, in cleaning or serving food, while some centres are experimenting with offering limited online qualifications in a restricted number of educational offerings.

For staff and detainees, the lack of activities and the rapid turnover of the population is boring and painful. For the researcher, it can be challenging.[5] Gaining trust is particularly difficult, compounded by linguistic barriers and cultural differences. Detainees often have poor mental health, and rates of depression are extremely high.[6]

It is common practice in custodial research to spend time in the education block. These areas, which, in detention, include the art and media rooms (Fig. 1 and 2), are usually somewhat more relaxed than elsewhere in the institution. They may be staffed by 'civilian' teachers, or by officers who advocate a more 'rehabilitative' or 'therapeutic' approach to custody, than

their more security-concerned colleagues. The archive has its roots in this aspect of research, as Mary gravitated towards the art rooms as places where she could have quiet conversations in a more relaxed environment.

1. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Media Room with trompe-l'œil of London skyline in Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre*, 2015, digital photograph, Immigration Detention Archive Oxford.

2. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Art Room of Campsfield House*, 2015, video still from *Artists in Residence*, Immigration Detention Archive Oxford.

Art Rooms in Immigration Detention

Although all IRCs have art rooms, they vary somewhat in their provision and instruction. The two that were most important for this project were located in Campsfield House, outside Oxford, and Colnbrook, adjacent to Heathrow Terminal 5. Whereas Campsfield House employs a full-time, trained art teacher, Colnbrook predominantly relies on the labour of a selection of detainee custody officers. The teacher at Campsfield House emphasises artistic methods, while Colnbrook has a range of equipment for media and music, much of which is under-utilised. At the time of the research, the part-time art teacher in Colnbrook largely offered the men colouring pencils, as well as access to a sewing machine.[7]

The art room is more purgatory than Zen in its décor. Swathed in flags from the multicolour of nationalities and poorly affixed artworks, this has *horror vacui*: the fear of emptiness expressed by filling entire surfaces with drawings. The effect is not calming, and is amplified by the noisy radio and din of different conversations echoing over the cheap partition walls.

Nevertheless, detainees speak approvingly of these spaces. The materials provided seem to absorb at least some of their free-floating fears. Some can lose themselves in the details of their project, relaxing from the anxieties of their immigration case. The rhetoric of redemptive self-improvement justifies these sites, even as their staff are often the first to be deployed when problems arise elsewhere.

The images and artefacts in the archive challenge the traditional divide between modernist definitions of artistic freedom (which also underpins ideas in art therapy), and the culturally embedded practises of crafting gifts. The Oxford collection began with a bunch of origami flowers and a large swan given to Mary by women in the Yarl's Wood Centre, followed a ring and some birds she made in the art room at the Tinsley House centre. Such items predominate in these spaces, where most participants turn their hand at craftwork for the very first time. Unused to 'spare' time, or 'leisure', people in detention turn to activities they may have never done before, or left long ago in their childhood. While most of them are untrained, they are sometimes joined by craftsmen, jewellers, or weavers, who had sought new opportunities in Britain, away from the tasks of their fathers and their fathers' fathers. Still others, just a handful, are academically trained.

A striking example in the archive can be found in the work of one Chinese man who was held in Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre. While writing this piece, we struggled to reconcile the conventions of our two disciplines, namely criminology and art practice and thory. His case in many respects captures the potential and the tension in this kind of cross-disciplinary project. For Mary, his name had to be withheld, as we had not obtained his permission to use it, because he had already been deported. For Khadija, naming him returned him his agency, lost by his confinement, honouring him as an artist, rather than 'another research subject'. As a compromise, we settled on the first part of his name, Fang.

Detained in 2012, Fang became 'the most enthusiastic artist that Campsfield would ever have', according to the institution's newsletter. Profiled in a document produced for internal circulation only, Fang was asked about how he saw his future with his artistic skills from art school in China. 'I would like to do better in future to improve my current skill if I have the opportunity here in the UK',[8] he replied. We were permitted to copy the interview for our collection, on the condition that we taped over the photograph of the artist himself.

Fang painted the Queen and Prince Charles, before turning to Prime Minister David Cameron. He sent them their portraits with a letter setting out his case for British citizenship. Perceiving that horse portraits also appealed to the ruling classes, he painted horse heads for good measure. His works have the photorealism of press photographs and the brilliant authenticity of a perfected mimicry. His skills, we were told, were acquired from working in China as a counterfeiter.

As a recent conference on *Faking, Forging, Counterfeiting* stated, although the visual impact of counterfeits contrasts with their negative connotation, they are still considered as fraud, faken – shadows of a creative act. There is a great irony, hence, in using photorealism to prove the artistry and authenticity necessary to be a skilled economic migrant. Yet forgeries can also be an 'embodiment of an aesthetic patriotism', and Fang's portraits can be read as interpretations of the press photographs on which he based his paintings.[9] In his images, the establishment show the harsh public face presented to the press. It is the dignified, official icon of the queen that Fang chooses to represent, not the paparazzi's scoop of her eating from plastic Tupperware in private. She is a decorated and upright figurehead, with the raised eyebrow of a judge in action. Like many others in detention, Fang assumed she has power in the UK, the way a hierarchical figurehead might. Of course, he was mistaken.

3. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, *Boardroom of Campsfield House*, 2016, digital photograph on poster, 84 x 118 cm, Immigration Detention Archive Oxford.

Fang's portraits are not uncontroversial in the detention centre. While the Queen sits proudly in the centre's boardroom (Fig. 3), David Cameron has been returned, unwanted, to the art room. 'It was an election year', we were informed, and like the BBC, if the centre were to hang a portrait of the incumbent, they would have needed to represent the other political parties as well.

This photograph is from a series of posters made by Khadija, with Fang's letters in parafictional form.[10] The text was recreated from interviews about the letters Fang wrote to accompany his paintings (the originals remain with the recipients while the replies were taken by Fang when he was deported). In them, the polite replies from Charles and the Queen are recreated to form a sequence. Apparently, it all ended after Fang sent his portrait and letter to David Cameron. He was never seen again, deported once the gift arrived at number 10.

According to the art teacher, many of the men seek to make a perfect, realistic image, and easily become frustrated with the process, failures, and naivety of the drawings they produce. A clear image, a future where there is a sun shining on an English Garden, they will sign (and perhaps more likely take with them from the art room when they leave). What is left in these art rooms are piles of unfinished pictures that have frustrated their makers, or do not fit into their restricted luggage home. Those we watch in their endeavours are almost always producing gifts for their girlfriends and mothers. Their items are included in the digital version of the archive as documentary photographs, while the objects themselves are mailed out or passed over in the visits hall.

During the workshops in Colnbrook IRC, Khadija took portraits of the residents when they requested them, even though she was subsequently unable to share them with the men.[11] Images of empty visits halls, or of abandoned objects, exhibit only the biography of material culture that, it has been argued, 'emerged as a response to the 1980s crisis of representation and the deeper postcolonial critiques that accompanied this crisis'.[12] As Severin Fowles has also pointed out, as it became more difficult to study and make claims about non-Western people, anthropologists and scholars in related disciplines began to explore the advantages of treating non-human objects as quasi-human subjects. Things proved safer to study than people and the popularity of 'thing theory' grew, at least in part, for this very reason. 'More importantly, the analytical shift of focus from people to things had the effect of salvaging – and, indeed, greatly amplifying – the representational authority of Western scholars at the precise moment when that authority seemed to be evaporating'.[13]

The Sites, and the Play Off-Site

External border controls require, generate and reflect internal ones. An IRC is both a site within the nation state and a means of ejecting people from it. For those people crossing borders without documents, the detention centre is always a potential destination, unless they can prove their right to remain.

By creating the archive, we hoped to generate new engagements with these sites of confinement. Documents and artefacts lend themselves to different uses than words and testimonies. The digitisation and projection of them in video literally brings to light otherwise largely invisible objects. While some may stand alone, others need interpretation. In the back and forth between word and image, the images provide an untranslated immediacy for the conceptual frameworks construed in language.

The collection grew in response to the inadequacy of words and arguments. Fieldwork is tiring and emotionally draining. Art promises a more direct emotional response, affective impact on the viewer, and therapy for the maker. Khadija sought to dramatise the experience of being inside in a performative script that obliquely interrogates the system responsible, gesturing to the invisible, inviting people in. This was rehearsed in a pilot video, posters, slide projection, lectures, and then expanded in a play that premiered on December 2, 2016.

The play, *ImIgrazie: In the Shadows*, focuses on the feeling of despair in detention, the experience of time and waiting, anger and protest, propaganda and politics. It took these core challenges in the experience of detention, and drew them into a shadow play, enacted by puppets and people, with live music improvised with the enlivenment of the shadowpuppet world. The first scene opens with a haunting Macassar flute, and the last closes with a song Gandrung, a mantra used on the other side of the sea border of Australia before a journey, anticipating arrival and return. The first puppet, a hairy angel, arrives with a poem whispered into it, to bring it to life:

It is not, it is not	es ist nicht
it is not enough to be	es ist nicht genug
to be here,	[echo: hier zu sein]
to be paused, to be invisible, obsolescent	
it is not enough to be silent,	[echo: still zu sein, unsichtbar zu sein]
Not in pure darkness nor real sunlight	
Neither black nor white	Weder Schwarz noch Weiss
I am the shadow of whiteness, of	
lightening, of whitening	Ich bin der Schatten der Weisheit, doch weiss nicht, waise zu sein
and so the shadows came to Bern	so sind die Schatten nach Bern gekommen

The script is in German, English and Bahasa Indonesian. It had a double premier, in the Konzerttheatre Bern in March 2017, and the Pesta Boneka Fesival in Jogjakarta, following our development of the script with the Swiss writer Jurg Halter and Indonesian composer J. Mo'ong Santoso Pribadi. The cast of puppet characters and the host of instruments were made in Indonesia out of recycled waste materials. Gongs made gas bottles, bagpipes of plumbing offcuts, a biscuit tin sitar, a PVC pipe elephant trunk roaring, flute of plastic waste, toothbrush guitar fret, broken window pane gamelan. These are not visible in *In the Shadows*, only audible: the recycled waste is a material echo of displaced people, discarded immigration requests.

4. Khadija von Zinnenburg Caroll, video still from *[Great Britain] – Interview & Highlight Performance*, 2016, available at: http://www.oarplatform.com/art-criminology-border-making-immigration-detention-archive/.

It was only far from the UK research sites that this play, *ImIgrazie: In the Shadows*, could begin to develop a response free from the rules set by the residency inside the sites of detention. Shadow puppets have long been used as propaganda imparted to the multilingual masses of the archipelago of Indonesia. For instance, in Indonesian puppetry (*Wayang Kulit*) during the Soharto regime, there was an hour interval in the epic story that was devoted to propaganda about the dictatorship. It was entertaining and contemporary, different from the classical Ramayana and Mahabharata stories. Until today people stay to watch the performances late into the night, in order to see the favourite part of some, this interval. This part is called *Goro Goro*, and is the genre that *ImIgrazie: In the Shadows* conceptually mimicked.

Border studies have been accused, particularly from those within critical race studies, of producing a pornography of misery. There is a danger, not only to us, but also to the agency of those inside, of contributing never-ending stories of woe. Images and artefacts can open a different kind of story, one that abstracts and thereby sharpens the institutional critique in ways that are absorbing and affective. *In the Shadows*' final scene, for example, paints a redaction of immigration paperwork in a performative gesture of erasure. Backlit on an overhead projector, my hands turn the bureaucratic form, line by line, to black.

Redaction and Pixelation

The intersection of art and criminology of the border makes a contribution to contemporary artistic practises that deal with the aesthetics of redaction, with the censorship of documentary material, like embedded journalism and press reportage of crimes. In so doing, it echoes with works elsewhere. In recent collages, for instance, Thomas Hirschhorn makes 'pixelation' into the medium of the faceless crimes of the state, embodied in press coverage. He appropriates these by cut-pasting victims of war, and suturing his juxtapositions with pixels. The lines literally blur between the spectacular and the criminal, the sex and the death that sell commercial photography. But it also refreshes the discourse around agency in the social sciences by asking who has the power to pixelate, and who gets pixelated. In the exaggerated manipulation of images, Hirschhorn can reveal the authority of photographic objectivity and of editorial and political decisions. 'The time in which we live is a pixelation', Hirschhorn says, to refer to the faceless abstraction of information as a strategic measure. He historicises pixels to the mid-century abstraction that German fascism categorised as 'degenerate' in the work of artists such as Otto Freundlich.[14]

Hirschhorn's cutting up of fashion magazines and online reportage is in fact a purely artistic and socially disengaged practise, but it has visual similarities with the necessary redaction of the images in archives such as ours. The Home Office bans photography of recognizable individuals, 'for their own safety'. As a result, any public use of the portraits we took inside Colnbrook Immigration Removal Centre would have to pixelate or black out the face. The infamous Black Square that the Russian Supremacist Kazimir Malevic hung on the site of the Madonna icon is the avant-garde referent for the contemporary aesthetics of redaction. The black squares that stretch into long rectangles on redacted documents and photographs have caught the attention of several artists that work with classified material. They also became important referents for the work we were doing in Oxford, as censorship began to play a part in the way we thought about what was possible, legally and artistically – what was necessary abstraction, and what is necessary documentation.

Sometimes pixelation draws attention to the 'criminal' in a standardised way that can be thematised through baroque pixilation, black squares, or indeed through different strategies of visualisation. For the viewer, it is through the censorial pixelation that the crime is made significant: it is factualised in the moment it is redacted. The redaction reads as a validation of the power of a fact, hence it has to be hidden. It may also protect the identities of those locked up, especially those who continue to challenge their asylum status and may, therefore, be vulnerable to the authorities in their country of origin.

The invisibility of immigration detention is a central theme in many of the visual artworks and films on the subject. Virtual Reality has become a technology of visualising detention with heightened immersion of the viewer. The *Guardian*'s virtual experience *6x9*, VR City's project *Invisible*, and David Rych's work *Border Act* use VR in very different ways to represent incarceration. Rych is interested, as a filmmaker and an activist, in the multiperspectival nature of filming VR that finally removes the one-point perspective of the traditional camera, and turns that into a filming of space. Strapped to the face, empathy is produced also through the physical proximity of the screen wrapped about the head.

Cutting

5. Anonymous, *Gentleman's Club*, ca. 2014, design for a mural in Campsfield House IRC, A3, Immigration Detention Archive Oxford.

The Photoshop cut-paste gets used by detainees to place themselves into the London they migrated to. They have access to two computers, and can purchase a photograph of themselves to send to their family. Photoshop workshops were run also before ours by the photographer Nana Varveropoulou, whose *No Mans Land* and *Life is Good Here* reflect on the aesthetics and empowerment of cutting and pasting.[15] This practice brings the evidentiary power of the portraits – which the detainees were most keen to produce with us – together with

6. Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, video still from *Artists in Residence*, 2016, available at: http://www.oarplatform.com/art-criminology-border-making-immigration-detention-archive/.

fictions of success, prestige, and security in Britain. The backgrounds, often provided by the art teachers, present fantasy stately homes, Georgian mansions, English gardens, and the image of London's skyline.

In an art room exercise to produce a design to be painted in *trompe-l'œil* on the wall of a common room to 'cheer it up', one of the residents won the £5 competition with the design of an English Gentleman's Club (Fig. 5). The Gentleman's Club, as with the London skyline, are interpolated into the prison architecture, also for the purpose of selfies (ironically, in a place where no cameras are permitted, because no images of inside are permitted out). Similarly, in the Media Room digital exercises, the selfie and social media conscious population – who are banned from using social media inside – use careful costuming, portraiture and elaborate backgrounds to create an image. Cutting and pasting is the 2D equivalent of migration. It brings the body to an ideal destination. Visually, Photoshop cannot often make this cut realistic. Larger than even the skyscrapers and mansions, the figures hover insistently and, indeed, indeterminately in detention.

Conclusion

The immigration detention archive at Oxford and artist residency in Border Criminologies came about through the vision of Mary Bosworth that art could be a form evidence in criminology. There is no disciplinary training in either criminology or art history for using or interpreting the material culture of immigration. Indeed, while there is a small field of 'visual criminology', where colleagues analyse images, for the most part criminology is not a visual subject, nor is it one familiar with artistic production. And yet, as this article has shown, art and imagery in criminological analysis of border control have an unexplored cross-disciplinary potential to ask and answer new questions, and to reach new audiences.

The artistic strategies that emerged from Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll's residency in the IRCs is particular to this collaboration. The access gained, research shared, and emotional responses traced through the process led to an archive and series of artistic responses that would never have come about without immersion in this field site.

While the workshops and dynamics of the institutions put productive limitations on the artist, it taught many important lessons about the real policy impact of public critique, manipulation by the press, the power of paperwork, and the representation of other, vulnerable voices on their behalf. Censorship, abstractions, digital manipulation of documentary photography, virtual reality, and political gift giving gained a new force in the context of immigration removal centres.

The traditionally trained artist is ill equipped to do research in a site such as a prison, charged with social implications that demand to be addressed before 'art' can be made. Research itself appears a perversion in the context of human suffering. Yet, our collaboration was of emotional response and intellectual understanding, another border that requires constant negotiation and dismantlement.

1   For more on the ethics and challenges of gaining and maintaining research access to these contested sites, see Mary Bosworth and Blerina Kellezi, 'Doing Research in Immigration Removal Centres,' *Criminology & Criminal Justice* (2016): 1–17. For more of Mary's work on these institutions see Mary Bosworth, *Inside Immigration Detention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

2   Home Office, 'Immigration Statistics: October to December 2015,' London: HMSO (2016). https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/immigration-statistics-october-to-december-2015.

3   Home Office, 'National Statistics Detention,' London: HMSO (2016). https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/immigration-statistics-july-to-september-2016/detention.

4   Mary Bosworth and Marion Vannier, 'Comparing Immigration Detention in Britain and France: A Matter of Time?' *European Journal of Migration & Law* 8:2, (2016): 157-76.

5   Mary Bosworth and Blerina Kellezi, 'Getting in, Getting Out and Getting Back: Access Ethics and Emotions in Immigration Detention Research,' in *Reflexivity and Criminal Justice: Intersections of Policy, Practice and Research*, ed. Sarah Armstrong, Jarret Blaustein and Alistair Henry (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 237–62.

6   Stephen Shaw, 'Review into the Welfare in Detention of Vulnerable People,' London: HMSO (2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/490782/52532_Shaw_Review_Accessible.pdf

7   While Campsfield House only holds men, Colnbrook houses a small number of women in a self-contained housing unit within the facility. The women there do not have access to the art room. Instead, they may be provided with items to draw or colour-in upon request.

8   Fang cited (and translated from Chinese) in 'Interview with an Orderly,' *Campsfield News*, Immigration Detention Archive Oxford file, 6.

9   See, for instance Tina Öcal, 'Shape Shifters of Transculturation: Giovanni Bastianini's Forgeries as Embodiment of an Aesthetic Patriotism,' *Faking, Forging, Counterfeiting*, conference paper (Munich, 29–31 October 2015).

10 Carrie Lambert-Beatty, 'Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility,' *October* 129 (2009): 51–84.

11 Just as there is a radio station inside that never broadcasts to the outside world, there are headshots that can never be shared over email.

12 Severin Fowles, 'The Perfect Subject (Postcolonial Object Studies),' *Journal of Material Culture* 21:1 (2016): 9.

13 Idem, 9–27.

14 Thomas Hirschhorn, lecture at the Hamburg Academy of Fine Art (June 2016). For examples of these images see https://www.crousel.com/home/exhibition/600/.

15 See: http://www.nanav.com/album/no-man-s-land.

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Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll is Professor of Global Art at the University of Birmingham. She is an artist and art historian based in London and her installations and texts have been exhibited at the Venice Biennale, Savvy Contemporary Gallery, Haus der Kulturen der Welt Berlin, and the Marrakech Biennale. She is the author of poetry, videos, and academic texts about borders between Australia/Indonesia, Mexico/US, and within Europe.

Tectonics

Peter Bo Rappmund

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Editors' note:

Peter Bo Rappmund's 2012 film *Tectonics* (video – HD, 60 min., color, stereo) is made available temporarily on *OAR* (oarplatform.com/tectonics/). When the online screening period is over, stills and the co-authored statement below will remain as a trace of the film's dialogue with *Sites of Research* and its inquiry into the U.S.-Mexico border.

Contributors' Statement:

Tectonics, an ontological portrait of the U.S.-Mexico boundary, surveys the physical qualities and metaphysical quandaries of this highly politicized, militarized swath of land. The structure of the film is dictated by the border itself, as it moves incrementally from the Gulf of Mexico bordering Texas, to the Pacific Ocean and California, and while it captures vistas of the American West, the Rio Grande, the monuments and memorials to (personal) histories, and, naturally, the fences and walls that have only escalated since the Bush Presidency. *Tectonics* was constructed solely from animated still photos shot with a DSLR camera and cable release, and field recordings taken on location. Along with the voiceover-less images, the soundtrack fills in the missing human presence, and deconstructs the socio-psychological image of the border in American society: though everyone has a view of the frontier, its reality remains unseen.

Mark Peranson and Peter Bo Rappmund

Peter Bo Rappmund is a Texas-based artist whose work focuses on the physical and metaphysical properties of built and natural environments. He holds an MFA in both music composition and film/video from CalArts.

The Lives of Other People:
The 'I' in Interpreting the Places I've (Never) Been

Steph Kretowicz

There are many problems with what I do for a living. I'm an editor and a journalist who draws on the work of others to inform my own, making a career out of it – a critic. I've written about music for over a decade and art for half of that. In that time, I've reviewed shows and conducted artist interviews, sharing other people's thoughts filtered through a tailored lens, while rarely drawing directly on personal experience. Traditional journalism assumes a certain archetypal (masculine) persona of neutral objectivity, or an egoistic one that, aggressively, projects its own position with little regard for its subject (see Gonzo, New Journalism and the many men that write for *Vice* magazine). I'm a woman, white, also queer. Identity, for me, was for a long time something to be hidden, obscuring my own gender, dismissing my sexuality, and often writing under a pseudonym, because mine was never a voice of authority.

As a bilingual Australian expat with Polish roots and ties to parts of Asia, I've grown up largely estranged from my surroundings. I was born in Perth, and live in London, soon to reside in Los Angeles. In my formative years, I travelled and lived abroad with my family, spending time in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Brunei, post-Soviet Poland. Like many Australian students, I've backpacked in my past – India, South America, China. From my current UK base, I've visited more of Europe, been to parts of the Middle East and gone back and forth to the United States. At 31 years old, I've been around the world, observing it with the distance of a drifter – a postcolonial *flâneur* (you might gender it *flâneuse*, but it's complicated). You could call me a travel writer, except that my background of visiting unfamiliar places has never directly influenced my work, until fairly recently. I don't travel to write – I'm a writer that happens to travel. Yet, for the past three years, I've been working on a text that's near completion. It will be my first book, and the first time I've explicitly drawn on my life, as a person who travels. *Somewhere I've Never Been (SINB)* is a cohesive selection of research-based creative essays constructed from field recordings, found audio material, and personal reflections from in and around the United States, Europe and the Middle East between 2012 and 2015.

This non-fiction novel will be the central part of a multi-platform narrative (there is also an audio broadcast element, as well as supplementary texts already published online, and an interactive reading commission for Opening Times, exploring international soundscapes as an expression of heavily mediated environments). In an era of globalisation, mobile, networked

technologies and information overload, I've approached these phenomena through the concept of mobility, both physical and 'virtual,' recording impressions of corporate expansion and pop cultural hegemony (namely that of North America) from the three regions mentioned. So, hearing Jason Derulo's top-ten hit *Talk Dirty* single playing in a shoe store in New York, and later from an RV in Los Angeles, is deconstructed and explored by the sum of its multicultural parts, while walking down Hollywood Boulevard. The incessant repetition of Far East Movement's hip hop electronica of *Live My Life*, featuring Justin Bieber, is examined in the context of it being played for an Israeli crowd at a Palestinian-run Dead Sea resort – all with the barbed wire ambience and military presence of an army base. Pulling together sound bytes and media from handheld devices, software, websites and iOS applications, the book combines both browser-based artwork and experimental storytelling to evoke the fragmented layers of noise, voice, sound and song that makes up my subjective understanding of the visualised space. It's an understanding that never goes unfiltered – a bubble.
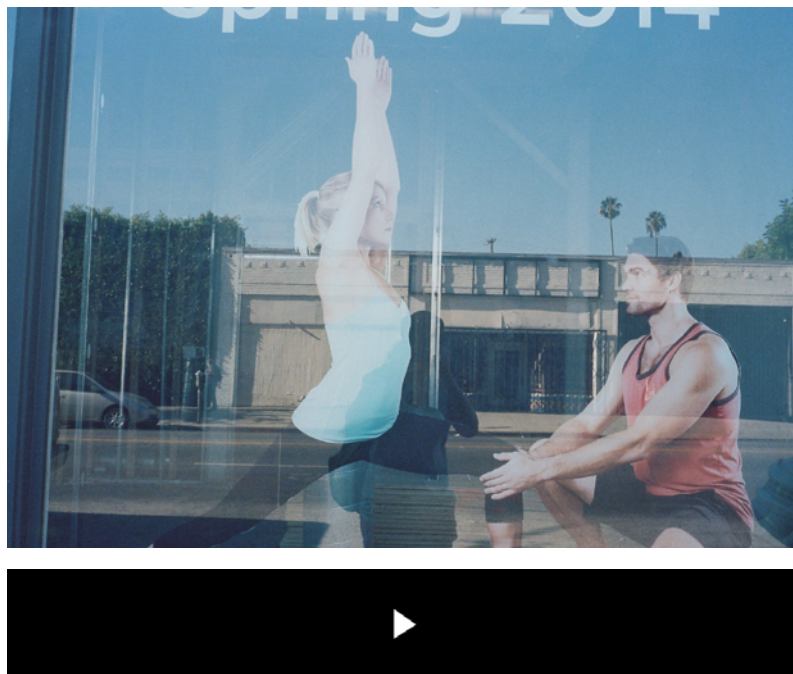
Kimmo Modig & Steph Kretowicz, *Los Angeles*, 2016.

SINB takes place physically in various destinations, including but not limited to Bucharest and Brașov in Romania; Iceland; Israel; Palestine; Jordan; Dubai; Muscat and Nizwa in Oman; Bialystok and Warsaw in Poland; parts of Georgia, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona in the US. The narrative is mostly non-linear, a vertical rather than horizontal structure of conceptual layers, composed of sensory information, memory and process, that are compressed to form shared spatiotemporal planes of experience which inform an idea, published in print.

The *Somewhere I've Never Been* title means more than simply a reference to both a destination and a poetic lyric from Jennifer Rush's 1984 single *I'm Your Lady*, famously covered by Celine Dion in 1993. It also alludes further back to the latter French Canadian artist's international

success and ubiquity, which cultural critic Carl Wilson compares to the 'steamroller of Anglo-American monoculture as it flattens the world.'[1] The sites of research in *SINB* are physical locations that are emotionally and psychologically felt by me, mediated by my early childhood experiences and preconceptions, constructed by my own upbringing and popular culture engagement – the latter being an overwhelmingly US American one.[2]

This notion of site, of location, is complicated by the presence of the self, a specific subjectivity, within it. My perceptions of a country I've visited are always somewhat incongruous with the preconceptions I had of them prior – yet afterwards both still seem to persist. My Romania of hot barbecued *mititei* and corporate westernization in recent memory is not the same as my earlier ideas of it, constructed from Australian headlines of neglected orphanages and violent revolution following the fall of the Soviet Union. And yet, like walking a street you've already seen from a different angle, one memory never entirely replaces the other: it only builds on top of it. They coexist.

> All I can conjure when imagining the country bordering Bulgaria, Ukraine and the Black Sea is Count Dracula and institutionalised neglect; an opening quote from Cool Hand Luke and a whistle from the Wild West – the finger-picked acoustic opening of Guns 'N' Roses' *Civil War* song first sung at the 1990 Romanian Angel orphan appeal. These count for the few bleak depictions I have of a country that is poor, but will counter the impressions gathered from three days at B'estfest. I'm here for their big promotional push to attract an international audience, wrapped up in Vodafone sponsorship and oddly contextualised display racks of *Hello!* magazine featuring Drew Barrymore's wedding photos.

The lack of distinction between an idea of a place and the place itself – an 'objective truth' – is further complicated when a skewed, biased or simply evident mediation continues in parallel with a new interaction. While travelling through Israel and Palestine, for example, there existed a rupture, not only where my direct experience of the place was informed by what I'd been told in the past, but also with what I was being told in *real-time*.

> When I type 'bus Jerusalem' in my iPhone the first two results are tripadvisor.com's 'Transportation from Ben Gurion Airport to Jerusalem-Jerusalem' and cbsnews.com's 'Israel bus blown up, shelling of Gaza continues as Clinton...' – the 'bus blown up' and 'shelling' are bolded as if those words were part of my search, but they weren't.

Discourse around contemporary travel literature as a genre – one I'd never taken much interest in until exploring the nature of my own developing writing practice – has made a move away from the problematically anthropological assumption of the author as 'objective outsider,' in favour of post-positivism.[3] That is, that there exists an objective truth or reality, but there is no way of truly knowing it. This is where my own complicated feelings about my role as a traveller and travel writer – a writer who travels – come in; my anxiety about my freedom to move, and to visit and interpret the sites and the people I've come to re-present as visitor, journalist and intermediary.

In an essay accompanying the *Wandering/WILDING: Blackness on the Internet* group exhibition at London's IMT Gallery, artist-curator and writer Aria Dean questions any notion of 'the would-be black flâneur' following in the tradition of Charles Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe and Walter Benjamin.[4] She identifies this embodiment of modernist detachment as being both white and male; Dean's solitary roamer through public space is restricted by how much they physically resemble said embodiment. 'Ontologically speaking, she can never be a true flâneur, lost alone in the city, because she bears the image and the history of all the other black wanderers who took to the streets (or the fields, the forest, the sea) before her.'[5]
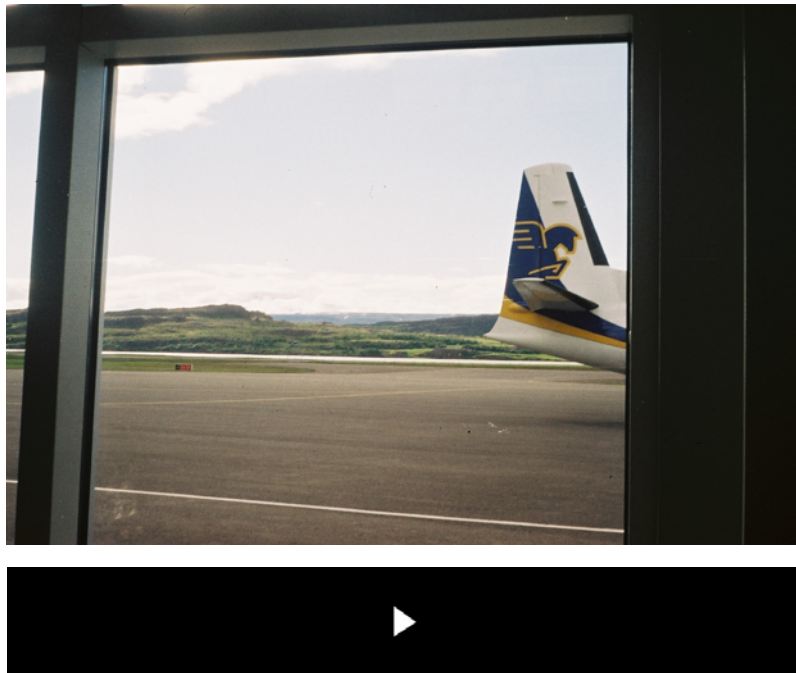
Mica Levi & Steph Kretowicz, *Iceland*, 2014, Olivier Messiaen's *Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus - IV. Regard de la Vierge* performed by Ásthildur Ákadóttir.

As a first-generation Australian with two (white) Polish parents, my own identity is split on several levels. Not quite postcolonial, and not quite postsocialist, my connection to both the oppression of the then Soviet state my family fled in 1980, and the dominance of the former British Empire is tenuous. There is little doubt of the privileges already afforded to my parents on account of their 'whiteness' in an era still redolent with a then relatively recently dismantled White Australia Policy. Discrimination towards Eastern Europeans existed, of course, but with the benefits of being born into an educated class with an Anglophile mother, my siblings and I were readily (if not awkwardly) assimilated into the naturalised immigrant foundations of occupied Australia. Furthermore, none of the above precludes me from what Doris Lessing called the 'travelling class,'[6] of which I am more or less a part. 'I need a visa to take a shit,' a Gulf-born artist once joked with me in an interview that was never published for fear of political ramifications. For her, free speech was also not an option. In Jericho ('Ariha' in Arabic), a Palestinian friend explained how it took a Swedish emissary acquaintance for him to acquire the necessary travel permits to see Eminem perform live in Tel Aviv. The two cities are easily a driveable distance apart from each other, but I couldn't tell you how

long it would take, because Google Maps won't allow it. Gayatri Spivak's subaltern are still reliant on the good will of whiteness.[7] Hence, the postcolonial condition extends well beyond my own identification with a history of British Imperialism. I might not be a British subject by bloodline, but as an Australian citizen, versed in the English *lingua franca*, I still enjoy its benefits.

In an interview published in 1999, the late South African travel writer Dan Jacobson acknowledges something he claims he's never openly owned up to before. That there is something 'vampiric' about the relationship between the travel writer and the people the travel writer encounters.[8] 'You go among them masked,' he says, before going on with the core dilemma of the necessary deceit of the undercover journalist, the flâneur. 'Maybe the falsity of simply not showing your hand results in more genuine dialogue with them than if you did show your hand. That's how complex these situations are.'[9]

Until recently, I'd never travelled with the same intention. Travel for me was as much a pleasure as a way of life, but still in that perverse way that Jacobson says a so-called 'traveller' distinguishes themself from a 'tourist' by 'the fact that they put themselves through considerable discomfort or danger. They make difficult or dangerous journeys.'[10] Although I'd never had an interest in travel writing *per se*, I'd often kept a journal, writing with some kind of unidentified intention, if not a specific audience, until a publisher found me on Twitter, and gave me one.

With all this in mind, I can't help but question, 'who am I writing for and whose is the gain?' I would hope that sharing my experience, from my subjective position, would help in illuminating the *someone* of the places and people I encounter. But it's clear – particularly as *Somewhere I've Never Been* is being published by two small presses – that that reading and listening someone is limited to a pool of English speakers, with access to and an understanding of the internet, probably of an educated class, and certainly with the privilege of an expendable income to spend on a book. That is, my peers, people much like me.

I'm reminded of something that Emily Witt wrote of her own distance and estrangement from the sexual voyeurism of her book *Future Sex*:

> There was no industry of dresses and gift registries for the sexuality that interested me in these years, and some part of the reason I wanted to document what free love might look like was to reveal shared experiences of the lives we were living that fell outside a happiness that could be bought or sold.[11]

The paradox here is that, as a New York-based investigative journalist, Witt's search for sex outside of capitalism was generating capital, whether economic or cultural, for herself. It's the same kind of 'cultural colonialism' that anthropologist Diane Lewis describes as the export of data about a country to one's own home for processing into 'manufactured' goods, like books and articles 'similar to what happens when raw materials are exported at a low price and reimported as manufactured goods at a very high cost.'[12] How 'very high' the cost

is for writing in the 21st century is debatable, but relative to the place the data is being imported from, particularly if it is poor, marginalised or oppressed, there would certainly be a disparity.

Then the question for me becomes, if all this is so problematic, why not rather abdicate my privilege than do it at all? Firstly, I do it because I want to. For whatever reason, including my upbringing, I travel because I enjoy it. I travel because I can. The issue as to why I *should* do it is a doubt I'm yet to resolve, except that, as a journalist by trade, an awareness of my audience, an impulse towards reach, accessibility and, most importantly, translate-ability is always a priority. In coming from neither a literary nor an academic background, and being trained to reach people outside of a highly specialised field, a project like *SINB* and its various forms is my attempt at expanding this reach, however marginally, into places I've never been.

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8   Kati Stammwitz, '"Turning the Telescope in the Other Direction": Four Interviews with Post-Colonial Travel Writers. Pico Iyer, Frank Delaney, Dan Jacobson, and Dervla Murphy,' accessed January 9, 2017, http://webdoc.sub.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic99/stamm/1_99.html.
9   Ibidem.
10 Ibidem.
11 Emily Witt, *Future Sex* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016): 562–3.
12 Diane Lewis, 'Anthropology and Colonialism,' *Current Anthropology* 14:5 (1973): 584.

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A Lexicon for Open Fields of Exchange: On the Language and Dynamics of Researching Towards a Social Sensibility

Zandie Brockett with Alessandro Rolandi

Ma Yongfeng's *Invest in Contradiction* spray painted on the Bernard Controls factory wall (SSR+D project number 2), courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.

Assemble, paint, test, order, receive, process, survey; these are a few of the actions the 90 workers at Bernard Controls' Beijing actuator manufacturing plant encounter and perform daily.[1] Occurring at workstations specific to each step of the actuator's production, the processes are enacted by workers trained to perform each task at hand. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prisons*, Michel Foucault's 1977 inquiry into the formation of institutional systems, the philosopher notes that the aim of disciplinary training and the establishment of heterogeneous enclosures specific to the execution of each action was

to establish presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits. It was a procedure, therefore, aimed at knowing, mastering and using the human body in order to increase its economic utility.[2]

However, in being trained to execute a skill, the worker is then simultaneously subjected to the control of the organizational hierarchy and the embedded power dynamics that govern work relationships.

In considering the success and sustainability of a company, the organizational systems that Foucault mentions restrict the employees' potential for building meaningful and trusted relationships that propagate the communication of information and new ideas. What, then, are the contexts that invite unstructured and spontaneous dialogues outside the influence of organizational demands or operational frameworks? How can the partial suspension of disciplinary systems, organizational hierarchies and performance metrics create fields or forums that encourage employees to connect and exchange information and ideas that circumvent the organization's conventional modes of communication? And, how does this relatively more open conversation and free-form dialogue help employees develop a 'social sensibility' that enables them to develop both meaning and purpose independent of the economic system to which their labor is contracted, while simultaneously adding value to the organization's operations?[3]

Organizing 'open fields' around the Bernard Controls' factory, the Social Sensibility Research and Development (SSR+D) department facilitates open-ended research towards a more flexible social dynamic within the organization. It should be noted that the term 'open fields' does not suggest a complete or achieved state of openness, but rather a process allowing for the temporary suspension of presiding social institutions such that information can move and be shared more freely. In avoiding conventional objectives and evaluation procedures of product research and development (R&D) departments, SSR+D invests in the future of the company – in the future of its employees. The family-owned Bernard Controls believes 'shareholders are no more 'owners' of the company than parents are 'owners' of their children because the future of the company belongs not to them, but to their employees'.[4] By 'investing in the future of the people', states Bernard, the company seeks to research 'possible modes of [organizational] existence where specialized physical and psychological environments as well as [manufacturing processes and corporate] systems are challenged, [and does so by] introducing a symbiotic relationship that alternates the existing organizational dynamic'.[5] Bound to a lesser extent than traditional organizations by organizational hierarchies or processes that can impede communication, the SSR+D department cultivates tactics for SSR+D projects use various 'divergent gestures' that encourage communication and mutual learning between employees.[6]

Since 2011, SSR+D has facilitated 39 social practice art projects that demonstrate how the temporary or partial suspension of organizational procedures, hierarchies and measurement frameworks encourages open dialogue amongst factory workers. Taking place as a series of

artists residency projects, each of which occurs over three to six months and during which the artist works at the factory one to two days per week, the artists' use various 'divergent gestures,' or tactics to freely engage workers in conversation about inter-organizational issues. In doing so, these projects arguably help workers cultivate aptitudes and capabilities, or 'social sensibilities' that better empower them to maneuver complex organizational relations. By subtly manipulating or contradicting the factory's disciplinary system – training programs, manufacturing workflows and organizational hierarchies that professionally arrange the human body in time and space for technological progress, efficiency and economic gain – the resident artists' also give employees opportunities to share information and learn from each other in ways alternative to the conversation patterns created by the organizational status quo. Finally, it has been observed that these conversations have brought greater meaning and purpose to people's role as employees beyond that of contracted laborers.

This paper explores the actors, methods and results of the social research conducted by the SSR+D department by presenting a new lexicon through which these topics can be discussed in both organizational and art contexts. Organizational behaviorists, Chip and Dan Heath note 'every culture, whether national or organizational, is shaped powerfully by its language… [for the incubation of a new language] reflects a new set of values'.[7] This new language attempts firstly, to develop a framework to assist the SSR+D department and other social practice artists apply these tactics to their own research-driven art practices, and secondly, to provide both Bernard Controls and other interested organizations the possibility of adopting similar practices in their own companies. These terms have been devised both by the authors of this text as well as in response to those used by resident artists who have worked on projects facilitated by the SSR+D department. The examples listed under each term are not indicative of the situation in which the terms were first created, but rather illustrate its use. Finally, each term is given a subgenre, namely people (who), place (where), goal (why), process (how), so that readers can better understand the usage of each term.

Lexicon

Agents (People)
Agents are the factory's employees, including workshop employees (i.e. assembly, painting, packaging or quality control), office employees, middle managers and directors (i.e. marketing, finance, research & development), and administrators and other staff (i.e. reception, house-keeping). It is important to note that agents are not just product-assembling employees in the factory's workshop. Agents do not include the artists brought into the organization through the SSR+D department. The term references the agency someone possesses (latent or not) to enact change by being a conduit for the creation and communication of new ideas and information.

Amateurism (Goal)
The amateur is the key figure in a future contributive economic model. By cultivating sensibilities, workers develop tools of self-expression and self-development needed to mitigate the destined disappearance of their manufacturing role that is threatened by automation.

Furthermore, in disrupting the social institutions that guide employee behavior within the organization, the SSR+D department promotes new forms of communication and encourages the vitality of the amateur worker that is not 'motivated by profit or pay, [but rather by] ideas and values not tied down to any profession... this vision is often more expansive, more eclectic, and not hampered by the conservatism of narrow expertise, preoccupied with defending one's intellectual turf'.[8] It is speculated that by preserving amateurism in the professionalized work environment through the presence of art projects, workers' capacities for self-expression and self-development are heightened.

Additionally, amateurism maintains a dimension of knowledge and independence that extends beyond the sphere of functionality and labor. It helps the agents develop a set of 'working skills' that they can exchange in contribution to their sustained existence in community life (i.e. a mechanic uses his skills to fix the neighbor's car in return for that neighbor – a woodworker – constructing a small structure). The reciprocal and spontaneous exchange of these services helps build a culture and community based not on monetary remuneration, but instead on sharing and exchange.

At the Bernard Controls factory, five agents have been directly involved with the *Work/Live* project (see 'Facilitator') and have started making artwork during work hours. While primarily using break times, these workers continuously return to the SSR+D office on their own time to paint, journal and converse with SSR+D facilitators. In taking the initiative to fill their free time with activities that build sensibilities, the agents protect their individual liberties and abilities to form community.[9]

Divergent Gestures (Process)
Research towards a social sensibility is qualified by the introduction of unmediated gestures that seek not to optimize the output of a laborer, but rather to punctuate or contend with the organizational processes that constrict the worker. The intention of these gestures, or dynamic points of dissonance, are not to create shock value, but rather to generate meaningful reactions that lead to open dialogues, extending beyond those ordinarily had within the organization's politically correct framework.

By using divergent gestures that emphasize interaction, inquiry, and process over isolated production and end product, resident artists challenge the organizational status quo with activities, scenarios or sites that engage agents in tasks or conversations beyond those required of them as employees. Some artists 'use humor, while others use pedagogical methods, some look for internal collaborators and partners, and others count merely on their own presence'.[10] Further, some use role-playing as a gestural tactic to engage individuals in discussing narratives that create collective empathy towards a particular issue. These divergent gestures are

> process-driven modes of production that are detached from both the object
> and the scripted nature of performative works. [They are different]
> from socially engaged projects in that they do not solicit participants to enact
> prescribed roles or actions.[11]

Moreover, by provoking intimate and open communication between various members of the organization, artists provide opportunities for new ideas, habits and social institutions to enter the organization. In a comparative analysis of similar 'art intervention' programs in Europe, researcher Ariane Antal notes that

when artists enter organizations with their "foreign" cultural norms, practices and codes, they are expected to disturb the "local" cultural codes and practices while they try to discover how to engage with their new setting. The interactions should generate dissonance (Stark 2009), offer alternatives and spark off new possibilities for exploration from which members of both cultures can learn.[12]

Developing divergent gestures triggers agents to generate common forms of communication. These are processes of mutual learning and exchange that 'entail listening to each other to come to a shared understanding and agreement about the way forward. In almost all the cases where the artist arrived with a proposal, the ideas changed under the influence of the interaction with the context'.[13] It has been observed that the artists who use most of their time engaging with the employees, assimilating into the company culture, and demonstrating an authentic interest in listening to employees in order to create personal bonds, have been the most fruitful in helping factory workers develop sensibilities. Rolandi states

whenever the agent-artist interaction leans too much towards serving pure artistic purposes or toward serving company-related objectives, the quality of the interaction decreases exponentially. When both parties manage to use art not as an end in it of itself, but as a tool to communicate and elaborate about their condition, the quality of the exchange reaches an interesting level, which while difficult to articulate, is clearly perceived by those around.[14]

The success of these gestures revolves around their ability to suspend or diverge from the optimized use of time and space as seen in conventional organizational processes. Through repeated exposure to these divergent gestures, agents' gradually gain awareness of both their surrounding environment and colleagues, grow the sense of trust with these environments and colleagues, and in doing so, find new communication techniques. This is synonymous with the development of a social sensibility. Artist and SSR+D consultant Tianji Zhao comments

for me, the process of this project is equally, if not more important as the outcome. First it's an encounter – we have a conversation about the current living-working condition in general, and then through many meetings, memories begin to surface, as well as delicate subjects and intriguing imaginations. Together we dig deeper into one concept, we look at other artists' works that might have a similar approach in form material or message, and see if it's possible to conceive something original. The research of art making doesn't stop with art, it creates the potential for exploring personal emotions and thoughts, and it builds a closeness through time and trust. Time is a key factor, a project can be truly root itself and grow by giving it enough time to develop – it's the same as relationships between people.[15]

After several conversations with the agents, artist Ma Yongfeng's project No. 2 subverted the meaning of the company's motto, 'Invest in Confidence', by mimicking provocative Maoist-era propaganda banners. In writing 'Invest in Contradiction' high above the assembly line on the factory's wall, he reminds the organization and its employees that variance rather than certainty, leads to innovation, growth and long-term sustainability. Other slogans such as 'Action is Product' and 'First Check on Yourself, then Check on Others' as well as quotes by workers such as 'Communication is a River' were spray painted onto cardboard typically used for actuator packaging. The work is direct and visually aggressive, imposing its existence into workshop space. To this day, 'Invest in Contradiction' is still imprinted onto the factory wall, embodying the very spirit of the department and its facilitated projects.

In another example, artist Lulu Li developed SSR+D project No.4, *Human Products*. As a short performance, Li invited then plant manager, Gilles Urhweiller, to become an actuator. Like all actuators, Uhrweiller was assembled, painted, packed and put into storage. By using humor as a gestural tactic to disrupt the tensions arising from the stratification of power between the plant manager and workshop employees, Li provides workers an opportunity to challenge the organizational hierarchy, formulate a sense of trust through the possibility for a more intimate conversation, and commence a more casual dialogue with senior management.

Facilitator (People)

The SSR+D department as well as individuals were invited to broker and negotiate artist projects within the host organization (i.e. Bernard Controls). Note facilitators can be artists, but are not in all cases. The status of facilitator is dependent on the individual's relation to the agents. Namely, facilitators serve as bridge between the cultures and habits of the artists and the organization, the facilitator's role nears that of a translator, ensuring that 'differences and dissonances between the cultural codes can be resources, not barriers'.[16] Facilitators also 'function as "guarantors," because their reputation, resources and, on occasion, legal cover[age is] at stake'.[17] In order to challenge normative employee behavior, disrupt stagnant flows of information, and encourage sensibility exchange through the organizational network, facilitators use 'direct and physical presence of contact and engagement, egalitarian and voluntary forms of communication and information exchange, and long-term physical commitments to relationships'.[18]

An illustrative example of facilitator's at work is seen in the *Work/Live* project that Rolandi and Zhao developed in late 2015. Part of the newly founded Social Sensibility Research Institute (SSRI), *Work/Live* is a series of projects where agents create artworks in response to their living and working environments and social and psychological conditions. These works are exhibited in galleries and art spaces outside the factory context. Sharing books with images and textual references of noted artworks, Rolandi and Zhao serve both as educators helping agents to conceptualize their work as a form of self-expression or commentary, and also as producers to help materially create the artwork. As an extension of the *Work/Live* project, Rolandi and Zhao also organize weekly conversations between Guillaume Bernard, COO of Bernard Controls worldwide and Director of Bernard Controls China, and workers in locations and times chosen by the worker. In doing so, a new dynamic is created regarding the role,

responsibility and attitude of the worker towards both middle and upper management. The *Work/Live* project as well as the bike shed-tearoom project (see '<u>Open Fields</u>') have demonstrated Zhao's capacity to listen to and respond to the agents' demands beyond those propelled by her personal artistic desires. Her projects and requests have often touched upon sensitive issues and have encountered resistance, thus allowing her presence and role as a facilitator to be perceived as valuable.

Open Fields (Place)

In reference to social fields, open fields are both physical and non-physical (social or psychological) spaces, scenarios or environments where the presiding organization's rules and regulations are temporarily suspended and whose function is undefined and unmediated. Like a magnetic field or a quantum field, where the movement of energy takes place in a seemingly random but still patterned manner, these open fields are constantly changing spaces where information and sensibilities are exchanged between agents.

However, unlike the fields as proposed by sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, or the fields in field theory, open fields strive to deconstruct hierarchy, remove competition and attain relative neutrality in respect to the social relations of the engaged participants. An individual's status given their role within the organizational hierarchy comes secondary to the mutual trust and respect that is held between colleagues given the possibility for exchange. Moreover, within these open fields are composed of constant and complex micro-interactions; highly codified spaces are subtly hijacked and slowly transformed in ways that may be partial, temporary, or exist merely as a proposal that is refused. This softening of institutional structures creates small openings, triggering new interactions and reactions, or allowing small opportunities to bypass the rules. Given the partial or temporary disruption and shift of institutional norms, habits and behaviors, agents gain new perspectives that create new ideas and are instilled with a sense of confidence when sharing these ideas or sensibilities.

Like most fields, open fields are not stable. Nevertheless, these open fields attempt to maintain a constant negotiation between interacting agents to ensure that judgment is minimized, and that the intended mode for interaction as dictated by the organizational hierarchy does not completely overpower the exchange. The ability for these fields to stay open and non-competitive is what characterizes their nebulous forms. The negotiation of these open fields is what provides the practice and experience needed to develop a <u>social sensibility</u>.

These open fields are synonymous with 'spaces for play'[19] in so far as ideally the interactions occurring within them are ideally organic, spontaneous and encouraging of both experimentation and the possibility of failure. They are also similar to 'free spaces', or 'small-scale meetings where [agents] can gather and ready themselves for collective action without being observed by members of the dominant group. Free spaces often play a critical role in facilitating social change because it is in these spaces that the organization's constituents can digest, reflect upon, discuss, and implement new organizational boundaries, rules, and policies or processes for engagement and interaction'.[20] In the case of SSR+D, both the department as well as each artist can be a facilitator of open fields that 'maintain spontaneity and disturbance within the company's day-to-day activities'.[21]

In SSR+D projects No. 27 and No. 35, Tianji Zhao worked together with Australian artist Matthew Greaves to improve recreational common spaces for factory workers. By turning a bike shed into a tearoom that served as a site for conversations with all factory employees during the summer months, the artists provided a physical, open field, or a commons, in which agents could gather, smoke cigarettes and discuss topics of their choice. It is in these discussions that various codes and boundaries imbedded in the working environment were unveiled. Such work can be idealistically called a 'open field' because it strives to create a space where hierarchies and rules are temporarily suspended. Of course, as with the proverbial 'water cooler',[22] the possibility for more fluid social interactions does not imply the complete dissolution of power structures. Nevertheless, the Zhao and Greaves' tearoom remains a site more open than others in the factory to fluctuate between coded interactions on the one hand and greater neutrality and spontaneity on the other.

Research and Development (Process)

Research and development is a controlled process that enables the continued profitability of a corporation by innovating products, machine technologies, supply chains or production processes and systems, and organizational or managerial strategies that increase the competitive capacity and efficiency of a corporation. R&D is often an investment in the future, where 'development' implies short-term and 'research' indicates long-term investments in the company's future. While R&D permits organizational flexibility given the prospect of innovation, this permission is still bound to a regulated framework that determines the use of an employees' time, the manufacturing space, and the company's capital, material and labor investment. It is a process that is not entirely open to experimentation and as such, its potential to generate truly new ideas is limited.

While conventional product R&D departments are tasked with missions of innovation, the spaces, temporalities, processes, and resources determined by organizational systems constrict the open-ended possibility of those objectives. Bernard notes that while 'commonly associated with innovation, [product] R&D can be quite restrictive because it is done within a specific physical place and by a specific team'.[23] Product R&D is also constrained by evaluation metrics, such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that speculate on the potential future value of R&D projects in order to justify the corporation's invested resources.

SSR+D breaks prevailing R&D processes in that it does not answer to market demands, the invested interests of stakeholders or organizational timelines. Since a core tenant of the SSR+D mission is to remain non-proscriptive such that the facilitated introduction of divergent gestures can remain as spontaneous reactions to real time scenarios, conversations and relationships, the department must remain sensitive to the organization's internal changes. Whether responding to a subtle shift, such as the hiring of new employees, or a larger one, such as the construction of a new office space within the factory, the department must constantly assess and renew programming to protect against the normalizing influences of the organization's structure, inertia, and time.

It should be noted that working in real time is incredibly risky for an organization that typically orients its operations on at least a quarterly, if not annual planning schedule.

However, the ingenuity of SSR+D as a department is grounded in its ability to be guided by an intuitive quality that solves issues through action-oriented processes rather than by the calculated analysis of a scenario and application of a formulaic response or procedure.

Social Sensibility (Goal)

Sensibilities are social skills, emotional capacities or creative aptitudes that help individuals listen, learn, and adapt to other agents in real time. These sensibilities, developed in open fields facilitated by SSR+D often encourage agents to have intimate conversations with colleagues in other departments and of higher organizational status, to have the confidence in proposing new ideas or solutions to work issues, and to maneuver complex work relationships dictated by formal disciplinary systems. Sensibilities are manifested in various capacities, including but not limited to negotiation, observation, communication, collaboration, leadership, and adaptive skills for dealing with individual or organizational ambiguity.

Following the 'Mere-Exposure Effect' or 'Familiarity Principle', a psychological term used to describe how people's interest towards something increases in direct correlation with increased exposure to outside elements, social sensibilities arise as agents are exposed to divergent gestures. By engaging with dialogues and artistic projects existing outside normalized work procedures or diverging from the organizational hierarchy, agents sometimes latent sensibilities are activated and they are empowered with a new found confidence and sense of purpose.

It is important to acknowledge that social sensibilities are not considered to be forms of innovative ingenuity. Innovation is an industry term that emphasizes a profit driven end. Social sensibilities attempt to bypass the profit objectives of often competitive organizational relationships, and focus instead on the emotional sensitivities that enable workers to approach problems with different intelligences. Moreover, the term has an underlying essence that seeks to maintain the idea of free will amongst those who possess it, such that he or she can be an active participant in processes of transformation and community building. As such, embedded within the definition of social sensibilities is an inherent quality of being unquantifiable.

Over a series of conversations in British artist Celyn Bricker's project No. 37, *Traces*, worker Zhao Tao was engaged in the factory's actuator-painting booth; the project is demonstrative of the rise of Zhao Tao's sensibilities. Bricker asked Zhao to participate in his project by standing in front of white paper he mounted to the booth's walls, serving as a quasi-stencil. Posing for Bricker's performative paintings, Zhao added his own touch by doodling abstract forms onto the paper. When completed, the two discussed the randomness of the work they had collectively made, specifically debating whether the outline of Zhao's body was or was not a work of art, and if so, the implications their collaboration had on issues of authorship. After these conversations Zhao became enthusiastic and curious about art making, and it was then that he volunteered to participate in the *Work/Live* (see 'Facilitator') project. Using the actuator packing foam, Zhao produced foam sculptures that were inspired by stories and memories of his childhood mountain village. The works were compiled into the series, *Badlands*, which was exhibited in the Beijing independent art space, Arrow Factory. Since

the exhibition, Zhao has continuously developed his creative practice, making works such as a sound piece in which he delivered the election campaign speech, 'If I was the mayor of my village'. Zhao was one of the first agents who became aware of the impact art could have on his life outside of his job as an actuator-painting technician.

Sensibility Exchange | Mutual Learning (Process)
The exchange of information or ideas occurring over an extended duration of time, taking place within <u>open fields</u> of exchange, and whose rate is positively correlated with the engaged agents' possession of <u>sensibilities</u>. Sensibility exchange is similar to *usership*, a term first coined by cultural theorist, Stephen Wright. *Usership* is a 'process of personalization, or "using" latent information that allows factory workers to gain confidence in and willingness to negotiate inter-personal relationships with colleagues and managers'. [24]

In Megumi Shimizu's *Petit Movement* (project No. 3), the Japanese artist stimulated interaction between agents by engaging them in drawing and performance exercises. In asking them to symbolically communicate their work environment to their colleagues, they were able to illuminate issues of behaviors and boundaries determined by the organizational culture. The project convinced agents to enact a 'small movement', within which they would communicate the meaning of their position in the factory to others on their teams. Agents responded with both absurd and provocative as well as subtle and passive gestures that helped to establish amongst them a strong empathetic bond.

Conclusion

The SSR+D department facilitates the introduction of <u>divergent gestures</u> into the organizations daily operations that create <u>open fields</u> and help <u>agents</u> form new communication habits built on trust and mutual respect. It is through these relationships that agents have an increased propensity to cultivate, share, and discuss new ideas about problems produced by organizational hierarchies, practices, and systems at Bernard Controls' Beijing factory. In doing so, the social practice art projects, facilitated by SSR+D, produce research towards alternative scenarios and environments that enable factory workers to embody the spirit of the <u>amateur</u> laborer and give meaning and purpose to their labor beyond a professional contribution to the organization. Moreover, the bilateral exchange of sensibilities amongst agents reframes the relationship between the organization and its constituents, and enables the possibility for agents' to actively participate in the organization to which their labor is contracted. By decoupling the use of time and space with traditional KPIs that guide conventional R&D departments, SSR+D presents new, unbounded sites of research that are conducive to more spontaneous forms of dialogue and agency.

This paper presents the birth of the Social Sensibility Research + Development lexicon, which will be continuously revised and expanded as the project progresses and the Social Sensibility Research Institute gains traction with the *Work/Live* project. The process of developing this new language has mirrored that of developing sensibilities. It is a practice-led process, negotiated through constant dialogue with artists and members of the organization's various departments. By relying on the input and feedback from various members of the Bernard

Controls community and invited SSR+D artists, this language attempts to negotiate the established discourses within the fields of social practice and organizational behavior, and provide an alternative ground in-between them. In doing so, this lexicon hopes to bring a structured logic to artists seeking to challenge the cliché of provocative art that borders on activism, and rather cultivate a practice of sensibility that can assist workers to re-negotiate their labor environments.

Tianji Zhao pours tea for factory workers in the bike shed-turned-tearoom, designed in collaboration with Matthew Greaves (SSR+D project number 27), courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.

Lulu Li photographs Gilles Urhweiller as he is packaged like an actuator (SSR+D project number 4), courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.

Zhou Tao stands behind his foam sculptures crafted in collaboration with Celyn Bricker (SSR+D project number 37). Courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.
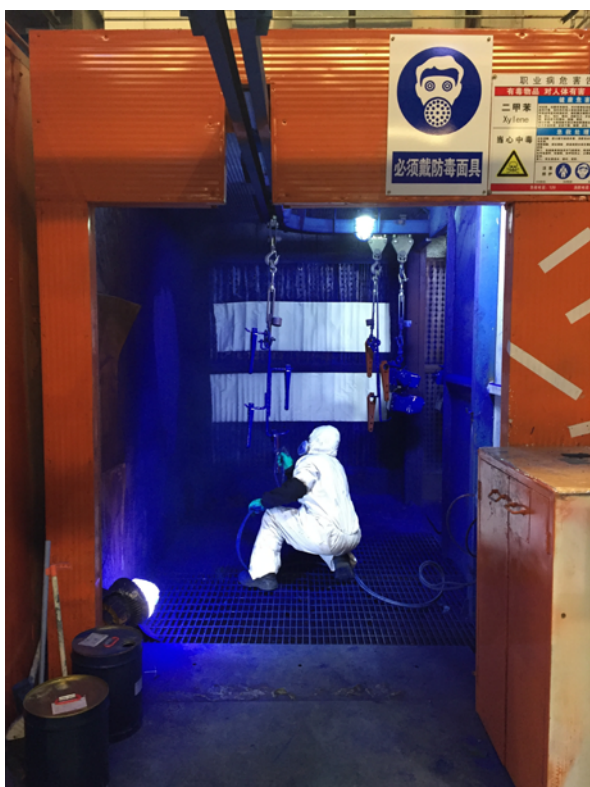
Celyn Bricker prepares the paper and spray paint before Zhou Tao enters into the painting booth (SSR+D project number 37). Courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.

Manager stands above his team as a part of Megumi Shimizu's *Petit Movements*
(SSR+D project number 3). Courtesy of Social Sensibility Research + Development.

1 An actuator is a mechanical component that is used to move or control a mechanism or system (Wikipedia); it is often understood as a valve. It the case of Bernard Controls, the factory produces actuators for oil, gas and water pipelines.

2 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, Vintage, 1995): 143.

3 Due to the ethical dilemma surrounding a need to emancipate the enslaved worker, as posited by Karl Marx, there is a tendency to focus critical discourse on the systems that constrain the manual laborer or factory worker, rather than on those employed within an office or managerial position. It is one that arises from an ideological association between the industrial and manufacturing site – the factory – as one of the prime locations for the exploitation of labor. Certainly there is reason for concern of the instrumentalization of the worker's social interactions for the benefit of the corporation's profit driven objectives, but this paper alongside the SSR+D department chose not to focus on the pitfalls of this potential form of exploitation for several reasons. Firstly, due to the small-size, family-run nature of the 120-person Beijing factory, there is a genuine desire to aid the workers condition. As referenced in the text's introduction, the Director of the Beijing factory believes that the sustainability and future success of the workers is dependent on its worker's well being. So, while this critique might be just for a large, multinational corporation that is driven by bottom lines and optimized operations, the company culture at Bernard Controls makes this a moot point. Secondly, by focusing on the exploitative nature of the employer-employee relationship in all competitive capitalistic systems, it denies the possibility that the relationship might bring positive value to the worker beyond the disadvantaged state to which he is already bound. It is in this later example that the complex dynamic of the symbiotic relationship between the SSR+D department and the company is formed, because while the SSR+D department provides Bernard Controls a platform to increase its potential for sustainability and innovation, the company also provides the department valuable resources to help workers develop sensibilities that can be translated for use outside of the work environment. As such, this text focuses on the process of negotiation or mutual learning and exchange between these two parties. In emphasizing sustainability over competition, the establishment of mutually shared or complimentary goals allows both parties to win in a game that typically has a fatalistic end for one.

4 Guillaume Bernard, 'Guillaume Bernard on SSR+D,' telephone interview by Zandie Brockett, January 15, 2017.

5 Alessandro Rolandi, 'Alessandro Rolandi on SSR+D,' telephone interview by Zandie Brockett, June 25, 2016.

6 Ibidem.

7 Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard* (New York, Crown Business Publishing, 2010).

8 Andy Merrifield, 'Intervention – "Future Shock,"' *Antipode*, June 9 2015, accessed 10 January 2017, antipodefoundation.org.

9 There is a critique to be made about agents' participation in the SSR+D artist projects in that first, those who decide to be more deeply engaged with the projects tend to be given more free time and flexibility in their break schedule, which is currently allocated as 10 minutes, twice a day. Second, agents' wishing to be involved in creating artwork in spaces provided to them by the SSR+D department must use their break time, rather than additional time during the work day allocated to partaking in SSR+D related projects. There is a tension, however, between the time the factory can give to workers to partake in SSR+D projects and the time the factory contacts them to produce the company's product. Ultimately, the workers' primary function is to provide a labored service.

10 Rolandi, 'Alessandro Rolandi on SSR+D.'

11 Zandie Brockett, 'A Space For Play: On "Social Sensibility Research and Development" and the Construction of Commons in Urban China,' *Proceedings of Overwhelming Imaginations Conference* (Beijing: Sishang Museum of Art, 2016): 107-116, 112.

12 Ariane Berthoin Antal, 'Artistic Intervention Residencies and Their Intermediaries: A Comparative Analysis.', *Organizational Aesthetics* 1.1 (2012): 44-67, Digital Commons, 46.

13 Antal, 'Artistic Intervention,' 56.

14 Rolandi, 'Alessandro Rolandi on SSR+D.'

15 Tianji Zhao, 'Notes on SSR+D Zhao,' January 2, 2017.

16 Antal, 'Artistic Intervention,' 60.

17 Antal, 'Artistic Intervention,' 61.

18 Rolandi, 'Alessandro Rolandi on SSR+D.'

19 Zandie Brockett, 'A Space For Play.'

20 Heath, *Switch*, 246.

21 Rolandi, 'Alessandro Rolandi on SSR+D.'

22 The water cooler example proves that invaluable information is passed through the organization not in formal memos or reports, but rather in informal environments, such as during a break in the office's kitchen or near the water cooler.

23 Bernard, 'Guillaume Bernard on SSR+D.'

24 Brockett, 'A Space For Play,' 113.

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Alessandro Rolandi is a multimedia and performance artist, director, curator, researcher, writer and lecturer living in Beijing since 2003. His work currently focuses on social intervention and relational dynamics to expand the notions of art practice beyond existing structures, spaces and hierarchies as a means of engaging directly with reality in multiple ways. He is the founder and director of the Social Sensibility Research & Development Department at Bernard Controls since 2011.

The blue in the flame is bright because it's hot

An Intervention Into *The OAR - Issue 1 - Sites of Research*
Website Background by Daniel Lichtman
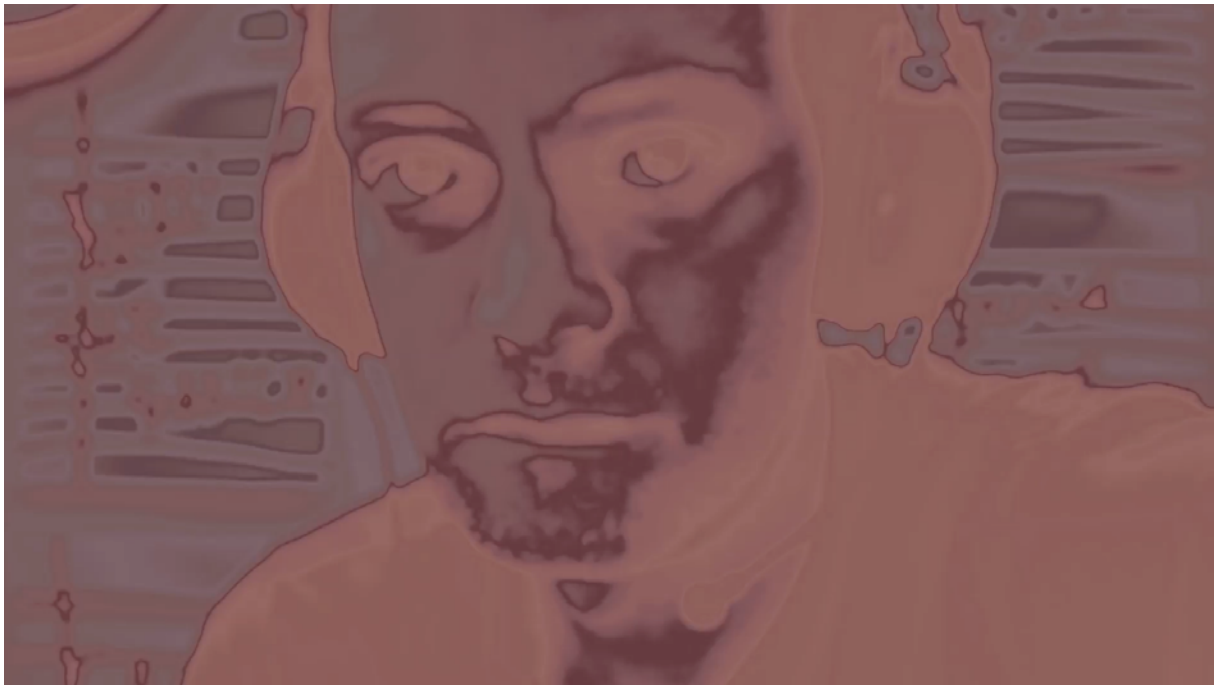
Daniel Lichtman is an artist who considers the lone creator of self-initiated public content – and the fantasies, dramatics and constructions of freedom involved in producing and believing in an imagined audience. Recent projects include *Open Sessions*, The Drawing Center, NY; *Get Straight or Die*, Dynamo Arts, Vancouver (solo exhibition); and *Moving Performances*, Oxford University. He is currently Media Arts fellow at BRIC, Brooklyn and has upcoming shows at Guest Projects, North Carolina and Hercules Project Space, NY.

Smoke and Mirrors: Amalia Ulman's Instagram

Giulia Smith

Amalia Ulman, *Excellences and Perfections*, 2014, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

When scrolling through Amalia Ulman's Instagram account, three constants stand out: her iPhone, her body, and the many mirrors against which the latter is portrayed, phone in hand, playing a host of characters that range from kinky girl to office drone. These are the core elements of Ulman's online melodramas, a genre that she has refined in the last couple of years with two scripted performances designed entirely for circulation on Instagram and Facebook: *Excellences and Perfections* (2014) and *Privilege* (2016). It is with these two projects in mind that the following pages investigate the nature of Ulman's sites of research.

Using a reflective surface is obviously a practical way of taking a selfie with some depth of field. Ulman is far from alone in repeating this act over and over again, nor is she the only contemporary female artist to have been accused of being hopelessly narcissistic for it. As Sarah Gram rebutted in 2013, such an accusation demonstrates 'an extraordinary lack of insight' into how women can conceive of autonomy within a late capitalist economy premised

to a significant extent on the exchange of enticing images. 'Narcissism', Gram wrote, 'may not only be what capital expects but also *demands* from young girls, in order that they be legible as girls at all'.[1] An influential source among artists of Ulman's generation and orientation (call them digital natives, 89plus, post-internet or whatnot), Gram's text strongly resonates with her performances. *Excellences and Perfections* and, to a lesser degree, *Privilege* are premised on appropriating and acting out the expectations of the audience on social media. From the outset, the idea was to turn a mirror back onto the fantasies of this public in order to expose their effects on how we (women in the specific) perceive ourselves. The bottom line being that there is no such thing as a solid, unmediated self.

In Ulman's case, then, mirrors are more than just reflective. They are reflexive. Not just because they implicate the spectator in the picture-frame, but because they are metaphors for this artist's belief that reality (and with it, identity) is inherently constituted as a second-degree image. Understanding the workings of the media is at the centre of this vision of the world, whereby transmission and simulation are seen to generate the only experiential parameters that truly matter. In this context, the very notion of site, with its claim to fixity and self-containment, is fundamentally unhinged.

I am reminded, no doubt arbitrarily, of Robert Smithson's dialectic of site and non-site. Smithson originally articulated this relationship in his *Mirror Displacement* installation for 'Earth Art' (Cornell University, Ithaca, 1969), an exhibition that is now associated with the birth of Land Art. His contribution to the show was something of a mock-science project. As a starting point, he went down a local mine armed with a 35-mm camera and a bunch of mirrors, which he then scattered around the network of subterranean tunnels with the intention of taking pictures of their reflections. The gallery installation that followed consisted of a series of floor sculptures made out of mirrors and heaps of soil extracted from the mine, surrounded by photographic and notational documentation of Smithson's underground adventure. The exhibition catalogue frames the whole project in terms of his pseudo-scientific theory of non-site. While the site is explained to be a physical landmark (in this case, the mine near Ithaca), the non-site is a negative function of the latter as it is reproduced across a multitude of technological channels (photographs, text and so on). Smithson liked to visualise this dialectic with mirrors, presenting them time and again as illustrations of the mechanism of displacement he believed to be at the heart of every act of transmission. The point for him was that the site never quite existed without the non-site, for as soon as anything is situated it is also codified and modified by language (be it visual or textual). In a sense, the non-site was always more tangible than the site itself. But what really mattered to him was the gap between the two. Smithson saw a lot of potential there, describing it as 'a space of metaphorical significance', or more simply, 'a vast metaphor'. Even more important for the purpose of this article, he imagined the journey across this zone as necessarily 'invented, derisive, artificial'.[2]

I am not trying to say that we absolutely need Robert Smithson (a male artist, no less) in order to understand Ulman's work, only that he offers a suggestive way to address the theme of this issue of *OAR* by allowing us to reimage the concept of site in negative and fundamentally fictional terms. This approach seems much better suited to an art practice than more

conventional notions of 'site' and 'research site' derived from the social sciences. Of course, Ulman's selfies look nothing like Smithson's earthy brand of Land Art. Still, to my mind her mises-en-scène are 'artificial' zones of metaphorical significance in the sense Smithson intended it. Only, for him, it was all about psycho-geography and the erosive potential of language, whilst what matters with Ulman is subjectivity and the way it is affected by images. Not long ago, she admitted, 'I manipulate my own online presence in order to show how easy it is to manipulate an audience with images'. Her goal? To expose 'the female body as virtual construction suffered in silence'.[3] Facebook and Instagram lend themselves to exploring this dynamic because they are widely seen to be at the same time performative and immediate, spontaneous even. Not only are the performances that recently propelled Ulman onto the international stage formatted specifically for these platforms, they take social media trends and memes as their subject matter. At its most basic level, then, the site of Ulman's research is the web. The twist is that Ulman's work is overwhelmingly about fictitiousness: artificial situations, plastic surgery, counterfeit merchandise, fake clinics, neighbourhoods and even entire cities that are just façades. This seems like a more interesting trail to follow than simply saying that her research is primarily situated online, which it is of course. If we are to fully articulate the site of her practice, we better assume that it is something of a non-site, much like identity for her is fundamentally slippery. With this in mind, one might begin to appreciate her penchant for the absurd, the artificial, indeed the derisive.

Excellences and Perfections

1. Amalia Ulman, *Excellences and Perfections*, 2014, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

A turning point in Ulman's career was the completion of *Excellences and Perfections* in the autumn of 2014. The performance consists of a series of carefully crafted status updates, mostly selfies accompanied by brief epigraphs and strings of hashtags. The narrative is organised around three chapters: Innocence, Sin and Redemption. The fable they conjure is of a naïve blonde who moves to Los Angeles and, after breaking up with her boyfriend, spirals down the city's world-famous vortex of superficial obsessions.

The homeland of Hollywood and Disney, LA, is a befitting if hyperbolic demonstration of Ulman's belief that reality is all about façades and gimmicks. Apparently, it is why she chose to live there, because it is a non-site of sorts. Her take on the city harks back to a longstanding literary tradition that portrays Los Angeles as the ultimate hall of mirrors and, as Mike Davis put it in his inimitable study of the genre, world capital of 'counterfeit urbanity'.[4] This body of texts was at least half a century old when, in the early 1980s, the philosopher Umberto

Eco positioned the Californian megalopolis smack in the middle of his 'travels in hyperreality'.[5] More recently, it was Thomas Andersen's film-essay *Los Angeles Plays Itself* (2003) that presented the city as a fictional construct, exploring its mythologies across an endless sequence of iconic movie sets. *Excellences and Perfections* can be seen to unfold in the footsteps of this lineage, to which it adds Ulman's precocious understanding of the effects of social media on the millennial society. One could posit that if Cher Horowitz, the lead character of cult teen movie *Clueless* (1995), and Clay from Bret Easton Ellis' equally popular novel *Less than Zero* (1985) had a post-internet child, it would be the protagonist of *Excellences and Perfections*. You get the picture.

2. Amalia Ulman, *Excellences and Perfections*, 2014, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa..

The performance opens with a version of Ulman inspired by Angeleno and Asian Tumblr girls in her network. Imagine her in fluffy socks and cute pyjamas, wearing ballerinas and pretty lace dresses, or eating strawberry tarts and collecting Hello Kitty stickers (fig. 1). This first act is colour-coded on a fairly uniform scale of pink and white, hues that implicitly tag her as girly and inexperienced. Act two departs quite dramatically from this candyfloss world, veering towards a much more noir aesthetic dominated by gold and black. In the process, Ulman's alter ego has a makeover, maturing into an escort with a sugar daddy who pays for her shopping sprees in the luxury goods department. Eventually, she gets enormous breast implants, becomes addicted to drugs, has a meltdown, and finally goes to rehab (fig. 2). It is worth mentioning at this point that isolating a colour palette is for Ulman a key step in building a fictional microcosm. Much like a set-designer or a professional retoucher working on one fashion campaign after the other, she tends to streamline the gradation of her individual projects in order to give them extra definition as discrete storylines. Another thing worth noting about her technique is that she never simply appropriates and recycles pre-existing images. Although she takes screengrabs as part of her research, she generally reconstructs what she encounters online from scratch. This gives the backdrops of her photo-shoots an uncannily curated look. Both parodies and unique fabrications, they come across as highly beautified versions of a matrix of somewhat familiar visual references.

'I think Arte Povera, swirls, poor girls, £1 stores, money, diaries, esparto and glitter is pretty me', the artist has said when asked about her signature style.[6] Still, there is something deliberately generic about the aesthetic of *Excellences and Perfections*. The settings that form the backdrop to the first two acts reinforce this impression.[7] Hotel rooms, lounges, airports and spas – these are globally streamlined spaces that symbolise leisure as much as transience. They are the kinds of places that tend to be defined negatively as un-homely, neutral, and

indistinct. They are non-sites of sorts, just like LA itself. Robert Smithson was drawn to them precisely for this reason. Once again, the dereliction of his *Hotel Palenque* (1969) is at the opposite end of the aesthetic spectrum from the catalogue of polished mirrors and marble sinks one finds inside *Excellences and Perfections*; just as the technical sketches Smithson made for his *Dallas-Fort Worth Regional Airport Plan* (1967) have nothing whatsoever in common with the sexy look of the selfies Ulman took on airplane toilets. What matters here is not formal resemblance, but conceptual continuity. The point is that hotels, airports and planes equally belong with a poetics of circulation and endless replication.

3. Amalia Ulman, *Excellences and Perfections*, 2014, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

The third and final act of *Excellences and Perfections* sees Ulman return, still in character, as a newly balanced individual. Fruit platters and asana poses dominate her journey to redemption, along with pious self-help cards that purport to restore balance by actively discouraging any form of action (fig. 3). This last act is tailored after Goop, a popular lifestyle blog run by the Angeleno actress-turned-wellbeing-guru Gwyneth Paltrow, and a contemporary staple of Los Angeles's deep-rooted cult of the body. Eating 'raw' and sleeping 'clean' (as Paltrow invariably recommends) are only the latest instructions in a much longer course of collective brainwashing in the name of physical perfection. You do not have to be half as interested in the mechanics of indoctrination as Ulman is to find its global success a source of fascination. No matter how much avocado she eats, however, the heroine of *Excellences and Perfections* will only truly find redemption in the form of a new boyfriend. A picture of the young couple in matching bathrobes closes the performance, sanctioning her rescue by a conventional happy ending. The neat tripartite structure of *Excellences and Perfections* indicates that Ulman worked from a script that had a clear beginning and end. The artist eventually revealed that she had prepared all the status updates for the performance in advance, and then leaked them on her Instagram and Facebook accounts over an interval of five months (some of which she actually spent in a retreat in the Californian woods). Only at the end of this period did it become clear to her followers that they had unknowingly taken part in a prefabricated play whose contents had not been shared instantly at all, as Instagram would have it, but with a delay.

Few, if any, suspected it was a hoax, in spite of precedents such as *lonelygirl15* (2006–2008), a YouTube channel that went on gathering millions of views for over two years before it was revealed that its teenage protagonist (aka lonelygirl15) was not in fact a genuine user but a paid actress. Perhaps unaware of this reference, Ulman's rapidly growing audience did not really question the veracity of her actions, being mostly divided over whether these made her into a wicked seductress or a fragile soul in need of massive outpourings of cyber-support.

The stunt paid off: mainstream journalists and art critics alike commended the originality of the performance and its meticulous execution, agreeing that Ulman had succeeded in presenting a disturbing mirror image of contemporary social relations. *Excellences and Perfections* 'reflects our worst anxieties back at us', Molly Languir wrote for *Elle*, 'tweaked just enough to become readily apparent, like a fun-house mirror that instead of warping the world allows you to see it more clearly'.[8]

Ulman later explained how she came up with the idea for the performance at a point when her online persona was being misconstrued to such an extent that the only logical way out appeared to her to be TMI (Too Much Information). A consolidated strategy among the famous, TMI involves oversharing, overtagging and overposting in order to divert attention from one's private life. The artist squared this technique with the observation that women's online popularity is directly proportional not only to their sex appeal, but to their fiascos too. Sometimes called Trainwreck TV, this sad form of entertainment tends to be reserved for female celebrities. Think Britney Spears and Amanda Bynes (though lately Kanye West has dominated the field).[9] More often than not, their misfortunes are set in Los Angeles, feeding its already consolidated reputation as a place in which spectacle breaks humans. Armed with a Machiavellian understanding of the art of online performance metrics, Ulman took it upon herself to stage-manage the fantasies of failure that were being thrown at her anyway. In order to properly assassinate her own character, she opted for a tragically exaggerated caricature of the brainwashed narcissist. In this sense too, *Excellences and Perfections* is a mirror. As the artist had bet, she earned the sympathies of thousands of new followers when it became evident that she was having a terrible time.

In devising this project, Ulman went beyond using the internet as an engine for searching and sifting through data. What she did was turn its inbuilt capacity for feedback into the content of her performance. In a sense, *Excellences and Perfections* is a barometer of popular appetites. This is also what makes it site-specific to Web 2.0. In the early 2000s, the upgrade to this system revolutionised the online interface by allowing users to upload feedback on websites in real time. Social media are a direct product of this reconfiguration. As many have remarked in the past few years, it was a mixed blessing. Initially welcomed for allowing alternative forums to emerge from the bottom up, Web 2.0 configured a highly exploitable overlap between private and public interests. For one thing, the market jumped at the opportunity to refine its services through algorithms that use the data we input online to target our personal accounts with tailored ads and messages. And one could posit that Ulman is at home among the crowds of marketing strategists, digital trendsetters and aspiring scriptwriters that populate the shores of California. Like them, she recognised early on the potential of social media for extrapolating contemporary social typologies and feeding them back to an audience hungry for their expectations to be reaffirmed.

For *Excellences and Perfections*, the focus was on conventionally good-looking girls whose online presence is carefully retouched in order to appeal to a broad spectrum of followers. In choosing this crowd-pleasing meme, the artist deliberately reproduced an existing system of ratings, reinforcing a pattern of feedback that already favours impossibly normative body types. It did not escape the attention of commentators, who saw the performance as a mirror

on social reality, that all this was deliberate. The point was to impersonate an idealised version of what women are expected to perform in order to excel in consumer societies (hence the title, *Excellences and Perfections*). As others have noted, however, Ulman's alter ego upholds a beauty regime that is by no means a defining condition of womanhood, but a privilege that only a minority gets to be hard done by (after all, a mirror only shows what you choose to put in front of it). Aria Dean is one of many who condemned 'selfie-feminism' on these grounds, calling it 'a wet dream' for white feminists premised on a myopic replay of 'freshman-year gender-theory-favourite Laura Mulvey'.[10] The question of whether Ulman's script falls short at this criticism is a no brainer. But then again, she is refreshingly honest about her commitment to deconstructing the dominant narratives that most people live by. If she parodies cute Asian tumblr girls, for example, it is because this is a widely exoticised fetish, especially online. Likewise, in the second part of *Excellences and Perfections* Ulman plays 'ghetto-bitch' to the sound of Iggy Azalea as a parody of white girls appropriating black pop culture.[11] In a way, she is co-opting precisely the kind of solipsism Dean talks about.

Among the other characters that Ulman researched for *Excellences and Perfections* are Angeleno lifestyle bloggers who use their social media accounts to advertise haute couture collections in return for samples gifts. This explains why there are plenty of Dolce and Gabbana, Dior and Chanel logos emblazed on the objects that surround the young protagonist of the performance, punctuating her hungry climb among the local jetsetters. These accessories signal at once the realisation of her darkest dreams and the growing objectification of her persona. Although the artist maintains that she used counterfeit merchandise as a play on the 'fake it until you make it' mentality explored throughout the performance, her endorsement of high-end brands also transcends the distinction between genuine and simulated sponsorship.[12] This begs the question of where *Excellences and Perfections* is situated within the feedback circuits that make user-generated data such a feast for big business. Without necessarily detracting from its timeliness, it is important to underscore that calling it a mirror on reality also deflects attention from the fact that its author stands to profit from actively reproducing the logic of the market.

4. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016,
Instagram performance, digital still image,
courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

Ulman has said that she does not want to be ironic (read: cynical) about what she portrays, so perhaps humorous would be a better way of putting it. *Excellences and Perfections* is full of dark humour. If act one was met with puzzlement and act two escalated the dramatic involvement of a growing audience, then act three came as a bit of an embarrassing comic relief. Obviously some took it at face value, but others clocked onto the fact that it was a parody of a Goop-ed lifestyle. Not everyone found it amusing. What is perhaps most interesting (though unsurprising) is that women understood what was going on much more readily than men: 'LOL', they said in a nutshell, 'we get it, it's funny'.[13]

Privilege

Just over two years after the completion of *Excellences and Perfections*, Ulman's Instagram looks unambiguously aligned with the conventions of comedy and satire. This performance is titled *Privilege,* and features the artist playing a number of incongruous roles to comic effect. At times, she is a Pierrot, at others an expecting mother, at others still she appears on screen through bird-faced selfies, and all along she plays the part of the corporate employee who wears exquisitely demure outfits. To be more precise, Ulman refashioned herself as a Manhattan yuppie. The reference is made clear at the start of the performance with a short clip from the late 1990s HBO series *Sex and the City*. Styled with Miranda Hobbes' wardrobe in mind, Ulman's office uniform is generally topped by a pristine white shirt and finished off with low ankle-strap heels. It looks nothing like the sexy teen ware to which we had grown accustomed in 2014. In devising this act, in fact, the artist sought once again to turn a mirror on her critics, this time co-opting the accusation (which followed in the wake of the success of *Excellences and Perfections*) of having become a shrewd entrepreneur and social media puppeteer.[14] More broadly, *Privilege* is a comment on how 'online we all become caricatures of ourselves',[15] Ulman told me. It is no surprise, then, that occasionally its heroine can be spotted wearing a clownish red nose (fig. 4).

5. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

The gag went on for over nine months. During this time, Ulman gestated a fake pregnancy with only the support of her sidekick, Bob, a pigeon-puppet and a meme for whom she reserved all the best lines (including 'what I do as an artist is I take an ordinary object—say a windshield—and, by shitting on it, transform it into something that is uniquely my own' and the more minimalist, 'I will shit on everything you love', fig. 5). Judging from the comments of her followers (now approximating over a hundred thousand), the pregnancy was widely presumed to be a stunt in the style of *Excellences and Perfections*, but the uncertainty still managed to generate some distress among her followers. Toward the end of the performance, Ulman cleared the air by uploading a highly stylised portrait of her prosthetic belly perched sideways on a wheeled office chair. Comments ranged from the festive 'when is that baby gonna pop out' to the dead serious 'you can see the line of the mould'. Of course you can. Ulman is clearly putting up a show. Why else would she clothe herself in the garb of the ventriloquist, the Pierrot, the clown even?

There are drawings too—great drawings in fact. Ulman told me that she made them herself, replicating the style of Charles Barsotti's satirical cartoons for The New Yorker. The unchallenged protagonists of her parodies are Bob and Amalia, the latter almost invariably dressed
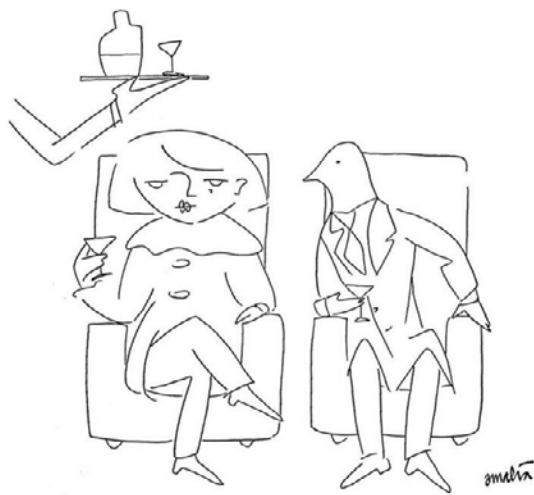
6. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

in a yuppified version of the Pierrot costume. In one sketch, the two are sitting on a plane, having an argument. Martini in hand, she mocks his thickness: 'Yes, I said that in an ironic tone. Of course I said that in an ironic tone. There is very little I <u>don't</u> say in an ironic tone'. (fig. 6) Which seems like a good way of approaching Ulman's work in general.

The couple's surreal routine unfolds inside a small office (very nearly a large cubicle) on the seventeenth floor of a skyscraper in the heart of the Financial District. Previously the artist had used Instagram's built-in GPS to misdirect her followers as to her whereabouts, but this time she made a point of sticking to the address displayed on her feed: Suite 1717, 811 Wilshire Boulevard, Downtown LA. Instead of anchoring her digital mise-en-scène IRL, however, these coordinates only add another layer of non-site-specificity. Let me explain. The Financial District was developed in the 1980s in an effort to compete with Wall Street and establish Downtown LA as the gateway to Asian capital. This amused Ulman, who liked the idea of working in a wannabe replica of the Big Apple. One Wilshire, a nondescript building around the corner from her studio is one of the biggest broadband hubs in the world with an underground cable network channelling one third of the internet traffic between Asia and the US. You would think an artist whose entire practice is based online would care about this, but in researching the history of the neighbourhood, Ulman became primarily fascinated with the failure of the Financial District to fully take off. 'Half of the office suites here are empty', she told me with a frank smile, 'it's all a façade'.[16]

Aside from this, that Ulman made a point of picking a completely unremarkable corporate suite is entirely in keeping with the figure of the artist as marketing researcher and fabricator of virtual fantasies that bank on the sinister appeal of a successfully capitalist lifestyle. 'I work better here than in a traditional artist studio', she told me when I visited her, 'for the same reason I like to work in airport – it's a neutral space'.[17] More non-site than site, Ulman's office only comes alive through the lens of her iPhone and a solid dose of digital artifice. In one, particularly striking image, the artist Photoshopped herself six extra arms, each holding a key accessory for the performance: a giant staple, a clock, a red balloon,

7. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

a red mug, red scissors, and fake flowers (fig. 7). This is her own take on that staple of modern advertising in which the Hindu goddess Kali is fused with the Western stereotype of the multi-tasking mother. It is a caricature of it, too.

Like all of Ulman's projects, *Privilege* is strictly colour-coded. From the outfits of the protagonist to the absurd clerical props that surround her, the aesthetic is dominated by a basic spectrum of blacks and whites injected by infusions of deep crimson and admiral blue. These are the shades of old-school corporate design, the artist told me. Perhaps; but with its quirky cast of characters her office looks nothing like the workplace of a genuine white-collar worker. Instead, it looks distinctively like one of Ulman's synesthetic visions (she does in fact have synaesthesia, a rare neurological condition that manifests itself in the combination of two or more sense impressions, such as for example colour and language, or colour and space-time perception). Aside from Ulman's brain, the chromatic scale of *Privilege* strikes a chord with the aesthetic of contemporary crime TV (think *The Good Wife*, a reference the artist acknowledged in passing). There is something thrilleresque about *Privileg* – and it's not just because clowns can be creepy. No, it's the colours. All that red bleeding through the grey world of Bob and Amalia feels ominous, especially in the context of a pregnancy (even a fake one). The performance does in fact end with the two in a car crash in which she loses the baby and the bird becomes a cyborg. But, even before the accident, the office had grown into an absurd crime scene, with the artist casting the most ludicrous object as clues to a larger plotline. She makes a huge deal of staples, for instance, isolating them under a spotlight like forensic specimens, and insisting that they are unmistakable evidence of something only she can see. Once again, it is about faking it until it becomes real. Or, until you lose it.

There is an additional connotation to the colours of *Privilege* – they match the American flag. The connection becomes salient toward the end of the performance. This has to do with the fact that, contrary to what she did with *Excellences and Perfections*, this time Ulman let the action unfold roughly in real time. Every day, she would go into the office, like a 'real' employee,

8. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016, Instagram performance, still from a digital video, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

and produce something for *Privilege*. This meant that the main plotline – the pregnancy – was gradually eclipsed by more pressing political concerns, turning into a bit of a dead end. As the 2016 campaign of the Republican candidate for president, Donald Trump, grew more hateful and his Tweets wilder in their speciousness, Ulman decided to shift the focus of the performance and prolong the original timeline so that it would end after Election Day (which explains why the pregnancy goes on for over nine months). Clearly, her intuition that online communication turns individuals into caricatures took on new meaning as the American mogul gained massive popular support (Twitter followers in the lead), in spite of his blatant disregard for conventional

notions of factual accuracy and political coherence, not to say correctness. Even within his own party, many dismissed Trump as a joke, a farce. The American electorate made them eat their words.

At points, *Privilege* comments caustically on the news. In one post, the artist – who is originally Argentinean and grew up in Spain – targets the rise of anti-immigration propaganda with a video-portrait of her face covered in a digital mask of stars and stripes (fig. 8). Using a modified selfie app, Ulman made her features look grotesquely nationalistic. 'You think my accent is funny', the mask whispers in a derisive, overacted tone. 'You think my English is cute. You called it broken English. You think I'm broken'. The accusation comes with a markedly Spanish inflection. 'Well, wait and see. Wait until I get my papers. This baby is my anchor'. Ulman here is pretend-threatening to use the baby to obtain a green card. And although she can be seen to take a stab at Republicans and Democrats alike, Trump's voice was the loudest in accusing illegal Latina immigrants of plotting to give birth in the US in order to legitimise their residence.

This is where the physical coordinates of Ulman's office become important for situating her Instagram script in the context of dynamics occurring *in situ*. For the last three decades at least, many local artists and activists have directed their forces against the gentrification of Downtown LA, a historically Latino area that is currently suffering from critical levels of displacement and homelessness.[18] For someone like Ulman to hire a suite right in the belly of the beast is no insignificant gesture. As mentioned before, 811 Wilshire Boulevard is located in the Financial District. It is one of a cluster of corporate towers whose dark reflective surfaces stretch skyward, breaking the pattern of low-rise warehouses that characterise the old Downtown LA past Broadway Avenue all the way down to the Fashion District. Much like the matter of financial speculation, Ulman's pantomime of 'privilege' travels through the transnational circuits of digital exchange, and in keeping with the conditions of its online circulation, the corporate fantasy we are invited to follow is carefully cropped out of the urban fabric it inevitably belongs to. By her own admission, Ulman makes a parody of the ambition to become a member of the middle-class establishment in the knowledge that she is also a victim of it. While she makes a sardonic mockery of what has become of the American dream, she is not prepared to forfeit her allegiance with the capitalist aspirations onto which it rests. In the end, it is not easy to pin down the politics of *Privilege*, not least because it is so embedded in parody. A critic of reactionary forces, Ulman targets the liberal press as much as anything else. Her homages to Barsotti, for instance, give her Instagram feed a mock-journalistic tone that is nothing but light-hearted. Which leads me to our recent obsession with online spoofs.

In the immediate aftermath of Trump's election, the topic of 'fake news' occupied the Western press almost on a daily basis, with a chorus of journalists and political commentators reprimanding the CEOs of major social media firms for having allowed misleading information to circulate on their platforms unchecked. The supposed neutrality of their algorithms was challenged by a number of international think tanks,[19] with Google, Facebook and Reddit all accused of facilitating a 'post-truth' regime biased towards reactionary forms of propaganda.[20] For some, the problem was that user-generated forums have come to be dominated by the

language of invective, mockery and caricature. This had tangible consequences on the tone of the campaign, contributing to blur the distinction between reality, parody and straight up lies in the run up to the election. Writing for *The New Yorker*, Emily Nussbaum asked 'How Jokes Won the Election: How Do You Fight an Enemy That's Just Kidding?' Online, Nussbaum wrote, 'jokes were powerful accelerants for lies', while 'the distinction between a Nazi and someone pretending to be a Nazi for "lulz" had become a blur. Ads looked like news and so did propaganda and so did actual comedy, on both the right and the left – and every combination of the four was labelled "satire"'.[21]

In retrospect, it is possible to see how *Privilege* relates to this scenario. The performance parodies the fact that farce and travesty have become pervasive modes of expression. Ulman started out from the assumption that social media transform people into caricatures of themselves, but her performances show the opposite to be true as well – that is, that social media can turn a parody into a paradigm, a farce into a shared truth. This is partly because, online, information is not gauged qualitatively but quantitatively (how many times a message is shared, repeated, or re-tweeted), while any image can take on a life of its own as long as it is shared enough times. The more times a symbol is repeated, the more unhinged its meaning becomes. Ulman understood this early on. After all, 'fake it until you make it' was both the subject of her research and a personal mantra. When I talked to the artist, she told me that Pepe the Frog struck her as the most absurd example of this mechanism of symbolic displacement. Originally an amiable character from Matt Furie's comic series *Boy's Club*, in the late 2000s Pepe went viral on MySpace and 4Chan, and eventually on Tumblr too. Then,
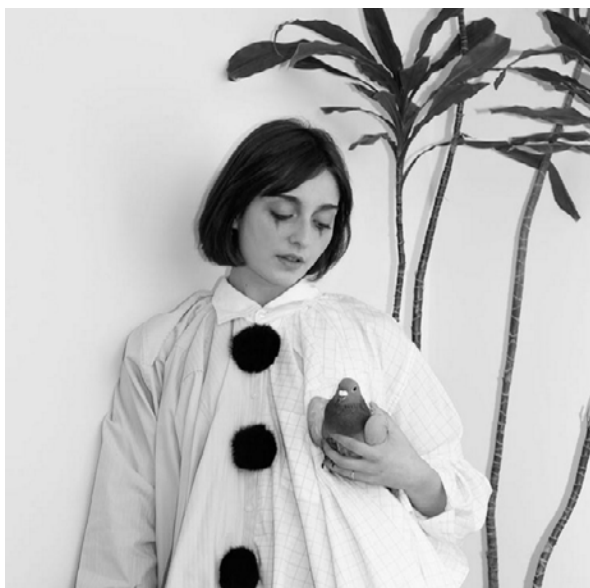
9. Amalia Ulman, *Privilege*, 2016, Instagram performance, digital still image, courtesy of the artist and Arcadia Missa.

around the time of the US presidential election, the digital amphibian was appropriated by the Alt Right, and turned into a meme of right-wing atavism. A caricature of its original self, Pepe now wears a blonde wig and is a veritable totem for what its worshippers hail as the coming of 'Trump-the-saviour'.[22] The same people who glorify the new Pepe also believe that women are mere vessels for the reproduction of the species and that men are truly divided between Alphas (like Trump) and Betas or cuckolds, an emasculating insult reserved for the vast majority. This is the coded language of the most extreme fringes of the 'manosphere'—a name for the network of forums, blogs and websites for those who share an obsession with reasserting positively medieval forms of patriarchy in the face of a feminist backlash of apocalyptic proportions (according to them). It takes less than an hour on the manosphere to rethink Ulman's work as a brilliant antidote to misogynist trolling. Not only is she a woman who comes up with genuinely funny satires about the obnoxiousness of male desire, in *Privilege* she even plays Pierrot, the naïve husband who is permanently made a fool of by his cheating wife Colombina (meaning 'little dove' in Italian). Maybe Ulman's

version of the mask could be elevated to a nemesis of the Alt-Right's cuck, though when I spoke to her she seemed more interested in comparing her pigeon friend to Pepe the Frog (fig. 9).

Bob, Ulman explained to me, is something of a reverse mirror image of Pepe, in the sense that the frog went from friend to foe, while the bird encountered the opposite fate. When Ulman's followers first spotted it flapping about inside Suite 1717, they felt compelled to send the artist all sorts of advice about how to get rid of it. But by the end of the performance, Bob had become their favourite character. How did the artist manage it? By giving Bob all the best lines. In this way, she deliberately made a pigeon—possibly the most detested embodiment of urban trash – appear just as lovable as a dove. Ulman told me with a chuckle that it was just too absurd. 'Things cannot go on like this', she said. Then she seemed to change her mind entirely. 'You'll see, this is just the beginning', she added, without quite explaining whether she was referring to her work or to the political context we had just discussed in relation to the evolution of social media. I did not think to ask either, the distinction seemed beside the point.

1   Sarah Gram, 'The Young-Girl and the Selfie,' *Textual Relations* (2013), accessed 20 January 2017, http://text-relations.blogspot.ch/2013/03/the-young-girl-and-selfie.html.
2   Robert Smithson, 'A Provisional Theory of Non-Sites' [1968], in *Unpublished Writings*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), accessed April 20, 2017, https://www.robertsmithson.com/essays/provisional.htm.
3   Amalia Ulman, 'Do You Follow? Art in Circulation #3,' panel discussion, ICA, London, 17 October 2014.
4   Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990), 50. Davis borrows this phrase from the German geographer Anton Wagner who, in 1935, compiled one of the earliest and most comprehensive studies of what he then described as 'the Paris of the Far West'. See: Anton Wagner, *Los Angeles…Zweimillionenstadt in Sudkali-fornien* [1935], cited in Davis, *City of Quartz*, 49.
5   Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986).
6   Amalia Ulman interviewed by Asher Penn for *Lonely Girl* (Martos Gallery, New York, 2013), accessed January 30, 2017, http://lonelygirl.info/amaliaulman.html.
7   That said, the fact that Ulman re-stages her memes of choice within a more complex narrative distances her Instagram art from the more cynical end of appropriation. A counterexample here would be Richard Prince's *New Portrait Collection* (2014). Released shortly after Ulman brought *Excellences and Perfections* to a close, Prince's series consists of over thirty ink-jet printed canvases that reproduce screen-grabs of his Instagram feed. In other words, Prince lifted other people's posts and sold them as paintings worth hundreds of thousands of dollars.
8   Molly Languir, 'Amalia Ulman is the First Great Instagram Artist,' *Elle* (October 2016), accessed December 22, 2016, http://www.elle.com/culture/art-design/a38857/amalia-ulman-instagram-artist/.
9   In 2013, the previously acclaimed actress Amanda Bynes was caught behaving manically on camera and on Twitter. A network of fans and conspiracy theorists speculated that it was a stunt (a piece of performance art in fact) that Bynes had orchestrated with the deliberate intent of boosting her popularity. This gave Amalia Ulman the idea for *Excellences and Perfections*. Bynes later revealed to have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. See Molly Lambert, 'Career on Fire: The Increasingly Strange Case of Amanda Bynes,' *Grantland* (2014), accessed January 15, 2016, http://grantland.com/hollywood-prospectus/career-on-fire-the-increasingly-strange-case-of-amanda-bynes/. I came across the term Trainwreck TV in David Ferguson, 'What Makes Celebrity Meltdowns Entertainment Instead of Tragedy?' *The Guardian*, 11 December (2016), accessed December 22, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/dec/11/what-makes-celebrity-meltdowns-entertainment-kanye-west.
10 Aria Dean, 'Closing the Loop,' *The New Inquiry* (2016), accessed 22 November 2016, http://thenewinquiry.com/essays/closing-the-loop/.
11 On Iggy Azelaia and her appropriation of black hip hop see Amy Zimmerman, 'The Cultural Crimes of Iggy Azalea,' *The Daily Beast*, 29 December (2014.), accessed January 21, 2017, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/29/the-cultural-crimes-of-iggy-azalea.html.
12 Amalia Ulman, in conversation with the author (December 2016).
13 Amalia Ulman, 'Do You Follow? Art in Circulation #3,' panel discussion, ICA, London, 17 October 2014.
14 Amalia Ulman in conversation with the author (December 2016).

15 Ibidem.

16 Ibidem.

17 Ibidem.

18 An example would be Allan Sekula's documentary project *Facing the Music: Documenting Walt Disney Concert Hall and the Redevelopment of Downtown Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: East of Borneo, 2015).

19 See, for example: Kate Connolly et al., 'Fake News: An Insidious Trend That's Fast Becoming a Global Problem,' *The Guardian*, 2 December 2016, accessed December 22, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/dec/02/fake-news-facebook-us-election-around-the-world, and Sapna Maheshwari, 'How Fake News Goes Viral: A Case Study,' *The New York Times*, 20 November 2016, accessed December 22, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/business/media/how-fake-news-spreads.html. For a much more thorough analysis of the way in which online news have loosened and corrupted previously held standards of truth and accountability, see Katharine Viner, 'How Technology Disrupted the Truth,' *The Guardian*, 12 July 2016, accessed December 22, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/jul/12/how-technology-disrupted-the-truth.

20 A recent investigation commissioned by *The Observer* concluded that Google's search is biased towards right-wing predictions. See Olivia Solon and Sam Levin, 'How Google Search Algorithm Spreads False Information with a Rightwing Bias,' *The Guardian*, 16 December 2016, accessed December 22, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/dec/16/google-autocomplete-rightwing-bias-algorithm-political-propaganda.

21 Emily Naussbaum, 'How Jokes Won the Election: How Do You Fight an Enemy Who's Just Kidding?' *The New Yorker*, 23 January 2017, accessed January 23, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/23/how-jokes-won-the-election.

22 On Pepe the Frog and the rise of pseudo-religious symbolism on Alt-Right sites, see Tara Isabella Burton, 'Apocalypse Whatever: The Making of a Racist, Sexist Religion of Nihilism on 4Chan,' *Reallife*, 13 December 2016, accessed December 22, 2016, http://reallifemag.com/apocalypse-whatever/.

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Deep Compositing: Performance, Augmentation and Voids

Robert Rapoport

Robert Rapoport, video still from *Deep Compositing: Performance, Augmentation and Voids*, video, 3'43", 2017.
Available at: oarplatform.com/deep-compositing-performance-augmentation-voids/.

Cinema has been compositing images for over a century. Double exposure, matting and chroma-keying were all visual techniques that required a new embodied understanding by the actor, so that the actor's *performance* could be projected into a composited future. With the coming of augmented reality (AR) the logic of compositing deepens in both space and time. Using 3D meshes and volumetric capture compositing becomes 'deep'. 2D cinema sets used to require what Flusser called 'a new imagination' between the material and computational worlds.[1] Under conditions of deep compositing, the imaginative labor of a performance is increasingly delegated to processors, operating in real-time. As this technique spreads, productions will increasingly leave strategic voids into which digital assets can be poured. Lev Manovich has argued for the need to explore the 'substance' of these voids.[2] How does a landscape made up of such dynamic spaces change one's behavior?

This video takes two compositing techniques – the chroma-key and 3D mesh – and gives them a presence on a 2D set in the form of blue and magenta netting. The behavior of this netting is subjected to chaotic forces – light, wind and bodies – which make a convincing composite absurd. The aim is to highlight how the act of inference inherent in real-time compositing is performative on a number of levels.[3] What are the poetics of performing with or against these processes? How does behavior under these conditions provide a microcosm of larger epistemological questions that AR will bring? What is the temporality of a site/landscape of such dynamic voids?

1   Vilém Flusser, 'A New Imagination,' in *Writings*, ed. Andreas Ströhl, trans. Erik Eisel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 114.
2   Lev Manovich, 'The Poetics of Augmented Space,' *Visual Communication* 5 (2006): 237.
3   For an example of performative compositing see: Shunsuke Saito, Tianye Li, and Hao Li, 'Real-Time Facial Segmentation and Performance Capture from RGB Input,' in *Computer Vision – ECCV 2016: 14th European Conference, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, October 11-14, 2016, Proceedings, Part VIII*, ed. Bastian Leibe, Jiri Matas, Nicu Sebe, and Max Welling (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 244–61.

Robert Rapoport's work focuses on video production as a lens through which to view larger shifts brought on by automation. He was recently a research fellow at the Digital Cultures Research Lab (DCRL) at the Leuphana University, Lüneburg, Germany. He has taught both theory and practice in a number of contexts including the History of Art Department at Oxford, Sarah Lawrence College, The University of Lüneburg, and The Hamburg Media School. More info on: www.iterativeframe.com.

Instrumental: Performance and the Cumulative Potential of Distributed Sites

Campbell Drake

Campbell Drake, *Instrumental*, Culpra Station 2015, image courtesy of Greta Costello.

Exploring the relations between the site of research and the site of output, this paper is a critical comparison of the immediate experience of conducting research in a specific place/space and the sites at which practice based research outputs are published and exhibited. Extending Miwon Kwon's assertion that 'site is not simply a geographical location but a network of social relations,'[1] my research is situated within the field of critical spatial practice and explores the ability of site specific performance to contribute to and shape cultural

politics in Australia. Carried out as a series of iterative performances, the practice based research methodology uses salvaged pianos as a device to renegotiate the politics of space through the re-appropriation of iconic and contested Australian sites.

This paper is focused on a recent performance, titled *Instrumental*, that took place on an 8000-hectare property acquired by the Indigenous Land Corporation as part of a land bank established for the Aboriginal people of the Barkanji nation.[2] Produced in collaboration with the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation (CMAC) in 2015, *Instrumental* came about through an invitation to participate in a critical cartographies workshop, and comprises a professional piano tuner attempting to tune a broken upright piano outdoors in the blazing midday sun. Drawing on the semiotic potential of the piano as a cultural artifact of western colonial origins,[3] this research stages a juxtaposition of the piano and the Australian bush to examine cultural semantics unique to the sites' political and spatial contexts.

Here, I build upon Henri Lefebvre's assertion that 'there is a politics of space because space is political'[4] to provide insights into the relations between aesthetic practices, human and non-human interaction, and the politics of Indigenous and non-Indigenous space. Part one of the paper provides a close reading of the immediate experience of producing *Instrumental* and speculates on the ability of site specific performance to re-negotiate spatial politics. Part two examines the motivations and critical operations behind mediatizing or documenting site specific performance for the purposes of exhibiting (and evidencing) within institutional research frameworks. Tracing *Instrumental* from conception to realization and on to dissemination as exhibition and publication, this paper investigates the efficacy and impact of sites of research production and sites of research output as cumulative fields of discursive operation.

Part 1: The Research Site in a Specific Place & Space

Instrumental is the title of a creative research project that is situated at the intersection of spatial design, performance, and sound.[5] Taking place in September 2015 during an Indigenous-led mapping workshop titled *Interpretive Wonderings*, the project involves the staged tuning of a broken upright piano situated outdoors on Culpra Station in rural New South Wales.

The research is framed within an existing field of practice in which a variety of creative practitioners have engaged pianos as performative devices to renegotiate situations, subjects, and environments. *Instrumental* is both critical and spatial, a specific type of practice coined by Jane Rendell as 'critical spatial practice – work that intervenes into a site in order to critique that site.'[6] The artwork builds upon the work of Ross Bolleter's *Ruined Pianos* (2000), Richard McLester's *The Piano is the Sea* (2008), and Yosuke Yamashita's *Burning Piano* (1973/2008) which all engage the politics of a given spatial context by leveraging and exploiting the symbolic associations of the piano.[7]

Research in the field

Inspired by a body of critical cartographic work that approaches mapping as 'performative, participatory and political,'[8] *Interpretive Wonderings* was structured in two parts across two sites. Part one consisted of a three-day mapping workshop in the field on Culpra Station. Part two consisted of a curated exhibition of mapping outcomes exhibited at the Mildura Arts Centre. In all, thirty Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants were invited to produce creative interpretations of Barkanji Country.

The project had emerged through discussions with Barry Pearce, Aboriginal Elder and secretary of the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation, in which he conveyed a desire to develop alternate representations of Culpra Station that express an Indigenous perspective of land and Country.[9] Produced in collaboration with the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation, the University of Technology Sydney, Monash University, RMIT University and the Mildura Arts Centre,[10] *Interpretive Wonderings* commenced with an open call for expressions of interest. In response, participants submitted mapping proposals in a range of media with the only stipulation that a relationship to the specificity of Barkanji Country was demonstrable.[11] My engagement with the these sites pre-dated my role as an *Interpretive Wonderings* participant. Over a two year period, I worked in a research capacity exploring participatory design methods and opportunities for developing enterprises which drew on the local knowledge and business capabilities of the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation.[12] While conducting this research, I was fortunate to visit Culpra Station on several occasions. Each time, Barry, Betty, and Sophia Pearce of the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation shared their knowledge and histories of the property.

A short history of Culpra Station

The earliest evidence of human occupation within the vicinity of Culpra Station is an Aboriginal midden that has been carbon dated to 16,250 +- 540 years before the present. This midden is most likely to have been created by the Aboriginal people of the Barkindji and Kureinji language groups that continued to occupy the region of the Central Murray at the time of the first contact with Europeans. The earliest written records of Culpra Station indicate that the area was first visited by the 'explorer Captain James Sturt during his 1829–31 expedition of the Murrumbidgee and Murray Rivers.'[14] The proximity of the Murray River and diversity of soil types has seen cropping and grazing since the property was first delineated in 1846. Early records indicate that at least some of the land now was owned by David Wickett in 1887, and remained in the Wickett Family until its sale to the Burns family circa 1980.[15] In more recent times, in 2002, the property was purchased by the Indigenous Land Corporation 'for the purpose of building a secure and sustainable land bank for Indigenous people.'[16]

This acquisition was made possible by the *Aboriginal Land Act* of 1983 (ALRA), which lay the foundations for the return of land to Indigenous Australians by the Commonwealth state or territory governments of Australia based on recognition of dispossession. ALRA is a statutory land rights regime that partly compensates Aboriginal people for historical dispossession of their lands in the recognition that land is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic

importance to Aboriginal people, and it is underpinned by the principle of self-determination.[17]

The statutory body for overseeing land acquisitions is the Indigenous Land Corporation, which was established in 1995 under the ALRA by the Federal Government to assist Indigenous Australians to acquire land and manage Indigenous-held land sustainably and in a manner that provides cultural, social, economic, and environmental benefits for themselves and future generations. Following the purchase of Culpra Station in 2002, the land was first managed, then granted to the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation, who continue to manage the property under the ethos of protecting the land from practices and actions that may be damaging to both its environmental and heritage value.[18]

Therefore reflected in this provenance are traces of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous occupation and cultural practices dating back 20,000 years. The colonial and modern pastoralist histories have left some obvious marks on the land today, including laser-leveled pastures, redundant irrigation channels, farming infrastructure, and the remnants of a former homestead. Alongside the pastoralist history, the land has a number of significant Aboriginal historical and cultural sites including burial sites, hearths, scarred trees, an ochre quarry, middens, and a fish trap.

Paul Groth asserts that 'landscape denotes the interaction of people and place: a social group and its spaces, particularly the spaces to which the group belongs and from which its members derive some part of their shared identity and meaning.'[19] But to which group and which identity are we referring? Which space and time? Could the same landscape be synonymous with the identity of both Aboriginal and white farming communities? If so, how could this duplicitous politics of space be better understood? Seeking an active engagement with such questions, the invitation to take part in *Interpretive Wonderings* brought about an opportunity to further investigate the duplicitous spatial politics of inter-cultural ownership.

The semiotic register of the piano

At the time of submitting the proposal for *Interpretive Wonderings*, I was developing a body of practice based research that investigated how site specific performance can renegotiate sites of cultural significance to provide insights into the political dimensions of space. This creative practice had been developed through a series of site specific performances staged within contested sites of differing cultural significance, including Melbourne's Flinders Street Station ballroom (*Duration*, 2012),[20] and the Princess Theatre (*The Princess Theatre Inversion*, 2014).[21] Central to the research methodology within this body of work was the utilization and exploration of the piano as a performative, spatial, and semiotic device to renegotiate the relations between spec-tatorship, action, and contested spatial contexts. This working methodology is exemplified within the performance titled *Duration* that took place within the dilapidated Flinders Street Station ballroom in October 2012. Empty for thirty years as a consequence of the privatization of state assets, *Duration* featured a 90 minute performance of *Canto Ostinato* performed on two grand pianos demonstrating the semiotic potential of the piano to negotiate contested spaces.[22]

The pianos selected for performances staged within the Flinders Street Station ballroom and the Princess Theatre were all concert grand pianos upon which formal recitals had been played by professional musicians. The move from iconic architectural spaces, purpose built for performance, to a rural landscape setting affected both the type of piano selected and the mode of pianist-to-instrument interaction, marking a methodological shift. While it cannot be denied that certain pragmatic concerns influenced these decisions – availability, cost, permissions, and the logistics of transporting a grand piano to a remote region of Australia – what is revealed in this change from grand to upright piano is the conventions of the piano in relation to spatial context. Two factors emerged. First, as the environmental and political context changed from urban to rural settings, salvaged upright pianos were selected in place of grand pianos, suggesting that the symbolic register of piano types (grand and upright) is tied to particular historical lineages in space and time. This historical lineage suggests a differentiation between the grand piano that is associated with cultural institutions of high art compared with the upright piano commonly found within more informal, domestic environments.[23] Secondly, in the shift from controlled interior environments to an externalized landscape condition, the mode of interaction with the piano was modified from a formal recital to a staged tuning, in order to highlight a spatial negotiation between the piano, the pianist, and the immediate environment.

In the work *Instrumental*, 'tuning' is both a process and a concept. Usually taking place within a controlled interior environment, the act of tuning the piano outdoors can be interpreted as being an ironic symbol or satirical commentary of the colonial desire to combat the harsh landscape and conditions presented by Australian environments. In being staged on a property intended to be a compensatory land bank for Indigenous people, the site brought about an opportunity to explore the semiotic potential of the piano as a colonial artifact in relation to land, Indigenous Country,[24] and Australian postcolonial politics.[25]

Informed by the perceived cultural identity of the piano as a colonial instrument, the preliminary proposal for *Instrumental* was to transport and locate an upright piano within Culpra Station's dilapidated former homestead. Reflected in the preliminary proposal to *house* the piano is my own cultural heritage as a man of British colonial origins with a predisposition to safeguard the piano in a denial of the environmental realties of the Australian landscape. The first piano arrived in Australia in 1788 with the first fleet, and was once considered 'the cultural heart and soul of the colonial home. It occupied the parlor, a place for families and their guests to gather, entertain and socialize, as well as a place to retreat into private solace.'[26] Historically an object of desire, status and 'civilization,'[27] pianos have in recent times been replaced with alternate forms of screen based entertainment including the television,[28] personal computers and smart phones. Whilst we might imagine the piano's place in the modern home has become redundant, and indeed these instruments are often gifted for free,[29] the symbolic recognition of the piano in Australia as part of a western cultural heritage has remained intact, with a perceived identity that it is tied to a British colonial past.[30]

In considering the symbolic register of an upright piano and Australian rural settings, it seems pertinent to contextualize the work in relation to Ross Bolleter's *Ruined Piano Sanctuary*.

Beginning the project as an art installation in 2005, Bolleter relocated forty pianos to a property outside the town of York in rural Western Australia.[31] In various states of dilapidation and decay, the pianos are scattered across the farm site, in dry fields and under gum trees. Over a period of thirty years, Bolleter has explored the timbral possibilities of ruined pianos. He writes:

> Old pianos that have been exposed to the elements of time and weather acquire novel and unexpected musical possibilities. A piano is ruined (rather than neglected or devastated) when it has been abandoned to all weathers and has become a decaying box of unpredictable dongs, tonks and dedoomps.
> The notes that don't work are at least as interesting as those that do.[32]

Bolleter is a practicing Zen Buddhist, and the *Ruined Piano Sanctuary* is most commonly interpreted through a Buddhist lens within the cycle of life, death, and renewal.[33] Visually and symbolically reminiscent of a Buddhist stupa, the pianos each weather at their own pace, under the prevailing winds and rain, and within the whole environment in which they are placed. Informed by Bolleter's aesthetic resonance, my first task in the realization of *Instrumental* was to source a piano within the vicinity of the site. Using the internet, I located a piano on a farm in the country town of Barham, about 400 km downstream. The owners said it was stored in an old farmhouse, and had not been played in over 50 years. I drove 800 km from Sydney, purchased the piano for $100, loaded it into the tray of a dual cabute,[34] and transported it to the site.

When I arrived, I decided it was inappropriate to place the piano in the former homestead. Restricting the performance to the homestead seemed reductive in comparison to the expansive context of the 8000 hectare property. If the spatial context I had intended to explore was that of Barkanji Country, the homestead that was once occupied by farming families was the wrong environment in which to situate a site specific performance. So I spent several days driving around, exploring the diverse landscape in search of an appropriate site. Following a discussion with members of the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation, I was directed to a particular area of Culpra Station dominated by a forest of dead gum trees. The gum trees had suffered in the statewide drought of the early 2000's and their ghostly appearance produced an 'almost spooky' atmosphere.[35] By situating the piano on the black soil country surrounded by gnarled black box trees, I hoped that an environmental dialogue would be evoked between the piano and Barkanji Country. Visually reminiscent of Bolleter's work, this dialogue presented the piano as vulnerable and exposed, awaiting to be subsumed by the environmental realities of the Australian landscape, which are also evoked by its proximity to the dead gum trees.

However, in contrast to Bolletor's ruined pianos that, in a sense, give in to their environment, I commissioned a local piano tuner from Mildura, forty kilometers away, to tune the salvaged piano for thirty minutes to the best of his ability, in the blazing midday sun. As the instrument had not been played in over fifty years and had a cracked sound board, the act of tuning and tightening strings only put additional pressure on the internal mechanisms, which slid in and out of tune as the tuner moved through the keys from one end to the other. As he toiled

away, the piano resisted. It denied its new situation, and could not maintain harmony in a foreign environment. Like the desire to house the piano in the homestead, the act of tuning could be conceived as re-enacting the colonial preoccupation with fighting against the land and what was perceived as a hostile, harsh, and foreign environment. By contrast, Bolleter's ruined pianos passively give way to these conditions, and performances using them have relished and celebrated the new sounds created by their gradual transformation by their environment. In *Instrumental*, the tuner, a solitary figure in the landscape, is not a recognized 'noise musician' or 'sound performer,' but becomes an almost absurd caricature of his colonial forbears.

Ross Bolleter, *The Ruined Piano Sanctuary*, York, Western Australia, image featured on ABC Online article, 'Ebony and Ivory: a Field of Ruined Symphonies,' 13 November 2013 , courtesy of Chloe Papas.

On tuning: An acoustic ecology

Usually taking place within a controlled and internalized environment, 'piano tuning involves listening to the sound of two notes played simultaneously (a two-note chord) and 'navigating' between sequences of chords in which one note is already tuned and the other has to be adjusted.'[36] The placement of the piano outdoors inverts conventional tuning practice. This inversion repositions the pianist to piano (human to non-human) interaction by assigning the environment (non-human) a more active role in the tuning process. The active role of the environment is determined by the sonic and spatial qualities of the landscape, the acoustic ecology within which the tuner recalibrates the instrument.

The term 'acoustic ecology,' coined by Murray Schafer, is a discipline studying the relationship between human beings and their environments, mediated through sound.[37] In developing the term, Schafer devised a new terminology for soundscape studies, defining background sounds as 'keynotes,' foreground sounds as 'signal sounds,' and sounds that are particularly regarded by a community as 'soundmarks.' Schafer's terminology helps to express the idea that the sound of a particular locality (its keynotes, sound signals, and soundmarks) can express a community's identity to the extent that a site can be read and characterized by sounds.[38]

Adopting Schafer's terminology, the *keynotes* were characterized by the wind rustling through the gum leaves and long grass, the *sound signals* were made up of the single notes of the piano, and the *soundmarks* were distinctive of local native bird calls. As the tuner played and tuned each of the notes, the existing sounds of the landscape were seemingly amplified as a form of symphonic accompaniment. Beyond the audible spectrum, Schafer also developed the concept of 'acoustic coloration.' This term describes the 'echoes and reverberations that occur as sound is absorbed and reflected from surfaces within an environment, and the effects of weather related factors such as temperature, wind and humidity.'[39] Sympathetic with the holistic notion of Indigenous Country, the acoustic coloration produced by *Instrumental* is inclusive of human and non-human presence and the effects of material and immaterial composition. Reflected by the surrounding tree trunks and absorbed by the tuner and the spectators, the sound signals were equally influenced by the wind and rising heat of sandy soils, such that 'the sound arriving at the ear is the analogue of the current state of the physical environment, charged by each interaction with the environment.'[40]

In the act of tuning the piano within this environment, the landscape comes to speak through the instrument, highlighting 'the duplicity of landscape: referring to the tension between thing and idea – matter and meaning, place and ideology.'[41] Swatting flies from their eyes, a small party of onlookers took shelter in the shade of the vehicles in silence. One unfortunate spectator sitting on an ant's nest suppressed his urge to call out and disturb the meditative space produced as the tuner went about his futile task. According to one audience member, *Instrumental* 'produced a space of meditative contemplation' in which the act of tuning the piano allowed the landscape to speak through the instrument as the piano was tuned to the wind and the birds.[42] The concept of 'tuning space' emerges from the immediate experience of conducting research in a specific place/space; the distance between passive spectators and constructed environments is collapsed to recalibrate the spatio-temporalities of landscape.

Campbell Drake, *Instrumental*, Culpra Station 2015, image courtesy of Greta Costello.

Part 2 : The Site(s) of Research Outputs

Performance documentation/post production/dissemination

Artist-researchers have long questioned the motivations, critical operations and impact of evidencing artistic and practice based research within institutional research frameworks.[43] Informed by Peggy Phelan's famous declaration that 'performance's being becomes itself through disappearance,'[44] I understood from the outset that the research output generated from the live performance of *Instrumental* would be exhibited at the Mildura Arts Centre in the form of video documentation. Although only a small live audience was present, the fact that the performance documentation would be disseminated in a gallery context shifted the emphasis of the performance design to one of performance for camera, rather than performance for a live audience.

The live and the mediatized

Philip Auslander critiques Peggy Phelan's assertion that 'Performance's being becomes itself through disappearance and can be defined as representation without reproduction.'[45] Auslander unpacks the tensions between two modes of performance, the live and the mediatized, arguing that 'there remains a strong tendency in performance theory to place live performance and mediatized or technologized forms in opposition to one another.'[46] Auslander suggests this opposition is focused on two primary issues: reproduction and distribution. In focusing on the notion of reproduction and distribution in relation to sites of research, we must first consider the method by which *Instrumental* was documented, then the modes in which it was distributed to secondary audiences.

Reproduction: Performance, documentation & post-production

The documentation was captured using three digital cameras and two audio recorders. Two of the cameras recorded moving images; one was set in a fixed position and the other roamed.[47] The fixed camera was positioned to one side of the piano and used a wide longitudinal lens; the camera view framed the piano in the middle-foreground surrounded by dead, twisted gum trees. The second video camera captured close-up imagery of the tuner working the piano, combined with cutaways of surrounding vegetation and ephemera. Two audio recorders were situated within the base of the piano out of camera view. With limited budget for post-production and a conceptual emphasis on what I think of as a *Dogme 95* aesthetic,[48] the video documentation was designed to capture the event in real time, on location, with minimal editing post-performance. The result was a 26 minute single screen video. Emphasizing the difference between performative elements, the video output is black and white, providing contrast between the instrument, tuner, and landscape.

In the opening sequence of the video, the piano tuner enters the frame as though from side stage, armed with a box of tuning implements. Placing the tool box on the ground, he removes the timber facing to expose the keyboard and internal mechanics. Returning to the tool box,

he removes a selection of utensils and small note book in which he records the piano's make and model. Starting with middle C, the tuner systematically moves first down and then up the keys, tuning the piano with the use of his tuning lever, wedges and mute sticks. Seeking to enhance the notion of acoustic coloration, the performance frame alternates between the fixed camera and fragmented close-ups of the tuner and the surrounding natural environment. Of equal emphasis to the visual/ocular representation are the sonic qualities of the video. As the audio recorder was placed inside the piano, the audio output is dominated by the sound of the tuner striking incremental keys, drowning out the *keynotes* – the wind and *soundnotes* of the birds that were audible in the live production. Finishing with the highest notes to the far right of the piano, the tuner packs away his tools, reassembles the piano, picks up his tool box and exits the frame.
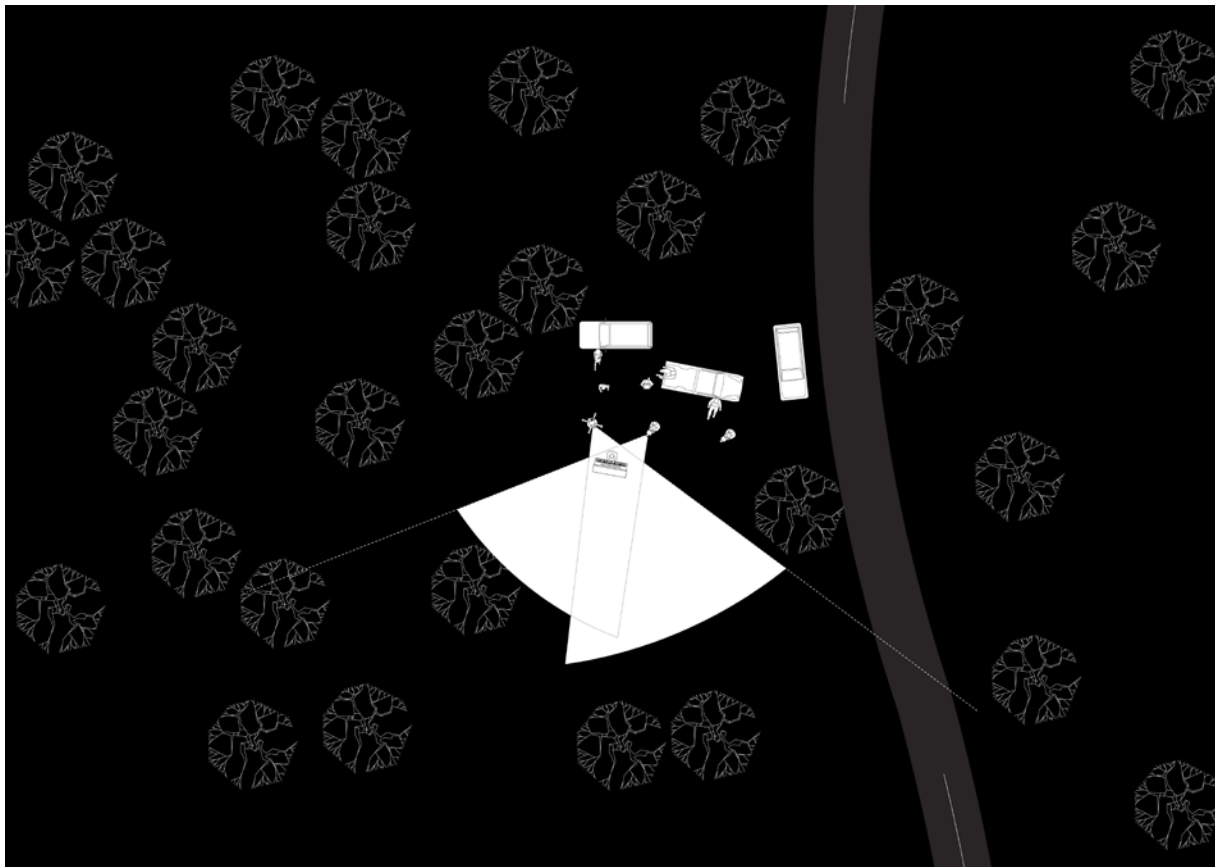
Campbell Drake, *Instrumental*, Culpra Station 2015, diagram courtesy of William Kelly.

Interpretive Wonderings exhibition (Distribution)

Exhibited over an eight-week period between February and April 2016, the *Interpretive Wonderings* exhibition featured twenty works across three white cube galleries. Led by curatorial designer Sven Mehzoud, the exhibition design strategy differentiated each of the three gallery spaces. The first room, titled 'The Map Room,' was presented as a cabinet of curiosities or *Wunderkammer* complete with fragments of colonial furniture, antique maps, and a boardroom table. The second and largest of the gallery spaces was titled 'The Sculpture Room,' and featured two video works, a rusted out car, sculptural artifacts, wall paintings

and a large ink drawing. The third gallery, titled 'Windows to the World,' in which *Instrumental* was exhibited, featured a collection of five 40 inch television monitors tilted at various angles, surrounded by a series of wall hung works including paintings, prints and photographs. Exhibited as part of the television 'cluster,' *Instrumental* was positioned alongside video works by Mick Douglas and Sam Trubridge.

Considered an inherently spatial investigation, *Instrumental* was intended to be exhibited as a 1:1 wall projection with the piano and the tuner represented 'life size.' Instead, the work was scaled down to a 40 inch monitor, thus changing the apparent spatial relationships between the tuner, the piano and the landscape, and changing the bodily engagement which I hoped from a lifesize encounter. Equally important in terms of scale, the audio output of *Instrumental* was played to headphones rather than being amplified in surround sound which I had initially intended. This changed the multisensory potential of the work, relegating the performance documentation to an ocular mode of expression that contrasted with the acoustic ecology experienced in the live event.

Instrumental exhibited as part of Interpretive Wonderings, Mildura Arts Centre, February 2016. Image courtesy of Greta Costello.

Second, the quantity, quality, and diversity of works selected within a group showing of this nature provides a multifarious and somewhat convoluted mode of exhibition that masks the potential clarity of any one work, a claim which is echoed in writing on contemporary exhibition making. For example, according to Claire Bishop, collective projects are more difficult to market than works by individual artists, and less likely to be 'works' than a fragmented array of social events, publications, or performances.[49] I intended to open a transformative space of encounter through collaboration and participation between creative practitioners, community members and Barkanji Country. Yet the legibility of this intent relies on the discursive synergy of the works in combination with the multiple outcomes,[50] which are materialized across Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural contexts, creative disciplines, and exploratory mappings.

Whilst *Instrumental* was displayed in less than ideal circumstances for me, the benefits of exhibiting as part of *Interpretive Wonderings* at the Mildura Arts Centre extend from the production and exhibition of the artworks to the visibility and credibility it created for the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation in relation to building capacity at Culpra Station. In co-producing the *Interpretive Wonderings* exhibition, the Corporation were able to forge new relationships with a number of statutory bodies, enabling them to move closer to achieving their aim of 'boosting the local Aboriginal community's connection to country and the understanding of the local landscape and environment.'[51] In addition to these benefits, the exhibition demonstrates that Indigenous and non-Indigenous creative partnerships can transcend cultural boundaries to lend weight in practical terms to a larger project of reconciliation through mutual understanding.[52]

Instrumental went on to be distributed through a number of unanticipated research platforms. These platforms included radio, invited lectures, conferences, publications, and a second exhibition. In addition to exhibiting *Instrumental* as a video work, an image captured by photographer Greta Costello during the live event was selected for the marketing coverage of the larger exhibition, appearing on a life size banner at the entrance to the exhibition. In addition to the photograph, *Instrumental* was featured in *Unlikely Journal for Creative Arts*, issue no. 2, *The Koori Mail*, and presented at academic conferences: *Performance Studies International (PSI) #22, Performing Climates* at Melbourne University, and *Performing Mobilities and Practice Research Symposia* at RMIT in Melbourne.

One of the more unexpected outputs was that *Instrumental* was featured on ABC Radio National. Hosted by presenter Michael Mackenzie, and titled 'More than one way to map Country,'[53] the broadcast consisted of an interview with *Interpretive Wondering*'s project partners Jock Gilbert and Sophia Pearce. Making reference to a 30 second clip of *Instrumental* found online, Mackenzie describes the opening sequence of the video:

> In this film you see a white bloke walk onto screen...There is a piano, an upright piano just sitting, in the middle of Culpra Station. Out there in the bush. There is no other reference points to civilisation, if you can call it that, than the piano. And then this is what happens. Have a listen to this...(Audio clip of piano tuning). He is actually tuning the piano here. Then he packs up all the things he has used to tune the piano in his bag and he walks off and that's it. What's that all about Jock?[54]

Jock Gilbert responds:

> Campbell is interested in the juxtaposition between the piano as a colonial device and this idea of country. And it's particularly beautiful, almost spooky, you'd describe that part of the property. The piano is sitting on the black soil plain, in amongst some black box trees that have suffered quite badly through the drought of the early 2000s...And it's looking at how we take the idea of performance and take it slightly out of context and what the response is.[55]

Mackenzie replied, 'Ever so slightly. Yes, you are right. It's great, I liked it and I think it is strange and therefore quite compelling and obviously that is part of the project, to get people thinking about landscape in different ways.'[56]

Having no formal training in sound and a limited musical vocabulary, the act of listening to *Instrumental* unexpectedly broadcast on national radio, changed my understanding of the work and reoriented my practice. From being predominantly ocular-centric I began instead to combine both the visual and the aural within a multimodal spatial practice that sought to produce ocular-acoustic affect. I recognised the insights that emerged from the radio broadcast

as a reflective feedback mechanism resulting in a recalibrated practice for a previously unimagined audience.

In referring to the variety of platforms in which the work was featured, I rely on Kwon's understanding of the fragmented site: one in which the power of site specific performance to engage with spatial politics exists across a number of places,[57] including the live event, the exhibition, the virtual space of YouTube and, perhaps most potently, in its discursive potential within traditional forms of research production – namely academic journals and conferences.[58] In distributing the research outputs across a variety of traditional and non-traditional research platforms, each iteration affords a reflective re-positioning that allows for the emergence of new interpretations and understandings. For example, in the translation from the live event to the video work exhibited in the gallery, *Instrumental* was reframed and reworked for a gallery based audience. Similarly, in re-presenting *Instrumental* at a series of academic conferences,[59] the work was re-contextualized within a broader community of practice underpinned by current discourse on site specific performance practice. The conference presentations culminated in a series of articles published within peer reviewed journals. Each iteration has its own merits that are tailored in relation to spectatorship (or readership) that is determined by the site of research production or distribution.

The discursive potential of practice based research lies in the way that different sites of research production and distribution converge to generate knowledge iteratively across a variety of research platforms. To repurpose Kwon's concepts, sites of research production and sites of research output are

> subordinate to a discursively determined site that is delineated as a field
> of knowledge, intellectual exchange or cultural debate. Furthermore,
> this site is not defined as a pre-condition, rather it is generated by the work
> and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation.[60]

Originally conceived as a piano recital on Barkanji Country with an invited live audience of *Interpretive Wonderings* participants, my work was reoriented into a spatial negotiation between a cultural artifact (the piano), a piano tuner, and the duplicitous identity of the Australian landscape. While a handful of spectators were present during the work, the staged act of tuning the piano in the landscape rendered the spectators secondary to the discursive space, which emerged through secondary showings of the video, sound and photographic documentation at the Mildura Arts Centre, on radio, in print and in online media.

Informed by the reflective and iterative process's specific to artistic and practice based research, the different sites of research interact to create a discursive framework that operates across a variety of traditional and non-traditional research platforms. Emerging from this discursive framework are different forms of knowledge that reach diverse audiences within academic and non-academic contexts. Each subsequent iteration provides new opportunities for critical reflection informed by corresponding modes of interaction, engagement and spectatorship suggesting the efficacy and impact practice based research is defined by the convergence of sites of research production and sites of research output that substantiate as a cumulative field of discursive operation.

1   Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

2   In August 2016, the Barkanji people were awarded the largest native title claim in New South Wales history after an 18 year struggle, see https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2015/jun/23/weve-got-to-tell-them-all-our-secrets-how-the-barkandji-won-a-landmark-battle-for-indigenous-australians.

3   See Jane Campion's film *The Piano* (1993), which touches on the symbolic status of the piano in 19th century colonial Britian.

4   Henri Lefebvre, *La production de l'espace* [1974] (Paris: Anthropos, 2000).

5   Campbell Drake, excerpt from *Instrumental* (2016), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kr5hpicrAJA. Produced in collaboration with the Culpra Milli Aboriginal Corporation.

6   Jane Rendell, 'Constellations (or the Reassertion of Time into Critical Spatial Practice),' in One Day Sculpture (Bielefeld: Kerber Verlag, 2009).

7   See Andrea Büttner's recent show about pianos, destruction, and masculinity, accessed 24 April, 2017, http://en.artcontemporain-languedocroussillon.fr/evenement-939.html.

8   Jeremy Crampton, 'Cartography: Performative, Participatory, Political,' *Progress in Human Geography* 33 (2009): 840.

9   Prior to the workshop, the only maps of Culpra station were cadastral ones – paper objects made by government agencies to value and manage parcels of land.

10 The *Interpretive Wonderings* project team consisted of Jock Gilbert (RMIT), Sophia Pearce (CMAC), Sven Mehzoud (Monash) and myself (UTS). Our responsibilities included curating, sourcing funding, exhibition design, and project managing the three-day mapping workshop and subsequent exhibition at the Mildura Arts Centre.

11 Ibidem.

12 Sunraysia Environmental, 'Environment and Heritage Management Plan (DRAFT),' *Culpra Station NSW* (2013), 39–40.

13 Ibidem.

14 Idem, 'Historical Land Use,' 3.

15 Ibidem.

16 Idem, 'Background,' 1.

17 See: https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquirySubmission/Summary/52928/0028%20NSW%20Government.pdf.

18 'Environment and Heritage Management Plan,' 39–40.

19 Paul Groth, 'Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study,' in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Groth and Bressi (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 1.

20 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11QbX4p2Plo.

21 See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkRiitjmoso, accessed April 24, 2017.

22 C. J. Drake, 'Contemporary Site Investigations,' in *Expanded Architecture: Reverse Projections*, ed. Claudia Perren and Sarah Breen Lovett (Berlin: Broken Dimanche Press, 2013), 78–83.

23 Jocelyn Wolfe, 'Pioneers, Parlours and Pianos: Making Music, Building a State in the Queensland Bush,' in *The Piano Mill Catalogue* (2016), 9–11.

24 'When Aboriginal people use the English word "Country", it is meant in a special way. For Aboriginal people's culture, nature and land are all linked. Aboriginal communities have a cultural connection to the land, which is based on each community's distinct culture, traditions and laws. Country takes in everything within the landscape landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. Community connections include cultural practices, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as all people: past, present and future. These custodial relationships may determine who can speak for particular Country. These concepts are central to Aboriginal spirituality and continue to contribute to Aboriginal identity.' See: http://www.visitmungo.com.au/aboriginal-country. This definition of Country has been selected for its specific relevance to Culpra Station and the Bankanji nation having originated from Lake Mungo. This site, of Bankanji cultural significance, was pivotal in substantiating the largest native title claim in New South Wales history, one that was awarded to the Barkanji people in August 2016.

25 The author acknowledges transculturation that has occured in relation to musical instruments from Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. However, for the sake of exploring the semiotic potential of the piano in relation to Culpra Station, the perceived identity of the piano is defined by its western colonial origins.

26 Wolfe, 'Pioneers, Parlours and Pianos,' 9–11.

27 Douglas Gordan, 'The End of Civilisation,' accessed April 24, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/culture/video/2012/jul/03/douglas-gordon-cultural-olympiad-video.

28 The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) estimate 99% of Australian homes have a working Television set. See http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/Library/researchacma/Snapshots-and-presentations/tv-sets-in-australian-households-research-library-landing-page.

29 See Gumtree listing for over 50 free upright pianos available in Australia: https://www.gumtree.com.au/s-upright+piano+free/ko?sort=price_asc.

30 See Jane Campion's film *The Piano* (1993).

31 See: http://www.australiancountry.net.au/updates/sanctuary-ruined-pianos/.

32 Ross Bolleter, 'The Well Weathered Piano,' Sleeve Notes WARPS Publications (2005).

33 See: http://www.abc.net.au/local/photos/2013/11/13/3890191.htm.

34 Ute – an abbreviation for 'utility' or 'coupé utility' – is a term used originally in Australia and New Zealand to describe

usually two-wheel-drive, traditionally passenger vehicles with a cargo tray in the rear integrated with the passenger's body. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ute_(vehicle).

35 Jock Gilbert, 'More than one way to map country: Audio Transcript from RNAfternoons,' *ABC Radio National*, 19 February 2016.

36 S. Teki and S. Kumar, 'Navigating the Auditory Scene: An Expert Role for the Hippocampus,' *Journal of Neuroscience* 29 (2012): 32.

37 Kendall Wrightson, 'An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology,' *Journal of Electroacoustic Music* 12 (1999).

38 Ibidem.

39 Idem, 10.

40 Barry Truax, ed., *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (Burnaby: ARC Publications, 1978).

41 Una Chaudhuri and Eleanor Fuchs, ed., *Land/Scape/Theatre*.

42 Stephen Loo, 'Practice Research Symposium,' RMIT University, October 2016.

43 See Philip Auslander, 'Against Ontology: Making Distinctions Between the Live and the Mediatized,' *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts* 2 (1997): 50–5.

44 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

45 Ibidem.

46 Auslander, 'Against Ontology,' 50–5.

47 Camera operated by videographer Elizabeth Langslow.

48 Andrew Utterson, *Technology and Culture: The Film Reader* (London: Routledge 2005).

49 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012).

50 Drake, 'Contemporary Site Investigations,' 78–83.

51 'Environment and Heritage Management Plan'.

52 C. J. Drake et al, 'Migratory Wonderings Introduction,' in *Migratory Wonderings Catalogue* (2016).

53 See: http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rnafternoons/more-than-one-way-to-map-country/7183348.

54 Michael Mackenzie, 'More than one way to map country.'

55 Jock Gilbert, 'More than one way to map country.'

56 Michael Mackenzie, 'More than one way to map country.'

57 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

58 The discursive potential of journals and conferences is considered a potent form of traditional research output in relation to the longevity, wide circulation, accessibility and reach when compared to the limited audience that experienced *Instrumental* as a live event and the four-week duration in which the work was exhibited at the Mildura Arts Centre.

59 *Instrumental* was presented at *Performance Studies International (PSI) #22, Performing Climates* at Melbourne University in June 2016, and at the *Performing Mobilities and Practice Research Symposia* at RMIT University, 8–11 October 2015.

60 Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 92.

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jenseits: Place, Dwelling, and Art Practice

Farniyaz Zaker

We tend to think of the concept of 'dwelling' in relation to places. How and why would we think of dwelling in terms of artworks?

Edward S. Casey identifies two modes of dwelling. One is to dwell physically in a certain place; the other is to dwell mentally in a memorised place.[1] In both cases, the bodily experience of a place is a prerequisite for dwelling in it. This fundamentally physical experiencing is also what interests the architect Steven Holl, who argues that 'architecture, more than other art forms, engages the immediacy of our sensory perceptions.'[2] According to Holl, 'the passage of time, light, shadow and transparency,' as well as 'colour, texture, material and detail' influence the way we feel, see and hear architecture.[3] All these factors, he argues, 'merge perceptually' in the mind of a dweller and shape his or her spatial perception.[4] In this vein, my own art making rests on the belief that the longer we reside in a place, the stronger it affects us; the more intimately we experience a place, the more thoroughly we dwell in it. The philosopher Yi-Fu Tuan describes this process as endowing a place with value.[5] To dwell is thus to experience and sense place, to memorise and get to know it, and to let it generate associations within us.

Among my earliest and most intense recollections of experiencing art as a child is my encounter with Noriyuki Haraguchi's installation *Matter and Mind* (1977) at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA). This large rectangular pool of crude oil – which, incidentally, predates Richard Wilson's better-known *20:50* (1987) by a decade[6] – intrigued me so much that, to the alarm of my mother and the museum staff, I could not resist submerging my hand in it. At least as powerful as its tantalising materiality is the work's location in a spiral pathway at the heart of the museum, a structure built by the Iranian architect Kamran Diba and inspired by courtyard-house of traditional Iranian architecture. It is as though *Matter and Mind* was site-specific; as if Haraguchi had created the work with the TMoCA in mind. Haraguchi's installation sits in its location like a pond at the centre of a courtyard house. It absorbs and mirrors its architectural environment. The glittering pool of oil transforms the audience's perception of space, and evokes in it a sense of familiarity, domesticity, and dwelling.

Noriyuki Haraguchi, *Matter and Mind*, 1977, mixed media, installation view, permanent
installation at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA), photo by the author, 2016.

Noriyuki Haraguchi, *Matter and Mind*, 1977, mixed media, installation view, permanent installation at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA), photo by the author, 2016.

For me, dwelling and touching are intimately intertwined. Casey's modes of dwelling highlight the importance of the haptic perception and bodily experience of a place for the development of a sense of dwelling. Furthermore, the architect Juhani Pallasmaa states that 'the eye is the sense of separation and distance, whereas touch is the sense of nearness, intimacy, and affection.'[7] However, since most artworks are visual, for the artist the issue arises as to how viewers might nonetheless be encouraged to dwell within them. This leads me to the question of how our senses interact with each other. According to research by Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, a blindfolded person senses when she/he is approaching a wall by paying attention to the changing frequency balance of the background noise.[8] Even though that person cannot literally see with her or his ears, she/he does, in a way, see *through* them. In other words, one sense can, to some degree, be transferred and diverted to another. Pallasmaa makes a similar point when he maintains that eyes can touch, i.e. that our gaze allows us to identify with objects and to grasp them. According to him, our 'gaze strokes distant surfaces, contours, and edges, [and thereby creates an]…unconscious tactile sensation [that] determines the agreeableness or unpleasantness of the experience.'[9] This 'unconscious tactile sensation' is reliant on the viewer associating something with this object. In other words, on having previously experienced and committed to memory. Without that mental connection, our vision alone cannot recreate the same sense of touch and intimacy from a distance. For me, *Matter and Mind* instantly establishes intimacy and evokes a sense of touch because it reminds Iranian viewers of a place many of them have previously experienced, namely the court-yard-house of traditional Iranian architecture. As a result, some viewers do not just *see Matter and Mind* – they actually *feel* the work. The echoing spiral pathway that winds around the installation, the lingering acrid smell of the oil, its reflective surface, and the fact that the

installation and the building of the museum are based on the design of a traditional courtyard house only increase this sensation. The artwork not only engages the viewer's sense of vision, but also evokes the senses of smell, sound, taste, and touch. The way the artwork and its infrastructure merge transforms the audience's perception of both the installation and the space around it. The work and its surroundings generate a particular sense of dwelling in the site of the museum and in the artwork. My contention is this: it is impossible to separate our engagement with the artwork from our perception of the space in which it is situated in (and vice versa).

The relationship between the body and the built environment informs all of my own artwork which, like architecture, attempts to influence both my own sense of space as well as that of the viewer. My art making seeks to engage the idea that our built environment is not passive, but rather invested with meaning and thus the subjective experience of those who encounter it. The works are always installed with sensitivity to their built environment and, ideally, the work merges with it into what I think of as one architectonic whole. In other words, the work is influenced by the site in which it is installed, and it hopes to influence the way people experience that site. In short, the site of research and the site of output are inextricable in my art making.

Furthermore, for me, the process of producing and installing artwork is always also an act of dwelling. Experiencing the site of an artwork, but also the materials and tools involved in crafting it, are part and parcel of the creative process. Artworks are always a medium through which I experience my built environment. One example is *Primeval Relationship I* (2014), a work that covers the walls and floor of the gallery with four hand-woven carpets and their elongated fringes. While hand-weaving *Primeval Relationship I* on a vertical loom, I sensed every knot, the vibration of the woollen piles, cotton warps and wefts, the sharp squeaks of the loom, the materiality and the fragrance of the wool and cotton yarns. According to Pallasmaa, natural materials – unlike synthetic ones – allow the spectator's 'gaze to penetrate their surfaces.'[10] Following this view, natural materials are thus much more easily touched by the viewer's eyes in the way described earlier. The wool and cotton of *Primeval Relationship I* (2014), for example, may evoke a sense of dwelling that is both deeply ingrained in personal experience of space and domesticity and simultaneously recall the history of many ancient cultures. Conceptualising, crafting the work, and the concentration which these processes involved engaged a multitude of senses and allowed me, in my terms set out here, to dwell in it. The process constitutes a 'transaction between body, imagination, and environment.'[11] *Primeval Relationship I* is not just a work about the concept of dwelling; it also *generates* a sense of dwelling.

Some dwelling places are so central to my sense of identity, and so rooted in my body and memory, that they unavoidably influence my art practice. Consciously (or not), I recreate, re-experience and ultimately re-dwell in the works. Both the process of making a work which follows such an impulse, as well as the finished product, refresh my memory and allow me to re-dwell in particular places, albeit momentarily. *In-between* (2008–12), *Earthly Paradise* (2008–10), *jenseits* (2013) and *Caryatid* (2016) exemplify this. They directly relate to places in which I spent a considerable amount of time. *jenseits* ('beyond' in German), for example, is

Farniyaz Zaker, *Primeval Relationship I*, 2014, wool and cotton, 80cm x 2cm x 450cm, installation view, *Something There Was That Must Have Loved a Wall*, Pi Artworks Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey, 2016

Farniyaz Zaker, *Primeval Relationship I*, 2014, wool and cotton, 80cm x 2cm x 450cm, installation view, *Something There Was That Must Have Loved a Wall*, Pi Artworks Gallery, Istanbul, Turkey, 2016

a short video about my childhood room in Tehran. The video consists of four sequenced spaces: a room, a balcony, a garden, and an alleyway. The video starts with an image of a white curtain that veils the balcony, the garden, and the alley. The wind repeatedly opens and closes the curtain, thereby merging these spaces into one unified entity that is neither fully private nor fully public. To recall the words of Victor Turner, it is 'neither here nor there; it is betwixt and between.'[12] In the video, this spectacle continues as the curtain restlessly curls across the boundaries of these fours spaces until the window abruptly shuts and the audience is faced with the image of a motionless curtain. The work speaks of the ambiguous grey area between the private and public that exists in much of contemporary Iranian domestic architecture. *jenseits* is the result of having experienced this liminal mode of dwelling, and tries to convey this to the audience, as it continues to evoke my own sense of dwelling. The video is not independent from my experience of such places.

For Tuan, a place is 'a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value…an object in which one can dwell.'[13] Artworks can also be such concretions of value. Some can be dwelt in physically; others provoke a sense of dwelling in the minds of artists and audiences. As such, they heighten our awareness of how 'place-oriented and place-saturated' our lives are, to recall the thoughts of Casey.[14] I hope *jenseits* encourages viewers to experience a particular mode of being within a liminal space that is not confined to the privacy of one's own four walls, and that it generates a sense of oscillation between the public and private sphere. In the same way, *Primeval Relationship I* is not only a reflection on the historical and deep link between architecture and textiles;[15] its four carpets also suggest of a room and an experienced domesticity, thereby hoping to evoke a sense of dwelling in the audience.

Farniyaz Zaker, *jenseits* , video, 04'23", 2016, video still, *The Wall of Europe*, Paese Museo, San Sperate, Sardinia, Italy, 2013. Available at: http://www.oarplatform.com/jenseits-place-dwelling-art-practice/.

1   Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place, Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), 112–14.

2   Steven Holl, 'Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture,' in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, ed. Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa abd Alberto Pérez-Gómez (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2006), 41.

3   Ibidem.

4   Idem, 45.

5   Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 6.

6   Haraguchi executed his first oil pool installation in 1971; later he exhibited another version of the work at Documenta 6, 1977, which was subsequently acquired by the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMoCA).

7   Juhani Pallasmaa, 'An Architecture of the Seven Senses,' in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, ed. Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa abd Alberto Pérez-Gómez (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2006), 34.

8   Barry Blesser and Linda Ruth Salter, *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* (London: MIT Press, 2007), 1. Another prominent example illustrating this complex interconnection of our sensory system is the renowned deaf-blind American art historian Mary Keller (1880–1968), who could hear the music by feeling the beat, and see the water by touching it.

9   Pallasmaa, *Questions of Perception*, 34.

10 Idem, 29.

11 Kent C. Bloomer and Charles W. Moore, *Body, Memory, and Architecture* (London: Yale University Press, 1997), 105.

12 Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 95

13 Tuan, *Space and Place*, 12.

14 Casey, *Getting Back into Place*, ix, 15.

15 I am referring to the argument of the German architect and art critic Gottfried Semper (1803–79), according to whom primitive architectural places were made from textiles, fabrics, and carpets. Therefore, for him, today's walls are the successors to earlier clothes, carpets, and other textiles. See: Gottfried Semper, *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 246–7.

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The Surface as Site: *Exterior A*

Caitlin Yardley

Caitlin Yardley, film still from *Exterior A,* 2016, HD video, 6'30", 2017. Filmed at Maison Louis Carré, Bazoches-sur-Guyonne with permission from Association Alvar Aalto, Paris.
Available at: http://www.oarplatform.com/the-surface-as-site-exterior-a/.

Maison Louis Carré is Finnish architect Alvar Aalto's only building in France, located 40 kilometres south-west of Paris in the small village of Bazoches-sur-Guyonne. The house was commissioned in the 1950s following a meeting between Louis Carré, a Paris art dealer and Aalto at the Venice Biennale, where in 1956 Aalto had designed the Finnish pavilion. Together the architect and the art dealer created an important design within modernist domestic architecture. The significance of Maison Louis Carré resides in its particularly close relationship to theories of how an interior domestic space might be conceived and arranged with the intention of living with art. It was proposed that the house might appear small on the outside but contain an interior of large volume.

Carré used the house as a space to both live with his own collection and to bring prospective buyers to view specific works, installed in situ. Today, the house is a museum and contains all original furnishings and fittings as designed by Aalto, but the walls are empty. On the death of Carré's widow in 2002, the significant art collection fell to distant family and was quickly dispersed at auction. This included paintings and sculptures by Bonnard, Picasso, Calder, Leger, Klee, Le Corbusier, Degas and Duchamp, all of which had been displayed on the walls and in the designed spaces of Maison Louis Carré. While the collection was dismantled, the house and its furnishings were perceived to hold international significance and were acquired for preservation through a joint effort by the French and Finnish states.

Exterior A is an early work in my broader project *Mobile Composition* that will focus on the interior of Maison Louis Carré, and the art collection of its former owner. This will result in a body of works installed in the house, a series of photographs and a parallel publication. The project works with the posthumous dispersal of Carré's collection, and is an attempt to reconvene it through other means. The collection is being considered specifically as it was installed and documented by Aalto's architectural photographer Heikki Havas in 1962, the year in which the house was visited by Finnish President, Urho Kekkonen.

This work is an encounter with the surface of a site; it is a moment of first contact, using long static shots to draw out the moment where we find ourselves in proximity to, but outside of, knowledge.

Working with video as a methodology, visual and audio material has been gathered and organised, evidencing the moment of physical exclusion from content. It is intended as a means to visualise the initial resistance of research to reveal itself at the point of encounter, while tracing and resembling its physical form.

Caitlin Yardley is an artist living and working in London. She completed an MFA at Goldsmiths, University of London, in 2012. Recent exhibitions and screenings include *Mobile Composition*, Maison Louis Carré with the Alvar Aalto Association, Paris (forthcoming in 2017); *The Legacy Complex*, Nordic Art Association, Stockholm (2016); *Epic Narratives*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Australia (2015); *Medium*, Moana Project Space, Perth (2015); *One Way Return*, Peter Von Kant, London (2014); *Open Cube*, White Cube, London (2013).

Artistic Research at the Edge of Science

Vid Simoniti

To lie down with the wolves

A woman, naked save for a thin gauze covering her loin, is lying immobile on a bare theatre stage. The scene is starkly lit by yellow light. A male voice, amplified, off-stage, reads from manifestos on the relationship between man and animal: Joseph Beuys', Oleg Kulik's, Susan Silas'. Meanwhile, two wolf-dogs and a wolf emerge from the wings, and sniff at the woman's body. The voice then reads out the words written by the artist lying upon the stage. This is a confessional, recounting a childhood spent amongst animals, a paradoxical kinship with the wild within the confines of human domesticity. 'We feel and understand each other, lying in a waste tanned skin landscape of dead animals...We smell death and feel comfortable in the uncanny valley of machined fur'. The creatures sniff at the woman's outstretched palms; they lick her palms, her forearms, her stomach.

Maja Smrekar, K-9_topology: *I Hunt Nature and Culture Hunts Me,* 2014, performance documentation (8 November 2014), Le Nadir, Bourges, France, photograph by Amar Belmabrouk, image courtesy of the artist.

Maja Smrekar's performance piece, *I Hunt Nature and Culture Hunts Me* (2014), belongs to the artistic tradition which extols man's attempted communion with the animal (and more specifically, with the canine animal).[1] Syntactically and performatively, Smrekar quotes Beuys' *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), for which Beuys spent three days cohabiting with a coyote. In Smrekar's piece, too, one of the animals is wild (the partially tamed wolf), and the audience is protected by a cage. By contrast, Oleg Kulik's performances – for which Kulik barks and acts like a provoked dog – display antagonism rather than coexistence. However, all three artists hold up animals for their truthfulness, their pre-linguistic inability to deceive. There is, though, an important difference. While a piece of performance art, I Hunt Nature and Culture Hunts Me is, in fact, a part of a much larger series, *K-9_topology* (2014-ongoing). Like most of Smrekar's work (and unlike the performances by Beuys or Kulik), this series is driven

by findings of evolutionary biology. The starch, licked off Smrekar's body by the wolf-dogs, is symbolic of the starch diet, which has been crucial to the joint evolution of man and dog.[2] Another piece by Smrekar involved isolating serotonin from the blood of both Smrekar and her pet dog, Byron, creating a perfume – the olfactory basis of their relationship – which permeated one of Smrekar's gallery installations, *Ecce Canis* (2014). Indeed, as I will illustrate later, most of Smrekar's artistic practice relies on biological findings or even direct collaborations in the biochemist's laboratory.

Maja Smrekar, *K-9_topology: Ecce Canis*, 2014, installation with recycled wolf fur and manufactured scent, Kapelica Gallery, Ljubljana, Slovenia, photograph by Miha Fras, image courtesy of the artist.

Here I wish to address this research-driven element in an artistic practice. Should we say that an artistic practice, such as Smrekar's, is assisted by the research she undertakes into evolutionary biology? Or should we say (more ambitiously) that, in some sense, such a practice *constitutes* research *into* evolutionary biology? This question may seem artificial, but consider this analogy: certainly, Ian McEwan studied neurology to a considerable level to write his novel *Saturday*, the protagonist of which is a neurosurgeon, but it would be rather controversial to say that the novel *itself* contributes to neurology, or some other academic field. In some form or other, I take it that this dilemma has been at the core of arguments for and against artistic research, especially with regards to its inclusion within academic institutions.[3] The issue at stake is whether we ought to see artistic research as knowledge-producing, and therefore belonging to the academy, or (merely) as art that is inspired by an academic field.[4]

I raise these questions as I hope to show their limitations, but I think it is the right way to start the debate. Here, I will consider the case of bio-art. By this term, I designate artistic projects, such as Smrekar's, which directly utilise biological technology at a level comparable to that of professional laboratories.[5] Bio-art, due to its proximity to academic disciplines (such as bioengineering), is an especially telling case study for thinking about artistic research in general. Appropriately for this issue of *OAR*, I hope to show that the notion of a 'field' of research is useful for disentangling the difficulties.

The field of bio-art

We can identify a field of research methodologically or topologically. For example, academic analytic philosophy is a field which seems above all to be defined methodologically. It covers all kinds of topics – ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, as well as more 'applied' topics like philosophy of public affairs, philosophy of biology and even philosophy of wine – but these are united by adherence to certain research protocols: such as formulating questions that go beyond empirical findings, putting forward theses, and finding arguments for and against them.[6] Defined topologically, however, a field of research comprises some part of the world, which one is trying to get to grips with. In this sense, almost anything could be a field of research: France, consciousness or deciduous plants. Fields that end with the suffix 'studies' seem to be defined topologically; so, under 'consciousness studies' one might bring together anthropology, philosophy and neuroscience to shed some light on the nature of conscious experience.[7] Geography is perhaps also one academic field that is topologically defined, focussing on distinct areas of the world, but combining methods as diverse as cultural history and soil science. This is a rough and provisory distinction, but I think it is useful to help us get clearer on the sense in which bio-art might be considered a field of research.

Bio-art has become established both within academic institutions and within its own dedicated ones. After experimental beginnings in the early 1990s,[8] the early 2000s saw artists gain increasing access to residencies within biomedical laboratories, establishment of funding streams dedicated to this kind of production such as the Arts Awards at the Wellcome Trust, and dedicated exhibitions and biennales, such as the Hybrid Art section at Ars Electronica in Linz.[9] The establishment of SymbioticA at the University of Western Australia in 2000, a dedicated bio-art laboratory which also offers postgraduate research degrees, was another notable development. Bio-art, we can safely say, exists within a strongly interlinked, inter-national institutional network. Interestingly, this network may have more interactions with the field of science and technology than it does with mainstream contemporary art. Museums such as Tate Modern, MoMA or the Centre Georges Pompidou have paid bio-art relatively little attention.[10]

Despite its increasing institutionalization, it would be problematic to designate bio-art as its own field of research under the *methodological* designation. While bio-artists might critique each other's work, they do not require it to be amended or disqualified in order to conform to some research protocol. Certainly, a degree of standardized mutual policing may exist in bio-art, and is exerted through such administrative procedures as grant applications.[11]

However, whilst such procedures may share some features of peer review (such as being partially anonymized), they ostensibly follow a different set of criteria: in the case of the Wellcome Trust arts awards, what is assessed is potential for outreach rather than, say, engaging the right kind of scholarly literature.[12] Likewise, whilst some bio-artists also hold science PhDs (Natalie Jeremijenko, who has a PhD in computer science is one example), and others have published reports on bio-art in science journals,[13] none of this should lead us to conclude that methodological uniformity exists within bio-art *itself*.

The institutional reality of bio-art, as is perhaps true of artistic research more broadly, then does not seem to reflect the rigors of self-control that is typical of methodologically defined academic disciplines. Besides, it seems such methodological conformity would be an undesirable outcome: arguably amounting to a kind of self-suffocation by self-regulation that Charles Harrison's piece on artistic research warns against.[14] The very open-ended nature of bio-art speaks against seeing it as methodologically stable.

The field-as-a-methodology option, then, is one I want to quickly discount, and rather consider the more promising possibility that bio-art is a participant in a field that ought to be defined *topologically*: a field that investigates a part of reality, but does so through various tools. Then, we might count Smrekar's performance as a contribution to 'evolution studies'; Eduardo Kac's genetic art as a part of 'genome studies'; Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr's pioneering forays into artistic manipulation of living tissue as research within 'tissue engineering studies'. The topological way of conceiving bio-art aims to address, then, this interdisciplinary, open-ended and collaborative nature of bio-artists' undertakings.

Here, it is important to note an acceleration that occurred in bio-art by the turn of the millennium. Writing in the catalogue of a landmark early exhibition, *Genetische Kunst / Künstliches Leben* (Genetic Art / Artificial Life) in 1993, Peter Weibel defined his subject as follows: 'Genetic art as artistic counterpart of genetic engineering is…intended to simulate processes of life with the same modern technological tools and methods as the latter'.[15] Through the 1990s, however, artists' access to bioengineering technology was still limited to commercially available services or to documentation of the scientific process.[16] One of the first significant cases of an artist's direct involvement with bioengineering in an academic laboratory occurred in 2000–01, during the residency of the artists Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr at the Tissue Engineering and Organ Fabrication Laboratory in Massachusetts General Hospital at the Harvard Medical School.[17] What is notable about Catts' and Zurr's *Tissue Culture and Art Project*, is the level of access Catts and Zurr enjoyed, supervising the manipulation of biological matter after their own design. This resulted in several projects such as *Pig Wings* (2000–01), whereby pig stem cells were grown in the shape of an angel's, a bat's and a pterosaur's wings, and *Disembodied Cuisine* (2000/03), for which the artists grew frog flesh in the laboratory, and consumed it at a dinner party, whilst the donor frogs' lives were happily preserved.[18]

Within the next decade, such collaborations became more commonplace, with artist's increasingly creating work through bioengineering techniques, often in collaboration with academic laboratories. To give some examples, Eduardo Kac's *Move 36* (2002/04) is an

installation featuring genetically modified plants; Marta de Menezes' work, *Tree of Knowledge* (2004/05) is a sculpture made of artificially grown neurons; and Maja Smrekar's *Maya Yoghurt* (2012) involves the insertion of the artist's gene into a yeast, to make it produce a more nutritious kind of yoghurt.

In the process, bio-artists acquired access to increasingly sophisticated tools. In 2004, Kac used bioengineering to encrypt the message '*cogito ergo sum*' in the plant's genetic code in *Move 36*. Eight years later, in *Maya Yoghurt*, Smrekar utilized an already more advanced technology. Her genetic modification of a yeast is functional: the human gene in the yeast is expressed as a protein, which speeds up the fermentation of the yoghurt.[19] Not only is the genetic code played with, the artist also creates a functioning transgenic organism. Crucially, then, bio-art attempts to keep up with its technological progress, something that can also be clearly seen when considering the increasingly advanced works that win Hybrid Art Awards at Ars Electronica.[20] In this respect, this strain of bio-art also appears to be different from those artists who have emphasized do-it-yourself, amateur incursions into bio-art.[21]
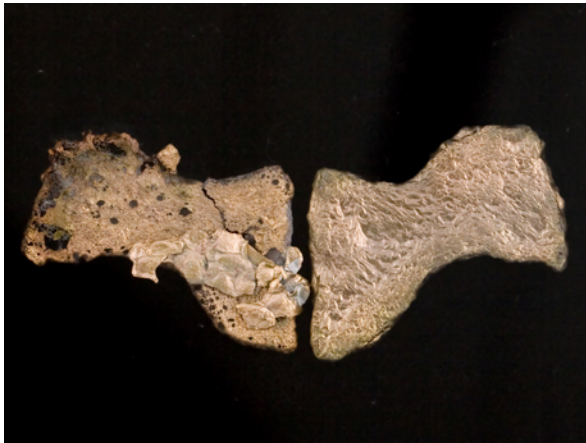
Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, *Pig Wings*, 2000–01, pig bone marrow stem cells grown over and into biodegradable polymers, 4 cm x 2 cm x 0.5 cm, installation view (detail), image courtesy of the artists.

It is precisely the proximity of bio-art to technological progress that has led many commentators to describe bio-art as possessing a unique critical purchase on its subject matter. Suzanne Anker and Dorothy Nelkin speak of the artists' 'interrogation' of science,[22] Ingeborg Reichle follows Donna Haraway in framing the discussion of bio art around a bleak vision of an age of exploitative, ethically blind 'techno-science' against which bio art functions as an agent of 'subversion',[23] and the artist Claire Pentecost suggests the role of the bio-artist is one of a public amateur, who reconfigures science which is 'vested with traditional claims to truth and service to the public good, while shaped to narrow market agendas'.[24] This line of thinking has also been echoed by those who sponsor bio-art. For example, the internal review of the Wellcome Trust's Sciart programme describes artists as 'scrutinisers' and 'pseudo-"public representatives" in what might otherwise remain hermetic sanctums of knowledge'.[25] As Eduardo Kac puts it, bio-artists 'appropriate and subvert contemporary technologies – not to make detached comments on social change, but to *enact* critical views'.[26] In his book on bio-art, Robert Mitchell develops this view further. For Mitchell, biotechnology itself is the proper 'medium' of bio-art. It is precisely because of the artist's actual usage of the current technological techniques, that this work exercises a certain affective pull on the audience, which allows them to take up a critical stance towards it.[27] To relate this discussion to our theme, we might say that bio-art participates in a topologically defined field – such as 'tissue engineering studies' or 'genetic enhancement studies' – but does so by combining bio-engineering with other approaches. The artists' distinct methodological contribution is their affective and critical uses of the technology.

The use of affect in bio-art has been mostly manifested in what we might call the 'freakishness' of bio-art. The artists' subversion of biotechnology namely often involves a puckish, dystopian aesthetic. *Pig Wings*, where the levity of the pun seems inappropriate to manipulation of 'semi-living' tissue, are a clear example of that. Recent work corresponds to this standard. Smrekar's *Maya Yoghurt* is a marketing campaign riffing off the organic food craze; it features stock images of happy families imbibing human-enhanced yogurt. In the presentation of the piece, the audience could also taste the yoghurt. It is presumably because we know that a real biotechnological change has been performed that, to paraphrase Robert Mitchell's position, the viewer's affective state is changed in a way that disposes her towards greater political involvement.[28] To put the point perhaps over-simply: we are more shocked by bio-art than by abstract debate, because bio-art utilizes, in culturally compelling ways, the technologies we may want to interrogate.

Here, then, emerges one rationale for bio-art as a topologically defined field of research. Any topologically defined field combines various methodologies, and the question then becomes what advantage is conferred by this kind of interdisciplinarity. Here, insofar as bio-art involves methodologies of 'freakish' or otherwise culturally significant presentation, which are taken to be alien to bioengineering proper, the advantage is a certain kind of critical purchase. The artists bring ethical scrutiny to the processes involved by inscribing biotechnological progress in a punchy, culturally easily legible code. Though this analysis, embraced both by academic surveyors of bio-art like Mitchell and Reichle and award-granting bodies such as the Wellcome Trust, seems popular, I wish here to point out a difficulty which arises for bio-art in this context.

Maja Smrekar, *Hu.M.C.C.* (Human Molecular Colonization Capacity), 2014, genetically modified yeast fungus (S. cerevisiae) and product design, image: advertising images, brand design: Boris Balant / HUMAN1ST, image courtesy of the artist.

The problem of absorption

I will call this problem the problem of absorption, and it may be formulated as follows. Attempting to incorporate another academic methodology (bioengineering) into an artistic practice, bio-art runs the risk of becoming assimilated into bioengineering. In more general terms: any research-driven art, which incorporates an academic discipline into its practice,

runs the risk of becoming wholly assessable by the standards of that discipline. In even more general terms: any topologically defined field ('*X* studies'), which investigates a part of reality by employing multiple disciplines, runs the risk of becoming absorbed into one of those, methodologically homogeneous disciplines.

To consider this point, let me draw attention to some interesting new applications within (non-art) bioengineering. In 2013, a group of scientists took a step that seemed wholly in line with the bio-art experiments of the Tissue Culture and Art project. The vascular physiology research team at Maastricht University, headed by bioengineer Mark Post, artificially grew a beef burger patty.[29] Using a similar technology, Catts and Zurr made a 'semi-living steak' in 2000, using prenatal sheep skeletal muscle cells.[30] The public presentation of this research was also interesting: a public tasting of the patty was organized in London, and food critics and professional chefs were invited to comment on the taste of the burger and to provide recipe suggestions.[31] This comical gesture is reminiscent of the frog flesh dinner party of Catts and Zurr's 2003 *Disembodied Cuisine*, discussed above.[32] While it was at no point suggested that the burger patty was supposed to be an artwork, the work of bioengineering clearly mirrors the work of bio-art.[33]

And, in fact, there are many cases of such mirroring. The artist Stelarc grafted ear-shaped tissue onto his arm, together with a microphone and a transmitter (*Ear on Arm*, 2010). While Stelarc claims he had the idea for this project prior to 1997,[34] it clearly recalls an infamous 1997 image of a laboratory mouse that had what looked like an ear growing out of its back. This experiment, known as the 'Vacanti Mouse', importantly contributed to reconstructive surgery in humans and became an early internet sensation, principally because it invited the misinterpretation that the mouse was a product of irresponsible genetic engineering.[35] *Maya Yoghurt* (2012) – where a foodstuff is modified with a human gene – seems not altogether different from a strain of rice, modified with a human gene, which caused concern amongst conservationists in the USA in the mid-2000s.[36] Probably the most infamous work of bio art is Eduardo Kac's infamous *GFP Bunny* (2000) – an attempt to create a glow-in-the-dark domestic rabbit, which probably never succeeded.[37] However, GloFish have been on the market since at least 2003, not as an artwork, but as a pet.[38]

Some of these inventions go relatively unnoticed, existing away from the public eye until pointed out by the media (the rice, for example, quickly acquired the nickname 'frankenrice'). Others are much advertised by their makers; Google co-founder, Sergey Brin, was the creative engine behind the artificially grown burger.[39] Steve Baker has argued that the criterion of 'utility' distinguishes between bio-art and bioengineering,[40] but that is also not quite the case. Of the bioengineering projects, many have direct immediate practical implications in mind, but others – such as the creation of Biosteel Goats, which produced spider silk in their milk – are much more a case of blue sky thinking.[41] Today's biotechnology seems to be also quite successful in producing an 'affect': be it through catchy names, branding, or simply through the inherently sensational nature of what is being produced. Therefore, it becomes harder to see how bio-art might constitute a distinct and *interdisciplinary* approach towards its subject matter. Rather, it seems bio-art simply becomes subsumed under bioengineering 'proper', perhaps as its more spectacular branch. Accordingly, it becomes difficult to see how bio-art could exercise a kind of ethical scrutiny of bioengineering.

None of what I say is meant to dispute the need for a critical interrogation of bioengineering, or indeed the need for critical bio-art. Likewise, I do not mean to deny that bio-art projects of the early 2000s did not have their own, distinct aesthetic, as can be perhaps seen in the Catts' and Zurr's lovingly presented *Victimless Leather* (2003). Certainly, through their spectacular form, pioneering bio-art projects such as these indeed raised 'serious ethical questions' about 'what kind of relationships we will form with such objects'.[42] However, as bioengineering itself becomes more spectacular, the problem for the next generation of works of bio-art is to create greater distance; to resist becoming absorbed in bioengineering; to create a new distance between art on the one hand, and GloFish or Cultured Beef Burger on the other.

Arguably, the problem of absorption can be also detected beyond bio-art, within various research-driven artistic practices. Just as bio-art can merge with 'mere' bioengineering, so socially engaged art runs the risk of becoming 'merely' social work,[43] or philosophically inflected conceptual art 'merely' philosophy.[44] If interdisciplinary, topologically defined (art) practices attempt to borrow from various established fields, they can become assessable by the standards of success which govern those: scientific novelty for bio-art, social utility for socially engaged works, and philosophical rigour and profundity for works of conceptual art. My worry is that these standards will inevitably be better met by works in the 'host' discipline.
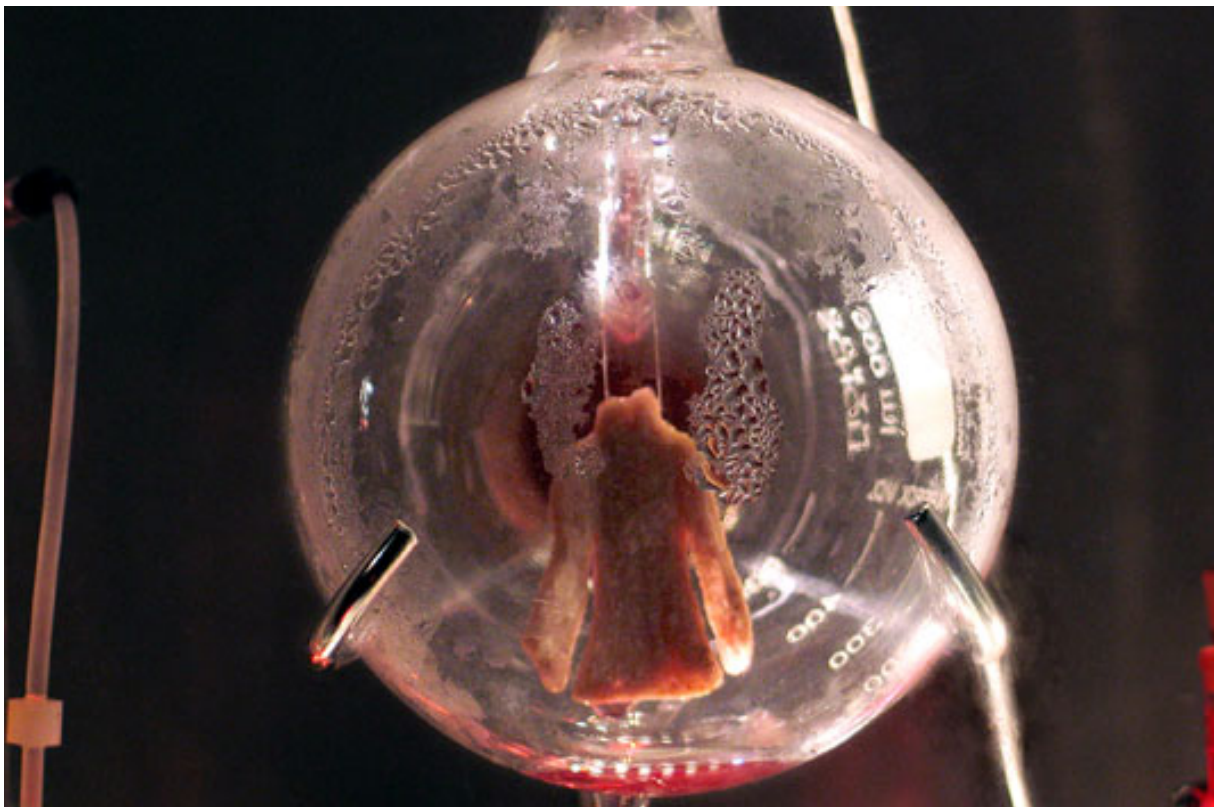
Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, *Victimless Leather*, 2004, artificially grown tissue supported by biodegradable polymer matrix, dimensions variable, installation view, image courtesy of the artists.

Distance

The title of Maja Smrekar's *K-9_topology* series already evokes some of the problems I discuss above. The name is suggestive of science, coding and even science fiction: 'K-9' is the name of Dr Who's dog, as well as shorthand for police dogs; 'topology' is most often used to denote the study of mathematical space. Indeed, the work incorporates scientific findings, specifically, theories of the joint evolution of dog and man, and the profound impact each species has had on the development of the other. However, a certain distance from 'mere' science becomes obvious if we observe the works not as theoreticians prizing their research-driven contents apart, but simply as spectators of Smrekar's installations and performances.

K-9_topology so far consists of three works: the performance *I Hunt Nature and Culture Hunts Me* (2014), the installation *Ecce Canis* (2014), the performance *Hybrid Family* (2016), and the forthcoming bio-art project *ARTE_mis* (2017). There are different guises that Smrekar herself adopts in these works: a performer in the tradition of Beuys for I Hunt..., a sci-fi huntress in *Ecce Canis*, and a mother inhabiting a dilapidated bourgeois apartment in *Hybrid Family*. These personas are sometimes created for staged photographs that accompany the works, and sometimes inserted into the performances. They also establish a certain distance. In *Hybrid Family*, Smrekar spent four months in the said apartment with her two dogs (an adult and a puppy called Ada). Using a breast pump and a special diet, she compelled her body to lactate; this resulted in a final performance, admitting only up to three visitors at a time, for which she breastfed the puppy. To this spectator, it seemed not so much about the 'feat' of body art (which, in itself, was rather unassertive, the puppy emerging after an hour of conversation and play to bestow a single lick upon the artist's swollen nipple), as it was about the emotional costs inherent in any relationship.[45]

Maja Smrekar, *K-9_topology: Hybrid Family*, 2016, performance at Freies Museum Berlin, image: pre-performance art photograph, photograph by Maja Smrekar and Manuel Vason, image courtesy of the artist.

What could have been another sensationalist artistic 'first' therefore, arguably, became a rather touching piece. It is the narrative, fictionalized elements, which lend a thematic wholeness to Smrekar's opus. To change the example: though the installation *Ecce Canis* (2014) is conceived as an interesting exercise in bioengineering (the merging of the artist's and her dog Byron's serotonin), the piece itself is as much about the primeval, Surrealist, den-like installation in which the perfume is presented. This is a place of joint dwelling lined with wolf fur, recycled from old coats. It is also noteworthy that these pieces seem to rely on artistic precedents more than they do on simply showing off the bioengineering involved. As in Lord Byron's epitaph to his Newfoundland dog or in David Lurie's devotion to a stray at the end of J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace,* in Smrekar's series the bond between dog and man comes to stand for an almost prelapsarian state of love. It is a love that is complete, even if it remains unfulfilled, and riddled with death.

Perhaps it is in works like these that artistic research stakes its claim to a separate identity, and resists absorption into one or another of the biological sciences. By tying in more directly with autonomously artistic concerns of fictionality, narrative, eros and even a kind of romanticism, the work becomes distinct from the proofs of concept in bioengineering, which, by the late 2010s, have ceased to amaze us anyway. Does that mean Smrekar's works still produce knowledge? Do they belong to the university or to the gallery? The former question belongs to philosophy of art; the latter to institutional-political reality. I did not try to answer them here, though I hope my remarks are relevant for those who would.

To sum up my claims: I have argued that bio-art research ought to be considered topologically. Rather than contributing to any methodologically well-defined academic discipline, a bio-artist applies various approaches, bioengineering amongst them, to a subject matter. The problem that this has led to is the problem of absorption. Artistic research projects, insofar as they borrow methodologies from another field, inherently run the risk of becoming merely an (unremarkable) exercise within that field. Indeed, artists can become bioengineers, but then we simply have more bioengineering. The challenge for the artistic researcher is as much to maintain distance from the academic field she encounters as much as it is to acquaint herself with it.

1   A recording of the performance can be viewed here: https://vimeo.com/112481726, accessed December 28, 2016.
2   Interview with the artist (20.10.2016), and http://majasmrekar.org/k-9_topology, accessed December 28, 2016.
3   See, for example, Henk Bogdoff, 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research,' in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts,* ed. Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson (London: Routledge, 2010), 44–63.
4   This dilemma roughly mirrors Christopher Frayling's distinction between research *for* art, and research *through* art. Frayling also considers research *into* art, for example, into techniques of painting, but that designation mostly applies to the explo-ration of medium-specific techniques. See Christopher Frayling, 'Research in Art and Design,' *Royal College of Art Research Papers* 1:1 (1993–4): 1–5.
5   I am interested here in artists who utilize biotechnology, rather than those working in traditional media, such as figurative painting or sculpture, who merely depict biotechnological themes. For discussion of 'bio-art' as conforming to this broader definition, see for example Ingeborg Recihle, *Art in the Age of Technoscience* (New York: Springer, 2009), 42–6.
6   Of course, coming up with a more precise definition of a field's methodology will be a matter of controversy and various methodological 'turns'. For one recent contribution, see Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).
7   See the J*ournal of Consciousness Studies* and Center for Consciousness Studies at the University of Arizona.
8   Joe Davis' *Microvenus* (1986) and Eduardo Kac's *Genesis* (1990) were among the first DNA-manipulating artworks. See Robert Mitchell, *Bioart and the Vitality of Media* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 40-8.
9   For overviews of bio-art, see Sian Ede, *Art and Science* (London: IB Tauris Publishers, 2005); Robert Mitchell, *Bioart and the Vitality of Media* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); and, Stephen Wilson, *Art + Science Now* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).
10 Searching through the databases of these three institutions, I could find little evidence of bio-artists being shown, save for a few hosted discussions and bio-artists shown as part of MoMA's Architecture and Design department

exhibitions. The situation is different when a well-known gallery artist (such as Marc Quinn) makes bio-art. See, for example, Quinn's *DNA portrait of Sir John Sulston* (2001), shown at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

11   For an insight into this procedure, see Paul Glinkowski and Anne Bamford, *Insight and Exchange: An Evaluation of the Wellcome Trust's Sciart Programme* (London: Wellcome Trust, 2009).

12   According to the Wellcome Trust internal report, a 'significant minority of respondents' were concerned that the arts were utilized as a public relations exercise for science (Glinkowski and Bamford, *Insight and Exchange*, 7, 30).

13   E.g. Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, 'Growing for different ends,' *The International Journal of Biochemistry & Cell Biology* 56 (2014): 20–9.

14   Charles Harrison, 'When Management Speaks…,' in *Artists with PhDs: On the New Doctoral Degree in Studio Art.* 2nd ed., ed. James Elkins (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, 2014).

15   Karl Gerbel and Katharina Gsöllpointner, *Genetische Kunst - Künstliches Leben. Ars Electronica (Festival für Kunst, Technologie und Gesellschaft)*, (Vienna: PVS-Verleger, 1993). Catalogue is accessible on the *Ars Electronica* Archive (http://archive.aec.at/, accessed December 2, 2016).

16   In this way, Larry Miller offered viewers to protect their genetic material in the action *Genetic Code Copyright Certificate* (1992), and Chrissy Conant subjected herself to hyper-ovulation and offered her egg cells for sale in *Chrissy Caviar* (2000–01).

17   *Tissue Culture and Art Project Website*, http://www.tca.uwa.edu.au/, accessed June 12, 2013. See also Catts and Zurr, 'Growing for different ends'.

18   See: http://lab.anhb.uwa.edu.au/tca/disembodied-cuisine/, and http://lab.anhb.uwa.edu.au/tca/pig-wings/, accessed January 6, 2016.

19   See: http://www.mayayoghurt.net/, accessed January 6, 2017.

20   See: http://archive.aec.at/prix/, accessed January 10, 2017.

21   Joe Davies' stint at MIT, and Natalie Jeremijenko's one-issue *Biotech Hobbyist Magazine* (1998) are cases in point.

22   Suzanne Anker and Dorothy Nelkin, *The Molecular Gaze: Art in the Genetic Age* (Cold Spring Harbor: Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2004), 4.

23   Reichle, *Art in the Age of Technoscience*, Chapters 1 and 2. Reichle relies on Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

24   Claire Pentecost, 'Outfitting the Laboratory of the Symbolic: Toward a Critical Inventory of Bioart,' in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*, ed. Beatriz DaCosta and Kavita Philip (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), 107–23, here 112.

25   Glinkowski and Bamford, *Insight and Exchange*, 65.

26   Eduardo Kac, ed., *Signs of Life: Bio Art and Beyond* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2007), 164.

27   Mitchell, *Bioart and the Vitality of the Media*, Chapters 3–5.

28   Idem, 77–91.

29   See the project website at Maastricht University https://culturedbeef.org/, accessed January 7, 2017.

30   See: http://lab.anhb.uwa.edu.au/tca/semi-living-steak/, accessed December 10, 2016.

31   'What Does a Stem Cell Burger Taste Like?,' *BBC News*, August 5, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-23529841, accessed August 25, 2013.

32   See: http://lab.anhb.uwa.edu.au/tca/disembodied-cuisine/, accessed December 10, 2016.

33   This has been noticed by a former collaborator of Catts'; see Elizabeth Stephens, 'World's first lab-grown burger? Don't forget the semi-living steak,' *The Conversation*, August 12, 2013, https://theconversation.com/worlds-first-lab-grown-burger-dont-forget-the-semi-living-steak-16941, accessed January 10, 2014. For further discussion, see Erik Jönsson, 'Benevolent Technotopias and Hitherto Unimaginable Meats: Tracing the Promises of in Vitro Meat,' *Social Studies of Science* 46: 5 (2016): 725–48.

34   Ben Myers, 'Future Mods,' *Bizarre Magazine*, April 2009.

35   The mouse can be seen online. The image was first published as Y. Cao et al., 'Transplantation of Chondrocytes Utilizing a Polymer-Cell Construct to Produce Tissue-Engineered Cartilage in the Shape of a Human Ear,' *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery* 100: 2 (1997) 297–304.

36   Ethan Huff, 'Human Genes Engineered into Experimental GMO Rice Being Grown in Kansas,' *Natural News*, May 2, 2012. http://www.naturalnews.com/035745_GMO_rice_human_genes_Kansas.html, accessed December 10, 2013.

37   Henry T Greely, 'Human/Nonhuman Chimeras: Assessing the Issues,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*, digital edition, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp and R. G. Frey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), §3

38   See: https://www.glofish.com/, accessed December, 24 2016.

39   Steve Baker, *Artist/Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 74–5, 82–3.

40   See: http://postnatural.org/filter/specimen/Biosteel-Goat, accessed December 24, 2016.

41   *The Pig Wings Project*, http://www.tca.uwa.edu.au/pig/pig_project.html, accessed March 4, 2013.

42   In relation to socially engaged art, a similar problem begins to be identified by Claire Bishop. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 19.

43   Peter Osborne, 'Conceptual Art and/as Philosophy,' in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, ed. Michael Newman and John Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 47–65.

44   Maja Smrekar, *K-9_topology: Hybrid Family*, performance at Freies Museum Berlin, February 2, 2016.

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This is the site of indiscipline. It is always the site that you're in. You can't not be in it, like you can't not be in your skin. That's why Cato ripped his guts out when the doctor sewed them in. Sometimes they're already outside you. The astronaut's tether, the baby's cord. But you can cut them – when you're bored. The last untethered spacewalk. The last untethered spacewalk took place in 1994. (There were only ever four.) The first was Bruce McCandless. The research possibilities were endless. An Extravehicular Mobility Unit lasts for eight hours, a Manned Maneuvering Unit for up to six. At 80 feet per second, he could have travelled 327 miles and still had two hours left. He had a choice to make; that's the option he didn't take. Three years later he completed an MBA at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. Safe Trip Home was the name of Dido's album. (The one she recorded with Aeneas before he left.) Put on the cover instead of her lover, McCandless sued for infringement of persona. (A Latin misnomer.) Aeneas could have stayed. He was swayed, and unaccountably delayed. But Fate drove him on. There's no exact translation. Call it the MBA in the DNA. (The MFA in his PDA.) How can you melt a double strand of DNA? 60 degrees will do it. That's why Icarus flew so high. To leave behind his father. Aeneas had his father with him, seated on his back. Dido melted for him. Relaxing on the pyre. Let's practice that posture again. Just a small adjustment, one more degree of reclination, until we're all laid back. But here's the rub. What's the source of indiscipline? Sometimes it's excess. The right stuff that you're made of, and can't turn off. The battery in the bunny that's always on the hop. The soldier in the jungle who doesn't know when to stop. On Lubang Island, Hirō Onoda fought the Allies for twenty-nine years after the end of the Second World War. He hadn't received an order. His commanding officer had to come from Japan to tell him to surrender. I've seen the Duracell bunny canoeing into space. There's the discipline that doesn't know its place. Never hears the order at the crossing of the border. Continues the fight until it's out of sight. Like Annie Dillard's weasel that left its jaws in the throat of an eagle. As the eagle soared, the weasel did not let go when it should, so the eagle tore off the bits that it could. Inspired by success in finding Hirō Onoda, Japanese explorer Norio Suzuki put down his machete and went looking for the yeti. He was killed in an avalanche in the Himalayas, and his body lay under the snow undiscovered for a year. An abominable way to die, lost up there in the sky. If you're lucky you can just lean back. Into the snow and the fire and the nothing. McCandless could have done it. Release your grip at the end of the trip, and you will start to slip. And the indisciplinary site will hold you tight without even touching. As you tilt, the feathers on the inside of the suit will start to wilt. That's what it's like to have no discipline: a gentle sort of itching on the inside of the skin.

Here you go (handlings)

Fritha Jenkins

Fritha Jenkins, video still from *Here you go (handlings)*, video, 04'37", 2017.
Available at: oarplatform.com/here-you-go-handlings/.

Here you go (handlings) was filmed during the firing of an Anagama Kiln in Wytham Woods, University of Oxford, 2016. The artist initially approached the site not knowing where the experience might lead, with an interest in the handling of materials and the performative qualities of the kiln site. This film reveals the finding of a gendered site.

Fritha studied Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, Ruskin School of Art, and with the artist led art school AltMFA. Work and further information can be found at https://www.frithajenkins.com/.

Sites of Research, or 'No Layers of the Onion': *Phantom Europe*

Mischa Twitchin

> Ghosts: the concept of the other in the same, the *punctum* in the *studium.*[1]
> – Jacques Derrida, 2007

> Even this article is metaphorical.[2]
> – Michel Leiris, 1989 [1929]

Last year, after visiting an exhibition in Ostend entitled *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century,*[3] my curiosity about the gallery show led me to try to review it. My text was initially accepted by a journal. However, having read the final version, the journal decided that they could not publish it without a change in its basic premise. While this initial incident attests to the mistaking of an editorial agenda on my part, it also raises questions concerning differences in the understanding of research – between the empirical and the speculative, or between the positivistic and the phantomatic. As notes to an essay-film that I subsequently made with photographs taken in Ostend, my reflections here, revisiting the exhibition's 'representation' of appearances between art and anthropology, offer a thoughts on the spectral nature of the site of research.[4]

It turned out that what had been expected was a discussion of the things shown in the exhibition without the apparitions testifying to the contingency of the reviewer's encounter with them. The conditions of representation, through the apparatus of making things visible in museums and galleries (in this case, of 'art from Africa' in twentieth century Europe), could not themselves be the object of reflection in a testimony about museum ethnography. However, by exploring the relations between the visual and the verbal, should we actually blur calls for a transparent viewpoint in research? Addressing the very subject of this question as itself a site of research, might opacity be registered by a limited and partial refraction of questions? This investigation addresses the 'permanent finitude of engaged interpretation', which Donna Haraway evokes with the figure of 'layers of the onion'.[5]

Beginning this discussion with the story of an exhibition review – apocryphal, allegorical, actual? – attests that reporting ethnographic experience is never direct, but always mediated. Presenting this text in the context of another one highlights its relativity (as a 'construction site', perhaps); indeed, 'suggesting that its source is not social reality but scholarly artifice'.[6]

This article offers, like the layers of the onion, my site of research as a palimpsest. I sensed, in the rejection of my original review, the echo of a question in my attempt at writing. It reminded me of the obsidian mirror once owned by the astrologer John Dee. This strange piece of ethnographica (now on display at the British Museum)[7] suggests the space of reflection itself might be artifice. Indeed, as Franco Berardi observes:
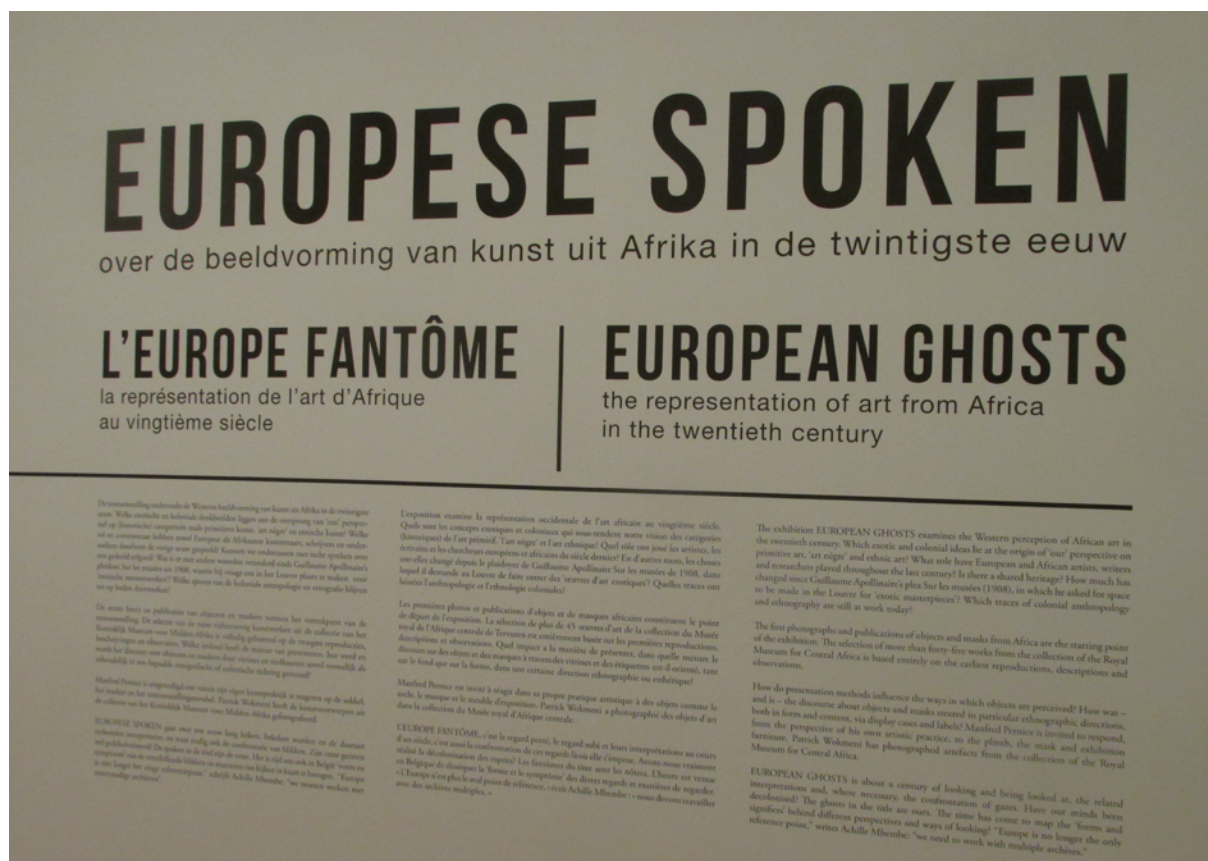
View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*, 'Introduction', 29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author, (image of exhibition wall text).

> The current evolution of digital technology is transforming the human environment in such a way that the very relation between the Ego – as actor – and the Self – as mirror – is being reformatted. The reflective function of the Self investigates the Ego and the contexts, meaning, ethics, and implications of its actions. Yet what if that space of action is technically fabricated, simulated?[8]

In my review I had wanted to engage with the exhibition's conjuring of spirits (in a reflexive catoptrics between anticipation and actuality). However, for the journal it was as if the medium of the exhibition would – or, rather, *should* – become intelligible in terms of its material, as if this already offered answers to the questions that it might raise, as if to exorcise the phantoms of its endeavour in anticipation of the gallery's visitors.[9]

My curiosity was particularly prompted by the function of the introductory chronology, covering an entire wall. Despite the promise of the exhibition's title, this wall instantiated the phantomachia typically associated with historical research. I asked myself the following: Did this textual version of the exhibition work as a synecdoche or a parergon? Or was it itself one of the exhibits? As a model or guide for the visitor, was this introduction meant to de-exoticise the ethnographic and/or the aesthetic? The exhibition itself offered ethnographic artefacts juxtaposed with newly commissioned art works (including works by Manfred Pernice and Patrick Wokemi), but these were variously placed in both outer galleries and the central rooms. This spatialised distinction of time, maybe to be thought about as an historical core and a contemporary rim, appeared to reproduce the colonial mapping of centre and periphery, metropole and margin. Was this deliberate or contingent; haunted or historical?

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Critical reflexivity, or strong objectivity, does not dodge the world-making practices of forging knowledges with different chances of life and death built into them. All that critical reflexivity, diffraction, situated knowledges, modest interventions, or strong objectivity 'dodge' is the double-faced, self-identical god of transcendent cultures of no culture, on the one hand, and of subjects and objects exempt from the permanent finitude of engaged interpretation, on the other. No layer of the onion of practice that is technoscience is outside the reach of technologies of critical interpretation and critical inquiry about positioning and location; that is the condition of articulation, embodiment, and mortality.[10]

– Donna Haraway, 1997

While writing my review, I had found myself wondering how, or even whether, I could say (with Michael Taussig),[11] 'I swear I saw this'; as if, in the claim of ethnographic 'fieldwork', going to visit the exhibition and engaging with what it presented as significant for itself, allowed me to say that I had indeed seen it. This question of how the possibility of seeing might be evidenced subsequently became the subject of an essay-film, my virtual research in place of the review.[12] In both the essay-film and the review there is the same question of how a project might 'enact a specific strategy of authority'.[13] Of course, the very distinction between self and other is part of what is in question concerning the subject of ethnography. To cite but one 'authority', affirming the sense that 'in ethnographic experience the observer apprehends himself as his own instrument of observation', Claude Lévi-Strauss proposes that: 'Clearly, [the observer] must learn to know himself, to obtain, from a self who reveals himself as *another* to the *I* who uses him, an evaluation which will become an integral part of the observation of other selves'.[14]

Concerning phantoms, what would convey critical 'credibility' for museum ethnography in a review, distinct from 'simply' a piece of travel writing or, in an essay-film, distinct from simply a tourist slide-show on Facebook or Instagram?[15] For all their differences – between, for example, the professional and amateur in coding the visit as 'work' and not 'leisure'[16] – these engagements in semiotic practices overlap (like the layers of the onion), even as they are supposed to be separated out into distinct sites of research. Paradoxically though, it is marking that distinction through the citation of 'reflexive statements' as a counter-point to abstraction

that standardly characterises the desired 'checks on reality and fiction'[17] within such narratives from the 'field'. When, for example, Francis Huxley[18] raises the question of the travelogue, he proposes that it is the anecdote that allows for the voices of his informants to be heard, locating the research in colloquial situations when written-up, rather than in synoptic 'objectivity'. It is the directly cited observations, distinct from indirect summaries, which invite credence, albeit perhaps not always as intended. For the anecdotal evidence also exhibits Huxley's own preconceptions, 'marking' a temporality in the authorial conditions of knowledge that is not particular to him.[19]
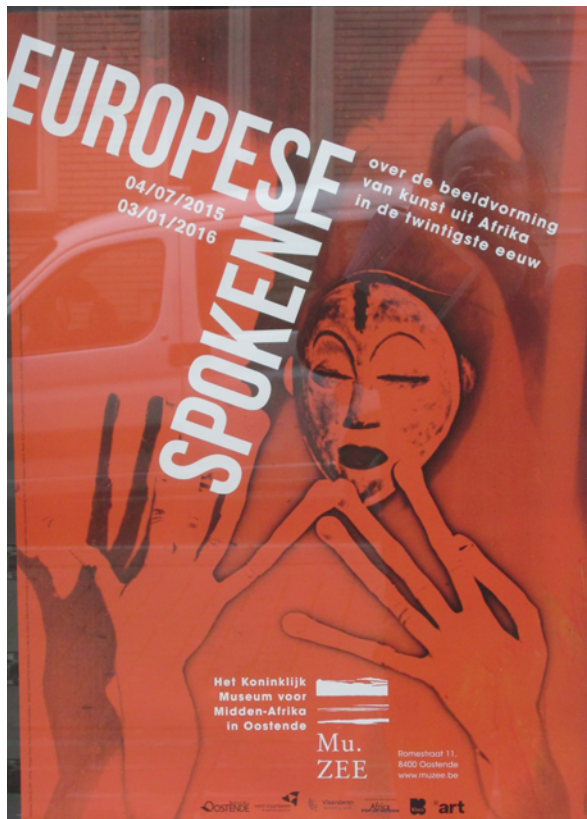
View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*, 'Poster' 29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author, (image of the exhibition poster).

By the 1970s, narrating the conditions of and for ethnographic knowledge as fieldwork had been recognised by some as a subject – or site – of such research itself, especially through reference to 'reflection(s)'. If the disciplinary resistance to this at the time seems dated today,[20] we might conclude that this is only in its institutional understanding of knowledge rather than in its practice of power (reproducing a discipline through appropriate qualifications and the recognition of research through funding decisions and acknowledged publications). These enduring traces of power in knowledge are not the least of the reflexive interests in, for example, George Stocking's review of the history (or the self mythologisation) of fieldwork within the 'magical' overtones of anthropology's disciplinary formation of its student-initiates;[21] and they are also the underlying concern with 'the challenge of practice' in dialogues between art and anthropology discussed, for example, by Arnd Schneider and Chris Wright.[22]

Concepts or modes of reflexivity are manifold and, as Michael Lynch cautions, the 'attempt to 'do' reflexivity or to 'be' reflexive does not control its communal horizons and eventual fate'.[23] This is true also for my refraction of questions addressing the representation of African art. What is it that interests the visitor in wanting to see the phantoms? My essay-film is voiced by one of the exhibition's 'subjects', taking one of the many books on display and citing its argument concerning the spectre of colonialism. Distinct from an ethnographic documentary, the film offers no interviews - it does not intercut various voices to camera - and rather features one 'participant' voice as its ostensibly authorial subject. Interviews seem to function as the equivalent in terms of footage to the former requirement of citing fieldwork within ethnographic monographs.

The question remains as to what kind of 'informants' the artefacts in this European ethnographic séance might have been, re-constituted as a site in the film's phantomatic conditions of time and place. The standard expectation (in a review, for instance) would be that the presentation of artefacts already supposed an answer to the question as to why one would be interested in visiting the exhibition. Here, however, the interest is in discovering how such artefacts (or, indeed, the apparatus of their exhibition) might prompt that very question, addressing something not already known but waiting to be discovered.

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The exhibition was one of a series of 'pop up' shows associated with the temporary closure of the Belgian Royal Museum of Central Africa and the site of the Ostend gallery was not itself neutral.[24] The exhibition barely touched on the fact that this city was also a major beneficiary of Leopold II's legacy, with just one reference to an incident in 2004 when a commemorative sculpture of a group of Congolese, looking up at an equestrian statue of the Belgian monarch, supposedly in gratitude for his 'saving them from Arab slavery', had their hands cut off by unknown activists in the city. The haunting power of this gesture, migrating through both official and unofficial knowledge of the former 'Belgian-Congo', transforms an understanding of the historical agency in such a site of public commemoration to one of (post-)colonial complicity.[25] The 'arch of severed hands', invoked as Leopold's lasting memorial by Emile Vanderwelle in the Belgian parliament in 1905,[26] was not part of the exhibition's representation of 'European ghosts' attending the collection of 'African art'.

Rather than providing answers to a reflexive question concerning the claims of 'being there', my review tried to explore how the time and place of research might be the consequence, as much as the cause, of this research itself. Here the question of visibility touches upon how techniques of both exhibition and testimony – in the historical imbrication of modernity and colonialism – engage with their own ambiguity concerning autonomy (or art) and representation (or contextualisation). Another question: where the presence of ghosts attends that of 'African art' in its European representation, what might be *their* point of view concerning such an exhibition, being simultaneously included and excluded, as both participants and observers? This question returns in the composition of the essay-film in its fracture between a point of view within and without – no longer 'there' but not yet 'here' – evoking the presence of ghosts, which is always that of a return or a revisiting.

Questions of perception are always troubled when invoking the spectral and what it might mean to see ghosts, let alone to be seen by them. How does the phantom of visibility itself become a question, or a site, of research with respect to objects identified, historically (or, indeed, phantomatically), as 'African art'? How might something specific to 'being there', to visiting the exhibition in Ostend, be realised in either a review or a film? As with most ethnographic scenarios, my questions are also haunted by issues of translation – to take only the exhibition's title as itself another 'informant'. The Anglophone version was ghosted by its French alternative, *L'Europe fantôme*, which echoes Michel Leiris' evoking of phantoms (in his record of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition in the early 1930s), *L'Afrique fantôme*.[27] The ghost of the English speaks of something that is, indeed, phantomatic, since Leiris' book does not (yet) exist in this language. Its citation here, then, adds another layer of reflexive

opacity, especially as his text makes of its own writing a site of research – an example of what James Clifford (suggesting an ethnographic alternative to the travelogue) famously called 'oneirography'.[28]

Between object and phantom, or between document and dream, the ethnographic research cited by the exhibition's curators invited the visitor to question claims of and for 'seeing'; not least, for seeing what is European in 'the representation of art from Africa'. In this context, Leiris offers a particular testimony to the double condition of observer and observed. For, as Joseph Mwantuali notes, in another of the many books (or 'informants') on display at Ostend, 'the capacity to see the Other without objectifying him or her makes Leiris a precursor of what the Americans call 'reflexive anthropology' and also, as Michel Beaujour found in him, of ethnopoetics'.[29] Here the translation of claims for 'seeing for oneself' into those for a reflexive envisioning exposes the sense of what is discovered afterwards with respect to the phantom of 'being there'.

View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*,
29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author.

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The technical and the political are like the abstract and the concrete, the foreground and the background, the text and the context, the subject and the object...shifting sedimentations of the one fundamental thing about the world – relationality. Oddly, embedded relationality is the prophylaxis for both relativism and transcendence. Nothing comes without

its world, so trying to know those worlds is crucial. From the point of view of the culture of no culture, where the wall between the political and the technical is maintained at all costs, and interpretation is assigned to one side and facts to the other, such worlds can never be investigated. Strong objectivity insists that both the objects and the subjects of knowledge-making practices must be located. Location is not a listing of adjectives or assigning of labels such as race, sex, and class. Location is not the concrete to the abstract of decontextualisation. Location is the always partial, always finite, always fraught play of foreground and background, text and context, that constitutes critical inquiry. Above all, location is not self-evident or transparent.[30]

- Donna Haraway, 1997

Questions of 'location' are taken up by T.J. Demos in his *Return to the Postcolony*, another of the many books chosen by the curators to participate in their séance. For Demos, the concern with ghosts and 'knowledge-making practices' is evoked by citing Jacques Derrida's transposition of ontology into hauntology, addressing the task of 'learning to live with ghosts… more justly'.[31] The question of justice is fundamental here, instantiating the powers of separation (and of translation) that construct the borders of disciplinary knowledge with regard to the spectral. Quoted in *Phantom Europe*, the following observation by Demos addresses the issue of not simply looking at the objects in the exhibition, but attending to what they themselves have to say. Demos notes:

> If such a hauntological study necessarily proceeds by rejecting – along with Stengers, Latour, and Gordon – the clear separations between modern science and pre-modern animism, objective positivism and subjective belief, the real and the imaginary, then it corresponds…to an approach to aesthetics that joins the factual and the fictional…As such, it is entirely appropriate that this investigation is conducted in the medium of…photography.[32]

How might photography itself admit an ('appropriate') unsettling of institutionalised document-dream, or fact-fiction distinctions of disciplinary knowledge? Taken out of the vitrine, Demos' book (seen fleetingly in the photographs of the exhibition) offers a paratactic narration to the film's images. The time of seeing is split through a juxtaposition of what is seen with what is heard, each image being itself a still photograph without deictic sound. Unlike in Dee's mirror, there is no hierarchy of interpretation, even if it might seem that the montage follows that vector 'from ear to eye' which belongs to the early definition of the essay-film, as offered by Bazin (1958) in his advocacy of Chris Marker's *Siberian Letter*.[33] For Bazin, it is this 'lateral relation of word to image' (distinct from the visual relations within and between, preceding and succeeding, images) that makes Marker's film watchable in terms distinct from those of documentary or dramatic film montage (or more simply, in terms of the movement-image of 'cinema').

In *Phantom Europe,* however, Bazin's vector for making sense is only apparent as the lure of actuality in anticipation. The fiction-creating montage of two factual elements occurs not in a unidirectional encounter, but in an oscillation between them, also evoking what is not seen

in what is heard. This is nothing new. In 1960, for instance, André Labarthe had proposed that 'the *transition to the relative* is the sign of a reconciliation between pure fiction and pure documentary',[34] although in *Phantom Europe* such a 'reconciliation' is but the appearance of an underlying reflexive asymmetry.

The factual fiction of 'being there' becomes the very subject of my film-essay; or, in Haraway's terms, the layers of its onion. Indeed, as distinct from a review, the question of the essay – that which 'makes a ruin out of its own conflicting desires for aesthetics and adventure'[35] – is precisely evoked in this figure of the onion, whose layers simultaneously offer something and nothing. Rather than being exegetical, the essay narrative suggests its own displacement. It no more 'speaks for itself' than for the images it accompanies. The sense of the text would be different if read in terms of what has been edited out in constructing a continuity that is both a quotation of Demos' book and a variation of it. Here montage, the modernist principle of composition (and comparison), which cuts across romantic metaphor (and the identity of difference), displaces the familiar sense of reflexivity, of an identification between voice and subject. In my film's non-synchronisation of word and image, instances of reflection are mediated by fragmentary citation rather than the silhouette of a transcendental ego. Exploring the dynamic of a simultaneous de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation of images, my film's site of research is constituted by the *appearance* of continuity between past and present, here and there, sight and sound, in conjuring the possibility of return. The medium of

View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*, 'Gallery', 29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author.

photography offers a phantomatic ethnography of modernity, as it addresses what might still prove visible in the European representation of art from Africa. As with the example of Leiris, whatever I could swear to have seen in Ostend becomes a site that is dreamt in translation. Here oneirography touches on a reflexive concept of consciousness evoked by Aby Warburg in the image of a griffon: 'Beneath that dark flutter of the griffon's wings we dream – between gripping and being gripped – the concept of consciousness'.[36] Active and passive are not opposed in this instance, but translated in an asymmetric reflection between word and image, in a site where, as Warburg already understood (long before Latour's famous declaration), 'we have never been modern'.[37]

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The important practice of credible witnessing is still at stake.[38]
- Donna Haraway, 1997
How should we proceed so that the documents (observations, objects, photographs), whose value is tied to the fact that they are things taken from life, may retain some freshness once confined within books or locked up in display windows? [39]
- Michel Leiris, 1938

Unlocking 'display windows', as in Malraux's 'museum without walls' (as a possible mode of understanding art history),[40] photography offers an endlessly repeatable instance of (and not simply in) the history of images. Besides this modernist ambivalence concerning contextualisation, photography offers another dynamic site of research for reflection concerning dis-enchantment and re-enchantment, touching upon the powers of the 'fetish'. The framing of the photograph (and its ambivalent work of decontextualisation) offers its own testimony to the (re-)sacralisation of artefacts by the magic of vitrines. This mode of isolation in exhibitions is the corollary of the assumed 'authenticity' of handling and exchange – of the reverse investment in notions of use value concerning the fetish. However, what might be ethnographically particular about evoking 'European phantoms', in the representation of African art, through a montage of photographic images?
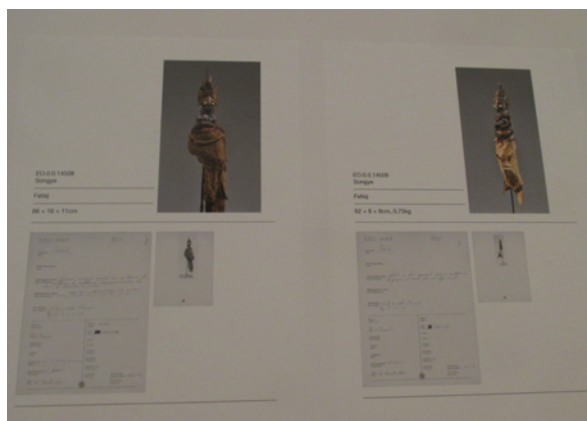
View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*, 'Fetish 1' 29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author, (image of exhibition wall text).

The sense of the spectral in photography specifically – from Balzac (*Le Cousin Pons*) to Barthes (*Camera Lucida*) – is expressive of a superstition that is as characteristically European as it is commonly ascribed to a 'primitive' belief in the migration of souls. Another set of questions arise: Alongside the ghostly, what becomes manifest in the documentary testimony of an historical appeal to the fetish, when cited not only in the relation between scientific curation and popular imagination, but in the framing of an artefact as its simulacrum? Collected and conserved in European museums, what is the power, or

the potential, of images of traditional African art, transmitted or transformed today through the almost universal medium of photography, including these museums' own websites (or, indeed, their mobile apps) with their exhibition 'trailers' (as distinct from curatorial essay-films)? Here one might reflect on what of these art works' (or assemblages') own technologies of visibility is reproduced or repressed by their different conditions (or sites) of exhibition. With respect to the 'fetish', is there something specific to foregrounding the photographic by the use of stills rather than moving images, not least in an essayistic appeal to reflection?

Concerning the essay-film, such questions address the possible relations between words and images that might be realised by the viewer in the temporality of the image through its voiced narration, in an appeal to reflection after the film has 'finished'. The question of what lasts – not least, in its repeatability – when it is 'finished' also offers an echo of the relation between documentation (a catalogue or a review) and the exhibition itself. One might wonder whether the site of the exhibition is sublated into the ethnographic present of its becoming writing, in whichever medium that occurs. Or whether it is, indeed, addressed as something past – that, nonetheless, returns to haunt the present in its continuing possibility.

View of the exhibition *European Ghosts: The Representation of Art from Africa in the Twentieth Century*, 'Fetish 1' 29 December 2016, photograph taken by the author.

Having made the film I can attempt questions that would not have been possible in simply writing up a review of the exhibition. Beyond the fundamental issue of what one could swear to have seen, one might wonder about the 'credibility' of the film's version of passing through the exhibition as a communication with its ghosts. Perhaps the thought-figure of reflections, glimpsed on the surface of glass vitrines, fleetingly capturing the time and space of the visit, is no more than a play on words. But there remains the issue of how to register the sense that things might resist speaking for themselves, as much as their being spoken for. Some resultant questions: How might an essay engage with the resistance of objects to having theoretical perspectives 'applied' to them, as if they were already 'examples' of what they are not? With respect to the reflections already cited from Rabinow and Lévi-Strauss, and Leiris, what to make of an ethnographic (or art historical) site of an apparently impossible reflexivity, where the viewer does not otherwise see him or herself

from the place of the viewed, other than in becoming the very subject of the research in question?[41] Indeed, it is precisely this question of research that serves as a metaphor for the paradigm of the ethnographic project: to see oneself from another's point of view (as the

other's anthropology)⁴² – translated by 'modern' technologies of dissemblance and resemblance, as here between the sites of exhibition and photographic testimony. With respect to what one might swear to have seen, Demos' words offer the appearance of exteriorising a monologue internal to the film's images, conjuring a relation to thought as that Other by which we are addressed when questioning ourselves as to the conditions of making sense of experience.

To return to reflecting on the mark of temporality in such research (both anthropological and artistic), Paul Rabinow writes:

> The question is whether or not digital techniques, technology, and practice are transforming the concept of the image in essential ways… making the historicity of photographic technology more and more evident, more and more visible…The historical disassembling of technique, technology, and practice produces a marking of their historicity and opens a space for new concepts and practice to emerge.⁴³

In this space of emergence, how might one address phantoms in 'the European representation of African art' – as a site of hauntological research? In contrast to the living, who need light to create the opacity (and the ambivalence) of their testimony to the visible, ghosts have no need to swear that they 'saw this'. In the interplay between site and sight, both Berardi and Rabinow evoke the digital conditions of new concepts and practices, of luminences without bodies (reflections or shadows). But, between art and anthropology, what becomes of research if there is no question of the difference between here and there, now and then, self and Other? Might we then be condemned to offer, 'in mimick sounds, and accounts not her own' (Ovid),⁴⁴ only the echo of Narcissus' questions in scrying the art (or phantom) of reflection in anthropology?

1   Jacques Derrida, 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes,' [1981] trans. Pacale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, in *Psyche Volume 1*, ed. Peggy Kamuf and Elizabeth Rottenbeg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 272.
2   Michel Leiris, *Brisées*, trans. Lydia Davies (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1989), 18.
3   'European Ghosts,' accessed February 5, 2017, http://www.muzee.be/en/muzee/t204300/european-ghosts-the-representation-of-art-from-africa-in-the-twentieth-century.
4   Mischa Twitchin, *Phantom Europe: 1. Return to the Postcolony,* https://vimeo.com/181043313; and *2. Living with Ghosts* https://vimeo.com/181630585.
5   Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (London: Routledge, 1997), 37.
6   Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 16.
7   In Roger Parry's entry for Dee's 'scrying mirror', or 'shew-stone', in the catalogue book for the exhibition *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing* curated by Brian Dillon for Hayward Touring, we read (amongst other things) that: "The black mirror…[was] reputedly used by [Dee] in his practice of 'scrying' – whereby he would predict the future by looking into the glass and reflective surface for symbols or the "ghosts" of people,' see Roger Parry, 'John Dee,' in *Curiosity: Art and the Pleasures of Knowing* (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 102.
8   Franco Berardi, 'Engineering Self,' *e-flux* (2016), accessed February 5, 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/66877/engineering-self/.
9   Phillip van den Bossche and Koenraad Dedobbeleer, *European Ghosts: Visitor Guide* (Ostend: Kunstmuseum aan zee, 2015).
10 Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*, 37.
11 Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).
12 Mischa Twitchin, *Phantom Europe: 1. Return to the Postcolony,* https://vimeo.com/181043313; and *2. Living with Ghosts* https://vimeo.com/181630585.
13 James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 25.
14 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology 2*, trans. Monique Layton (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 36.

15 For a summary of discussion of the historical construction of a 'tourist gaze' through the 'photographic eye' (as an object of research, rather than its subject), see (for example) Carol Crawshaw and John Urry, 'Tourism and the Photographic Eye', in *Touring Cultures*, ed. Chris Rojeck and John Urry (London: Routledge, 1997).

16 Needless to say, my film is 'amateur' in the particular sense of being made with no budget – in contrast to such epics as, for example, Alexander Sokurov's recent *Francofonia* (2015).

17 Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 157.

18 Francis Huxley, *Affable Savages* [1956] (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 12.

19 Paul Rabinow, *Marking Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

20 Paul Rabinow, *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* [1997] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), xiv-xv.

21 George Stocking, *The Ethnographer's Magic* [1983] (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 12–16.

22 As Schneider and Wright observe in their introduction: 'The role of experiment is still relegated to a historical pantheon of established 'maverick' anthropologists (such as Michel Leiris, Gregory Bateson, and Jean Rouch), rather than an actively encouraged and valued facet of anthropological training... Recent proposals have called for anthropologists to focus on the performative aspects of artefacts, and on the agency of images and artworks, but these have been applied to the cultures that anthropologists study, and not to anthropology's own visual practices,' see Arnd Schneider and Chris Wright, 'Introduction,' in *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 4–5.

23 Michael Lynch, 'Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privileged Knowledge,' *Theory, Culture & Society* 17:3 (2000): 47.

24 RCAM website, accessed February 5, 2017 at http://www.africamuseum.be/popupmuseum/popup.

25 The portmanteau of the 'Belgian-Congo' (also part of the Tervuren museum's name until Congo's independence in 1960, when it was changed to 'Central Africa') condenses a truth that continually needs spelling out, as here by the Congolese historian Isidore Ndaywel è Nziem: 'In a way, Belgium would be a creation of the Congo as [much as] this latter would become Belgium's creation' (cited in Allen Roberts, *A Dance of Assassins: Performing Early Colonial Hegemony in the Congo* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013], 24). In another aspect of its twentieth century history, Ostend was heavily bombed during WWII. This leads Volker Weidermann to make the haunting observation that, with respect to the pre-war city: 'Ostend no longer exists. There's another city today, a new one with the same name,' see Volker Weidermann, *Summer Before the Dark*, trans. Carol Janeway (London: Pushkin Press, 2016), 163.

26 Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* [1998] (London: Pan Macmillan, 2006), 165.

27 Michel Leiris, *Miroir de l'Afrique* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1996).

28 Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, 165.

29 Joseph Epoka Mwantuali, *Michel Leiris et le Négro-Africain* (Ivry-sur-Seine: Nouvelles du Sud, 1999), 210.

30 Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*, 37.

31 T.J. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 18.

32 Idem, 17.

33 André Bazin, 'On Chris Marker,' (1958) trans. Dave Kehr, accessed February 5, 2017, http://chrismarker.org/category/essay-form/.

34 André Labarthe quoted in Christa Blümlinger, 'Reading Between the Images,' trans. John Rayner, in *Documentary Across Disciplines*, ed. Erika Balsom and Hila Peleg (Berlin: HKW, 2016), 175.

35 Brian Dillon, *Objects in this Mirror* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 359.

36 Aby Warburg quoted in Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: an Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 303. Gombrich glosses his translation of Warburg's note in terms, precisely, of its resistance to translation: '[Warburg] tried to condense his philosophy of impulse and of the dual meaning of "grasping", as seizing an object and seizing a thought in a "concept", into a sentence that plays on the meaning of *greifen* ("grasping") and the German word for the mythical griffon (Vogel Greif).'

37 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

38 Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*, 33.

39 Michel Leiris quoted in Denis Hollier, 'The Use-Value of the Impossible,' trans. Liesl Ollman, *October* 60 (1992): 10. Leiris' concerns with ethnographic exhibition in the 1930s have come full circle in the example of the Musée du Quai Branly, to cite only James Clifford, 'Quai Branly in Process,' *October* 210 (2007) and Nélia Dias, 'Double Erasures,' *Social Anthropology/Anthropologie Sociale* 16:3 (2008).

40 Georges Didi-Huberman, *L'Album de l'art à l'époque du 'Musée imaginaire'* (Paris: Hazan, 2013).

41 This is also explored in another essay-film, with narration by Foucault accompanying images from a temporary exhibition at the Quai Branly: https://vimeo.com/177274641 [French]; https://vimeo.com/178221335 [English].

42 Marc Augé, *A Sense for the Other,* trans. Amy Jacobs (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

43 Paul Rabinow, *Marking Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 121.

44 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Book III), trans. Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al., accessed February 5, 2017, http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.3.third.html.

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Antiphonal Republic

Connell Vaughan

[W]e will do well if... we Orphically sing...Am Énflaith[1]

Introduction

There is a kingdom – both literal and imaginary – within Ireland's republic. This translucent place birthed a philosopher: John Moriarty (1938–2007). Inspired by Ireland's ancient lyrical mythology and bardic tradition, and further informed by a prodigious transcultural and global 'walkabout', Moriarty argues for the baptism and rebaptism of community spirit, in Ireland and further afield, through song.[2] Referring to the Irish myth of High King Conaire Mhór who established a birdreign (*Ind Énflaith*), where ecumenical harmony between all peoples and living creatures existed, Moriarty conceives of an imaginary space into which we are initiated through song. Moriarty explicitly invokes us to sing into being a new republic, a New Ireland, a new mind founded on sensations and embracing 'dimensions that would embarrass Einstein' by sketching a global larder-like 'Dreamtime' to which we can return for restoration.[3]

Moriarty's application of our shared past is consistently grounded in the local. This local is not the almost immovable Irish county boundary. Neither is it the existent nation state. The current political and cultural divisions, be they at the county level or the state level, will not find valorisation in Moriarty's invocation. On the other hand, specific sites which are imbued with mythological power were revived. Such sites are not, in the eyes of Moriarty, pinned to the peculiarities of place but rather contained universal significance.

The scale of Moriarty's personal engagement with his 'Dreamtime' archive includes classical sites such as Athens, Jerusalem, Rome, and further afield locations such as Varanasi, the Kwakiutl coast and Manitoba. Such a gathering is a resource to be applied in contemporary living, not a canon to be merely admired.

> The Bhagavad Gita, the Song of the God that Mannannán, god of the sea, sang
> to us at sea – that he could as easily sing to us in New York or in Tokyo,
> because reality there is as immaculate as it is here this morning in the mountains
> of Kerry. Banbha, Fódhla and Éire are immaculate dimensions of New York

as much as they are immaculate dimensions of the furze-yellow world between me and Torc Mountain. Silver branch perception is as possible in the Ruhr Valley as it is here.[4]

Moriarty was educated in Dublin and taught English literature in Canada for six years before returning to Ireland in 1971. His resulting perspective privileged the role of song as a gateway for citizens to remake and reshape the world. His voluminous and dense writings treated song and singing as the site of radical personal, communal and national renewal. This paper is an attempt to address his methodology to our contemporary situation. Currently Ireland is in the midst of a decade of contentious centenary commemorations (2012–23).[5] Furthermore, post Brexit, and with the spectre of a so-called 'hard-border', the nature of Ireland's existential constitution has been revived for the first time in a generation.

The anthem, when considered as a dynamic site, as opposed to a static symbol, might expand the zone of the Republic to different temporal and spatial contexts. In the spirit of an enquiry into 'sites of research', this paper therefore considers the space of Moriarty's imaginary kingdom and its significance for rethinking the contemporary anthem. Anthems can be seen as symbolic signs of unity and/or division.[6] Shana Redmond, for example, has seen the anthem as emblematic of solidarity and citizenship. The anthem she argues, in its varied composition and performance, is a 'sound franchise' contributing to the political domain.[7]

The place that delivered Moriarty is Co. Kerry, commonly referred to as 'The Kingdom' in sport, politics and tourist advertising. The origin of that moniker is opaque. It has been suggested that it is simply a transliteration of 'Ciar's Kingdom', Ciar being the name of a king and subsequently a tribe in the region.[8] That a county should hold such a title is in itself curious. That a county so strongly associated with Republican sentiment and anti-royalist feeling, all the while within a self-declared republic, should do so is even more puzzling because Kerry, of all counties, with its rugged, rural and mountainous terrain, has constituted the image of the nationalist independent Gaelic ideal. It is significant that the ancient nickname is maintained not in jest or as a clever jape but rather with an honest pride. It reveals a connection to a complicated history and mythology deeper than the current Irish State.[9]

The county unit is simultaneously the most English and Irish of manmade markings on the island's map. The contours of their borders and limits are among the everyday legacy of British colonial rule, yet their ongoing affirmation in domains of sport, folklore and politics is a hallmark of Ireland's post-colonial and post-partitioned culture. Moriarty eschews the county, and this is important because the county is the foremost spatial and geographical unit of meaning in contemporary Irish identity and its boundaries are infused with a sacred untouchability.[10] His site of engagement is a wider, more enduring space, a 'Dreamtime',[11] grounded in the mythologies, theologies, classical learning and literature of diverse cultures. It is founded on a belief in the sacred inheritance of poetry and prose. My argument is this: Moriarty's global 'Dreamtime' can be conceived as a reservoir, an archive to be re-read, chanted and re-sung.

Antiphonal Singing

> Once we have heard you [Anna Livia/The Liffey] singing Manannán's song as you flow through Dublin...we will have no choice but to rebuild it, giving every street and bridge of it the nearly perilous aesthetic sovereignty of the Ardagh chalice.[12]

The spirit of reflective singing, articulated by Moriarty, calls us to consider our antiphonal practices. It is only through antiphonal singing that the anthem can respond to the present, including the formation of the capitalist nation state itself. The new Republic's constitution is best conceived as an unfinished antiphony, by which I mean a document open to amendments and re-interpretation. In cases where the ambiguity of a song's meaning and significance invites participation, we must seize the opportunity to occupy this space by singing antiphonal and atelic republics. We must also pursue our singing methodology. How do we sing our anthems?

Etymologically derived from 'antiphon' ('anti' = over/against; 'phone' = voice), referring to an extended duet/hymn whereby a choir of opposing voices sings through call and response, the anthem has transformed from sacred music, to music of praise, to national signifier. It would be a failure to limit our understanding of anthemic singing to a practice whereby the individual submits to a greater and singular collective harmony. Singing can be a primal, intoxicating marking of territory. The challenge of our current time is to transplace the song and specifically the anthem. Certainly the anthem can be defined as a song of loyalty or devotion, but it also can accommodate the inclusion of different voices. If this transplacement is only for the moment in which the song is sung, then this is still symbolically significant. Momentary vision beyond our rigidities is valuable. There is a folkloric vocabulary beyond classical, folk and pop songs. Moriarty hears it in whale song and the song of the curlew, in the call of the angelus, the sound of the crocked stream, the chant of prayer. Rethinking these traditions, emblems and symbols in light of current politics is a constant challenge because there is a tendency for cultural forms to be ossified in the making of canons.

Inspired by Moriarty's provocation and fuelled by the limitations of the existing anthems, I suggest we apply an ethics and aesthetics of counterpoint (polyphony) to the mythology, methodology and ideology of our singing. To do so, we must analyse and transform how we sing. Our critical task requires 'emancipating ourselves from the myths and metaphors that have become forms our sensibility and categories of understanding'.[13] This requires accessing the sacred 'Dreamtime' archive of song in a spirit of creative necessity. It also entails challenging any assumption that the choir is unimpeachable; the choir can hide all manner of individual responsibilities.

Following Kolstø, we can understand the anthem as unifying or divisive. However, the oppositional nature of antiphonal singing embraces what I call the 'counterpoint ideal'. In music, the term counterpoint is used to describe the relationship between polyphonic sounds that remain independent. Counterpoint recognises the interactive potential of song, and is conventionally used to refer to the way in which certain compositions with competing lead

parts simultaneously collaborate to create and support the overall melody. As a principle, in counterpoint, no singer is relegated to a support role. Rather, the texture of the song can be thought of as a tapestry. A popular example of counterpoint is Simon & Garfunkel's version of *Scarborough Fair/Canticle*.[14]

The call and response of the traditional anthem can seem antithetical to the fostering of independent identity and living ecumenically, but at its most straightforward we need to recognise that *even imitation* can offer counterpoint. The counterpoint ideal, I suggest, extends beyond an individual song's composition. It extends beyond any strict or governed species of counterpoint.

In the most general terms, I propose that songs have beneficial properties. In the case of anthems they may offer communal *catharsis* in he Aristotelean sense. However we also might identify, within a song, a stupefying capacity. In antiphonal singing there is the possibility of a transparency that blinds; a structure-less singing that does not speak to our time. An unthinking or uncritical humming of *Amhrán na bhFiann* (the Irish national anthem) that accompanies most of its public airings is an example of a practice devoid of reflection and contestation. This is a complicit singing. It is a singing devoid of the rich resources and aesthetic intelligence of what Moriarty calls 'Dreamtime'.

For me, the value of 'Dreamtime' is the extent to which it can be deployed as a source and repository of heightened awareness. The singing of new republics requires anti-lullabies that do not seek to ease citizen's distress and merely entertain. It entails anthems that do not seek to make us feel comfortable in traditions (of geography, economics and history). It demands not to be sung critically, not in a zombie-like in a daze.

The Anthem

> More than anyone else...Molly [Mallone] enabled Dubliners to think of themselves
> not just as citizens but as folk.[15]

The current politics of the anthem in Ireland is not defined in terms of a strict nationalist duty, nor is it clarified in terms of an understandable goal; rather its opaqueness evokes an unclear memory of a dated national cause and a signal of the uncomfortable nature of the state's independence.[16] The particular moment of centenary commemoration makes this clear. While the Irish tricolour and the Proclamation were centrepieces of 2016's centenary commemorations in Ireland, the national anthem was conspicuous in its absence. All primary and post-primary schools received their own national flag, either from the Defence Forces or from the Thomas F. Meagher Foundation,[17] and a copy of the 1916 proclamation with March 15th declared Proclamation Day. In contrast, the national anthem, as unloved signifier of Irish statehood, was routinely shunned.

The cosmological content and cosmopolitanism of Moriarty's vision extends this musical site of research beyond a North-Western European isle. In the contemporary and local politics

of events such as the State Commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising, or Brexit, the challenge of our time is a cosmopolitan challenge to live ecumenically (*mitakuye oyasin*) with all beings whilst, at the same time, to be in chorus attempting to 'reconstitute ourselves as a people'.[18] Song and its authentic singing do not require a genetic lineage to specific postcodes. As such the potential of song is to combat our 'conscription into the modern world'.[19] By invoking an oblique space (a 'Dreamtime') accessible through singing, Moriarty challenges us to think beyond fixed identities. In this way singing is for Moriarty both an aesthetic way to knowledge and a form of ethics.

While Moriarty risked an idealised and romanticised Ireland empty of disconcerting historical specifics, his idealisations are mythical, not historical. For example, he resists the constriction of a Kerry (a North Kerry at that) to an island shielded with shibboleths. Instead, Kerry's folklore was seen as the basis for a new anthropology of ecumenical harmony. In each site, there was the potential to read and sing myth and structure new ways of seeing. The singing was a way to come out from behind 'the Dykes'.[20]

The challenge for Moriarty was to combat rigid patriotic nationalism.[21] The aesthetic and ancient mechanism for such reconstitution and solidarity is song. 'Maybe Uvavnuk's song [an untitled Inuit shaman song from the 19th century] will sing us out of our dead-end rigidities. Maybe it will sing us into more hopeful evolutionary shape'.[22] In the spirit of such a reconstitution, where better to begin than where we explicitly declare, in song, ourselves as a people? While there are other symbols and paraphernalia of ersatz patriotism - flags, emblems, proclamations, salutes and so on - song is a crucial site to explore the spirit of Moriarty's conceptual claims.

With Moriarty's invitation to rework and remix, and in the context of confusion between commemoration and celebration alongside the false assumption that (Irish) independence has been fully achieved, we may ask ourselves: what anthem can announce a mode of existence beyond the singular Irish capitalist nation state?[23]

Nation states announce themselves with anthems of all sorts; triumphant, sombre, defensive, and so on.[24] Bound by ideals of nation and by functions of state, the national anthem cannot be completely opaque. Furthermore the singularity of the national anthem ensures it is a site of ongoing contestation.[25] As a song, there is a wonderful crookedness to the anthem which derives from the atelic and dynamic activity of its singing. For example, America's *The Star-Spangled Banner*, itself a reworking of a London drinking song, has been adapted in versions as diverse as Jimi Hendrix's instrumental and José Feliciano's blues style version.[26]

My purpose in conceptualising the anthem as a site is to transcend its reductivism to a singular version, and consider not a plurality of future potential anthems, but rather the antiphonal possibilities and ambiguities of the *practice of* the national anthem. This can productively reside in a space between the revelation and concealment of cultural origins and identities. Ireland's relationship to its national song is noteworthy in demonstrating some of the tensions and necessary ambiguities involved in articulating the idea of an independent republic. Initially, songs such as Thomas Moore's *Let Erin Remember, God Save*

Ireland and *A Nation Once Again* were used as anthems at the foundation of the state. *Amhrán na bhFiann*, a song composed by Peadar Kearney (lyrics) in English as *The Soldier's Song* and Patrick Heeney (music) and popularised in 'the internment camps after the Easter Rising'[27] was eventually adopted.[28]

As *Amhrán na bhFiann* is traditionally sung in a later Irish language translation (by Liam Ó Rinn), it presents an event of ambiguity. Due to its contentious politics as a clear revolutionary symbol, 'successive governments [have sought perhaps understandably] to make it so difficult for citizens and others to know exactly what the anthem is'.[29] This has been a successful policy. 'Today, when most people in the Republic of Ireland…hear "The Soldier's Song", they are reminded not of particular political ideals or historical events, but simply of their membership of the Irish nation'.[30] The very ambiguity of translation itself and the absence of any official translation render the song apart from attempts to perceive our current situation.

Amhrán na bhFiann persists despite its supplementation in sporting contexts where the nation is represented in opposition to the Republic (*Ireland's Call* and on occasion *The Rose of Tralee*), its failure to register with the diaspora (unlike *Danny Boy*), and its apparent allegiance to militant republicanism/anti-Britishness. The anthem persists due to its ambiguous nature and a reluctance to discuss alternatives. (Although the focus of this paper has been on the Irish anthem, it is worth noting that the anthem of Northern Ireland is also marked by ambiguity and divisive politics. On some occasions the national anthem of the UK *God Save the Queen* is used, whereas for other events, such as the Commonwealth Games, *Londonderry Air* with the lyrics of *Danny Boy* are used.)

This ambiguity fosters an aura of cultural elitism around Irish identity whereby the anthem functions as shibboleth to mark exclusion. Its musical notes decorate the passport, a document regulating another kind of inclusion or exclusion. Yet, the anthem's ambiguity and collective situatedness also invites us to take ownership over its performance, especially through singing. Where rebel songs such as *Óró, sé do bheatha abhaile* and *Foggy Dew* have become associated with an attitude of patriotic 'correctness', I argue that such correctness denies the importance of community and collective living, and should be avoided because it serves to entrench division. My hope is not for a tune which can fully succeed in representing the world (or even just Ireland) in its complexity, but I do think we need to make attempts. The anthem and fellow republican ballads such as *The Fields of Athenry* have plotted a sectarian space of exclusion, and yet we must embrace the possibilities of their re-singing as anthems of ecumenical harmony.

Revisiting the Politics of the Anthem

[T]here is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggests – above all in the form of poetry and songs. Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At

precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provide occasions for unisonality, for the echoed physical realization of the imagined community.[31]

In the spirit of bringing forward Anderson's idea here of 'unisonance', thinking through Moriarty challenges us to consider renewal. Exemplary of the anthems antiphonal substitution was *A Nation's Voice*, broadcast live on RTÉ One, on RTÉ Radio 1 and on www.rte.ie/1916 on Easter Sunday, 27th March 2016. This free open-air concert at the National Museum Collins Barracks in Dublin,[32] consisted of 1,114 singers from 31 choirs based in 19 different counties across Ireland, led by the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and conductor David Brophy. Central to this hour of singing was Paul Muldoon's poetic reading of lyrics set to conductor Shaun Davey's score *One Hundred Years a Nation*. Muldoon's words were 'moving and celebratory but also scathing and provocative, giving space to "gombeen financiers", "parish parasites", ghost estates, mass emigration, "bloody assassinations" and the "bomb's abominations"'.[33]

As an attempt to *sing* Ireland, *A Nation's Voice* negotiated the complicated challenge of critically commemorating and simultaneously celebrating the resources of national identity. By emphasising hybridity, inclusivity and participation, this event was successful (in Moriarty's terms) insofar as it employed choral singing to rework the anthem to embrace new approaches to ownership, access, usage and scale in the singing of Ireland. In contrast to the official *Seachtar Fear, Seacht Lá* (Seven Men, Seven Days) narrative that dominated the 50th commemorations, *A Nation's Voice* recognised and embraced a multiplicity of narratives. Furthermore, Moriarty would have recognised, in the tri-temporal orientation (past, present and future) of the work, an attempt to productively engage ancient, medieval and modern mythology in the hope of remaking the world. In reusing songs from Irish history such as the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*,[34] Seán Ó Riada's *Mise Éire* Orchestral Suite and *The Connemara Suite* by Bill Whelan, *A Nation's Voice* achieved a collaborative counterpoint. This interactive counterpoint was enriched in a style akin to Moriarty when Muldoon, sketching an Irish 'Dreamtime', criss-crossed Irish history with contemporary concerns by curating and cataloguing moments and places of national significance from 'proclamations' to 'stagflation', 'Newgrange' to 'Glenmalure'. Muldoon, echoing Moriarty's philosophy, sang 'Let's renew, rather than ransack, our corner of the planet'.[35]

A Nation's Voice could be criticised for failing to explicitly confront, and thus rework and re-sing, *Amhrán na bhFiann*. However by singing over and against the tradition of the anthem, it nonetheless shows what antiphonal singing entails; namely, the risk of representing the nation anew in both content and style.

A related example of such a consideration was the later project, *Composing the Island: A Century of Music in Ireland 1916-2016*, held over three weeks in September. This festival presented twenty-nine concerts of orchestral, choral, instrumental, song and chamber music by Irish composers written between 1916 and 2016. *Composing the Island* sought to make visible the efforts of classical musicians in defining Ireland's independent identity. Showcasing

this history demonstrated the central place that musical composition and the heritage of folk song have been accorded in the political, economic and educational configuration and reconfiguration of the Irish as a people.

What else could be done to further explore the anthem in these terms? In tandem with a classical songbook we could record a Great Irish Songbook. This would track the popular music of the last century from so called rebel songs to celtic folk to traditional and pop. From *The Men Behind the Wire*[36] and *The Boys Are Back in Town*[37] to *Lights On*.[38] All these genres occupy the imaginary space of the lived identity of a nation. *The Men Behind the Wire* memorialises a revolutionary generation, whereas *The Boys Are Back in Town* and *Lights On* in succession imagine new teenage and immigrant generations. To catalogue a national repertoire can both validate and valorise an 'indigenous' collection of tunes, however it can also trick us into a form of silo thinking that music mocks. Music embraces a heterogeneity of influence.

Conclusion

Vital to any realisation of the promise in *Am Énflaith* is the Orphic charm of the birdsong. This is not simply to emphasise the importance of myth making, but also the poetics involved. To rethink the anthem, it is worth following Moriarty's lead by both traveling back to the ancients and to 'walkabout' in the contemporary global.[39] New myth making, a new *sing*ular Ireland, is possible by re-invoking the term and practice which would later become the anthem.

With each instance of antiphonal singing we have the power to invoke a Moriarty-like 'Dreamtime', and rework our current situation. In concluding, I recall that the central method in Moriarty is a demand to 'break spontaneously into song...and in all possible variations'.[40] I have added to this injunction the principles of counterpoint and antiphonal singing. It is not my intention to prescribe one specific new anthem, though explicit new efforts should be welcomed, but rather to expand the idea of anthem to include those occasions where we sing in the spirit of counterpoint to sing into being a new way of being in the world. The challenge within my ongoing project is to build on the sites which might be occupied by the conceptual framework of Moriarty's thoughts. This could be further stretched beyond this current paper to provoke questions such as - What songs are sung today in internment camps? Can these be sung as anthems? A final, manifesto-like, set of injunctions: If we need to sing these anthems in celebration, we must. If we are called to sing in protest, we must. And if the mood calls us to keen (to sing in lamentation), then keen. Understanding the history of use and a diversity of engagement must be out starting point if we are to undertake the invocation of *Ind Énflaith* that Moriarty imagined.

1   John Moriarty, *Invoking Ireland: Ailiu Iath n-hErend* (Dublin: Lilliput. 2005), 129. See footnote 39 on Moriarty's use of the terms 'Dreamtime' and 'walkabout'.

2   Ibidem.

3   Julius Ziz & Dónal Ó Céilleachair, *Dreamtime Revisited* (Ireland: Anú Pictures, 2012).

4   Moriarty, *Invoking Ireland*, 11. This, it ought to be remembered, is Moriarty's personal store, it need not be the limit of ours. By the expression 'silver branch perception', Moriarty is referring to the ideal of the mythic/bardic method whereby the ancient and mythological world is recalled to provide clarity on the contemporary. This is not a championing of archaic ways of seeing, but rather a route to a clearer encounter with the opaque present, and its narrow emphasis on the economic.

5   These include the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the First World War, the Easter Rising of 1916, Women's suffrage (1918), the war of Independence (1919–21), the establishment of the State in 1922 and the Civil War (1922-1923). And see http://www.decadeofcentenaries.com/

6   Pål Kolstø, 'National Symbols as Signs of Unity and Division,' Ethnic and Racial Studies 29 (2006): 676–701.

7   Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

8   M. P. Ryle, *The Kingdom of Kerry: Historical And Descriptive Articles* (Dublin: The Irish Associated Press, 1899), 80.

9   See, for example, Simon Brouder, ed., *Rebel Kerry: From the Pages of 'the Kerryman'* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 2017); and Richard McElligott, *Forging a Kingdom – The GAA in Kerry 1884–1934* (Dublin: Collins Press, 2013).

10 One only has to consider the current controversy concerning the proposed changes to the borders between Westmeath and Roscommon, and Kilkenny and Waterford to see rigidity of these lines for their residents.

11 A note on the use of the term 'Dreamtime': Moriarty clearly and perhaps crudely seeks to evoke the Indigenous Australian philosophies known as 'the Dreaming'. While this latter term is preferable for accuracy in the Australian context, I stick with the term 'Dreamtime', not only because it was the term that Moriarty used, but also because his deployment of the term is global in its ambition. His philosophy does not make any specific claim on the complex practices and knowledge systems of Indigenous Australians except for being inspired by the centrality of ancient complex singing practices that inform contemporary living.

12 John Moriarty, *Nostos* (Dublin: Lilliput. 2001), 664.

13 Idem, 6.

14 Simon & Garfunkel, 'Scarborough Fair/Canticle,' in *Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

15 Moriarty, *Nostos*, 137. Here Moriarty ventures the idea of a city anthem – or as Dublin is more properly understood by Irish people as county, a county anthem – as generating more than a locus of communal connection, namely a republic. As such, we can see a reaffirmation of the local grounded solely in song, infectious song. But, crucially, we notice that song is malleable, and can be used to announce, mould, sell and mourn a people.

16 This anthem anathema is visible in the perennial commentary on the ability of sports players to recite the anthem. See, for example, Hugh Linehan, 'Can you sing the national anthem better than our hockey team?' *The Irish Times*, August 13, 2016.

17 Thomas Francis Meagher flew the first Irish tricolour flag on the 7th of March 1848 in Waterford City.

18 John Moriarty, *Invoking Ireland*, 1. 'Dreamtime' is a research space greater than the cogito, beyond the digital or the canon. It is a sacred everywhen.

19 Moriarty, *Nostos*, 164.

20 Idem, 176.

21 Moriarty, for example, speaks of a 'safari of stories' when describing the nation. And see Moriarty, *Invoking Ireland*, 8.

22 Moriarty, *Nostos*, 402.

23 New anthems need not be as formal as *Nice Screams – A Citizens' Anthem*, a socially engaged sound art project by Softday (Sean Taylor and Mikael Fernström) and Deirdre Power, where the song *A dhaoine uaisle Uachtair Reoite* (Better World in Mind) by Donnacha Toomey, 'was selected by public vote and converted to a chime performed by two ice cream vans in Limerick city' (http://softday.ie/nicescreams/). They can be as discrete and informal as we require.

24 For example, France's *La Marseillaise* is a rousing call to arms, while Uruguay's *Himno Nacional* is a more serene affair. India, Netherlands and Germany describe their country's geography, while Mexico, Poland and Thailand reference historical battles. Spain's *Marcha Real* is wordless, while South Africa's National Anthem is sung in five languages.

25 See, for example the current debate for England to adopt a national anthem, 'MPs back calls for English national anthem,' http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-derbyshire-35296296, 13 January, 2016, accessed April 20, 2017.

26 William Coleman, 'The Music of a well tun'd State,' *Journal of the Early Republic* 35:4 (2015): 599–629.

27 Ruth Sherry, 'The Story of the National Anthem,' *History Ireland* 4:1 (1996): 41. The song's English title is *The Soldier's Song*.

28 The decision was only announced by way of a curt parliamentary answer to a backbenchers question in 1926. See 'Ceisteanna - Questions - Saorstat National Anthem,' *Dáil Éireann Debate* 16:21 (1926), accessed April 25, 2017, http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/takes/dail1926072000021?opendocument. See also Ewan Morris, *Our Own Devices: National Symbols and Political Conflict in Twentieth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), 40–1.

29 Sherry, 'The Story of the National Anthem,' 43.

30 Morris, *Our Own Devices*, 69.

31 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 145.

32 This venue had been used as a British Army barracks in 1916.

33 Fintan O'Toole, 'Writers' view of Rising far from rose-tinted,' *The Irish Times*, April 29, 2016.

34 First performed in Dublin on April 13, 1742.

35 RTÉ, *A Nation's Voice*. Dublin: RTÉ. First broadcast Sunday 27 March 2016, available at http://www.rte.ie/player/ie/show/a-nations-voice-30003953/10551947/.

36 The Barleycorn, 'The Men Behind The Wire,' in *Live at the Embankment* (Dublin: Release Records, 1971).

37 Thin Lizzy, 'The Boys Are Back in Town,' in *Jailbreak* (London: Mercury, 1976).

38 Rusangano Family, 'Lights On,' *Let The Dead Bury The Dead* (Limerick: Rusangano Family, 2016).

39 As with the Moriarty's appropriation of the term 'dreamtime', his use of the term 'walkabout' is jarring, if not culturally insensitive and inappropriate. I have chosen solely to stick with the term 'walkabout', as opposed to wander, because it was the term that Moriarty used. Despite the global perspective of Moriarty's philosophy, his equalising appropriation of different cultural traditions fails to fully acknowledge the histories and legacies of cultural imperialism.

40 Moriarty, *Nostos*, 378.

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Here We Are Again

Robin Bale

▶
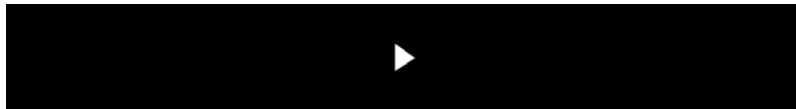
The audio piece presented here is a response to a site that I have visited and revisited throughout my doctoral research, a piece of wooded 'waste ground' in East London that has, on and off, served as an unofficial tip for many years. It is a syncope, a gap, gasp, or hiccup in the syntax of the city, an elision within the proper sequence of authorised and named locations. It seems fitting to me that this place (like almost all such places) should be full of junk, mirroring as it does the actual status of the site as 'waste ground'. Rubbish is a strange, untimely, category of matter; persisting in its obsolescence, already finished but not gone. The same can be said for those parcels of land left unutilised by local planners, the vagaries of the market, bankruptcy, or the last war.

The endless, undulating roar of traffic from a motorway slip road and the 'A' road it leads to, surround the particular site I deal with here. This ambience created by the minor teleology of multiple simultaneous journeys that posit their destination as emphatically not here, and do so as loudly as possible, is as much an inextricable part of the place as the birdsong. It emphasises that time is out of joint, or at any rate, is going elsewhere.

I have been much preoccupied with the idea, not so frequently touted now as it was in the early 1990s, of the end of history. As utopias go it was a pretty banal one and it's probably quite telling that even a bar set as low as that could be missed. As it has often been correctly observed since, history didn't actually end; liberal democracy and capitalism did not reach a symbiotic equilibrium, mutually reinforcing one another in an apotheosis of such conjoined stability and dynamism, that it rendered all other competing systems redundant. I have found a lot of grim humour in imagining, counterfactually, that this destination towards which history was supposedly striving has been achieved, and that this is where we now live – at, or in, the end of history. In trying to envisage what this unachieved and unachievable place would be like, I have been unable to find a better model than the waste ground upon which I build this piece – the word topic is derived from *topos* (place). The obsolete promise of old futures doesn't go away any more than waste does; like waste, it can be shovelled away out of sight but it stages periodic returns as a mocking ghost, interrupting current festivities: 'as I am now, so will you be'.

I have tried to capture this sense of the untimely within the piece. It begins with the word 'again', a nonsensical return. I have used considerable amounts of delay, or echo, as both literal audio effect and poetic trope; a set of repetitions and interruptions.

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The Gaps in the Line:
A Study of Drawing Between Word and Thing

Tamarin Norwood

In the following pages, I look in detail at a line I drew in biro across a bed sheet in 2009, which to date remains unresolved as an artwork despite several periods of attention. Below is a short reflection I wrote not long after the event, setting out what I saw as my motivation for drawing the line:

'One night a few weeks ago I was in bed writing something about the day. I tried to describe the room just as it was. The harder I tried to describe it the more exact it became and consequently the more inadequate my description. I wanted to catch the room on the paper so I could have it again, later on, when it was gone and the book remained. I was aware of the power of writing to outlive its object, but also of the gaping distance between the things I wanted to keep and the words I was using to capture them. It was like making a net with holes too loose.

Then I noticed the words were jealous of the book they were in. The book was real, and it pressed down with real, present weight on the blanket, and the blanket touched the bed and the bed the floor and the floor the other furniture and the furniture everything else in the room I was trying to write down. Yes, the words took up space on the paper of the book, and yes, the paper pressed down on the rigid cover of the book that touched the blanket, and so on, but the words betrayed themselves. They betrayed themselves in their way of directness, which claimed to cut through the physical things in the room and intimately name them, and yet naming can never be intimate because a name is so different from a thing.

A line in biro is a thing just as a chair or a hat is a thing. But the extra quality I was giving my biro lines by shaping them into words caused them to depart from the world of things. Each time I tried to look at a biro line I just ended up reading what it spelled. The words weren't going to be able to keep the things in the room, and so the things in the room would fade.

Then I drew a biro line from my paragraph to the edge of the page and from the paper onto the bed sheet, and all the way across the sheet to A as he slept. One day he will die, but I have kept in my book a line that touched him'.[1]

As I remember, the line was initially drawn with no thought of how it might exist to other people outside of its originary moment, and the now evident connections to my art practice did not occur to me at the time. I recognized these connections fairly quickly the following morning, and took steps to show what I took to be an interesting development in my studio research. I removed the sheet from the bed, scanned it into my computer in A4 sections and pieced the sections together into a long, narrow PDF file. I washed the sheet. The same month I distributed bookmark-sized printouts of the PDF at FormContent, London during an artist talk. Because it introduces and connects various aspects of my studio work, the episode has frequently appeared in my artist talks since then, including at Spike Island, Bristol in 2011 and Modern Art Oxford in 2012, where I showed no images of the bed sheet, but read out the 2009 text, and described my difficulty resolving the episode as an artwork. For a 2013 solo exhibition entitled *Well You Have to Draw the Line Somewhere*, I visited the episode again. This time, I presented the bed sheet itself, folded tightly with just segments of the line visible, and supported by a tall, narrow plinth constructed to exactly fit the dimensions of the folded fabric. Though I read the 2009 text at the associated artist talk, information supplied in the gallery space was limited to the following:

> *Line*, 2012
> Bed sheet, biro line to A sleeping
> H125 x W34 x D14cm

If the orientation of the sheet in relation to the bedroom was as I remember it, with A sleeping to my right as he always has, then I can look at the biro line and know that I drew it from left to right, and that it started at *this* end and ended at *this* end.

The feint blue outline to the upper edge of the tiny circle at this end of the line must be where the tip of the biro first met the surface of the sheet as it tripped down off the bottom edge of the notebook. It must have landed with more pressure than friction, so the only mark it made was with the little residue of ink collected on the sloping circumference of the nib. The centre of this tiny circle is empty, and the line really only begins just below it, softly as it curves a little to the right and then darkens in two uneven passages each a millimetre long or more. Or, rather than darkens, it thickens so that where, just above, only an occasional speck of the fibre was darkened with ink, here two or three specks in a row are thick with blue, as are six or seven in a row below them, and the next rows too, the ink making visible the invisibly fine weave of the fabric.

The line on the bed sheet is widest where the curve is most sharp, where the barrel of the pen must have tilted to bend

As I mentioned in the artist talk, this was a restaged line, drawn on a fresh sheet for the purpose of the artwork. Just like the original line (long since washed away) it was drawn from the page of my notebook to A's mouth, and I even waited for him to go to sleep – a somewhat parodic situation, as he knew what I was planning – but the original motivation and feeling for the gesture was so well rehearsed, it was difficult to muster this second time round. To this list I must also add the present essay, which omits images of either the original or the duplicate biro line, includes the 2009 text both in its entirety and in extracts quoted throughout the argument, and examines slowly and at very close range the form of the line and the conditions of its execution.

Each of these problematic manifestations engages the problem of attempting to extract an event from its local context and make it *show* as part of my artistic practice. There is an acknowledged belligerence to this extraction, be it in my scanning and digitizing of the line, my handing it out like a bookmark, my restaging (parodying?) of the drawing, or indeed the invasively detailed enquiry in the present essay. The folded sheet on the narrow plinth had a shroud-like or memorial quality, adding to this suggestion of belligerence a suggestion that the original episode is mournfully lost through its inscription as gallery artwork. The fact that the event, text and artifact have been tested in several ways and still resist satisfactory resolution, is what makes them available to me as a highly wrought site of theoretical and material research. This essay, then, takes the original episode not as the basis of a finished artwork, but as a site of ongoing practice-led enquiry.[2]

*

The central assertion of the 2009 text is that words and things are radically different from one another, and that a consequence of this difference is the inadequacy of language as a means of 'capturing' things through description. This problem appears to relate closely to the more urgent and elementary assertion also made in that text: that my attempt to capture things in writing was preceded by a desire to capture these things, a feeling itself provoked by a feeling of separation from them.

the line, or I must have held the heel of my hand against the sheet to keep it from crumpling, while I edged the pen along. Where the thickness stops, the line sweeps rightward then fades to nothing. There is a soft gap in the line, where the pen must have carried on along the surface with the ink temporarily blocked. Continuing to draw the pen across the sheet must have sufficed to pull the ink into flow again: the line fades in again after an inch or so, a fraction lower, and goes on. Then another gap, which turns out to be a passage of very feint drawing that meanders unsteadily and picks up again with a particular little indentation that makes me think it must have been drawn over a little hill in the sheet, which offered no resistance against the pressure of the nib, so it barely made a mark, until the sheet was flat against our skin again, and the pen could press down with real weight. At least two of the gaps in the line must have been caused by drawing across creases which have since fallen out of the fabric. These gaps are nearly identical. Each time, the nib must have mounted the fold and slipped onto the surface below to continue its path, leaving a tiny deposit of ink at what must have been the very brink of the pleat, where the line stops abruptly, only to resume just as abruptly a little further on.

This is the most basic strife described in the 2009 text: an awareness of an irreconcilable difference not between words and things, but between my own situated experience of the world around me, and some essence of that world which resisted my attempt to capture it. The comfort offered by the biro line was not a resolution of this strife, but rather an accomplishment of it: a tensioned material evidencing of the strife at stake. From this perspective, the biro line emerges as an exemplary 'work' in the Heideggerian sense: it 'consists in fighting the fight between world and earth'.[3] This assessment of the episode draws upon Heidegger's thought in *The Origin of the Work of Art*, a text that brings together what I have described as this 'most basic strife', and the related separation of word and thing.

Here, it is worth examining briefly how Heidegger intends the word 'strife'. The historical and cultural layering of human practice and experience constitutes what he calls the 'world', a system that exists upon and in opposition to the 'earth', the unformed and self-secluding ground of matter upon which the world is built, and which the world continually seeks to uncover and illuminate. Because of their opposing tendencies – of the earth to remain concealed, and of the world to tolerate nothing concealed – the two 'are essentially different and yet never separated from one another'.[4] It is this relationship of metaphysical opposition that Heidegger refers to as 'strife'. He endows the work of art with the particular function of bringing this strife into appearance by means of setting up a world that illuminates the self-concealment of the earth: it shows us that the earth does not show itself. As this state of strife is irresolvable in his philosophy, he emphasizes that the artwork's 'fighting [of] the fight' between earth and world is an 'accomplishing' of this strife rather than any kind of resolution.[5] Perhaps when I drew the biro line it began from my own experience of this strife, being myself a participant in the world and wanting to bring into the world the ungraspable and self-secluding matter – the earth – around me.

In any case, the biro line began not as a line but as language, and specifically as writing. These two beginnings have something in common. Anthropologist Michael Taussig describes how his 'hurried, abbreviated,

By now there are too many creases on the bed sheet to identify which must have caused these gaps in the line. The original creases have likely fallen out as new ones have accumulated over the past months and years. While I have been writing about the sheet most recently, I have often bundled it on my lap with portions of the line pulled up onto the desk to inspect. When I stop writing I tend to fold it, and store it in a pile with my notebook, my laptop and some other sheets of paper and fabric. This folding leaves its own creases, and marks, too. Before I began the present writing, the sheet lay in a box upstairs for a few years, still tightly folded from the last time it was used, and many of these folds have yet to fall away.

*

There are so many gaps in this line. The little gaps on the sheet are the smallest of them. There are much greater ones. For a start, the line did not begin on the bed sheet but on the page of a notebook I was writing nine years ago, which I have kept but no longer have to hand. It ended on A's open mouth, and he washed the mark away when he woke the following morning. But even before he woke, the line began to separate into its member parts. As soon as I had finished drawing it, I remember the line seemed to release the book from where it lay pinned against the sheet, and I closed

and urgent' notebook entries were motivated, something like mine, 'by the desire to have contact because the thing witnessed dies away as soon as it is seen'.[6] But the desire was countered by 'a foreboding sense that the writing is always inadequate to the experience it records', and moreover that 'the very words you write seem to erase the reality you are writing about'.[7] It is striking that he singles out writing as opposed to drawing as the agent of erasure. He goes on:

> Why draw in notebooks?...one reason, I supect, is the despair if not terror of writing, because the more you write in your notebook, the more you get the sinking feeling that the reality depicted recedes, that the writing is actually pushing reality off the page.[8]

This anecdotal account of the 'erasure' of things by words is what Peter Schwenger draws upon Hegel, Kant, Heidegger and Blanchot to describe provocatively as 'the murder of the thing'.[9] He describes a 'recurrent metaphor', appearing across the literature by which the act of naming results in the nullifying or annihilation of the thing-in-itself, and moreover, its return as the object of the human subject that names it.[10] In Heideggarian terms, the act of naming causes the thing-in-itself to recede into the concealment of earth meanwhile bringing that being into appearance as a projection into the world of that very seclusion.[11] This is to say: it is the name of a thing that shows us that the thing does not show itself.[12]

While Taussig's response to the problem of erasing experience through language is a preference for drawing over writing, Schwenger searches literature for a solution. Turning to the writing of Maurice Blanchot, he traces a final turn in the word's 'murder of the thing'. He asserts that as 'words throw the things of this world into nonexistence...they then move into the vacancy with an existence of their own'.[13] The crucial passage is in Blanchot's words:

> What hope do I have of attaining the thing that I push away? My hope lies in the materiality of language, in the fact that words are things, too...A name ceases to be the ephemeral passing of nonexistence

it, put it away and settled down into bed, and he must have moved his mouth from the edge of the sheet before morning, and we must both have moved and crumpled the sheet as we slept. I wrote *one day he will die, but I have kept in my book a line that touched him*. Yet the line that touched him was only briefly intact, for the duration of the drawing, and no longer.

And here is the greatest gap of all: this sheet is not the real one. I washed the real bed sheet the very morning after the line was drawn, and the line came out. A few years later I bought a new sheet, laid it over the bed, and when night came, I waited for A to fall asleep and drew the line again, from my notebook to his open mouth as he slept. I did this because I wanted to show the work in an exhibition. And when I did show the work, folded tightly and poised on a tall, narrow plinth in a way that seemed to me memorial, or funereal, I gave a talk describing how I drew the line and washed it away, wrote about it, bought a new sheet and drew it all over again, and how this time A knew I was waiting for him to fall asleep for the purpose of finishing *some work* for my show, and it raised a laugh. Perhaps these are all creases, and have all caused gaps in the line.

*

When did it become *some work*? When did it cease to be

and becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence; language, abandoning the sense, the meaning which was all it wanted to be, tries to become senseless.[14]

Schwenger finds an example of this kind of language in the writing of Gertrude Stein. Her semantically rich and ungrammatical text *Tender Buttons* (1914) makes words unfamiliar not in an attempt to capture things, but rather to show them uncapturable. Her writing evidences what Heidegger would call the strife between world and earth by manifesting 'a vital disorder...within the words one senses, always, the movement of the mind seeking an unknown *x*'.[15] By putting this into evidence – demonstrating through the disorder of representation that representation is going on – Stein's language refuses the recession of thing to object and acquires its own status as a thing in itself. I would suggest Henri Chopin's 1956 audiopoem *Rouge* covers similar ground through the incremental layering of spoken words, which come to abandon their sense and develop an aural effect arrestingly suggestive of a 'solid mass of existence'. The work brings to mind Roland Barthes' utopian rustle of language: 'a vast auditory fabric in which the semantic apparatus would be made unreal; the phonic, metric, vocal signifier would be deployed in all its sumptuosity'.[16]

As it tries to become senseless in an attempt to capture the thing pushed away by language, the biro line on the bed sheet has something in common with these literary experiments. It is a feature extracted from the material shape of written language: an attempt to metaphorically extend the reach of a given description by literally extending its form toward its object. The line shares its (biro) medium, its basic (linear) form, and initially its support (the page of a notebook) with the handwriting in which it originates. But it does not relate to the page as handwriting does.

Just like the bed sheet, the page of the notebook is a material thing that takes its place alongside everything else in the room 'just as a chair or a hat is a thing'.* But the page is also a site set apart from the room: a level ground upon which units of representation can be laid out, not in relation to the other things in the room, but in relation to one another. (The same is true of the deposits of ink on the paper, which exist as ma-

something I did on my own once in a room? When did I introduce the gap, if this is what happened? Perhaps these are the wrong questions after all, because they presume it was once otherwise, and perhaps it was always work.

I know it was already work by the time I washed the line away in the morning. Before I washed it, I stripped the sheet from the bed and pressed it, section by section, against the glass of our A4 flatbed scanner, made a series of scans, and spent some time on Photoshop matching up the sections into a long continuous composite. The line became something I always mentioned when I gave talks about my artwork. I would explain that the line, or the drawing of the line, was *work*, or that it was *doing work*, but that it was not necessarily *a* work or *a* work of art.

For a long time, during these lectures I would describe the biro line in terms of an article I had read about words murdering things. I would say that when I was trying to write my description of the things in the room, it was partly *because* I was trying to describe them that the things had become so hard to capture. This I would use as an example of what was meant by words murdering things. It was easy enough to insert my line into a repertoire of literary experiments that were supposed to mitigate against the murder of the thing by balancing somewhere

terial things in the room, even if this is easy to forget when they are read as units of representation on the level ground of the page.) The ordering and positioning of strokes in a grapheme and words in a paragraph are significant just as, in different ways, the ordering and positioning of strokes in a drawing are significant: in either case, a change in location contributes to a change or disruption in meaning. The space of the page has its own topological rules, which are distinct from the topological rules of the room, even if some mimetic connections exist.[17] Crucially, the notebook can be moved around the room without disrupting the internal relationships set up between the elements of drawing or writing upon its pages.

Some ambiguity creeps in, however, where the biro marks begin their transition from handwriting to line. As a line, the biro mark is difficult to site on the page according to topological rules appropriate to language because the words and graphemes of language are no longer available to order or disrupt. At the same time, a vestigial feature of these rules seems to be still at work: the line moves downwards and veers slightly to the right on the way, as if to continue the general trajectory of the paragraph it leaves behind. Yet, the rightward veering of the line is also beginning to anticipate the topology of the room, because A is lying asleep to the right of the page. At this point the biro line is not clearly governed by the rules of the page or of the room but seems to be sliding between the two. Meanwhile, as it slides from something like handwriting to something unlike handwriting, so it begins to transform the status of the page from a level ground that is non-situated in the space of the room to a thing that is governed, like the bed sheet, the chair or the hat, by the topology of the room.[18] At this point, moving the notebook around the room would disrupt the meaning of a mark on its page. Perhaps this is an example of Blanchot's hope fulfilled: a name that 'becomes a concrete ball, a solid mass of existence' in which, to borrow Barthes' terms, 'the semantic apparatus would be made unreal'.[19]

But Barthes' description continues with a caveat: in its utopic state, semantics would be backgrounded 'but also – and this is what is difficult – without meaning being brutally dismissed'.[20] There is good reason for the caveat. In the works of Stein and Chopin, for in-

between words and things, and then it was easy enough to argue that my drawing of the line was one of many efforts to reconcile the kind of loss I had felt: the gap between the room around me, and the words I was trying to use to capture it. Although I believed what I was saying, I believed it especially well when I made the argument well, and that was partly a matter of shaping my sentences to arrange analogies where I wanted them. I wanted the gap between words and things to be analogous to the gap between me and the room. I wanted the things and the room to tend to remain concealed, and I wanted the words and me to tend not to tolerate anything being concealed. I would explain that the biro line on the bed sheet was *work*, or it was *doing work*, or it was – I would pronounce it in inverted commas – *an exemplary work* because it revealed that there was something concealed.

But, did I know about these things when I drew the line on the bed sheet? I already knew, at that time, about many of the experiments that balanced between word and thing, and so perhaps while I drew the line I was thinking about them. Or, was the line already work before the pen had even met the bed sheet? Perhaps, when I found my description inadequate, the inadequacy was as comfortable as a trope, and when I extended my handwriting into a line, the line stretched from far beyond

stance, language certainly '*tries* to become senseless', but never wholly succeeds, because to succeed would be to abandon language altogether and, with it, the enterprise of 'attaining the thing I push away'.[21] Instead, these works establish an intimate rapport between the semantic apparatus of language and the visual or aural experience of its material form, continually returning one experience to the other.

Perhaps the biro line on the bed sheet equivocates between word and thing in another way. As I look at the work that the line appears to do, and the work I ascribed to it in the 2009 text, it seems to me that it is not a form of linguistic representation, but rather a representation of linguistic form. That is, the line replaced the written description not to *inherit* the semantic function of the description, but to *describe* that semantic function. In this sense, the line is representational after all, though its object is not my experience of the room but rather my inability to capture any such experience. This new conceptualization of the line's object forces a shift in perspective. The operation of representation does not trace the nib's movement, travelling along the length of the line to finally touch its object; instead the object is the operation of representation which, like a static thread, *is* the line in its entirety, all the way along its length.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

If it is a representation of linguistic form, then the line is its own object. This lends to the line a character of superfluity: a sense that if the representation and its object are in total identity with one another, then representation is unnecessary in the first place. Rather than bridging the gap between two separate entities, perhaps the gesture of the biro line is to refuse their separation in the first place: a prospect that is at odds with Heidegger's account. Roberto Pinheiro Machado offers a critique of his account, and in doing so he suggests a theoretical framework more appropriate to the emerging characteristics of the biro line.[22] He locates Heidegger's writing on the strife between earth and world within Western philosophy's 'attempt to overcome the dualistic conception of the world in which an ideal or metaphysical realm exists separately from everyday reality', and it is in this context that I have so far considered the biro line. But 'once philosophical

the handwriting, tracing a line through the arguments already forming in my imagination, and all the way back to wherever those arguments began. Or perhaps, there was none of this, and I was all alone with the line, and the gap came later. Or perhaps, I came with it all the way along its length, and am still with it now as I write, in which case if it is indeed work then it, and I, have always been work. In any case, I know I meant it. I know, also, that there was a feeling of communion when the line touched his mouth, though whether I meant *communion* in the way I would mean it in lectures later, I do not know. In any case, by the time it was morning I was not alone, and I scanned the sheet, and prepared its image for distribution.

enquiry starts from a separation', Pinheiro Machado continues, 'it can hardly move back to a unity'.[23] He argues that the discipline of aesthetics tasks the senses with mediating between the human being and the world, but in so doing it presupposes and instates their separation in the first place; a separation that 'must be bridged by a third, sensory element'.[24] Likewise, metaphysics 'instates a fissure in being through its claim of the existence of a realm located beyond being'.[25] While Heidegger accepted this negative ground, he 'failed to take the evidence of the negative ground of reality to its ultimate consequence', because he did not allow for a state of unity that exists prior to this separation.[26] Instead, his solution depends upon endowing language and the work of art with the function of bridging the separated world and earth.

Indeed, an emphasis on the priority of language makes Western philosophical thought specifically ill-equipped to admit that these two entities were never separated in the first place, because language itself 'is nothing other than the very expression of that separation'.[27] Pinheiro Machado's description of language might equally have been describing aesthetics or metaphysics:

> Language...can be conceived only as mediation. It can be conceived as nothing but a bridge that in trying to connect two entities that were never really separated ends up working as a hindrance to their communion.[28]

At this point, an alternative theoretical framework is put forward from the tradition of Eastern philosophy, of which 'Zen Buddhism and Taoism, for instance, consistently perceive a uniform ground existing prior to the separation of subject and object'.[29] The writing of Nishida Kitarō is instructive in this respect, being part of a tradition that considers the origin of being to be not the *separation* of self and world, but their *identity*. Where Heidegger takes the point of view of the self 'and then tries to work back to the world by avowing a "forgetting of the self" that will disclose truth as pure presence of being, Nishida considers a unified field of identity as the ground in which the self is built'.[30]

Although I have been careful to treat the biro line episode as a 'site of ongoing practice-led enquiry' as I described it at the start of my discussion, it is as a practice of art-making that I here evaluate the episode against both Heidegger's and Nishida's concepts of art. Where for Heidegger the exemplary work of art reveals truth by accomplishing the strife between world and earth, for Nishida the art object is 'nothing other than an invitation to pure experience': it too functions to reveal truth, but the truth it reveals is 'the union of total being as undifferentiated from nonbeing'.[31] There is no separation to bridge. Instead, experience of the unified ground is revealed through direct or 'pure' experience of one's own state of consciousness, when 'there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified'.[32] It is this conception of a unified ground prior to separation that accommodates the character of superfluity that emerged in the continuousness of the biro line. If subject and object, or world and earth, originate in a state of identity rather than separation, a line drawn from one to the other does not reconnect them but simply participates in their continuous material being.

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In this new light, I will conclude by reflecting on the difficulty I have had in resolving the biro line on the bed sheet, or the act of drawing it, as an artwork of some kind. There is a striking homology between the line's refusal of separation, and the resistance of the drawing act and the episode as a whole to any kind of stable resolution. Here, I would contend that in the latter case too, the difficulty arises from the Western philosophical resistance to a pre-dualistic conception of unity.

By this account, the original act of drawing the line was a private experience undifferentiated from the continuity of everyday life. My attempts to *preserve* the episode as artwork have so far involved differentiating it from this continuity only to present it back to the same continuity by means of an artwork tasked with bridging a separation that was never there in the first place. What I described earlier as acts of belligerence, and what emerged in the same discussion as expressions of memorial or loss, might also be seen as attempts to preserve the episode as artwork. In these

endeavours, then, differentiation and preservation emerge as much the same thing, each premised upon metaphysical separation. 'It is not only the creation of the work that is poetic', argues Heidegger: 'equally poetic, though in its own way, is the preservation of the work. For a work only actually is as a work when we transport ourselves out of the habitual and into what is opened up by the work'.[33] A glance in this direction appears at the very close of Pinheiro Machado's essay, when he notes a need to further investigate those of Nishida's concepts 'developed from pure experience, such as "action-intuition" and "place"'.[34] 'Only after such concepts are observed in relation to artistic events rooted in immediate experience', he goes on,

> will we be able to bring our results to a consideration of Western art forms and works of art, regarding them from a broader perspective that encompasses everything everything from architecture and literature to jazz and conceptual art.[35]

One might extend this list beyond artistic events rooted in immediate experience to include also originally 'non-artistic' events like the drawing of the biro line, which was rooted in and seems to remain continuous with immediate experience, yet which might finally be evaluated against concepts of art even as it remains – and perhaps, must remain – unresolved as an artwork.

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1   In the present document, quotations from this text will be indicated with an asterisk.

2   These remarks take into account my assessment of the biro line as an 'exemplary work of art' in the Heideggarian sense. According to this account, the biro line emerges as an exemplary work of art when encountered in its originary context and by its originary audience (myself alone) but – to put its resistance to resolution in Heideggarian terms – as a work it lacks any satisfactory means of 'preservation'. See Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 41–2, 47. Hence, I assess the episode (event, line, and text) in its unresolved state, and outside its originary conditions, as a site of enquiry rather than a work.

3   Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 26.

4   Ibidem.

5   Ibidem.

6   Michael Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This: Drawings in Fieldwork Notebooks, Namely My Own* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 19, 124.

7   Idem, 100, 15.

8   Idem, 16.

9   Peter Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' *Critical Inquiry* 28:1 (2001): 99.

10 Idem, 100.

11 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 46.

12 Indeed, it is in this sense that Heidegger describes the work of art as a species of poesy: 'Truth', he writes, 'as the clearing and concealing of that which is, happens through being poeticized' (idem, 45); and, later on: 'Poetry is the saying of the unconcealment of beings...the saying of the arena of their strife' (idem, 46).

13 Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103.

14 Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death,' in *'The Gaze of Orpheus' and Other Literary Essays*, ed. P. Adams Sitney (New York: Barrytown, 1981), 46, cited in Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103.

15 Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 106.

16 Roland Barthes, 'The Rustle of Language,' in *The Rustle of Language* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 77.

17 For example, Taussig points out a mimetic relationship between object, image, and body of the artist during the act of drawing: 'You draw an image that has a mimetic relationship with what it is an image of (bear in mind this does not mean that there is necessarily a one-to-one resemblance, as if such a thing were possible)... But coincidentally there is set up a mimetic relation between you, especially that part of you called your body, with you, especially that part of you called your body, withwhatever it is that is being rendered into an image, and also with the resulting image itself,' and see Taussig, *I Swear I Saw This*, 23.

18 It is not difficult to discern in this a minimalist/literalist attitude, following Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood,' in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

19 Blanchot 'Literature and the Right to Death,' 46, cited in Schwenger, 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103;

20 Barthes, 'The Rustle of Language,' 77.

21 Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death,' 46, cited in Schwenger 'Words and the Murder of the Thing,' 103, emphasis mine.

22 Roberto Pinheiro Machado, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art: A Comparative Approach to Existential Phenomenology and the Ontological Foundation of Aesthetics,' *Philosophy East and West*, 58:2 (2008): 244–66.

23 Idem, 244, 259.

24 Idem, 245.

25 Ibidem.

26 Idem, 244. In fact, Heidegger comes very close to allowing for this negative ground at numerous points in his writing, yet at each point, Pinheiro Machado argues, he 'insists on overlooking' the ' deeper truth' (idem, 247). Pinheiro Machado addresses these points throughout his argument.

27 Idem, 256.

28 Ibidem.

29 Idem, 258.

30 Idem, 259.

31 Idem, 261–2, 262.

32 Idem, 260.

33 Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art,' 47.

34 Pinheiro Machado, 'Nothingness and the Work of Art,' 263.

35 Ibidem.

Tamarin Norwood is an artist and writer. She holds degrees in Linguistics and Fine Art from the University of Oxford and Central Saint Martins respectively, and an MFA in Art Writing from Goldsmiths. She is now completing a practice-led doctorate in Fine Art as a Clarendon Scholar at the Ruskin School of Fine Art, University of Oxford. In 2016 she completed artist residencies at the Hub at Wellcome Collection, and at Spike Island, Bristol.

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