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On the position of the spectator in contemporary visual culture

Ann Hamilton
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Jérôme Bel
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Katya Sander
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Mark Leckey
Cinema in the Round,
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Sharon Hayes
I March In The Parade Of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free,
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Judith Hopf
What Do You Look Like? A Crypto Demonic Mystery,
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Antoni Muntadas
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Tellervo Kalleinen & Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen
The Complaints Choirs Project, 2005-2010

Nicoline van Harskamp
Speech as a Political Act,
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Curro González
El enjambre II, 2005

Rainer Ganahl
Seminars/Lectures,
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Danica Dakić
Isola Bella, 2007-2008

Sharon Lockhart
Teatro Amazonas, 1999

Marta Minujín
Minucodes, 1968-2010

Grazia Toderi
Apollo, 2003

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa
A Short Video About Tate Modern, 2003-2005
(the two images)

**Abramović/Ulay**
Imponderabilia, 1977
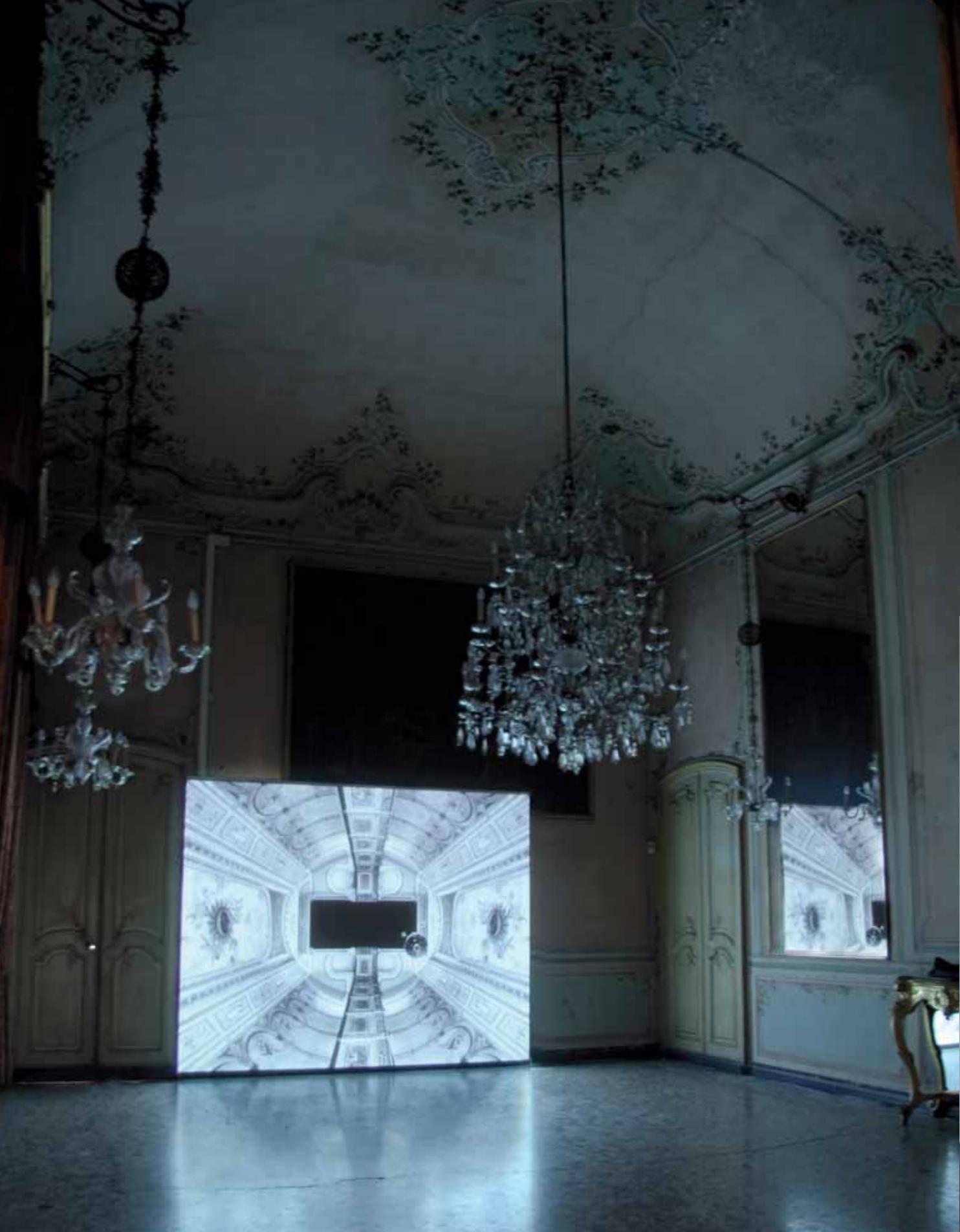
on Saturday 11 October 2003
I went to Tate Modern

11 to 21

On the position of the spectator in contemporary visual culture

THE MASS PUBLIC AND THE MASS SUBJECT

Michael Warner

As the subjects of publicity – its hearers, speakers, viewers, and doers – we have a different relation to ourselves, a different affect, from that which we have in other contexts. No matter what particularities of culture, race, gender, or class we bring to bear on public discourse, the moment of apprehending something as public is one in which we imagine, if imperfectly, indifference to those particularities, to ourselves. We adopt the attitude of the public subject, marking to ourselves its nonidentity with ourselves. There are any number of ways to describe this moment of public subjectivity: as a universalizing transcendence, as ideological repression, as utopian wish, as schizocapitalist vertigo, or simply as a routine difference of register. No matter what its character for the individual subjects who come to public discourse, however, the rhetorical contexts of publicity in the modern Western nations must always mediate a self-relation different from that of personal life. This becomes a point of more than usual importance, I will suggest, in a period such as our own when so much political conflict revolves around identity and status categories.

Western political thought has not ignored the tendency of publicity to alter or refract the individual's character and status. It has been obsessed with that tendency. But it has frequently thought of publicity as distorting, corrupting, or, to use the more current version, alienating individuals. The republican notion of virtue, for example, was designed exactly to avoid any rupture of self-difference between ordinary life and publicity. The republican was to be the same as citizen and as man. He was to maintain continuity of value, judgment, and reputation from a domestic economy to affairs of a public nature. And lesser subjects – non-citizens such as women, children, and the poor – were equally to maintain continuity across

both realms, as nonactors. From republicanism to populism, from Rousseau to Reagan, self-unity has been held to be a public value, and publicity has not been thought of as requiring individuals to have discontinuous perceptions of themselves. (Hegel, it is true, considered the state a higher-order subjectivity unattainable in civil society. But because he considered the difference both normative and unbridgeable within the frame of the individual, a historical and political analysis of discontinuous self-relations did not follow.)

One reason why virtue was spoken about with such ardor in the 17th and 18th centuries was that the discursive conventions of the public sphere had already made virtuous self-unity archaic. In the bourgeois public sphere, talk of a citizen's virtue was already partly wishful. Once a public discourse had become specialized in the Western model, the subjective attitude adopted in public discourse became an inescapable but always unrecognized political force, governing what is publicly sayable – inescapable because only when images or texts can be understood as meaningful to a public rather than simply to oneself, or to specific others, can they be called public; unrecognized because this strategy of impersonal reference, in which one might say, "The text addresses me" *and* "It addresses no one in particular," is a ground condition of intelligibility for public

"The Egocrat coincides with himself, as society is supposed to coincide with itself. An impossible swallowing up of the body in the head begins to take place, as does an impossible swallowing up of the head in the body. The attraction of the whole is no longer dissociated from the attraction of the parts." Claude Lefort[1]

"During these assassination fantasies Tallis became increasingly obsessed with the pudenda of the Presidential contender mediated to him by a thousand television screens. The motion picture studies of Ronald Reagan created a scenario of the conceptual orgasm, a unique ontology of violence and disaster."
J.G. Ballard[2]

language. The "public" in this sense has no empirical existence and cannot be objectified. When we understand images and texts as public, we do not gesture to a statistically measurable series of others. We make a necessarily imaginary reference to the public *as opposed to* other individuals. Public opinion, for example, is understood as belonging to a public rather than to scattered individuals. (Opinion polls in this sense are a performative genre. They do not measure something that already exists as public opinion, but when they are reported as such, they *are* public opinion.) So also it is only meaningful to speak of public discourse where it is understood as the discourse of a public rather than as an expansive dialogue among separate persons.

The public sphere therefore presents problems of rhetorical analysis. Because the moment of special imaginary reference is always necessary, the publicity of the public sphere never reduces to information, discussion, will formation, or any of the other scenarios by which the public sphere represents itself. The mediating rhetorical dimension of a public context must be built into each individual's relation to it as a meaningful reference point against which something could be grasped as information, discussion, will

formation. To ask about the relation between democracy and the rhetorical forms of publicity, we would have to consider how the public dimension of discourse can come about differently in different contexts of mediation, from official to mass-cultural or subcultural. There is not simply "a" public discourse and a "we" who apprehend it. Strategies of public reference have different meanings for the individuals who suddenly find themselves incorporating the public subject, and the rhetorics that mediate publicity have undergone some important changes.

Utopias of Self-Abstraction

In the 18th century, as I have argued elsewhere, the imaginary reference point of the public was constructed through an understanding of print.[3] At least in the British American colonies, a style of thinking about print appeared in the culture of republicanism according to which it was possible to consume printed goods with an awareness that the same printed goods were being consumed by an indefinite number of others. This awareness came to be built into the meaning of the printed object, to the point that we now consider it simply definitional to speak of printing as "publication." In print, understood this way, one surrendered one's utterance to an audience that was by definition indefinite. Earlier writers might have responded with some anxiety to such mediation or might simply have thought of the speaker-audience relation in different terms. In the 18th century, the consciousness of an abstract audience became a badge of distinction, a way of claiming a public disposition.

The transformation, I might emphasize, was a cultural rather than a technological one; it came about not just with more use of print but also with the extension of the language of republicanism to print contexts as a

structuring metalanguage. It was in the culture of republicanism, with its categories of disinterested virtue and supervision, that a rhetoric of print consumption became authoritative, a way of understanding the publicness of publication. Here, for example, is how the *Spectator* in 1712 described the advantage of being realized in the medium of print:

"It is much more difficult to converse with the World in a real than a personated Character. That might pass for Humour, in the *Spectator,* which would took like Arrogance in a Writer who sets his Name to his Work. The Fictitious Person might contemn those who disapproved him, and extoll his own Performances, without giving Offence. He might assume a Mock-Authority, without being looked upon as vain and conceited. The Praises or Censures of himself fall only upon the Creature of his Imagination, and if any one finds fault with him, the Author may reply with the Philosopher of old, *Thou dost but beat the Case of* Anaxarchus."[4]

The Spectator's attitude of conversing with the world is public and disinterested. It elaborates republican assumptions about the citizen's exercise of virtue. But it could not come about without a value placed on the anonymity here associated with print. The Spectator's point about himself is that he is different from the person of Richard Steele. Just as the Spectator here secures a certain liberty in not calling himself Richard Steele, it would take a certain liberty for us to call the author of this passage Richard Steele – all the more so since the pronoun reference begins to slip around the third sentence ("those who disapproved *him*"). The ambiguous relation between Spectator and writer, Steele says, liberates him. The Spectator is a prosthetic person for Steele, to borrow a term from Lauren Berlant – prosthetic in the sense that it does not reduce to or express the given body.[5] By making him no longer self-

identical, it allows him the negativity of debate – not a pure negativity, not simply reason or criticism, but an identification with a disembodied public subject that he can imagine as parallel to his private person.

In a sense, however, that public subject does have a body, because the public, prosthetic body takes abuse for the private person. The last line of the passage refers to the fact that Anaxarchus was pummeled to death with iron pestles after offending a despotic ruler. In the ventriloquistic act of taking up his speech, therefore, Steele both imagines an intimate violation of his person and provides himself with a kind of prophylaxis against violation (to borrow another term from Berlant). Anaxarchus was not so lucky. Despite what Steele says, the privilege he obtains over his body in this way does not in fact reduce to the simple body/soul distinction that Anaxarchus's speech invokes. It allows him to think of his public discourse as a routine form of self-abstraction quite unlike the ascetic self-integration of Anaxarchus. When Steele impersonates the philosopher and has the Spectator (or someone) say, "Thou dost but beat the Case of Anaxarchus," he appropriates an intimate subjective benefit of publicity's self-abstraction.

Through the conventions that allowed such writing to perform the disincorporation of its authors and its readers, public discourse turned persons into a public. At points in *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* Jürgen Habermas makes a similar point. One of the great virtues of that book is the care it takes to describe the cultural-technical context in which the public of the bourgeois public sphere was constituted: "In the *Tatler,* the *Spectator,* and the *Guardian* the public held up a mirror to itself ... The public that read and debated this sort of thing read and debated about itself."[6] It is worth remembering also that "persons" read and debated this sort of thing, but in reading and debating it as a public, they

adopted a very special rhetoric about their own personhood. Where earlier writers had typically seen the context of print as a means of personal extension – they understood themselves in print essentially to be speaking in their own persons – people began to see it as an authoritative mediation. That is clearly the case with the Steele passage, and pseudonymous serial essays like the *Spectator* did a great deal toward normalizing a public print discourse.

In the bourgeois public sphere, which was brought into being by publication in this sense, a principle of negativity was axiomatic: the validity of what you say in public bears a negative relation to your person. What you say will carry force not because of who you are but despite who you are. Implicit in this principle is a utopian universality that would allow people to transcend the given realities of their bodies and their status. But the rhetorical strategy of personal abstraction is both the utopian moment of the public sphere and a major source of domination, for the ability to abstract oneself in public discussion has always been an unequally available resource. Individuals have to have specific rhetorics of disincorporation; they are not simply rendered bodiless by exercising reason. And it is only possible to operate a discourse based on the claim to self-abstracting disinterestedness in a culture where such unmarked self-abstraction is a differential resource. The subject who could master this rhetoric in the bourgeois public sphere was implicitly, even explicitly, white, male, literate, and propertied. These traits could go unmarked, even grammatically, while other features of bodies could only be acknowledged in discourse as the humiliating positivity of the particular.

The bourgeois public sphere claimed to have no relation to body image at all. Public issues were depersonalized so that, in theory, any person would have the ability to offer an opinion about them and submit that opinion to the impersonal test of public debate without personal hazard. Yet the bourgeois public sphere continued to rely on features of certain bodies. Access to the public came in the whiteness and maleness that were then denied as forms of positivity, since the white male "qua" public person was only abstract rather than white and male. The contradiction is that even while particular bodies and dispositions enabled the liberating abstraction of public discourse, those bodies also summarized the constraints of positivity, the mere case of Anaxarchus, from which self-abstraction can be liberating.

It is very far from being clear that these asymmetries of embodiment were merely contingent encumbrances to the public sphere, residual forms of illiberal "discrimination." The difference between self-abstraction and a body's positivity is more than a difference in what has officially been made available to men and to women, for example. It is a difference in the cultural/symbolic definitions of masculinity and femininity.[7] Self-abstraction from male bodies confirms masculinity. Self-abstraction from female bodies denies femininity. The bourgeois public sphere is a frame of reference in which it is supposed that all particularities have the same status as mere particularity. But the ability to establish that frame of reference is a feature of some particularities. Neither in gender nor in race nor in class nor in sexualities is it possible to treat different particulars as having merely paratactic, or serial, difference. Differences in such realms already come coded as the difference between the unmarked and the marked, the universalizable and the particular. Their internal logic is such that the two sides of any of these differences cannot be treated as symmetrical – as they are, for example, in the rhetoric of liberal toleration or "debate" – without simply resecuring an asymmetrical privilege. The bourgeois public

sphere has been structured from the outset by a logic of abstraction that provides a privilege for unmarked identities: the male, the white, the middle class, the normal.

That is what Pier Paolo Pasolini meant when he wrote, just before his murder, that "tolerance is always and purely nominal":

"In fact they tell the 'tolerated' person to do what he wishes, that he has every right to follow his own nature, that the fact that he belongs to a minority does not in the least mean inferiority, etc. But his 'difference'– or better, his 'crime of being different' – remains the same both with regard to those who have decided to tolerate him and those who have decided to condemn him. No majority will ever be able to banish from its consciousness the feeling of the 'difference' of minorities. I shall always be eternally, inevitably conscious of this."[8]

Doubtless it is better to be tolerated than to be killed, as Pasolini was. But it would be better still to make reference to one's marked particularities without being specified thereby as less than public. As the bourgeois public sphere paraded the spectacle of its disincorporation, it brought into being this minoritizing logic of domination. Publicness is always able to encode itself through the themes of universality, openness, meritocracy, and access, all of which derhetoricize its self-understanding, guaranteeing at every step that difference will be enunciated as mere positivity, an ineluctable limit imposed by the particularities of the body, a positivity that cannot translate or neutralize itself prosthetically without ceasing to exist. This minoritizing logic, intrinsic to the deployment of negativity in the bourgeois public sphere, presents the subjects of bodily difference with the paradox of a utopian promise that cannot be cashed in for them. The very mechanism designed to end domination is a form of domination.

The appeal of mass subjectivity, I will suggest, arises largely from the contradiction in this dialectic of embodiment and negativity in the public sphere. Public discourse from the beginning offered a utopian self-abstraction, but in ways that left a residue of unrecuperated particularity, both for its privileged subjects and for those it minoritized. Its privileged subjects, abstracted from the very body features that gave them the privilege of that abstraction, found themselves in a relation of bad faith with their own positivity. To acknowledge their positivity would be to surrender their privilege, as, for example, to acknowledge the objectivity of the male body would be to feminize it. Meanwhile, minoritized subjects had few strategies open to them, but one was to carry their unrecuperated positivity into consumption. Even from the early 18th century, before the triumph of a liberal metalanguage for consumption, commodities were being used, especially by women, as a kind of access to publicness that would nevertheless link up with the specificity of difference.[9]

Consumption offered a counterutopia precisely in a balance between a collectivity of mass desires and an unminoritized rhetoric of difference in the field of choices among infinite goods. A great deal of noise in modern society comes from the inability to translate these utopian promises into a public sphere where collectivity has no link to the body and its desires, where difference is described not as the paratactic seriality of illimitable choice but as the given constraints of preconscious nature. Where consumer capitalism makes available an endlessly differentiable subject, the subject of the public sphere proper cannot be differentiated. It can represent difference as other, but as an available form of subjectivity it remains unmarked. The constitutional public sphere, therefore, cannot fully recuperate its residues. It can only display them. In this important sense, the "We" in "We the People" is the mass equivalent of the Spectator's prosthetic generality, a flexible instrument of interpellation but one that exiles its own positivity.

From the 18th century we in the modern West have inherited an understanding of printing as publication, but we now understand a vast range of everyday life as having the reference of publicity. The medium of print is now only a small part of our relation to what we understand as the public, and the fictitious abstraction of the Spectator would seem conspicuously out of place in the modern discourse of public icons. So although the bourgeois public sphere continues to secure a minoritizing liberal logic of self-abstraction, its rhetoric is increasingly complicated by other forms of publicity. At present, the mass-cultural public sphere continually offers its subject an array of body images. In earlier varieties of the public sphere, it was important that images of the body not figure centrally in public discourse. The anonymity of the discourse was a way of certifying the citizen's disinterested concern for the public good. But now public body images are everywhere on display, in virtually all media contexts. Where printed public discourse formerly relied on a rhetoric of abstract disembodiment, visual media, including print, now display bodies for a range of purposes: admiration, identification, appropriation, scandal, and so on. To be public in the West means to have an iconicity, and this is true equally of Muammar Qaddafi and of Karen Carpenter.

The visibility of public figures for the subject of mass culture occurs in a context in which publicity is generally mediated by the discourse of consumption. It is difficult to realize how much we observe public images with the eye of the consumer. Nearly all of our pleasures come to us coded in some degree by the publicity of mass media. We have brand names all over us. Even the most refined or the most perverse among us could point to his or her desires or identifications and see that in most cases they were public desires, even mass-public desires, from the moment that they were his or her

desires. This is true not only in the case of salable commodities – our refrigerators, sneakers, lunch – but also in other areas where we make symbolic identifications in a field of choice: the way we bear our bodies, the sports we follow, or our erotic objects. In such areas, our desires have become recognizable through their display in the media, and in the moment of wanting them, we imagine a collective consumer witnessing our wants and choices.

The public discourse of the mass media has increasingly come to rely on the intimacy of this collective witnessing in its rhetoric of publicity, iconic and consumerist alike. It is a significant part of the ground of public discourse, the subjective apprehension of what is public. In everyday life, for one thing, we have access to the realm of political systems in the same way we have access to the circulation of commodities. Not only are we confronted by slogans that continually make this connection for us ("America wears Hanes," "The heartbeat of America"); more important, the contexts of commodities and politics share the same media and, at least in part, the same metalanguage for constructing our notion of what a public or a people is. When the citizen (or noncitizen – for contemporary publicity, the difference hardly matters) goes down to the 7-Eleven to buy a Budweiser and a *Barbie Magazine* and scans from the news headlines to the tabloid stories about the Rob Lowe sex scandal, several kinds of publicity are involved at once. Nevertheless, it is possible to speak of all these sites of publicity as parts of a public sphere, insofar as each is capable of illuminating the others in a common discourse of the subject's relation to the nation and its markets.

In each of these mediating contexts of publicity, we become the mass-public subject but in a new way unanticipated within the classical bourgeois public sphere. Moreover, if mass-public subjectivity has a kind of singularity, an undifferentiated extension to

indefinite numbers of individuals, those individuals who make up the "we" of the mass-public subject might have very different relations to it. It is at the very moment of recognizing ourselves as the mass subject, for example, that we also recognize ourselves as minority subjects. As participants in the mass subject, we are the "we" that can describe our particular affiliations of class, gender, sexual orientation, race, or subculture only as "they." This self-alienation is common to all of the contexts of publicity, but it can be variously interpreted within each. The political meaning of the public subject's self-alienation is one of the most important sites of struggle in contemporary culture.

The Mirror of Popularity

In an essay called *The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism*, Claude Lefort speculates that public figures have recently begun to play a new role. He imagines essentially a three-stage history of the body of publicity. Drawing on the work of Ernst Kantorowicz, he sketches first a representative public sphere in which the person of the prince stands as the head of the corporate body, summing up in his person the principles of legitimacy, though still drawing that legitimacy from a higher power. Classical bourgeois democracy, by contrast, abstracted the public, corporate body in a way that could be literalized in the decapitation of a ruler. "The democratic revolution, for so long subterranean, burst out when the body of the king was destroyed, when the body politic was decapitated and when, at the same time, the corporeality of the social was dissolved," Lefort writes. "There then occurred what I would call a 'disincorporation' of individuals."[10]

According to Lefort, the new trend, however, is again toward the display of the public official's person. The state now relies on its double in "the image of the people, which ... remains indeterminate, but which nevertheless is susceptible of being determined, of being actualized on the level of phantasy as an image of the People-as-One." Public figures increasingly take on the function of concretizing that phantasmic body image, or, in other words, of actualizing the otherwise indeterminate image of the people. They embody what Lefort calls the Egocrat, whose self-identical representativeness is perverse and unstable in a way that contrasts with the representative person of the feudal public sphere: "The prince condensed in his person the principle of power ... but he was supposed to obey a superior power ... That does not seem to be the position of the Egocrat or of his substitutes, the bureaucratic leaders. The Egocrat coincides with himself, as society is supposed to coincide with itself. An impossible swallowing up of the body in the head begins to take place, as does an impossible swallowing up of the head in the body."[11] Lefort sees the sources of this development in democracy, but he associates the trend with totalitarianism, presumably in the iconographies of Stalin and Mao. But then, Lefort wrote this essay in 1979; since that time, it has become increasingly clear that such phantasmic public embodiments have come to be the norm in Western democratic bureaucracies.

Habermas has an interestingly similar narrative. He, too, describes a first stage of a representative public sphere in which public persons derived their power in part from being on display. The idealizing language of nobility did not abstract away from the body: "Characteristically, in none of [the aristocracy's] virtues did the physical aspect entirely lose its significance, for virtue must be embodied, it had to be capable of public representation."[12] For Habermas, as for Lefort, this ceased to be the case with the bourgeois public sphere, in which the public was generalized away from physical,

theatrical representation. It was relocated instead to the mostly written contexts of rational debate. And Habermas, again like Lefort, speaks of a more recent return to the display of public representatives, a return that he calls "refeudalizing": "The public sphere becomes the court before [which] public prestige can be displayed – rather than in which public critical debate is carried on."[13]

Why should modern regimes so require a return to the image of the leader in the peculiar form that Lefort calls the Egocrat? We can see both how powerful and how complicated this appeal in mass publicity can be by taking the example of Ronald Reagan's popularity. Reagan is probably the best example because, more than any other, his figure blurs the boundary between the iconicities of the political public and the commodity public. George Bush, Michael Dukakis, and the others were less adept at translating their persons from the interior of the political system to the surface of the brand-name commodity. The Reagan-style conjunction of these two kinds of appeal is the ideal-typical moment of national publicity against which they are measured. So, regardless of whatever skills they have within the political system, Bush and others like him have not been able to bring to their superbureaucratic persons the full extended reference of publicity. Reagan, by contrast, was the champion spokesmodel for America, just as he had earlier been a spokesmodel for Westinghouse and for Hollywood. It's easy to understand why the left clings to its amnesia about the pleasures of publicity when confronted with a problem like the popularity of a Ronald Reagan. But we do not have a clear understanding of the nature of the public with which Reagan was popular, nor do we have a clear understanding of the attraction of such a public figure.

A 1989 report in the *Nation* has it that Reagan was not a popular president at all. Gallup opinion polls, over the duration of his two terms, rated him far less favorably than Franklin D. Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, or Dwight D. Eisenhower. He was not appreciably more popular than Gerald Ford or Jimmy Carter. For the left-liberal readership of the *Nation,* this surprising statistic spells relief. It encourages us to believe that the public might not be so blind, after all. Indeed, in the story that presents the statistics, Thomas Ferguson claims exactly this sort of populist vindication. For him, the point of the story is simply that journalists who genuflect before Reagan's popularity are mistaken and irresponsible. The people, he implies, know better, and politics would be more reasonable if the media better represented the public. Not without sentimentality, the *Nation* regards the poll as the public's authentic expression and the media picture as its distortion.[14]

But even if the figures represent an authentic public, it's far from clear how to take reassurance from such a poll. What could it mean to say that Reagan's popularity was simply illusory? For Congress discovered that it was not. And so did the media, since editors quickly learned that the journalistic sport of catching Reagan in his errors could make their audiences bristle with hostility. Reagan in one sense may have had no real popularity, as polls record it. But in another sense, he had a substantial and positive popularity, which he and others could deploy both within the political system and within the wider sphere of publicity. So if we characterize the poll as the authentic opinion of the public, while viewing the media reports of Reagan's popularity as a distortion, then both the genesis and the force of that distortion become inexplicable. It would be clearly inadequate to say, in what amounts to a revival of old talk about the conspiracy of the bosses, that the media were simply "managed" or "manipulated," despite the Republicans' impressive forensics of spin control.[15]

The *Nation,* then, gives a much too easy answer to the question of Reagan's attraction

when it claims that there simply never was any. If that answer seems mistaken, the poll shows that it would be equally mistaken to see the public as successfully recruited into an uncritical identification with Reagan and an uncritical acclamation of Reaganism. It might otherwise have been comforting to believe, by means of such explanations, that Reagan really was popular, that the people were suckered. Then, at least, we could tell ourselves that we knew something about "the people." In fact, we have no way of talking about the public without theorizing the contexts and strategies in which the public could be represented. If we believe in the continued existence of a rational-critical public, as the *Nation* does, then it is difficult to account for the counterdemocratic tendencies of the public sphere as anything other than the cowardice or bad faith of some journalists. On the other hand, if we believe that the public sphere of the mass media has replaced a rational and critical public with one that is consumerist and acclamatory, then we might expect it to show more consumer satisfaction, more acclaim.

"Reagan" as an image owes its peculiar character in large part to the appeal of the other media construction that is jointly offered with it: "the public." In publicity, we are given a stake in the imaginary of a mass public in a way that dictates a certain appeal not so much for Ronald Reagan in particular as for the kind of public figure of which he is exemplary. Different figures may articulate that appeal differently, and with important consequences, but there is a logic of appeal to which Reagan and Jesse Jackson equally submit. Publicity puts us in a relation to these figures that is also a relation to an unrealizable public subject, whose omnipotence and subjectivity can then be figured both on and against the images of such men. A public, after all, cannot have a discrete, positive existence; something becomes a public only through its availability for subjective

identification. "Reagan" bears in its being the marks of its mediation to a public, and "the public" equally bears in its being the marks of its mediation for identification. Indeed, the most telling thing of all about the article in the *Nation* is Ferguson's remark that the myth of Reagan's popularity is itself "ever-popular." The problem is not Reagan's popularity but the popularity of his popularity. "Reagan," we might even say, is a relay for a kind of metapopularity. The major task of Western leaders has become producing popularity, which is not the same as being popular.

What makes figures of publicity attractive to people? I do not mean this to be a condescending question. This question does not ask simply how people are seduced or manipulated. It asks what kinds of identifications are required or allowed in the discourse of publicity. The rhetorical conditions under which the popular can be performed are of consequence not only for policy outcomes but, more important, for who we are.

Self-Abstraction and the Mass Subject

Part of the bad faith of the *res publica* of letters was that it required a denial of the bodies that gave access to it. The public sphere is still enough oriented to its liberal logic that its citizens long to abstract themselves into a privileged public disembodiment. And when that fails, they can turn to another kind of longing, which, as Berlant shows, is not so much to cancel out their bodies as to trade them in for a better model. The mass public sphere tries to minimize the difference between the two, surrounding the citizen with trademarks through which she can trade marks, offering both positivity and self-abstraction. This has meant, furthermore, that the mass public sphere has had to develop genres of collective identification that will articulate both sides of this dialectic.

Insofar as the two sides are contradictory, however, mass identification tends to be characterized by what I earlier called noise, which typically appears as an erotic-aggressive disturbance. Here it might be worth thinking about a genre in which the display of bodies is also a kind of disembodiment: the discourse of disasters. At least since the great Chicago fire, mass disaster has had a special relationship to the mass media. Mass injury can always command a headline; it gets classed as immediate-reward news. But whatever kind of reward makes disaster rewarding, it evidently has to do with injury to a mass body – an already abstracted body assembled by the simultaneity of the disaster somewhere other than here. When massive numbers of separate injuries occur, they fail to command the same fascination. This discrepancy in how seriously we take different organizations of injury is a source of never-ending frustration for airline executives. They never tire of pointing out that although the fatality rate for automobiles is astronomically higher than for airplanes, there is no public panic of supervision about automobiles. In the airline executives' interested exasperation, that seems merely to prove the irrationality of journalists and congressmen. But I think this fondness of the mass media for a very special kind of injury makes rigorous sense. Disaster is popular because it is a way of making mass subjectivity available, and it tells us something about the desirability of that mass subject.

John Waters tells us in *Shock Value* that one of his hobbies in youth was collecting disaster coverage. His all-time favorite photograph, he claims, is a famous shot of the stadium collapsing at the Indianapolis 500, a photograph he proudly reproduces. But despite his pride in the aura of perversion that surrounds this disclosure, he is at some pains to point out that his pleasure is a normal feature of the discourse. "It makes the newspapers worth the quarter,"

he writes, and "perks up the local news shows." What could be the dynamic of this link between injury and the pleasures of mass publicity? Waters stages the intimacy of the link in the following story about his childhood, in what I think of as a brilliant corruption of Freud's *fort/da* game:

"Even as a toddler, violence intrigued me While other kids were out playing cowboys and Indians, I was lost in fantasies of crunching metal and people screaming for help. I would sweet-talk unsuspecting relatives into buying me toy cars – any kind, as long as they were new and shiny. ... I would take two cars and pretend they were driving on a secluded country road until one would swerve and crash into the other. I would become quite excited and start smashing the car with a hammer, all the while shouting, 'Oh, my God, there's been a terrible accident!'"[16]

Exactly what kind of pleasure is this? It isn't just the infantile recuperation of power that the *fort/da* game usually represents. The boy Waters, in other words, is not just playing out identification and revenge in the rhythm of treasuring and destroying the cars.

Nor is Waters simply indulging the infantile transitivism of which Jacques Lacan writes: "The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries".[17] In fact, Waters's pleasure in the scene seems to have little to do with the cars at all. Rather, it comes about largely through his identification with publicity. Not only does Waters have access to auto disaster in the first place through the public discourse of news; he dramatizes that discourse as part of the event. Whose voice does he take up in exclaiming, "Oh, my God, there's been a terrible accident!"? And just as important, to whom is he speaking? He turns himself into a relay of spectators, none of whom is injured so much as horrified by the witnessing of injury. His ventriloquized announcer and his invisible audience allow him

to internalize an absent witness. He has been careful to imagine the cars as being on "a secluded country road" so that his imaginary audience can be anywhere else. It is, in effect, the mass subject of news.

In this sense, the story shows us how deeply publicity has come to inform our subjectivity. But it also reveals, through Waters's camp humor, that the mass subject's absent witnessing is a barely concealed transitivism. The disaster audience finds its body with a revenge. Its surface is all sympathy: there's been a terrible accident. The sympathetic quality of its identification, however, is only half the story since, as Waters knows, inflicting and witnessing mass injury are two sides of the same dynamic in disaster discourse. Being of necessity anywhere else, the mass subject cannot have a body except the body it witnesses. But in order to become a mass subject, it has left that body behind, abstracted away from it, canceled it as mere positivity. It returns in the spectacle of big-time injury. The transitive pleasure of witnessing/injuring makes available our translation into the disembodied publicity of the mass subject. By injuring a mass body – preferably a really massive body, somewhere – we constitute ourselves as a noncorporeal mass witness. (I do not, however, mean to minimize Waters's delirious perverseness in spelling out this link between violence and spectatorship in mass subjectivity. The perverse acknowledgment of his pleasure, in fact, helps him to violate in return the minoritizing disembodiment of the mass subject. It therefore allows Waters a counterpublic embodied knowledge in the mode of camp.) The same logic informs an astonishing number of mass publicity's genres, from the prophylaxes of horror, assassination, and terrorism, to the organized prosthesis of sports. (But, as Waters writes, "Violence in sports always seemed so pointless, because everyone was prepared, so what fun could it

possibly be?"[18]) The mass media are dominated by genres that construct the mass subject's impossible relation to a body.

In the genres of mass-imaginary transitivism, we might say, a public is thinking about itself and its media. This is true even in the most vulgar of the discourses of mass publicity, the tabloid pastime of star puncturing. In the figures of Elvis, Liz, Michael, Oprah, Geraldo, Brando, and the like, we witness and transact the bloating, slimming, wounding, and general humiliation of the public body. The bodies of these public figures are prostheses for our own mutant desirability. That is not to say that a mass imaginary identification is deployed with uniform or equal effect in each of these cases. A significant subgenre of tabloid publicity, for instance, is devoted not to perforating the iconic bodies of its male stars but to denying them any private power behind their iconic bodies. Johnny Carson, Clint Eastwood, Rob Lowe, and others like them are subjected to humiliating forms of display not for gaining weight or having cosmetic surgery but for failing to exercise full control over their lives. By chronicling their endless romantic/matrimonial disasters, publicity keeps them available for our appropriation of their iconic status by reminding us that they do not possess the phallic power of their images – we do.

In this respect, we would have to say that Reagan stands in partial contrast to these other male icons of publicity. He does not require a discourse of star puncturing because he seems to make no personal claim on the phallic power of his own image, His body, impossible to embarrass, has no private subject behind it. The gestures stay the same, undisturbed by reflection or management. Reagan never gives a sense of modulation between a public and a private self, and he therefore remains immune to humiliation. That is why it was so easy for news reports to pry into his colon without indiscretion. His witless self-continuity is the

modern equivalent of virtue. He is the perfect example of what Lefort calls the Egocrat: he coincides with himself and therefore concretizes a fantasy-image of the unitary people. He is popularity with a hairdo, an image of popularity's popularity.

The presentation of Reagan's body was an important part of his performance of popularity. J.G. Ballard understood that as early as 1968 in a story titled "Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan." In that story, every subject of publicity is said to share the secret but powerful fantasy of violating Reagan's anus. In sharing that fantasy, Ballard suggests, we demonstrate the same thing that we demonstrate as consumers of the Kennedy assassination: the erotics of a mass imaginary. Like Waters's perverse transitivism, Ballard's generalized sadistic star cult theorizes the public sphere and ironizes it at the same time. His characters, especially in *Crash,* are obsessed with a violent desire for the icons of publicity. But theirs is not a private pathology. Their longing to dismember and be dismembered with Ronald Reagan or Elizabeth Taylor is understood as a more reflective version of these public icons' normal appeal. In the modern nations of the West, individuals encounter in publicity the erotics of a powerful identification not just with public icons but also with their popularity.

It's important to stress, given the outcome of such a metapopularity in the realm of policy, that the utopian moments in consumer publicity have an unstable political valence. Responding to an immanent contradiction in the bourgeois public sphere, mass publicity promises a reconciliation between embodiment and self-abstraction. That can be a powerful appeal, especially to those minoritized by the public sphere's rhetoric of normative disembodiment. Mass subjectivity, however, can result just as easily in new forms of tyranny of the majority as it can in the claims of rival collectivities. Perhaps the clearest example now is the discourse on

AIDS. As Simon Watney and others have shown, one of the most hateful features of AIDS discourse has been its construction of a "general public."[19] A spokesman for the White House, asked why Reagan had not even mentioned the word AIDS or its problems until late in 1985, explained, "It hadn't spread into the general population yet."[20] In pursuit of a public demanded by good professional journalism, the mass media have pursued the same logic, interpellating their public as unitary and as heterosexual.

Moreover, they have deployed the transitivism of mass identification in order to exile the positivity of the body to a zone of infection; the unitary public is uninfected but threatened. In this context, it is heartbreakingly accurate to speak of the prophylaxis held out by mass publicity to those who will identify with its immunized body.

Hateful though it is to those exiled into positivity by such a discourse, in a sense everyone's relation to the public body must have more or less the same logic. No one really inhabits the general public. This is true not only because it is by definition general but also because everyone brings to such a category the particularities from which she has to abstract herself in consuming this discourse. Of course, some particularities, such as whiteness and maleness, are already oriented to that procedure of abstraction. (They can scarcely even be imagined as particularities; think, for example, of the asymmetry between the semantics of "feminism" and "masculinism.") But the given of the body is nevertheless a site of countermemory, all the more so since statistically everyone will be mapped into some minority or other, a form of positivity minoritized precisely in the abstracting discourse with which everyone also identifies.

So in this sense, the gap that gay people register within the discourse of the general public might well be an aggravated form,

though a lethally aggravated form, of the normal relation to the general public. I'm suggesting, in other words, that a fundamental feature of the contemporary public sphere is this double movement of identification and alienation: on one hand, the prophylaxis of general publicity; on the other hand, the always inadequate particularity of individual bodies, experienced both as an invisible desire within a visible body and, in consequence, as a kind of closeted vulnerability. The centrality of this contradiction in the legitimate textuality of the video-capitalist state, I think, is the reason why the discourse of the public sphere is so entirely given over to a violently desirous speculation on bodies. What I have tried to emphasize is that the effect of disturbance in mass publicity is not a corruption introduced into the public sphere by its colonization through mass media. It is the legacy of the bourgeois public sphere's founding logic, the contradictions of which become visible whenever the public sphere can no longer turn a blind eye to its privileged bodies.

For the same reasons, the public sphere is also not simply corrupted by its articulation with consumption. If anything, consumption sustains a counterpublicity that cuts against the selfcontradictions of the bourgeois public sphere. One final example can show how. In the 1980s, graffiti writing took a new form. Always a kind of counterpublicity, it became the medium of an urban and mostly black male subculture. The major cities each devoted millions of dollars per year to obliterate it, and to criminalize it as a medium, while the art world moved to canonize it out of its counterpublic setting. In an article from 1987, Susan Stewart argues that the core of the graffiti writers' subculture lay in the way it took up the utopian promise of consumer publicity, and particularly of the brand name. These graffiti do not say "U.S. out of North America," or "Patriarch go home," or "Power to the queer nation"; they are personal signatures legible only to the intimately initiated.

Reproduced as quickly and as widely as possible (unlike their canonized art equivalents), they are trademarks that can be spread across a nearly anonymous landscape. The thrill of brand-name dissemination, however, is linked to a very private sphere of knowledge, since the signature has been trademarked into illegibility. Stewart concludes:

"Graffiti may be a petty crime but its threat to value is an inventive one, for it forms a critique of the status of all artistic artifacts, indeed a critique of all privatized consumption, and it carries out that threat in full view, in repetition, so that the public has nowhere to look, no place to locate an averted glance. And that critique is paradoxically mounted from a relentless individualism, an individualism which, with its perfected monogram, arose out of the paradox of all commodity relations in their attempt to create a mass individual; an ideal consumer; a necessarily fading star. The independence of the graffiti writer has been shaped by a freedom both promised and denied by those relations – a freedom of choice which is a freedom among delimited and clearly unattainable goods. While that paradise of consumption promised the transference of uniqueness from the artifact to the subject, graffiti underlines again and again an imaginary uniqueness of the subject and a dissolution of artifactual status *per se.*"[21]

The graffiti of this subculture, in effect, parody the mass media; by appearing everywhere, they aspire to the placeless publicity of mass print or televisualization. They thus abstract away from the given body, which in the logic of graffiti is difficult to criminalize or minoritize because it is impossible to locate. ("Nowhere to look, no place to locate an averted glance" exactly describes the abstraction of televisualized space.) Unlike the self-abstraction of normal publicity, however, graffiti retain their link to a body in an almost parodic devotion to the sentimentality of the signature. As Stewart points out, they claim an imaginary uniqueness

promised in commodities but canceled in the public sphere proper. Whenever mass publicity puts its bodies on display, it reactivates this same promise. And although emancipation is not around the corner, its possibility is visible everywhere.

Obviously, the discursive genres of mass publicity vary widely. I group them together to show how they become interconnected as expressing a subjectivity that each genre helps to construct. In such contexts, the content and the media of mass publicity mutually determine each other. Mass media thematize certain materials – a jet crash, Michael Jackson's latest surgery, or a football game – to find a way of constructing their audiences as mass audiences. These contents then function culturally as metalanguages, giving meaning to the medium. In consuming the thematic materials of mass-media discourse, persons construct themselves as its mass subject. Thus the same reciprocity that allowed the *Spectator* and its print medium to be mutually clarifying can be seen in the current mass media. But precisely because the meaning of the mass media depends so much on their articulation with a specific metalanguage, we cannot speak simply of one kind of mass subjectivity or one politics of mass publicity. Stewart makes roughly the same observation when she remarks that the intrication of graffiti, as a local practice, with the systemic themes of access – "access to discourse, access to goods, access to the reception of information" – poses a methodological problem, "calling into question the relations between a micro- and a macro-analysis: the insinuating and pervasive forms of the mass culture are here known only through localizations and adaptations."[22]

Nevertheless, some things are clear. In a discourse of publicity structured by deep contradictions between self-abstraction and self-realization, contradictions that have only been forced to the fore in televisual consumer culture, there has been a massive shift toward the politics of identity. The major political movements of the last half century have been oriented toward status categories. Unlike almost all previous social movements – Chartism, temperance, or the French Revolution – they have been centrally about the personal identity formation of minoritized subjects. These movements all presuppose the bourgeois public sphere as background. Their rallying cries of difference take for granted the official rhetoric of self-abstraction. It would be naive and sentimental to suppose that identities or mere assertions of status will precipitate from this crisis as its solution, since the public discourse makes identity an ongoing problem. An assertion of the full equality of minoritized statuses would require abandoning the structure of self-abstraction in publicity. That outcome seems unlikely in the near future. In the meantime, the contradictions of status and publicity are played out at both ends of the public discourse. We, as the subjects of mass publicity, ever more find a political stake in the difficult-to-recognize politics of our identity, and the egocrats who fill the screens of national fantasy must summon all their skin and hair to keep that politics from getting personal.

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2. J. G. Ballard, *Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A.* (New York: Grove Press, 1972), pp. 149–151.

3. The arguments condensed here can be found in full form in Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication*

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4. Richard Steele, *Spectator*, no. 555, in Angus Ross, ed., *Selections from the Tatler and the Spectator* (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 213.

5. Lauren Berlant, "National Brands/National Body: Imitation of Life," in Hortense Spillers, ed., *Comparative American Identities* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 110–140.

6. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), p. 43.

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9. Timothy Breen, "Baubles of Britain," *Past and Present* 119, May 1988, pp. 73–104.

10. Lefort, "Image of the Body," p. 303.

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 304–306.

12. Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p. 8.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 201. The MIT Press translation reads "whose" where I have corrected the text to "which."

14. "F.D.R., Anyone?" *Nation,* May 22, 1989, p. 689.

15. For a critique of the still-popular notion of media manipulation, see Hans Magnus Enzensberger, "Constituents of a Theory of the Media," in *Critical Essays* (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 46–76.

16. John Waters, *Shock Value* (New York: Dell, 1981), p. 24.

17. Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," in *Ecrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 19.

18. Waters, *Shock Value*, p. 26.

19. Simon Watney, *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS, and the Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 83–84 and passim.

20. Jan Zita Grover, "AIDS: Keywords," *October* 43, 1987, p. 23. This issue has since been reprinted as Douglas Crimp, ed., *AIDS: Cultural Analysis, Cultural Activism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

21. Susan Stewart, "Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," in John Fekete, ed., *Life After Postmodernism: Essays on Value and Culture* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987), pp. 175–176.

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"SHOOT AT THE AUDIENCE!"[1]
PROJECTION AND PARTICIPATION IN THE LATE 1960s

Matthias Michalka

I

In December 1967, filmmakers and artists from many different fields met for the Fourth International Festival of Experimental Film in the Belgian town of Knokke-le-Zoute to debate the newest developments in film and discuss adequate responses to the social and political crises of the day. While the official festival program, in which Michael Snow's *Wavelength* was awarded the grand prize, was dominated by material and structural analyses, the parallel discussions and events dealt with expanded forms of cinematographic work and possibilities of more direct political engagement.[2] Film installations and happenings by the likes of Marcel Broodthaers, Jean-Jacques Lebel, and Yoko Ono thematized cinema as a media apparatus as well as an institution determined by ideology and economics. Up for debate were not only film's illusionary character and mechanisms of representation, but also its conditions of reception and distribution. These activities were accompanied by filmmaker meetings, where the establishment of European film cooperatives was discussed, as well as protest actions by film school students from Berlin, Ulm, Brussels, and Paris, who turned "against American imperialism in experimental film" and at every possible moment [hurled out] banners emblazoned with slogans like: "Every meter of film that shows an intact bottom from the metropolises hushes up a burnt body in Vietnam."[3]

As this quotation indicates, Knokke 1967/68 was marked by a series of conflicts and oppositions. Jean-Jacques Lebel, for example, describes the festival as "one of the most important international gatherings of youth in rebellion [...] where both members of the SDS as well as anarchist and extra-parliamentary groups from all over Europe took part [...] whose actions were from the very beginning of a neo-Dadaist and anti-conformist nature." [4]

Birgit and Wilhelm Hein's report on the festival, in contrast, refers with a somewhat ironic undertone to the students protesting with "burning sparklers against mere aesthetic appearance," who demanded the struggle against "American imperialist and cinema-imperialist aggression in both overt and covert forms all over the world [...]." [5] The differences that resonate here about politically feasible forms and approaches probably became clearest during the course of the closing event of the festival, which Hans Scheugl describes as follows: "The students under the leadership of Harun Farocki and a small group around the Happening artist Jean-Jacques Lebel turned the discussion into a demonstration, in that Lebel staged a 'Miss Festival' contest, and from among the seven naked male and female participants, including Yoko Ono, who took the stage, chose a Miss Festival who was a man. The action was much less off-target than the students with their banners, and clearly proved one of the slogans legible on a protest placard wrong: 'No reality without the death of the spectacle.'" [6]

These descriptions provide the most vivid summary of the various approaches to political film work in the late 1960s. On the one hand were demonstrations against content-less camera work, elitist filmic formalism, and media essentialism of the Greenbergian variety, which in the fine arts during the Cold War had become the long-term US export hit in the form of abstract expressionism.[7] Linked to this critique was the rigorous rejection of the bourgeois cultural industry and its institutions, which included museums and galleries as well as film festivals like Knokke itself. From the point of view of the demonstrators, film could only become politically effective if it concentrated on political content, refused entertaining spectacle, and like a Brechtian *Lehrstück* or epic theater appealed to the reason of the spectator. Film was to bring itself out of its self-imposed isolation in the underground or the art world and open itself

to a broader audience, thereby contributing to the transformation of consumers into participants and producers.[8]

On the other side were the neo-Dadaists, Fluxus, and Happening artists, who with their subversive actions relied on provocation and the play with overdetermination. Their "Miss Festival" pageant, for example, a self-ironic attack on pseudo-democratic mechanisms of judgement and participation as well as the voyeurist and sexist expectations among the "progressive" cultural consumers, was intended to undermine the order of both the festival and film itself. The Dadaist "disturbances of meaning" in the area of film sought to counter the mechanisms of meaning production on which official media policy relied day after day. The breakout from this apparatus was a leap towards "reality"; direct actions, fantasy, and the overaffirmation of spectacle were used to attempt an escape from the representation and thus control over that "reality."

In the midst of this were the structural filmmakers, who in fact did consider their anti-illusionist work on cinematographic determinants to be political. Films like *Wavelength* stand for what Wollen saw as the shift towards interrogating the relationship between signifier and signified within the sign itself.[9] This focus on material and structural foundations unavoidably entailed a "demystification" of the filmic process. By displaying their mechanisms of construction, representative and documentary aspects were thrown up to debate, and in rejecting identificatory narratives an attempt was made to reorder the ideological relationship between film and spectator.

This radical destruction of every form of illusionism in structural film was clearly distinct from the essentialist retreat of film to abstraction in the formalist concentration on the pure material. As Peter Gidal critically remarked in his theory and definition of

structural materialist film, a blank film with no "images" running through the projector can also awaken associations and notions that are quite illusionist and far from reality. Gidal thus sees the accusation of mystification, romanticism, and apolitical aestheticism as justified for some works considered to be structural film, but still emphasizes in contrast to this the radical and contextualized unveiling of techniques of consciousness production in the structural analyses of filmmakers like Kurt Kren, Michael Snow, Malcolm Le Grice, and Paul Sharits.[10]

The deconstruction of the ideological apparatus as it was advanced by the representatives of structural film did not stop at the moving image and its direct determinants like celluloid, light, and editing. It also examined the situation of projection, the production process, as well as the cinema with its social and economic conditions,[11] and led to expanded filmic actions and installations as well as the foundation of film cooperatives and alternative structures of distribution.

II

Even if this brief sketch of political strategies in and around Knokke can only do limited justice to the complexity of the film discourse in the late 1960s, it does give a first impression of the multilayered and contradictory nature of the approaches to critical filmmaking.

The consequences of the festival in Knokke were dramatic. The European avant-garde and experimental film scene were gripped by a mood of renewal that led to a large number of new productions, the emergence of a series of coops,[12] and in March 1968 the opening of XSCREEN, the first screening site for avant-garde and experimental film in Germany. On its first evening, films by Kurt Kren, Hans Scheugl, and Ernst Schmidt, as well as film actions by VALIE EXPORT and Peter Weibel were shown.[13]

The expanded film work of EXPORT and Weibel is many ways paradigmatic for the expansion of structural/material film and political activity in the field between film and the fine arts at the end of the 1960s.[14] Central to their expanded cinema actions was an engagement with the techniques of media representation and the determination of consciousness through the filmic apparatus. Not only influenced by the Vienna Group's literary analyses of language and explorations of reality, material and structural treatments in Austrian experimental film, and intense experiences with Viennese Actionism, but also informed about international attempts towards closing the gap between art and life in the expanded arts, EXPORT and Weibel developed ideas for films that ran contrary to film's linguistic character and the mechanisms of identification and involvement it entailed.[15] "Expanded cinema is in the current phase the radical decision to do away with reality and the language that communicates and constructs it," as Weibel succinctly put it in 1969.[16] EXPORT and Weibel's rejection of filmic representation accompanied a vehement questioning of established cinematographic role assignments and strategies of subjectivization.

A large part of EXPORT and Weibel's performances in 1968 were concerned with the status of cinema-goers: the determinants of their perception and their possibilities of participation. VALIE EXPORT's expanded movie *Ping Pong*, for example, was not only chosen in 1968 as the political film of the year at the second Maraisiade, an international short film festival in Vienna;[17] this work exhibits the artistic critique of manipulation and the demands of participation characteristic of the period just as clearly as it does their theoretical and political fields of reference. It consists of an 8mm film projecting points in various positions on a screen and an actor equipped with a table

> An apparatus was to be developed that would "lead consumers to production, in brief, one that is able to make readers or spectators into participants."

tennis ball and racket. The goal of this actor is to hit the points with the ball.

"*Ping Pong* explains the relationship of domination between the producer (the director) and the consumer (the spectator). What the eye tells the brain is the cause for motoric reflexes and reactions. Spectators and screen are the screen for a game with rules that are dictated by the director. Attempt to emancipate the audience."[18]

EXPORT's description, as well as her labeling of *Ping Pong* as a *Lehrstück*, refer to Walter Benjamin's 1934 essay *The Author as Producer* and his confrontation with the Brechtian theater. Benjamin analyzes the conditions of political work in the cultural field, the dangers through "critical work" of "constantly gaining new effects from the political situation to entertain the audience,"[19] and the resulting necessity to not only deliver material for the cultural apparatus of production, but also to fundamentally transform this apparatus. An apparatus was to be developed that would "lead consumers to production, in brief, one that is able to make readers or spectators into participants [*Mitwirkende*]."[20] In the context of 1968, when "across all national differences" political movements were "dedicated to expanding chances of participation, codetermination, or self-administration, changing structures of control or decision, as well dismantling domination and hierarchies,"[21] Benjamin's study served as the central model for these kind of attempts at democratization in the artistic field.

Although models of participation were clearly the goal in both political debate and in wide areas of theoretical discussion in the late 1960s,[22] the over-hasty and unbroken "call for participation" was seen quite ambivalently in both Benjamin's complex analysis of the Brechtian concept of the theater itself as well as in diverse artworks.[23] The address or involvement of the receiver is in fact a constitutive requirement of all forms of art and cinema perception. The receiving subject is always already present in the image and called to participate in the work or in the event; in the cinema the spectator is called at least in part to identify by way of the camera, protagonists and the like, to follow the signs and attractions of the screen and in the end to make sense of them.[24] As Baudry, Metz, and others have extensively analyzed, if the spectator follows the symbolic interpellations together with their well-calculated possibilities of choice and freedom, he or she moves along tracks that are pre-formed.[25] Thus, involvement or activation is also a constitutive part of all forms of manipulation and subjection. In Foucault's terms, it is precisely the essence of all relationships of power "that the 'other' (the one over whom

In light of the history of "audience activation" in art and the expanded cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, "doing away with reality," that is, dismantling the image of reality constructed and controlled by the media apparatuses, thus making possible the opening of free spaces within which real participation becomes possible, proves a contradictory undertaking.

power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up."[26]

Seen from this perspective, real possibilities of participation would have less to do with strategies of involvement and still less with "invitations to collaboration" than with forms of distantiation and transformation, that structurally modify the functions of the author and that of the apparatus, thus enabling unforeseen access and perceptions.

In light of the history of "audience activation" in art and the expanded cinema of the 1960s and 1970s, "doing away with reality," that is, dismantling the image of reality constructed and controlled by the media apparatuses, thus making possible the opening of free spaces within which real participation becomes possible, proves a contradictory undertaking. The recognition and valuation of the spectator or beholder in the wake of developments critical of authority and autonomy like those in the tradition of John Cage, the context of Minimal and Concept Art, or the feminist arts movement, are here confronted with artistic work that indeed demonstratively includes the audience, but in the end seems to encounter that audience in ways that were anything but positive. Writing about the activation of the audience in connection with happenings by Kaprow, Oldenburg, Schneemann, and Whitman, Susan Sontag already commented in 1962: "Perhaps the most striking feature of the Happening is its treatment (this is the only word for it) of the audience. The event seems designed to tease and abuse the audience."[27]

Referring to the destruction of conventional meaning by the "radical juxtaposition" of distinct elements, she further suggested that this art is clearly possessed by an aggression against the supposed conventionality of the audience. These ambivalences in relation to the audience,

swaying between demonstrative inclusion and total degradation, valuation and "liberation" through "abuse" basically correspond to Dada strategies of provocation and shock, through which the spectators or beholders are to be ripped out of their consumerist daydream and their comfortable and secure passivity. Pulling the audience to "reality" by way of its distantiation from the given symbolic order is also usually involuntary in this context.

Examples for an ambivalent "treatment of the audience" in the 1960s are not only to be found in the context of neo-Dadaist developments, they can also be seen in post-minimal (media) installations, like those of Bruce Nauman, or expanded cinema actions, like those of VALIE EXPORT or Peter Weibel.[28] The audience is confronted with protocols that expressly demand participation, but which in the end primarily demonstrate their structural insufficiency/impossibility. In the case of Nauman's video corridors, this is done by promising the visitors an image of themselves and/or their corporeal experience, but refusing to fulfill this promise. In *Ping Pong*, the playful "activation of the participants" proves to be a one-sided stimulus-reaction mechanism, and in his expanded cinema lectures Peter Weibel demonstrates technological closed circuit mechanisms that depend on collaboration and participation, but through that very participation unavoidably fall apart.

Weibel's Action Lecture, performed on the occasion of XSCREEN's opening in Cologne in 1968, is made up of various films showing Weibel projected onto his body as well as the screen behind him. He also carried on his body a tape recorder playing back a lecture, while at the same time holding a lecture through a microphone with the same content as the one recorded on the tape. The central element of the action was a visible electronic switch mechanism with which the audience could influence the operation of the film projector, the

tape recorder, as well as a second tape recorder playing music. Weibel describes the set up as follows: "The noise, the screams of the audience are picked up by a microphone. An electronic circuit leads these impulses to a lamp, which is turned on when an adjustable noise level is surpassed. If the noise of the audience is loud enough, the lamp lights up. It shines on the ldr in front of it. The ldr is connected with the tape recorders and a film projector. Only when the ldr receives light, do the tape recorder and the projector get electricity. If the audience screams loud enough, the lamp lights up, the ldr gets light and the magnetophone and the projector run, producing sounds and images [...] in case of screaming: a lot of light, a lot of sound, in case of quiet, no light, no sound, except for the sound of me speaking. In the same way, I can – as a kind of dictator – hold my hand between the lamp and the ldr and stop the circuit."[29]

Weibel deconstructs the audiovisual media as an illusionary apparatus by separating image and sound and in addition playing various levels of "reality" or representation against one another. As part of this complex confrontation of differing modes of articulation and mediation, he installed a technical mechanism of communication that pushes the linked promise of participation to its absurd limit. This means that the audience in fact has no way of understanding the sound recording; the switch mechanism that regulates the apparatus only plays the recording when its sounds are covered by the noise of the potential listeners. The process of participation initiated here is not only controlled – Weibel can at any time become dictator – it is just as determined as it is paradoxical: the participation of the audience leads directly to the breakdown of all communication. As Weibel puts it: "in the automatic circuit of volume, the patient, the cripple of the state, experiences the powerlessness of his communication, the

[closed] circuit of our democracy: tautology or antinomy, affirmation or annulment, swim along with the current or go aground."[30]

It would surely be a mistake to generalize the aggression and negativity expressed here, which at least in Weibel's case was in part due to an extremely tense cultural and political situation. As a result of this situation, the representatives of the artistic avant-garde in Austria were subject to an unprecedented negative media campaign and were arrested and convicted to fines or imprisonment for disturbing the public order.[31] But beyond this specific background for his critique on media power and manipulation, Peter Weibel's Action lecture makes clear that the development of technocratic mechanisms of communication and administration at the end of the 1960s had reached a point where individual as well as collective agency could no longer be discussed divorced from strategies of subjectivation in the media. The predetermination of perception by the media and society as well as the linked definition of the frame of participation become in this period the object of an artistic, theoretical, and political engagement, in which concepts like "ideological state apparatus" or "repressive tolerance" took on increasing importance.[32] Herbert Marcuse, who with his studies on the repressive society provided the 1968 movement with a differentiated theoretical *instrumentarium* as well as an orientation towards action and a goal, already explained in 1965: "The exercise of political rights (such as voting, letter writing to the press, to Senators, etc., protest demonstrations with a priori renunciation of counter-violence) in a society of total administration serves to strengthen this administration by testifying to the existence of democratic liberties, which, in reality, have changed their content and lost their effectiveness. In such a case, freedom (of opinion, of assembly, of speech) becomes an instrument for absolving servitude."[33]

On the one hand, Marcuse argues that "the existence and practice of these liberties remain a precondition for the restoration of their original oppositional function, provided that the effort to transcend their (often self-imposed) limitations is intensified."[34]

Nevertheless, his theses on "repressive tolerance" make any overly hasty statements about participation and freedom seem more than problematic, and the unavoidable collaboration of participants with the dominant order becomes the foundation for all further discussion.

VALIE EXPORT's *Tapp- und Tastkino*, probably her most famous expanded cinema action, was first presented in November 1968 at the second Maraisiade in Vienna, and a few days later was presented again as a street action in Munich as part of the "first European meeting of independent Filmmakers."[35] EXPORT attached a box to her body, a mini-cinema, in which the "visitors" had direct access to her naked breasts. "To see the film, in this case to touch and feel it, the 'spectators' (visitors) have to lead their two hands through the entrance into the cinema [...] The tactile reception inoculates against the deception of voyeurism. For as long as the citizen satisfies himself with the reproduced copy of sexual freedom, he saves the state from the real sexual revolution. Tapp- und Tastfilm is an example for the activation of the audience qua new interpretation. Tactile instead of visual communication. The new organization of the filmic elements also determines a new communication, and with that a new form of experience."[36]

EXPORT's critique of manipulation and exploration of participation is developed around the differentiation between the eye and the body, optics and physics, and intended a liberation of the senses, sexuality, and the woman. The mechanisms of social (body) controls, not least expressed in the fixed position, isolation, and reduction of cinema-

goers to a purely audiovisual presence, were to be abolished and the patriarchal state order represented in the cinema was to be resisted.[37] But on closer examination, the status of the visual in *Tapp- und Tastkino* proves to be as complex as it is ambivalent. EXPORT's critique of the cinematographic apparatus is far more than a simple refusal of voyeurism and the image/gaze culture or a plea for tactile experience and direct participation. Already in *Ping Pong* it became clear that visuality and bodily activity, image and action are closely correlated to one another. Representations lead to actions and actions result in representations. VALIE EXPORT's Munich expanded movie studies the relationship between image and body, representation and action, and thus the question of possible participation and/or self-determined forms of perception on various levels of "reality" at the same time. In so doing, actions can be understood as symbolic acts and linguistic or visual representations as performative agency. Peter Weibel assisted EXPORT in the action: as a combination market crier and theoretician, he used a megaphone to inform spectators about the background of the action, inviting them to participate and at the same time supervising them to ensure that the set time limit was not broken. He thus encouraged the "mini-cinema visitor" to "grasp" [*begreifen*] the naked "truth." In so doing, the visitor found himself subject both to the looks of VALIE EXPORT as well as those of the crowd of passersby. The "visitor" thus not only receives a "direct" sexual impression, but also experiences it as strictly observed and controlled. The situation of the surrounding spectators, who can potentially take a grab, is essentially identical: unavoidably entangled in this *mise-en-scène* of the gaze, in which all expectantly observe what will happen next, they cannot escape. Here, too, sexual or tactile experience and visual control coincide.

EXPORT and Weibel's practical relationship to the mass media and the culture of the spectacle was determined by strategic considerations. Already in 1966, Peter Weibel formulated this in the following terms: "Today, the artist is becoming an advertiser [...] he has to go into mass distribution. [...] He knows his work is a commodity."

While the *Tapp- und Tastkino* at the Maraisiade as well as at later performances in cinema spaces was perceived as "film," and thus automatically as a self-reflexive representation in terms of artistic staging, the transfer of the action to the Munich's Stachus dramatically expanded the frame of reference for the potential participants. Nonetheless, the announcements and scene of control led in public space to the symbolic loading of the "direct" sexual grasp. A separation of "linguistic" or represented phenomena and "direct" bodily experience is thus hardly possible. This intersection of action and representation is then taken a step further: what is particularly striking about the photographs taken of the *Tapp- and Tastkino* is the huge presence of cameras. There is hardly a photo on which a lens does not push its way into the image. The action attracted immense attention in the mass media, leading to reports in *Spiegel*, *Stern*, and the yellow press, in WDR [a West German television and radio broadcaster] and an East German broadcaster.[38] The highpoint of this media processing or "repatriation [*Rückführung*]" was certainly the restaging of the *Tapp- und Tastkino* for Austrian television in 1969. This media action, that demanded the overcoming of traditional forms of audiovisual film and communication, itself wound up a

classical recording, cynically commented upon in public television before a public TV audience, in the face of which Weibel had before seemed to give up all hope.[39]

EXPORT and Weibel's practical relationship to the mass media and the culture of the spectacle was determined by strategic considerations. Already in 1966, Peter Weibel formulated this in the following terms: "Today, the artist is becoming an advertiser [...] he has to go into mass distribution. [...] He knows his work is a commodity. Only the artistic complexity of his works raised it above the mass products and perhaps uncovers the shark in the swimming pool [...] where things are driven and administered, or operated and anonymously created and consumed in a totalitarian manner, an artist can only smuggle critical material into consciousness in the flair of baby pink and Acapulco."[40]

With this expanded cinema work, settled between direct action, distantiated epic theater, and subversive media infiltration, EXPORT and Weibel provoked a struggle for transgression and reappropriation where, as far as the mass media are concerned, the representatives of the given order ultimately got the upper hand.[41] This could not be changed by further increasing the level of aggression, on the contrary. One day after VALIE EXPORT's public performance of the *Tapp- und Tastkino* Peter Weibel presented the "action film" *Exit* in a small Munich cinema. "While Weibel held a lecture [on the aggression of the state] and films were projected on the aluminum screen, [EXPORT, Scheugl, Schmidt, Schlemmer, and Kren] shot fire balls through the screen, threw fireworks [...] hissed at the audience, which tried to hide behind anything available, ripped open the door, and fled out to the street."[42]

A similar fate awaited the visitors of the series *Underground Explosion* in the following year.[43] They were abused by EXPORT and Weibel with "obscene and radical political slogans,"

sprayed with an "audience extinguisher" [*Publikum(s)sprenger*] and finally whipped.[44] The spectacular struggle against cinematographic illusionism, media consciousness control, and pleasurable entertainment was indeed able to "mobilize" the audience over the short term, provoking unforeseen reactions – mostly expressions of dissatisfaction and fisticuffs. All the same, the press also reported widely about these actions, which in the end led to their being turned against their original intent in the media, resulting in an audience ever more demanding of sensation.[45] In a certain sense, EXPORT and Weibel thus produced with their media effective actions in the late 1960s an audience against which they explicitly defended themselves in these actions.

EXPORT and Weibel's expanded cinema works were not able to change anything about the structure of the mass media, but with all their ambivalences and fissures they did make possible a complex understanding of the subject of perception in the context of media interpellations. The operating mechanisms and perception effects of the filmic and/or media apparatus thereby surfaced both in the expanded cinema actions themselves as well as in their mass mediation and re-valuation. As shown above, EXPORT and Weibel's double strategy of critique and simultaneous infiltration did initially seem to go wrong: press, radio, and television by and large neutralized the critical potential of the expanded cinema actions. At the same time, in a kind of "reality-test" they involuntarily demonstrated the manipulable and constructed character of meaning that was being explored in the actions. EXPORT and Weibel's simultaneous attitude of being both "with" and "against" the media made it possible for them to expose the media apparatus and its laws in both a symbolic and practical way, and in turn to situate the whole thing as an artistic

or symbolic action in the art context. In the struggle for transgression and appropriation, they did not reject the controlled spaces of participation; instead, they consciously took advantage of the spaces left open in the symbolic order. The result is a strategic swaying back and forth between demonstration and action, between a brief stepping-back and critical distance, deconstruction, and alienation in the Brechtian sense and then again spectacle and provocation, turbulence, fights and destruction, which – if all went well – got out of control. And as soon as order was reestablished, the events mutated to a *Lehrstück* about matters of art, cinema, and the expansion of reality.

1. The title is a translation of a headline in a German newspaper describing one of Weibel's film/performances.

2. See on this the festival reports in *Film* 2 (1968) and Hans Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino. Die Wiener Filme der 60er Jahre* (Vienna: Triton, 2002), pp. 87–91.

3. *Ibid.*, 2002, p. 91. The phrase referred to Yoko Ono's *film No. 4 (Bottoms).*

4. Jean-Jacques Lebel, "Die Dadaisierung des Politischen," *Um 1968: konkrete Utopien in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, Marie Luise Syring, ed. (Cologne: Dumont, 1990), p. 49.

5. Christiane Habich, ed. *B + W Hein. Dokumente 1967– 1985: Fotos, Briefe, Texte* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Filmmuseum, 1985), p. 7.

6. Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino*, p. 91.

7. On the political significance of abstract art, see Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

8. See on this Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," *Versuche über Brecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971); Walter Benjamin, "Was ist das epische Theater?," *Gesammelte Schriften 2.2.* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977). [Trans. Note: All translations, unless otherwise specified, are my own. Translation published as "The Author as Producer," *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Brian Wallis, ed. (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996)].

9. Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes," *Readings and Writings: Semiotic Counter-Strategies* (London: Verso, 1982).

10. Peter Gidal, "Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film," *Structural Film Anthology*, ed. Gidal (London: BFI, 1976).

11. In film theory, Jean-Louis Comolli in particular dedicated a series of essays in *Cahiers du cinéma* to questions of the development of technology and social constellations in the cinema context. See Jean-Louis Comolli, "Technic and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field [Parts 3 and 4]," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

12. Film coops were founded in Hamburg and Vienna, for example.

13. On the first evening at XSCREEN see Habich, *B + W Hein*, p.13.

14. EXPORT and Weibel advanced in the late 1960s to become central figures of expanded cinema in Europe and had performances in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Munich, Zürich, and Vienna. The magazine *film* dedicated covers to both EXPORT and Weibel. Their work was widely reported in the German-language media.

15. In 1967 EXPORT and Weibel discovered Number 43 of the journal *film culture*, a special issue with extensive reports about expanded cinema activities in New York, and as early as 1966 Weibel referred in a text to Michael Kirby's 1965 survey *Happenings.*

16. Peter Weibel, "Expanded Cinema," *film 11*, November 1969, p. 42.

17. Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino*, p. 140; Peter Weibel, ed., with VALIE EXPORT, *Wien: Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film (*Frankfurt/Main: Kohlkunstverlag, 1970), p. 293.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 262.

19. Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," p. 110.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 114.

21. Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, *Die 68er Bewegung: Deutschland-Westeuropa-USA* (Munich: Beck, 2001), p. 113.

22. This discourse finds its paradigmatic expression in Barthes' thesis of the "death of the author" and the new "pleasure of the text." See Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," *Image, Music, Text,* trans. Stephen Heath, ed. (New York: Hill, 1977).

23. See Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent," pp. 114–115.

24. On the role of identification in the context of film reception, see especially Kaja Silverman, *Threshold of the Visible World* (London: Routledge, 1996).

25. Beginning in 1970, Jean Baudry, Christian Metz, and further representatives of apparatus theory extensively analyzed the cinematographic strategies of involvement and ideological control, using direct reference to the sociological and psychoanalytic models of Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan. Baudry at first studies the mechanisms that cause the spectator to forget the apparatus, that is, the technologies and operations required to make the illusion of filmic coherence possible, taking place in a constructed, centered image space and organized around central perspective, is brought to ideological identification with theatrical acting. Christian Metz, in contrast, dedicates himself with his psychoanalytic approach to the scopophilia and cinephilia of the spectator. See Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, Philip Rosen, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) and Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

26. Michel Foucault, "Power and the Subject," Brian Wallis, *Art After Modernism. Rethinking Representation*, p. 427.

27. Susan Sontag, "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition," *Against Interpretation* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1967), p. 265.

28. On the status of participation in Bruce Nauman, see Janet Kraynak, "Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments," *Grey Room*, 10. Winter 2003.

29. Peter Weibel, "Action Lecture: intermedium," *Protokolle*. Vol. 2, 1982, p. 88.

30. Weibel, *Wien. Bildkompendium*, p. 258.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

32. Althusser's concept of the "ideological state apparatus" and the subject determined by "interpellation" achieved both in the political discourse of the late 1960s as well as in film and apparatus theory central importance. Based on his famous example, in which a policeman calls "Hey, you," to pedestrians passing by, thus making them turn around, feel spoken to, and cooperate or identify themselves, Althusser was able to show how subjects react to ideological interpellations in order to constitute themselves and to achieve identity and agency, thus unavoidably subjecting themselves to the law. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,"

Lenin and Philosophy, trans. Ben Brewster (London: NLB Books, 1971).

33. Herbert Marcuse, *Repressive Tolerance*, http://grace.evergreen.edu/~arunc/texts/marcuse/tolerance.pdf. Originally published in R. Wolff, Barrington Moore, and Marcuse, eds., *A Critique of Pure Tolerance* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965).

34. *Ibid.* Marcuse's critique, which he also explored *in On the Affirmative Character of Culture* or *One Dimensional Man*, found wide acceptance in the late 1960s and was expressly mentioned by Peter Weibel in a number of his writings.

35. Weibel, *Wien. Bildkompendium*, p. 261.

36. VALIE EXPORT, *Tapp- und Tastfilm*, unpubl. Manuscript, Archiv VALIE EXPORT.

37. The role of the body in the cinema was extensively studied within the framework of the apparatus debate. See on this Note 24.

38. Weibel, *Wien. Bildkompendium*, p. 261.

39. Apropos Film, ORF, September 19, 1969.

40. Peter Weibel, "Zeit der Transition: Avantgarde zwischen Kunst und Massenkultur," *Kritik der Kunst. Kunst der Kritik* (Vienna: Jugend & Volk, 1973), p. 60.

41. The reporting on this event in the mass media is discussed in Weibel, *Wien: Bildkompendium* and Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino.*

42. Weibel, *Wien: Bildkompendium*, p. 259.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 183 and 266 and Scheugl, *Erweitertes Kino*, p. 157.

44. Weibel, *Wien: Bildkompendium*, p. 266.

45. 3,000 paying guests attended the Underground Explosion in Munich.

THE PRACTICE OF EVERYDAY (MEDIA) LIFE
FROM MASS CONSUMPTION TO MASS CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Lev Manovich

The explosion of user-created media content on the web (2005-) has unleashed a new media universe. On a practical level, this universe was made possible by free web platforms and inexpensive software tools which enable people to share their media and easily access media produced by others; rapidly fallen cost for professional-quality media capture devices such as HD video cameras; and addition of cameras and video capture to mobile phones. What is important, however, is that this new universe was not simply a scaled up version of 20th century media culture. Instead, we moved from "media" to "social media."[1] (Accordingly, we can also say that we are graduated from 20th century "video/film" to early 20th century "social video.") What does this shift means for how media functions and for the terms we use to talk about media? These are the questions this essay will engage with.

Today "social media" is often discussed in relation to another term, "Web 2.0" (coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2004). While Web 2.0 refers to a number of different technical, economical, and social developments, most of them are directly relevant to our question: besides "social media", other important concepts are "user-generated content,""long tail," "network as platform," "folksonomy," "syndication," and "mass collaboration." I will not be summarizing here all these concepts: Wikipedia, which itself is a great example of Web 2.0, does it better. My goal here is not to provide a detailed analysis of social and cultural effects of Web 2.0; rather, I would like to put forward a few questions and make a few points that I have not seen expressed by others and that directly relate to video and moving image cultures on the web.

To get the discussion started, let us simply state two of the important the Web 2.0 themes. Firstly, in 2000s, we see a gradual shift from the majority of Internet users accessing content produced by a much smaller number of professional producers to users increasingly

> If 1990s web was mostly a publishing medium, in 2000s it increasingly became a communication medium.

accessing content produced by other non-professional users. Secondly, if 1990s web was mostly a publishing medium, in 2000s it increasingly became a communication medium. (Communication between users, including conversations around user-generated content, take place through a variety of forms besides email: posts, comments, reviews, ratings, gestures and tokens, votes, links, badges, photo, and video.[2])

What do these trends mean for culture in general and for professional art in particular? First of all, it does not mean that every user has become a producer. According to 2007 statistics, only between 0.5 % – 1.5 % users of most popular social media sites (Flickr, YouTube, Wikipedia) contributed their own content. Others remained consumers of the content produced by this 0.5 - 1.5%. Does this mean that professionally produced content continues to dominate in terms of where people get their news and media? If by "content" we mean typical 20th century mass media – news, TV shows, narrative films and videos, computer games, literature, and music – then the answer is often yes. For instance, in 2007 only two blogs made it into the list of 100 most read news sources. At the same time, we see emergence of "the long-tail" phenomenon on the net: not only "top 40" but most of the content available online – including content produced by individuals – finds some audiences.[3] These audiences can be tiny but they are not zero. This is best illustrated by the following statistics: in the middle of 2000s every track out of a million of so available through iTunes sold at least once a quarter. In other words, every track no matter how obscure found

at least one listener. This translates into new economics of media: as researchers who have studied the long tail phenomena demonstrated, in many industries the total volume of sales generated by such low popularity items exceeds the volume generated by "top forty."[4]

Let us now consider another set of statistics that show that people increasingly get their information and media from social media sites. In January 2008, Wikipedia has ranked as number nine most visited website; MySpace was at number six, Facebook was at five, and MySpace was at three. (According to the company that collects these statistics, it is more than likely that these numbers are U.S. biased, and that the rankings in other countries are different.[5] However, the general trend towards increasing use of social media sites – global, localized, or local – can be observed in most countries.)

The numbers of people participating in these social networks, sharing media, and creating "user-generated content" are astonishing – at least from the perspective of early 2008. (It is likely that in 2016 they will look trivial in comparison to what will be happening then.) MySpace: 300,000,000 users.[6] Cyworld, a Korean site similar to MySpace: 90 % of South Koreans in their 20s, or 25 % of the total population of South Korea.[7] Hi4, a leading social media site Central America: 100,000,000 users.[8] Facebook: 1,400,000 photo uploads daily.[9] The number of new videos uploaded to YouTube every 24 hours (as of July 2006): 65,000.[10]

These statistics are impressive. The more difficult question is: how to interpret them? First of all, they don't tell us about the actual media diet of users (obviously these diets vary between places and demographics). For instance, we don't have exact numbers (at least, they are not freely available) regarding what exactly people watch on sites such as YouTube – the percentage of user-generated content versus commercial content such as music videos, anime, game trailers, movie clips, etc.[11] Secondly, we also

don't have exact numbers regarding which percentage of peoples' daily media/information intake comes from big news organization, TV, commercially realized films and music versus non-professional sources.

These numbers are difficult to establish because today commercial information and media does not only arrive via its traditional channels such as newspapers, TV stations and movie theatres but also on the same channels which carry user-generated content: blogs, RSS feeds, Facebook's posted items and notes, YouTube videos, etc. Therefore, simply counting how many people follow a particular communication channel no longer tells you what they are watching.

But even if we knew precise statistics, it still would not be clear what are the relative roles between commercial sources and user-produced content in forming people's understanding of the world, themselves, and others. Or, more precisely: what are the relative weights between the ideas expressed in large circulation media and alternative ideas available elsewhere? If one person gets all her news via blogs, does this automatically mean that her understanding of the world and important issues is different from a person who only reads mainstream newspapers?

The Practice of Everyday (Media) Life: Tactics as Strategies

For different reasons, media, businesses, consumer electronics and web industries, and academics converge in celebrating content created and exchanged by users. In academic discussions, in particular, the disproportional attention given to certain genres such as "youth media," "activist media," "political mash-ups" – which are indeed important but do not represent more typical usage of hundreds of millions of people.

In celebrating user-generated content and implicitly equating "user-generated" with "alternative" and "progressive," academic discussions often stay away from asking certain basic critical questions. For instance: To what extent the phenomenon of user-generated content is driven by consumer electronics industry – the producers of digital cameras, video cameras, music players, laptops, and so on? Or: To what extent the phenomenon of user-generated content is also driven by social media companies themselves – who after all are in the business of getting as much traffic to their sites as possible so they can make money by selling advertising and their usage data?

Here is another question: Given that the significant percentage of user-generated content either follows the templates and conventions set up by professional entertainment industry, or directly re-uses professionally produced content (for instance, anime music videos), does this means that people's identities and imagination are now even more firmly colonized by commercial media than in the 20th century? In other words: Is the replacement of "mass consumption of commercial culture" in the 20th century by mass production of cultural objects by users in the early 21st century a progressive development? Or does it constitute a further stage in the development of the "culture industry" as analyzed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their 1944 book *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*? Indeed, if the 20th century subjects were simply consuming the products of culture industry, 21st century prosumers and "pro-ams" are passionately imitating it. That is, they now make their own cultural products that follow the templates established by the professionals and/or rely on professional content.

The case in point is anime music videos (often abbreviated as AMV). My search for "anime music videos" on YouTube on February 7, 2008 returned 250,000 videos.[12]

De Certeau makes a distinction between "strategies" used by institutions and power structures and "tactics" used by modern subjects in their everyday life. The tactics are the ways in which individuals negotiate strategies that were set for them.

Animemusicvideos.org, the main web portal for anime music video makers (before the action moved to YouTube) contained 130,510 AMVs as of February 9, 2008. AMVs are made by fans who edit together clips from one or more anime series to music, which comes from a different source such as professional music videos. Sometimes, AMVs also use cut-scene footage from video games. In the last few years, AMVs makers also started to increasingly add visual effects available in software such as After Effects. But regardless of the particular sources used and their combination, in the majority of AMVs all video and music comes from commercial media products. AMV makers see themselves as editors who re-edit the original material, rather than as filmmakers or animators who create from scratch.[13]

To help us analyze AMV culture, let's put to work the categories set up by Michel de Certeau in his 1980 book *The Practice of Everyday Life*.[14] De Certeau makes a distinction between "strategies" used by institutions and power structures, and "tactics" used by modern subjects in their everyday life. The tactics are the ways in which individuals negotiate strategies that were set for them. For instance, to take one example discussed by De Certeau, a city's layout, signage, driving and parking rules and official maps are strategies created by the government and companies. The ways an individual is moving through the city, taking shortcuts, wandering aimlessly, navigating through

favorite routes and adopting others are tactics. In other words, an individual can't physically reorganize the city but she can adapt it to her needs by choosing how she moves through it. A tactic "expects to have to work on things in order to make them its own, or to make them 'habitable.'"[15]

As De Certeau points out, in modern societies most of the objects which people use in their everyday life are mass-produced goods; these goods are the expressions of strategies of designers, producers, and marketers. People build their worlds and identities out of these readily available objects by using different tactics: bricolage, assembly, customization, and – to use the term which was not a part of De Certeau's vocabulary but which has become important today – remix. For instance, people rarely wear every piece from one designer as they appear in fashion shows: they usually mix and match different pieces from different sources. They also wear clothing pieces in different ways than they were intended, and they customize the clothes themselves through buttons, belts, and other accessories. The same goes for the ways in which people decorate their living spaces, prepare meals, and in general construct their lifestyles.

While the general ideas of *The Practice of Everyday Life* still provide an excellent intellectual paradigm available for thinking about the vernacular culture, since the book was published in the 1980s many things have also changed in important ways. These changes are less drastic in the area of governance, although even there we see moves towards more transparency and visibility. But in the area of consumer economy, the changes have been quite substantial. Strategies and tactics are now often closely linked in an interactive relationship, and often their features are reversed. This is particularly true for "born digital" industries and media such as software, computer games, websites, and social networks.

Their products are explicitly designed to be customized by the users. Think, for instance, of the original Graphical User Interface (popularized by Apple's Macintosh in 1984), which allows the user to customize the appearance and functions of the computer and the applications to her liking. The same applies to recent web interfaces – for instance, iGoogle which allows the user to set up a custom home page selecting from many applications and information sources. Facebook, Flickr, Google and other social media companies encourage others to write applications, which mash-up their data and add new services (as of early 2008, Facebook hosted over 15,000 applications written by outside developers.) The explicit design for customization is not limited to the web: for instance, many computer games ship with an editor that allows the users to create their own levels.

Although the industries dealing with the physical world are moving at a much slower pace, they are on the same trajectory. In 2003 Toyota introduced Scion cars. Scion marketing was centered on the idea of extensive customization. Nike, Adidas, and Puma all experimented with allowing the consumers to design and order their own shoes by choosing from a broad range of shoe parts. (In the case of the Puma Mongolian Barbeque concept, a few thousand unique shoes can be constructed.[16]) In early 2008 Bug Labs introduced what they called "the Lego of gadgets": an open-sourced consumer electronics platform consisting of a minicomputer and modules such as a digital camera or a LCD screen.[17] The recent celebration of DIY practice in various consumer industries is another example of this growing trend.

In short: during the time since the publication of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, companies have developed new kinds of strategies. These strategies mimic people's tactics of bricolage, re-assembly and remix.

In other words: the logic of tactics has now become the logic of strategies.

The Web 2.0 paradigm represents the most dramatic reconfiguration of the strategies/ tactics relationship to date. According to De Certeau's original analysis, tactics do not necessary result in objects or anything stable or permanent: "Unlike the strategy, it [the tactic] lacks the centralized structure and permanence that would enable it to set itself up as a competitor to some other entity… it renders its own activities an 'unmappable' form of subversion."[18] Since the 1980s, however, consumer and culture industries have started to systematically turn every subculture (particularly every youth subculture) into a product. In short, the cultural tactics evolved by people were turned into strategies now sold to them. If you want to "oppose the mainstream," you now had plenty of lifestyles available – with every subcultural aspect, from music and visual styles to clothes and slang – available for purchase.

These adaptations, however, still focused on distinct subculturs: bohemians, hip-hop and rap, Lolita fashion, rock, punk, skin head, Goth, etc.[19] However, in 2000s, the transformation of people's tactics into business strategies went into a new direction. The developments of the previous decade – the Web platform, the dramatically decreased costs of the consumer electronics devices for media capture and playback, increased global travel, and the growing consumer economies of many countries which after 1990 joined the "global world" – led to the explosion of user-generated "content" available in digital form: websites, blogs, forum discussions, short messages, digital photo, video, music, maps, and so on. Responding to this explosion, Web 2.0 companies created powerful platforms designed to host this content. MySpace, Facebook, Livejournal, Blogger, Flickr, YouTube, h5 (Central America), Cyworld (Korea), Wretch (Taiwan), Orkut

(Brazil), Baidu (China), and thousands of other social media sites make this content instantly available worldwide (except, of course, in countries which block or filter these sites). Thus, not just particular features of particular subcultures but the details of the everyday life of hundreds of millions of people who make and upload their media or write blogs became public.

What before was ephemeral, transient, unmappable, and invisible becomes permanent, mappable, and viewable. Social media platforms give users unlimited space for storage and plenty of tools to organize, promote, and broadcast their thoughts, opinions, behavior, and media to others. You can already directly stream video using your laptop or mobile phone, and it is only a matter of time before constant broadcasting of one's life becomes as common as email. If you follow the evolution from MyLifeBits project (2001-) to Slife software (2007-) and Yahoo! Live personal broadcasting service (2008-), the trajectory towards constant capture and broadcasting of one's everyday life is clear.

According to De Certeau's 1980 analysis, strategy "is engaged in the work of systematizing, of imposing order… its ways are set. It cannot be expected to be capable of breaking up and regrouping easily, something which a tactical model does naturally." The

Since the companies which create social media platforms make money from having as many users as possible visit them (they do so serving ads, by selling data about usage to other companies, to selling ad-on services, etc.), they have a direct interest in having users pour as much of their lives into these platforms as possible.

strategies used by social media companies today, however, are the exact opposite: they are focused on flexibility and constant chance. (Of course, all businesses in the age of globalization had to become adaptable, mobile, flexible, and ready to break up and regroup – but they rarely achieve the flexibility of web companies and developers.[20]) According to Tim O'Reilly, who originally defined the term Web 2.0 in 2004, one important feature of Web 2.0 applications is "design for 'hackability' and remixability."[21] Thus, most major Web 2.0 companies – Amazon, eBay, Flickr, Google, Microsoft, Yahoo and YouTube – make available their programming interfaces and some of their data to encourage others to create new applications using this data.[22]

In summary, today strategies used by social media companies often look more like tactics in the original formulation by De Certeau – while tactics look strategies. Since the companies which create social media platforms make money from having as many users as possible visit them (they do so serving ads, by selling data about usage to other companies, to selling ad-on services, etc.), they have a direct interest in having users pour as much of their lives into these platforms as possible. Consequently, they give users unlimited storage space for their media, the ability to customize their "online lives" (for instance, by controlling what is seen by whom) and expand the functionality of the platforms themselves.

This, however, does not mean strategies and tactics have completely exchanged places. If we look at the actual media content produced by users, here the strategies/tactics relationship is different. As I already mentioned, for many decades companies have been systematically turning the elements of various subcultures developed by people into commercial products. But these subcultures themselves, however, are rarely developed completely from scratch – rather, they are the result of cultural appropriation and/or remix of earlier

commercial culture by people.[23] The AMV subculture is a case in point. On the other hand, it exemplifies the new "strategies as tactics" phenomenon: AMVs are hosted on mainstream social media sites such as YouTube, so they are not exactly "transient" or "unmappable" (since you can use a search engine to find them, see how other users rated them, and so on). On the other hand, on the level of content, it is a "practice of everyday life," as the great majority of AMVs consist of segments lifted from commercial anime shows and commercial music. This does not mean that the best AMVs are not creative or original – only that their creativity is different from the romantic/ modernist model of "making it new." To use De Certeau's terms, we can describe it as "tactical creativity" which "expects to have to work on things in order to make them its own, or to make them 'habitable.'"

Conversations through Media

So far I have discussed social media using the old familiar terms. However, the very terms which I was evoking so far – content, a cultural object, cultural production and cultural consumption – are redefined by Web 2.0 practices.

We see new kinds of communication where content, opinion, and conversation often can't be clearly separated. Blogs are a good example of this: lots of blog entries are comments by a blog writer about an item that s/he copied from another source. Or think about forums or comments below a website entry where an original post may generate a long discussion which often goes into new and original directions with the original item long forgotten.

Often "content," "news" or "media" become tokens used to initiate or maintain a conversation. Their original meaning is less important than their function as such tokens. I am thinking here of people posting pictures on each other's pages

on MySpace, or exchanging gifts on Facebook. What kind of gift you get is less important than the act of getting a gift, or posting a comment or a picture. Although it may appear that such conversations simply foreground Roman Jakobson's emotive and/or phatic communication functions[24] described already in 1960, it is also possible that a detailed analysis will show them as being a genuinely new phenomenon.

The beginnings of such analysis can be found in the work of Adrian Chan. As he points out, "All cultures practice the exchange of tokens that bear and carry meanings, communicate interest and count as personal and social transactions." Token gestures "cue, signal, indicate users' interests in one another." While the use of tokens in not unique to networked social media, some of the features pointed by Chan do appear to be new. For instance, as Chan notes, the use of tokens is often "accompanied by ambiguity of intent and motive (the token's meaning may be codified while the user's motive for using it may not). This can double up the meaning of interaction and communication, allowing the recipients of tokens to respond to the token or to the user behind its use."[25]

Consider another very interesting new communication situation: "a conversation around a piece of media" – for instance comments added by users below somebody's Flickr photo or YouTube video which do not only respond to the media object but also to each other.[26] (The same is often true of comments, reviews and discussions on the web in general – the object in question can be software, a film, a previous post, etc.) Of course, such conversation structures are also common in real life: think of a typical discussion in a graduate film studies class, for instance. However, web infrastructure and software allow such conversations to become distributed in space and time – people can respond to each other regardless of their location and the

conversation can in theory go on forever. (The web is millions of such conversations taking place at the same time.) These conversations are quite common: according to the report by Pew Internet & American Life Project (12/19/2007), among U.S. teens who post photos online, 89% reported that people comment on these photos at least some of the time.[27]

Equally interesting is "conversation which takes place through images or video" – for instance, responding to a video with a new video. This, in fact, is a standard feature of YouTube interface.[28] (Note that all examples of interfaces, features, and common uses of social media sites refer to early 2008; obviously details may change by the time you read this.) While social media sites contain huge numbers of such conversations through media, for me the most interesting case so far is a five-minute theoretical video *Web 2.0... The Machine is Us/ing Us* posted by a cultural anthropologist, Michael Wesch, on January 31, 2007.[29] A year later this video was watched 4,638,265 times.[30] It has also generated 28 video responses that range from short 30-second comments to equally theoretical and carefully crafted long videos.

Just as it is the case with any other feature of contemporary digital culture, it is always possible to find some precedents for any of these communication situations. For instance, modern art can be understood as conversations between different artists or artistic schools. That is, one artist/movement is responding to the work produced earlier by another artist/movement. Thus, modernists in general are reacting against classical 19th century culture; Jasper Johns and other pop-artists react to abstract expressionism; Godard reacts to Hollywood-style narrative cinema; and so on. To use the terms of YouTube, we can say that Godard posts his video response to one huge clip called "classical narrative cinema." But the Hollywood studios do not respond – at least not for another 30 years.

As can be seen from these examples, typically these conversations between artists and artistic schools were not full conversations. One artist/school produced something, another artist/school later responded with their own productions, and this was all. The first art/school usually did not respond. But beginning in the 1980s, professional media practices begin to respond to each other more quickly, and the conversations are no longer one-way. Music videos affect the editing strategies of feature films and television; similarly, today the aesthetics of motion graphics is slipping into narrative features. Cinematography, which before only existed in films, is taken up in video games, and so on. But these conversations are still different from the "communication between individuals through media" in a networked environment. In the case of Web 2.0, we see individuals directly talking to each other using media rather than just professional producers.

Is Art After Web 2.0 still possible?

Have professional artists (including video and media artists) benefited from the explosion of media content being produced online by regular users, and from the easy availability of media publishing platforms? Does the fact that we now have platforms on which anybody can publish their videos and charge for the downloads mean that artists have a new distribution channel for their works? Or is the world of social media – hundreds of millions of people daily uploading and downloading video, audio, and photographs; media objects produced by unknown authors getting millions of downloads; media objects fluently and rapidly moving between users, devices, contexts, and networks – making professional art irrelevant? In short, while modern artists have so far successfully met the challenges of each generation of media technologies, can professional art survive extreme democratization of media production and access?

On one level, this question is meaningless. Surely, never in the history of modern art it has been doing so well commercially. No longer a pursuit for a few, contemporary art has become another form of mass culture. Its popularity is often equal to that of other mass media. Most importantly, contemporary art has become a legitimate investment category, and with all the money invested in it, it is unlikely that this market will ever collapse. (Of course, history has repeatedly shown that the most stable political regimes do eventually collapse.)

In a certain sense, since the beginnings of globalization in the early 1990s, the number of participants in the institution called "contemporary art" has experienced a growth which parallels the rise of social media in this decade. Since the early 1990s, many new countries entered the "global world" and adopted western values in their cultural politics. This includes supporting, collecting, and promoting "contemporary art." Thus, today Shanghai already has not just one but three museums of contemporary art plus more large-size spaces that show contemporary art than New York or London. A number of starchitects such as Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid are now building museums and cultural centers on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi. Rem Koolhaas is building a new museum of contemporary art in Riga. I could continue this list, but you get the idea.

In the case of social media, the unprecedented growth in the number of people who upload and view each other's media led to lots of innovation. While the typical diary video or anime on YouTube may not be that special, enough are. In fact, in all media where the technologies of production were democratized (video, music, animation, graphic design, etc.), I have come across many projects which not only rival those produced by most well-known commercial companies and most well-known

artists but also often explore new areas not yet touched by those with large amounts of symbolic capital.

Who is creating these projects? In my observations, while some of these projects do come from prototypical "amateurs," "prosumers" and "pro-ams," most are done by young professionals, or professionals in training. The emergence of the Web as the new standard communication medium in the 1990s means that today in most cultural fields every professional or company, regardless of its size and geographical location, has a web presence and posts new works online. Perhaps most importantly, young design students can now put their works before a global audience, see what others are doing, and together develop new tools (for instance, the processing.org community).

Note that we are not talking about "classical" social media or "classical" user-generated content here, since, at least at present, many of such portfolios, sample projects and demo reels are being uploaded on companies' own websites and specialized aggregation sites known to people in the field. Here are some examples of such sites that I consult regularly: xplsv.tv (motion graphics, animation), coroflot.com (design portfolios from around the world), archinect.com (architecture students projects), infosthetics.com (information visualization). In my view, the significant percentage of works you find on these websites represents the most innovative cultural production done today. Or at least, they make it clear that the world of professional art has no special license on creativity and innovation.

But perhaps the most conceptual innovation has come about in the development of the Web 2.0 medium itself. I am thinking about all the new creative software tools – web mash-ups, Firefox plug-ins, Facebook applications, etc. – coming out from both large companies such as Google and from individual developers who are creating, and so on.

Therefore, the true challenge posed to art by social media may be not all the excellent cultural works produced by students and non-professionals which are now easily available online – although I do think this is also important. The real challenge may lie in the dynamics of Web 2.0 culture – its constant innovation, its energy, and its unpredictability.

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1. See Adrian Chan, "Social Media: Paradigm Shift?" http://www.gravity7.com/paradigm_shift_1.html, accessed February 11, 2008.

2. *Ibid.*

3. "The Long Tail" was coined by Cris Anderson in 2004. See Cris Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired* 10.12 (October 2008), http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/12.10/tail.html, accessed February 11, 2008.

4. More "long tail" statistics can be found in Tom Michael, "The Long Tail of Search," September 17, 2007, http://www.zoekmachine-marketing-blog.com/artikels/white-paperthe-long-tail-of-search/, accessed February 11, 2008.

5. http://www.alexa.com/site/help/traffic_learn_more, accessed February 7, 2008.

6. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myspace, accessed February 7, 2008.

7. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyworld, accessed February 7, 2008.

8. http://www.pipl.com/statistics/social-networks/sizegrowth/, accessed February 11, 2008.

9. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook, accessed February 7, 2008.

10. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youtube, accessed February 7, 2008.

11. According to research conducted by Michael Wesch, in early 2007 YouTube contained approximately 14% commercially produced videos. Michael Wesch, Presentation at panel 1, DIY Video Summit, University of Southern California, February 28, http://www.video24-7.org/panels.

12. http://www.youtube.com, accessed February 7, 2008.

13. Conversation with Tim Park from animemusicvideos.org, February 9, 2009.

14. Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du Quotidien.* Vol. 1, *Arts de Faire* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions 10/18, 1980). Translated into English as *The Practice of Everyday Life*; trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

15. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Practice_of_Every-day_Life, accessed February 8, 2008.

16. https://www.puma.com/secure/mbbq/, accessed February 8.

17. http://buglabs.net/, accessed February 8.

18. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Practice_of_Every-day_Life, accessed February 10, 2008.

19. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_subcultures_in_the_20th_century, accessed February 10.

20. Here is a typical statement coming from the business community: "Competition is changing overnight, and product lifecycles often last for just a few months. Permanence has been torn asunder. We are in a time that demands a new agility and flexibility: and everyone must have the skill and insight to prepare for a future that is rushing at them faster than ever before." Jim Caroll, *The Masters of Business Imagination Manifesto* aka *The Masters of Business Innovation*, http://www.jimcarroll.com/10s/10MBI.htm, accessed February 11, 2008.

21. http://www.oreillynet.com/pub/a/oreilly/tim/news/2005/09/30/what-is-web-20.html?page=4, accessed February 8.

22. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mashup_%28web_application_hybrid%29, accessed February 11, 2008.

23. See a very interesting feature in *Wired* which describes a creative relationship between commercial manga publishers and fans in Japan. The *Wired* story quotes Keiji Takeda, one of the main organizers of fan conventions in Japan as saying "This is where [convention floor] we're finding the next generation of authors. The publishers understand the value of not destroying that." Qtd. in Daniel H. Pink, "Japan, Ink: Inside the Manga Industrial Complex," *Wired 15.11*, 10.22.2007, http://www.wired.com/techbiz/media/magazine/15-11/ff_manga?current Page=3

24. Roman Jakobson, http://www.signosemio.com/jakobson/a_fonctions.asp, accessed February 7, 2008.

25. http://www.gravity7.com/paradigm_shift_1.html, accessed February 11, 2008.

26. According to a survey conducted in 2007, 13% of internet users who watch video also post comments about the videos. This number, however, does not tell how many of these comments are responses to other comments. See the Pew/Internet & American Life Project, Technology and Media use Report, 7/25/2007, http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/219/report_display.asp, accessed February 11, 2008.

27. http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/230/report_display.asp, accessed February 11, 2008.

28. The phenomenon of "conversation through media" was first pointed to by Derek Lomas in 2006 in relation to comments on MySpace pages.

29. http://youtube.com/watch?v=6gmP4nk0EOE, accessed February 8, 2008.

30. *Ibid.*

Publics and Counterpublics, CAAC 2010. Photo: Guillermo Mendo

From and About the Spectator's Position

Juan Antonio Álvarez Reyes

The *Publics and Counterpublics* project attempts to examine the position of the spectator in contemporary visual culture. To do this, the spectator's perspective is used allegorically from a twin point of view. On the one hand, in terms of his or her vision; that is, from what the spectator sees, be this stage, screen or display system. On the other, the gaze is used to look at such spectators, at their behavior and at the place they occupy or which is reserved for them in the different systems. This twin viewpoint might well be visualized in two works on show in the exhibition. Firstly, in the video by Ernst Schmidt Jr., which is about opening and closing the space of representation through the interplay of the opening and closing of curtains that permit or do not permit a performance to be seen, just as this action marks the beginning and the end of the performance, and hence the position of the spectator as such. Secondly, in Sharon Lockhart's contribution, footage of the stalls full of people becomes a film about those same spectators who find themselves in the position traditionally reserved for them in the theater *all'italiana* and in cinema auditoria. The vision, therefore, from and about the spectator's position is basically what this exhibition is about. At the same time the interest of different artists in this twin point of view may be foregrounded in two other projects also included here. The piece by Antoni Muntadas is, at all events, a symbiosis of both visions, since in a double slide-projection it brings the gaze to bear on the transmitter (in this instance the television set) and on the receiver (the TV viewers). Meanwhile, Rainer Ganahl's photographs focus on another system for transmitting knowledge – the lecture as a genre – by lingering on the two main participants: those who elaborate and propagate the discourse (lecturers) and those who are in a position to receive it (the public).

In order to delve into the task of questioning the position of the spectator in contemporary visual culture, we proceed from two earlier essays that are considered to be fundamental as starting points for the discussion. Firstly, there is Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator*. In it the author posits the need to "piece together the network of presuppositions that place the issue of spectatorship at the center of the debate about the relationship between art and politics." In critical dialogue with the innovatory theatrical tradition that has, throughout the 20th century, attempted to break down the barriers between public and actors, Rancière states that "Spectatorship is not the passivity that has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation." In a way, and alluding to the title of his essay, he concludes that "in fact the emancipation of the spectator lies in that power of associating and dissociating; that is, the emancipation of each of us as spectators." Secondly, there is Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics*, the essay that, moreover, lends its name to this exhibition. In it, Warner remarks that the public "is a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself," at the same time as he warns that as such it only "exists by virtue of being addressed" and that it has "some social basis." Namely, that the "public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse" which becomes reality through an active posture. Over and above these issues, Michael Warner's reasoning is especially interesting when he speaks of "counterpublics," that is, of those subaltern segments that are better recognized as "alternative counterpublics," in Nancy Fraser's words, although for Warner they are defined in opposition to a "dominant public."

The exhibition is articulated and organized around a series of axes, not so much in the exhibition space per se as conceptually. Thus, we proceed from the opening and closing of the space of representation symbolized by curtains that open or close on stages or projection screens. The exhibition gets under way, then, with works by Perejaume, Heimo Zobernig and

We proceed from two earlier essays that are considered to be fundamental as starting points for the discussion. Firstly, there is Jacques Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator*. Secondly, there is Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics,* the essay that lends its name to this exhibition.

Ernst Schmidt, inasmuch as the curtain (its opening and closing movement) allegorically involves that feature which provides a time frame for spectatorship. By way of contrast, the show comes almost physically to an end with Ann Hamilton's huge, motorized curtains. Next, it is the stage or place of representation that takes over with the works of Danica Dakić, Grazia Toderi, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer and Sharon Hayes (the first two through the image and the last two via the voice). For his part Isidoro Valcárcel Medina alludes, in his plans, to a space for the public that would have its exact opposite for the counterpublic and, in the staging of a long play of his, he offers the spectator a rigorously theatrical experience. In this exhibition Valcárcel Medina participates in practically all its conceptual axes through a selection of different projects and performances communicated by post.

The project's second organizational axis focuses directly on the public and the audience in two different sections. The first lingers over something that has been previously announced (mainly in Danica Dakić and Isidoro Valcárcel Medina): the spectator in the space of representation and/or exhibition, through the works of Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, Manon de Boer, Antoni Muntadas, Ulla von Brandenburg, Dan Graham and Judith Hopf. The second section has the receiver as sole protagonist in the works of Sharon Lockhart, Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller and Ryan Gander. The object of analysis is the public, individualized or collective, according to the arts it is confronted by and the different systems it is immersed in. In this axis, the existence is posited of different systems of vision and representation as an ideological transcription of a hypothetical "unity of the public," the immediate conclusion being that, as Michael Warner puts it, "there are as many shades of difference among publics as there are in modes of address, style, and spaces of circulation."

The third axis speaks of something Rancière alludes to in his essay as being typical of the evolution of the theater in the 20th century: the change of roles between actor and public. Hence, the spectator becomes a willing or unwilling actor (Dora García, Ant Hampton, Tom Marioni, Abramović/Ulay and Tellervo Kalleinen & Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen). The devices for achieving this are many and varied: from the invitation to participate actively through

more or less everyday acts not directly related to contemporary art (drinking beer or protesting while singing and socializing, in Marioni and the Kalleinens, respectively); following certain pre-established rituals (García and Hampton); or in an obligatory way (Abramović/Ulay) and an involuntary one (by recourse to mirrors in Graham and Hopf). At the same time, as a complementary concern, the actor confesses as such in the presence of the spectator (Katya Sander and Jérôme Bel), just as things come full circle in the video by Christoph Girardet & Matthias Müller, in which numerous actors play the part of the public. That is to say, in this axis and in relation to others highlighted above, a movement is produced that leads to the activating of the spectator by sundering his or her apparently passive role, while another movement is simultaneously produced that reveals the mechanisms by which representation is constructed, thus reversing and destroying those mechanisms and illusory conventions.

Lastly, the fourth thematic axis has as its basis the staging of the communication and reception of discourse. Namely, the lecture as a genre in the recent artistic landscape, which is often camouflaged in a hybrid format somewhere between presentation and representation, between the traditional format and that other kind that develops in the direction of performance, almost. The group of works brought together here might be seen as the expository presentation of a seminar that has this kind of new artistic genre as a central protagonist. In fact, much of the last bit of *Publics and Counterpublics* could be understood in this way, as a seminar or set of lectures unfolding in museum space in the form of an exhibition. The group of work collected here starts historically with Joseph Beuys and continues with Andrea Fraser, Nicoline van Harskamp, Rainer Ganahl, Seth Price and Mark Leckey, with all this bit of the show being understood as almost a seminar in itself on this particular instance of study, which is currently attracting a lot of attention on the international art scene.

At the same time that these four conceptual axes unfold, three moments have been highlighted during the spatial itinerary of the show as forming a direct dialogue between works from the 1960s and 70s and others from today. These three moments have been placed at the beginning, middle and end of the

exhibition. The first dialogue/re-appropriation occurs in the use Heimo Zobernig makes of the work of Ernst Schmidt Jr., of the curtains that continually open and close. Both share, therefore, the same space. The second, in the middle of the tour, relates a well-known performance by Dan Graham to a reactivation of it created by Judith Hopf by means of a new loop in which the new spectator also sees himself immersed in the performance, contemplating himself as a spectator of an earlier action. Lastly, the third moment at the end of the exhibition calls for two works from the past – a dialogue with the audience on the part of Joseph Beuys and the public's reaction to the nakedness of the artists in a well-known performance by Abramović/Ulay – and relates them to the words of welcome Andrea Fraser emits to the public at an opening while she gradually takes her clothes off.

Furthermore, the *Publics and Counterpublics* project does not start out from zero but dialogues more or less closely with other earlier exhibitions. There are, then, points in common – although they might be dissident ones – with *Un teatro sin teatro* (MACBA, Barcelona, 2007), *The Art of Participation* (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 2008), *The Death of the Audience* (Secession, Vienna, 2009) and *Move* (Hayward Gallery, London, 2010). It is akin to the first in the importance both attribute to theatrical experiments as articulators of the discourse of art, although what separates them is chronology and the focus of attention, since in Seville more contemporary works are privileged as against those of a more historical kind, and the film- and performance-based as against the purely theatrical. Linking it to the second and fourth is the section in which the spectator becomes an actor, but what differentiates them from the CAAC project is the insistence in the latter that those earlier exhibitions create as a possible way out for an emancipated spectator. That is, the belief in those exhibitions that the escape routes are derivations of a sort of relational aesthetics. Lastly, it mainly differs from the Vienna show in its title, since the idea of the development of publics and counterpublics, and the study of some of the mechanisms that intervene in their configuration and dramatization, become essential in the Andalusian project.

The artist and the public have long since ceased to be antagonists and have become, instead, mass-actors within a superstructure for which both work as mediators. In *Absorption and Theatricality* Michael Fried has traced the antagonism between artworks that establish a theatrical relationship with the spectator and those that ignore him, which treat him "as if he didn't exist." In his essay he defends a theory to do with French art of the 18th century that merits being heard and then being contrasted with other theories about the same historical moment in the shaping of modern political and aesthetic theories: the artist was to "find a way to neutralize or negate the beholder's presence, to establish the fiction that no one is standing before the canvas." This situation is deemed by Fried to be paradoxical, since "one was only able to attract the attention of the spectator and to keep it fixed on the painting through this negation." For his part, Thomas Crow – in *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* – has studied how something essential occurs in that period: "the gestation of a public space." Crow devotes time to studying the salons of Paris and the rise of a new artistic stratum, "the public" (and, inseparably linked to it, "the art press"), which annexes aesthetic experience and dissemination. Prior to this, Crow observes something that inevitably holds his interest: the relationship between "the Salon and the street," by investigating, first, exhibitions in the street in which pictures were displayed on the walls of Place Dauphine. That is, in contrast to Fried's theory that the painting of the period sought to negate the existence of the spectator, Crow investigates and argues that it is precisely in this period that the concept of a "public" and of "public space" appears. The two theories are not, for all that, antagonistic – instead, they work on different levels, levels that we somehow have to bear in mind within the complexity and the contradictions inherent in the public space of art, in the exhibition space.

> Michael Fried has traced the antagonism between artworks that establish a theatrical relationship with the spectator and those that ignore him, which treat him "as if he didn't exist."

The artist/public relationship, the dialogue between the two, contributes, according to Brian O'Doherty in *Inside the White Cube*, "a useful definition of the kind of society we have evolved." before going on to point out that each type of art has created a particular social structure, be it the concert hall, theater, cinema or gallery. To this it must be added that due to the assimilation of the artist's studio – mainly from minimal art onwards – many industrial spaces have become public spaces for the arts, and have become concert halls, theaters, cinemas or galleries. In that sense, all this changing of roles and of systems that are transmuted one into the other has also to do with what Brian O'Doherty says about how, starting with postmodernism, "the artist and audience are more like each other." This exhibition seeks to confirm the resemblance O'Doherty alludes to: actors (artists) acting as publics, audiences converted into actors, mechanisms that reveal artistic conventions, the opening and closing of representation, broadcasting and reception, and so forth. In fact the position of the spectator in contemporary visual culture is not only complex and multiple – it could acquire all the prominence and power it wishes to give itself. Its emancipation is only a question of volition and action.

All this changing of roles and of systems that are transmuted one into the other has also to do with what Brian O'Doherty says about how, starting with postmodernism, "the artist and audience are more like each other."

Publics and Counterpublics. Installation view of Seth Price: *Redistribution* at CAAC 2010. Photo: Guillermo Mendo

Publics and Counterpublics. Works in exhibition

Abramović/Ulay

Imponderabilia

1977, video, b/w, sound, 9'53"
Photo: Giovanna dal Magro
Courtesy of the artists and
La Fábrica Galería, Madrid

Imponderabilia is the title of an
action carried out by the artistic
couple Abramović/Ulay at the
Galleria Communale d'Arte
Moderna in Bologna.
Imponderabilia explores the
reaction of visitors on entering an
exhibition space. In the course of
the action the two artists stood
naked at the entrance to the
museum. Visitors had a narrow
space available to them and were
obliged to have physical contact
with the artists, at the same time as
they had to decide which way they
faced as they entered. Indirectly,
they were obliged to choose
between the man and the woman.
Once inside the gallery, the visitors
discovered they had been filmed by
a hidden camera. A text on the wall
defined the word *imponderable*:
"Such imponderable human factors
as one's aesthetic sensitivity/the
overriding importance of
imponderables in determining
human conduct." (Montse Badía)

Jérôme Bel

Véronique Doisneau

2004, video, colour, sound, 32'
Courtesy of the artist and Telmondis

Véronique Doisneau is a film that
depicts the choreography created
by Jérôme Bel about the complex
relations between the youth and
maturity of a woman. Véronique
Doisneau is the name of the work
but also the real name of the main
figure, a woman of 42, dressed in a
pale pink rehearsal sweater from
when she was a young ballerina.
Véronique Doisneau talks about her
life as a member of the *corps de
ballet* at the Paris Opéra, about her
salary and her children, revealing a
mature person who has a normal
relationship to her work, until the
moment she is asked if perhaps she
did not have enough talent to
become a prima ballerina. Between
reality itself and what she could
have been, Doisneau recreates her
youthful dreams and at the same
time presents herself as the main
protagonist and narrator of her own
story. (MB)

Joseph Beuys

Dialogue with Audience

1980, video, colour and b/w,
sound, 50'19"
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
(EAI), New York

*Joseph Beuys. Dialogue with
Audience* is an historic document
that records the talk and
discussion that took place between
the artist and audience gathered
on 7 January 1980 at Cooper
Union in New York. A paradigmatic
figure in art's link with any form
of social organization, and, as a
consequence of his political ideas,
in direct encounters with the
public, Beuys speaks in a relaxed,
direct way about his life, his
conception of art and what he
calls social sculpture. Beuys
emphasizes his defense of human
nature, "profound and free," and
advocates the possibility of
changing society on the basis of
individual conscience, "a long road
that ought to begin with teaching."
(MB)

Danica Dakić

Isola Bella

2007-2008, video-projection, colour, sound, posters, texts, masks, 19'8"
Courtesy of the artist

Using a poetic approach, Danica Dakić's work explores the formation of identity, especially among marginalized or displaced groups of people. *Isola Bella* films a theatrical performance by a group of mental patients in a home in Pazarić, Bosnia, who had carried on during the war as if nothing were happening. Dakić creates an environment for her video, with posters on the wall that reproduce *Isola Bella*, an island without buildings that harks back to the idea of paradise. Filmed in a small hall, the performance does not distinguish between scenic space and the space for the audience. (MB)

Manon de Boer

Two Times 4'33"

2008, video, colour, 4'33"
Courtesy of Jan Mot, Brussels

Two Times 4'33" is based on John Cage's famous composition *4'33"*. Manon de Boer invited pianist Jean-Luc Fafchamps to do two performances of the same piece. The artist filmed both. The first was recorded with the sound of the public and background noise, while the second is shown in complete silence. In both, the camera focuses on the pianist, approaches the people who make up the public, travels outside the studio and disappears into the landscape. The fact of showing the same performance with and without sound means that the spectator's perception in relation to time and space may be seen as being totally conditioned. (MB)

Andrea Fraser

Official Welcome

2001, video, colour, sound, 30'32"
Courtesy of Galerie Christian Nagel, Cologne/Berlin/Antwerp

Official Welcome is a performance by Andrea Fraser commissioned by the MICA Foundation for a private reception. In it the artist repeated the banal formal comments that are customarily pronounced in prize-giving ceremonies. In her discourse the artist personifies different character types pertaining to the art world. In the meantime she gradually takes off her clothes until all she has on is a set of Gucci underwear, while saying, "I'm not a person today. I'm an object in an artwork." In underlining such paradoxes Fraser makes an institutional critique that is not without self-criticism, as well as being full of intelligence and humor. (MB)

Rainer Ganahl
Seminars/Lectures

Daniel Barenboim, Edward Said, Music and Society, moderator, Michael Kimmelman, **The New School, New York, 10/1/2002.** Series of 2.

Cornel West, Rem Koolhaas, Conversation 2, pragmatist imagination, **The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 11/10/2000.** Series of 2.

Rosalyn Deutsche, Walter Hood, Martha Rosler, Roger Sherman, Moderator: Raymond Gastil, Public space and the public, pragmatist imagination, **The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 11/11/2000.** Series of 3.

Paul Ricoeur, Paul Ricoeur, moderated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, **Columbia University, New York 10/19/1999.** Series of 2.

Series. Digital prints.
Courtesy of Elaine Levy Project, Brussels; Alex Zachary, New York; Fruit and Flower Deli, Stockholm

Seminars/Lectures is an archive of photographs taken during university classes and lectures. The images show not only the person giving the class or lecture but also the student public and the occasional slide or projection shown at the time. In this way *Seminars/Lectures* displays the production and exchange of knowledge, and also the way in which intellectuals present themselves. The photographs are taken from the point of view of a member of the public. They involve Ganahl's presence at these events, in the course of which he often photographs and participates actively in the debate. (MB)

Ryan Gander
We Are Constant

2009. Digital print.
Courtesy of the artist

We Are Constant is the portrayal of an art fair, Frieze. The artist installed a photography studio and offered to make portraits of visitors looking at a work of interest to them. The portrait was immediately printed, with a copy being given to the protagonist, and another copy going on to form part of the installation the artist was preparing in the access corridor to the fair. *We Are Constant* is a comment on artistic consumerism, on the construction of the fair as a spectacle and as a social event, and, finally, turns into a portrait of that same fair, not in terms of what is on show, but of its visitors. (MB)

Dora García
La esfinge

(The Sphinx)
2004, photograph and paper.
CAAC collection

La esfinge is a global project by
Dora García incorporating a
performance that led to a
photographic document and an
artwork in internet. In the
performance a young woman went
every day to an exhibition by the
artist with the aim of finding,
among the public, someone who
could respond correctly to three
questions. If the replies were
wrong the game was over, and if
they were right, on coinciding with
the replies of the artist, the winning
person was congratulated by the
woman, The Sphinx, before being
photographed with her and assured
of being sent a photograph and a
certificate by the author. The next
day the performance was repeated,
thus giving rise to individual
photographs that could be
considered a collective portrait of
the winning visitors. (Margarita
Aizpuru)

**Christoph Girardet &
Matthias Müller**
Play

2003, video, colour, sound, 7'20"
Sánchez-Ubiría Collection

Girardet & Müller's work focuses
on found footage and the
derivatives of the film diary. As in
other earlier pieces, in *Play* they
re-elaborate and invent by using
film footage taken from the history
of cinema, in particular classic
melodramas. Unlike earlier works,
Play, like *Pianoforte* or *Kristall*, is
immersed in the more specific
qualities of the medium itself. In
short, *Play* is a loop film that puts
the cinema and theatre public on
the stage. In the film a series of
fluctuations in the public, caused
by different motives and emotions,
forms a continuity of reactions
drawn from various American
movies. (MB)

Dan Graham
Performer/Audience/Mirror

1977, video, b/w, sound, 22'52"
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
(EAI), New York

In *Performer/Audience/Mirror* Dan
Graham uses video to document an
investigation into perception and
the real time of reaction. The
performance redounds directly on
the public, which is captured live
by the artist, while the space is
duplicated through being reflected
in the mirror. Graham reflects on
video by utilizing the mirror
situated at his back as a monitor in
which the public can see itself
while it listens to the descriptions
of the situation improvised by Dan
Graham. The title of this work is not
only descriptive – instead, it
announces the complexity of the
combinations and reflections that
can be generated between the three
elements of performer, public and
mirror. (MB)

Ann Hamilton

(appeals)

2003-2010, installation; fabric, motor, sound.
Courtesy of the artist

(appeals) is an audio-installation in which a series of curtains intermittently open and close with the help of a motor while a mix of individual voices can be heard speaking fragments of quoted testimony from the political tribunals in The Hague following the ethnic violence in Bosnia. The spectator gradually goes through them and begins to form part of the convention we call representation, albeit in a situation in which s/he is no longer in the space of the viewer or that of the actor. In her work Ann Hamilton utilizes time as both process and material. She is accustomed to inviting the viewer to experience an "immersion" in environments or situations in which s/he is confronted by sensorial experiences as well as evocations of memory and imagination. (MB)

Ant Hampton & Glen Neath

The Bench

2010, 45' experience for 2 people; bench, light box, audio, mp3, computer.
Courtesy of the artists

The Bench is a 45 minute experience for two strangers, and forms part of Ant Hampton's self-theatre project: self-generated performances, whereby participants follow instructions for what to say and do, often via headphones. By simply listening and responding accordingly the dialogue and small movements fall into place. Before beginning the experience (involving dialogue written by Glen Neath, here translated into Spanish by the Argentinian writer and critic Alan Pauls), the participants make their contribution to the work by "curating" the encounter themselves: each thinks of someone who the other hasn't met, and arranges for them to meet on *The Bench*. It is also possible to experience *The Bench* with a random stranger.
The Bench adopts an expanded notion of performance based on the idea that circumstantially bringing two people together may become a creative act. (MB)

Sharon Hayes

I March In The Parade Of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free

2007-2008, audio-installation, 9'18" PA speaker, mp3 player and a framed poster.
Courtesy of Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin

Sharon Hayes utilizes performances, video and installations to create situations that demonstrate the frictions that exist between the public and the private, collective activities and personal actions. She draws her inspiration from political language and theatre art to mount protests, speeches, demonstrations and marches.
I March In The Parade Of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free is a sound installation that describes the feeling of loss and disorientation when a personal relationship ends and also when political systems forego their principles. The artist uses the language of political speechmaking to read love letters out loud, the aim being to communicate her feelings about the war in Iraq and the rights of homosexuals in the United States. (MB)

Judith Hopf

What Do You Look Like? A Crypto Demonic Mystery

2007, video-installation; mirrors, colour, sound, 7'
Courtesy of Galerie Andreas Huber, Vienna; Croy Nielsen, Berlin

The video *What Do You Look Like? A Crypto Demonic Mystery* is the recording of a performance by the artist, and involves a reenactment of the performance by Dan Graham, *Performer/Audience/Mirror*. In this instance the artist explores the relationships between corporeality and mediatized reaction, since the video that records the performance confronts a new spectator with his/her own image in the mirror. The statement *What Do You Look Like? A Crypto Demonic Mystery* proceeds from the assumption that nobody is capable of discovering what they look like. This type of "inner innocence" vis-à-vis visual and physical appearance may be considered a *sine qua non* that is conducive to a certain flexibility in relationships: the relations between the viewer and the object under observation. (MB)

Tellervo Kalleinen & Oliver Kochta-Kalleinen

The Complaints Choirs Project

2005-2010, 4-channel video-installation, colour, sound, 67'
Courtesy of the artists

A word exists in Finnish, *valituskuoro*, which means "the complaints choir." This inspired the artistic couple Kalleinen and Kochta-Kalleinen to embark on their *Complaints Choir Project*. The lyrics of complaint are perfectly adapted to the choir music. Given that complaining is a universal attitude, the artists offered the concept at different events and invited other to perform it on their own behalf. As of now there have been *Complaints Choirs* in different cities of the world, such as Birmingham, Philadelphia, Hong Kong, Gothenburg and Buenos Aires. The performances have been documented and the artists present them in installation form in art centres or else on their webpage. (MB)

Mark Leckey

Cinema in the Round

2006-2008, video, colour, sound, 40'
Courtesy of the artist and Cabinet, London

Mark Leckey began making a series of performance-cum-lectures in order to escape the excess of information relating to his teaching work in the Staedelschule in Frankfurt. In this process an ongoing issue is the purpose of art. In his presentation Leckey offers a refreshing and heterodox reading of art and cinema history. One of his approaches is to ask how a cinematic image may become an object, sculpture, monument or "beast." The movie *Titanic*, the artist Philip Guston, the animated cartoons of Felix the Cat and the paintings of Georg Baselitz are some of the references that come up in an eclectic discourse teeming with intelligent reflections and questions. (MB)

Sharon Lockhart
Teatro Amazonas

1999, 35mm, colour, 40'
Courtesy of the artist and
neugerriemschneider, Berlin

Teatro Amazonas is a film shot in
the opera house in Manaus, a
setting the artist knew through
Werner Herzog's movie *Fitzcarraldo*.
Along with an anthropologist, the
artist did a screen test among the
local people to select the 308 who
would form the public. The camera
films the audience from the theatre
stage, while an off-screen choir
sings a minimalist piece by Becky
Allen that gradually ceases being
heard. Progressively the sound
generated by the public acquires
the leading role. At no time do we
see what the public is seeing.
Teatro Amazonas is about the
experience of the public, turning
the spectators into the audience of
another public. (MB)

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer
Voz Alta

(Loud Voice)
HD video with stereo sound,
colour, 16'19"
Courtesy of the artist

Voz Alta documents a project
carried out in public space on
the occasion of the fortieth
anniversary of the student
massacre in Tlatelolco in 1968.
The participants were able to
speak through a megaphone
located in the Plaza de las Tres
Culturas, the site of the massacre.
The megaphone amplified the voice
to 10kW and a light projected the
voice in a sequence of flashes.
The stronger the voice, the brighter
the light. On hitting the upper part
of the former Ministry of Foreign
Affairs building, today the
Tlatelolco Cultural Center, the ray
of light split into three beams
pointing to different places: one
towards the north, another towards
Plaza del Zócalo, and a third
towards the Monument to the
Revolution. In this way the voice
was projected throughout the city
and also retransmitted via the
radio. (MB)

Tom Marioni
Golden Rectangle #2
(An Aid to Communication)

2010, installation; wood shelves,
empty beer bottles.
Courtesy of the artist and Crown
Point Press

The Golden Rectangle combines
analytical and sacred aspects and
reflects the artist's interest in Zen
Buddhism and in developing an art
of participation. The piece forms
part of a wider framework based
on the concept of "golden" as a
synonym of "perfect proportions."
Invited to follow a path leading to
the Temple of Geometry, visitors
enter a symbolic Japanese
teahouse, with its different features
and crammed with bottles of beer.
Drinking beer becomes not only a
social act but also a ritual. In this
way the artist establishes links
between the sacred and the
colloquial, between contemplation
and the social. (MB)

Antoni Muntadas
Emisión-recepción

(Emission-Reception)
1973-1974, double slides
projection.
Courtesy of Museum of
Contemporary Art Antwerp, MuHKA

Emisión-recepción is a piece
typical of the works in which
Muntadas portrayed the
sound/visual and TV
communication of the day, in
particular the dialectic between the
transmission and reception of
television content. This is a portrait
of the "media landscape" the artist
has gone on exploring since that
time. *Emisión-recepción* – which
literally shows images of the
transmitter, the television set and
of the receiver, the audiences –
can be considered as the origin of a
genealogy of works that explore
what the artist has defined as the
"invisible mechanisms" through
which information is manipulated.
This premise has governed many of
his subsequent works, especially in
the *On Translation* project. (MB)

Perejaume
Telón seguido

(Non-stop Curtain)
1999, video, colour, no sound,
10'8"
Courtesy of Galería Joan Prats

The video, which shows a curtain
that the camera tracks over in an
upwards direction, reflects on the
elements that make up the
structure of performance, the
theatrical and *mise-en-scène*. In
a statement the artist explained
that *Telón seguido* is "like a
twilight that never comes to an
end, a curtain that never stops
descending, because it works like
a loop. We did it by sewing the end
of one piece of velvet to a second
piece and with two cylinders."
Perejaume has often worked on
the theatre and the theatrical
event. He was also the creator of
the Liceo opera house ceiling, for
which he drew his inspiration from
mountains of red velvet seats.
(MB)
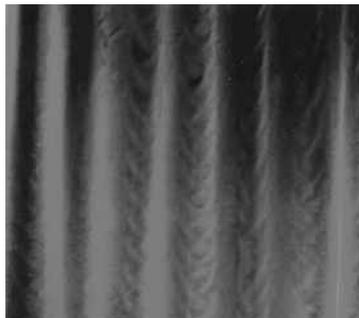
Seth Price
Redistribution

2008, video-projection, colour,
sound, 40'
Courtesy of Galerie Isabella
Bortolozzi, Berlin

Redistribution is the name Seth
Price gives to a multidisciplinary
work that includes video, sculpture,
sound, music and text. Price
utilizes strategies to do with
appropriation, recirculation and
recontextualization to analyze
issues relating to the production
and distribution of information and
the role ideology plays in this. As
Elizabeth Schambelan wrote in
Artforum: "Working in an expanded
range of media and subtly
deranging the strategies of mass-
cultural production (repackaging,
piracy), [Price] stakes out resistant,
rather than recuperative, positions
within the so-called space of
flows – the partly virtual, partly
physical field in which information,
culture, and capital circulate under
ever-increasing state and corporate
control." (MB)

Katya Sander

Televised I: The I, the Anchor and the Studio

2006, multi-channel video.
Horia Grusca, 40'25"
Cosmin Prelipceanu, 18'29"
Adriana Muraru, 15'29"
Courtesy of the artist

Katya Sander questions both herself and others about the role of the media, the kind of news the media communicate, how the news is communicated and what is communicated in each bit of news. Her research involves the editors/presenters of TV news programs and adopts the format of the televised news bulletin. In it the artist asks different presenters a series of generic questions about their role and their identification or distantiation in relation to the news they present and comment on. In this way the mechanisms of television are revealed and the role of the presenter is changed, with the latter becoming the interviewee. (MB)

Ernst Schmidt Jr.

Ja/Nein

(Yes/No)
1968, video, b/w, no sound,3'
Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien MUMOK Collection

Ernst Schmidt Jr. was one of the most important avant-garde filmmakers and theorists on the Viennese scene. *Ja/Nein* depicts a moving curtain projected on a real curtain that is itself in movement. The film was screened for the first time in 1968 and the projectionist was asked to synchronize the movements, both real and projected, as much as possible. For Schmidt, cinema is a form of research and discussion and his cinematic work must be understood as a transgression of film language and its techniques and genres. In that sense the identity of the image and the object, along with the identity of the location or the projection surface, were some his recurrent themes. (MB)

Grazia Toderi

Apollo

2003, video-projection, colour, sound, 19'08"
Courtesy of the artist

2003, series of 8 photographs.
Private collection

Grazia Toderi is accustomed to using play and performance spaces in her works. For her, stadiums, theatres and urban landscapes represent the relationship between personal and collective memories. In *Apollo,* Toderi offers a theatrical vision of the world via images of empty theatres. In her images, fixed and moving, the arches of the boxes and the paintings on the ceiling seem to double and reflect each other. The absence of a public becomes even more obvious with the presence of the Apollo spacecraft, which reinforces the feeling of loss. Toderi contrasts the world of imagination, represented by the theatre, with that of scientific research, in the form of Apollo. With such clear and simple elements as these the artist explores relationships in the universe and man's place in it. (MB)

Isidoro Valcárcel Medina
El Gran Teatro del Mundo

(The Great World Theatre)
1989, drawing on vegetable paper.
Private collection

Through very detailed plotting with
the ruler and compasses typical of
technical drawing, *El Gran Teatro
del Mundo* presents a study in
images of the different floors of a
theatre, with its plans and
elevations and diverse features
such as its seating. (MB)

**Isidoro Valcárcel Medina**
*Un autor en busca de seis
personajes*

(An Author in Search of Six
Characters)
2001, theatre play representation.
Courtesy of the artist

A reinterpretation of Pirandello's
play. The true director of the piece
is the prompter, who directs the
characters to their positions on
the stage until, based on the
movements of the character who
represents the playwright, these
fulfill all the combinations of
position possible. The play script
the public attending the
performance receives at the
entrance is of the text by
Pirandello. Thus, when the public
attempts to follow the play on
stage it comes up against the
mismatching of the two versions.
(MB)

Isidoro Valcárcel Medina
3 ó 4 conferencias

(3 or 4 Lectures)
2002, book.
Courtesy of the artist

Valcárcel Medina is one of the most
representative figures of Spanish
conceptualism, someone who
deliberately shuns the commercial
aspects of art. Valcárcel Medina's
work is characterized by its
tremendous rigor, coherence and
commitment. For him, "art is a
personal act that can have value as
an example, but never have an
exemplary value." This work is a
book published by the Universidad
de León that includes some of his
talks and public presentations, in
which his particular rigorous vision
of artistic practice and the role of art
in society is very much in evidence.
(MB)
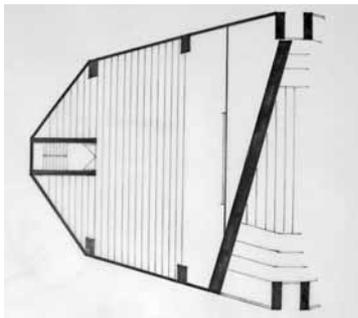
Isidoro Valcárcel Medina
Sin Título

(Untitled)
2007-2010, printed paper.
Courtesy of the artist

Valcárcel Media articulates his work around a wide range of formats: he does videos, books, lectures and actions which often go unannounced and can rarely be seen in their entirety. Some of these actions are described or registered in the form of pamphlets and reports in which the artist sums up the content of the action, like, for example, remaining in the queue of a museum until, due to the time, it is no longer possible to go in or insisting on making a tour of a museum that enters into contradiction with the one stipulated by the institution. All these actions underline certain sorts of barely visible personal behaviour that seek after autonomy and a vindication of personal freedom in the interstices the public sphere still permits. (MB)
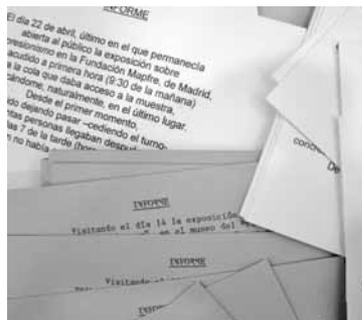
Nicoline van Harskamp
Speech as a Political Act

2007-2010, video-installation.
Courtesy of the artist

Speech as a Political Act is a performance that depends on the participation of a series of professionals from the art world who have been previously invited by the artist. These professionals start a discussion, scripted by the artist, which starts out from current social issues. The performance is recorded on video and added to other earlier performances. This work investigates the political implications of language and of the act of speaking in public. For her scripts the artist uses published statements, discussions and conferences. Notwithstanding the theatrical game they propose, by being announced as "scripted conferences or debates" they do not seek to pass for real, although they explore the confusion they may create to the full. (MB)

Ulla von Brandenburg
Singspiel (Songplay)

2009, video, b/w, sound, stools, 14'34"
Courtesy of Art: Concept, Paris

This artist explores the mechanisms of theatre and *mise-en-scène*. The video *Singspiel* consists of footage filmed in Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye that follows the movements of a group of people – possibly a family – who live in it. The experience of the Savoye family at this space was not an "ideal way of living" as the architect had planned. At the end of the video, the family or group of people becomes the audience while their own representation is taking place. (MB)

Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa
A Short Video About Tate Modern

2003-2005, video, colour,
sound, 4'48"
Courtesy of the artist

Narrated in the first person, in
A Short Video About Tate Modern
the artist explains her experience
when participating in a workshop
at Tate Modern in October 2003.
Using short, direct sentences, the
artist narrates her feeling of
estrangement at being the only
participant of colour in the
workshop, a fact that contrasted
with the majority of coloured
workers in the kitchens or the
security department of the
institution. In a way as simple as
it is direct, Wolukau-Wanambwa
critically addresses such complex
issues as the relations of power,
belonging or not belonging to
certain environments, and the
conventions of visibility/invisibility
in the public realm. (MB)

Heimo Zobernig
Video/Kino

(Video/Cinema)
1999, video, colour, no sound, 7'
Generali Foundation Collection,
Vienna

Video/Kino sets up a play of images
in which, to begin with, a series of
dots turn into a television. Next,
the camera shows a cinema in
which Ernst Schmidt Jr.'s film
Ja/Nein is being projected. Finally,
the camera returns to the starting
point; namely, to the minimal
components of the TV image.
In this video Zobernig proposes a
contrast between a classic of the
cinematic avant-garde that
transgresses film language and the
self-reflexive possibilities of video
as a medium. In an almost
narrative way Zobernig shows the
dialectical dependency of cinema
and video. (MB)
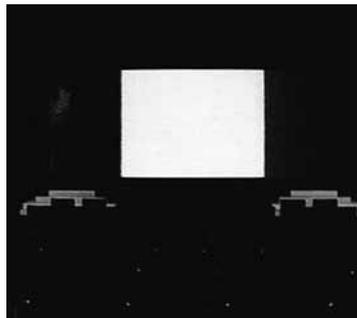
Minucodes, 2010. CAAC, Seville

Minucodes, 1968-2010. Stills

Minucodes

Marta Minujín

In 1968, the Center for Inter-American Relations was a very uptight place, so my idea was to use the Center as a way to produce a subversive work. I'd noticed that cocktail parties were very important in New York – a way of social climbing. I decided to have a series of these parties, inviting the people who were the most fanatical about their jobs: politicians who only talked about politics, economists who only read about economics and who decorated their offices with portraits of other economists, people from the fashion world who only thought about clothes and how to be beautiful, and artists who really lived to create art.

Minucodes was an extension of my interest in media – I was crazy about media. In Buenos Aires in the mid-1960s, I used to go to Oscar Masotta's lectures and reading groups. Masotta produced a lunch called *The Raw and the Cooked*, after Claude Lévi-Strauss and also Ferdinand de Saussure, and Marshall McLuhan, whose book *Understanding Media* was very important to us. So in Buenos Aires in 1966, I did *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad (Simultaneity in Simultaneity)*, which was originally supposed to be a three-part project, with Allan Kaprow and Wolf Vostell organizing simultaneous happenings in New York and Berlin. I'd persuaded sixty famous people to participate – the biggest celebrities in Argentina, based on how many times their faces had been reproduced in mass media. It was a very complex work involving simultaneous radio and television broadcasts, which the celebrities watched together in a theater at the Di Tella Institute, while also looking at projections of themselves. On the radio, you could hear Vostell's and Kaprow's voices through static. On TV, we showed a video: shots of the celebrities in the theater; shots of me talking about McLuhan's ideas – lots of things. The public could tune in to the broadcasts, and 500 preselected people received phone calls and telegrams while this was going on, so that they would be totally invaded by the media.

Then, the next year, I was invited with other Happening artists to Montreal for Expo 67, and I did two works, *Superheterodyne* and *Circuit*. I didn't have any money, but I wanted to use computers – a technological filter – to select and evaluate the participants. So I showed up at Sir George Williams University and asked the dean "Please, will you give me all the computers you have?" And somehow I got access to this gigantic mainframe that filled a whole room. I persuaded the newspapers to publish surveys asking people to list their physical characteristics and sexual preferences and to say whether they thought they looked like celebrities – Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe. And then, I don't know how I did it, but I got Montreal's most famous boxer, most famous tennis player, most famous actress, most famous theater actor, and most famous writer… I think I was one of the first *artistas de gestión*, management artists.

So for *Circuit*, all of the celebrities sat around, talking about nothing; the conversation was broadcast and shown on televisions in the studio, so that the celebrities were watching themselves, as if in a mirror. Meanwhile, for *Superheterodyne,* we'd coded the survey responses and used the computer to sort the respondents by similarities into the three groups. The groups met in separate spaces in the Montreal Youth Pavilion, watching one another, watching images of themselves – projected Polaroids, several different media.

During these years I'd been spending some time in New York, and I'd become well known there, especially after I did *Minuphone*, a multimedia environment in a phone booth. That got written about in *Time* and *Newsweek*, which may have been why Stanton Catlin, the original director of the CIAR art gallery, invited me to do a show there. I told him my exhibition would involve producing four cocktail parties, with people selected by computers and filmed, but I don't know whether he really understood what I was planning. I published questionnaires in *The New York Times*, *The Village Voice*, *Women's Wear Daily*, and so on. A thousand responses came back, and I used computers again – these where at New York University – to sort through the answers. We had senators, famous economists… I don't know why some of them applied. There was a curiosity factor, I'm sure, and maybe people also responded to the fact that the Center was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation – maybe it was prestigious to show up and have a cocktail with a crazy artist from South America. That was something I was trying to play on – being a South American artist in New York. At the time, I was creating *Cha Cha Cha*, a magazine I co-founded with Juan Downey and Julian Cairol to point out how Latin American art was not being included in the global discussion. So at a couple of the center parties, I think the last two, I decided to dress like a stereotypical Puerto Rican as they were depicted in those days – a tiger-print shirt, a big

hairdo. Like the title of the magazine, my outfit at the parties was a joke. The concept was *traslación de clases*, or translation of social classes – I was staging a passage from high to low.

Wednesday was the fashion party – Diana Vreeland, Veruschka – and Thursday was the art party: Viva, John Perreault, Al Hansen… Charlotte Moorman came and played her cello. A lot of people crashed, because by that night word of the events had circulated. Free cocktails! At each party the cameras would be on, six 16mm cameras filming simultaneously, but the guests would forget about them pretty quickly. During each party, we also had eight people – the most "fanatical" members of each group, the biggest workaholics, the most obsessive ones, selected by computer – in a separate room. We were looking to expand their sensibilities. So we had Tony Martin, who at that time was working at the Electric Circus, bring all the materials that he would normally bring for a light show, gels, and so on. And the eight politicians or the eight economists would sit there picking colors, listening to Jimi Hendrix.

We edited the film over the weekend, and for the actual exhibition, which opened the following Monday, we put projectors in the same place where the footage had been recorded. The public was invited in to drink cocktails, completely surrounded by the film. So you could see what each group did, how they behaved, how the people moved, and you could see the differences among the groups. When the people who'd been filmed showed up, they would look for themselves in the projections: they could see the differences, but they could also see the similarities. I wanted the party guests to see themselves "backwards" – to observe their own behaviors, to watch their own social interactions. And possibly to change some of their attitudes.

I believe that *Minucodes* is still avant-garde. Although today, everything is mixed together: politics is mixed with business, business with art, art with fashion, fashion with Hollywood. So I suppose if I were to do it again, I'd only need to have one big party.

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Minucodes, 2010. CAAC, Seville. Photo: Guillermo Mendo

Notes on Marta Minujín's *Minucodes* (1968-2010)

Gabriela Rangel

The 1960s and 70s were conducive to the upsurge of a whole host of artistic actions that run the risk of being forgotten due to their sparse documentation or, even worse, to being simplified or distorted under the totalizing labels of the dematerialization of the work of art or of institutional critique. Because of their insertion in networks and circuits of the spectacle, many of these projects were, from the actual moment of their production, difficult to slot into a framework. Indeed, some of them cannibalized media spaces such as fashion parades, entertainment magazines and professional partying, thus destabilizing the systems of interpretation and valorization of art and generating an opacity that has made their historiographic interpretation difficult. Outstanding among these is *Minucodes*, an event whose documentary image appeared briefly as a short-lived virus in the page given over to the artist Marta Minujín in the catalogue of *Information* – the exhibit that catapulted conceptualism into the art institution in the USA – prior to becoming dispersed for more than forty years.

In that respect, the reconstruction of *Minucodes,* a performance project created in various stages and presented on 14 May 1968 in New York, in the same place it was originally held in, the Americas Society, is an unprecedented undertaking and clears up a misunderstanding perpetuated by the publication of a photograph of the event in a place it never occurred in.

After years of research we have salvaged some of the fragments that made up *Minucodes*: the institutional letters and records in the CIAR archives belonging to the Americas Society and in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, were copied; part of the missing 16mm film, found in a private library in Mexico, was recovered; the photographs on paper and slides that documented to process of the project were rescued. The salvaging of these riches has revealed Marta Minujín's centrality as a key figure in the creation of environments and events that elicited the participation of predetermined audiences and publics.

Notwithstanding the critical power of many of her performance pieces in museums or city squares and avenues, the intensity and meaning of them is often overshadowed by the reputation of a public figure who brings together crowds of people. Marta Minujín forms part of a brilliant generation of Argentinean artists whose work blossomed in the 1960s and stimulated the renewal of artistic vocabulary and visual practice.

Initially attracted by the experimental modernizing programs promoted by the Lirolay Gallery and the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, or the prizes from Empresas Kaiser, those same artists subsequently refused to confine art within institutional limits and implemented more radical practices.

An exceptional figure ever since her early arrival on the late-50s Argentinean scene, Marta Minujín won the support of the institutional establishment before leaving for Europe and the USA, where she formed part of the artistic milieu that was fermenting pop, feminism and conceptualism via the happening and performance, collaborating with artists as diverse in their praxis as Jean-Jacques Lebel, Mark Brusse, Daniel Spoerri, Alejandro Otero and Lourdes Castro. During that same period Minujín not only rapidly absorbed the ideas of theorist Marshall McLuhan but articulated them in discussions taking place at the same time in different points of the Atlantic: in Argentina by Oscar Masotta and the Arte de los Medios group, in France by Structuralism, Pierre Restany and Nouveau Réalisme, and in North America and Europe by Fluxus and Pop Art.

Preceded by *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* and *Circuit (Superheterodyne)*, *Minucodes* was the third of the performance projects Minujín conceived between 1966 and 1968; today it is considered to be a precursor of the field of relational aesthetics. Its performance is frequently tarnished by its symbiosis with theater, television, advertising, journalism and the social sciences. In that sense, the series of events corresponding to the second half of the 1960s created by Minujín was modeled on the power of the mass media in the construction of identity, both social and individual. Organized consecutively after her return from Paris in the American cities of Buenos Aires, Montreal and New York, these events condensed different conceptual aspects of the globally developing discussion about the effect of the media on reality and the role of art within a powerful culture industry. In general terms, all these events called for the participation of different publics as the consumers of messages and the bearers of given, easily manipulated social codes, involving a powerful machinery of technological mediation furnished by different mass media.

On the basis of an idea attributed to Joseph Kosuth, Blake Stimson summarized the lines of enquiry and achievements of conceptualism as a

reaction of the art of the Vietnam era. In that sense *Minucodes* was only possible thanks to the conservative profile of the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR), a new institution created in the mid-60s on the initiative of the Latin American private sector close to the sphere of influence and interests of the magnate David Rockefeller. Founded as a projection of the politics of cultural diplomacy of the Cold War, the CIAR had an ambitious visual arts program headed at the time by the historian Stanton Loomis Catlin, who had worked at the Museum of Modern Art and Yale University Art Gallery. *Minucodes* was presented in its final phase in May 1968 in the CIAR Gallery, housed in an old mansion in the luxury residential neighborhood of Park Avenue in New York. Being the least complicated of the series of events conceived by Minujín between 1966 and 1968, the cheapness of its execution helped make it the most effective, complex and intelligible of them all.

It consisted of a preparatory phase in which the artist elaborated surveys that were published in local newspapers and then processed by computer, and, in the production phase, called for six 16mm cameras, movie and slide projectors, lights, megaphones and loudspeakers. The end of the event concluded with an exhibit in which the parts of the process were brought together, with the films of the various moments of the latter being projected on the walls of the gallery, along with what remained of the second component, *Light and Sound Environment*.

On arriving in New York in 1965, Minujin was warned by her friend Pierre Restany that "New York is a tough city, especially for foreigners, and there's a whole subtle blend of social standing, art world politics, self-interested friendships, and scheming. There's also a lack of interest on the part of galleries, dealers, and nationalist critics in everything done outside the American, specifically the New York, cultural milieu." Out of phase with the professional scale of the American metropolis, Minujín had, for all that, understood the importance of parties in the city's professional circles and that these were
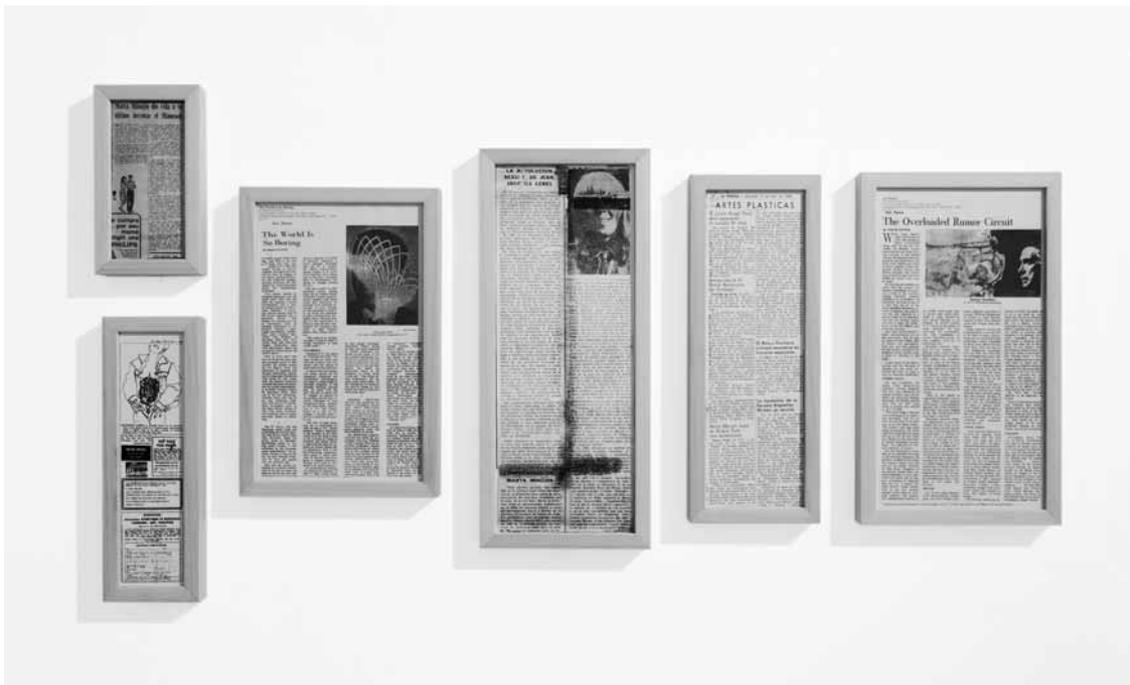
Minucodes, 2010. CAAC, Seville. Photo: Guillermo Mendo

"another means of communication." And so she proposed to organize four different cocktail parties in the CIAR Gallery, each with eighty guests from the art, fashion, financial and political communities. Each group would have a specific cocktail party for its members, whose social interaction would be recorded live in a color 16mm film, and later on be united spatially and temporally via the screening on the walls of the gallery of the films of all the cocktail parties edited in a loop. Minujín roamed through the four parties as an instigator and witness of the interactions.

The neologism *Minucodes,* formed by the first part of the artist's surname and the word "code," was evocative of the *Minuphone* interactive telephone booth successfully presented a few months earlier at the Howard Wise Gallery, a space where artists who were beginning to experiment with video and technology encountered a platform of institutional articulation for their groundbreaking practices in New York. The CIAR "social environment," as *Minucodes* was described in the newspaper columns, posited a series of social situations in which the codifications that define power groups according to disposition, taste and *habitus* were explored.

Minujín prepared and published the survey in the city's mass-circulation dailies (*The New York Times, Village Voice, Women's Wear Daily*), the aim being to recruit and then select the audience needed for the project. The survey contained questions whose answers pointed towards a definition of the professional function of the participants (fashion, art, politics, economics), the passive or active role they occupied in performing it, as well as their consumer preferences and their tastes when using the media. According to the available documentation, the responses were ordered and classified by a computer that would select eighty people for each party and eight leaders in each group. However, the CIAR's political contacts and the hiring of a specialist in public relations were the factors facilitating access to exclusive members and celebrities in the political and fashion sectors.

Minucodes also envisaged a separate section during each cocktail party in which the artist Tony Martin made use of slide projectors, slides, 16mm projectors, colored liquid transparencies and music of the time by Janis Joplin, Cream, The Doors, The Rolling Stones and The Incredible String Band, among others. Martin, who defined himself as a light artist, frequented the artistic circle of Howard Wise and had worked with the postmodern dancer Anna Halprin in San Francisco. The psychedelic space in question, *Light and Sound Environment*, functioned as a creative workshop led by Martin, with Minujín being assigned exclusively to the eight people considered to be the leaders of their group, who were invited to play around with technological devices arranged for their use. Unlike earlier projects by Minujín in which the subject, immersed in processes of technical mediation, was submitted to individually and collectively controlled stimuli, the separate sections of each cocktail party involved "the reversing of the function of the camera and the transformation of the object into subject." But perhaps the central feature of the many components and phases of *Minucodes* was to relativize the distinctions between work and document and fiction and document. In that sense *Minucodes* constitutes an unusual and extraordinary experiment in quasi-cinema in which Minujín and her collaborators managed to incorporate the theoretical and practical essentials of *cinéma vérité* in an art gallery on the basis of an everyday situation whose apparent banality condemned the project to forty years of oblivion.

Like a Monument to the Artist, 2010. Polychromed bronze. Photo: Claudio del Campo

**Bad Weather Circus: The fabulous one-artist band and his amazed (phantom) public.
An interview with Curro González about his installation/sculpture *Like a Monument to the Artist***

Pepe Yñiguez

Like a Monument to the Artist is the first installation/sculpture project by Curro González (Seville, 1960), one of the most important representatives of the generation of artists that appeared in Seville in the 1980s. The piece, which will be permanently installed in the CAAC, is his most recent recreation of the figure of the artist, a subject he's shown an interest in almost since the beginning of his career. On this occasion, moreover, the public has a leading role, not only as the viewer-cum-receiver of the piece but as a constituent part of it. Humour, the conceptual games of the Baroque *vanitas*, and the historical memory of painting, with references like Brueghel and Hogarth, are some of the keys Curro González manipulates in order to suggest all kinds of warnings that, like contemporary, albeit disenchanted emblems of a sort, can help us decipher and avoid the deceptions of today's world.

Like a Monument to the Artist is an installation in which the artist is presented as a one-man band, almost like a figure from vaudeville or a humble street performance. He is a visual artist because we recognize certain attributes, except that he's overwhelmed by all the tasks that have to be performed at the same time. In some paintings you'd already portrayed yourself and had portrayed the artist as a foul-mouthed person or as a tightrope walker – what does this update mean in relation to earlier iconographic projects?

I think this figure of the one-man band can transmit, quite clearly, the feeling produced in us by the task we have to confront when acting as artists. As you say, it's overwhelming, but at the same time it displays an admirable ability to tackle different, even contradictory, tasks. The role of the artist here reminds me of how Homer defines Odysseus at the beginning of the book as an *anthropos polytropos*, which could be translated as a man of many paths or of many tricks. I reckon that's a good starting point to position yourself, in general, vis-à-vis the world, and very necessary to do so in particular as an artist.

It's more than likely that thanks to the precedents in my work that you mention, José Lebrero would propose I do this project for the CAAC gardens with a subject matter that reflected the image of the artist. In this case I was sure I ought to take the determining factors typical of the site, as well as material and technique used, into account. I had to consider all these elements and it seemed interesting to add another that, like the Wooden Horse of Troy, inadvertently introduces the viewer into the piece by using him as one more element in it.

The piece is going to open accompanied by sketches and earlier works relating to the figure of both the artist and the public, or at least with the potential viewer who appeared in Friso (Frieze), a work from 1993 shown in the now-defunct Arenal galleries in Seville, or the expectant figure in Enjambre (Swarm), which could also be seen in Biac3. As well as all these works, among which is also the claymation of La broma infinita (Infinite Jest), a series of drawings will be shown in the exhibition that imitate visual jokes in which different types of artists are portrayed with, among them, the artist as a one-man band. What interests you about these jokes about artists, which are especially abundant in American magazines of the 1950s with the triumph of Abstract Expressionism? I say this because, seen today, they seem to express a somewhat more intelligent judgement of the image and the idea of artists than might have been considered at the time.

Apart from their particular style as vignettes with fuzzy edges, the really fascinating thing about the caricatures that appeared in publications like *The New Yorker* is that in many instances the paintings that appear in them have become indicative of some of the abstract works certain artists who defend abstraction in their pictures have recently painted. It's as if the premise, which has been fulfilled since the appearance of the Modern Movement, of exaggeratedly privileging some aspects over others to the point of defining the work method – that is to say, of caricaturizing – had performed a pirouette by feeding off its own mockery. Although I wouldn't be very sure that this was the intention of those artists.

As you know, I've used caricature in my works for years now because in some ways it continues to have that quality which is alien to the serious, high-
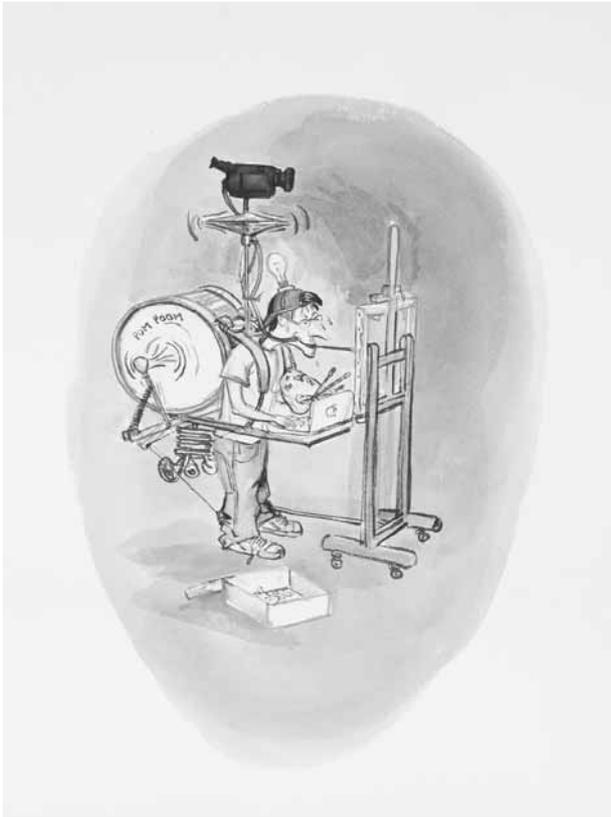
Artista hombre-orquesta (One-Man Band Artist), 2007. Ink on paper, 78 x 55 cm

minded discourse impregnating much of contemporary art, even when this is defined from a supposedly marginal, ultra-committed position. For me, caricature functions as an antidote to dogmatism.

In the series you mention there appears, along with others, the image of the artist as a one-man band. From the evolution of that idea there arises the idea of the sculpture. For the latter I needed a figure that wasn't exclusive, with a certain universal character, and I think that this was the right one.

The profusion of detail in the sculpture has to do with your work, but it seems to go against the idea of a monument, in which one tends to highlight the essential in order to make recognition and possible identification easier. The work is, so to speak, anti-monumental, something which, as I see it, accentuates its ironical charge. More than exalting the figure of the artist, the conception of a monument marginalizes him, in the same way that the current

status of the idea of monumental sculpture is marginal, however fashionable it might be in a lot of town halls. How does one reconcile the idea of the artist who is recognized and occupies the top step on the podium although he might be treading in shit? Of the artist who, finally, deserves a monument with the marginal character that same monument bestows on him?

It could only be reconciled if we recognize it as a paradox – a chain of paradoxes, I would say. This is also what the phrases denote that can be read, not without a certain difficulty, on the sides of the drum: "I keep the time of a time that will never be" or "I look at what I cannot see," despite putting on night vision goggles, perhaps. This work is not, then, a monument. It's something "like a monument" and therefore it asserts and denies itself at the same time. Hence the complex game of readings on different levels, from near and far, in different spaces.

When I think of the idea of the triumphant artist I can't help thinking of the story Félix de Azúa, in his *Diccionario de las artes* (Dictionary of the Arts), illustrates his entry for the word "artist" with. In it he likens the word to that of a figure included in certain Jewish accounts of the Holocaust. In short, that of a character, a lookout, propped up by the occupants of the windowless wagons of the train in which they were travelling to the concentration camps. To the others he narrated what he could make out of the outside world through a small ventilation hole in the roof of the wagon. Azúa ends up reminding us that this task didn't pertain to them but was the result of an ephemeral collective pact. A work of narration that as a result had to avoid the arrogant expression of individual genius.

Shit on the sole of the shoe is a symbol of chance, the luck every winner has to have, but it also serves as a parody of that reminder that in the celebrations of a triumph in ancient Rome a slave repeated in the ear of the victorious general, "Remember you are only a man."

The latter reminds me of something you've reflected on in your recent paintings – I'm thinking of your last exhibition at the Galería Rafael Ortiz. I'm referring to the relationship between everyday life and transcendence, between the ordinary and the sublime. Is this the most relevant task of the artist today, the

combining of that everyday life so that the viewer recognizes, in some way, the place from which he interrogates it, and that value, if not transcendent at least meaningful, that enables him to question that everyday life? I ask this because that relationship can also be the one that exists between the image of the white-on-white painting of the sculpture and the image of the desert island that appears on the computer.

I don't know if it's the most relevant task, but it's undoubtedly very necessary. What in that exhibition I called "false epiphanies" was the outcome of assuming this situation by proceeding from the way Joyce tackled them. In actual fact, it was a matter of proposing a game in which meanings slip in when confronting a common, everyday situation as if they were moments of revelation: a moment charged with magic that can only exist thanks to the ability to believe, to the faith of someone who experiences it. In our culture the feast of the Epiphany is the day of the Three Wise Men and, as we well know, with this feast we also celebrate a great swindle. The "white on white" picture has something of this; it partakes of the need to believe in something. A tautological affirmation that functions well in contemporary art and that places us on the terrain of what I would call the eternal reinvention of the wheel. Maybe due to this, so as not to be duped by appearances, on the back next to the word *Eden* I've placed a small wasps' nest. That's also why the image on the computer screen is of a desert island with an advertising slogan asking us to get shipwrecked there.

All this seeks to produce a recognition that might lead us to accept that this search for transcendence, for an art that marks the path of the absolute, is nothing but a sham. In short, that the sublime is nothing but damaged merchandise that continues in the shop windows as a lure.

There's also the issue of the importance of the siting of the piece. The sculpture faces away from a garden. A not very important garden, perhaps, although Ferdinand Columbus' ombu tree is nearby, that in some way contains the memory of ideal nature, of that nature which no so long ago was the mistress of the artist. Is it possible that the artist's marginal position may be due to a forgetting of nature, as the positioning of the sculpture seems to suggest?

Like a Monument to the Artist, 2010. Polychromed bronze.
Photo: Claudio del Campo

Frankly, I don't think the forgetting of nature contributes to increasing the marginality of the artist. The idea of the natural has gradually been faded away for all of us. In some ways the stereotype has devoured the original model. The artist ought never to have been imagined as a noble savage; except for a few literary fantasies, he never was one. The activity of the artist has always been artifice. Art's appeal to a model of the natural is contradictory, since what we may obtain from art is only an imitation of nature. Hence, that original model is always conditioned by the representation that precedes it.

It's obvious that the sculpture is situated in a totally domesticated framework. The garden could be understood as a frontier, a hybrid space in which the diverse shores that delimit, or marginalize, different worlds converge. This being so, it could be understood as the ideal space for siting a representation of the artist.

The idea is to place it in an almost hidden location. The polychromed bronze and the many details invite the viewer to glimpse it as he draws near. But due to the narrowness of the site, this drawing near is actually individual. How do you understand this individual "representation" with the fact of being installed in an open public space'

A central space, say, would have meaning if my aim was that of playing at making a piece that would reproduce the tics of the monuments that pay tribute to power. This isn't the case. On the contrary, the intimate – I wouldn't say hidden – character of the chosen location also permits a double level of reading. A distant one, in which we consider the ensemble as a whole, allowing the existing architecture to participate; and one that is close to, that leads to a relationship of intimacy necessary to appreciating the details, which finally extends and enriches the content of the piece. I've often used this near/far alternation in my paintings. It's an effective way of involving the viewer, of obliging him to actively interpret things, to forego his contemplative passivity and assume an inquisitive, critical attitude. This calls for a degree of involvement on the part of the public that isn't always easy to find. But it's our job to propose that challenge.

Although the monument is dedicated to the artist, it appears that the true hero of the piece is the viewer. He deserves the fanfare and the applause merely for approaching something that seems to be a monument. But Fame was a highly controversial figure in antiquity, as praised as she was insulted. She saw everything and transmitted everything, the good and the bad, the great news of heroic victories and the most malicious bits of gossip. I say this because the viewer, although deserving in your piece of the attentions of fame, doesn't come out of it very well, either: while the fanfare sounds in his honour, his surprised, frozen image is projected on a screen at the entrance to the area. And so the piece seems to acclaim the viewer and to reward him for his daring, but at the same time situate him in Warhol's insubstantial fifteen minutes of fame. To bring this interview to an end, what is the role and the place of the viewer in this work?

As I've remarked above, his role could be likened to that of the occupants hidden inside the Wooden Horse of Troy. The piece exists and is justified with the public, but the latter also draws up its death certificate. This is the way that starting out from an offering the city ends up being destroyed. Over the years my work has insistently gravitated around the idea of *vanitas*. The ephemeral nature of existence cannot be foreign to the work of art and by extension – or inclusion – to the public. Auden said that no individual belonging to the public genuinely commits himself, given that for only a few hours a day does he effectively belong to the public, the rest of the time he will be himself, therefore he won't be public. We artists are no different in this, either.

Like a Monument to the Artist, 2010 (detail). Polychromed bronze. Photo: Claudio del Campo

Like a Monument to the Artist, 2010. Polychromed bronze. Photo: Claudio del Campo

Art After Modern Times

Juan Bosco Díaz-Urmeneta

Manet depicted himself as something of a dandy and Cézanne as a workman. The self portrait brings together the identity the painter gives himself and the traits that he believes the artist had at the time. They are ideas that can change throughout the course of life: when he was young, Rembrandt painted himself as an Italian gentleman, then as a bourgeois gentleman from the Northern Provinces and towards the end of his life he depicted himself with a craftsman's white hat.

Curro González (Seville, 1960) is a recurrent self portrait painter. He would fly high like a tightrope walker laden with his painter's tools and images, socialising with the upper classes of the city; and he was also a vagrant like the old philosopher Bias of Priene, who carried all his worldly possessions with him. Now the artist's features are captured in a polychromed bronze sculpture which can be found at the entrance to the *Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo*. The piece is reminiscent of two figures from the thirties: firstly *the one-man band*, the seductive peddler (from Vigo's film *L'Atalante*) who tempts the barge owner's wife to discover the world beyond the barge and occasional cafés along the banks of the canal, and secondly *the new journalist*, a well-known photomontage by Umbo. The one-man band opens to the spectators with music; the museum's solemnity is mixed with irony, as it is about a fanfare and not the sounds of Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance*. As well as his band on his back, he carries a rack around his neck with painting tools, and next to this is a laptop computer. These days an artist's eyes and hands as tools are not enough – it is vital to have a screen and a mouse, and cameras which hide the painter's eyes like vision prosthesis. Hence Umbo's photomontage and the extension of the work; when the fanfare sounds the camera catches the viewers who instantaneously see themselves on a nearby screen. No longer is it enough for the spectators to recognise themselves in an image, like in a mirror: the artist returns the onlooker's gaze, giving them a picture of themselves.

This ironic game is explained and expanded on throughout the rest of the exhibition. In a nearby room you can see González work which reflects the difficulties of art. On the one hand there is the artist who, like wise monkeys of eastern culture, can neither see, hear, nor speak, and on the other there is a succession of drawings which humorously sketch out

El estudio, 2008. Mixed media on canvas, 325 x 800 cm
Photo: Guillermo Mendo

some current paradoxes, such as the painter who is more hurried than clear-thinking, and tries to turn himself into a technological artist.

Inside the museum these reflections are gathered, and there are meditations on what it is to make art and what the public's role usually is. The decisive piece is González's replica of an historical work, *L'Atélier* by *Courbet*. It is a painting with large dimensions, like that of the French painter, but without his ambitious program. There are no prominent figures in society, nor is there a cast of artists belonging to that time, just different works of González himself, resting on furniture or mounted on the shelves of one big piece of furniture. Quotes used in artistic tradition are limited to small reproductions attached here and there, and the water jump (which

Courbet painted accompanied by his muse) is turned into a shower which suddenly turns on and threatens to flood the studio. A video in the room to the side explains its meaning: it is the paint itself which invades the workshop because this is the true protagonist. What is not as clear in the exhibition is the meaning of the spiders which appear in different places on the painting and which point to those authors whose ideas stimulate the artist's thinking. He is there, but almost insignificant, in a corner of the studio under the guise of a beaver, he is able to gnaw like the little animal, at every day appearances and transform them critically into his world.

The audience is faced with this intense allegory of what can be art today, the ideas art feeds upon and what resources it makes use of. The audience is a multitude which watches, maybe without seeing, and tourists, with the indifference that Duchamp discussed, who look but immediately forget.

The exhibition brings about a far from trivial reflection. Many spectators including the most cultured ones, still see art from a late-romantic perspective; they expect the shiver of emotion which, as Octavio Paz would say, goes no further than the retina. González has always refused to be involved in such an experience. His painting is critical because it is caustic and loaded with the enigma of baroque concepts. Also, it is modest, as he knows very well that after Auschwitz (and also terrorism, Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo) art cannot aspire to save the world. For him, it is enough to suggest and raise concern. He succeeds in doing this with the figure, not forgetting the irony. That is no mean feat.
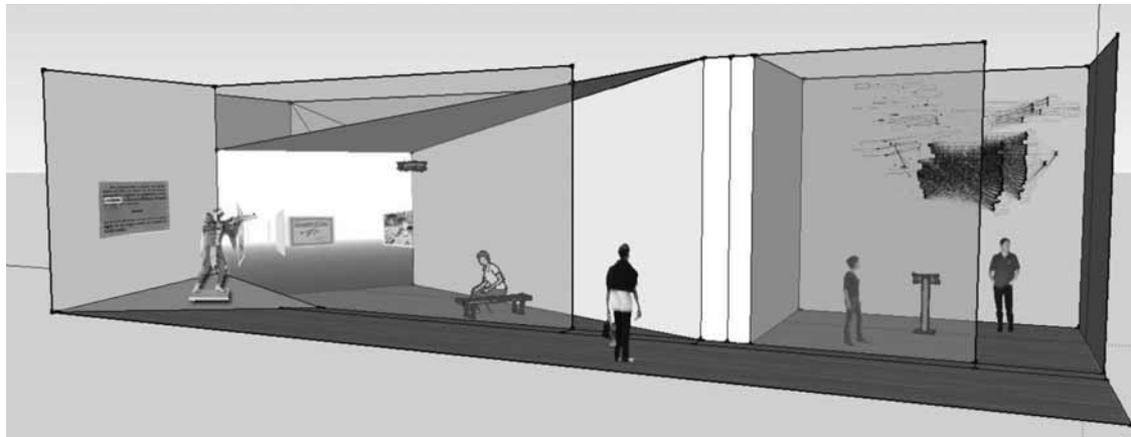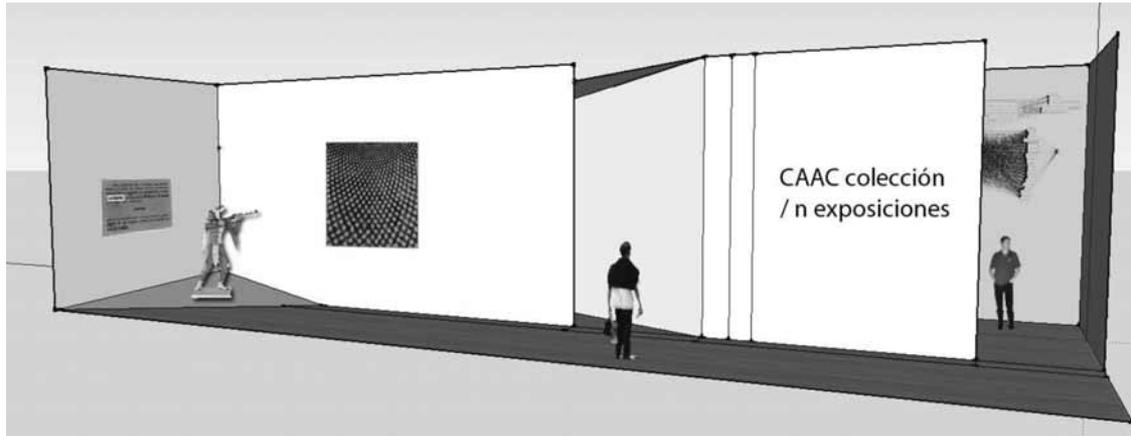
CAAC colección / n exposiciones
(*CAAC collection / n exhibitions*),
created on behalf of and from
the CAAC's digital holdings,
makes use of a video game that
invites spectators to navigate in a
cyberspace in which random
exhibitions are unceasingly
recombined from the photographic
documentation of the collection.
These also come with their own
formal discourses, which are
themselves randomly generated.

CAAC collection / n exhibitions

Pierre Giner

How do we account for several decades of creativity, for a collection of almost 2,000 artworks of varying shapes and sizes? Despite the workings of time, can we regard the collection in terms of likes and dislikes? Must we always select from an overall group that has yet to be seen? To display or dissimulate what, exactly? Mere daubs and masterworks? A potential fiasco? Or on the contrary is it better to take the risk of showing everything? Of not being afraid in retrospect of the very act of collecting and of what it involves. And to lay claim to it in its entirety by giving in to its potential.

The *CAAC colección / n exposiciones* installation is, then, to do with extracting artworks from the collection and projecting them in the imaginary space of an infinite virtual exhibition of all the artworks it contains. To do this, a video game, *n exposiciones*, offers the spectator supplied with a joystick the chance to call up, room by room, stage by stage, images of the artworks in the collection. As he advances, the player involuntarily – and completely at random – composes new exhibitions. He navigates by sight in this ceaselessly renewed, endless exhibition in which the unexpected comparison of artworks from the CAAC collection can reveal coincidences, hidden meanings, everyday or intimate thoughts, regenerate the collection from the collection itself.

CAAC colección / n exposiciones is a sort of "fictionalized document," or documentary fiction, maybe, since it is not the artworks themselves but their documentation which forms the material on show. If, on the evening of the private view, there are artists who come, perhaps, to see their works as a new consecration of their oeuvre they will be disappointed. This is not what's at stake in this celebration. Instead, it's a sort of ode to the act of collecting and displaying artworks, an homage in the spirit of the collector (of stamps) who presents his own collection (of stamps) and gets a certain pleasure from telling his own story through it.

Moreover, as *CAAC colección / n exposiciones* produces one (of the) exhibition(s), it has need of speech for what it is revealing to the public. A generator of speeches introduces and accompanies it. It enables the visitor to listen to the range of possible discourses constituted automatically by a software program, thanking the donors, institutions and artists who have made this collection possible. In so doing it gives the floor to the politician, the art administrator and the society that has rendered it possible. The speech always ends up politely thanking an artist in the CAAC collection by name, a name consisting of the first names and surnames of two different artists pertaining to the collection.

"Thanks to Antoni Burguillos, Jaime Tapiès." *
Future artists of the ongoing collection.

CAAC colección / n exposiciones takes pleasure in celebrating the fact that Art, its makers and its spaces exist. Let us thank them here.

* And not Antoni Tàpies and Jaime Burguillos [Trans.]

Marhaba! An Art Camp for the Sahara

Alonso Gil & Federico Guzmán

"Thus, written works and any artistic expressions which highlight the strength of our identity may be the best weapon, since it is through art that one can be subtle, delicate but also well-aimed, able to open many doors and hopefully the odd window too. From the best perspective, that of Peace, we dare to do our bit tonight, adding our tiny grain of sand to the pile so that someday it will make up the weight of an entire desert, capable of moving even the most fearsome and persistent giant. I demand that, from the best of perspectives, from the perspective of Peace, today, the Sahara does not rest either."
Manifesto of the Saharan White Night
Sukeina Aali-Taleb Semlali

Invertidos. Action by Isidro López Aparicio

Marhaba! / Welcome! to the nomad camp created by artists in solidarity with the Saharan people. The Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (CAAC) welcomes a gathering of *haimas* (traditional Bedouin tents) to the patio of the museum, where music, visual art, historical documentation and solidarity movements aim to make visible the historical and cultural dimensions of a forgotten conflict: that of the Western Sahara, the only colony in Africa which still remains without independence.

The project, coordinated by Alonso Gil and Federico Guzmán, curators of ARTifariti 2010, brings together the efforts of the *Encuentros Internacionales de Arte en Territorios Liberados* (International Art Encounters in the Liberated Territories) of Western Sahara. This experimental festival in the desert was organised by the AAPS (*Asociación de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui,* Friendship Association with the Saharan People) in Seville and The Ministry of Culture of the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic. Over the last four years it has relied upon the participation of more than 150 artists of 20 different nationalities.

To make this initiative known, works from Saharan artists and documentation regarding ARTifariti are displayed, alongside a further parallel exhibition on the history of Western Sahara. This aims to bring the public closer to the reality of the conflict of the Saharan people. During the last 35 years they have been lost in a political limbo, waiting for a solution.

As Alonso explains, "the Saharan conflict is the worst example of decolonisation ever seen" (*ABC de Sevilla*, 3rd May 2009). In 1975, when Franco was at death's door, Spanish authorities secretly signed the handover of the province to Morocco and Mauritania. By doing so, it was a stab in the back for those who had been our compatriots, leaving them defenceless and throwing them to the wolves.

With Spain's shameful withdrawal, Morocco began a military occupation of the Sahara, sinisterly dubbed the "Green March." The Saharans were driven out of their homes and their land, chased ruthlessly by the French and Moroccan Air Forces, in an exodus which forced them to take refuge in the South West of Algeria. Without any chance of hiding in the desert, men, women, the old and young alike were bombed without mercy.

When a ceasefire was signed after eighteen years of war between the Polisario Front and Morocco, the country was split into two, creating a painful wound which slices diagonally across the region. The Wall of Shame was built by Morocco and is a 2,700 km-long fortification. It is reinforced with wire, electrified and riddled with thousands of mines which continue to cause accidents in the civil population.

The part of the Sahara which lies on the Atlantic coast is a very fertile, rich land, since its subsoil contains abundant water and petroleum. Its phosphate mines and plentiful supplies of fish

continue to be illegally exploited by the invading power, which grants permits for the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons. Morocco rules as a police state in the occupied territories, where human rights are endlessly trampled underfoot and where surveillance, harassment, repression, kidnappings and tortures inflicted on the population are the order of the day.

On the other side of the wall, in a nation founded in exile, the refugee camps in Tinduf (Algeria) struggle on – 200,000 abandoned souls in an inhospitable desert, subsisting on scarce international help, waiting for a solution that never arrives. The negotiations between Morocco and the Polisario Front are at a standstill. The mandate for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) is not even capable of ensuring that human rights are respected. The independence plan for the Sahara which Moroccan rule promotes is attempting to complete an illegal occupation, for which the Moroccan government is guilty and the Spanish state responsible.

Broadly speaking, this is the nightmare which our Saharan brothers wake up to every day. A present without past or future, which puts time to the test, a scene which is silenced by the media, which keep the conflict hidden away. Alonso, myself and other international artists have had the opportunity to live side by side with Saharan people and artists from the region. This proved to be a profound and unforgettable experience which has transformed us and opened our eyes to the Saharan conflict, giving us a new perspective of reality in our own societies.

As citizens, this experience has made us share the worry that our country (and Europe, or, more generally speaking, the West) is capable of turning its back on its colonial past as though it had already moved far beyond it, as though it were now just ancient history and not a substantial heritage which forms part of its present and future projects.

As artists, it has also revived our capacity for reflection and made us question, via aesthetic processes, the contradictions in which we live. It has opened our eyes to the transforming power of art, that

Meeting at ARTIfariti haima, 2008

energy which is always there – although sometimes we do not recognise it. Art is a tool which transforms. However, it is not charged with violence, as is a steam roller which flattens the curvature of the horizon, but rather it is filled with the wisdom of Taoism, of "non-action" (*wu-wei*). As Sukeina Aali Taleb says, it is a tool which is "subtle, well-aimed, which opens doors." Above all, within oneself.

The art camp *Marhaba* will fill the patio of the museum with Saharan *haimas*, with exhibitions: The *Haima of Arts*, *Haima of Memories* and *Haima of Tea*. In these tents there are examples of work relating to ARTifariti, the history of the Sahara and video displays. The initiative will also include activities on the opening day: a Seminar on Art and Human Rights, Pililli and Moakara in concert, artistic interventions from Isidro López Aparicio (ILA) and Antonio Gómez, a tea ceremony, a *Sahara Libre Wear* showroom, video conference with the occupied territories and poetry readings from Bahia Amwah, poet of the *Generación de la Amistad* (Friendship Generation).

Marhaba welcomes the *II Seminar on Art and Human Rights*, a day of reflection on the relationship between contemporary artistic production and active defence of Human Rights, organised by Esther Regueira. The speakers include: Pamen Pereira, artist and curator of ARTifarita 09; Sergio Caro, winner of the Ortega y Gasset Award for photojournalism, who has worked in conflict zones; Abidin Bucharaya, Andalusian Delegate of the Polisario Front and Abdeslam Omar, President of AFAPREDESA (Association of families of saharawi prisoners and people who have disappeared).

The intervention put forward by ILA reminds us of the large welcome signs which are found at the gates of the cities. In this instance, the artist is planning a "human milestone" through the intervention *Invertidos "aprendiendo a relacionarse"* (Inverted: "learning to relate") in a clear call for attention regarding the conflict in Western Sahara. As the artist explains, "we tie their feet together and hang them, head down, in bouquets of people. In this position we are defenceless, we lose our points of reference, we are still ourselves but we find it hard to recognise our environment and we don't know how to react. On changing our points of reference, we are less inhibited since we have to redefine how we relate to each other; a new environment allows new behaviour. The inverted is not necessarily that, it is just a new way of seeing each other, of relating to each other."

The poet Antonio Gómez, who was a witness to the Spanish abandonment of the Sahara, also presents an intervention in this art camp. Antonio still has a telephone book from his years in El Aaiun. "While in Spain you could speak to other people on the telephone in different regions automatically and freely, the residents of Aaiun could not do this. It was the only city which did not have an area code. To speak to another user in any area, or phone abroad, you had to dial 009 and give the town and telephone number of the person you wanted to speak to, then the number from which you were calling. With my proposal I want to remember the first Saharans who were signed up to the Spanish telephone company."

Sahara Libre Wear is a clothes brand made in Western Sahara. It was created in collaboration with the Saharan community, stemming from the *¡A Pintarropa!* textile patterns of the artist Alonso Gil, and the workshops which have come from this, and their collaboration with the workshop *Entretelas,* whichs create designs based on the *melfa*, the traditional dress of Saharan women. These are made in the camps under the direction of Angustias García and Esther Regueira.

Both were conceived as spaces for communication and exchange, but also as spaces for learning and production, whether it be intellectual, social, working or material. The two proposals use clothes as medium to make the unfair situation of the Saharan community visible, turning to art as a strategy of diffusion and resistance, as a weapon in the fight. In this way, clothes become an element which generates thought and social stances.

The Sevillian artist Pililli, from the group Moakara, has dedicated her new album *Yahuti Sahara* (Brothers, the Sahara) to the Saharan people. In her gigs, Pililli invokes the primordial power of music which is capable of tearing down any wall in our hearts. This year, with the title *África no se vende* (Africa is not for sale)*,* the artist begins an investigation into ethnomusicology in collaboration with Saharan artists and the participation of schools in Spain and the Western Sahara.

We have learnt many things from the Saharans: How to resist and remain dignified (*alkarama*) despite pain; to honour and respect (*lijtiram*) others, recognising the common humanity of all; we also have learnt the culture of giving and generosity (*saja*) which assesses our greatest richness, what we have in our hearts; and to realise that these values, which

Zeina, Ismail, Cheridan and Jadiya wearing Sahara Libre Wear, ARTIfariti 2009

are so easily forgotten here, are not only the customs of survival in refugee camps, but rather the very centre of human interchange in all our societies. The teachings of the Saharans bring to life the words of the Prophet: "Allah placed the tribes on Earth so they could learn one from the other."

We give thanks to Heaven and Earth for accepting us here. And also to the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, the AAPS, the Polisario Front and to all the artists and activists who offer their support and efforts. Putting up a Saharan camp here is like opening a space of welcome, dialogue and knowledge. Come with us to the *haima*, to share some tea with our Saharan brothers, beyond occupation and exile, in a free land, without walls and mines, where there is space for all.

Towards a Poor Theatre

Jerzy Grotowski

I am a bit impatient when asked, '"What is the origin of your experimental theatre productions?" The assumption seems to be that "experimental" work is tangential (toying with some "new" technique each time) and tributary. The result is supposed to be a contribution to modern staging – scenography using current sculptural or electronic ideas, contemporary music, actors independently projecting clownish or cabaret stereotypes. I know that scene: I used to be part of it. Our Theatre Laboratory productions are going in another direction. In the first place, we are trying to avoid eclecticism, trying to resist thinking of theatre as a composite of disciplines. We are seeking to define what is distinctively theatre, what separates this activity from other categories of performance and spectacle. Secondly, our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship. That is, *we consider the personal and scenic technique of the actor as the core of theatre art.*

It is difficult to locate the exact sources of this approach, but I can speak of its tradition. I was brought up on Stanislavsky; his persistent study, his systematic renewal of the methods of observation, and his dialectical relationship to his own earlier work make him my personal ideal. Stanislavsky asked the key methodological questions. Our solutions, however, differ widely from his – sometimes we reach opposite conclusions.

I have studied all the major actor-training methods of Europe and beyond. Most important for my purposes are: Dullin's rhythm exercises, Delsarte's investigations of extroversive and introversive reactions, Stanislavsky's work on "physical actions," Meyerhold's bio-mechanical training, Vakhtangov's synthesis. Also particularly stimulating to me are the training techniques of oriental theatre – specifically the Peking Opera, Indian Kathakali, and Japanese Noh theatre. I could cite other theatrical systems, but the method which we are developing is not a combination of techniques borrowed from these sources (although we sometimes adapt elements for our use). We do not want to teach the actor a predetermined set of skills or give him a "bag of tricks." Ours is not a deductive method of collecting skills. Here everything is concentrated on the "ripening" of the actor which is expressed by a tension towards the extreme, by a complete stripping down, by the laying bare of one's own intimity – all this without the least trace of egotism or self-enjoyment. The actor makes a total

gift of himself. This is a technique of the "trance" and of the integration of all the actor's psychic and bodily powers which emerge from the most intimate layers of his being and his instinct, springing forth in a sort of "translumination."

The education of an actor in our theatre is not a matter of teaching him something; we attempt to eliminate his organism's resistance to this psychic process. The result is freedom from the time-lapse between inner impulse and outer reaction in such a way that the impulse is already an outer reaction. Impulse and action are concurrent: the body vanishes, burns, and the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses.

Ours then is a *via negativa* – not a collection of skills but an eradication of blocks.

Years of work and of specially composed exercises (which, by means of physical, plastic and vocal training, attempt to guide the actor towards the right kind of concentration) sometimes permit the discovery of the beginning of this road. Then it is possible to carefully cultivate what has been awakened. The process itself, though to some extent dependent upon concentration, confidence, exposure, and almost disappearance into the acting craft, is not voluntary. The requisite state of mind is a passive readiness to realize an active role, a state in which one does not "*want to do that*" but rather "*resigns from not doing it.*"

Akropolis, 1969. Dir. James McTaggart

Most of the actors at the Theatre Laboratory are just beginning to work towards the possibility of making such a process visible. In their daily work they do not concentrate on the spiritual technique but on the composition of the role, on the construction of form, on the expression of signs – i.e., on artifice. There is no contradiction between inner technique and artifice (articulation of a role by signs). We believe that a personal process which is not supported and expressed by a formal articulation and disciplined structuring of the role is not a release and will collapse in shapelessness.

We find that artificial composition not only does not limit the spiritual but actually leads to it. (The tropistic tension between the inner process and the form strengthens both. The form is like a baited trap, to which the spiritual process responds spontaneously and against which it struggles.) The forms of common "natural" behaviour obscure the truth; we compose a role as a system of signs which demonstrate what is behind the mask of common vision: the dialectics of human behaviour. At a moment of psychic shock, a moment of terror, of mortal danger or tremendous joy, a man does not behave "naturally." A man in an elevated spiritual state uses rhythmically articulated signs, begins to dance, to sing. A *sign*, not a common gesture, is the elementary integer of expression for us.

In terms of formal technique, we do not work by proliferation of signs, or by accumulation of signs (as in the formal repetitions of oriental theatre). Rather, we subtract, seeking *distillation* of signs by eliminating those elements of "natural" behaviour which obscure pure impulse. Another technique which illuminates the hidden structure of signs is *contradiction* (between gesture and voice, voice and word, word and thought, will and action, etc.) – here, too, we take the *via negativa*.

It is difficult to say precisely what elements in our productions result from a consciously formulated programme and what derive from the structure of our imagination. I am frequently asked whether certain "medieval" effects indicate an intentional return to "ritual roots." There is no single answer. At our present point of artistic awareness, the problem of mythic "roots," of the elementary human situation, has definite meaning. However, this is not a product of a "philosophy of art" but comes from the practical discovery and use of the rules of theatre. That is, the productions do not spring from *a priori* aesthetic postulates; rather, as Sartre has said: "Each technique leads to metaphysics."

For several years, I vacillated between practice-born impulses and the application of *a priori* principles, without seeing the contradiction. My friend and colleague Ludwik Flaszen was the first to point out this confusion in my work: the material and techniques which came spontaneously in preparing the production, from the very nature of the work, were revealing and promising; but what I had taken to be applications of theoretical assumptions were actually more functions of my personality than of my intellect. I realized that the production led to awareness rather than being the product of awareness. Since 1960, my emphasis has been on methodology. Through practical experimentation I sought to answer the questions with which I had begun: What is the theatre? What is unique about it? What can it do that film and television cannot? Two concrete conceptions crystallized: the poor theatre, and performance as an act of transgression.

By gradually eliminating whatever proved superfluous, we found that theatre can exist without make-up, without autonomic costume and scenography, without a separate performance area (stage), without lighting and sound effects, etc. It cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion. This is an ancient theoretical truth, of course, but when rigorously tested in practice it undermines most of our usual ideas about theatre. It challenges the notion of theatre as a synthesis of disparate creative disciplines – literature, sculpture, painting, architecture, lighting, acting (under the direction of a *metteur-en-scène*). This "synthetic theatre" is the contemporary theatre, which we readily call the "Rich Theatre" – rich in flaws.

The Rich Theatre depends on artistic kleptomania, drawing from other disciplines, constructing hybrid spectacles, conglomerates without backbone or integrity, yet presented as an organic artwork. By multiplying assimilated elements, the Rich Theatre tries to escape the impasse presented by movies and television. Since film and TV excel in the area of mechanical functions (montage, instantaneous change of place, etc.), the Rich Theatre countered with a blatantly compensatory call for "total theatre." The integration of borrowed mechanisms (movie screens on stage, for example) means a sophisticated

technical plant, permitting great mobility and dynamism. And if the stage and/or auditorium were mobile, constantly changing perspective would be possible. This all nonsense.

No matter how much theatre expands and exploits its mechanical resources, it will remain technologically inferior to film and television. Consequently, I propose poverty in theatre. We have resigned from the stage-and-auditorium plant: for each production, a new space is designed for the actors and spectators. Thus, infinite variation of performer-audience relationships is possible. The actors can play among the spectators, directly contacting the audience and giving it a passive role in the drama (e.g. our productions of Byron's *Cain* and Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*). Or the actors may build structures among the spectators and thus include them in the architecture of action, subjecting them to a sense of the pressure and congestion and limitation of space (Wyspianski's *Akropolis*). Or the actors may play among the spectators and ignore them, looking through them. The spectators may be separated from the actors – for example, by a high fence, over which only their heads protrude (*The Constant Prince*, from Calderón); from this radically slanted perspective, they look down on the actors as if watching animals in a ring, or like medical students watching an operation (also, this detached, downward viewing gives the action a sense of moral transgression). Or the entire hall is used as a concrete place: Faustus' "last supper" in a monastery refectory, where Faustus entertains the spectators, who are guests at a baroque feast served on huge tables, offering episodes from his life. The elimination of stage-auditorium dichotomy is not the important thing – that simply creates a bare laboratory situation, an appropriate area for investigation. The essential concern is finding the proper spectator-actor relationship for each type of performance and embodying the decision in physical arrangements.

We forsook lighting effects, and this revealed a wide range of possibilities for the actor's use of stationary light-sources by deliberate work with shadows, bright spots, etc. It is particularly significant that once a spectator is placed in an illuminated zone, or in other words becomes visible, he too begins to play a part in the performance. It also became evident that the actors, like figures in El Greco's paintings, can "illuminate" through personal technique, becoming a source of "spiritual light."

We abandoned make-up, fake noses, pillow-stuffed bellies – everything that the actor puts on in the dressing room before performance. We found that it was consummately theatrical for the actor to transform from type to type, character to character, silhouette to silhouette – while the audience watched – in a *poor* manner, using only his own body and craft. The composition of a fixed facial expression by using the actor's own muscles and inner impulses achieves the effect of a strikingly theatrical transubstantiation, while the mask prepared by a make-up artist is only a trick.

Similarly, a costume with no autonomous value, existing only in connection with a particular character and his activities, can be transformed before the audience, contrasted with the actor's functions, etc. Elimination of plastic elements which have a life of their own (i.e., represent something independent of the actor's activities) led to the creation by the actor of the most elementary and obvious objects. By his controlled use of gesture the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner, etc. Elimination of music (live or recorded) not produced by the actors enables the performance itself to become music through the orchestration of voices and clashing objects. We know that the text *per se* is not theatre, that it becomes theatre only through the actors' use of it – that is to say, thanks to intonations, to the association of sounds, to the musicality of the language.

The acceptance of poverty in theatre, stripped of all that is not essential to it, revealed to us not only the backbone of the medium, but also the deep riches which lie in the very nature of art-form.

Why are we concerned with art? To cross our frontiers, exceed our limitations, fill our emptiness – fulfil ourselves. This is not a condition but a process in which what is dark in us slowly becomes transparent. In this struggle with one's own truth, this effort to peel off the life-mask, the theatre, with its full-fleshed perceptivity, has always seemed to me a place of provocation. It is capable of challenging itself and its audience by violating accepted stereotypes of vision, feeling, and judgment – more jarring because it is imaged in the human organism's breath, body, and inner impulses. This defiance of taboo, this transgression, provides the shock which rips off the mask, enabling us to give ourselves nakedly to something which is impossible to define but which contains *Eros* and *Caritas*.
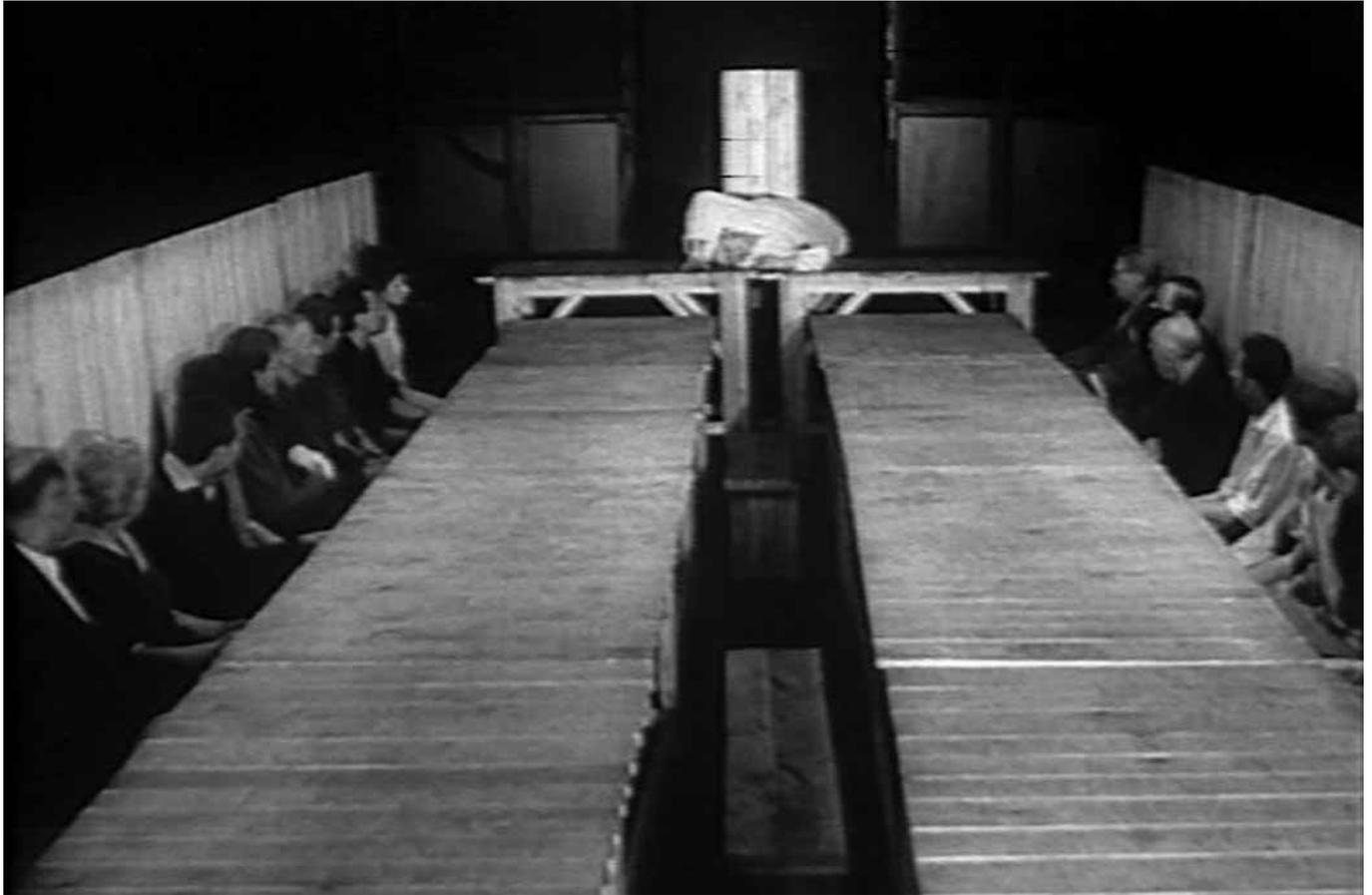
Teatr Laboratorium, 1964. Dir. Michael Elster

In my work as a producer, I have therefore been tempted to make use of archaic situations sanctified by tradition, situations (within the realms of religion and tradition) which are taboo. I felt a need to confront myself with these values. They fascinated me, filling me with a sense of interior restlessness, while at the same time I was obeying a temptation to blaspheme: I wanted to attack them, go beyond them, or rather confront them with my own experience, which is itself determined by the collective experience of our time. This element of our productions has been variously called "collision with the roots," "the dialectics of mockery and apotheosis," or even "religion expressed through blasphemy; love speaking out through hate."

As soon as my practical awareness became conscious and when experiment led to a method, I was compelled to take a fresh look at the history of theatre in relation to other branches of knowledge, especially psychology and cultural anthropology. A rational review of the problem of myth was called for. Then I clearly saw that myth was both a primeval situation and a complex model, with an independent existence in the psychology of social groups, inspiring group behaviour and tendencies.

The theatre, when it was still part of religion, was already theatre. It liberated the spiritual energy of the congregation or tribe by incorporating myth and profaning or rather transcending it. The spectator thus

had a renewed awareness of his personal truth in the truth of the myth, and through fright and a sense of the sacred he came to catharsis. It was not by chance that the Middle Ages produced the idea of "sacred parody."

But today's situation is much different. As social groupings are less and less defined by religion, traditional mythic forms are in flux, disappearing and being reincarnated. The spectators are more and more individuated in their relation to the myth as corporate truth or group model, and belief is often a matter of Intellectual conviction. This means that it is much more difficult to elicit the sort of shock needed to get at those psychic layers hind the life-mask. Group identification with myth – the equation of personal, individual truth with universal truth – is virtually impossible today.

What is possible? First, *confrontation* with myth rather than identification. In other words, while retaining our private experiences, we can attempt to incarnate myth, putting on its ill-fitting skin to perceive the relativity of our problems, their connection to the "roots," and the relativity of the "roots" in the light of today's experience. If the situation is brutal, if we strip ourselves and touch an extraordinarily intimate layer, exposing it, the life-mask cracks and falls away.

Secondly, even with the loss of a "common sky" of belief and the loss of impregnable boundaries, the perceptivity of the human organism remains. Only myth – incarnate in the fact of the actor, in his living organism – can function as a taboo. The violation of the living organism, the exposure carried to outrageous excess, returns us to a

A Sacrilegious Rite, 1979. Dir. Krzysztof Domagalik

concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth.

Again, the rational sources of our terminology cannot be cited precisely. I am often asked about Artaud when I speak of "cruelty," although his formulations were based on different remises and took a different tack. Artaud was an extraordinary visionary, but his writings have little methodological meaning because they are not the product of long-term practical investigations. They are an astounding prophecy, not a programme. When I speak of "roots" or "mythical soul," I am asked about Nietzsche; if I call it "group imagination," Durkheim comes up; if I call it "archetypes," Jung. But my formulations are not derived from humanistic disciplines, though I may use them for analysis. When I speak of the actor's expression of signs, I am asked about oriental theatre, particularly classical Chinese theatre (especially when it is known that I studied there). But the hieroglyphic signs of the oriental theatre are inflexible, like an alphabet, whereas the signs we use are the skeletal forms of human action, a crystallization of a role, an articulation of the particular psycho-physiology of the actor.

I do not claim that everything we do is entirely new. We are bound, consciously or unconsciously, to be influenced by the traditions, science and art, even by the superstitions and presentiments peculiar to the civilisation which has moulded us, just as we breathe the air of the particular continent which has given us life. All this influences our undertaking, though sometimes we may deny it. Even when we arrive at certain theoretic formulas and compare our ideas with those of our predecessors which I have already mentioned, we are forced to resort to certain retrospective corrections which themselves enable us to see more clearly the possibilities opened up before us.

When we confront the general tradition of the Great Reform of the theatre from Stanislavsky to Dullin and from Meyerhold to Artaud, we realize that we have not started from scratch but are operating in a defined and special atmosphere. When our investigation reveals and confirms someone else's flash of intuition, we are filled with humility. We realize that theatre has certain objective laws and that fulfillment is possible only within them, or, as Thomas Mann said, through a kind of "higher obedience," to which we give our "dignified attention."

I hold a peculiar position of leadership in the Polish Theatre Laboratory. I am not simply the director or producer or "spiritual instructor." In the first place, my relation to the work is certainly not one-way or didactic. If my suggestions are reflected in the spatial compositions of our architect Gurawski, it must be understood that my vision has been formed by years of collaboration with him.

There is something incomparably intimate and productive in the work with the actor entrusted to me. He must be attentive and confident and free, for our labour is to explore his possibilities to the utmost. His growth is attended by observation, astonishment, and desire to help; my growth is projected onto him, or, rather, is *found in him* – and our common growth becomes revelation. This is not instruction of a pupil but utter opening to another person, in which the phenomenon of "shared or double birth" becomes possible. The actor is reborn – not only as an actor but as a man – and with him, I am reborn. It is a clumsy way of expressing it, but what is achieved is a total acceptance of one human being by another.

Geister-Trio, 1977. Photo: Hugo Jehle

Beckett's Failures

Yara Sonseca & Javier Montes

"An interesting failure." This is how Beckett described his first film *Film* in 1964 when it was released. He certainly cannot be accused of false modesty: his comment radiates the unique Beckettian concept of *failure*, which is seen as the true essence and overriding characteristic of both his artistic vision and his outlook on life. It is this sense of failure which is omnipresent throughout all of his work.

Often Beckett's sense of failure can emerge through words, and not just through the references he makes to his first film. Almost twenty years after, in one of his later works *Worstward Ho* (1983) the lucid Beckett, ever conscious of the essentially failed nature of his work, uttered what may be considered the most famous expression regarding his vision of existence and his work. "All of old. Nothing else ever. Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better."

Film is the first in a series of audiovisual pieces spaced out in time demonstrating his coherence, severity, conceptual hostility and, which is by no means any less important, his plastic splendour. In this medium length film and up until a few years before his death, Beckett continued to try different ways of *failing better*, attempting to express his growing mistrust of words – spoken, written and *thought* – via the alternative medium of image. Beckett saw words as an impossible means of communication between individuals or of relating as an individual to an outside world of inaccessible nature.

Beckett's way of talking about *Film* can be applied to the whole of his audiovisual experience. That *interesting failure* is mentioned in one of the many letters he wrote to Alan Schneider over the course of almost thirty years between 1955 and 1983. Schneider was the co-director of *Film*, or the *executive* director, to coin a term to refer to the section he was responsible for in the symbiotic work they both carried out during the filming. The letters are published in *No author better served* (edited by Maurice Harmon and published by Harvard University Press in 1998). Publishing Beckett's voluminous and complete correspondence (it has only just been sent for editing and the first volume covering 1929 to 1940 has recently been published by Cambridge University Press) will provide a valuable insight into his feelings towards the new medium and working with the images of an author who has very seldom passed comment on himself or anything else.

In September 1964, after returning to Ussy from filming in New York, Beckett wrote to Schneider about *Film*, which he had just seen edited and projected for the first time: "After the first projection (…) I described it as an interesting failure. But now I see that that is too harsh. I suppose that it fails in a way that only you and I and a few others can see, but, in doing so, it has acquired a dimension and validity of its own that are worth far more than any merely efficient translation of intention."

In this letter, Beckett's notion of words and language as being *failures*, which is already well expressed now, gives way to his incipient perception of the nature of images. From now on this is what inspires Beckett towards new experiments. These phrases *set the tone* (to use a musical terminology which, as we will see later, is not different to other critics' perceptions of this section of his work) for how Beckett will, from now on, deal with attempting visible representation in the era of infinite technical mechanical image reproducibility. Also, the tone is set for the philosophical and practical issues of this era, which from a certain point, end up coinciding.

The same letter covers this issue in detail, which is overriding for us as spectators of his audiovisual work, and we suspect also for Beckett himself, insofar as he is verbalising his increasing awareness of the intrinsic nature of non-verbal images: "I have been to two projections (…) After the first I was not very happy, after the second I felt that it was very good. *Not exactly because of the projected form, but because of the pure beauty, the power and the strangeness of image.* In reality for example, double vision is not corrected but the attempt to correct it has given the film a plastic quality which it would not have had any other way. Said using different words, and in a more general way, being hindered by a particular failure to fully communicate the basic intention via purely visual means, I now begin to understand that this is irrelevant, and that the images we see probably *gain in strength what they lose in ideogram* and that the whole idea of the film, though it may be expressed well enough for those who are interested, achieves its value especially from its formal and structural level".

A year later on 12th March 1965, Beckett has put a lot of thought into the strange experience of *seeing*, as a spectator, the material that he has previously filmed. He writes a letter to Schneider in which we

Film, 1964. Dir. Samuel Beckett and Alan Schneider. Courtesy of Evergreen Review, Inc.

find a revealing sentence regarding the extent of the affect that the process of accepting the intrinsic qualities of image has had on him. "I realise how [the film] turns out to be more successful when you move away from rigid intention and how it becomes better. The last time, once I was distanced from the extravagant idea, *I surrendered to the strangeness and beauty of the pure image."*

Pure beauty, power and the strangeness of image. By *surrendering* to the autonomy of the image, recognising the impossibility of reducing it to an ideogram, Beckett *fails* (fails *better,* in his words) in many ways. In reality *Film*, like the rest of his audiovisual works is a chronicle of this surrender. To begin with, the very plot of the film has surrender as its theme. The protagonist, an elderly Buster Keaton in his last role, fails in his attempts to evade his condition of being an image, of being looked at. Eventually, after many attempts, in infinite loneliness,

he is forced to recognise that he cannot escape his own gaze which the camera has captured forever, the camera which follows him relentlessly. He cannot hide from his self-transformation into image.

After the attempt to take back possession of gaze in the form of *Film*, Beckett (as O, the film's protagonist) begins to recognise in this letter to Schneider the inevitability of giving way to pure image, which we consume and which consumes us at the same time without distance, without thought and without possible ideographic transformation. In a sense, *Film* is much more interesting than the intentions behind it and its original explanations, which Beckett describes in detail to his co-director, and which can sometimes seem naïve and simplistic. The viewer is surprised when confronted by the complexity and richness of contradictory meanings, by the fundamental ambiguity of the film. The intellectual translation of Berkeley's dictum *esse est*

percipi ("to be is to be perceived") is reminiscent of Machado's verses: "The eye you see is not an eye because you see it; it is an eye because it sees you." The allusions to *the eye of God*, the technical differentiation between E and O (Eye/Camera and Object – the camera's gaze as a character and the character's gaze insofar as being seen)… *failure* as Beckett understands from his first experience is not so much in the final result of the images – an image is neither a success nor a failure – an image *is,* like the attempt to explain *previously,* to be applied to the image of some ideographic parameters which is not designed to be defended or accepted.

Crisis of image (which is also, inevitably crisis of words) is found here, from the beginning, at the centre of Beckett's films. It couldn't be anything less, as this was now the very heart of his perception of the world.

This work is, of course, at the heart of issues which would later concern many in the post-modern movement. After the successive crises of representation that brought us into the era of technological image ubiquity, the "you and I and a few others" that Beckett said could perceive the intrinsic failure of pure image and the contaminated word are probably many more today in 2010 – those who view his work and are conscious of the "dimension and validity" of his attempt to grapple with their complexities.

This failure, which can be seen in the progress Beckett goes on to make, is made *better.* It is fitting for an artist who loved paradoxes that failure should signal not the end of his work, but the beginning.

Perhaps it is Beckett's progressive mistrust of language possibilities as a tool for communication or understanding of the world (insofar as progressive strengthening of his understanding of the non ideographic nature of filmed images), which makes his audiovisual work following *Film* so minimal in its regarding its word content.

The first medium length film actually appears to be silent but it isn't. Its anti-eloquence appears eloquent. It is very telling that the only piece of dialogue – which is background noise – comes from a programmed sigh – shhhh, a demand for silence directed towards the viewers by Buster Keaton, legend of silent film.

That speech *vacuum*, that word concealment, that gradual disappearance are common features of the rest of his filmed work, where language is substituted by silence or music.

Quad, *Ghost Trio*, *…but the clouds…*, and *Nacht und Träume* are later works written and directed by Beckett throughout the seventies and eighties for public television. They often have two versions, German and English and are in this sense successive steps towards obtaining, recreating, recuperating that "pure image" which impresses Beckett so much in the first projection of *Film.*

In *L'Épuisé*, perhaps the most beautiful and touching of his last texts, Gilles Deleuze was inspired by Beckett's filmed work and put into words that urge to discover a non ideographic image. "It is very difficult to make an image pure, unsullied, nothing more than image, reaching a point where the image emerges singularly conserving nothing personal or rational and accessing the indefinite like a heavenly state (…) *To make* an image, from time to time, art, painting, music, can they have another aim, although the content of the image may be poor, very mediocre? Image is a little visual or audio interlude, when its time has come."

And what is more, faced with what he calls Language I (of "combinatorial imagination, sullied by reason") and Language II ("imagination sullied by memory"), Deleuze sees Beckett's films as an attempt to develop and make use of what he calls Language III: "Not of names or voices, but of images resounding and colouring images, the annoying thing about language with words is how it is burdened with calculation, memories and stories: it can't not be. However, it is necessary that the pure image be inserted into language, in names and voices. And some times it will be in silence, at the time when voices appear to have hushed."

This particular syntax belonging to Language III, with its own grammar and specific conventions, made up of "pure" images, of visual interludes and musical resources marked with silence, can take form to a greater or lesser extent in all of his work to follow. The interlude is essentially the visual motif and model that he hangs over in *Quad 1* and *Quad 2* and he articulates them. In absolute silence, each to the obsessive beat of percussion, four players move around a square on the floor, each enters, exits, and re-enters the square area, always pacing at a steady rhythm but never stepping in the centre. Beckett's script is accompanied by diagrams which are carefully drawn and combinatorial exercises in exhaustive detail, leaves nothing to chance, so it seems. In
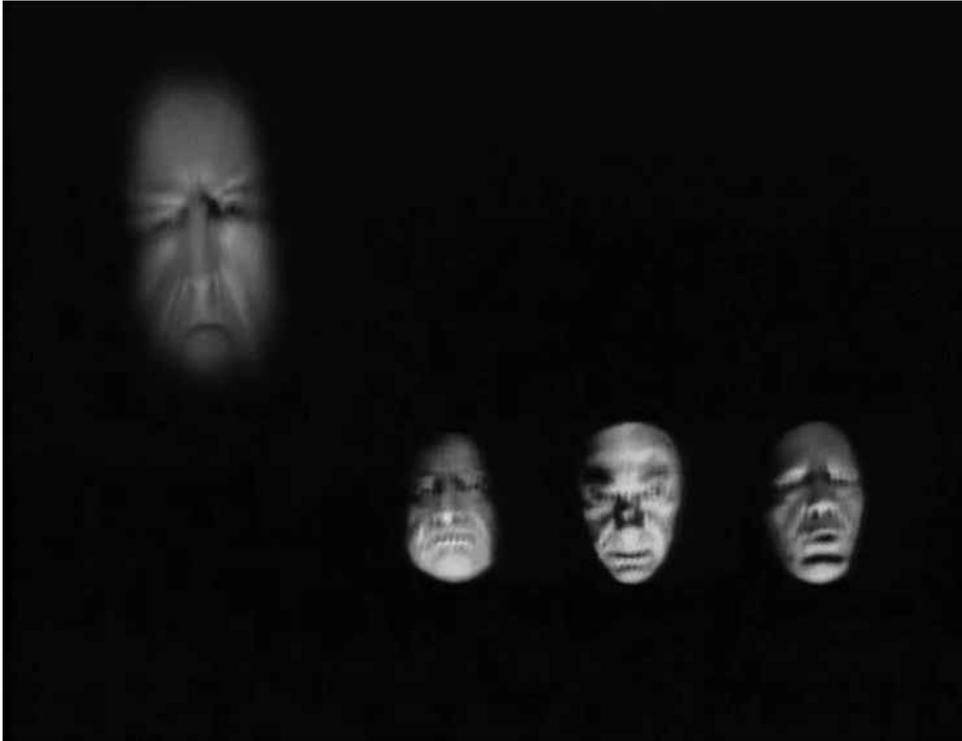
What Where, 1988. Dir. Stan Gontarsky

reality, it is the most radical expression of his interest in fate and its annulment, of his effort to explore alternative grammar in that Language III. Beckett arrives at this complete combination with the simple chain of *Ghost Trio* to the strict symmetry of *Nacht und Träume* and the interchange of *What Where*.

Furthermore, in saying "absolute silence" the expression, as in *Film,* is both true and untrue. The silence of language (the absence of voice, *deleted* from the ideograph) does not mean absence of sound, it means quite the opposite. In *Quad* word concealment is taken to the extreme and substituted by patterned, rhythmic motifs and obsessive interludes or musical pieces. However, Beckett had already experimented with fragmenting music associated with image: in *Ghost Trio* he includes music by using a tape recorder which the protagonist switches on then off, playing some strains of Beethoven's "*Ghost Trio*" *Trio for piano and strings*

op. 70, No. 1. In *Nacht und Träume*, on the other hand, is Schubert's Lied with the same title, a musical interlude much loved by Beckett, which articulates in an inarticulate way the piece without words. It only contains a human voice which has replaced the speech of Languages I and II (of communication and representation, according to Deleuze) with soft humming and whispered singing, which appears to belong to Language III.

When Beckett comes to *Quad* even the melody has lost its sense. A frantic *abstract* percussion, lacking any meaning beyond its own *existence* (like the images) is then combined with a more subtle sound: the light shuffle along the floor of tunics and characters' hidden feet, which then slows down in *Quad II*, losing the percussion and becoming almost exhausted – which is the *exhaustion* that gives the title to Deleuze's piece: a definitive comsumption of every possible permutation and variation.

Quad I+ II, 1981. Photo: Christ Simone

The extremely enclosed space of *Quad* – the square which only allows the figures to move within the contained area, with an apparently infinite combination of movements which are eventually exhausted, corresponds to the definitive enclosure of Language III in this supremely mature work. It is not a coincidence that on 4th February 1982 Beckett wrote a letter to Schneider replying in a cutting way to the possibility of organising a theatre piece based on *Quad: "Quad* does not work on stage." (He adds: "Although it is without doubt interesting for students, gymnastically.")

Of course, this does not refer to technical difficulties (although it is true that the almost zenithal background of the televised piece is very different to the purely frontal perspective that would be seen when sat in the audience at a conventional theatre space). For that time, after two decades of cinema and television experimentation, Beckett is very aware of the extreme closeness between *languages* which is shown throughout this aspect of his work and the rest of it: *Quad* does not work on stage because its realm is that of *pure* image, fascinating and terrible image, the realm of half image, simultaneous absence and presence, according to Deleuze – a realm of image which he has joined, via its technical reproduction, in a space in which it is reproducible at will (and truly reproducible to the point of exhaustion through repetition/compulsive projection).

In *Ghost Trio* a ghostly, soothing female voice comes from an invisible figure, a kind of hybrid between usherette, air hostess and herald of the Final Judgement introduces the images in the background with a hint (or is it an order?) which is repeated: *Look again*.

Over and again, with Beckett's images, the idea is to look again, to try again, to fail better.

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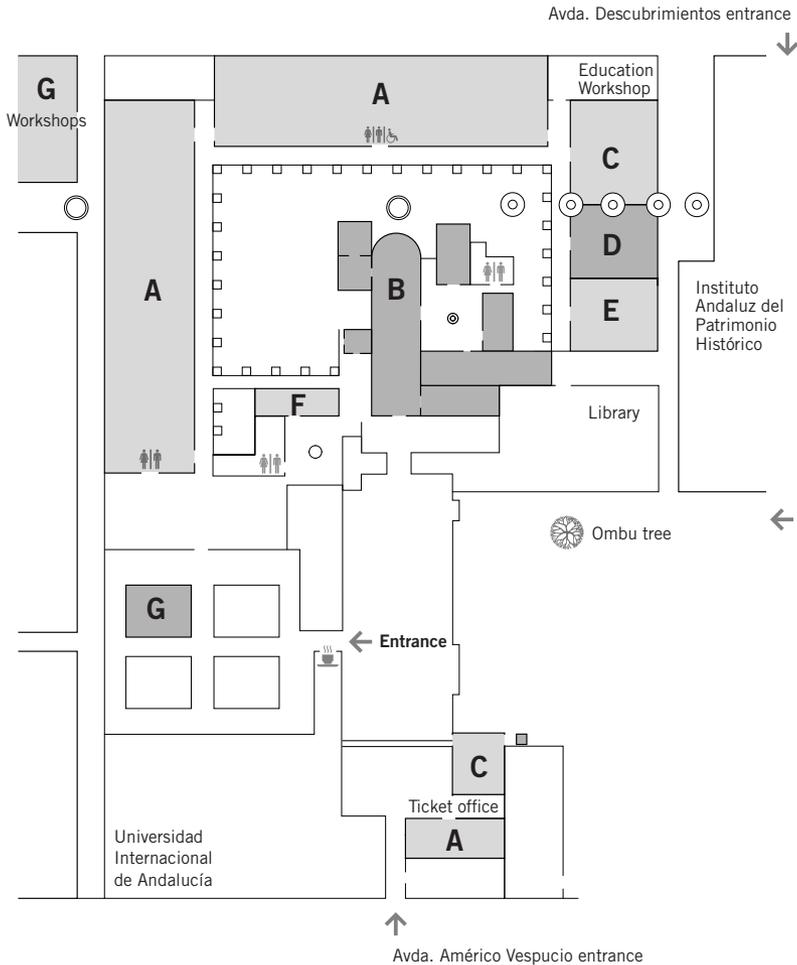
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