

**Ambient Attitudes.**

**On practices of contingency, treason and humour.**

**Edgar Schmitz**

**Goldsmiths, University of London**

**PhD Visual Cultures**

## **Abstract**

*Ambient Attitudes. On Practices of Contingency, Treason and Humour* outlines post-critical modes of involvement in current artistic practice. The project intersects current philosophies of difference with post-critical contemporary arts practice and mobilizes their conjunction to set up new conceptual frameworks for emergent modes of (non-)engagement. Placing its investigative focus on contemporary artistic practice, the project is set against a broader crisis of representational relationships between theory and practice, and is embedded in questions around contemporary concepts of resistance (Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno) and the possibility of non-representational relationalities (Jean-Luc Nancy).

For artistic and cultural practice as exemplary field, the project argues a move from specificity to contingency through Giorgio Agamben's notion of the *whatever* and Liam Gillick's early practice; it diagnoses slippage from trickery toward treason in Gilles Deleuze's notion of extended play and Gabriel Orozco's situational inserts; and it mobilises an attitudinal shift from irony to humour through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of minority and Andreas Slominski's trap-settings. These moves are shown to overflow the limited and limiting economies of established critical models which cohere around implicit claims for sustainable exchanges between theory and practice: the critique of institutional and other specificities, trickster engagements with game-like structures and ironic responses to given situations are all invariably premised on representational assumptions about the ways in which situations and responses, gestures and conceptualisations relate.

Against such models of reciprocity and as challenge to their coherence, *Ambient Attitudes. On Practices of Contingency, Treason and Humour* profiles practices which fuse a basic refusal to engage with an affirmation of productive encounters. Ambient dispersal as a new, fundamentally contingent milieu for contemporary practice and its articulation in qualities, effects and attitudes is thus argued to have a quasi-paradigmatic relevance for resistant practices at large, including any theoretical involvement with them.

## Table of contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Declaration .....   | 2   |
| Abstract .....  | 3   |
| Table of contents .....   | 4   |
| List of illustrations .....   | 5   |
| 0 Introduction (Setting up ambient) .....   | 7   |
| 0.1 Preamble .....  | 7   |
| 0.2 Some dedications to the story of the ape .....  | 11  |
| 0.3 Exiting and criticality .....   | 17  |
| 0.4 Ambient Modes: Contingency, Treason and Humour .....                                  | 22  |
| 0.5 Post-critical. A preliminary note on attitudes.....                                   | 26  |
| 1 Mode One: Contingency (Un-fitting settings).....  | 29  |
| 1.1 New encounters with and through art .....   | 29  |
| 1.3 From settings to set-ups .....  | 36  |
| 1.2 Over, beyond and under site-specificity and relational aesthetics .....               | 41  |
| 1.3 Generating clusters .....   | 49  |
| 1.3.1 Dispersal and sprawl .....  | 52  |
| 1.3.2 Overlaps and near-misses .....  | 71  |
| 1.3.3 Collisions .....  | 75  |
| 2 Mode Two: Treason (Stories of play) .....   | 80  |
| 2.1 Mobilising slippage.....  | 80  |
| 2.2 Playing (with) games.....   | 84  |
| 2.2.1 Games within the “economic circle of exchange” .....                                | 85  |
| 2.2.2 Outward moves “beyond measure” .....  | 89  |
| 2.3. Trickster moves .....  | 95  |
| 2.3.1. Running home.....  | 95  |
| 2.3.2. “Home-Run” .....   | 99  |
| 2.4 Modes of treason .....  | 104 |
| 2.4.1. The ball “and ... and ... and ...” .....   | 104 |
| 2.4.2 “and...and...and” its Stories .....   | 110 |
| 3 Mode Three: Humour (Imploding effects).....   | 119 |
| 3.1 Models and attitudes and some series of works .....                                   | 119 |
| 3.1.1 Irony and patterns of closure in Freud’s joke-work .....                            | 121 |
| 3.1.2 Deleuze’s ad-ventures of humour and the laterality of multiple<br>engagements ..... | 132 |
| 3.2 Expanded traps and open forms of capture.....   | 139 |
| 3.2.1 Reaching out.....   | 140 |
| 3.2.2 Sympathizing appeals .....  | 145 |
| 3.2.3 Forms of surfacing .....  | 151 |
| 3.2.4 In and Out .....  | 155 |
| 3.3 Ambient effects (“A certain piping”).....   | 162 |
| 4 Conclusion (“Arriving beside itself”) .....   | 171 |
| Bibliography.....   | 179 |

## List of illustrations

- fig.1: Liam Gillick: *theanyspacewhatever signage system (prototype)*, 2008.  
fig.2: Liam Gillick: *Applied Resignation Platform*, 1999  
fig.3: Liam Gillick: *Ibuka! Announcement #1*, 1995  
fig.4: Liam Gillick: *Ibuka! (Part 2) (Stuttgart)*, 1995  
fig.5: Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, 2001 (detail)  
fig.6: Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, 2001 (detail)  
fig.7: Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno: *A Smile Without a Cat (Celebration of Annlee's Vanishing)*, 2002  
fig.8: Joe Scanlan: *Do It Yourself (Annlee)*, 2002  
fig.9: Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, 2001 (detail)  
fig.10: Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, 2001 (detail)  
fig.11: Liam Gillick: *Coats of Asbestos Spangled with Mica*, 2002 (detail)  
fig.12: Liam Gillick: *Coats of Asbestos Spangled with Mica*, 2002 (detail)  
fig.13: Liam Gillick: *Up On The Twenty Second Floor*, 1998  
fig.14: Liam Gillick: *A Search For The Centre Ground Kept In Check By Violence, Disorder And Conspiracy*, 1998  
fig.15: Liam Gillick: *Erasmus Ass Zehn Jahre Opium #2*, 1997  
fig.16: John Tenniel: Illustration for Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865  
fig.17: John Tenniel: Illustration for Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 1865  
fig.18: Gabriel Orozco: *Home Run*, 1993 (detail)  
fig.19: Gabriel Orozco: *Crazy Tourist*, 1991  
fig.20: Gabriel Orozco: *Home Run*, 1993 (detail)  
fig.21: Gabriel Orozco: *Photogravity*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.22: Gabriel Orozco: *Photogravity*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.23: Gabriel Orozco: *Photogravity*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.24: Gabriel Orozco: *Chacahua*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.25: Gabriel Orozco: *Chacahua*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.26: Gabriel Orozco: *Chacahua*, 1999 (detail)  
fig.27: Gabriel Orozco: *Hammock Between Two Skyscrapers*, 1993  
fig.28: Andreas Slominski: *MUHAMMAD ALI vs SONNY LISTON*, 2003  
fig.29: Andreas Slominski: *The Ladder*, 1998  
fig.30: Andreas Slominski: *Colour to Paint One German Tank*, 2003  
fig.31: Andreas Slominski: *Fox Trap*, 1998  
fig.32: Andreas Slominski: *Mass Mousetrap*, 1990  
fig.33: Andreas Slominski: *Leopard Trap*, 2002  
fig.34: Andreas Slominski: *Trap for Combat Dogs*, 2001/2  
fig.35: Andreas Slominski: *Guinea-Pig Trap*, 1997/8  
fig.36: Andreas Slominski: *Ditch to Trap Slugs*, 1998  
fig.37: Andreas Slominski: *Trap to Throttle Small Vermin*, 1992  
fig.38: Andreas Slominski: *Birdstation*, 1998/2002  
fig.39: Andreas Slominski: *Snow-Grouse Trap*, 2002  
fig.40: Andreas Slominski: *Mouse Trap*, 2003  
fig.41: Andreas Slominski: *Mouse Trap*, 2003  
fig.42: Andreas Slominski: *Bird Trap*, 2000/2001  
fig.43: Andreas Slominski: *Merry Christmas From Belfast*, 2003  
fig.44: Felix Gonzalez-Torres: *Untitled (Ross)*, 1991  
fig.45: Liam Gillick: *discussion island: item a001*, 1996  
fig.46: Felix Gonzalez-Torres: *Untitled (Placebo Landscape for Roni)*, 1993  
fig.47: Liam Gillick: *Discussion Island Preparation Zone*, 1993  
fig.48: Liam Gillick: *Untitled*, 2002

For Lindsay, who read *Underworld* first.

## 0 Introduction (Setting up ambient)

### 0.1 Preamble

“Where all possibility of action seemed inappropriate,  
all sorts of activities became possible”<sup>1</sup>

There is an emergent expanded field around art in which new modalities of involvement come into being. At increasingly widespread intersections between artistic practice, philosophical discourse, sub-philosophical theorizations of art as well as politics and most fields in-between, configurations are emerging which involve, in one way or another, the making and installing of artworks of some description; a lot of writing about art and with art that relates to the work by expanding it; the salvaging of philosophical vocabularies and repertoires on one hand and the look toward art practices as trigger for new types of thought on the other. All of these are underpinned by a shared investment in the need to move away from illustration as predominant mode in which the fields interface; and another need, implicit in the former and making it more urgent, to develop more assertive combinations that should have effects rather than producing insights, and that should be played out rather than dissected.

This field emerges in the aftermath of models of dealing with art which were variously grounding themselves in epistemological certainties—be it in the refined formalism of recent critical projects (politically inflected or otherwise) or linguistically inspired approaches developed from the (post-)structuralist tradition; be it in phenomenological accounts premised on experience or indeed its current (im-)possibilities, or the new art history of complex social contextualisations. Yet no matter how wide the gaps and how fundamental the differences between these approaches, the real shift in the present occurs not from one such model to another or indeed toward yet other (or more refined) models. Rather what is currently becoming possible is the inauguration of new modalities beyond the teleologies that bind all of them together.

The coherence of explanatory models has lost most of its currency not because of the way in which it is in constant need of broadening out and refining, but rather through the way in which redundant attitudes of contemplation and introspection inherent in analytical ways of looking at art and facilitated by it seem inappropriate

---

<sup>1</sup> Marc Camille Chaimowicz, wall text for *Here and There...* (1979–2006), as presented at *Tate Triennial 2006: New British Art*, Tate Britain, 1 March - 14 May 2006.

for current forms of artistic as well as discursive work. The new non-teleological forms of accounting for practice and its effects no longer cohere into models. Rather they posit an effective politics of activated encounters generated by and around art in the present which displace the normalised analytical and/or introspective modes of existing models. At stake in this is thus also a different mode of relating to existing models. Rather than having to overcome such models, these new modalities are premised on a surplus that precedes and indeed *overspills* them. "The final word on power", as Gilles Deleuze argues, "is that *resistance comes first*"<sup>2</sup> so that what is produced is not a methodological shift but a re-organisation of the entire field of encounters which acknowledges and activates their potential.

This project on what I call *Ambient Attitudes* is set up as a response and approach to that possibility of a field that re-arranges as well as multiplies engagements. As supposedly discrete practices re-configure their respective outlines, and previously distinct realms have started seeping in and out of each other in what Maurizio Lazzarato calls a zone of indifference (between labour, political and artistic work)<sup>3</sup>, realms and activities alike enter into an indirect proximity of odd mirrorings which constitute a new sort of milieu from and within which to work. This project takes off from the potentiality of this milieu. It also starts from a disenchantment and from recognizing a misfit: a sense that in most approaches to and involvements in art, things do not seem to play themselves out as fully as they could and should, if they are indeed to be taken seriously as modalities that set their own terms. And a sense that dealings with art are potentially (and this potentiality matters) more confusing, stimulating and unstable than what they are given credit for in the terms of most existing models.

For me, that has been for a while now the everyday experience of being involved with such practices in multiple ways: making art, teaching theory, writing art criticism and organising events in the art world (some of which are exhibitions, others discursive platforms). What is stimulating as well as challenging about these is not only what they produce each and every time, the new perspectives, the contradictions, the productive misunderstandings and those that remain problematic. They also develop an expansive set of relations between adjacent, parallel and obliquely related knowledges which are productive as such and inaugurate a way of always thinking and navigating within different horizons at once,

---

<sup>2</sup> Gilles Deleuze: *Foucault*, transl. Séan Hand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p.89

<sup>3</sup> Maurizio Lazzarato, 'What possibilities presently exist in the public sphere?', available online under <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fplazzarato4.htm> (last accessed 6/11/08).

thinking about art through reading philosophy, assembling discourse through looking at art and working with it, often both ways making things do what they are supposedly not very good at, on the odd chance that they unlock new possibilities in the process. (Similar things need to be said about the uses of fiction too, for instance.) Against that background, which is simultaneously one of experience and of expectation, disciplines have always seemed at best strategic ways of containing knowledge formats. But also the sorts of representational relationships conventionally set up between different fields of practice and knowledges, seem un-useful then to describe how things come together, and indeed to outline how they might come together from here on and sideways.

If indeed the current moment is saturated in this sense, if the tendency with which it opens onto a to-come<sup>4</sup> that is as yet unclear and needs to be generated, seems more explicit and pressing; if it is one where coherences within specific fields break down as much as they do in the coming together of those fields, and where the restlessness of time is more pronounced than often, then the question of how to inhabit that situation is key. And in a more productivist sense, the question becomes what kinds of effects are being produced, and which ones can be generated from, through and with this present and an engagement with the art embedded in it? How can this involvement be imagined if imagination is to be posited as a “gesture which throws a web over the to-come so as to know it, construct it, organize it with power”<sup>5</sup>? How can it be invented such that this inhabitation itself qualifies as practice under the same terms in a field where “the old techniques do not work” because “there is no exteriority on which to fall back, on any occasion”<sup>6</sup>?

One key concern of this thesis is what happens when models of (critical) engagement are abandoned in the process, how this leaving behind works, what kinds of effects it produces and what kind of new encounters with art it enables, sets up or activates. One important part of that is art as practice that stakes a claim on the present and the way it can be read. Another is philosophy as re-arranging of conceptual parameters and opening of new possibilities. The rest are all sorts of activities surrounding it, modalities of engagement that become possible for and through art—the way one talks about art and through it, the way one can set up arguments with it and also use it to not concentrate on anything at all, if that seems

---

<sup>4</sup> Antonio Negri speaks of a necessarily “creative search of the to-come” in this sense (Antonio Negri, ‘Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo: Nine Lessons for Myself’, in *Time for Revolution*, London/ New York: Continuum, 2005, pp.129-241, p.148)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.147

<sup>6</sup> Antonio Negri, ‘The Constitution of Time: Timepieces of capital and communist liberation’, in *Time for Revolution*, London/ New York: Continuum, 2005, pp.19-128, p.47

useful. All of which is part of an expanded and obvious as well as counter-intuitive and suggestive dealing with art as trigger for *all sorts of* productions expanding and responding to the present.

This thesis argues for art in an expanded field of encounters where art and the engagement with it are equally prominent and equally active, where art is distributed between what works do and what can be done with them. So at least part of the challenge is to take on the fictions, the plots, the situations works seem to set up and find themselves immersed in; the inappropriate readings and the questions of how they could have happened and whether they should or not and why.

At stake in these activated encounters are *encounters* in the full sense in which art and the engagement with it are necessarily and inevitably on an equal standing; and are *activated* because they produce effects, unclear for most part but active in generating potentialities, most of which refuse to answer to any of the clear cut categories they seem to be emerging from. In this saturated time as milieu for current practice, and the present work in response to and as part of this practice, resides a peculiar way of specifying material: a sort of continually unhinged form of reciprocity which specifies the material each time such that it exists only ever in explicit assemblages along whose lines it is active. The very notion of a position from which to observe these re-configurations or indeed represent them is increasingly pressurized, verging on untenable; none of the above ever really exists outside of the ways in which it is mobilized. These sorts of assemblages need to be produced, rather than possibly being an object of study.

As far as the primary material for this thesis goes, this means that very different types of it qualify as relevant because their relevance now involves their potential for being productive, rather than an established linkage between material and the subject of the study. Most of the material here, be it text- or image based, features along similar lines of unscripted/ less scripted encounters. As far as these are images, they are the thesis' material as much as the texts are and also visually take the place of text (the texts, in turn, are theoretical as well as fiction).

In addition, there is a whole sequence of other images too, scattered throughout the thesis that operate slightly differently by making primarily associative appearances. Their smaller pictures are of an associative nature and looser in the ways in which they relate to the material discussions of the main text. They perform their non-fit in largely uncommented combinations, are interspersed in the text and accompany it in parts, on a sideways series of steps from which to go in and out of the text, its discussion and the focus it projects.

The other, very similar question is one of vocabulary. Inserted, or rather used in the text is a range of terms that have been helpful to me for dislodging in-built arguments through their connotations, through the ways in which they only partially fit and through the ways in which they indicate the kind of attitudinal slippages which are crucial to the project. Terms such as *overspill*, *underperform*, *inappropriateness* as well as *ambient* and *attitude* in themselves have been useful as corrective gestures of sorts in relation to the more canonically outlined terms that resonate throughout. They may not have universal appeal but have been helpful for me in the process of the research and its formulation – they are highlighted in the text as activations and should indicate a possible vocabulary of word-gestures which builds up throughout the project. These terms, like the images, are not subject to definition or similar forms of clarification but necessarily embedded in the context of the use they lend themselves to. In the text, a slightly differing font is used for these terms (when they are first used) so that they can be set apart as well as smooth with the surrounding text. They are merely pointed out here as possibilities, and there are always potentially more to be added to the range. Attitudes do not really claim a stable vocabulary.

## 0.2 Some dedications to the story of the ape

“Tenderly yet in some degree hardheartedly should this tale be tackled, which declares that it occurred to a monkey one afternoon to drop into a coffeeshouse and idle away the time of day there.”<sup>7</sup>

In Kafka's *Report to an Academy*, an ape who speaks and behaves mostly like a human, is invited to give a report on his former life as a beast. His sequence of events goes something like this: shot in the jungle by a hunting expedition he wakes up aboard the expedition's ship on her way back to Europe and comes to himself between decks trapped inside a cage too small to sit or stand in. What he calls “his own memories” begin here,<sup>8</sup> and the report then goes through a series of moves through which the monkey leaves behind the condition of the captive. The way in which he leaves behind whatever was given and ready for him; how he undoes captivity by shifting attitude and the way in which he turns the horizon of his

---

<sup>7</sup>Robert Walser: ‘The Monkey’, in: *Selected Stories*, transl. by Christopher Middleton and others, foreword by Susan Sontag, New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 1982, pp.145-148, p.145. The seeming contrast between the two monkeys is only superficial – Walser’s is here read as an extension of Kafka’s and its continuation.

<sup>8</sup> Franz Kafka: ‘A Report to an Academy’, in *The Complete Short Stories*, ed. by Nahum N. Glatzer, London: Random House Vintage, 1999, pp.250-262, p.252.

condition into a milieu of activity instead, are moves which are emblematic, indeed exemplary for the kind of new encounters developed in the following for, through and with art.

The first impulse obviously is to flee. It would make so much sense for the beast to break free and get back to where it belonged because that would seem to offer a radical solution to all kinds of problems from cramps to being spat at, and because the urge for space feeds on vague and half-forgotten memories of a freedom with uninhibited movement in that very other place which for the monkey was the jungle. And for a monkey flight should always be possible - even if he could not force the boards of his cage apart, he could at least attempt to bite through the lock by degrees.<sup>9</sup>

Yet his problem is not the (im)possibility of flight but where it would lead and what that would allow for. Even if he managed to escape in trying to thus get back, he would only ever perish among the predators surrounding him in their own respective cages, ending up strangled by the pythons or devoured by the lions. Or beyond them, if he ever made it that far, he would drown in the open ocean. Either way, he would only ever find himself captured by other cages, other beasts or too much water<sup>10</sup>.

What is needed instead is a whole new way of setting up relations between the monkey and the cage and the boat and beyond, between the beast and the structure and the milieu in order not to break free, not even necessarily to claim new ground but at least to invent new moves and new articulations between the two. Again and again in the cage, the ape's options are determined by partitions. His movement is confined by boxes nailed onto planks and, more importantly, by determined trajectories which lead into death through strangulation or drowning. Or, still under the perspective of a return to his natural state, they lead to the circus, the other obvious option for a monkey in captivity, into the kind of rehearsed choreographies that make even apes smile: performances of self-controlled movement which are to the monkey but a mockery of what nature would have been<sup>11</sup>. The scripted, deterministic nature of all these options is at the core of his capture, is that which he has to work to overcome: not by taking apart the cage or

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., pp254/55

<sup>10</sup> For a discussion of the tradition of thinking the animal as contained and the human as uncontained, see Giorgio Agamben's conflictual notion of an "anthropological machine" of modernity for which "the production of man through the opposition man/ animal, human/ inhuman, is at stake". (Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, esp. p.37) The way the monkey in Kafka reconfigures (pragmatically at least in motivation) the contradistinction between human and animal, plays into this too.

<sup>11</sup> Kafak, op.cit., p.253

choosing other ones but by inventing other possibilities out of it, to develop other scripts outside of the ones made available in the binary pairings of capture and freedom, constraint and mobility, resignation and flight, as well as monkey and human, object and interpretation. Needed are inventions and shifts that allow to re-script the situation in question instead.

And so he decides to invent a different way out that will make movement possible where escape cannot. Instead of aiming for freedom, he gives up being stubborn<sup>12</sup> and learns how to spit and smoke and drink, how to break into human speech and reach the cultural level of an average European, half sitting and half lying in his rocking chair and gazing out of the window<sup>13</sup>. Giving up hope on returning to the freedom that was, becomes a prerequisite for a series of moves through which he implodes his way out into a way in and ends up leading the beast out into humanity and its particular forms of conduct rather than directing him back to the spaces or behaviours that were once natural to him.

The present project around Ambient Attitudes should be dedicated to the monkey's story because it offers a similarly indirect account of such a transition from confrontation and constraint to new forms of mobility. Like the monkey's, the present project takes on a set of expectations toward explicating, toward insight, toward privileged access to both sides of a divide which runs between animal and human for the monkey, and between art and theory for this project. The monkey was presumably once one and is now presumably the other. He should by all accounts be able to talk about the former through the prism of the latter so that (and that is the promise and the conceit) both sides can finally become accessible through him, that they can be juxtaposed instead of having to be processed into one another. When asked he is more than happy to comply with the request made of him, accepts the invitation with only a slight hesitation and indeed delivers his speech in front of the Academicians. What he outlines to the assembled group of dignitaries is not the expected and desired first-hand account of his former life as an animal though. Instead he explains how he came to be respectable among humans, and outlines the series of encounters he orchestrated to get there. Describing the process of his own becoming human, the ape presents the academy with a story that sits awkwardly if not altogether uncomfortably alongside the account they had hoped for and expected. On one hand because it presents them with an aftermath rather than a pre-history, and on the other hand because the ape's story is to a

---

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.250

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.255ff.

large extent also a fable of invention; his report is an account of inhabitations, strategic decisions and sideways moves. In the same spirit, this dissertation does not attempt to unveil arts practices but work along and around them on a trajectory of animations and appropriations. Like the ape's report, this one too underperforms, frustrates expectations, "cannot comply with your request to the extent you desire"<sup>14</sup> and produces differently inhabited knowledges instead.<sup>15</sup>

In another sense then, this present work on Ambient Attitudes is dedicated to the figure of the monkey because his shift in attitude translates defiance into a form of inhabiting a situation and opens the horizon of an engagement from which movement can be generated. When the monkey states how much he needs a way out of captivity, he is not asking for freedom but for the possibility of a different kind of movement. "No, freedom was not what I wanted", he says. "Only a way out; right or left or in any direction."<sup>16</sup> He constructs it, quintessentially, by disregarding the ways in which conditions and with them positions of captor and captive, controller and controlled have been allocated and by then inhabiting differently the situations they set up. (And in doing so, that is the claim, the monkey simply disregards and thus undermines their claim to authority.) This shift in perspective onto the situation goes with a fundamental shift in attitude. When he claims that the first thing he ever learned was giving a handshake and that this betokens frankness<sup>17</sup>, the frankness of that gesture is not first in a temporal sense. (The detailed account of his transition starts with him spitting and being spat at and picking flees.) Rather it comes first as a foundational setting which asserts a fundamental shift in attitude from the covertness indispensable for escape to the explicit assertiveness of his inventions.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.250

<sup>15</sup> The seventh dedication would be a dedication to having-been-both. The monkey escapes being a trapped monkey by becoming human, and through this way in finds types of movement which undercut a whole series of ideas about what it means to be somewhere (among humans, human). There is a whole politics of gestures in this, which the monkey becomes very good at manipulating—his entire trajectory is one of inventions, making up moves and patterns in order to become human in such a way that the very stability of what it might mean to be human comes undone. Being human, being smart, having insight is no longer an exclusive domain, but it becomes, through his appropriations, subject to processes of making and erosion, of becoming human and of not always having been human. This project should then be dedicated to him also because he claims this as a position from which to re-assess. If "your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be farther removed from you than mine is from me" (ibid., p.250), hasn't then everyone gone through such transition from monkey to human? And does that not at least erode or at most undo distinctions one is used to drawing? And is this erosion not contagious? If it was not such a shame to reduce the monkey to the field one habitually calls the arts, or indeed the artist, then this (and he) would be obviously attractively also 'me'.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.253

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.251

The frankness he talks about is a condition of this assertiveness. Somewhere along the transition from cage to bourgeois sitting room, he claims, his move from one captivity to another allows for movement and is therefore captivity only under very different terms. Being caught and inventing a way out appear much more intimately linked here than one would normally assume to be useful or indeed appropriate. The way in which the present text remains entangled in its material and reassembles it thus, is dedicated to this mode of the monkey.

Thirdly this is also dedicated to the ape because his moves imply moves away from what might have been appropriate situations or frameworks. Instead they are directed toward new, differently fitted grounds which need to be inhabited under new grounds. The monkey could live in the zoo, and might even have the freedom humans have when they, like monkeys, swing on ropes. He has the option, it seems to him early on, of settling in the replica of his milieu and accepting a reductive approximation of his habitat all premised on suiting him and meeting his needs as far as possible. But he does not, he prefers not to, and invents instead a way into a situation which had never been his. This text is dedicated to him because it too takes the indispensable misfit (between monkey and society, between actor and situation, between art and its given theoretical frameworks), as a given set of tensions to work from and with in the way it relates a work to its milieu.

Furthermore, the Ambient Attitudes project is dedicated to him because in the process he decides to neither simply escape from nor capitulate before his condition. Instead, the strength and ingenuity of his project lie in the fundamental re-formatting it produces. Inventing a way out of the conditions of a situation by inventing new parameters for it, he refuses to submit and commit to what one would have to call his condition. He decides that his main aim is movement, not freedom when he finds himself locked up in a cage that is so narrow he can neither stand nor sit. The beast who “had had so many ways out of everything” now “had to devise one”<sup>18</sup>, “only not to stay motionless with raised arms, crushed against a wooden wall”<sup>19</sup>, as he says. The discovery which leads him into becoming human disregards captivity as all-encompassing condition to which freedom is the only alternative option on offer. Instead of subscribing to the mutually constituted inescapability of captivity and freedom, the monkey invents a way out that produces itself through encounters and engagements which are played out as continual adjustments. So he attempts not to escape, necessarily, but to create the possibility of movement where

---

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.253

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.254

really none is possible and where this lack of possibility, this lack of a pre-given perspective means that movement needs to be, but also can be invented anew in terms of its scale, its perspective and relevance.

In short, he makes a whole series of moves that can be useful as indications toward a politics of activated encounters that will be developed here: The monkey's process is a sequence of ways of setting up these encounters between him and his humans, his behavior and their expectations, their patterns and his imitations. And with these encounters comes the question as to how one can start steering them, which attitudes can be played out in relation to them and how they can be inhabited, how one can effectively move through them. Instead of an allegory of resistance, the monkey's story offers a tale about the possibilities of generating, framing, re-framing and assessing encounters in order to enable movement. This line of thought underpins most arguments in the thesis, from those engaging the slippages of contingency through the invocation of treason to the ways in which humour overflows ironic economies of meaning. All of these need to be played out through the performance of juxtapositions. The monkey is very good at demonstrating just that.

In crucial addition, the project also needs to be dedicated to the monkey because of the way in which he only ever exists as a fable of invention. His key modality is fiction. First and foremost as an invention of his own, for whom the becoming human appeared as a "fine clear line of thought"<sup>20</sup> he made up (even though with the belly) and then as a story of those who write him, first Kafka who invents him as a figure of his own report and then Deleuze/ Guattari who re-write him into the blueprint for a new kind of (literary) politics.<sup>21</sup> Insofar as this project writes its material as a series of encounters and invents itself through their collisions, it follows a similarly constructive logic of operations. Main concern then is not only what they do to each other, the playing and the situation, the thinking and the work, the baseball and the pitch it has left and the orange on the window sill, the museum installation and the mainstream novel one might want to juxtapose it with. What matters is mainly what they can be made to do with each other, and what the natures of that *with* might be.

A last and somewhat minor dedication is to the nature of the gestures invoked. As apes have a tendency to not only play but also playfully copy, their mimicking makes all sorts of connections. It takes the monkey a long time before the

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.253

<sup>21</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986

components fall into sequence, until he knows the difference between a burning and an extinct pipe when pressing the tobacco down. In the meantime, play is its key modality as well as one of its key motives. In Kafka's story, it occurs as the realm of spectacle and performance, circus and society etiquette in the overall play on roles that the Report stages.<sup>22</sup> For this thesis, games are those of art or art in relation to them in the full sense extended sense in which the German term *Spiel* encompasses game and play and slippage all in one word. *Spielen*, its verb, mobilizes all of them and potentially at the same time in a playing with things which makes them do what they do not or cannot normally perform.

### **0.3 Exiting and criticality**

The proposed ambient de-framing of artwork here is twofold: on one hand it updates rhetorical and conceptual tools which are invested and embedded in established notions of critique, confrontationality and questions of scripted competences and which need to be re-configured for the different types of works, situations and broader usages at play in the context of this project. On the other hand, it profiles modes and attitudes as singular forms of criticality in parallel to and against the background of such models. Enacted through new forms and styles of encounters, these ambient modalities imply a fundamental shift in positionality from frontal to oblique in a variety of ways: rather than inscribing works and frameworks into predetermined exchanges, it becomes necessary to work out possible and productive intersections between works, milieus and their component parts. Oblique involvements in milieus then need to be taken up and mirrored rather than analysed. And the non-linear juxtapositions between works, models and knowledges thus produced then generate configurations where all intersect but where neither figures as a stable reference for the other.

In the background and as effective horizon to this twofold operation, there is an intersection between such conjunctures and the ways in which recent non-representational political thought has re-mapped categories toward fundamental re-configurations of the political and the potentiality of radical change. In both fields, cultural practice and political thought, the very notion of positions is being abandoned along with claims for ideological grounding and clearly discernible critical projects, from canonical Marxist projects through to their Althusserian

---

<sup>22</sup> In Robert Walser's story of a monkey claiming a coffee house and propositioning one of its customers, the dimension of society etiquette as domain of play is staged in the monkey's nonchalant/ impertinent disrespect of etiquette, and more immediately recognizable as premised on unfitting attitudes (see Walser, op.cit.).

variants; from the various formations of identity politics as they emerged from feminist and post-colonial projects through to a Foucauldian account of micro-politics. In the move away from these horizons, the notion of the political is not so much abandoned as it is re-assessed as proto- and post-political potential. In the place of programmatic contributions to existing critical projects and concerns emerges instead a notion of resistance as opening up of new types of possibilities re-configured beyond established confrontationalities. In this form of resistance and in the way in which its generative impetus disrupts dominant ordering patterns of the respective field of practice (political, art and mixed fields as well as their intersections), strategies of exit overlap with a leaving behind of the very notion of strategy. Critique, refusal and affirmation are interwoven into mutually constitutive operations.

As Antonio Negri argues in his recent account of political possibilities in the present, not only have the concepts of resistance changed in what he calls postmodernity<sup>23</sup>; the most astounding fact is how its practices are transformed.

“If we attempted to identify [resistance] in accordance with the categories and experiences of modernity, we would now be incapable of understanding it. In modernity, resistance is an accumulation of forces against exploitation that come to be given a subjective determination through a *‘prise de conscience’*. In postmodernity, none of all this.”

In the place of modern confrontationality, resistance (if that is what it still is) as enacted by the postmodern multitudes which for Negri determine the current socio-political condition, is played out “in a diffuse manner” and in such a way as to “escape the increasingly confining enclosures of misery and Power.”<sup>24</sup>

At stake is not resistance as a coherent set of operations against a fundamentally coherent set of dominant conditions, and directed toward a programmatic and agreed upon set of aims; at stake here is rather a set of resistant practices that defy clear (intelligible) placement and are made up of some out of the all sorts of activities which make up the milieu and set up its possibilities. Crucial for the way in which such dispersed resistance allows for an undoing of capture, through the modes in and through which these practices are played out as activity. Part of this

---

<sup>23</sup> For Negri’s notion of *postmodernity as real subsumption* and its relationship to ‘laboratory Italy’ as well as his assessment of the ongoing relevance and broader critical scope of Italian Operaismo’s analysis, see his 1997 Introduction to ‘The Constitution of Time’, reprinted as ‘Afterword’ in Negri, *Constitution of Time*, p.120-128). He claims of the 1981 text that its concerns can and should be translated “into a revolutionary dialect of postmodernity” (ibid., p.120).

<sup>24</sup> Negri, ‘Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo’, p.188

other form of resistance is refusal, part is affirmation. If a fundamental, strategic and tactical refusal to engage under the terms offered up opens a new field of operations, then it becomes important to work out what kind of productions become possible under the condition of such originary refusal. It is at least one of the urgent tasks, if not the most urgent, to re-configure their very relationship in these new formats of exchange. Or more precisely: to work out how refusal can be thought in this sequence not as a fundamental setting of parameters, not as a rigorous new framework that demands its own forms of allegiance and commitment, but instead as a first gesture in a whole series of re-adjustments and re-orientations directed toward generative encounters and situations. *All kinds of activities* can be played out only where refusal stops short of setting new authoritative, regulatory parameters for coherent and appropriate behaviour. Rather than providing a foundational framework of integrity, refusal needs to be thought as an affirmation of possibilities and through the affirmation of these possibilities also as an affirmation of an originary ungroundedness that allows for lateral juxtapositions to be played out.

One key motive in this field of contemporary resistance (its “second key word”, as Paolo Virno claims) is exodus as a gesture that fuses the refusal of a given situation with an affirmative embrace of an elsewhere which orients the move. Exodus is transformative in that it “modifies the conditions within which the struggle takes place, rather than presupposing those conditions to be an unalterable horizon; it modifies the context within which a problem has arisen, rather than facing this problem by opting for one or the other of the provided alternatives. In short, exit consists of unrestrained invention which alters the rules of the game and throws the adversary completely off balance”<sup>25</sup>. This loss of balance is not a result but an effect, a secondary, side-effect in that it “hinges on a latent kind of wealth, on an exuberance of possibilities, in short, on the principle of the *tertium datur*”.<sup>26</sup> Defection then is an affirmative gesture, rather than simply one of withdrawal, and “allows for a dramatic, autonomous, and affirmative expression of this surplus”.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Paolo Virno: *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Los Angeles/ New York: Semiotext(e), 2004, p.70

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. See also Sylvère Lotringer’s notion of what he calls *luxury* in *Autonomia* and which he reclaims as “a luxury that we should be able to afford: the luxury of imagining a future that would actively bring together everything we are capable of “ (Sylvère Lotringer: ‘We, the Multitude’, in Virno, op.cit., pp.7-19, p.17. For a broader historico-political contextualisation see also Sylvère Lotringer: ‘In the shadow of the Red Brigades’, in Sylvère Lotringer, Christina Marazzi (eds.), *Autonomia: Post-political Politics*, Los Angeles/ New York: Semiotext(e), 2007, pp.V-XVI.

The inversion of aims and effects produced through it, has its own implications for the confrontational assumptions underpinning it. Such resistant tactics opens a quantitative imbalance of power but operates onto a qualitative register too. This is why outlining the heterogeneous encounters of such resistance is useful as a template for re-thinking the stakes of different cultural practices and their forms of coming together, too. The real “throwing off balance” lies in the fact that even the registers and critical parameters of engagement are emptied out by sprawling involvements that overspill their specificity.

Resistance is thus prior to what it defies<sup>28</sup> in that it is not a response but consists of another set of moves which are no longer determined solely by their starting point but also by the ways in which they are directed toward an elsewhere. And this elsewhere, because it is unhinged from cause/effect relationships, operates elsewhere in relation to its parameters too, be they temporal (before and after) or spatial (inside and outside). Under these terms “there is no more outside”<sup>29</sup> only an expanded (un-bounded) inside with “exodus [...] leading nowhere but here”.<sup>30</sup> *Exodus* “as the only possible creative event” then is “the name for a transmutation of the values of resistance” “that would [i.e. could] finally exhibit an other postmodernity”.<sup>31</sup> An other mode of involvement becomes possible here that oscillates between refusal and affirmation, resistance and flight and starts generating a milieu where both tendencies overlap. This mode is at least suggestive for re-thinking engagements between artistic practice and theoretical concerns as well as their articulations in relation to both. It is a matter of working from this situation Hardt and Negri call postmodern as a given premise and of simultaneously mobilising the potentiality of what Lotringer calls postmodernity’s amphibious nature.<sup>32</sup> The present project gestures toward the latter as an opening for possible multiplications to be generated.

---

<sup>28</sup> “One might say in this sense that resistance is actually prior to power.” (Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt: *Empire*, Cambridge, MA/ London: Harvard University Press, 2000, p.360)

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186

<sup>30</sup> Eric Alliez, Antonio Negri, ‘Peace and War’, in *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20:2, 2003, pp.109-118, p.116

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> For Lotringer, capitalism itself “keeps providing its own kind of ‘communism’ both as a vaccine, preventing further escalation, and an incentive to go beyond its own limitations.” Both options in response to this ambiguity, “absorbing the shocks” and “multiplying the fractures” can thus be part of the “luxury of thinking ahead, unimpeded” granted by the spectre of capitalism and in spite of itself (Lotringer: *op.cit.*, p.18). Alliez/ Negri call that which can be produced from this monstrous: The “product of generation is always a ‘monster’” (*ibid.*) not as moral category but in terms of the improbable fusions and combinations, and in their turning component parts of various creatures into other life forms which then (and that is important too) take on their own dynamics.

Art figures in this post-critical scenario first and foremost as proto-political potential toward a re-configuration of the present. In Virno's account, its potential is generated by levelling art, work and speech and claiming them as proto-political through the way in which they require and in turn constitute an audience, social organisation and a language, and how they perform proto-political situations<sup>33</sup>. Art in this account is paradigmatic for a new type of politics both in the way in which it indexes potentiality and in the pragmatics of the inevitably public situations it generates. Implicit in both is what Alliez/ Negri call art's direct attack on "the partition of identities that regulates the political effects of the relation between the utterable and the visible, or between appearing, being, and doing."<sup>34</sup> Such disregarding, production-oriented attack on the enforcement of categories, no matter how direct it may be, cannot be contained where containment itself is under attack, and is inevitably and necessarily entangled in other forms of exchange onto which it abuts: "this [attack] is what [art] cannot do for real, that is, without academic mediation, without situating itself in the taking-place of what it wants to demonstrate in order to reverse – by situating itself, and therefore placing us, both within and "after the passage of life through the ordeal of nihilism"(Agamben)."<sup>35</sup> Art's attack on the enforcement of categories is then itself subject to what the authors call "academic mediation" and in this sense always also entangled in the overall distributions art supposedly interferes in. Rather than standing outside of the dynamics it generates, art is itself subject to mediation as another level of undoing of competences. The remit then is double: ways in which art can be animated need to be animated in themselves as dynamic points of departure through which art can become generative of new possibilities.

Virno describes this shared and contested milieu in terms of the potential it holds for what he calls a "general hybridization" from which emerge not only the potentiality of the multitude, but also late capitalism's inherent communism. Drawing in particular on the erosion of formerly constitutive distinctions between politics, labor and intellect Virno observes and argues for,<sup>36</sup> this general hybridization shall here be applied to mobilizing art and mediation and/as/of potential.

---

<sup>33</sup> See Lotringer, op.cit., esp. pp.52-56

<sup>34</sup> In Alliez/ Negri, art features furthermore in terms of "the artist in his or her effort to extract expression from the unworldly [...] by the construction of a world once again made possible", a world set against "the hegemonic media regime of the image" (Alliez/Negri, op. cit., p.115). The direct attack above is a function, for Alliez/ Negri, of art performing this extraction. It is also its effect and will be taken up as a starting point here in this sense.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See also Virno's tri-partite distinction and its overcoming: then, in modernity (Arendt), and now, in the amphibious postmodern. The claim back to Arendt and notably Marx (when

At stake is a question as to what kind of relations some of the artwork sets up, and as to what kind of relations can be constructed for a thinking with and through and from these practices? The important task in both is to develop a thinking from and toward which will start fusing ways in and out. Positing work without considering the involvement with it would undercut precisely the crucial effect of artwork Alliez/Negri posit as its potential for generating “social danger” where this is understood as having an impact (“political effects”) on the relation(s) “between appearing, being and doing”, which for them constitute the very core of political distribution in the present.

In this perspective and at the risk of taking it too seriously, even the notion of mediation is misleading in that it seems to posit a primacy of the work and a secondary status of the engagement with it whilst in fact it marks a crucial hinge between artwork and situation, a hinge that is unacknowledged but serves to qualify the claims made for the artwork. Foregrounding this hinge and indeed taking off from it, the Ambient Attitudes project posits both the various involvements the work sets up and the possible involvements with it as operations that inevitably mutually constitute each other. If artwork indeed “attacks directly the partition” between appearing being and doing, then this undoing has to also affect the artwork that produces it. It can never only be the artwork that produces that sort of attack, nor can it be artwork alone that would be exempt from the effects generated. Rather artwork has then also to be thought under these very effects, affected too by the attacks it itself launches. It can and has to be thought as itself caught and oscillating between appearing being and doing, and needs to be animated in their interactions and interferences.

#### **0.4 Ambient Modes: Contingency, Treason and Humour**

The ensuing chapters arrange clusters of concepts and works as a way of

---

Virno posits in the second of his *Ten Theses on the Multitude and Post-Fordist Capitalism* that “Post-Fordism is the empirical realization of the “Fragments on Machines” by Marx”, “without, however, any emancipating consequences” (Virno, op.cit., p.100)) is not a simple attempt at historically legitimising his outlook. The reference back, to the contrary, indicates the unresolved (and potentially unresolvable) nature of the tension at play, a tension that is now potentially closer than before to being possibly mobilised. The question of its mobilisation, its potential, is now unresolved and was unresolved before. The historical reference, ironically, serves here as a safeguard against the kind of deterministic argument underpinning Negri/Hardt’s take on historical materialism through the figure of the multitude in relation to which the crises of capitalism, as well as the ‘production of the common’ they argue in *Multitude*, re-enact Marxist determinism. See Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri: *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, New York/ London: Penguin, 2004. For a critical assessment of their Marxist re-interpretation of class struggle see also Lotringer’s (cautious) introduction to Virno’s *Grammar of the Multitude*, and Lotringer’s critique of Hardt/ Negri there (Lotringer, op.cit).

producing such mobilities in order to overcome the impasses of existing critical frameworks and the ways in which they assess the possible effects of art. One chapter addresses how contingency allows to overflow specificity, another tells stories of treason beyond the economies of trickery and intervention, and the last is concerned with an attitudinal slippage that occurs between irony and humour and opens onto confusingly unstable effects. Each of these clusters follows and produces a fundamental shift away from established critical models and elaborates on a series of different ways into conceptualising and articulating ways out. Through and with them the project will attempt to shadow artworks exiting from situations and engagements by trying to, in the same move, exit from a scripted, representational relationship to the artwork itself. The shadowing consists in following some of the artworks' moves and projecting them onto broader conceptual concerns, whilst simultaneously projecting theoretical moves and attitudes onto the works in question. The way in which this interplay allows to animate artwork and theoretical frameworks alike provides the effective horizon to this entire project.

'Mode One: Contingency', the first of these clusters, attempts to drown out notions of specificity as structuring principles for an engagement with artistic practice. The chapter outlines how specificity figures in recent critical accounts of artistic practice as a way of projecting a fundamentally responsive exchange between given conditions and artistic responses to these. The chapter then profiles modes of indifference set up to defy and overflow these limiting economies. Taking off from two recent, paradigmatic conceptualisations of specificity, Nicholas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* project<sup>37</sup> and the historical trajectory of site-specific practices (as well as institutional critique as their implicit critical horizon), the chapter deconstructs them as models of analytical highlighting and essentialised difference respectively, and argues that both result in ultimately limiting reading patterns premised and focused on generating overall coherence between an intervention and the situation it addresses.

In order to mobilise such contingency against established notions of specificity, the chapter follows the ways in which some early spatial as well as discursive interventions by Liam Gillick operate across the divide of theoretical and practical operations and set up multiple and incoherent involvements in the situations they relate to. Contingency here destabilises the focal precision implicit in claims of specificity and sets up a whole series of unbalancing adjustments that reconfigure the basic coordinates of relationships at play. Against the economy of a specific

---

<sup>37</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*, Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002

response or intervention, contingency sets up a loose fit between factors that contribute to varying degrees to the constitution of a situation. One of contingency's key strategic features is its capacity to unhinge linear causalities, and with them unilinear connectivities as such. And in terms of this looseness, contingency allows to replace economies of necessity with probabilities, likelihoods and ultimately merely possible connections, outlining a conjunction of refusal and indifference which sets the grounds for new forms of affirmation.

Concepts have to then be played out accordingly in relation to refusal, indifference and affirmation. Challenging the close fit implicit in commentary functions and cohering reading patterns, the Ambient project proposes instead to work out how to operate in relation to contingency without re-cohering it. Articulating outward openings through loose fits, near-misses and other figures of seeming imprecision, this chapter unhinges the specificity of works as well as concepts and opens them onto a field of expanded and unclear effectivities.

'Mode Two: Treason', the second chapter, develops a trajectory from trickery toward treason as play between two fundamentally incompatible conceptualisations of intervention which are set up here as an interplay between game and playing. Whilst the notion of the game features as a structured set of scripted exchanges into which trickery can intervene, play features as an uncontained sequencing of moves that constantly re-set the terms under which they take place and opens onto the more radical departures of treason. The chapter examines how the slippage between both modes affects the rules, grounds and effects a game is determined by and that it (the game) in turn generates. Gilles Deleuze's extended notion of play as developed primarily in his work on Lewis Carroll<sup>38</sup> and Gabriel Orozco's situational inserts are set up in this tension so as to take games beyond notions of structure. Instead, they are moving it to the point where treason is only one perspective onto the traitor's activities which are also always and necessarily part of an affirmative move. At this point, and only at this point or when coming from it, can it become possible and important to betray the distinction between trickery and treason, and challenge the possibility of setting them apart. In their place then emerges a notion of proliferation for which leaving-behind is always also the affirmation of an elsewhere generating effects which feed back into the situation it leaves behind.

Narrativity, which already plays a significant minor role in some of the discussions around contingency in chapter one, is a key mode in understanding and mobilising this kind of sprawl. As work/ concept cluster, the 'treason' chapter narrates a home-

---

<sup>38</sup> Gilles Deleuze: *The Logic of Sense*, London: Athlone, 1990

run set up by Gabriel Orozco around New York's Museum of Modern Art<sup>39</sup> with/ through a game of baseball and the stories its ball takes on in Don DeLillo's *Underworld* novel<sup>40</sup>. Blurring Orozco's spatial dispositifs and DeLillo's combinatory plot sequences into a multiple narrative strand allows to appropriate and re-assemble both into a narrative engine for the chapter itself. Situational inserts and extended play thus extend into trigger objects for a narrative sprawl that gestures toward un-containing the chapter itself.

Evasion as a paradoxical movement into and way out of a situation features as a key concern throughout the third chapter addressing the modalities of 'Mode Three: Humour'. It is organised along a movement from irony to humour as shift through which escape can be conceptualised as a pro-active rather than a defensive stance and operation. Humour is not only, as will be shown, a productive reaction simply because it startles expectations. Its relevance lies furthermore in the way in which it allows to conceptualise escape as going beyond the classical dichotomy of ways in and ways out, as if they were really to be opposed.

The chapter sets up Sigmund Freud's notion of the joke<sup>41</sup> as background against which to play out Deleuze's notion of humour as un-cohering practice. Following the shift from irony to humour outlined by Deleuze, the chapter backtracks irony from this conceptual re-adjustment: What Deleuze describes as the circularity of irony is here projected back onto Freud's notion of the joke as its fundamental structure (and structural foundation). Freud's reading of the economies at play in forms such as the joke can thus be taken up against the grain of his model as a way of highlighting and problematizing their implicit claims for coherence.

Projecting these readings onto Andreas Slominski's conceptual animal traps and the ways in which they solicit a multiplicity of milieus as real traps for imagined animals, 'Humour' mobilises an attitudinal shift from irony toward humour as way of re-thinking the potentiality of sideways movements and lateral slippage. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's shift from the symbolics of circularity and depth toward figures of laterality and flatness, the chapter turns their mobilisation of minor practices into a blueprint from which to re-visit the effects of Slominski's trap-settings. The blurring of conceptual and spatial registers of laterality allows to posit these works as fusing a basic refusal to engage with an open-ended affirmation of

---

<sup>39</sup> Gabriel Orozco, *Home Run*, projects 41 exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1993

<sup>40</sup> Don DeLillo: *Underworld*, London: Picador, 1999

<sup>41</sup> Sigmund Freud: *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960

productive encounters and a new kind of effects generated through these.

### **0.5 Post-critical. A preliminary note on attitudes**

So if this mobilises contingency, treason and humour in order to update existing critical vocabulary, inscribe broader horizons and enable new modes of operating at their intersection, then this adjustment consists partially at least also in re-assessing attitudes within and toward the field; they are necessarily what the project shifts towards. The material consulted and used is therefore primary material for the most part, literary fiction and philosophical construct as well as artwork, because it is, for this project, not so much a matter of understanding and/or explaining the material differently, as it is a matter of mobilizing it in new ways. There are obvious implications to this for the text itself, for the way in which repetitions and shifted priorities animate the relationships between the different chapters and for the ways in which similar motives and key concerns are consistently re-revisited throughout. The chapters constitute mutually responsive clusters much more than consecutive chapters. Also because such current artistic practices correspond to the new modes of involvement which animate their discussion here not necessarily in content or ideas, but rather in shared attitudes of approximation and distance and the dynamics of contiguity played out through these. The project of exiting strategies is always on one hand a matter of developing strategies of exit and on the other to enact ways of exiting the framework of strategies as such in the same process. For Virno, attitudes are central to an understanding of as well as a dealing with the present condition because they are central parameters to what he describes as post-Fordist production, and because in attitudes lies what he calls the amphibious potential of post-Fordism/ postmodernity. This is a realm which therefore needs to be considered also in terms of what appropriate responses to it might be, or rather attitudes in relation to that.

The problem and the urgency of the project lie in replicating moves without falling back onto cohering models and positions. Or, as Nancy puts it in a different context yet within a similar horizon:

“1. How can one know in what way and just how far critique—both revolutionary critique, including its most recent manifestations, and also so-called reformist critique—remains paradoxically and unconsciously subject to a classical model in which reality is opposed to appearance and unity is opposed to plurality? (This model assumes that a certain Nietzschean lesson is constantly misunderstood or avoided within the critical tradition and, at the same time, that the whole question of what can be called “art”

from the point of view of social critique remains more or less untouched.) In other words, to what extent do “critical” thinking and the critical attitude as such entail this subjection (if “critique” always presupposes the possibility of unveiling the intelligibility of the real), and what other attitude is necessary, where an attitude of resignation is out of the question?”<sup>42</sup>

The following chapters address this problematic of critique by taking up both key leads: on one hand, by replacing the depth of what Nancy calls subjection with the flatness of lateral sprawls in which dispersal overflows concentration and multiple involvements undermine marked out positions and engagements with these. On the other, by replacing the imperative for models through the active use of modes which are to be played out in their place.

In contrast to models inevitably relying on and imposing structures, modes enable sequences along lines of attitudes; in this perspective involvements can be cohered around a shared attitude displayed toward them whilst remaining otherwise disparate and inconclusive. Also, under these terms, involvements need to be generated in terms of a relation which needs to be set up and brought into motion; at stake is precisely the movement this actualisation enables.

The horizon of these attitudes remains, in Nancy and here, post-critical rather than a-critical in that it insists on the generation of effects, rather than disavowing impact<sup>43</sup>. Nancy’s coupling of a necessary “other attitude” with his insistence that

---

<sup>42</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: *Being Singular Plural*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000, p.54

<sup>43</sup> In this sense, the notion of the *post-critical* builds on and expands Irit Rogoff’s notion of *criticality* as “operating from an uncertain ground which while building on critique wants nevertheless to inhabit culture in a relation other than one of critical analysis”. What is required, argues Rogoff, “would be an open and fluid space in which numerous forms of experimental conjunctions between ideas, politics, images and effects might take place” (Irit Rogoff, ‘What is a Theorist?’, 2003, n.p., available online under <http://www.kein.org/node/62>. A German translation of the paper is published in Martin Hellmond, Sabine Kampmann, Ralph Lindner, Katharina Sykora (eds.), *Was ist ein Künstler? Das Subjekt der Moderne*, München: Fink, 2003.) See also Rogoff’s elaboration on criticality in “Smuggling”: An Embodied Criticality’, paper at conference *TRANSFORM. The Future of Institutional Critique*, Lentos Kunstmuseum Linz, 12/10/05: “What interests me in ‘criticality’ (and I am aware that this is a contingent and not entirely satisfactory term, not least because it is already occupied with various meanings I am not much interested in - but at the moment it is the best that I have at my disposal) is that it brings together that being studied and those doing the studying, in an indelible unity. Within what I am calling ‘criticality’ it is not possible to stand outside of the problematic and objectify it as a disinterested mode of learning. Criticality is then a recognition that we may be fully armed with theoretical knowledge, we may be capable of the most sophisticated modes of analysis but we nevertheless are also living out the very conditions we are trying to analyse and come to terms with. Therefore, criticality, is a state of duality in which one is at one and the same time, both empowered and disempowered, knowing and unknowing”. *Post-critical* is, on one hand, the necessary supplement to such criticality’s impossible adjective, and on the other, provides an opening out of its effectivity by unhinging the cause-effect relationships conventionally assumed behind accounts of critical operations.

resignation is out of the question, marks the effective horizon of the present project: that all formations including those of staged or effective indifference need to be accounted for in relation to existing critical models and effects to be generated, and therefore have to be accounted for also as deviations, as un-answerable challenges, diversions and affirmative acts of turning-away.

The present thesis therefore does not unveil what Nancy calls 'intelligibilities' but aims instead to indicate possible operations of exiting. The main task, under these terms, is not to find a new appropriate attitude, but rather to insist on the notion of the attitude as such, as a de-substantialised refusal to categories of commitment.<sup>44</sup>

*Contingency, treason and humour*/Ambient Attitudes thus sets up contiguous modes beyond the limiting exchange economies of established and applicable theoretical models, analytic, critical and otherwise. Instead, the impetus lies on effects generated alongside and through these involvements in such a way that new encounters, contextualisations and juxtapositions develop their own sets of logic and friction, continuity and disconnectedness. The dynamics of these effects and the feedback loops they emerge from and in turn generate, are what is being investigated here.

---

<sup>44</sup> Agamben's notion of the gesture as residual space for a singularity that remains pure potentiality, corresponds to this notion of the attitude in a complex series of overlaps and will be developed in 'Mode One: Contingency (Un-fitting settings)' below, pp.28-76, esp. in what he calls Bartleby's formula and the way it oscillates between refusal as gesture and as attitude.

## 1 Mode One: Contingency (Un-fitting settings)

“Rather, it would seem that a general law of intrusion is exhibited: there has never been only one [...] As soon as intrusion occurs, it multiplies, making itself known through its continually renewed internal differences.”<sup>45</sup>

This work is concerned with new modes of involvement and the effects they generate and allow for. Engaging with recent (and current) art practices, it considers exchanges between works and situations in order to mobilise a notion of active entanglement as operational dimension for both, the works in question and any engagement with them. The project profiles this as a notion and mode of the ambient, in relation and as response to these.

### 1.1 New encounters with and through art

Conceptually and methodologically, the project operates at the intersection of recent post-critical theory and artistic practice and mobilises them as two sets of developments that fundamentally re-frame discussions of and assumptions about effects in cultural operations and artistic practice. Large parts of the first set are concerned with de-regulated accounts of effects and the repercussions they generate; broad strands of the second set activate modes of interference that oscillate between affirmative involvement (*collusion*) and disjunctive intervention (*disruption*). In both fields, shifts in the way effects are considered culminate in the dimension of an effect-ivity that defies inherited categories of engagement and undermines conventional forms of accountability.

This effectivity contrasts with linear models of accountability in that it is fundamentally multiple, potentially sprawling and necessarily uncharted on any one of the inherited trajectories. Inherited models of context and engagement are directed towards results, either in the form of an actual outcome or at least in the form of an intention or expectation, whilst the effects at stake here cannot be premised on such endings. Here, instead of developing towards a relevant outcome, situations are mobilised in such a way that they generate a sprawl of propositions; not as a production, but rather as a setting up of mere possibilities that give up radically on control and directedness by purely allowing for a configuration to produce itself and take place. Even where a result or outcome are generated from this process, they have ceased to provide a relevant index to the workings of a situation, presenting merely the most easily recuperable component of a multiplicity

---

<sup>45</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, ‘L’Intrus’, transl. by Susan Hanson, in *The New Centennial Review*, Fall 2002, pp. 1-14, p.9

of effects generated. To unlock, assess and activate other parts of that spectrum is the aim of the present project.

What these samples outline (as works and as engagements) is a possibility to overcome notions of condition and context through a precise and fundamental re-arranging, or rather, re-configuring of the entire web of relations in the mode of the encounter. What is “in the course of becoming possible”<sup>46</sup> by taking off from these works and engaging with them under new terms is a mode of engagement that differs from inherited models and engages practical operations as much as theoretical ones – a mode that (as such) defies assumptions of complementarity, reciprocity and their corresponding equations between work and situation, intervention and effect, cultural operation and critical reading strategy. Beyond the trickery of interferences that “claim to take possession of fixed properties, or to conquer a territory, or even to introduce a new order”, unfitting settings in this way is a first step in an overall project towards the “creative theft of the traitor”.<sup>47</sup>

The shift from results to effects and the closely related parallel one from outcome to impact can be traced in both sets of developments, post-critical theory and some recent artistic practice. In the former, the shift can be summarily and tentatively projected around what Giorgio Agamben outlines as the potentiality of *whatever* entities and their implied propensity for multiple engagement. His notion of the *whatever* itself performs an unframing from structural boundedness (an unframing already performed—albeit differently—by post-structural accounts of *différance* as deferral of meaning and differing from given structural systematics), but more importantly it inaugurates a new type of operability by allowing for movements and trajectories to take place under the terms of this unframing.

The important shift inaugurated is one in perspective, displacing a strategy of ungrounding towards the notion of an engagement that is fundamentally contingent and yet loses nothing of its actuality. To the contrary: it is the radical contingency itself of *whatever* entities that provides the very precondition for their generating of effects. If *whatever* is understood, as Agamben suggests, not as an emptied out formula (“it does not matter which”) but as “such that it always matters”,<sup>48</sup> this (necessary) inversion can provide a formula of contingency that insists on the actuality of encounters, without referring them back to the regulatory categories of

---

<sup>46</sup> Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parnet: *Dialogues*, London: Athlone, 1987, p.147

<sup>47</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, *op.cit.*, p.41.

<sup>48</sup> Giorgio Agamben: *The Coming Community*, Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p.1

necessity or will.<sup>49</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy formulates the same insistence when he invokes an “absoluteness of the finite” as “*our* sense of finitude, the one that is to be made ours, to be appropriated, and thus, that is yet to come [...] which lies in the availability of the singular, of the non-totalizable, [...] dispersed totalities, and in the necessity of contingency”.<sup>50</sup>

It is from this type of engagement that a new “politics of [the] whatever”<sup>51</sup> can be thought which is both radically evasive and through this emptying out generative of disruptive impact. Premised on the *impropriety* of singular constellations “in which phenomena arrange themselves in a gesture” and which overflow the distinction between means and ends, this politics opens onto a working of “means that, as such, evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends.”<sup>52</sup>

This evasion (that for Agamben constitutes the core modality of a politics to come, “an opportunity” that “humanity [...] must at all costs not let slip away”<sup>53</sup>), is the horizon against and within which the latter set (some recent and current artistic practice) gains virulence not as a model or exemplification, but as a starting point and challenge for developing ways of engagement. This second set is made up of practices that display a seemingly impassive indifference towards inherited oppositional models, and premise their operations on the effectivity of minor gestures below the threshold of established revelatory or deconstructive strategies. Rather than intervening in any meaningful way, these practices operate by way of insertions that re-configure effects in a new type of play beyond the structurality of structure and its inescapable embeddedness.

After the empirical turn of deconstructive applications in early cyberfabulations and their generalised blurring of reality registers (under the onslaught and as appropriation of supposedly generalised technoscientific innovations and applications) that opened the structurality of structure towards non-language

---

<sup>49</sup> Giorgio Agamben: *Potentialities*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999, p.254

<sup>50</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy: ‘The Weight of a Thought’, in *The Gravity of Thought*, London: Humanity Books, 1997, p.75-84, p.78f.

<sup>51</sup> Agamben, *Coming Community*, p.85. Whilst Agamben’s account is primarily concerned with “whatever singularity” insofar as it defies state machineries and operations of power (taking off from Deleuze and Foucault respectively) against which the whatever is activated as that which is “in no way a real predicate” (ibid., p.3), the present approach extracts from his project the *whatever* as operational mode, mobilising it for a formula in which *whatever* happens.

<sup>52</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*, Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p.56f

<sup>53</sup> Agamben, *Coming Community*, p.65

registers (empirical turn) and blurred the (conceptual) borders between both<sup>54</sup>; and in the light of the corresponding promises of dispersed entanglements and chaotic repercussions that still glimmer in the background of the differently situated practices in question here<sup>55</sup> — after all this, the more recent practices in question play in a novel way that needs qualifying not only outside of linear patterns and beyond the structure of games. It also needs qualifying outside the near-utopian charges of these earlier deconstructively and digitally informed perspectives. In their place emerges a *minor*<sup>56</sup> play of whatever entities and their dispersed effectivities, premised on contingency and impropriety.<sup>57</sup>

Both fields of practice are clearly and plausibly informed by each other, and it would be naïve and unwise to refute obvious connections. Given the extent to which Guattari or indeed Deleuze and (to a lesser extent and in a fundamentally different reading) Agamben are functionalised in relation to recent practice, the connection as such cannot even be reclaimed as novel. But the type of play in question not only informs both fields independently. It can also be mobilised as possible mode of their coming together and generate a conjunction that raises the stakes for both.

Beyond an illustration of common sources, overlapping concerns and systems of reference, there is another, seemingly more negligible similarity that concerns a mode of operations spanning both fields. The ways in which situations are accounted for and interacted with, share recurring key characteristics of dispersal, fragmentation and non-coherence that add up to a type or rather form and style of thought. And since the practices in question address modalities and attitudes more than they achieve efficiency, since they are more concerned with mobilising inappropriatenesses than they are with arranging adequacies, it is exactly from these features that such a thing as a new sensitivity (on one hand) and attitude (on the other) need to be approached and generated.

This type of conjuncture of the fields replicates the quality of the encounter at stake between work and situation, an encounter that is accounted for on one hand and actively solicited, enhanced, mobilised on the other, blurring the borders between

---

<sup>54</sup> For a broad overview, see e.g. Neil Spiller (ed.): *Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*, London: Phaidon, 2002. Also more specifically: Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, p.149-181 and Sadie Plant, 'Coming Across the Future', in Joan Broadhurst Dixon, Eric Cassidy (eds.), *Virtual Futures: Posthumans and Cyberotics*, London: Routledge, 1998

<sup>55</sup> For a partial overview over some of the discursive and artistic approaches, see Timothy Druckrey (ed.): *ars electronica. Facing the Future*, Massachusetts/ London: MIT, 1998

<sup>56</sup> For the category of the *minor* see Deleuze/ Guattari, *Kafka*, esp.16-28.

<sup>57</sup> Agamben: *Coming Community*, p.65

both. The conjuncture at issue here is thus not simply an overlap of interests, of questions, of doubts, to be charted and traced. Rather it is in itself the kind of encounter that can open (and can be turned into) an operational space to be activated and mobilised, an encounter-trigger itself under the condition of expanded effectivity.

What is in the process of becoming possible in the conjunction of both is therefore also an expanded collusion between theoretical and practical elaborations that turns both into components of a mutual working and opens onto a widely expanded series of encounters. Categorical differences such as theory and practice relinquish their importance here; in their place emerge series of encounters between a work and its situations, between an intellectual frame and an artistic appropriation, between a horizon and an attitude, an effect and an operation.

In this expanded field of encounters, *ambient* is a strategic device transporting both a horizon of interest and a working attitude in relation to it. Appropriated here as a set term rather than defined, it carries a whole range of charges, some of which

take on particular importance: it is important how ambient is generally defined as encompassing on all sides and completely enveloping in such a way that that includes circumfusion and a notion of investment; and how this installs the ambient element as carrier and object of an embeddedness and undercuts differentiations between container and contained – literally it translates as that which surrounds by going around. It is always and against this background in particular a term that challenges clear distributions, and even at its most applied installs at



fig. 1

best confusingly new forms of stability. NASA, for instance, conceives of the ambient in contrast to focal forms of directedness. It is interesting then too how recent neuro-physiological approaches in perceptual studies differentiate between an *ambient* and a *focal* mode of (spatial) perception: the focal mode concerns the nature of objects being examined and is characterised as an intensive and clearly directed type of attention primarily based on stable, high definition visual

information. The ambient mode, on the contrary, is relevant for establishing the subject's relationship to its surroundings, for situating it spatially, and processes low-intensity information from a much wider section of the visual field available. Whilst object recognition through focal vision is optimised through concentration, spatial orientation in the ambient mode increases with broader low-density coverage.<sup>58</sup>

Ambient and focal processing are thus not only directed towards different entities (a surrounding field vs. an object), rather they represent structurally different modalities of engagement. Whilst the former tends to dominate studies and investigations, a re-evaluation of the latter could suggest the peripheral as index for a different type of attention that bypasses focus by importing an ambient non-intensity into central areas of a field (of vision). Reconfiguring engagement under these metaphoric-conceptual terms acknowledges a variety of inputs (not just visual ones) as contributory factors, turning the processing of information into a heterogeneous assemblage of different components. Whilst the focal mode is premised on attention and therefore has a propensity to fail under the impact of disturbances, the ambient mode is fundamentally reflexive in nature and therefore able to reconfigure itself in response to changing stimuli. Its stability relies on an assemblage that replaces focality with dispersal, precision with balance, and isolation with overall integration. As different, "hitherto neglected system", ambient processing posits both, a different object of processing as well as a different modality for the engagement with it.

The overlaps between these usages of the *ambient* are in themselves worthy of investigation, notably in the way they question any clear-cut differentiation between perception and approaches, between situations and attitudes and the objects

---

<sup>58</sup> See Herschel W. Leibowitz, C.L. Shupert, Robert B. Post, 'The two modes of visual processing: Implications for spatial orientation', in *Peripheral Vision Horizon Display (PVHD): NASA Conference Publication-2306*, Edwards: NASA, 1983, p. 41-44. (available online under [www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/pdf/87978main\\_H-1232.pdf](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/pdf/87978main_H-1232.pdf) (last accessed 29/10/08) ). The context of the paper is military and addresses research into the dysfunctions of spatial orientation in vehicle guidance and aircraft instrumentation. (For more civilian applications see e.g. Richard H. Y. So, Andy Ho, W. T. Lo, 'A Metric to Quantify Virtual Scene Movement for the Study of Cybersickness: Definition, Implementation, and Verification', in *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, April 2001, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp.193-215). The point is obviously not, as Brian Massumi remarks in relation to his own appropriations of scientific knowledges, "to make the humanities scientific" or indeed appropriate their claims of empirically founded relevance, "the point is to borrow from science in order to make a difference in the humanities" (Brian Massumi: *Parables for the Virtual*, Durham/ London: Duke University Press, 2002, p.20f.). Whilst Massumi considers this a project of renegotiation, here it is primarily a metaphoric-conceptual appropriation that knows itself to be self-referentially and inappropriately just that — a generative loose fit which stops short of any of the larger claims Massumi rightly criticises (see Massumi, op.cit., p.19f.).

around which they are generated. The term's main strategic use though lies in the coming together of these charges in the conceptual impurity of a term that (even though it is very precisely not *ambience*) also resonates with its multifarious applications in current electronica and club culture, spanning across a field of (musical) settings from John Cage's silences to Brian Eno's *music for airports* and the more current idioms of trance and ambient electronica, as well as the socio-architectural pattern of the ambient lounge in current club culture.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore (and again in partial overlap) configurations of the *ambient* can also be traced in relation to immersive modes in current digital media, particularly in virtual reality applications and gaming, where the term is loaned from an architectural circulation. (In fact, the term *ambient mode* itself, as used in the current project, was first suggested by a video game description and is taken from there.<sup>60</sup>)

Rather than having to be emptied out, clarified, this multiplicity of connotations operates a series of contaminations that overload the term in such a way as to undermine its generic applicability. Most of its connotations are potentially relevant, but instead of complementing each other they join in oblique linkages, some of which are factual, some metaphorical, some simply transported through the poetics of the term. Rather than being accumulative, the various charges of *ambient* are thus allowed to operate as blurring devices that further replace focal precision (as would be required for the projection of a close fit) with dispersed encounters and their particular forms of togetherness. The content the term captures and the charges it mobilises condition each other in feedback loops that avoid *ambient* becoming simply another model (for work) or method (of approaching it) to be applied; rather it (the term, the attitude, the style) has to always be played out in the various encounters themselves.

---

<sup>59</sup> For the particularly interesting way in which Brian Eno first coined the term Ambient Music in continuity with and differentiation from commercial Muzak, see in particular his 'ambient music manifesto' as published at the American release of "'ambient #1': music for airports" in September 1978 ([http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian\\_eno/MFA-txt.html](http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian_eno/MFA-txt.html) (last accessed 29/10/08)). Some of these and other phenomena are outlined in a broad overview in Mark J. Prendergast: *The ambient century: from Mahler to trance: The evolution of sound in the electronic age*, London: Bloomsbury, 2000. Conceptually though, the project reduces ambient to a traceable, accountable feature, invoked as a new core modality for 20<sup>th</sup> century music to be written into the accounts of codified avantgarde practice and ideology. The focus as such, and the historiographic register of the work, immediately undercut any potentiality of the *ambient* as new type of practice.

<sup>60</sup> 'Our Design Playground' operates as background to Francis Lam's multi-user chatspace at [www.db-db.com](http://www.db-db.com) and, when first launched, offered the possibility of "fading into background obscurity through the "ambient mode" function" (Jonah Brucker-Cohen, 'Hi There Leak Much?', on *Rhizome.org*, 20/10/2002, available online under <http://rhizome.org/editorial/924> (last accessed 29/10/08)).

Strategically, *ambient* as particular form of non-focality necessarily involves an unfitting from coherent (cohering) patterns of accountability. In a first instance, *ambient* will thus be outlined against two existing and relevant but ultimately inappropriate categories: *site-specificity* as model that recuperates interventions by accounting for them in terms of appropriate and efficient response; and a notion of the *relational* that approaches divergent relations to a supposedly dominant context by establishing the latter as underlying and supposedly stable index of reference, and thus channelling relations and interferences into accountable contrasts. Both paradigms regularise and stabilise encounters under the assumption of a coherent overall economy of exchanges. Both will be solicited here through an active unfitting of their various component parts in relation to each other, and it is on the basis of this un-cohering that the ambient move will then open onto a different kind of effect.

### 1.3 From settings to set-ups

Where elements come together, they can fit and not fit in different ways, and there are of course different ways how these fittings and unfittings can be thought. But fitting (or unfitting) is in itself already a particular way of thinking about how things come together, and it has implications: as soon as they are addressed under the conceptual frame of fitting correspondances, things fit in as much as it is now pre-determined what can happen between them. They can fit or not fit (albeit to varying degrees), and in that polarity they will necessarily fall into pre-scripted forms of togetherness.

The following research is therefore an attempt at developing forms through and within which elements can come together in such a way as to not fall back onto already charted patterns. It is an attempt at resetting the conceptual framework for modalities of engagement, and it is therefore firstly a play with existing notions that tries to play them out against each other in a movement towards a fundamentally different understanding of what can happen when elements come together.

One such pair of elements is *insert* and *context*. Both are parts of a pairing as corresponding elements that fit and make sense only ever in relation in relation to each other. Most of the features of fitting relationships can be played through in their interdependencies.

The first is the complementary constitution of both in a notion of context that implies the coherence of a structure within which an insert can be located. Even though they are normally understood in a dichotomy of that which is stable (*context*) and that which is not (*insert*), their relation as such is always conceived as stable, their respective positions safeguarded by a series of hierarchies. Figures (of speech, of

action, of gesture) in this scenario are outlined against the rigidity of the foil in front of which they produce themselves and their dynamics. Backdrops, when thought of as part of this complimentary pair, accordingly assume the role of passive backgrounds, providing the *inserts* immobile and communicably stable counterweights that safeguard the coherence of the overall arrangement.

The second fundamental feature in this kind of togetherness is the implied causal dependency of component parts. Distinctions between categories such as *action* and *background*, *insert* and *context* introduce hierarchies which inevitably prioritise one over the other by according it causal primacy – the former always either determines the latter or is informed by it in a duality where idealistic and materialist traditions still serve as conceptual stand-ins to indicate the basic options available. A stringent causal link of some sort can normally be constructed either way under these terms.

Whichever way their respective hierarchies are thought, the causality itself, as causality, remains stable, and this causal determinacy of effects is the third recurring feature. Whether one element informs the other or is disturbed by it, is only of secondary importance here. What does count is the fact that both add up to an effective unity premised upon an understanding of complementarity as desirable and supposedly necessary. Complementarity is, through this very operation, not only constructed but naturalised and stipulated as inevitable condition under which effects, too, have to be accounted for.

To talk of a situation in terms of *context* or *insert* or indeed their duality is thus always to assume a coherence of conditions and their generalisable applicability. The aim of the present project is to undo this assumed coherence by elaborating a mode of operation that circumnavigates the underlying assumption of complementarity.

What is at stake in this enterprise is thus a form of engagement that can account for the complexity of current configurations both cultural and artistic. And that can, in taking off from these, propel them further. That the integration of art into culture and culture into broader societal concerns can now be taken for a condition rather than an aim means that some corresponding key concerns and strategies (highlighting and adjusting of conditions etc) need to be re-assessed too. Under the condition of a generalised entanglement between realms and operations, the very categories of *insert* and *context*, *intervention* and *situation* need to be opened up towards a more active configuration of interferences. Embeddedness needs to be activated as a condition from where to re-set an entire arrangement; as a starting point for a move

towards linkages and trajectories that are now multiple and ambient, complex and playful rather than linear and efficient.<sup>61</sup>

Questions then emerge as to: How something relates to what is no longer its context but something more subtle and multiple. How gestures and situations might come together as modular components on the level ground of an encounter, rather than as two separate categories of an incident; components in whose coming together positions become exchangeable because they allow for multiple occupations, and where elements do more and less than simply supplement each other in causal closure.

Without these known elements and positions or indeed the hierarchies implied between them, starting point for any engagement is exactly a not-knowing what happens and an attempt to chart exactly that in a move away from patterns and objects of exchange, towards a form of coming together that maintains questions of how things come together, what these things are and what happens in their coming together as overlaps and interferences.

Rethinking relationalities outside the seemingly all pervasive parameters of fitting thus inevitably starts with two given sets: the assumption of a multitude of possibilities on one hand and a series of limiting registers under which they are addressed on the other.



fig.2

And because the latter (thinking gesture and surround as a polarity of active and passive, happening and enabling, dynamic and static) appears as such a tremendous reduction of the former (the numerous graduations and involvements that defy causal integration), what is at stake is primarily this very inadequacy as a possibility to register omissions that remain unthinkable under the existing conceptual framework.

Some fundamental assumptions about relations and dependencies need to be undone in order to thus rethink relationality beyond the existing patterns of regulated exchange, and this requires new attitudes towards engagement. Because

---

<sup>61</sup> For an early moment in the shift towards complexity as paradigmatic see for example Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers: *Order out of Chaos. Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1984; for subsequent assessments with particular emphasis on the humanities, see for example N Katherine Hayles (ed.): *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 1991; Manuel de Landa: *1000 Years of Non-Linear History*, New York: Zone Books/ London: MIT, 1997; Sadie Plant: *Zeros + Ones: Digital women + the new technoculture*, London: Fourth Estate, 1998.

it is not simply a matter of profiling another model, but rather simultaneously to profile different qualities of encounter, and to profile them differently. To mobilise a notion of the ambient in an attempt to not simply foreground a backdrop, but to go beyond the futile inversion of a formula that in itself remains stable. What is at stake effectively is a way to account for encounters based on multiple slippages, as fundamentally different quality of coming together, precisely because these encounters defy the categories of background and foreground, backdrop and figure. More or less workable models (of differing degrees of subtlety and applicability) to

think the relation between insert and context obviously exist and the project takes off from these, notably from recent politico-philosophical considerations around evasion, exodus and criticality. But these also need to be applied in a different attitude because the notion of the model itself needs to be rethought under the terms of this project. Like notions of context and condition, that of the model too is premised on coherence and applicability. What is needed instead is a strategic superposition of existing reading strategies such as site-specificity, institutional critique or intervention onto works that consciously exceed the categories of such strategies, in

such a way that works and their respective codified readings can be shown to be complicit (elaborated in mutual exchange and profiting) but can also contain or at least indicate the possibility of an unlocking of both. The introduction of new terms, registers, angles and approaches can shift their blurred and partial fusion in such a way as to unlock the work and re-assess its workings. And these workings can then in turn be projected back onto established (reading) strategies in order to go beyond, not stop before the project of a critical engagement.

This methodological shift represents an attempt at adjusting (where possible) and re-configuring (where necessary) a set of critical models that at the time of their emergence enabled new critical forms of engagement, but now hinder other types



fig.3



fig.4

of involvement to be recognised or to occur. The aim in this re-assessment and re-assembly is thus not archaeology aimed at highlighting past shortcomings or redressing inadequate understandings and approaches. Rather it revisits the scene of these operations under different terms and by operating in the very different modality of an ambient interference, for which setting is a matter of tuning tonalities rather than of arranging a stage.<sup>62</sup>

It is therefore not necessary or even useful to denounce works, or even reading strategies, for their reductive implications and limiting repercussions (only in relation to the reading strategies will limitations have to be played out insofar as they can be useful, from this different perspective, to indicate new modes *ex negativo*. Otherwise, replacing the quest for new coherences with an inhabitation that appropriates rather than critiques, is a starting point for most current projects invested in forms of criticality<sup>63</sup>.) Instead this is an attempt to configure works and discursive patterns in such a way that they can go beyond a simple fitting and exceed criteria of appropriateness and function. The samples of works discussed in the present first part of the investigation are therefore not works that emerged in direct dialogue with such notions as *site specificity*, *institutional critique* and *intervention* and could become subject to a retrospective attempt to excavate or resuscitate them. Rather the project takes off from recent works that actively position themselves in a deferred and mainly implicit dialogue with these notions; they are works that allow for slippage in relation to these reading patterns and in doing so propose in this very dialogue a new type of fitting. No longer the more or less close fit of complementarity under which an insert is assessable in terms of the impact it has on a situation as context, imposing straight equations between work and critical reading strategy. To the contrary, the works under investigation here mobilise the encounter as multiple form of contact with surroundings on a variety of different registers. These surroundings then include theoretical apparatuses as much as cultural, physical, institutional and other constitutions of reality in varying combinations.

---

<sup>62</sup> “An ambience is defined as an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint” (Eno, *op.cit.*). For a closer examination of the shift between setting and set-up and its implications, see further down the discussion of Andreas Slominski’s practice in *Mode Three: Humour* (Imploding effects).

<sup>63</sup> Rogoff argues that the project of criticality itself cannot be separated from (and is indeed premised on) “the processes of exiting bodies of knowledge and leaving behind theoretical models of analysis and doing without certain allegiances. ‘Criticality’ as I perceive it is precisely in the operations of recognising the limitations of one’s thought for one does not learn something new until one unlearns something old, otherwise one is simply adding information rather than rethinking a structure.” (Rogoff, ‘What is a theorist’, n.p.)

This enterprise will thus be taken up from two different but overlapping perspectives: The attempt is firstly to register different modalities of contact. Emergent forms, modes and patterns of contact that defy distinctions premised upon differentiated registers of activity, categories of occupation and modalities of perception. The juxtaposition of current practice with its existing reading patterns will outline a radical shift in attitude that concerns not so much the object of engagement but the attitude through which that engagement is determined. Rather than following and highlighting a shift in what the focus of activity is placed upon (from work to context for instance, or from object to process), the shift under investigation here regards very different sets of differences: It concerns the ways in which different forms of confusion and solicited incompatibilities set up connective webs that are no longer textures or networks<sup>64</sup> because the type of constellation differs in quality rather than structure: instead of contents or patterns, it concerns modalities and styles of coming together. At one end of their spectrum will be Agamben's formula of potentiality as suspension, a "no more than [which] hovers so decidedly between affirmation and negation, acceptance and rejection, giving and taking"<sup>65</sup> and becomes virulent in their interstice. At the other end will be the type of conjunction Deleuze proposes in the form of an "and and and" as particular type of non-accumulative sequence allowing for multiple connectivities.<sup>66</sup>

What emerges out of these are less determined and more prolific forms of connectivity. And since it is these that can be mobilised to overspill existing models of opposition and complementarity, the second perspective then is to take up on this potential in order to re-set the terms for new modes of engagement with these forms of contact; in short, to register different forms of contact, but also to then register them differently.

## **1.2 Over, beyond and under site-specificity and relational aesthetics**

For artistic practice, relating to a context implies referring to the given dimensions of surroundings, cultural or political, institutional or administrative, in all their possible permutations and interrelations; it also means to assume and then relate to their qualities, to their underlying bias and repressive implications, to the constraints they

---

<sup>64</sup> For the relevance of 'texture' and 'network' as paradigmatic structures, one derived from a late poststructuralist project, the other from early theorisations of dispersed/ non-hierarchical structures in emerging electronic media, see: for the former for instance Eva Meyer: *Architexturen*, Frankfurt am Main/ Basel: Stroemfeld, 1981; and for the latter the seminal *Virtual Futures* conference organised by Warwick University (Dixon/ Cassidy, op.cit.)

<sup>65</sup> Agamben: *Potentialities*, p.256

<sup>66</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet: *Dialogues*, here esp. pp.9f. and 34f.

impose, the framing they provide and the articulations they supposedly exclude or corrupt. That which cannot be said or done within a given context is one of the fundamental referents for critically engaged practice because it provides a (negative) framework with and against which to mobilise the work. (To address the corruption utterances undergo through their permissive integration into an existing context, is another attempt at rescuing (ex negativo) the potential for resistant otherness). *Context*<sup>67</sup> in this sense—as object of a critical investigation or as support for a rearrangement of its component parts—is effectively one of the main parameters for the projection of such framing coherence. Reducing surrounding phenomena to functions of an inescapable mutuality, context provides a bracket against and within which economies of exchange and intervention, deviation and difference can be cohered and then negotiated.

The practices under consideration here will be mobilised to overspill and undermine such understanding of and engagement with context. Operating beyond the parameters of specificity, beyond categories of site and outside the stable economies of intervention, their potential lies in actively dissolving manageable relationalities with their surrounding conditions by exceeding given parameters of legibility. As modes of involvement that are blurred and distracted rather than precise and efficient, these practices can be mobilised to unhinge the very conditions for specificity and focus. And since the focus and precision of an intervention make for its potential as dissonant practice, suspending these basic critical parameters of specificity opens up the possibility to reconsider the entire project of critical engagement.

More or less recently two main perspectives have emerged that maintain and update the critical project under increasing pressure on the notions of coherence (of context) and efficiency (of artistic practice). One is a scenario of coherence and affectability for which an ever-expandable notion of the *site* of artistic practice serves as cohering framework within which insert and context can be synthesised

---

<sup>67</sup> For the notion of context, see Peter Weibel (ed.): *Kontext Kunst. Kunst der 90er Jahre*. Cologne: DuMont, 1994 and more recently and more critically Holger Birkholz: *Kontext. Ein Problem kunsthistorischer Methodenliteratur und künstlerischer Praxis*. Cologne: VDG Verlag, 2002. The term has determined discussions around recent art practices - in Germany the term 'context art' was coined to account for roughly the same set of practices Bourriaud discusses as 'relational'. Yet even Nicolas Bourriaud assumes and diagnoses a "will to reveal the invisible structures of the ideological apparatus" as driving impetus behind the work of artists "from Andrea Zittel to Philippe Parreno, from Carsten Höller to Vanessa Beecroft" and demands (subtle forms of) "contextual studies" for an engagement with these (see Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*, p.64 and p.109f.)

as mutually dependent.<sup>68</sup> The other is a structurally bound model of oppositionality premised on *relational* qualities and possibilities activated by contemporary practice.<sup>69</sup>

The former (*site specificity*) installs *site* as parameter of functional coherences in relation to which specificity can be played out: from physical space to the overall internal logic of an artistic production, recent formulations of site increasingly expand the field of investigation onto a broader range of what needs to be configured as a coherent, determinant context, around and within which practice and situation can then be re-cohered. But no matter how far its parameters are expanded, their function remains to indicate and account for a regulated exchange between work and (framing) context.

The latter, Nicolas Bourriaud's project of a *relational aesthetics*, upholds an underlying model of efficiency and outcome of artistic operations and adjusts it in relation to recent practices by updating the opposition between context and intervention as a contrast of critique and dissociation.<sup>70</sup>

Both models, *site specificity* and *relational aesthetics*, can be seen to provide types of adjustments and corrections (practical or conceptual, simultaneous or retrospective) that take care to re-establish the overall coherence of relations

---

<sup>68</sup> For an overview over the discussion's main facets, see Erika Suderberg (ed.): *Space, Site, Intervention. Situating Installation Art*, Minneapolis/ London (University of Minnesota press) 2000. See also Alex Coles (ed.): *Site - Specificity : the ethnographic turn*, London (Black Dog) 2000. The engagement here will concentrate on Miwon Kwon: 'One Place After the Other. Notes on Site Specificity', in *October* 80, spring 1997, p.85-110 because it covers a vast area of practice, and most notably because it attempts to actively broaden *site specificity* as field of interest and type of approach. In order to follow the argument and highlight its structural implications, it is therefore particularly suited for an exemplary reading. (The text was subsequently and with slightly different focus re-worked and published as Miwon Kwon: *One place after another: site-specific art and locational identity*, Cambridge (MA)/London: MIT, 2002. Unless indicated otherwise, the present analysis follows the former version of the text.)

<sup>69</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*; and *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2002.

<sup>70</sup> For an assessment of Bourriaud's notions from a position of critique rather than criticality, see the related exchange of articles between Claire Bishop and Liam Gillick, esp. Bishop's opening article (Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', in *October*, Fall 2004, pp.51-79) and Liam Gillick's first response (Liam Gillick, 'Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"', in *October*, Winter 2006, No. 115, Pages 95-106). Claire Bishop's critique of Bourriaud's position effectively folds the entire argument back into straight service provision and a horizon of imaginary productivity. Rather than going beyond Bourriaud's formulation of assertive mini-utopias, she argues for a straight position of recognisable critical impact. In a subsequent outlining of what she considers "the best collaborative practices of the past ten years" (including Phil Collins' *they shoot horses* (2004), Jeremy Deller's *Battle of Orgreave* (2001) and Lars van Trier's *Dogville* (2003), she dismisses practices clustered under Relational Aesthetics as "well-intentioned homilies that today pass for critical discourse on social collaboration" (Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', in *Artforum international*, February 2006, pp. 178 – 183, p.183)

mobilised in recent and current practice: Seemingly digressive strategies in relation to sites become part of the henceforth expanded operations and self-understanding of that very site; nonchalant and oblique *relational* occupations are turned into structural highlighters by the sheer force of their contrast to supposedly given social and power structures. When assessed in terms of a potential for divergence and/or recuperation, site specificity presents the mirror image of Bourriaud's (social) relationality: both embed the critical operations of practice in a broader, expanded macrostructure by prescribing their patterns of connectivity. As recuperative operations in this sense, both models will serve as backgrounds onto which to project the *ambient*. While site specificity's central concern with coherence will be outlined against dispersed types of engagement in a closer reading of some exemplary work, *relational aesthetics* (as strategy for the locating of practices and their effects) can serve as an immediate entry towards the problematic of unaccountable differences.

In relation to recent practice and indeed some of the practices that are the subject of this study, Nicolas Bourriaud's model of *relational aesthetics* has re-set the terms for an entire discussion. Levelling art and other practices in a blurring of spaces, realms and structures, the project gives up the supposed exclusivity of the art venue by embedding it not in society as networked machinery of power, but in an expanded range of (niche-)spaces of divergence, cultural and non-cultural. Going explicitly beyond institutional critique and its boundedness which proceeded "through the filter of a critique of the institution [...] in order to show the functioning of the whole of society", Bourriaud levels the exhibition venue as "a place like any other, a space imbricated within a global mechanism"<sup>71</sup> in such a way that it can be conceived beyond "the principles of an analytical materialism that was Marxist in its inspiration" and become "a model, a laboratory, a playing field" which is "never the symbol of anything, and certainly not a metonymy"<sup>72</sup>.

Instead of mobilising the workings of an other space in relation to society in the terms of a heterotopology as suggested by Foucault<sup>73</sup>, Bourriaud shifts the effects of cultural production towards a structural (rather than topical) account of oppositionality, projecting inter-human experiences as "relational space-time elements" through which "utopia is being lived on a subjective, everyday basis, in

---

<sup>71</sup> Bourriaud: *Postproduction*, p.65

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p.64-66

<sup>73</sup> For Foucault's *other spaces* see Michel Foucault: 'Of Other Spaces' (1967), in *Diacritics* 16, Spring 1986, pp. 22-27.

the real time of concrete and intentionally fragmentary experiments”.<sup>74</sup> Beyond the gallery space as subject of metonymical inscriptions and corresponding revelatory projects, the project thus successfully reconsiders the role and function of the exhibition in the light of recent post-ideological practices that appropriate critical models elaborated from the 1960s onwards. Placing a strong emphasis on the different directedness of these practices, Bourriaud demonstrates how they can be seen to effectively defy critical parameters by generating affirmative types of effects instead of responding to analytical impulses.

Yet by the same operation, Bourriaud levels the role of the visual arts venue in relation to the larger cultural (and social) field only to then reclaim its exclusive status as “base camp [within the vaster ensemble of public space] without which no expedition would be possible”<sup>75</sup>. Formerly reserved to the arts in spatial terms or in those of a particular realm, exclusivity is now re-assigned as set of structural characteristics, (again) turning the exhibition into an “interstice defined in relation to the alienation reigning everywhere else”<sup>76</sup>. Ironically it is this position that only serves re-integration: when mobilised against the dominant structures of late capitalist organisation and exchange, *relational* practices are simply re-instated as oppositional propositions in such a way that the underlying duality itself remains unaffected. That the art venue is now no longer the exclusive arena (if indeed it ever was) of this juxtaposition changes little with regard to the structure of its operations so long as the oppositional scenario itself constitutes the exclusive scale along which operations are accounted for: Even though “the imaginary of our day and age is concerned with negotiations, bonds and co-existences” and has supposedly left behind modernism’s “imaginary of contrast [...] which proceeded by way of separations and contrasts”—Bourriaud binds these “new assemblages, possible relations between distinct units, and alliances struck up between different partners” back exclusively onto social relations. “Relations between people and the world, by way of aesthetic objects” then become “various forms of *modus vivendi* permitting fairer social relations”.<sup>77</sup>

Premised on the assumption of a dissonant potential of these art practices, the notion of the relational establishes an indexical scale on which the structural properties of relations can be contrasted, anchored in the spatial and temporal dimensions of social conditioning and their inherent potential for change. But once

---

<sup>74</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p.44f.

<sup>75</sup> Bourriaud, *Postproduction*, p.65

<sup>76</sup> Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, p.82

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42-46

the potential of divergent “habitual and perceptual patterns”<sup>78</sup> is thus qualified in terms of “alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality”<sup>79</sup> and outlined against “the alienation reigning everywhere else”<sup>80</sup>, they are inevitably re-inscribed into a simple pattern of contrasting (and therefore recuperable) qualities.

The operational logic between “relational space-time elements, inter-human experiences” and the “straightjacket of the ideology of mass communications”<sup>81</sup> as underlying concern for recent practices, remains oppositional. It re-inscribes the recent practices in question not only in a societal context (one might argue that this is just one limited application of what is potentially a much vaster theoretical proposal), but also (by the same operation) integrates them into an oppositional structure that makes them (again) accountable for, simply turning the collisions between relational set-ups and dominant ideology into another stable exchange between pre-determined sets. Art again fulfils the function of a contrasting exception, only that this exception is no longer configured in terms of a cultural confinement that would set apart art (world) and larger societal concerns, but as a structural possibility.

Even though Bourriaud sets up this exchange in order to update the way component parts of the cultural configuration can be seen to refer to each, he is obviously not concerned with rethinking the nature of their coincidence. The project upholds their respective positions as well as the assumption of a consistent, culturally relevant and artistically efficient way of negotiating their relations. Its lowest common denominator remains a coherent economy of means as measuring scale against which impact can be assessed. Whilst the spaces of current art themselves supposedly escape the dominant logic of capitalist organisation in the form of an *interstice*—not as contrast, but as a realm below the threshold of systemic recognition and subjection to the overall set of coherent rules<sup>82</sup>—, their social function as contrasting models re-inscribes them into the accountability of a coherent societal framework to which the artwork stands in (demonstrative) structural contrast.

Not only does this leave the duality of situation and insertion intact as main structuring principle (explicitly inspired by Althusser’s structural Marxism,

---

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.69

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.44

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.82

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, p.44

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.16

Bourriaud's own *matérialisme aléatoire* has implicitly inherited the underlying dialectical structure. Rather than engaging with effects, Bourriaud accounts for them, and does so by remaining true to the dialectical spirit). This same duality also structures the encounter between work and audience as its "direct interlocutors"<sup>83</sup>. The work as model appeals to and relies on the faculties of an audience to mobilise the work's dissonant potential, and thus establishes an exclusive, appropriate register for the engagement between work and audience. Different types of effect or the variable intensities with which they impact, do not register here. Even where audiences become participants and are set free from constraints of societal conditioning—in situations where, like the interstice "which fits more or less harmoniously and openly in to the overall system [...] but suggests other [...] possibilities", the "contemporary art exhibition "creates free areas, and time spans"<sup>84</sup>—even then the (critical) relevance of any project is negotiated in conventional terms of oppositionality: Where the openness to dialogue and discussion is reclaimed as a "(relative) social transparency" of the "coefficient of art", the appeal to an audience as recognising guarantor of the work's operations cannot be challenged. The social dimension as much as the *transparency* of its operations impose a clearly defined register of recognitions and interactions as response to the artwork. The negotiation of its effects is "undertaken in a spirit of transparency which hallmarks it as a product of human labour",<sup>85</sup> and simultaneously provides material for thought.

Both are imagined as transparent and potentially open and re-cohere art in terms of its effects as *model* or *programme*. Even though the *model* is understood as functioning diagram rather than a maquette<sup>86</sup>, this malleable adaptability does nothing to undercut its overall coherence, to the contrary, it guarantees its applicability against the pitfalls of representation.

And similarly his notion of the *programme* reductively prescribes a particular form of interaction as well as its activating subject: the term itself is used in rhetorical ambiguity between recent digital media applications and the extended sense it originally carries in Deleuze as a "means of providing reference points for an

---

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.43

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p.16

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.41

<sup>86</sup> The non-dimensionality of the functional model is at the core of Bourriaud's (vague) notion of an 'Operational Realism' in which "the work proposes a functional model and not a maquette. [...] the concept of dimension does not come into it, just as in the digital image, whose proportions may vary depending on the size of the screen, which, unlike the frame, does not enclose works within a predetermined format, but rather renders virtuality material in x dimensions." (Ibid., p.112)

experiment which exceeds our capacities to foresee”<sup>87</sup>; but the implications of the former inevitably re-instate the notion of an application as something to be executed, to be carried out. Even though “these programmes [are made up] without guaranteeing the[ir] applicable character”<sup>88</sup>, they are production possibilities that imply a producer as the very basis of their operability.

Whether as *model* or *programme*, the work figures as challenging instigation for which legibility is a necessary condition of their working. Bourriaud’s potential of efficiency relies on the legibility of a proposition and needs to be negotiated as contrast by an acutely aware observer, capable of judging “these artistic proposals [...] in a formal way; in relation to art history, and bearing in mind the political value of forms”.<sup>89</sup> Critical potential, in this set-up, remains premised on the actively focussed, critical faculties and awareness of an audience.

It does not matter here how much critical credit to accord to the *relational* project, or how sophisticated it does or does not seem to be. The aim is certainly not to make Bourriaud’s compilation of essays the subject of a meticulous conceptual analysis (which is obviously neither an appropriate nor a particular productive register of engagement). Aim is rather to use Bourriaud’s construction as a foil with in-built limitations against which to outline a different *style* of encounters in (relation to) recent practice.

What matters for the purpose of the present argument is the fact that the focality and directedness of encounters is not a central concern for Bourriaud’s thinking, if indeed it is of any concern at all. And this kind of gap is interesting precisely because it allows for thought to take place in it, surrounded by and taking off from other bits and pieces of the project. And even though this gap might be in itself a question of style, a tactical move not to foreclose work—to operate beyond this linear form of appeal and address, not to undercut exactly this problem, is a central concern of the present study, and its own main difference in style.

What is needed and becoming possible in the present investigation and the practices that form its objects, is a different perspective: a possibility to rethink beyond oppositional structures through a consideration of what becomes possible and thinkable by avoiding the proposition of an alternative. It becomes possible then (and only then) to start thinking in terms of an expanded oscillation between insert and situation as *ambient*—mutually embracing, unfocussed, and virulent through its very dispersal. Then (and only then) can the different constituent elements be

---

<sup>87</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet: op.cit., p.48

<sup>88</sup> Bourriaud, op.cit, p.71

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p.82

overlapping and or parallel and or adjoining in a multiplicity of deregulated encounters that defy the stable economies of reciprocal conditioning. What is at stake is an unfitting as never-quite-fitting-either-brief, a way to think practices as thoroughly embedded (in situations and reading patterns) but in such a way that this embeddedness can now be fundamentally multiple as well as always again partial, a new kind of involvement that is simultaneously premised on and generative of encounters.

### 1.3 Generating clusters

To approach this mode and condition is necessarily a matter of double operations: following works as solicitations of given registers and soliciting them as potential for discursive operations. If the key interest in the investigated shift lies in the differing degree to which registers of activity and forms of embeddedness are maintained or undone, highlighted, blurred or actively collided, then the interest<sup>90</sup> of its investigation necessarily lies on the slippages opened and how they are operated. Not as a new realm to delineate, but a different kind of operation to account for.

These operations have to do with spaces and sites, questions of how to occupy them and related questions as to what an insert might be, consist of and effect, but in a differently structured consistency than the one that is implicitly assumed in the related critically codified projects. In parallel to and in overlapping exchange with these shifts, the project aims to elaborate new forms of engagement as triggered off and informed by these practices. *Ambient* modes are thus the modes of practice as much as they are a new discursive proposition in relation to them; an attempt at engaging with new forms of coming together that as such enables their recognition. A new type of reading that takes off from these practices *and* takes them along on its own accelerated trajectory.

And so this first, (non-)foundational chapter proceeds in two steps. Three clusters of works will be isolated as samples and read in terms of their potential of site specificity, institutional critique and critical intervention. Overlaps and lack of clarity in the choice of samples and their attribution to the three categories are intentional and inevitable: The categories are chosen because they are exemplary for reading strategies and patterns of engagement, not because of their supposed coherence, necessity or relevance; and because of the loose fit through which the samples operate in relation to these categories, the choice of the samples too is to some extent necessarily and explicitly random. Rather than a lack or shortcoming, this is

---

<sup>90</sup> Because of the nature of that which is being investigated, this *interest* has to be clearly differentiated from an investigative *focus* in terms of its modality of attention.

the very basis of their validity for the project. The exemplary approach as such as well as the practices under consideration here consciously project randomness and bias onto the engagements in question. That a work in the museum should be discussed in relation to site specificity (and not institutional critique), that the gallery should be assessed as a site for institutional critique (and not site specificity) and that the most direct intervention discussed should be an interference that remains as such imperceptible, only continues the logic of a loose fit set up by the works themselves.

“In the course of becoming possible”<sup>91</sup> here is an intersection installing works as *examples* that serve as coagulation points and operational diagrams without however becoming paradigmatic or representational. For this to become a possibility, the example has to be mobilised for what it conceptually always already is: neither particular nor universal but suspended between the two and active in their interplay. “Where it exerts its force”, writes Agamben, “the example is characterised by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included in these. [...] On one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity.” Rather than ever really standing in for the larger category, the example stands in relation to it; it is representative, but also part of the set and “plays alongside [...] like the German Bei-Spiel.”<sup>92</sup> It is both incomplete and excessive, and through this double constitution necessarily imports its own contingencies into the make-up of the grouping it supposedly stands for. This is not representation, but an exchange with the group that constantly challenges not only its own role as example, but also the overall coherence of the set in question.<sup>93</sup> It is in this sense of an intrinsic and mutual incompleteness that the example is always and inevitably inadequate as representation or illustration and constantly defies the possibility of a close (let alone total) fit. The example itself therefore is, one could argue, the problem, not one that requires closure but one that sets the working conditions and horizons for a new mode of (always also incoherent) engagement. Both the theoretical category of the example and the material used as example can be mobilised in this sense, and will be: firstly now to indicate the horizon of a new

---

<sup>91</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet: *Dialogues*, p.147

<sup>92</sup> Agamben: *Coming Community*, p.9f.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9-11. See also Brian Massumi’s ‘exemplary’ method through which he insists on the singularity of the example and its propensity for proliferation (Massumi: *Parables*, p.17f.). By contrast, the present approach is more concerned with the two-sidedness of underperforming and overflowing, the destabilising impact of the example on the group as such, and how this configuration can be mobilised as working mode.

working modality, further down and to some extent throughout the text then in order to enact the ambient attitudes at stake in this project.

The example's inappropriateness comprises two aspects: not only lack and inferiority when measured against the group and its coherence and completeness, but also an excess of contingent aspects when measured against the features necessary for an identifiable fit between set and sample. Rather than pointing towards a lack (of the close fit, the perfect match etc), the example can thus also be seen as an active insert into the very make-up of the group. Exceeding the individual case and undercutting the generic type, it indicates a tendentially different kind of engagement: it can neither cover what it supposedly stands for, nor can all of it ever be subsumed under the generic characteristics of the class, establishing instead an exchange between necessity and contingency that undoes their separation as the "two crosses of Western thought" and engages both in an oscillation that cannot be resolved in either category.<sup>94</sup> What counts is the oscillation itself as dynamic mode and site of encounters.

In and through these *examples*, it will be demonstrated to which extent and how the works in question can (consciously) undercut and overspill the trajectories and territories indicated by the inherited reading patterns associated with site specificity, institutional critique and intervention; at stake are fundamental (albeit subtle) shifts from the modalities of exchange towards a mode of the encounter as differently structured forms of coming together; a shift from an impetus of revelation towards an operation of projection that re-defines the object of engagement; and a shift from a perspective of use towards an unhinged notion of effect that reframes an understanding of embeddedness in a broader cultural scenario. Underlying all three is an investigation into fundamental assumptions about the focus and directedness of cultural operations as well as corresponding patterns of attention and perception.

The first case is an ensemble that installs a semi-functional environment of sculpture/furniture hybrids and Japanese animation in the sculpture court of a public gallery of British Art<sup>95</sup>. It is site-specific but only in such a way that the very notion of the site is drowned in the hyper-referentiality of the works on display.

The second is a group of works that invest a commercial gallery with a fictionally derived scenario<sup>96</sup>. Its props and accessories charge the space as (deferred) venue and engage with issues of the gallery as charged institution and framework for the consumption of artwork. But their narrative propositions and multiple framings

---

<sup>94</sup> Agamben, *Coming Community*, p.40

<sup>95</sup> Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, Tate Britain, 7 Sept 2001 – 31 March 2002.

<sup>96</sup> Liam Gillick: *Up On The Twenty Second Floor*, Galerie Air de Paris, Paris, April 1998

between fiction and documentary, their explicitness on one hand and continued withdrawal of experience and information on the other simultaneously un-ground the work. It is this multiple situating of the works that goes beyond any institutional sitedness and destabilises its underlying co-ordinates of audience, experience and staged re-enactment.

As a third example then, the project outlines an interference in the public space in which the work interacts directly with its given social surroundings, and in particular time as one of its main structuring principles.<sup>97</sup> Reprogramming time on a clock in the public arena, the work produces a structurally radical difference. By founding this adjustment on the coincidental juxtaposition of two fictional occurrences though, the work extends beyond a confrontational account of interference towards a mode of contingency that encompasses its origins as well as its directedness and potential effects.

All of these samples defy (albeit in different ways) the logic of the close fit to their being situated and to the registers under which this situatedness is customarily addressed. As works, operations and interferences the examples assert an explicit lack of distinction between the registers of production and consumption, affirmation and analysis, reflection and intervention, and push these to a point where the very ideas of coherence and closure succumb under a critical mass of overlaps and deferrals. Following the movements and shifts of the work is thus not so much an analysis as it is an attempt to redirect attention and reconfigure it away from existing paradigms of critical engagement. This shift encompasses the production and placing of work as much as its perception.<sup>98</sup>

### **1.3.1 Dispersal and sprawl**

Where modular arrangements of sculpturally defined objects appear on the grounds of a museum and, more specifically, in front of the post-modern architecture of one of its extensions housing a revered painter who is also a cornerstone for a certain type of pre-modernism, site specificity is one of their default conditions. Because they have a physical location for which they were conceived; because they enter the institutional realm of the museum and operate within and against its parameters; because they engage in a dialogue with preceding samples that form the cultural

---

<sup>97</sup> Liam Gillick: *Erasmus Ass Zehn Jahre Opium #2*, documenta X, Kassel, 1997

<sup>98</sup> Site-specificity, like interactivity, is a condition of the constitution of work, but also (overlappingly so) of its perception. For the role of interactivity as constitutive dimension of work and the important distinction from a purely empirical account of interactivity, see Juliane Rebentisch, 'Mythos "Betrachtereinbeziehung"', in *Texte zur Kunst*, Nr.40, December 2000, p. 126-130.

domain's reservoir of references; because in this dialogue they are embedded in a whole series of ideological constructions underlying the domain's operations and legitimations; and because, by entering all these conversations willingly and explicitly, the pieces re-negotiate the expanded institutional remit within which this institution commissions such a thing as a semi-permanent grouping of works for a hybrid outdoor situation in the first place.

To engage with the works in relation to their architectural, historical and institutional locatedness indeed assumes site-specificity as default approach towards situated art practices, and to some extent that has to do with the work's entanglement and the way it entertains these connections and makes them apparent. Yet ultimately the apparent ease of the work's inscription into the field of site specific practices says less about the ensemble's directedness and critical impact than it does about the wide range of registers potentially covered by the notion of *site*.

A near-historical trajectory of its permutations (in both artistic and discursive practice) unfolds into a spectrum of phenomena and conditions gathered and bracketed under the term:<sup>99</sup> originally site-specificity takes place as a direct engagement with the physical conditions of the exhibition situation. Most notably in nascent forms of site-specific practices and emerging from discussions around the sitedness of art work as a legacy of minimalist practices, practices link up to their sites in an attempt to challenge the supposed autonomy and mobility of the artwork as conditioned by the modernist conception of self-referentiality and by the commodifying forces of the art market. Outside of the conventional art venue this expansion occurs in a predominantly assimilative embrace of the non-art situation as possibility for coherent experience<sup>100</sup>; inside of its confines site specificity produces a revelatory gesture aimed at highlighting the implicit architectural and behavioural conditioning of art experience. Whilst the former is phenomenologically bound and centred around a notion of the subject of experience, the latter opens onto the cultural/institutional conditions of the situation of presentation, and is primarily premised on an impetus of disruption<sup>101</sup>. In both perspectives, specificity describes an appropriate and ideally somewhat efficient interaction with a given situation, whether assimilative or disruptive. Site specific practices are thought to be

---

<sup>99</sup> As indicated above, this account largely follows Kwon's 'One Place after the Other'.

<sup>100</sup> Earth and Land Art can be seen as the most emblematic cases of this interest in re-cohering experience and viewing conditions.

<sup>101</sup> The structurally useful distinction between assimilative and interruptive models of site specificity was first suggested by Rosalyn Deutsche. See Kwon, 'One Place after the Other', p.85, note 3.

specifically conceived for the spaces of their consumption and, above all, are thought to address these, be it in a revelatory or in an integrational mode.

In another respect and increasingly dominantly then, site-specificity functions as an engagement with the cultural-ideological constitution of art as (institutionalised) realm of experience and mediation itself. In this approach, the site engaged with is constituted less in the physical spatiality of the exhibition space - even where this is regarded as a mere index of implicit ideological constraints - than the discursive formations founding and surrounding its operations as cultural sphere. Site in this sense is the result (not the prerequisite) of cultural operations, and it is thus the very texture of the cultural realm as arena for engagement and critique which becomes the object of site specific interventions.

There is an almost convincing, seeming plausibility in any attempt to construct these two understandings of site as strictly successive, but neither the cultural conditions of showing nor the engagements with them necessarily follow linear patterns. To the contrary, both have to be understood as simultaneous possibilities that are distinct in their characteristics and applications but also overlap and become intertwined in the generation of profoundly hybrid forms. Any distinction between physicality and discursivity in this field merely indicates possible reference points for a range of activities and situations.

It is against this background of critical framing that the furniture ensemble in question here not only passively encompasses but actively embraces most of these perspectives and corresponding questions as basic conditions of its installation. As objects of and for the museum installed outside of its building and inside its grounds, they engage the sculpture court as hybrid and solicit the corresponding questions of the groundedness of art in the housing of the institution. In this literal, physical sense they occupy a situation between inside and outside that raises questions about their belonging to either realm: the inside as sanctioned shelter for art objects and corresponding patterns of appreciation where aesthetic value is customarily given priority over any potential use value. Or the outside as (semi-)public realm where the interaction between public and work is regulated differently and enters exchange forms closer to the modes of use and appropriation determined by leisure and corresponding forms of conditioned sociability.

An art historical reading of the work is clearly if misleadingly solicited by the way in which the work invokes and explicitly inscribes itself into the formal, institutional and art historical dimensions of the museum site. The reading, under these terms, goes something like this: As artefacts caught in this inside/outside, art/leisure etc ambiguity, the ensemble replicates and accentuates the duality of its institutional

sitedness through a double art-historical referentiality. Against the backdrop of the Gallery's architecture and its dominant colour scheme of green trims, the assembled modular elements appear as playful variations on colour that take up the architectural colour scheme only to expand its range and translate it into a multicoloured and explicitly contingent decorative arrangement. The sculptures' blue, red, yellow, beige, pale green and black panels bounce off Stirling's green, and the materiality of the objects only enhances this proximity: the powder-coating process employed for the colour of the modular elements is the same as the one used for the production of the Gallery's fittings. The linkage is ambiguous but stringent, and the sculptural ensemble is opposed to its architectural backdrop only in so far as it is originally also derived from it.<sup>102</sup>

In relation to their art historical precedents on the other hand, the work's sculptural components are firmly situated in a lineage of Minimalist practice. Formal similarities are striking (most explicitly in the open dialogue with Donald Judd), but the way they are self-consciously staged affects a number of dis- and replacements. Whilst the referenced (Late) Modernist sculpture postulated specificity and interest as essential and polemically exclusive qualities for the appreciation of artwork<sup>103</sup>, key formal characteristics of these works such as modularity, contingent colour arrangements and intentional yet defiant proximity to the functional implications of design, are here translated back into the reference system of functional ensembles as potential chairs, tables and shelving units. Simultaneously reflected back onto the integrational aspirations of (Early) Modernist design and on the appropriations of its stylistic achievements, but not ideological constructions in contemporary design formats, Minimalism's insistence on the experience of the artwork as its core dimension is thus tentatively and/or ironically re-introduced into a broader context of social practices. Bringing the mutually exclusive horizons of Modernist design and autonomous sculpture into play and denying to resolve either, the work thus oscillates between the utopian aspirations of both – integrational/social ones on one side and autonomously re-configured formalist ones on the other.

---

<sup>102</sup> Built 1980-84 by James Stirling architect as extension to the existing building to house the Tate's Turner Collection, the building is in itself an interesting housing for Turner's doubtful modernism. Even the tensions at play in the building thus prefigure the awkward positionality of the sculptural insert —the supposed flippancy and irreverence of the extension's postmodernism, itself articulated mainly through the colour applications, as well as the entrance's ambiguity between functional access to the educational facilities and entrance to the Turner collection (actually housed upstairs), can be seen as conceptual backdrops for the sculptures in the newly designated sculpture court.

<sup>103</sup> See for these notions for instance Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', in *Arts Yearbook*, 8, 1965, p.74-82



fig.5

More than simply caught between the conditions of architecture, sculpture and (street) furniture, the ensemble is also fundamentally constituted in the interplay between reference systems of high art production on one hand and popular commodity circulation on the other. Soliciting both, the work stages its own status as hybrid and reflects this instability back onto the assumed qualities of either

system. The structural modularity of the assembled elements serves as almost allegorical token for this double promise of adaptability and self-identity.



fig.6

In all of these senses, the work fulfils the remits of site specificity thus not only because site specificity offers a default reading of located art practices, but because the ensemble itself actively stages these different reading possibilities through its explicit hyper-referentiality towards physical location, architectural setting, institutional grounding and art historical framing. When the work becomes a proposition for school classes as an improvised assembly and teaching environment on field trips to the museum, even recent convergences between site-

specific concerns and community-based forms of activism<sup>104</sup> can be seen to be recuperated in the work's (pseudo-)functionality for the educational and outreach purposes of the museum. As series of potential but impossible open-air bookshelves, parts of the ensemble explicitly invoke and refute this form of appropriation.

### 1.3.1.a Animating elsewhere

Yet it is from another, more explicitly self-reflexive level of internal cohesion that the arrangement becomes problematic in a much more productive way. In addition to the sculptural arrangement, the installation comprises a video animating a Manga character purchased from a Japanese agency specialising in readymade characters for animation and cartoons. As part of the overall make-up of the commission, the video too can be read in terms of an explicitly multiple sitedness: As a comment on and engagement with the physical and symbolical setting of the museum, the out-facing monitor is displayed behind the otherwise black window panels on a rounded corner of the building and thus set just inside the (mirroring) screen separating inside and outside and symbolically differentiating between museum and world<sup>105</sup>. In a distancing move against the institutional background of Tate Britain as then newly re-defined situation for showcasing 'British' art<sup>106</sup>, the video is an animation executed by a Scandinavian animator and exposed as such in the work's disproportionately extensive credits<sup>107</sup>; and it is (even more fundamentally) based on a Japanese Manga character bought and copyrighted by two French artists who mobilise it as a vehicle for an international collaborative investigation into the current condition of cultural and intellectual copyrighting<sup>108</sup> which finishes in/

---

<sup>104</sup> See Kwon, 'One Place after the Other', p.91, note 13

<sup>105</sup> In the exhibition's documentation in the accompanying publication (*Liam Gillick: Annlee You Proposes*, Tate Britain, Sept. 2001-March 2002), the video features in the form of stills only. The form of its installation is neither documented nor mentioned, turning the sited video itself into a "half-remembered" appearance.

<sup>106</sup> With the inauguration of Tate Modern in 2000, the former Tate Gallery was re-defined as Tate Britain and designated as "the national gallery for British art from 1500 to the present day" (<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain>, last accessed 14/10/08). Full credit for the animation runs

<sup>107</sup> "Story/Concept: Liam Gillick. Director/Animator: Lars Magnus Holmgren, aka Dr Frankenskippy. Producer: Dominic Buttimore. Voice of Annlee: Saskia Reeves. Sound Design: Oliver Davis. Production Manager: Gil James. Compositors: Marcus Moffat and Laurence James". Gillick insists wherever possible on the use of the entire caption.

<sup>108</sup> For a complete documentation of the whole project and discussion see Emily Mast, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno (eds.): *No Ghost Just A Shell*, Cologne/ Eindhoven: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König/ Oktagon, 2003, as well as Philip Nobel, 'Annlee, Sign of the Times', in *Artforum international*, January 2003, pp.104-109. For a more explicitly foregrounded deliberation on intellectual property, where "Apart from the clashes between the films' protagonists, the content is all in the fine print", see Gillick's collaborative

disappears into an Ikea fashioned Snow-White coffin in a Zurich museum and a smile-without-a-cat firework on a Miami beach<sup>109</sup>. Furthermore and in response to the sculpture court as physically bound site for the work, the video's protagonist proposes a narrative derived from a working residency at a centre for international contemporary art in the Japanese town of Kitakyushu.

Like the sculptures that are always tendentially more (complicated) than their brief, the video too, in terms of its site specific qualities, engages with the institutional framework's perceived limitations by integrating that which might still find itself excluded for all kinds of institutional reasonings: the mode of collaboration (which potentially undermines the exclusive position of the individual artist invited for the commission); the international composition of people involved in producing the work (serving as a counterweight to the nationally prescriptive definition of a museum as 'Tate Britain'); and the introduction of a digital animation as guiding narrative into the physical ensemble of the sculpture court itself (colliding media still perceived as belonging to separate realms of commissioning and reception).

In relation to these dimensions of *context*, the video engages a marginality that seems set up primarily to test the permissive claims of the contemporary art institution as site for critical investigation. Neither disruptive nor assimilative in nature, the work operates in displacements that deterritorialise it only ever slightly from the site of its physical and institutional installation. These shifts can be conceived as a series of challenges to the institutional framework, yet they are explicitly recuperable. Successfully integrated into the finished work, they manage

---

*Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy* project with Philippe Parreno (Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno: *Briannnnnn and Ferryyyyyy*, Kunsthalle Zürich, 20.01.06-26.03.06), discussed in Jennifer Allen, '1000 Words: Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno', in *Artforum International*, 43, 6, February 2005, p. 144-145, p.144.

<sup>109</sup> Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno: *A Smile Without a Cat (Celebration of Annlee's Vanishing)*, firework display, Miami Beach 2002 (fig.7). For documentation see Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, 'Centerfold: *A Smile Without a Cat (Celebration of Annlee's Vanishing)*', in *Artforum international*, January 2003, pp.110-111. And Joe Scanlan: *Do It Yourself (Annlee)*, 2002 (fig.8)



fig.7



fig.8

to retrospectively inscribe themselves into the brief too and re-negotiate its underlying assumptions.



fig.9

The function of these inclusions is thus double: on one hand, they were conceived as a highlighting move to test the perceived limitations of the commission's given framework; on the other, their ultimate function in relation to the institutional framework is one of expansion, in which a potential of digressive site specificity is ultimately recuperated by overall integration into the institutional framework. This occurs explicitly when concerns around copyrighting are acknowledged as one of the project's core issues in the accompanying publication (even if in the process collaboration and copyright are then premised as key concerns of the artist's project, rather than responses to the specificities of the commission, defusing its specific implications and all reference to the national implications of the commission's framework are avoided, shifting the discussion instead to architectural

and art historical reference systems)<sup>110</sup>. And it occurs equally tacitly when the international collaboration as challenge to the terms of the commission is simultaneously acknowledged and defused by explicit reference to the “French artists” as “friends” on the accompanying website entry.<sup>111</sup>

Both, implicit and explicit recuperations are indicative of how the work necessarily arrives at retroactively broadening the commission’s terms rather than putting them in question. Ultimately, the work fulfils a fundamentally assimilative function in relation to an institutional situation that is flexible and malleable mainly because it is still in the making. ‘Tate Britain’ “encompasses a description of location and suggests precise content”, but could, “at this early stage of its existence [equally] just be a simple naming solution whose function therefor remains contingent upon the actions of people who will work in and around it.”<sup>112</sup> The possibility of integration as “soft critique” is at least one part of the work’s self-conscious and self-reflexive siting.

But then the video’s narrative and visual structure undercuts any such relation to the institutional brief with an unsitedness that ends up unfitting the entire arrangement. Inside the video, the character’s monologue appears as a disjointed account of projective thinking and vague memorisation that is in itself unsited, and this unsitedness prolongs itself in the constitution of visual space in the animation: the protagonist is surrounded by and submerged in a digital animation of sprawling special effects that defies any attempt at constituting or even projecting a location from where the monologue might be uttered.

When the protagonist, Annlee, was first purchased as a digital file from one of the two Japanese agencies specialising in this type of commodity, she was an inexpensive, digital off-the-shelf character, designed as a minor module of low complexity and without particular background for use in Manga cartoons or commercial advertising. “She could exist in any kind of story, but with no chance of surviving any of them. As a digital ‘extra’, her predetermined destiny was to fade away quickly or simply perish after a few minutes of film or a couple of comic book pages”<sup>113</sup>, a secondary background extra with low life expectancy to be inserted into a larger narrative thread. This condition of low definition and maximised malleability lies at the conceptual core of the whole series of Annlee works commissioned by

---

<sup>110</sup> See Katharine Stout: ‘Annlee You Proposes’, in *Liam Gillick: Annlee You Proposes*, pp.3-7, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> See <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/gillick.htm> (last accessed 14/10/08)

<sup>112</sup> Liam Gillick, ‘Kitakyushu in the Spring’, in *Annlee You Proposes*, pp.8-12, p.11

<sup>113</sup> Press release, Institute of Visual Culture, Cambridge, 2002, online under [http://www.instituteofvisualculture.org/2002\\_no\\_ghost.php](http://www.instituteofvisualculture.org/2002_no_ghost.php) (last accessed 14/06/04)

Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe under the title *No Ghost Just a Shell*, and it constitutes the focus of a large number of them. Following from this original brief, most of her applications are redemptive gestures through which Annlee is made to occupy the spaces of stories, situations and biographies she was denied under the original terms of her construction.<sup>114</sup>

In *Annlee You Proposes* the conceptual near-transparency of a largely unspecific character is taken as the basic condition for its use, not as the focus for a potentially critical re-configuration of its properties beyond their original, limited horizon. Her original pure functionality is translated into the function of a modular element in the animation of the overall situation. Profoundly embedded in the video's visual universe of cosmic animation, any physical or institutional specificity is drowned out of her appearance so that the video can figure as mere relay, as yet another level of animation in the overall multiple propositions exchanged between the work and its situation.

When she talks about another place (Japan) and describes it as another island, then this referral on a screen in London links the character to the place of its showing, but also links it back to her place of production and the cultural con-/subtext of Manga cartoons and advanced digital animation it originally emerged from. Yet even this place never becomes hers because the animation defies the category of Manga whilst the island she talks about is the Japan of a residency and a commission, not the exoticised universe of fully digitised, late capitalist pop culture commonly associated with the realms of digital animations and its currency within Visual Arts practice from Takashi Murakami through to Mariko Mori.

Through this series of internal displacements in relation to any recognisable cultural realm that could be hers and in relation to the internal logic of her artistic appropriations as commissioned by Huyghe and Parreno, Annlee is posited here as a sheer interface towards other sites. From the spatial and temporal co-ordinates of the video's location she refers towards the remoteness of an earlier residency; from a given location, she shifts the situation towards a narrated one in a move that also reframes the sculptural ensemble as approximative re-creation of "a half-remembered Japanese place"; from the semi-public situation of a newly inaugurated sculpture garden, she thus also refers to the semi-private space of a communal area within the Contemporary Art Centre in Kitakyushu "where a temporary solution

---

<sup>114</sup> See for the circumstances of the purchase and its original implications Philippe Parreno's notes on the project, online on the Air de Paris website under <http://www.airdeparis.com/annlee2.html> (last accessed 14/10/08), and the monologue he created as first work in the series under <http://www.ps1.org/cut/animations/install/parreno.html> (last accessed 14/10/08).

was created for a number of people who never asked for the gift they were given.”<sup>115</sup>



fig.10

All of this relies on a reading of the work against a dimension of site, in patterns by which site can be constituted as a location for work and as a means for engaging with it. But whilst the sculpture's entanglement with its physical, cultural and institutional location as well as the video's framing seem to be conceived in such a mode of direct engagement, the way in which multiple linkages are set up between the video, its site(s) and the overall ensemble open onto more complicated operations of setting and unfitting.

Specificity to the site of the work and displacements in relation to its potential are mutually constitutive in the overall ensemble. One is constantly outlined, highlighted and tested against the other, and their various degrees of fitting (because they certainly belong to the register of fitting and unfitting) can be seen as a critical

---

<sup>115</sup> *Liam Gillick: Annlee You Proposes*, p.11

investigation. But these solicitations are only one relational pair out of several, including less linear ones that span from work to site, from one element of the work to another, from the forms of their togetherness to the very constitution of site and beyond in a sprawling range of possible and mutually related connectivities. Whilst individually they can be accounted for in terms of an engagement with site, it is in their ambiguous and explicitly unclear coming together and the very quality of their unfitting that something else starts to emerge as a possibility.

### **1.3.1 b Too much and too little and some more**

When Annlee claims that “there was another place just like this” and that “a projection from another place is required here, not the projection of an image, but a projection of settled thinking”, she lays a claim on the very nature in which the entire ensemble is structured. Since the whole ensemble is designated as her proposition and not just the video (*Annlee you Proposes* is title for both, the installation and the video within it), it is under the terms of this proposition that the two originating situations at play - a residency in Japan and a commission for London - start overlapping in terms of concerns and conditions, with the video itself acting as interface onto the more remote of the two locations, as a device for their (re-)arrangement, as a commentary on the configuration and as an additional (non-)site in the overall picture.

This overlap is mainly a function of the way in which the various component parts are arranged to (not) come together and cross: that one should be there for the appreciation of the other is one (impossible) bridge between sculptures and video, a proposition under which the benches fulfil their function by serving as viewing position from where to watch the video. That one should be the projection of the other is another possible, inverted arrangement between the same component parts: the video not as centre of attention, but as generating point from where a fictional character projects a “half remembered set of solutions” from Japan, a projection which then takes shape in the physicality of the sculptural ensemble. The sculptural group, in this scenario, simply becomes an approximative re-creation of an originally improvised intervention in the function of a semi-public space. In this circular scenario, the story comes to a close in mutually completed referentiality.

But film and sound and the furniture for their consumption (as which the sculptures now necessarily appear) only ever join each other in oblique linkages, and a different form of encounter emerges from their slippages. The monitor is inserted into the oblique façade of the building in such a way that it can hardly be seen from the viewing position indicated by the benches, yet it is near these benches that the

video's soundtrack comes out of concealed speakers in such a way that it is entirely inaudible from any other position closer to the monitor, from where the imagery could be seen. This physical unfitting dissociates images and sound and opens them onto other, more contingent applications and involvements. Once the video's overall cohesion unravels into visual and audio components, supposedly marginal effects take on a new relevance: the way in which the video image itself almost disappears behind the reflections of urban and architectural surroundings in the black glass behind which it is installed, becomes more than a disturbance now; it actively imports the reflections and through them its surroundings into the image (which is now more than just what occurs on the video screen itself). Equally the sound relates to the situation of the benches and tables in a new way by opening onto an inclusion of the contingent that is propelled through random operations of analogy between the (over-)heard narrative, sculptural forms and all that occurs between them. Once the observations, comments and reflections are loosened from the sole reference of the video's visual narrative (as far as this ever adds up to a narrative anyway), the monologue is partially ungrounded from its visual support in the video; as a result, the colours, shapes and even meteorological conditions described become more freely attributable. They can now link up to otherwise contingent appearances in and around the work's installation. Describing the "lumps and forms which I try to describe", which is firstly Annlee's attempt at recollection, can then also become a reaching out for water drops on the furniture's glossy surfaces on a rainy day. And the account of that other place, "a place on the other side of the world. Somewhere in the south there is the last big island. When it rains, it really rains. It was nearly destroyed, but the clouds were too low. And still cry."<sup>116</sup> contrasts and projects both locations by superimposing the London sky onto the video's animation through the mirrored surface of the museum's glass wall.

This type of contingent encounter can be contrasting or complementary, disconnected or seemingly blurred; most importantly, it can only ever be made possible, but not planned. The way the connections occur can be facilitated or set up but necessarily remains unscripted, and it is in this register of unscripted encounters that the physicality and placement of monitor and sound open the video in its entirety onto a widely unregulated proliferation of analogies. Forms, colours and diagrammatic schemes sprawl outward from it and largely determine the way in which the video constantly (re-)configures itself and the situation of its showing. What occurs between them is no longer premised on the exchange between

---

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.9

different domains, but goes beyond their implicit reciprocity. In their place emerges a radically contingent and potentially expanding inclusiveness towards surrounding phenomena and events that, instead of emptying out encounters, insists on the generative dynamics of their unpredictability.

“I you propose”, as Annlee says, is then not the proposition of a resolved situation, but to the contrary levels ‘I’ and ‘you’ as two supposed centres that generate arrangements of things understood as always caught in their middle and generative of occurrences<sup>117</sup>. Annlee proposes to arrange the presence of the Tate-installation as projection of a “half-remembered set of solutions” once executed in Japan, whilst the *you* of the implied address arranges the various elements as component parts of an experienced and potentially usable ensemble. The formula’s lack of clarity in distinguishing address from originating voice (I/You) sets up their conjuncture as an encounter between two propositions whose various parts overlap and interfere with each other in a game across registers without however adding up. Rather than providing closure for either, the coming together of the solicited realms constitutes them mutually as potential. Both become propositions in relation to the other, elements for assemblages that oscillate by belonging to multiple geographies, realms and registers.

By thus continually cutting across seeming divides, these elements are simultaneously unhinged and opened up towards novel types of contingent assemblages. The arrangement denies any privileged vantage point from where to gather elements into a coherent structure, a resolved narrative or even a completed audio-visual offering, proposing instead assemblages that are obstructed in such a way as to stop short of constituting new coherent units of meaning or even experience.<sup>118</sup> The various elements can only ever be activated in particular, contingent assemblages, never as a coherent whole.

---

<sup>117</sup> *Things* in this sense need to be understood in the full and ambiguous sense of the term, encompassing “the modern sense of object” and an older connotation of “that which concerns somebody”, “anything that in any way bears upon men, concerns them, and that accordingly is a matter for discourse” (Martin Heidegger: ‘The Thing’, in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, London: Harper Collins, 1974, pp.165-182, p.174ff.). Heidegger differentiates between *object* and *thing* in order to establish a thing as oscillating between both dimensions of the term: passive entity and “matter for discourse”.

<sup>118</sup> In his Turner Prize shortlist presentation in 2002, similarly the way in which the ceiling light was reflected on the vitrine containing the actual samples of work on show, replicated and emphasized the impossibility—inside the vitrine—to cohere the given samples around a stable degree of reality. Some were mere project studies, some illustrations, some came from realized graphic commissions, indicating an entire range of status considerations around the work, the plan, the sketch and the accomplished design. Some awaiting realisation, some realised in themselves, they were all subjected to the light reflecting in the vitrine’s glass lid as hindrance of experience. That the ceiling itself carried a work that operated on multiple registers (*Coats of Asbestos Spangled with Mica*, 2002) only extends

Inherent in this partiality is an always possible dimension of non-inclusion. Not exclusion as wilful keeping outside, but the (negative) potentiality by which elements can be taken up or not from an offering, and in which both, access to components of the work and their cohering into assemblages, are contingent. Not only is it fundamentally open what the various elements of the work are synthesised into and what they are combined with in the process. It is also ultimately undetermined whether they will be synthesised at all or not. Since the arrangement opens onto all kinds of surrounding phenomena, the range of elements as well as the possibilities of their combinations, are tendentially open-ended. The audience only ever synthesises (a selection of) them again and again or does not and thus selectively and partially coheres arrangements from the offering.

By the same move these very audiences automatically only multiply the contingency of arrangements by introducing their own partialities into the respective approach to the work. At stake is thus not an audience encountering a work, but rather a set of multiplicatory dynamics by which singular members of diverse audiences encounter constantly changing sets of elements that may or may not cohere into such a thing as a work (complex or not). It is in this extended dialogical structure that the positions of audience and artwork make place for the expanded proposition of their contingent encounter.

In an accumulative, assimilative mode of engagement aimed at maintaining a workable linkage between site and work, there are several possibilities to recuperate such sprawl: one constitution of the work can be read against another as mutually exclusive, imposing a choice through which one can illuminate the other; clues to the references and deferrals at play in the work can be followed up and

---

this disturbance into an unclear effectivity itself suspended between phenomenological and conceptual/ narrative accounts (Turner Prize 2002, Tate Britain, 30 October 2002 – 5 January 2003, documented online on Tate website under <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/turnerprize/2002/gillick.htm> (last accessed 14/10/08)).

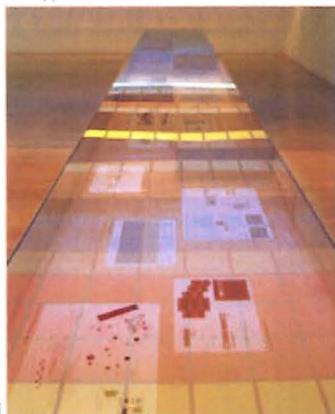


fig.11



fig.12

then reflected back onto the site from a distance. Kwon argues in a similar sense when she discusses the physical and the discursive site of interventions being pulled apart as a recurring feature in site specific practices, and tentatively proposes to extend the notion of site in such a way that it can also encompass the oeuvre itself as site for engagement.<sup>119</sup>

Even though persuasive, this conceptual extension of site specificity inevitably points towards the structural limitations of the model itself: an accumulative model of site ultimately ends up encompassing the entirety of self-reflexive conditions and operations. The very operation of site specificity then turns into an ever-expanding feedback loop between site and practice and replaces the precision of an engagement with the adaptability of an increasingly malleable notion. Site specificity, in this extreme form, is emptied of specificity to such an extent that it can become visible as a formula with the main purpose of safeguarding coherent and accountable relations, rather than for engaging with the particularities of an encounter. And so even when, on the conceptual and temporal margins of the project of site-specificity, Kwon conceives of a situation “between mobilization and specificity”, this situation still has to be perceived as “a terrain”, in relation to which “being out of place” can only be useful if it occurs “with punctuality and precision” and thus under scrutinizable and accounted-for conditions.<sup>120</sup>

Or alternatively one can enter the labyrinth of leads, follow them ad infinitum and then formulate that non-return itself into a statement about site and its characteristics and how it always falls short of that infinite demand. (Bourriaud’s notion of the *interstice* becomes such a device for re-connection once it is measured exclusively in terms of its critical capability in relation to a supposedly given surround).

In either case, the differentiation, diversion or transgression necessarily refers back to the condition, situation or context it supposedly left behind in order to profile itself; their binding relationality remains intact. Not only that, but it cannot (and this is the main point here) go beyond the coherence of a mutual reciprocity.

In a different mode of engagement though it becomes possible here to follow at least some of these indications not in an accumulative quest for information, knowledge and ultimately stabilising feedback, but rather in order to reach the point where aleatory overlaps and contingent interferences reach critical mass and drown out the usefulness of a relation to site. At this point, choice and privileges succumb

---

<sup>119</sup> ‘One Place after the Other’, p.93f. and p.104

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.110

under the multiplicity of linkages and in doing so unravel those hierarchies that normally safeguard focus: rather than directed and channelled, engagement is again and again reconfigured in different dimensions and registers in such a way that institutional critique, art historical referencing and architectural framing end up overexposing and thus blurring rather than complementing each other.

When Giorgio Agamben appropriates the notion of the *no more than* from the Skeptics experience of suspension for his own formula of contingency, he outlines exactly this possibility of a move beyond referentiality: a formula in which the (dis-)ordering principle of the *no more than* over spills attempts at recuperating coherence and constitutes the unsurpassable limit against which models run up. In Agamben's take on (Deleuze's reading of) *Bartleby the Scrivener*<sup>121</sup>, it is not the refusal of demands so much as the preference not to answer to them that establishes a "zone of indetermination" which defies existing patterns of acknowledgement and recuperation.<sup>122</sup> It generates an "irreducibility" over which the "categories [of the man of law] have no power": will and necessity succumb under the ambiguity of potentiality that "destroys all possibility of constructing a relation between being able and willing".<sup>123</sup>

Against this kind of generative withdrawal existing models such as site specificity and relational aesthetics appear inappropriate not because they are insufficient or underdeveloped (site specificity in need of an even further expanded notion of site; relational aesthetics understood in more abstract terms of structure) but because the moves in question simply cannot be re-cohered as *will* (to intervention) or *necessity* (of specific relations). The problem is not that the applications lack refinement or subtlety, but rather that their very coherence fails to engage when projected onto encounters that no longer follow the same logic of accountability.

Precisely this being out of reach indicates the point from where the *no more than* ceases to be a negative determination and begins affirming the *whatever* "such that it always matters" in a fundamental multiplicity of encounters. The formula for a different type of dynamic becomes conceivable here: the *no more than* "not as an affirmation or a negation, [...] this is not the sense in which we use it but rather an indifferent [...] and illegitimate [...] sense".<sup>124</sup> Between the two types of uses

---

<sup>121</sup> Herman Melville, 'Bartleby the scrivener', in: *Bartleby; and, Benito Cereno*, New York: Dover Publications, 1990.

<sup>122</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 'Bartleby; or, the formula', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, London/New York: Verso, 1998, pp.68-90, p.73. For Deleuze, the formula presents not resistance (even passive resistance), but a structurally resistant 'agrammaticality'.

<sup>123</sup> Agamben: *Potentialities*, p.254f.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256

(indifferent and illegitimate), contingency becomes active precisely through being inappropriate – the illegitimacy that necessarily accompanies the formula's indifference pushes it beyond appropriateness, but most importantly pushes it beyond a simple disconnectedness and into a condition of entanglement, an ab-use for which unfitting is less a precursor than a continual modality of activating use beyond functionality.

Whilst Agamben outlines this as a “new ontology”<sup>125</sup> it is here mobilised as a working premise, a style of operation under which “whatever” *happens* “such that it always matters”. It provides a point from which it appears possible to invert the entire equation: works cease to function as indicators for the constitution of meaning and become instead mutually blurring filtering devices between insert and situation that un-condition either. They can now be conceived as devices (not traces) whose supposed legibility collapses and opens the view onto a different organisational mode, not model. Turning away from the lineages and trajectories set up in relation to parameters such as site and coherence, context and intervention, it becomes possible here to turn towards the very slippages that blur their respective registers and the ways in which the work relates to own diverse parameters. Not as a new realm or even model, but as a different mode of practice and its perception, and indeed as one that replicates such slippages throughout in the way in which it animates juxtapositions.

Starting with these qualities to map out a field of activity opens onto a different type of sitedness that exceeds the relational parameters of a position and opens onto contingent assemblages instead. And even if this means to sever the linkage to site, or at least to level it as one relation among others, the move does not re-instate autonomy, which implies an internal logic of coherence, an internal fit. Rather it substitutes coherence itself with a heterogeneous assemblage that reconfigures its own parameters in constant unfitting. What becomes conceivable here is an unlocatedness in terms of an organisation that is relational in an expanded sense, encompassing internal relations as well as those with the outside.<sup>126</sup> Such a form overflows place not by constituting the richer, pluri-dimensional construct of a multiple site, but by enabling an assemblage that (rather than opening up liberational space) constantly unhinges itself from any one given consistency by shifting to another. (Bourriaud accounts for such processes of un-making that are

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.259

<sup>126</sup> Such an expanded notion of relationality overflows Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of 'relational aesthetics' defined as an account of artworks in terms of “the inter-human relations they represent, produce or prompt” and premised on a socially determined 'co-existence criterion' (Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*, p.112).

not necessarily related to de-materialisation by proposing a fundamentally process-based understanding of form which ceases to be finite: Form, for him and in relation to what he practices he calls relational and beyond, is a matter of constellations coagulating, of 'setting' the way ice sets in the transition from one state to another.) Contingency is here not accounted for as content but as produced in the aleatory nature of what can be taken up from the dispersed offering of the work. Not as an emptying out, but as constantly renewed promiscuity.

What is at stake in response is the assembly of something other than a reading strategy for connections made and constructions introduced; an aiming at something other than the economies of exchange and returns, input and output that underly assessments of intervention. Rather an account of some recurring and constituent features of these novel encounters, an overview over some of their variable dimensions and effects produced.

Among these, contingency takes on the role of a meta-condition: it implies an implicit refusal of the very categories of location and site as constitutive of meaning and critical potential (against specificity); it is one of the core modalities that unhinges assemblages from the specificities of their supposed context (exemplar); and it contaminates supposedly clear distinctions between registers of the work, its intended function and solicited or random effects in such a way that neither of the three can be upheld independently and become contingent in their mutuality as well as in the absolute sense. At stake is therefore a fundamental re-configuring of circular exchanges as multiple encounters which are never "encounters between domains, for each domain is already made up of such encounters in itself".<sup>127</sup> Instead they offer contingent series of aleatory points of interfacing.

### **1.3.2 Overlaps and near-misses**

And so when a sign "indicates arrival at the 22nd floor of the BIG CONFERENCE CENTRE"<sup>128</sup> outside a ground floor gallery and when inside that gallery an element of suspended ceiling over the desk area layers "the limited concerns expressed by the middle tier of social and economic projection" on top of the situation, these devices can no longer be seen to operate in parallel to or allegorical of the physical, economical and cultural implications of the gallery space.

---

<sup>127</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.28

<sup>128</sup> The recurring text passages are themselves part of the work, accompanying it in publications (see especially Susanne Gaensheimer and Nicolaus Schafhausen (eds.): *Liam Gillick*, Cologne: Oktagon, 2000) and other documentations (the most extensive of which is the Air de Paris gallery website under <http://www.airdeparis.com>). The extent to which information is provided and/ or withdrawn from circulation is another level of slippage in the way the works are constituted.

Institutional critique as a model relies on the assumption of a fundamental duality of meaning production, a duality by which one type of working (that of the gallery, the museum, the 'institution') can be uncovered through a form of direct engagement that reveals underlying structures behind a façade of surface appearances. Any intervention, in this model, proceeds through metonymy from one (presented) level of conditions and operations to another, hidden level of implications and involvements that can be revealed by and for critical engagement.

For this type of operation to be functional and efficient, some basic structures need to be assumed as given: notably and most fundamentally a split between separate levels of meaning along and against which irony, metaphor and metonymy can operate as highlighting or revealing processes. And secondly then a critical continuity that allows to suspend one consensually agreed understanding of the (institutional) situation and replace it with a broadened, critically updated other. Not only metaphor, but also metonymy necessarily presupposes a set of contact points that can be determined and along which the investigation can proceed from the minute detail to the bigger picture and thus reveal the latter. The movement behind such operations is fundamentally linear in the development of its grasp and circular in its critical reflection back onto the situation it engages with.

The cluster of works *up on the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor*<sup>129</sup> deviates from this exchange by operating along lines of narrativity and fictionalisation that challenge not the gallery and its implicit workings but the stability of its relationship with the artwork. Rather than clashing with the gallery setting, the works overlap with it because they are not only entangled with the gallery through their placing, but also with the underlying fiction they are extracted from: The 22<sup>nd</sup> floor of the exhibition's title not only indicates a generic high rise setting with corporate connotations, but is also derived from a *Big Conference Centre* that organises fragments of fiction around the modalities of 'conciliation', 'compromise', 'negotiation', 'delay', 'consensus', 'revision', 'concentration', 'dialogue' and 'assessment' as chapters of a book<sup>130</sup>

The various works placed around the gallery space are props that appear in the book or are derived from it, and they stage attempts at approximating both conditions, fiction on one hand and modalities of exchange on the other. At their intersection, the works constitute a supplementary space of negotiation and activity

---

<sup>129</sup> Galerie Air de Paris, Paris, 1998. The exhibition is documented online as Liam Gillick, *Big Conference Centre*, under <http://www.airdeparis.com/artists> (last accessed 14/10/08).

<sup>130</sup> Liam Gillick: *Discussion Island/ Big Conference Centre*, Ludwigsburg: Kunstverein/ Derry: Orchard Gallery, 1997

within the realm of the gallery, the qualities of which determine the types of encounter produced.



fig.13

Because the scenario of the book itself never achieves closure but remains suspended between other books and related parts of the overall practice, what it provides is not a complete or even coherent set of elements to insert into or apply to the gallery. It offers instead a series of arrangements. In the exhibition, these are superimposed as such, as tentative arrangements, onto the gallery situation.

One of these is a “test wall painted with attempts to match the colour of coca-cola” and “reflects a reference to a passage in the book BIG CONFERENCE CENTRE, where one location mentioned has walls the colour of Coca-cola”. That the piece produces a slightly confusing transfer from taste to colour is only one in a series of shifts that determine the work: A given fictional space becomes the model for a preparational assimilation of the gallery wall that remains repetitive, haphazard and permanently suspended. The paint marks remain suspended on a level plane of more or less unsuccessful approximations that defy the logic of fitting to either the book (where the colour is given and covers the walls) or the colour model invoked - none of the samples is recognisably closer to the colour of the trademark soft-drink than another. With the fulfilment of either reference suspended, the work appears as a mere series of shifts in relation to the notion of fitting, to the applicability of a model, to recreation and the layering of spaces. Fundamentally unconcluded, the marks insist on a trial mode of perceptual near misses as basis, condition and

working mode for a tentative type of insert. Rather than effectively approximating book and exhibition, the series of stains stages the (inconclusive) attempt at doing so.

Beyond these structural features, the relation between works and setting is further complicated in cases where what is taken over and appears in the gallery, is not simply a representation of the book or an element from it. What is transferred in these cases are active props and accessories with allocated functions in the book and in relation to it; accordingly the displacement to the gallery affects their context, but not their functional potential which becomes therefore applicable to the gallery situation. It is possible then that “a large mirror is deployed in search of the three main characters from the book BIG CONFERENCE CENTRE” high on the wall above the gallery desk, without any necessary loss or deferral occurring in the transfer from one realm to the other.



fig.14

The resulting mode (and this is the main underlying difference to canonical practices of institutional critique) is not revelatory but projective and thus open to occurrences of the contingent. The mirror transfers the demands of one realm (the book) onto the possibilities of the other (the gallery) not in a revealing fusion or confrontation but in a near-miss that fails to engage with the significant workings of the gallery even though it solicits them through the proximity to the desks as fetishised nerve centre of the gallery. Going over their heads, it picks up a range

contingent elements instead, some lighting fixtures, fragments of the surroundings, works and visitors and a vast expanse of blank ceiling.

Claiming and incorporating the gallery space for the plot of the book and simultaneously projecting it (the book) onto the situation of the gallery, the work overlaps its setting with fiction instead of simply allegorising one through the other. Rather than relating documentary and fiction by activating one against the other, the work undoes their distinction and opens them up to the inclusion of contingencies of the surrounding given. Instead of layering the fictionally derived scenario on top of a supposedly unchanged gallery situation as a reading device for the gallery's workings, fiction seeps in (like contingency and in relation to it) and is constituted as a merely possible, supplementary dimension of the situation.<sup>131</sup> That the space in the book is introduced, under the title of 'Revision', as the space where someone propels himself against the reinforced glass wall until it gives way to his falling, is another such additional plot.<sup>132</sup>

### 1.3.3 Collisions

If the encounter between work and situation can thus be decentred away from a category of appropriateness and the one-dimensional linearity of an impact, the notion of its effect too can be reconfigured as multiple and contingent beyond the function of commentary or constructive highlighting. What is needed in and through the third sample then is a re-thinking of what influence, effect and impact might be beyond linear models of efficiency.

Where a public clock in the urban space structures time as homogeneous and linear and generally reliable, any interference with its processes must appear as a challenge to its function for the public domain and its underlying principles of

---

<sup>131</sup> This again needs to be differentiated from Nicolas Bourriaud's understanding of the exhibition site as venue for a movie without camera, which is fundamentally premised on the empowering possibility of enactment and proposes it as a "functional model" (Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*, p.112).

<sup>132</sup> "Up there, the day before yesterday, somebody had finally done it. Lost in the place, caught and alone, they had repeatedly run full pelt against the reinforced glass of that best top room. Minor personal damage like bruising and broken teeth must have gone unnoticed in the repetitive drive for fresh air and dramatic absence. As far as anyone can make out he needed at least ten attempts. Moving faster and faster with each flailing run-up. Breathing hard and determined. And then on the eleventh impact, the glass gave way. Crashing open and falling away to allow brutal passage and moments of weightlessness on the way to the brutal chaos below. Numbed initially from the repeated window impact, our crasher came to a new form of consciousness half way down. The pavement concrete stayed where it was and didn't move up to meet him and his smile. Well they said it was like a grin although fuck knows how anyone could be sure with a flattened face buried in the top of a Toyota like that." (Liam Gillick, *Big Conference Centre*, Ludwigburg: Kunstverein/ Derry: Orchard Gallery, 1997, p.5)

coherence. Deregulating it must appear as a subversive disruption, immediately destabilising its role as an orienting device.

In *Erasmus ass zehn Jahre Opium #2*, the space of this disruption is one of 18 minutes that have been recuperated from the past 187 years. Through the introduction of a customised chip into the circuits of an electronic clock display in the public sphere, time is made to flicker between the current time of the day in 1997 (the year the work was installed as part of documenta X<sup>133</sup>) and the corresponding time in 1810, which differs by approximately 18 minutes as a result of subsequent adjustments through leap minutes and seconds. Alternating between the two times at irregular intervals, the work destabilises the linear homogeneity of quantifiable time and interferes with an essential structuring device of the everyday at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by making it unreliable. The work is in this sense an attempt at a mildly subversive form of confusion.

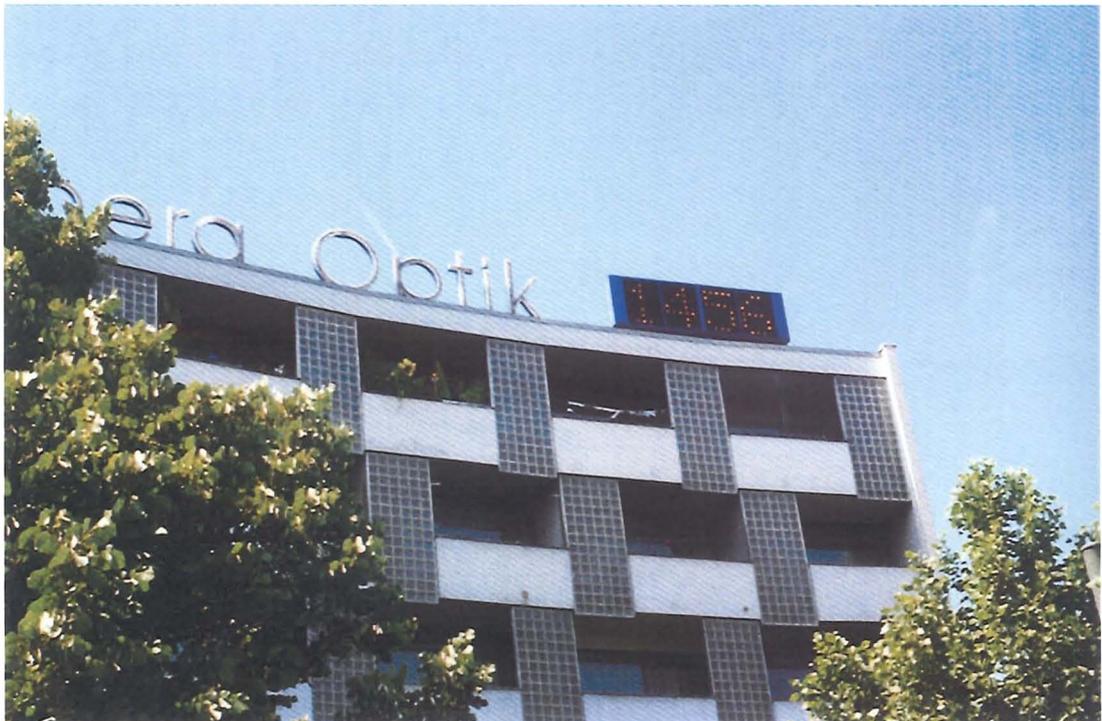


fig.15

But its confusion concerns not only the coherently structured realm the work engages with (linear time). It also regards the linkage of the work to other constitutions of time and setting, and the status and impact of the intervention itself. The chip introduces above all a confusion that feeds on and affects confusing series of fictional and factual temporal shifts and coincidences:

The resetting of time from 1997 to 1810 replicates a double temporal framework first set up in a book from 1995 in which the protagonist, Erasmus Darwin, Charles

<sup>133</sup> documenta X. Exhibition of Contemporary Art, Kassel, Germany, 21 June – 28 Sept 1997

Darwin's older brother, wanders through the streets of 1997 London under the influence of opium, whilst missing a dinner party held at his own house in the same part of town but some 187 years away in time.<sup>134</sup> It has to do with the juxtaposition of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century character with the surrounding settings of late 20<sup>th</sup> century shopping outlets, and appears as a slippage between an opium induced trance and a meandering (non-)presence which constantly undermines any effective occupation of the situation.

The derived work for documenta reclaims opium as underlying condition in the title 'Erasmus ass zehn Jahre Opium'<sup>135</sup> and translates the book's nebulous type of occupation into a fundamental unfoundedness of both time frames, given and inserted one: not only is time destabilised through the juxtaposition of two slightly differing settings which in turn take off from the non-fit between quantified linear time and planetary movement that makes leap seconds and minutes necessary in the first place; in terms of the work's impact too, contingency is mobilised in that the work's destabilising effect is itself random, its impact dependent upon exactly the kind of focussed attention it implicitly defies; nothing in the experiential realm indicates the working of the interference until it becomes discernible (not even recognisable) only at the precise moment of shifting from one frame of reference to the other, if at all.

Furthermore the very coming together of these different times (fictional and factual, outdated and updated, precise and adjusted) is itself triggered by a set of coincidences that lie at the work's conceptual core and determine its workings: the book was "written in 1995 but set between 1810 and 1997", and when the possibility of a work for an exhibition arises in 1997, it is exactly "the coincidence of the dating and the exhibition [that] seemed useful".<sup>136</sup> Not because it operates a destabilising irritation, but because it asserts contingency at the very basis of the blurring between fictional and factual.

Yet also the work's foundation in a fictional scenario is contingent upon the way the work is being approached: the book as source and background only becomes apparent in the accompanying title/text. But rather than this information completing the work and privileging the more informed approach over any other, it simply establishes a parallel site of encounter with the work – if the contingency of encountering the work at all determines its installation in the public domain, in the

---

<sup>134</sup> Liam Gillick: *Erasmus is Late*, London: Bookworks, 1995

<sup>135</sup> "Erasmus ate opium for ten years" (my translation)

<sup>136</sup> Gaensheimer/ Schafhausen, op.cit., p.65

catalogue it is the coincidental nature of overlaps between exhibition and work that is mobilised as 'useful'.

Rather than simply reproducing or referring to one type of contingency, the catalogue entry sets the scene for a parallel encounter between audience and work. Which one of the two scenes (unprepared encounter in the public sphere or informed engagement in the catalogue) actually takes place or in which order they relate to each other, is consciously and explicitly undetermined. Here too, one is *no more than* the other.

The diverse registers of the work's make-up thus add up to a whole range of indicated, but ungraspable framings. Nothing here is revelatory because not one of the work's propositions ever elucidates any of the others at play. The interference as such neither gains nor loses through being derived from the book and its chance encounter with the timing of documenta; the contingency of its effects is enclosed in the dispersal and confusion of its appearance.<sup>137</sup>

In all these operations, the confusion solicited thus regards the make-up of the work itself as much as its effects. It presents a mode of time that is corrupted not in that it flickers between precise and imprecise timing frames.<sup>138</sup> Rather it is corrupted because it flickers between realms and registers and marks out the slippage between them much more than their (supposedly) contrasting characteristics.<sup>139</sup> With constitution and effect of the work premised on contingency, function makes place here for a notion of use beyond recuperation, a 'usefulness' that defies attribution and opens onto sheer effects without given cause.

That the interference can be recognised or not (and/or made legible or not), and how it is thus perceived if at all, reclaims not-doing and not-affecting as necessary (counter-)parts of this type of potentiality. At stake, ultimately, is not the intervention in subtle ambient conditioning, but the full potentiality of an interference that always incorporates the (random) possibility of its own ineffectiveness.

---

<sup>137</sup> Even though the title is possibly elucidated through the provided description of how the work originated, this clarification only becomes necessary once the title is acknowledged, at which point the explanation is equally available anyway.

<sup>138</sup> Any distinction between the two only opens onto different sets of questions: which one is which anyway – one is consistent, the other adjusted, but both can only ever approximate each other, hence the need for continual adjustments.

<sup>139</sup> Elsewhere, such notion of time is presented as 'Ill Tempo'. *Ill tempo* is the title of a text by Liam Gillick that addresses the "potential of negotiating the points where actions and effects meet" (Liam Gillick, 'Ill tempo. The corruption of time in recent art', in *Five or Six*, New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2000, pp. 23-26, p.26). The title has been appropriated here for the silent contamination it effects by contaminating the Italian(!) 'il tempo' - the corruption is silent, but also occurs between different languages in such a way that at least one of them is always out of place.

If this indicates indeed a flight from the seeming coherence of overarching structures and factual, social and cultural conditions, then it is so as a reaction to accounts of embeddedness that subsume the complexities of situations and works under their own structurally stringent terms. Against their background, flight is not a form of disengagement, but “on the contrary, to flee is to produce the real [and] to create a weapon”<sup>140</sup>, one that can operate in and through a carefully unhinged mode of mobilised contingencies. Rather than disengaging from it, this flight generates a whole new set of moves in and of this ‘real’.

---

<sup>140</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.49

## 2 Mode Two: Treason (Stories of play)

“At what point must ontology become... what? Become conversation? Become lyricism? ... The strict conceptual rigor of being-with exasperates the discourse of its concept...”<sup>141</sup>

If contingency empties out a site of engagement by opening it toward new constellations, the nature of these assemblages-to-be determines how much mobility or indeed possibility are generated or shut down. In order to be generative between specifying regimes on one hand and vanishing perspectives on the other, these new assemblages need to be played out. In contrast to the seeming indifference of contingency, this play operates through moves in games which are set up to be reconfigured.

### 2.1 Mobilising slippage

Once *whatever* is at least provisionally taken out of its seemingly defiant and uninterested vagueness and is understood in its original sense by which it describes something “such that it always matters”<sup>142</sup> (Agamben), whatever happens is turned into *whatever* happening and opens two tendencies: on the one hand, it underperforms—as far as valid critical operations are concerned, whatever is never specific enough to enter their quantifying and qualifying equations. On the other it overflows, becoming uncontained in inherited legitimacies through continually unfitting itself from their qualifying frameworks. Both tendencies indiscriminately need to be considered as effective, since it is precisely in the ambiguous doubling of underperformance and overflow that the potentiality of a new affirmative politics of entanglement unfolds.

Whilst chapter I developed how works can be seen to allow for these things to take place<sup>143</sup>, the present part of the project considers more immediately whatever does happen under these terms, and what a trigger might be under their conditions. This shift in attention from generative withdrawal towards the occurrences it allows for, zooms in on the processes at play, but does so only in addressing both sides of the equation as intrinsically involved: the emptying out of conditions and circumstances

---

<sup>141</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p.34

<sup>142</sup> Giorgio Agamben: *The Coming Community*, p.1; see also chapter 1 above, ‘Unfitting settings’.

<sup>143</sup> For the notion of an activating potentiality, see Giorgio Agamben: *Potentialities*, p.245 (“So the potentiality of thought, which in itself is nothing, allows for the act of intelligence to take place”).

as determining factors as well as the re-charging of encounters thus generated as singular occurrences, only ever constitute each other; only under the condition of contingency and at the risk of nothing happening can whatever be opened up to a variety of encounters 'such that it always matters', precisely because neither of the collisions are pre-scripted, determined or otherwise legitimised. It is only in this way that 'whatever encounters' can be simultaneously "indifferent and illegitimate"<sup>144</sup>, and mobilised as virulently active.

At stake in this mutual constitution are non-directional, a-functional, a-specific forms of contact that can be productive and affirmative without falling back into the directional, functional, specific patterns avoided, over-spilled and by-passed through the various operations of unfitting developed in 'Mode One: Contingency (Un-fitting settings)' above. And so beyond the question of what is being produced here, in question is fundamentally the effectivity itself of this type of insert: how this type of unfitting re-configures the insert's relationship to what would otherwise be its context; and how this slippage feeds back into the situation it is indifferent and illegitimate to, if "the work of unfitting [is to be] as complex, as rigorous and as important as the work that goes into fitting within"<sup>145</sup>? Beyond or within settings that unfit themselves and in doing so introduce irrecoverable slippage, is there any space for the active claims and affirmative solicitation of what Agamben calls 'gesture'? If indeed gesture marks the threshold between fact and event and "breaks with the false alternative between ends and means"<sup>146</sup>, and if indeed there is any space to appropriate it for a "pure mediality" that in and of itself mobilises—then what are the possibilities of actively inhabiting that slippage?

Gestures performed by the works in question necessarily raise the stakes for the gestures performed in approaching said works. If being implicated is a fundamental condition for connections to be made and provides the basis for any active involvement, this entanglement equally has to be translated into any theoretical approach to the material considered. It cannot simply be observed but needs to be mobilised in such a way that the nature of its mobilising itself accounts for the complicated forms of virulent involvement at stake. Any approach to work is as much about making claims and setting up attractions as is the work in question, blurring the distinctions between the two by operating in similar modes.<sup>147</sup> In this

---

<sup>144</sup> Agamben: *Potentialities*, p.256

<sup>145</sup> Rogoff: 'What is a Theorist?', n.p.

<sup>146</sup> Agamben, *Means Without Ends*, p.57

<sup>147</sup> This is not hermetic self-reflexivity but to the contrary a mutual contamination of work and dealings with it. The contamination goes both ways so as to undermine categorical differentiations and establish a conjuncture "in the process of becoming possible" (see

way the present chapter is produced through two conjunctures which are mutually constitutive: it uses a novel and a work of sculpture, both of which have a contingent relationship to baseball as mythical fiction. And it appropriates their juxtaposition in order to shift the register of the encounter towards a narrative mode that is both borrowed and mobilised and precisely in being thus derived, becomes the key drive for the chapter itself.

The question of whatever qualities therefore applies to the solicitations operated by the works in question, as much as it also concerns the approaches to them. Since neither excess nor insufficiency can be essentialised in an attempt to account for whatever occurrences, productive encounters with these can also only be solicited through juxtapositions that in themselves uphold a similarly loose (permissive and productive) fit. To choose Don DeLillo's (baseball) novel *Underworld*<sup>148</sup> as foil against which to address the *Home Run* Gabriel Orozco installed in New York's MoMA some six years earlier<sup>149</sup>, is neither specifically necessary nor necessarily appropriate; yet the application of one to the other is generative because it allows for a series of connections that can now be told rather than tracked and that can be mobilised, in and through this telling, as ways out of regulated exchanges. The telling of these connections and of the way in which they are being assembled into a narrative of juxtapositions, is both indicative of and performs the story itself as generative ambient mode. Don DeLillo's rendering of a series of encounters hinged upon a baseball as narrative drive and motive, is appropriated here as a mirror through which to imagine Orozco's oranges; this particular fiction thus encounters Orozco's work in the same way in which the baseball in the book is again and again implicated in situations as trigger object and narrative device. All of these conjunctions are set up to answer to the category of generative encounters: between Orozco's oranges and all kinds of things, between the boy's baseball and his world and his father's and that of the ball; between the effectivity of the ball and that of Orozco's oranges; and between the different stories thus told, including that of their very coming together.<sup>150</sup>

Modalities too thus overspill their fit in the encounter of different sets of material. The different modes of engagement solicited by Gabriel Orozco's oranges and their placement echo in the engagements solicited with and for these oranges; and the

---

above, chapter 1 p.5) that needs to be mobilised as much as it needs to be paid attention to. It is not in the process of becoming real, but in the process of becoming possible.

<sup>148</sup> Don DeLillo: *Underworld*, Picador 1999

<sup>149</sup> Gabriel Orozco: *Home Run*, projects 41 exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1993

<sup>150</sup> Which is effectively what is being produced here, both through the work and for it.

narrativity of their encounters seeps in from DeLillo as an inherent quality of the material. Baseball is the stuff for the novel, and the novel is then the stuff for going back to baseball with Orozco's oranges in such a way that the game becomes open-ended, rather than completed. The resulting effect is an ambient narrativity as a mode that is itself contingent assembled and uncontained, in an overall dynamic mobilised against closure.

This mode generates connectivities that pull inward only in such a way that they also start sprawling out. This twofold perspective of generating encounters whilst withdrawing from qualifying frameworks is not a simple complementarity. Rather it arranges a double perspective of inward and outward moves that instead of mirroring each other, generate a-symmetrical (and to some extent incompatible) dynamics of engagement with a given set-up, as well as a particular type of their coming together. The opposition itself is taken from Deleuze/ Parnet who profile "the creative theft of the traitor as against the plagiarism of the trickster" and outline the trickster as having "plenty of future but no becoming whatsoever. The priest, the soothsayer, is a trickster, but the experimenter is a traitor"<sup>151</sup>. In a permutation, this opposition between trickery and treason is mirrored into the differentiation between different modes of treason below.

Its twofold dynamics will be described here in terms of trickery on one side and treason on the other: If trickery is an active involvement with a given set-up that engages in such a way as to alter the game it is part of, treason presents a refusal to interact that tends to undo the very premise of what there was to engage with in the first place. Conceptualising *desertion* as one out of three ways of 'being against' alongside *nomadism* and *exodus*,<sup>152</sup> Hardt and Negri develop the twofold effectivity of such non-engagement as a particular form of leaving-behind which has a forward effectivity and simultaneously produces (destructuring<sup>153</sup>) effects on what it leaves behind. But also the hope implied in the 'wealth of desire'<sup>154</sup> which propels this move forward, is equally twofold. It is necessarily a hope to overcome and move away as much as it is also an investment in the productive potential of submitting what was left behind to this kind of impact. This is the project's own notion of treason: a hope in and desire for treason as only mode of stimulating new connections. But these only ever under the condition of a radical promiscuity that replaces traditional notions of effectivity (as based on cause and effect,

---

<sup>151</sup> Gilles Deleuze/ Claire Parnet: op.cit., p.41.

<sup>152</sup> Hardt/Negri: *Empire*, p.210ff.

<sup>153</sup> *Empire*, p.412

<sup>154</sup> *Empire*, p.213

appropriateness etc) with a virulent connectivity<sup>155</sup> that can generate new assemblages because it is in the work/world by leaving it behind and dragging it elsewhere.

## 2.2 Playing (with) games

Together trickery and treason mark out the extremes of a spectrum of effective (non-)engagement; and raise the question as to how their coming together could be articulated, and more importantly, mobilised as an active conjunction itself. Rather than resolving their tension by means of contrast (which would only undo the potential of their coming together), the aim is to arrange inward and outward moves in an asymmetrical game that allows for a dynamic defying both means and ends.

Under the umbrella of *Spiel* as encompassing both the game itself and the way it is played, all of this can productively be constituted as a Playing (with) Games. Shifting away from an account of qualities and effects towards one of possible modes, the question then is how to play (with) the im-possible outside of the game? What kind of moves does it allow for and what do they produce? What are the politics of the trickster, and what are those of treason?

There are generally at least two very different types of game, or rather approaches to game as meta-phenomenon<sup>156</sup>: A first one is premised on the assumption of mutuality and reciprocity between parties involved, and defines games in terms of an overall pattern of exchange; a game, in this understanding, is fundamentally a cohering structure that involves all partaking elements in a unifying network of actions and responses. It operates as a fundamentally structuring framework within which complex operations can be contained.<sup>157</sup> Another mobilises the game as

---

<sup>155</sup> Brian Massumi: *Parables of the Virtual*, p.20

<sup>156</sup> The German term *Spiel* encompasses both *game* and *play* (as well as *slippage*) and in combining the two allows for an engagement that ties them together exactly in the dimension of their irreconcilable nature. The impossible fusion between game, play and slippage effected by *Spiel* serves to constitute as much as highlight their mutual exclusivity and interdependence. Precisely because in this im-possibility, their coming together is paradigmatic for the conceptual set-up of the present chapter.

<sup>157</sup> There obviously is a residue of chance in games normally, and of the joy normally associated with playing them (for Huizinga etc, the second and less structural account of game playing postulates a fundamental purposelessness of the game, and conceptualises the game as playful rehearsal outside of the constraints of the effective empirical situation the game supposedly re-enacts; see his classical study, Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens: a study of the play-element in culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955.). Yet under these terms of a structural assessment, the very fact that these qualities are bracketed by structured activity cancels their qualitative difference by integrating them into the overall structured economy of the game as regulated. These “normal games [...] retain chance only in at certain points” because they have “implicit models which are not games: the moral model of the Good or the Best, the economic model of causes and effects, or of means and ends” (Deleuze: *Logic of Sense*, p.59). The recent currency of game theory and related models as

starting point for a general unravelling of structure. Their main difference lies in the divergent assessment of the game's totalising potential. Whilst the former brackets and coheres phenomena under the conceptual umbrella of the game, the latter overcomes structural consistency by emphasizing the active potential implicit in different ways of playing the game. The game as structure in this sense is not part of but stands in contrast to an active notion of playing the game. Both are not mutually exclusive but attest to fundamentally different approaches to and investments in the game as milieu of operations. In the latter, performative accounts, games need to be played to be games, and place the emphasis on the permutations thus invited into the game's structure itself. Whilst the former formulates and imposes structure, the latter opens onto an account of dynamics generated through playing the game (sprawl etc). The two mirror and elucidate the tension between trickery and treason as range between structured game and the destructuring dimension of humorous playing.

### **2.2.1 Games within the “economic circle of exchange”**

Notably the former, somewhat totalized and totalizing approach to the game as meta-structure, has allowed cohering various sets of phenomena (including and most prominently socio-cultural ones) into games in such a way that they can be described as well as analysed and (potentially) altered. It is this totalized notion of the game as cohering meta-structure (not the baroque notion of its playful unpredictability) that underpins most modern and current accounts of the game as cultural configuration.

It is in this sense that Marcel Mauss' early analysis of gift-economies characterises gift-as-game as a “system of total services”<sup>158</sup>. Its totality is operational in two regards: In terms of the far-reaching nature of its claims, the symbolic ensemble of exchange patterns discussed both affects and expresses “all kinds of institutions [...] at one and the same time”<sup>159</sup> and is total in that sense; yet most importantly the games Mauss describes are total in that they are premised on an underlying obligation to mutuality that is both binding and ever-expanding. “The institution of

---

explanatory devices for the understanding and increasingly management of complex economic as well as social situations attests to the regulatory horizon of such games.

<sup>158</sup> Marcel Mauss: *The Gift*, here p.5f. (“the exchange of gifts and the obligation to reciprocate”). For an attempt to re-singularise the move in the game as event, see Derrida's notion of the *im-possibility* of the gift “that disrupts the exchange, the course of history, the circle of economy” (Jacques Derrida, ‘A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event’, in W.J.T. Mitchell and Arnold I Davidson (eds.), *The Late Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp.223-243, p.230f.)

<sup>159</sup> Mauss, op.cit., p.3

“total service” does not merely carry with it the obligation to reciprocate presents received. It also supposes [and that is where the foundational quality lies] two other obligations just as important: the obligation, on one hand, to give presents, and on the other, to receive them.”<sup>160</sup> In the interplay of these three obligations, the economy of exchange expands through contact: submitting anybody who comes within reach to its (invasive) overall economic patterns, it continually generates new players. This expanding dynamic is aggressively enforced. “To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war”<sup>161</sup> because they present refusals to engage that would undercut and thus challenge the most fundamental rule of the game: an overall coherence of exchange patterns, applicable to any form of contact and transaction.

This is the underlying structural demand that diversifies into the formations of reciprocity that underpin social and cultural (inter-)action, as Slavoj Žižek argues when analysing the mutual interdependency of sacrifice and belief:

"At its most elementary, sacrifice relies on a notion of exchange: I offer to the Other something precious to me in order to get back from the other something even more vital to me [...]. The next, already more intricate, level is to conceive sacrifice as a gesture which does not directly aim at some profitable exchange with the other to whom we sacrifice: its more basic ambition is rather to ascertain that there IS some other out there who is able to reply (or not) to our sacrificial entreaties" so that "the world out there, inclusive of all catastrophes that may befall me, is not a meaningless blind machinery, but a partner in a possible dialogue, so that even a catastrophic outcome is to be read as a meaningful response, not as a kingdom of blind chance."<sup>162</sup>

Under the terms of mutuality, everything becomes answerable simply because everything is now constituted as an answer (rather than recognized as an utterance or occurrence of some unspecified sort). And once it is constituted as an answer, it can in turn be responded too. Žižek's notion of *ascertaining* thus opens onto *producing* the other as answering, even and especially in the empirical sense of enforced integration Mauss investigates.

---

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p.13

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Slavoj Žižek: *On Belief*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2001, particularly 'Sacrifice Versus the Feminine Renunciation', p.68-78, p.69. For Žižek, this reciprocity ultimately determines the constitution of the other. "The notion of sacrifice usually associated with Lacanian psychoanalysis is that of a gesture that enacts the disavowal of the omnipotence of the big other: at its most elementary, the subject does not offer his sacrifice to profit from it himself, but to fill in the lack in the Other, to sustain the appearance of the other's omnipotence or, at least, consistency" (ibid., p.69f)

Effectively and as observed by Mauss, “these total services and counter-services are committed to in a somewhat voluntary form by presents and gifts, although in the final analysis they are strictly compulsory, on pain of private or public warfare.”<sup>163</sup> They are thus not only enforced, but also automatically ensured. Non-response, the refusal to enter the game and operate within its pattern, is not only heavily sanctioned but also ends up simply triggering off war as a substitute exchange, which in itself is only a slightly altered degree of the same kind of “total services of an agonistic kind”<sup>164</sup> that any non-response would be trying to avoid. Potlatch is a game that translates war into a more strictly symbolic register of activity and remains nevertheless premised on the same “principle of rivalry and hostility that prevails in all these practices”<sup>165</sup>. Both provide mirror images of each other, down to the result produced (ruin) and the enforcement of compulsory engagement. “Killing wealth”<sup>166</sup> is the aim and result of war and potlatch alike, and both operate by enforcing engagement and thus imposing participation in the excessive exchange. Once considered from the perspective of an extended game, no operation in relation to it can possibly stay outside of its (forcefully) integrating claims. Once seen from within the game, everything can be recuperated as move, and thus assimilated. The only available operation is that of the trickster. Against the complementary background of potlatch and/or warfare, both attitudes—willing submission to and participation in the game or the attempt to not acknowledge its obligations—are thus forcibly and somewhat automatically (re-)integrated into the overall economy of expenditure and gain, excess and destruction they end up merely stabilising. Premised on default incorporation, total games are thus not only self-regulating, but also have a tendency to become all-inclusive under the imposed condition of overall mutuality.<sup>167</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> Mauss, op.cit., p.5

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.,p.7

<sup>165</sup> ibd, p.6

<sup>166</sup> ibd, p.6, fn15

<sup>167</sup> This schema provides the underlying discursive formation in the constitution of the other through to Baudrillard’s account of the ‘radically other’ of terror: however ‘radically other’ this formation might be, it is nevertheless constituted only ever in relation to the game, and thus as player. The projection of one schema onto the other necessarily also highlights the sliding scale of enforced recuperation operative between both. Baudrillard’s take on ‘terror’ re-articulates Mauss’ totalizing account as critique of Western hegemonial power. Yet caught up in the very cohering logic that determines Mauss’ account of the game, Baudrillard’s argument ends up reproducing exactly the assimilative operations he diagnoses and criticises in Western responses: there is no other position available in this dispositif than that of the radical other, a position which undercuts the (assumed) radicality of the gesture as one that cannot be recognised.

Explicitly drawing on Mauss and re-articulating his notion of the gift in terms of the structure of a game, Baudrillard posits “poker and potlatch” as paradigmatic games exactly because

Even where game is mobilised in the opposite tendency as fundamentally negotiable form of involvement in such a way that it allows for partial, temporary forms of engagement, the overarching condition of games is the reciprocity of their moves. This applies equally to the point where games regulate exchanges only as much as they also provide the possibility to reconfigure the rules of the game by interfering from within. There are moves that seem to not fall into any of the established patterns only to then modify those very categories accordingly. “The stronger the “move”, the more likely it is to be denied the minimum consensus, precisely because it changes the rules of the game upon which consensus had been based”<sup>168</sup>; any such move fulfils the game as adaptable and adapting structure for which “consensus is only a particular state of discussion, not its end”<sup>169</sup>. Modalities of participation are thus no longer necessarily secondary but instead become potentially constitutive of the (temporary) contract regulating the game: ‘Moves’ feed back into the very make-up of the game in such a way that rules are changed by the way the game is played, making participation potentially active and transformative. Against these inherent feedback loops, “every utterance should be thought of as a move in a game” for which “to speak is to fight [...] within the domain of a general agonistics”<sup>170</sup>. Thus framed, every move is invested with the full capacity to alter the rules whilst simultaneously being subjected to the all-inclusiveness of the game it feeds back into.

---

of the quality of moves they allow for and the binding reciprocity they impose. Even the unanswerable challenge (death) is recuperated through war as response. Anything becomes part of a game, because game under these terms provides an expanding assimilative structure.

So even if an act or a gesture (9/11) answers a dominant and totalised power (globalisation, in Baudrillard’s account) by introducing a (supposedly) unanswerable challenge (suicide bombing), this défi still operates as a move within the game. Like any it tries to be the last and decisive move, tries to decide and end the game. But that does not mean it would leave the game behind—to the contrary it attempts to achieve control over it. What Baudrillard posits as unanswerable symbolical challenge is merely transgression, a cunning move (which is the only one left available: when one player amasses all the cards, the other has to change the rules of the game and is thus clearly and explicitly caught up in the exchange economy of the game, even if and particularly when pushed to its impossible extreme). No move in a game is unanswerable because every move is recuperable, the only seeming challenge appears as “‘Transgression’, a concept too good for seminarists under the law of a Pope or a priest, the tricksters.” (Deleuze/ Parnet: *Dialogues*, p.47). For Baudrillard’s analysis of terrorism, see in particular Jean Baudrillard, ‘L’esprit du terrorisme’, in *Le Monde*, 2 November 2001, and his ‘La violence de la mondialisation’, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2002, p. 18)

<sup>168</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986, p.63

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10

Even where this all-encompassing dimension of the game multiplies into a variety of radically modular, partial games, where “language games are heteromorphous, subject to heterogeneous sets of pragmatic rules”<sup>171</sup> and set off against the “outmoded and suspect value” of consensus<sup>172</sup> and systemic totality, providing “the outline of a politics that would respect both the desire for justice, and the desire for the unknown”<sup>173</sup>, incorporation in the game creates an accountability that engages, formats and ultimately contains the dynamics of (inter-)action allowed for. Any move has to be answerable and establish a fundamentally integrating “contract, explicit or not, between players”<sup>174</sup> as foundational, even and especially in the light of the “heteromorphous nature of language games” which opens, according to Lyotard, onto the potential of a generalised and fragmented “knowledge of language games as such and the decision to assume responsibility for their rules and effects.”<sup>175</sup> Any gesture, act, gift etc is always directed towards the other/ partner in the game, who then in turn (willingly or not) projects their gesture, act, gift in reciprocity. Even in a scenario of multiple participating parties and beyond the obvious dualism of the underlying concept, the overall set-up remains uni-directional in that it is always directed inward, towards the other presumably caught up in the same game, and/or relating back toward the structure of the game itself.<sup>176</sup>

### 2.2.2 Outward moves “beyond measure”

Yet beyond its internal structural dynamics, the game also produces an outward proliferation of effective dynamics. Instead of simply producing results contained within or relating to the game’s framework, these effects move away from the coherence of the game altogether. Once game-as-encounter is understood outside the reference to a site of meaningful coherence, its dynamics become multi-directional and engage in fundamentally uncontained types of trajectories and circulations. Carroll/Deleuze’s<sup>177</sup> account of Alice’s game(s) presents such an

---

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10. This includes the temporary contract (p.66) which Lyotard so ambiguously endorses by activating the legacy of Wittgenstein’s language games as un-grounding and anti-essentialist modularities.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66

<sup>176</sup> Even the “open system’ in which a statement becomes relevant if it ‘generates ideas’, that is if it generates other statements and other game rules” (*ibid.*, p.64), remains systemic and totalizing, even if it is not “terroristic” (*ibid.*, p.63f). The economy of feedback re-coheres into rules what are originally statements and utterances.

<sup>177</sup> Lewis Carroll: ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’ (1865), in: *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass And What Alice Found There*, edited with an introduction by Roger Lancelyn Green, with illustrations by John Tenniel, Oxford/ New York:

involvement in game as modality rather than model which makes it possible to overcome the binary opposition of game and play itself, and to engage in the entangled dynamics generated from their encounter.

Carroll/Deleuze elaborate this more complex inward/outward dynamic as a croquet game played in wonderland. It involves all the constitutive components of a game (players, playing ground, set of actions to be performed, as well as the material with which to perform these actions). Yet it reconfigures them in such a way as to make them permissive, productive and ultimately effective in a broadly affirmative sense of the term. The dynamics instigated allow outlining a paradigmatic account of the shift from contained to sprawling game that involves all component parts of the game, as well as their respective functions.

Firstly, the ground is curious, "it was all ridges and furrows" that import the borders of the ground into the playing field itself and multiply them "so that there was generally a ridge or furrow in the way"<sup>178</sup> of any straight, directed, aimed movement. The ground is no longer a separate area designed to accommodate the game and offer an appropriate field for its development, but to the contrary is arranged in such a way that the unfolding of the game runs up against the limits of its claimed field, and thus the very separation of game and world at large. As two different formations (of ground and properties), they now need to be negotiated in the playing itself. Rather than aiming for a result, playing becomes a constant having-to-take-account-of-the-territory.

The playing-card soldiers "who had to double themselves up and stand on their hands and feet to make the arches"<sup>179</sup> further undermine the spatial logic of a regular game by "always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground"<sup>180</sup> thus constantly moving the goalposts. With the aim thus suspended, any move is reduced to the attempt of reconnecting with the game's spatial logic of static goals and active movement towards them. Here, that which is not supposed to move joins in an overall dynamic that radically undermines any fixed coordinates along which to orientate the game.

Along with the spatial logic of the game, its temporal parameters are suspended too. The sequentiality of moves which normally allows to assess achievement in the game, is drowned out in the overall dynamic of deregulated activity too, with "the

---

Oxford University Press, 1982, p.1-111. Carroll/Deleuze because it is here read as conjunction between the original text and the way it is opened up through Deleuze's engagement with it in *Logic of Sense*.

<sup>178</sup> Carroll: 'Alice's Adventures', p.73

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p.74

players all [playing] at once, without waiting for turns” and “quarrelling all the while”<sup>181</sup>.

This is still a game, but one that has effectively ceased to answer to the demands for (even partial and conditional) consistency and coherence of rules or ground. “They don’t seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them.”<sup>182</sup>

Whilst a conventional game is premised on the distinction between mobile and immobile, active and passive components, between its players and their objects, the croquet game here enacts the confusion of “all the things being alive”<sup>183</sup>, with “the croquet balls [being] live hedgehogs, and the mallets live flamingoes”<sup>184</sup>. Instead of a clear-cut, contained account of the game, the croquet party enhances and demands other types of involvement, and with them a different range of possible effects.

When things (players, elements, etc) fail to cohere into structure in this game, this failure releases activity in a new series of different ways that moves outside of the confines of what the game supposedly contains. When Alice “succeeded in getting [the flamingo’s] body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down [...] its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head”<sup>185</sup>, the flamingo stares back in an act of defiance that undercuts the game (again) by suspending the appropriateness of the order so precariously imposed. At the moment when it has finally been prepared to assume its function as mallet in the game, the flamingo “would twist itself round and look up in [Alice’s] face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help



fig. 16

---

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p.75

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.73

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p.74

bursting out laughing.”<sup>186</sup> The twisting itself runs against the straightened-out logic of component parts of the game; yet the puzzlement suspends the game’s economy even more radically because it can only be met with laughter as a “bursting out” that in itself undoes the imposed rigidity of controlled movement. Not only the game changes here, but with it the range of possible reactions to it. “Bursting out” prolongs the internal undoing of the game into a particular kind of encounter with it, and inaugurates a new type of engagement between game and player. “Bursting out” is a response only insofar as it is also a going beyond the game, a leaving behind of its structured framework.

The extreme point of this range of un-fitting though is the hedgehog that was supposed to be a ball in the game and instead “had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away”<sup>187</sup>. Whilst the flamingo’s “puzzled” response challenges the appropriateness of the game, the hedgehog’s move away is a decision to do something else, and in this irreverence produces the real scandal. It not so much refuses the game as it asserts its preference to do something else, in such a way that even the question of refusal ceases to present itself.<sup>188</sup> If anything, this very question has lost its validity, and that is one of the first effects this act of withdrawal feeds back into the now unravelling coherence of the game as such.

Instead this kind of move produces a range of effects: Alice gives up her attempt to keep the game together and starts “looking about for some way of escape, and wondering whether she could get away without being seen”<sup>189</sup> and at that very moment encounters the floating Cheshire Cat’s head as embodiment of exactly that kind of (dis-)engagement. The cat is situated at the limit of the game, appears when Alice tries to leave the game behind but then has to negotiate her own non-position when asked into the game by the king. “I don’t like the look of it at all,’ said the King: ‘however, it may kiss my hand if it likes.”<sup>190</sup> The demand is one for recognition and accountability within the set-up of hierarchies and etiquette which run in parallel to and underpin the game of croquet,<sup>191</sup> and comes with the full weight of authoritative

---

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> The hedgehog walks away and ends up “engaged in a fight with another hedgehog” (ibid., p.76) leaving behind both the game and its flight from it. The flamingo too which originally protested against the game’s inappropriateness, is next seen “trying in a helpless sort of way to fly up into a tree” (ibid). As in *Bartleby’s* formula the shift from negation to preference sets up a zone of indeterminacy in relation to which an entire set-up unravels.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p75

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> The game is made impossible not only by the way it is played, but further unhinged by the Queen’s insistence on privilege and status, the enforcement of which continually

power. Yet the cat answers this compulsory integration by not wanting to, and when threatened, by simply vanishing, disappearing with a grin.

The “I’d rather not”<sup>192</sup> with which the cat replies, is a refusal to engage under the terms imposed and is qualified in the text as a *remark*, not an *answer*. It is also a refusal to even acknowledge the power of the threat underpinning the order: Even where the King’s “well, it must be removed”<sup>193</sup> turns into the Queen’s “Off with his head!”<sup>194</sup>, the argument still was “that you couldn’t cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from”<sup>195</sup>. The cat appears as disembodied head already anyway, therefore failing to ever be caught under the terms of the threat: the menace to coherence and wholeness has no leverage against a fragmented entity like the cat which can and does reconfigure



fig.17

its appearance itself. Paradigmatic for the type of engagement that un-structures the entire croquet game, the cat figures as trickster function that immerses itself in the game only so far as it wishes to<sup>196</sup> and withdraws itself with similar nonchalance after stirring a maximum of effect through its very refusal to engage.<sup>197</sup>

All of the game’s components (ground, goals, mallets, balls as well as players and spectators (if that is what the cat is)) are thus entangled in the game exactly by moving beyond it. Any move away from the game is always implicitly a non-engagement that has repercussions on the game it leaves behind, challenging the internal cohesion of what it leaves behind and opening onto a series of different

---

suspends the game by substituting one order (royal privilege) for another (rules of the game).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p.75

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p.76

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p.76

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p.77

<sup>196</sup> Once the whole head has appeared, “the cat seemed to think that there was enough of it now in sight, and no more of it appeared” (ibid., p.75).

<sup>197</sup> “The Queen’s argument was that, if something wasn’t done about it in less than no time, she’d have everybody executed, all round. (It was this last remark that had made the whole party look so grave and anxious.)” (ibid., p.77).

without. It is a movement away from and thus against the game and its structures of power only insofar as it is also a movement toward an elsewhere. Even though unspecified in Carroll, it constitutes the very horizon of the cat's repeated (dis-)appearances in the middle of the various game scenarios Alice inhabits in Wonderland<sup>198</sup>.

Insisting on the tension between the two tendencies and the impact this tension creates, Hardt/Negri conceptualise exactly this type of (non-)engagement with structures of power as an active possibility of 'desertion' that, rather than having a place, "is the evacuation of the places of power"<sup>199</sup>. Its dynamics are twofold: "In effect, what pushes from behind is, negatively, desertion from the miserable cultural and material conditions of imperial reproduction; but positively, what pulls forward is the wealth of desire and the accumulation of expressive and productive capacities [...]—and thus a certain hope."<sup>200</sup> In one and the same move, the scene is to be left behind and to be affected in a new type of directly critical function that is fundamentally twofold because it combines the two complimentary and mutually constitutive dimensions of withdrawal and assertion<sup>201</sup> Since "being-against might well be most effective in an oblique or diagonal stance" of deconstructing<sup>202</sup> power, "Battles against the empire might be won through subtraction and defection"<sup>203</sup> precisely because this type of being-against simultaneously encompasses and produces 'apparatuses beyond measure'<sup>204</sup> "defined by the productive activity that is autonomous from any external regime of measure"<sup>205</sup>. This latter understanding of expansiveness and its affirmative potential allows to set apart trickery and treason as two simultaneous yet irreconcilable ways of (not) engaging with a given game. On one hand the expansive nature of 'game' as integrational and accumulative form of coherence, incorporating ever-new elements into its overarching structure; on the

---

<sup>198</sup> The cat is only ever partially involved from the beginning. When it first appears, it serves as a (dysfunctional) guide to Alice and is thus explicitly positioned on the outside of the situation, detached (sitting up in a tree) and commenting (albeit self-referentially) on the madness of everybody in Wonderland. Alice's question "but how do you know?" addresses exactly this ambiguity (p.56/57). The exchange establishes the cat's status as marginal and entangled, a status then played out in full in the croquet game scene.

<sup>199</sup> Hardt/Negri: *Empire*, p.212

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213

<sup>201</sup> For Hardt/ Negri, this is the most current (and currently most productive) form of resistance: "Whereas in the disciplinary era sabotage was the fundamental notion of resistance, in the era of imperial control it may be desertion" (*Empire*, p.212)

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*, p. 412

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*, p.212. On defection and desertion in terms of their direct (military) impact and the corresponding legal frameworks in their original military and political context, see Nachman Ben-Yehuda: *Betrayal and Treason: Violations of Trust and Loyalty*. Oxford: Westview, 2001

<sup>204</sup> Hardt/ Negri: *Empire*, p.358

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.357

other, moves 'beyond measure' generating an "expansive power [...] of freedom, ontological construction, and omnilateral dissemination"<sup>206</sup> that sprawls outward.

### 2.3. Trickster moves

If Spiel is therefore always a double configuration of inward and outward tendencies, within which each move has an ambiguous potential for both, then baseball's home runs must be among the most explicit examples for this bi-dimensionality in the realm of actual games: They, too, are ambiguously framed by the game within which they occur and the spaces they temporarily incorporate. On the one hand, they involve the game whose contained structure is momentarily opened up. On the other, the movements of the ball itself go beyond the game and generate a new set of dynamics, effects and possible uses.

Double operations: One in the game itself, where trickster function of the home-run opens active interstices on the threshold of the game's coherence and allows for the ultimate trickster operation. And the other in the aftermath of the game, and as observed through the ball itself as magical (and partially disconnected) object, removing itself from the scene, taking the game further out and simultaneously stretching and testing how (long) that very connection back to the game is still to be made.<sup>207</sup>

#### 2.3.1. Running home

In the home-run as baseball's privileged moment, the player runs across the ground, traverses the diamond, and covers all remaining positions before returning home to base. All of this has to be completed before the ball is thrown back from wherever it was hit to, and intercepts the player's course. The risk lies in the ball

---

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p.358

<sup>207</sup> Deleuze summarises the games in *Alice in Wonderland* as having the following in common: "they have a great deal of movement, they seem to have no precise rules, and they permit neither winner nor loser" (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.58). In contrast to "the games with which we are acquainted" (*ibid.*, p.58) and which "retain chance only at certain points" (*ibid.*, p.59; see 58f. for the structural logic of these games), Deleuze profiles Alice's games as a starting point from where to think a pure "ideal game" without pre-existing rules where "all throws affirm chance and endlessly ramify it" and where "the throws therefore are not really or numerically distinct" (*ibid.*, p.58f.). Ideal player of this game is the Aion as "infused and ramified chance" and "unique cast from which all throws are qualitatively distinguished" (*ibid.*, p.64). Against this background and in order to set up the following investigation into other games, it is important to differentiate against this somewhat totalising account: Orozco's attitude (and the one under investigation here) insists on articulating the interplay between one type of game and the other. Replacing rules with "intention and concentration" and talking about his films, Orozco states that "the flow of images in my work is extremely controlled. I trace certain intentions with the camera, and then suddenly the tension between my intentions and reality becomes too great and the whole thing breaks down." (Gabriel Orozco: 'A Thousand Words. Gabriel Orozco talks about his recent Films', in: *Artforum international*, Summer 1998, p.114f)

coming back whilst the player is somewhere between a position covered and the next one, is the ball returning to the game and preventing the round from ever being completed. In the successful home run, this risk is inverted into the round being completed without the ball re-entering the game; in this case, it is the circuit of the ball that remains incomplete and thus open, rather than the player's. Either way, one circulation suspends another.

There are two types of home runs essentially: the first type are those that attest to the athletic capacities of a player where a good hit is followed by a successful run, executed against the threat of the returning ball. These are the dramatic ones where players skid into the position they need to reach, only marginally separated from the impact of the ball on that very same position. They stay firmly within the established parameters of the game premised on overcoming space through the (successive) creation of distance (the hit) and speed (the run).<sup>208</sup>

The second type though is different and really pushes the opening potential by not only infolding the threshold of the game, but also following its expansive possibilities. These are the big majestic hits and runs where the ball does not return but is knocked out of the realm of the game and never comes back. They create moments where the game is essentially over because nothing is at stake anymore—the game simply needs to be completed, needs to be filled so that the obvious outcome can be asserted. The trajectory of the home run merely confirms what is already established, and opens a time-space between hit and non-return of the ball in which some fundamental characteristics and dimensions of the game change and inaugurate a new type of configuration (which is more than simply an acceleration or slowing down of the game).

The interesting dimension of the home run is thus not the outcome it merely confirms but the bracketing within which it unfolds. No longer pressured by impending interruption, this kind of home-run is open on its way to the end, which in turn is pre-accomplished and has ceased to determine the temporal economy of the game. Instead of determining an outcome the home-run becomes a particular kind of non-completion that produces closure through infinitely deferring it. It defers the game to the realm of an aftermath that opens its own kind of duration because it is both the high point and complete breakdown of the game it is part of.

Within this impossible bracket, the home-run is enacted as a different kind of play, a play that suspends the game by stripping its two main organising principles of their structural importance. One has to do with performance, the other with timing.

---

<sup>208</sup> see DeLillo: *Underworld*, p.36

Performance changes in that it opens up onto a different pace where the result is unchallenged and the player can stroll, can run at ease (if that is still running). There is nothing that could possibly intercept his course, and so the pressure is off, the scores are effectively settled even though the game is not concluded yet. It is this kind of home run that allows for different speeds and movements.

From the very moment the ball goes off, the losing team is “already separated from the event, staring flat into the shadows between the decks”<sup>209</sup> where the ball went that conditioned and guaranteed their engagement with the field. And with this suspension of one of the parties and its “long dead trudge” from the field to the clubhouse, the field opens up to a re-enactment in which the formerly contested trajectory is performed as victorious and congratulatory display between one party and its audience, with “Thomson circling the bases in gamesome leaps, buckjumping”<sup>210</sup> and thus playing around the bases rather than aiming at reaching them. They turn from goals and endpoints of the game to its material, allowing for jumps and leaps and circles rather than imposing linear progression. Gamesome is a different quality then, a playfulness that introduces into the (upheld) framework of the game and its regulations a different set of movements and speeds. Completion of the run (and in this case game) is simply a given condition here, no longer a desired aim; all that is left to do is “making sure Thomson hits every base”<sup>211</sup>. The ball as absence brackets a space in time within which the game then infolds and within which the actual completion is simply carried through because the ball is still out there generating the different kind of time that allows for a home-run.

Around this kind of move, the relationship between anticipation on one hand and fulfilment on the other changes too, unhinging the game’s assumed linear temporal logic.<sup>212</sup> Because the conclusion precedes its actual fulfilment, performance and jubilation cease being sequential and instead overlap in possible re-enactments. Since the jubilation applauds the hit and not the run really, the run is merely a continuation/ prolongation/ picking up of what was effectively achieved in the hit. And so since a home run does not simply complete the game [although it might do that too], it is the setting up of precisely this kind of relation to impact and performance that can be mobilised to open onto a fundamentally different kind of game. One where the achievement is not contested any longer and thus ceases to

---

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.43

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., p.44

<sup>212</sup> Thomson “is forever Bobby now, a romping boy lost to time” (ibid., p.43f.), inhabiting the time lapse created by the ball.

be exclusive to the team and its capacities for clinching it. Instead, setting the winning team apart from the stakes of the game (everything is already accomplished) opens the game beyond its privileged players, levelling their activity in such a way that the game now allows for different modes of participation.<sup>213</sup>

More than a sheer celebration, the encounter between crowd and players, game and surrounds allows for a new type of conjunction: “The Giants win the pennant and they’re going crazy”, because they [the audience] can now be the Giants by inhabiting the same (time)space opened through the home run.<sup>214</sup> This is why the crowd goes in, “is growing over the walls” into the ground in order to play a different game around the same people — “Thomson is now out in the field dodging fans who come in rushes and jumps. They jump against his body, they want to take him to the ground”. Or (in an equally twisted continuation) they take over by strolling around the field in the aftermath of the game and re-enacting what was in itself an enactment of something already achieved. “Some ushers are lifting a drunk off the first-base line and the man warps himself into a baggy mass and shakes free and begins to run around the bases in his oversized raincoat with long belt trailing”<sup>215</sup>. Later, there is a “shrill cheer” when the same “raincoat drunk” slides into third base.<sup>216</sup> Who partakes in this series of appropriated re-enactments and in which order, is as open to re-arrangement and re-distribution as the disjointed temporary logic allows for. In the background of both, the ball is still out suspending time and in doing so, allowing for different distributions again and again.

The ball (as trophy, souvenir, stand-in) figures as token for exactly this shift by which participation opens up towards degrees of involvement: “It’s the ball they play with, the thing they rub up and scuff and sweat on”<sup>217</sup>, the thing which, once it reaches beyond the field itself, becomes graspable and thus re-distributes roles. From object of the hit and generator of the game’s dynamic, the ball’s role changes to that of a carrier and transmitter of expanded participation once it becomes the

---

<sup>213</sup> There is a delay in this that does not generate tension/expectation, an a-synchronicity that re-sets the sequential structure of the game, including the disjointed realisation of what is actually still at stake for players and audience. Whilst the audience at some point recognises the departure of the ball, the player might not immediately do so and keep on running before he switches. As differing intensities they now overlap because they are fundamentally uncoupled from their sequential or causal arrangement. (“He says, “It’s gonna be.” There’s a pause all around him. Pafko racing toward the left-field corner. He says, “I believe.” Pafko at the wall, then he’s looking up. People thinking where’s the ball. The scant delay, the stay in time that lasts a hairsbreadth.” (ibid., p. 42))

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p.44/45

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p.47

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p.53

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p.45

ultimate token for an involvement in the game. It seems to carry, incorporate and thus spread what was its power over the game to ever new holders of the ball for whom this very effectivity becomes a promise of power. By gaining control over it, these new handlers complete the home-run's fetishistic inversion by which the loss of the ball (which determined the game) is made contained and complete in the grasp of the object in its disconnected aftermath.

### 2.3.2. "Home-Run"

When Gabriel Orozco's arranges oranges on windowsills surrounding the MoMA courtyard as his version of a home-run, he installs the fruit as stand-ins for winning balls in exactly this expanded field of operations. Scattered all over a vicinity that configures the sculpture court as baseball's diamond, and through which the surrounding flats become tribunes and beyond, these oranges are staged as the majestic home runs that don't return to the game and instead start taking place elsewhere, and differently. Staged on the windowsills surrounding the MoMA courtyard as residues of one game (baseball), they become carriers of another (expanded sculpture) and end up caught in the interplay of in- and outsidess set-up in the home-run.<sup>218</sup>

In its most binary dimension, the arrangement consists in juxtaposing the realm of the museum with the surrounding housing as realm of the domestic, the private, the residential, all of which only matter (in a first instance) in contrast to the equally over-coded domain of aesthetic experience they overlook. Most prominently Benjamin Buchloh has proposed a structural reading of *Home Run* by considering the piece as conceptual arrangement of "institutional spectacle", "discursive convention" and "private fetish object":

"Fusing three types of radically different spaces, Orozco's intervention invites the spectator to recognize that these objects—easily suspended between the public and the private—articulate the fundamental condition of sculpture and its inability to resolve these contradictions. First of all the spectators perceive themselves as

---

<sup>218</sup> "I wrote to the occupants of the buildings located next to the museum, to ask them to put some oranges on their window, outside. They would accept it or not, if they agreed, the MOMA would send them fresh oranges every weeks, they would do everything on their own. This collaboration was an attempt to abolish the borderline between public and private space. It was an ordinary action." ('Benjamin Buchloh converses with Gabriel Orozco in New York', in *Gabriel Orozco: Clinton is Innocent*, exh. cat. Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1998, quoted in Liliane Terrier, 'Le modèle Übersicht', in *Le récit interactif*, Roundtable, Paris: École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs, 6/12/00, n.p., available online under <http://www.ciren.org/ciren/colloques/061200/terrier/terrier.html> (last accessed 14/10/08). Since the distribution of balls depended on the residents' response, even the pattern itself was outside of Orozco's control.

positioned within an indoor museum searching from the authorized institutional perspective of public exhibition and its objects. Subsequently they contemplate the display of structures in the sculpture garden as an official institutional site where sculptural objects would generally be exhibited according to their discursive classification. Lastly, the spectators realize that they have to stare—somewhat illicitly—into the spaces of private homes and offices, where the actual installation takes place in the facades of the buildings that now function as a vitrine outside the showcase of the sculpture garden itself.”<sup>219</sup>

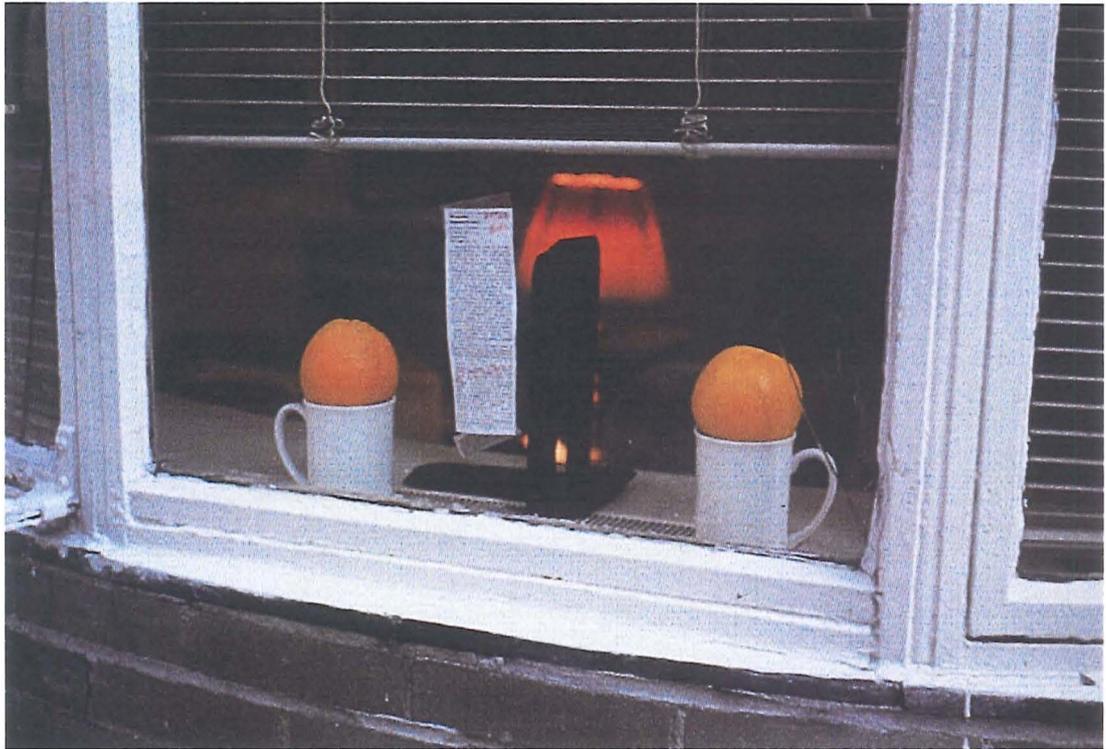


fig.18

But this account inevitably coheres the work around the spectator’s viewing position as exclusive vantage point and thus eclipses the inverted perspective that projects altered perceptions of the museum as seen from the flats (even imaginarily). It also undercuts the oranges’ precarious status as always already doubly entangled object tokens whose circulation is inevitably and necessarily two-directional<sup>220</sup>: the shift

<sup>219</sup> Benjamin H.D. Buchloh: ‘Gabriel Orozco. The Sculpture of Everyday Life’, in: *Gabriel Orozco*, exh. cat. Museum of Contemporary Art LA, 2000, pp.66-102, p.87

<sup>220</sup> Buchloh’s “peculiar dialectic between an artificially constructed specularity and a seemingly benign banality of displayed objects” (Buchloh, *op.cit*, p.87) remains centred in a viewing position (experiential or discursive) – in terms of this centredness, specularity and banality become indistinct positions that have (ironically) already fused “pure perception” and “interpellation”, precisely the two terms Buchloh sets himself to negotiate through Orozco’s practice (*ibid.*, p.69f).

enacted in their precarious positioning is directed from one realm to the other only ever to be reflected back immediately in a subtle reversal of values and prioritised features. (This is the fundamental levelling achieved in the majestic home-runs Orozco's arrangement re-installs). In Buchloh's account, this reflexivity is accounted for simply in terms of a disturbance of one realm (the museum) through the other (the domestic, the flats). But the flats are more than vitrines not simply because they occur outside of the sanctioned institutional realm, but also because they imply a different series of handlings and attitudes in relation to the objects thus inserted, attitudes that cannot be addressed in terms of display exclusively. Rather they coalesce around status and more importantly uses of the objects themselves (even if only imaginarily).

In the context of and as seen from the museum, the oranges figure as exotic tokens of an other place, standing in for (irredeemable) promises of consumption and pleasure, and by extension also as time bound reminders of duration, *carpe diem/memento mori* allegories isolated and re-charged against the overall banality of their everyday occurrence in the kitchen. As seen from the windows overlooking the sculpture court though, the oranges figure differently, inserted as they are in a domestic realm where they are considered under their use value. Here, the oranges



fig.19

Only in this somewhat reductive reading as formal/ conceptual arrangement can Orozco's *Crazy Tourist* (1991, fig.19) figure as "complementary installation" (Buchloh, op.cit., p.81) to *Home Run*. Here too Orozco displays oranges, this time in the deserted arrangement of market stalls after the end of a street market in a small town in Brazil. Very differently, the oranges here relate to their surrounding through their contiguous relationship to trade. Also, the displacements the two works operate in time are incommensurable: whilst *Crazy Tourist* operates explicitly by activating the aftermath (of the market), *Home Run* gains its currency from imposing an impossible simultaneity on the two very differently structured circulations of the game and its aftermath.

Also in the photographic documentation through which the works circulate, the former is cohered around a single viewing position removed in time and space, whilst in *Home Run* that very position is rendered impossible through the provision of multiple perspectives on the work, neither of which claims to cover or exhaust the work in question. Vantage points are multiple and explicitly dispersed in *Home Run*, whilst they are clearly established in *Crazy Tourist*.

effectively occur first of all as foodstuff awaiting consumption. Yet there is a similar layering of promises/ charges in the ambiguity with which fruit is the object of display, in the home too — generically in the convention of the fruit bowl and all those half utilitarian, half display-oriented ways of keeping fruit in and around the house. This is certainly emphasised here in its heightened form as prominent display on the windowsill, projecting inward as much as outwards. Orozco's display simply enhances this ambiguity by arranging the oranges in such a way as to make them visible from the courtyard below. The fact that they are displayed on glasses rather than in bowls renders this explicit, yet the way they are (primarily?) directed towards this outside is only a gradual difference, not an entirely new let alone alien dimension to the things one does with fruit. It is in this enhanced contiguity that 'home-run' arranges its interplay between the two domains thus related.

How the fruit in the windows echoes and challenges its own inverted framing as inaccessible promise as seen from the museum; and how (the other way round) the colour dimension of the oranges lends them very easily/ plausibly to aesthetic appreciation and links their appeal as brightly coloured spheres back to the formal considerations of the museum; all this intertwines domains and their respective expectations in such a way that the question becomes one of shifting degrees of involvement in these different registers. The display is consumed by museum public and residents alike, and exactly in the latent confusion of overlapping expectations and demands. Seen from the museum they look like fruit whilst in the flats they are removed from exactly that reality by becoming an extension/ outpost of the courtyard they overlook.<sup>221</sup> Establishing a nexus of contiguous relations between domains and the objects they respectively and overlappingly claim, this arrangement of visibilities generates an overall dynamic of transversal relations that destabilises the registers of 'public' and 'private' supposedly juxtaposed in the work. Most fundamentally and resulting from these reductions, Buchloh's argument eclipses the way in which the transversality of connections mobilised in the piece goes beyond sheer display and instead actively confuses registers of reception and production too. By producing an interplay between the different use dimensions solicited, the work polemically levels different handlings of the objects and thus fuses exactly those territories that would otherwise separate out makers and receivers. In the way in which residents were approached and delivered oranges

---

<sup>221</sup> Structurally, this is probably the most prominent difference between Orozco's *Home Run* and the one in baseball, that Orozco's is never quite removed from either circulation and juxtaposes the two domains as independent yet mutually visible and thus mutually challenging circulations.

and would display them themselves, they become executors (if not producers) of the piece. This is the way in which the piece seems to fit all too neatly into the category of a (socially) expanded practice, to the point where “the title Home Run may be partly a deft pun on the communal aspect of the installation (which was, so to speak, run by people in their homes)”.<sup>222</sup>

But exactly in assuming that role of hosts to the project, these people engage in a dialogue (institutional, artistic, commercial, neighbourly/social) that is theirs only insofar as it was originally offered to them, and in which from the very start they are also at the receiving end. Like the museum visitors below, these participants too figure simultaneously as audiences and protagonists to the project. The piece culminates in making them visible, through the highlighters of displayed oranges, as having entered exactly this dialogue; they are exhibited as participants in the making of the piece and thus turned into its very material. Through the same involvement, they are incorporated as (secondary) producers and as projected highlighters of their own becoming material for the piece, making impossible the very vantage position assumed in Buchloh’s account of the work.<sup>223</sup>

For all of this, the orange/ball operates as impossible carrier<sup>224</sup>, its particular prominence generated (like in baseball) through trickery — the baseball figures as

---

<sup>222</sup> Mark Haworth-Booth, ‘The Atomists’, in: Gabriel Orozco, *Empty Club*, London: Artangel 1998, p. 55.

<sup>223</sup> It is in these overlaps that the work produces something other than an articulation of “the actually existing fragmentation of the experience of public space and the concomitant annihilation of simultaneous collective conditions of reception.” (Buchloh, op.cit., p.87) By suspending the supposedly unified experience of that very public space in another time, the work can instead be seen to juxtapose a variety of spaces, attitudes and modes of entanglement, rather than necessarily referring this juxtaposition back to a supposedly lost condition that might have preceded it. On the other hand and with similar limitations, only part of this can effectively be thought as tying its participants into the broader operability of an expanded art practice “governed by a concern to “give everyone their chance”, through forms which do not establish any precedence, a priori, of the producer over the beholder [...] but rather negotiate open relationships with it, which are not resolved beforehand. This latter thus wavers between the status of passive consumer and the status of witness, associate, customer, guest, co-producer, and protagonist.” (Bourriaud: *Postproduction*, p.58). This too is only a limited account—the work jumps between registers not only by referring everything back to the artwork, but also by spreading out away from it. Bourriaud’s “hub of social “infra-thinness” (l’infra-ince social)” too, “that minute space of daily gestures” at which Orozco supposedly operates (*Relational Aesthetics*, p.17), is too limited a locus for the sprawl under investigation here. It is only one facet, one type of linkage and intrinsically linked to and entangled in the working of others.

<sup>224</sup> It is both medium and carrier, in the sense in which Brian Massumi explicates the notion of *milieu* in Deleuze and Guattari as meaning “‘surroundings’, ‘medium’ (as in chemistry) and ‘middle’. In the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari, ‘milieu’ should be read as a technical term combining all three meanings” (Brian Massumi: ‘Notes on the Translation and Acknowledgements’, in Deleuze/ Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, p.XVII). It is in terms of this understanding of the middle as milieu that Deleuze argues that “it’s not beginnings or ends that count, but middles. Things and thoughts advance or grow out from the middle, and

trickster object that disturbs a circulation by generating and inhabiting its impossible margins in such a way as to destabilise the entire arrangement in the process<sup>225</sup>. The ball figures as the over-determined, super charged object/function that fuses withdrawal (of the object) and production (of the space to run in), with both being premised on the ball as constitutive absence.<sup>226</sup>

## 2.4 Modes of treason

But this is also how the game becomes uncontained and starts asserting a fundamentally dispersed, sprawling type of arrangement. The space produced in the home-run partakes in the established game only ever in oblique ways, partially suspending its dynamics and partially shifting its field as well as its possible and factual participants. In Orozco's *Home-Run*, this extends the game, Buchloh argues, and in doing so spins the logic further into an accumulative juxtaposition cohered around the difficulty of a viewing position. But it also generates a point where the game is unhinged to such a degree that the very relation between ball, game, players and the fields constituted through and between them, needs to be reconsidered beyond the dynamics of formalised game structures, and as possible components for a different kind of arrangement. "The inability to resolve its contradictions" then is no longer an endpoint but to the contrary, a beginning opening onto a whole range of set-up sprawls that betray the very logic of the given set-up.

### 2.4.1. The ball "and ... and ... and ..."

Most of what is projected onto and condensed in the baseball as trigger object (in both cases) relates the ball back to the game it emerged and disappeared from. Assessing its currency from this perspective refers the ball back to the function it fulfilled in the game and in doing so presents closure for a game that only opened up through the disappearance of its carrier. A home run occurs as play in the impossible bracket whose second part is the open-ended disappearance of the ball

---

that's where you have to get to work, that's where everything unfolds." (Gilles Deleuze: *Negotiations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, p.161)

<sup>225</sup> In a winning home run but also in a more regular one, its effects on the game remain the same, at least until the next hit. The decisive home run is only the more explicit variant.

<sup>226</sup> For a structural account of the function of absent centre and supplementarity in the form of play, see Jacques Derrida's notion of *play* as "field of infinite substitutions only because it is finite, that is to say, because instead of being an inexhaustible field [...], instead of being too large, there is something missing from it: a centre which arrests and grounds the play of substitutions." (365) (Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', in *Writing and Difference*, London/ NY: Routledge 2001, pp.351-370, p.365)

and that suspends and completes the original game. Yet positing the ball as ultimate trophy re-inscribes it in the competitive currency of baseball and in doing so stabilises the structural economy of the game. What it provides in this form is closure as completion of the incomplete that brackets its own impossibility. Hence the extreme value— this is the object as fetish, as carrier of its own impossible closure.<sup>227</sup>

All this refers to value as defined within the currency of the game and its pre-established stakes, and leaves the ball inside the picture. Yet taking off from the home run and extending its unfolding of spaces within which to operate, the ball also generates a much more promiscuous effectivity that is open-ended and in relation to which the player reaching home is but a substitute ending. This outwards effectivity is derived from the ball's status as multiply invested but then takes off from it, in combination (but not strict synchronicity) with its leaving the field. Only in the imploded economy of the completed game is the ball accounted for, yet on its own trajectory (on which the economy of the baseball ground is carried along only as a residual charge), the dynamic it generates spins out as much as it aims back. The ball produces a result, but it also enables all kinds of other things to happen. Relieved of its direct function for the game, its use too changes outside of the immediate realm of the game.

Once outside the catchable, the ball does many things only some of which still relate to the game. The first effect is generated through the above-described trickery and works inwards: evading closure (defying to be re-introduced into and captured by the game). The ball messes with the economy and rules of the game and generates effects in relation to these: effects that push complete exchange patterns as well as rhythms of baseball into a slow dance of demonstrative unchallenged fulfilment. The one who knocks the ball out operates as its trickster generator, playing the game in such a way as to remove himself from its constraints whilst all the time remaining operative within its structuring framework.

The second type of effect though spirals outbound, in such a way as to lose its grounding in the game it started off from. Even though the home-run is an implosion of the game, folding the game back onto itself in a paradoxical temporality of suspended deferral and anticipated completion, the ball is all the while also involved

---

<sup>227</sup> One possibility here is an argument about investment into the game (psychic and otherwise) as an inward perspective that could draw on mechanisms of displacement and transference. The second one would propose an argument about the object as trigger function that generates a configuration, whilst it is supposed to contain it in the former reading. It is from the latter reading that the promiscuity of the trigger can be ascertained. It simply cannot be articulated from the other.

in an outbound sprawl that makes claims outside of the established ground. Even though and because its actual trajectory and movements cease to bear any relevance for the development of the game once they become irrecoverable for its exchange, the ball nevertheless stays in circulation and continues to generate effects in other milieus.

In DeLillo, the story of the home-run is one of un-grounding from the onset and starts with the way a boy enters the stadium by disappearing from grasp, by being out of reach. From the very beginning when he jumps the turnstile, “he knows absolutely—knows it all the way, deeps as knowing goes, he feels the knowledge start to hammer in his runner’s heart—that he is uncatchable”<sup>228</sup>, and it is like this only that “he hears the crescendoing last chords of the national anthem and sees the great open horseshoe of the grandstand and that unfolding vision of the grass that always seems to mean he has stepped outside his life”<sup>229</sup>. In a way and from the start, the boy himself mirrors (approaches the condition of) the ball of the home-run, and it is from this particular rogue status turned stealth that “you [then] lose him in the crowd”<sup>230</sup> and that this disappearance is not the end but the beginning of his engagement with (the) baseball. Only that this circulation is constituted beyond the structural coherence of the game, and produces/ allows for a fundamentally heterogeneous series of effects that only ever refer back to the game in oblique and partial ways. In the shift from one series to the other, the lost and recovered ball of the home-run is re-constituted as magical object with promises of effectivity that regard the object itself as much as they grant these powers to its new handler. And in this transference lies the possibility of new realms within which new uses for the ball develop.

In a first instance the inward move inaugurated by the boy’s immersion in the crowd, continues in the dive under the benches to get hold of the ball and the difficulty in grasping the ball. Yet as a negative centre the ball also disappears from the game in the same move. The ball is simultaneously deep in the stadium and out of reach, outside of the game it propelled up to this point. Now it has determined the game, and starts disassociating itself by transforming the inward implosion of the game into an outward move that leaves the entire set-up behind. For the boy the “game is way behind him. The crowd can have the game. He’s after the baseball now and

---

<sup>228</sup> DeLillo, op.cit., p.14

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p.13f

there's no time to ask himself why"<sup>231</sup>. As traitor to the game, he takes the ball elsewhere and towards new uses invented outside baseball and its grounds.

Firstly and like in the home run itself, this is again a question of spaces and speeds and how to organise one in order to overcome the other. Along this way, the ball performs all kinds of tricks. First tricks of evasion, where the boy who had taken the ball (not simply found it)<sup>232</sup> cannot get away because he is caught up in a situation that is not his and does not grant him the anonymity/ invisibility needed. "If he starts running at this point, what we have is a black kid running in a mainly white crowd and he is being followed by a pair of irate whites yelling thief or grief or something"<sup>233</sup>, and it is under these terms that he uses the ball for tricks of evasion that fuse its function in the game with its use as a ball. Pursued by the other (white) man who claims the ball to be his, "he cuts sharp and ducks away, skidding to his knees and wheeling on his right hand, the ball hand, pressing the ball hard in the tar and using it to pivot"<sup>234</sup>. Like in the game the ball is here too a vehicle for evasion that has to stay out of the other's reach in order to grant movement.

Yet when the son finally shifts milieu and "they are past the ballpark crowd now, this is unmixed Harlem here", the game shifts and "all he has to do is get to the corner, to people and lights" to claim the safety granted by his touching base, his running home as it were. For Cotter, running home turns into the mode of a stroll that introduces its own kind of play into the dynamics. "He holds the ball chest-high and turns it in his fingers, which isn't easy when you're running—he rotates the ball on its axis, spins it slowly over and around, showing the two hundred and sixteen raised red cotton stitches."<sup>235</sup> The gesture is gratuitous, a-functional and serves the sole purpose of demonstrating the new realm within which the ball can now unfold a different use, and one that is outside of the game's original economy (of powers, race, speed and distances): "The maneuver makes [the other man] slow down. [...] Because the maneuver makes him realize where he is. The fact that [the boy] is not scared. The fact that he's parading the baseball" claims the ball for a circulation yet to be defined. "So he stands there [...] and spins the ball up and over the back of his hand and catches it skipping off his wrist with a dip and twist of the same hand, like fuck you mister who you messing with."<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p.45

<sup>232</sup> All this obviously after having jumped the barrier in the first place.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p.52

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p.56

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p.57

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

The ball is now constituted as potentially effective, rather than predetermined as fetish. This is the moment of the ball “like it’s too magical to hold steady—it’s giving him palsy and making his eyes pop”, the magic of which is now the boy’s who is “doing it nasty and mad” because it allows him to “star[e] down his old man”<sup>237</sup>. In a series of new applications develops a potentiality for other uses, turning the ball into something to activate outside of its original economy. The boy taking the ball away and outside of the game indicates the function of the traitor as ‘creative theft’ in that he manages to steal in order to appropriate and re-configure, rather than simply in an attempt to usurp power and financial status. Whilst “the trickster claims to take possession of fixed properties, or to conquer a territory, or even to introduce a new order”, the boy can be seen to operate as a “traitor to the world of dominant significations, and to the established order”<sup>238</sup> by re-assigning use and use-value in defiance of and beyond the game itself, and through a very different kind of investment in its residue. The boy’s theft goes beyond the trickster operations performed to obtain it. (All his virtuoso trickery is organised around a question of ownership and indeed of inverting its distribution between the one without the ticket and the (white) one with ticket, between the impostor and the one with the rightful claim. And this claim is not even simply socially determined and biased. In the book, it is indeed the white man who takes hold of the ball first, the boy then snatches it only after.) In contrast to these distributions, the boy’s treason consists in the way in which what happens with the ball is increasingly removed from any of those concerns and poses the boy in a deeper contradiction to “the world of dominant significations (see above) for which the father as excluded is emblematic. His perspective on the ball is entirely scripted within dominant formations of economic/exchange value and the desire to enter into their transactions.

In this move, the ball is not only taken out of the ground, it is also removed from exchange. “The ball’s not for sale, not this ball”<sup>239</sup> because it starts producing a different kind of dynamic where use value dominates, only that the dimension of use itself remains unclear, or rather multiple. This precarious potential implodes once re-introduced into the economy of the game. The (newly expanded) value of the ball cannot be cashed in because once outside it carries its link to the game as purely residual charge that needs to be mobilised in different ways and for new situations. The link does not allow for the ball’s new expanded use-value to be translated back into exchange value, because the original reciprocity and the mutuality of shared

---

<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p.145

<sup>238</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.41.

<sup>239</sup> DeLillo, op.cit., p.55

criteria for assessment are gone and have been replaced by a singular embeddedness in new use-inventions.

The sale is therefore point of closure for this freely productive circulation of the ball, and marks the point where the previous holder and his 'creative theft' cease to be involved and the ball has reverted back (unsuccessfully) to being the object of trickery. Its current owner does not even enter into the equation; his entry is negotiated through monetary exchange and effectively re-introduces the ball into the

economy that had been betrayed by the boy (albeit by way of hyperinflation, loss of value etc). This too is betrayal, but one which only re-introduces the ball into the pre-established circulation, and thus eclipses the 'creative' potential of treason as *other* move. The difference also entails a very different attitude toward the object in question. For the boy and from the beginning, this was about the ball not the game, precisely in such a way that he didn't know why. He was "after the baseball now and there's no time to ask himself why" in such a way that the object cancels out the notion of context and condition.<sup>240</sup> For the father though and once "sitting in the open on the unused bed"<sup>241</sup>, disconnected from the son, the formerly magical object is only ever "a valuable thing"<sup>242</sup> that he takes because this value is transferable, and exactly not singular. A relationship to a commodity object with no particular becoming whatsoever.<sup>243</sup> The father thus betrays not only trust (his son's), but also the very potentiality of the ball as trigger for a series of different uses and with them juxtapositions and encounters under different terms. In contrast to the creative theft of the son, the father's appropriation is the kind of betrayal which operates exclusively within a contained horizon of recuperation.<sup>244</sup>

---

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., p. 45

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p.149

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> All the boy's uses of the ball are a becoming other. "Nothing reveals treason better than the choice of object" (Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.42), because even where it is not a becoming, it is an investment away from the game into the potentiality of its future handlings and uses.

<sup>244</sup> Parnet/Deleuze use betrayal and treason indistinctly (Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.40f), partially also because the French language of the original text does not differentiate along the same lines as the English language does – *trahison* covers both *betrayal* and *treason*. Yet the slippage between the two terms in English allows to set apart inward and outward tendencies of treason: Zizek's analysis of the sacrifice proposes different degrees of closure in the various scenarios of betrayal presented but ultimately he subsumes all of them under a notion of feigned deception (Slavoj Zizek: *On Belief*, p.70f).

It is in the writing of treason that the stakes become clearer. In Gore Vidal's traitor novel *Burr* (*Narratives of Empire: Burr. A Novel*, London: Random House, 1973), one level of betrayal is involved in the writing of a counter history from the perspective of the traitor figure (Colonel Aaron Burr). Its very perspective thus launches a challenge to canonical historical accounts by revalorising the figure of the traitor. But more importantly, under these terms

## 2.4.2 “and...and...and” its Stories

But even after this cut, the validity of the conventional, recognised and supposedly verifiable economic criteria re-instated through Manx’ (the father’s) theft needs to be re-asserted through an effort to link the object back to its former milieu. Yet the object itself bears only incidental proof of that link, “a little sort of green paint smudge near the seam”<sup>245</sup> that refers back to the green pillars of the stadium and is already contaminated by the traces of its new use, “a scant trace of tar, because Cotter must have bounced the ball in the street”<sup>246</sup>. Any attempt to re-introduce the ball into the economy of the game imposes verifiable categories on the ball’s value that the object itself cannot answer any longer. It remains unverifiable as such, and so the needed link has to be argued through the story of its removal from the ground. The re-introduction becomes a lure challenged always through the story’s fundamental lack of plausibility. Assessed under criteria that completely eclipse the new field of value, obstructed by class<sup>247</sup> and race<sup>248</sup>, the story itself fails to become a proof. “Who pays attention to us? They see two coloreds from nowhere. They gonna believe some colored boy snatch the ball out of them legions in the crowd?”<sup>249</sup>

Instead of trying to answer assessable categories of verification, the link needs to be made through enhanced fiction that bypasses criteria of verification because it can be prolonged and received as fiction. “He ought to be looking or fathers and sons.[...] See, even if the man doesn’t believe it, the boy will. And Manx can imagine a little conspiracy in the making, the father and the hustler working as a team to make the boy believe the baseball’s real.”<sup>250</sup> Beyond truth criteria<sup>251</sup>), the

---

treason produces a series of effects (rather than simply producing an alternative history): There is an unravelling of treason that results from superimposing conflicting stories that are all underpinned by an exclusive underlying truth claim and therefore automatically challenge each other. There is a second type of unravelling where the truth claims themselves unravel through that same superimposition. And then there is a third type of treason that always has an elsewhere it refers to, and exists as a relationship to that elsewhere. In the overlaps between the narrator’s betrayal of the traitor (the very premise of the historical account is the book’s protagonist’s desire to betray the traitor) and the various betrayals infolded in that, betrayal/ treason ceases to be an act or an operation and becomes a proliferating mode instead.

<sup>245</sup> DeLillo, op.cit., p.647

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p.646

<sup>247</sup> There is no stub to prove the boy was even at the match, and even if there was, “the ticket stub doesn’t say what section you’re sitting unless it’s reserve seat or box seat” (ibid., p.147).

<sup>248</sup> “Won’t work, Manx thinks. Black man’s not gonna believe anything he says. Think I’m some fool running a penny hustle. Black man’s gonna look him down with that saucy eye he’s got for outrageous plots against his person.” Ibid., p.642.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p.145

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p.643

whole transaction is a passing-on that only partially overlaps with the financial exchange. "It is one of those happenstances where the mood downshifts once the deal is made. Only normal"<sup>252</sup>, because the two registers of investment are incompatible: The fascination of the ball does not support the verification of its authenticity, or translating into quantifiable registers, since the whole point lies in its being somewhat illicit once outside the ground, and therefore uncertified and uncertifiable. The financial equivalent traded for inevitably fails to answer the ball's worth. "The baseball's bound to appreciate is the word. And the cash be worth less by the minute."<sup>253</sup> All there is to do with the money is to dispose of it, "just to be done with it".<sup>254</sup>

Yet fiction is not only the fiction employed to legitimise the ball as economic asset. It is also the explicit condition of all this being narrated, with the ball operating as trickster object and milieu for the story, just like it does for the game. There is also an overall dynamic to the developmental loop from field to outside and back into trophy that goes beyond either economy; what is generated is not simply an expanded field or a comparative juxtaposition of incompatible economic registers, but above all a conjunction of acts and situations as narrated. The different uses of the ball as baseball, flight device, trick object<sup>255</sup>, fetish and dysfunctional commodity generate not only these instances of use, but above all exactly the jumps occurring between them that make the list so incongruous. Rather than all of these possibilities (or exclusively some of them) being contained in the object, the ball operates as trigger/ catalyst for these jumps and juxtapositions. Its aspects and functions don't cohere other than as devices for a narrativity that sprawls in jumps and contiguities.

---

<sup>251</sup> "The line is true in this case but what's the difference? Manx has told amazing lies that were a lot easier falling from his lips than anything he could say about this little spheroid fact." (ibid., p.647)

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p.653

<sup>253</sup> Ibid., p.654

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p.655

<sup>255</sup> The trick is sported by the boy at least twice: once in a gesture of defiance against the other who's after the ball ("and then he turns and does a caper, he does a physical jape—running backwards for a stretch, high stepping, mocking, showing Bill the baseball. He's a cutup in a sour state. He holds the ball chest-high and turns it in his fingers, which isn't easy when you're running—he rotates the ball on its axis, spins it slowly over and around, showing the two hundred and sixteen raised cotton stitches." (ibid., p.57)), once against the father, feeling "anger and bluster come into his face": "He holds it out, he spins it on the tips of his fingers. He holds it high in his right hand and uses the other hand to spin it. He doesn't give a damn. He sports it, he shows it off." (ibid., p.144); and then as re-enactment by the father where this doesn't do anything because it is now intentioned/ functionalised to improve the chances of selling the ball, and thus has to fail. "He's not sure why he's doing this since it proves nothing except the fact that he has a ball, at least he has a ball, and he holds it up much the way his son Cotter had held it earlier in the evening." (ibid., p.642f)

Beyond the different functions of the ball thus recounted, this traitor function indicated by the boy is effectively fulfilled by the book as (baseball) novel too, carried forth by the narrative drive that carries the ball through situations as well as the book.<sup>256</sup> Deleuze/Parnet address this kind of link between narrativity and treason when, in the context of ‘the superiority of American literature’, they describe exactly “the traitor [as] the essential character of the novel, the hero”<sup>257</sup>. In the particular type of conjunction Deleuze describes under the formula of “and...and...and...”<sup>258</sup>, narrativity is not premised on development and resolution of plot, but offers instead a different model of dynamic, one “proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing”<sup>259</sup>. It is always also directed at an elsewhere “which will make language shoot along”<sup>260</sup> “syntax and experimentation, syntax and pragmatics”<sup>261</sup>.

If it was to be brought back into an oppositional configuration, exactly this incommensurability could be posited as contrast between an attitude of experimentation<sup>262</sup> on one hand and ‘Transgression’<sup>263</sup> on the other.<sup>264</sup> Whilst the latter is bound up in the structures it supposedly overcomes and is constituted through their horizon as limit to overcome, the former constitutes this horizon as threshold (if at all) and actively inhabits what Deleuze/Parnet characterise as a “relationship with the outside”.<sup>265</sup>

With Orozco, this type of unconfining narrativity is prominent in the videos and the importance paid to (random) itineraries in their making; his interest in “the liquidity of things, how one thing leads you on to the next” manifests itself in the combinatory contiguity of images through which “things are related, but through proximity rather than narrative” so that the resulting new type of narrative “is like a series of

---

<sup>256</sup> The particular construction of *Underworld* is important for this: made up of modular blocks that are arranged in disjuncted chronological fragments. They cohere around various plot lines and undermine these by constantly interspersing them with opening bits of all the other lines. The overall chronology broadly covers the second half of the twentieth century, but the book’s effective temporality relies on the juxtapositions between fragments, and their development across separate occurrences.

<sup>257</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.41

<sup>258</sup> See Deleuze/ Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, p.25; Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.10. and p.57-59.

<sup>259</sup> Deleuze/ Guattari: op.cit., p.25

<sup>260</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.59

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p.41

<sup>263</sup> Ibid., p.47

<sup>264</sup> In a similar take on the postmodern as affirmative criticality, Lyotard opposes jubilation and invention to attitudes of melancholia and nostalgia of the whole. See Lyotard, op.cit., esp. ‘Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?’, pp.71-82, esp. p.79-81.

<sup>265</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.36

punctums—focal points of attention”. Their new type of narrativity is determined by encounters that “trace a series of connections between two things” where “the connections themselves are real, not metaphoric”<sup>266</sup>. They develop their own dynamics held together by a flow of contiguous narrativity (rather than the bracket of a plot and its implicit resolution in some kind of *dénouement*).<sup>267</sup>

In ‘home-run’, narrative potential in this sense of a runaway sprawl of connections is activated by a decisive nonchalance that characterises all levels of the project: There is irreducible nonchalance in the way the oranges are placed on the windowsills. And even this nonchalance is already double: Orozco’s nonchalant gesture of invitation comes first, only to then be echoed back by the nonchalant (yet careful) way in which the oranges’ presentations are put together, engineered and improvised and which reverberates through the work.

And then most importantly there is too the nonchalance not only of their placing, but also of its harshly incomplete, fragmentary and exemplary<sup>268</sup> documentation. Instead of actually documenting the project, ‘Home-run’s photographic afterlife stages multiple (and always insufficient) viewing positions onto the work through explicit non-documentation: different vantage points, some generally accessible (courtyard), some explicitly not (view from window), and the way the documentation plays with invisibility in the overall view of the apartment buildings where the oranges are hardly, if at all, visible, generate a range of trigger possibilities, rather than a conclusive account of the work. That they operate as starting possibilities, rather than prescribing a position, is enhanced also through the fact that some of the photographs are taken from a location on the same level as the participating flats (undoing the hierarchies implicit in any configuration of museum/world as superior, inferior etc).

---

<sup>266</sup> Orozco: *A Thousand Words*, p.115. This insistence on the reality of connections found and made also leads Orozco to not use postproduction in the making of these videos, choosing instead to follow the dynamic and developments of encounters made as they are documented at the same time.

<sup>267</sup> Liliane Terrier talks about it as *récit interactif* (see Terrier, op.cit., n.p.), in the same way in which N Katherine Hayles talks about literature as hypertextual (Hayles, op.cit.). All of these accounts are structural though and here need shifting toward an engagement with the dynamics and possibilities thus generated.

<sup>268</sup> The photographic documents through which the work circulates (as far as it does not circulate exclusively through a talking about; see e.g. Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*, p.17), have to be considered as another example of the work. Not its substitute in enduring form but an example in the active sense of “that which is shown alongside (like the German *Bei-Spiel*, that which plays alongside)” (Agamben: *Coming Community*, p.10).



fig.20

The photographic non-documentation of the work as it circulates through illustrations and catalogue documentation<sup>269</sup>, thus fails to cohere the oranges into either elements of a documented exchange (no documentation available of the transactions that took place, including correspondences etc) or component parts of an overall pattern arranged and cohered around the museum's sculpture garden (where the whole front is shown, it is nearly impossible to make out the oranges at

<sup>269</sup> The other way round, in the physical exhibition space, Orozco's *Photogravity* installation addresses his works' circulation as photographs and problematises their implicit promise of access(ability) by installing sculptural photo cut-outs of his best-known pieces, supported by somewhat excessively ornate metal supports, all facing one direction in a space to be traversed by the visitor (*Museum Studies 5: Gabriel Orozco*, Philadelphia Museum of Art, October 27 – December 12 1999). For a discussion of the combinatory logic between Orozco's works and the Arensberg collection of pre-Columbian artefacts in the museum, see *Gabriel Orozco: Photogravity*, exh. cat. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1999.



Fig.21



fig.22



fig.23

all). Attention switches instead from an observing to a projecting gaze that never has enough support to know what register to project under, opening the range to all kinds of narrative fabulations<sup>270</sup>. Exactly in this consciously staged insufficiency and surplus, the photographs act as triggers for the kind of narrative imaginings they seem at first sight to block. Avoiding an overall account of the work and thus acting against metaphorical subsumption, the photos impose instead multiple deviations on the reading of the work and allow for a new sort of attachment to the seemingly insignificant, multiplying the connective possibilities of the project itself with those of the photographic evidence thereof.

When, in the same context, Orozco suspends a hammock between two trees in the museum courtyard,<sup>271</sup> documentation pushes this contradictory type of dematerialisation even further: In the photographs of the work, the hammock as temporary and supplementary occupation of the space, already in itself closer to the Bertoia chairs than to the surrounding sculptures, becomes nearly invisible as physical structure and is hard to actually make out in the photograph<sup>272</sup>. fig

<sup>270</sup> For fabulation as anti-memory, see Gilles Deleuze/ Félix Guattari: *What is Philosophy?* London: Verso, 1994. esp. p.168: “The monument’s action is not memory but fabulation, we write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present. Music is full of them. It is not memory that is needed but a complex material that is found not in memory but in words and sounds: ‘Memory, I hate you.’” (It is however important to differentiate the notion of fabulation as invitation to narrative sprawl developed here from the way in which Deleuze and Guattari’s account posits affect and percept as “autonomous and sufficient beings that no longer owe anything to those who experience or have experienced them” (ibid.)).

<sup>271</sup> Gabriel Orozco: *Hammock Between Two Skyscrapers*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1993

<sup>272</sup> The chairs are actual museum furniture, yet Orozco himself has repeatedly worked with very similar chairs, playing their circumscription of volume off against a surrounding background penetrating its space. In *Chacahua*, he goes so far as to re-arrange the juxtaposition of hammock and chairs in the book’s central double-page spread.

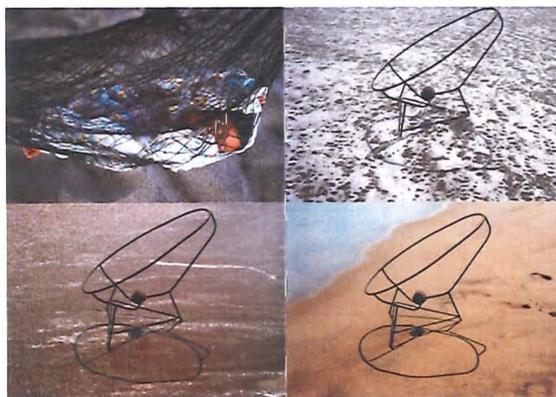


fig.24

Even where the chairs figure as explicitly sculptural like they do here, they are also shown in (the aftermath of) their original use-context (as belonging to the domestic when figured in the inverted ruin of a deserted construction site, or to the semi-public space of a shop front). They are thus related back to a (previous) functionality that now in turn informs their new contextualisation.

Undercutting even the volume of the wire-frame chairs surrounding it, the hammock instead enters into a visual dialogue with a light reflection on the wall behind it, thrown off a window of one of the surrounding buildings, and establishes a different register of visibility for the hammock supposedly at the centre of the work. The physical object is thus made, in the photograph, to approximate the temporary and insubstantial register of the light trace in such a way that both are bound together and mutually undone by being framed in the precarious visibility of the photograph. Instead of providing closure, the photographs thus play alongside, becoming another instance in the work's play across registers.

From the initial set-up through to the non-documentation of its effects, the work always already undercuts and overflows representative closure. The baseball-oranges are staged as starting points onto a dimension of contingency actively solicited through the work's various levels of letting go. This is the point where the work goes beyond the established parameters of the game itself (beyond baseball, and beyond the accountabilities of institutional critique, sculptural critique, social practice) and opens onto a different series; a series where Orozco's oranges disperse themselves in the open ended circulations they enter in the flats and beyond, rather than simply being incorporated: they become parts of social and domestic and individual, mundane and artificial sets of practices and handlings, with their own respective (at least imagined) narrativities the limits of which are no longer controlled by an authoring intentionality or scripted institutional framework but only be contained or indeed uncontained by the attitudes played out in relation to them. Looking at the oranges on the windowsills from the sculpture court (and even more so looking at the documenting photographs of some of the oranges), is not simply a staring illicitly into the flats and offices which would necessarily result in the recognition of an impossible conjunction of realms and the irresolvably compromised remit of art in relation to these<sup>273</sup>.



Fig.25



fig.26

See *Gabriel Orozco: Chacahua*, exh. cat. Portikus, Frankfurt aM: Portikus, 2000.

<sup>273</sup> See Buchloh, op.cit.

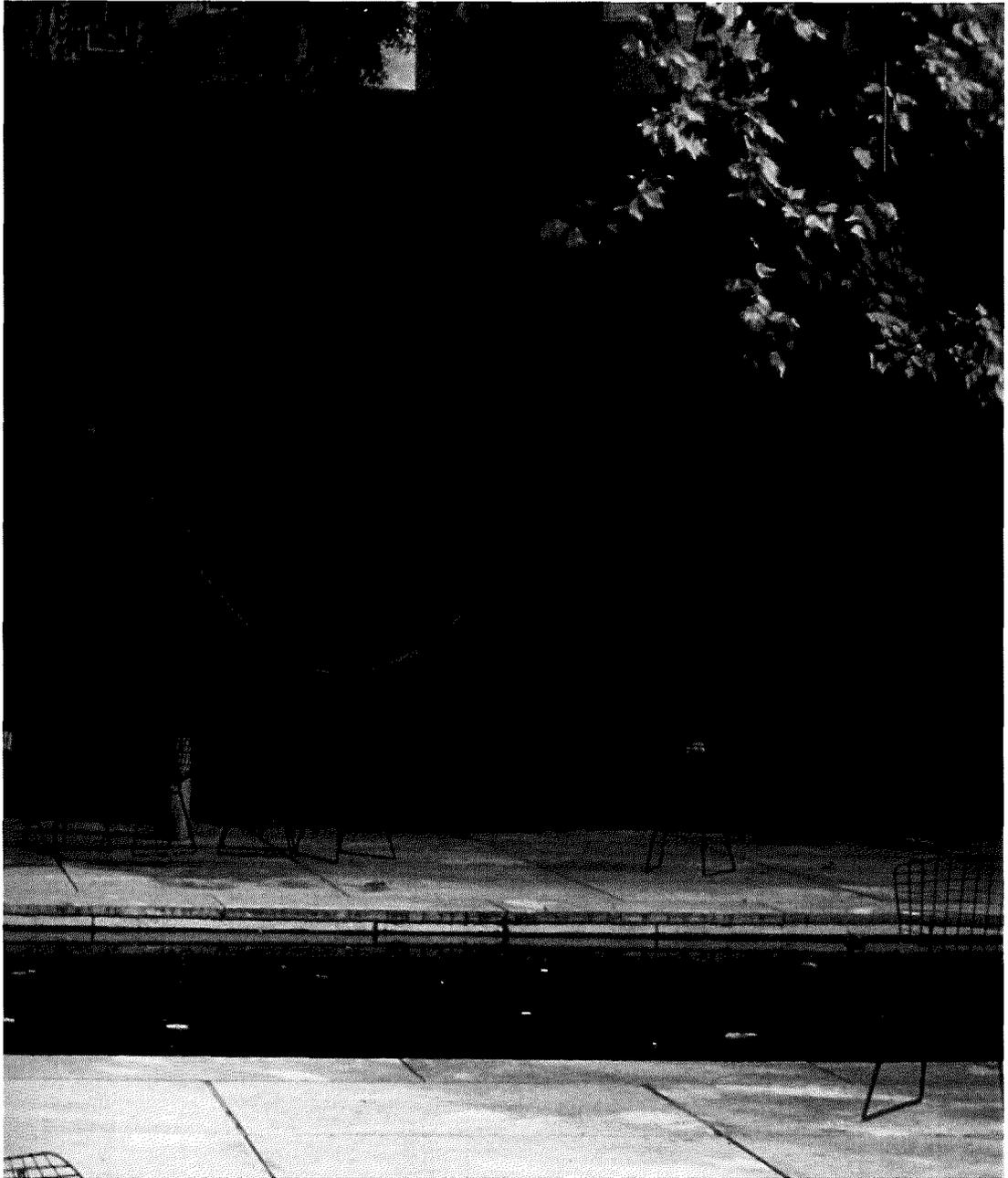


fig.27

Rather it is a starting point that allows for or at least offers, entices an active dreaming up of stories too. Some of these dreams will be factual, that is the nature of the project's workings, carried out by the museum's administrative infrastructure inviting residents to become participants, writing and receiving correspondence which is then filed and archived etc. These are, like all others, only ever facets of a broader enabled milieu of ways of being involved. Being a functional 'registered' participant of the work and participating by dreaming/ imagining/ recounting/ fictionalising are then simply different facets in a fundamentally expanded mode of participation. This too needs to be accounted for in terms of treason, rather than

trickery. It is effectively taking the game outside of itself, and starts playing it elsewhere.

The mirroring of modes that occurs between types of involvement and approaches to them, oscillates between trickery and treason and in doing so goes beyond simply replacing one way of playing the game by another. It reconfigures instead what kind of cohering or indeed un-cohering structures a game might set up, and what kind of operations might be produced in relation to it. The shift away from moves that are accounted for towards more random (multiple) dynamics marks the point where a certain way of playing the game (and this way is set-up in the very making of the project) feeds back onto the game in such a way as to un-cohere its basic make-up. An account of the game as structured activity can then no longer contain the range of grounds, moves and approaches involved. And time, too, is then only one facet of a multidimensional set-up operating along the lines of heterogeneous narrativity and poetics. The multiple realms of operation also undercut the generic applicability of criteria under which to engage with the work's component parts.

The factual, empirical and sociological start overlapping with the fantasmatic, imaginary and their poetics here. Rather than imposing registers, they have to be worked out in conjunction with the work and read from it. Not as a reading into, but as a reading away from it that is itself a creative theft. Much like this chapter itself performs treason by taking the ball and playing (with) it elsewhere.

### **3 Mode Three: Humour (Imploding effects)**

“The world, however, is not a room into which one enters.”<sup>274</sup>

Playing in its expanded sense where it approaches the condition of treason involves and indeed requires moves beyond measure, and extends milieus beyond the point of recuperation. Yet the dynamics of sprawl generated in these moves are never uni-directional (as moves beyond measure do not exceed measure quantitatively but defy it qualitatively). Playing out humour, and indeed the dimension of effects triggered through it, allows re-setting this directedness. If anything, humour operates by means of implosion and inward destabilisation, as far as these spatialisations are tenable as such. In contrast to the proliferations outlined in ‘Mode Two: Treason (Stories of play)’ above, the present chapter therefore tentatively inverts tendencies, re-setting the outward tendencies of treason through humour as inward movement directed into situations. Traps are the final test for thus inverting inward and outward moves whilst simultaneously insisting on their destabilising potential and their capacity for undoing capture.

#### **3.1 Models and attitudes and some series of works**

The present chapter thus outlines humour as an equivalent to the outward dynamic of treason as discussed in ‘Mode Two: Treason (Stories of play)’ above. It will allow for a methodological shift from structuring models and their attendant reading strategies towards attitudes which allow to set up multiple engagements under shifting terms and beyond accountability. These shifts away from structures and towards flexible modes of engagement will be developed by outlining Freud’s cohering model of the joke as one that produces closure through its insistence on structural coherence and (refined) legibility, and will be contrasted with a dynamic notion of humour as suggested by Deleuze. By mode of contrast, the latter notion is constituted as encompassing a multiplicity of approaches and involvements and is premised on a pragmatics of effects rather than on the coherent programmatic of structured sets and their operations.

Treason sets up a twofold relationship with the outside of its situation in that it sprawls outward and through this very leaving-behind produces effects on what is being left behind. By leaving behind the situation it betrays and that situation’s component parts in moves elsewhere, it simultaneously undermines the very coherence of that situation of departure, in the same operation but asymmetrically

---

<sup>274</sup> Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p.97

because under fundamentally different terms. It constitutes an unstable configuration, is inherently active, and only ever exists as dynamic set of tensions and movements between outsides and insides, through which both are re-arranged and re-articulated. Their effects combine asymmetrical outside and inside moves/ tendencies in a heterogeneity which makes even the underlying distinction between trickery and treason as two separate operations, untenable. This is not because they could not be differentiated. Indeed, Deleuze outlines their respective morphologies at length in *Dialogues*, with the kind of binary bias he then later repudiate in relation to such key terms as tree/ root and rhizome<sup>275</sup>. Rather, trickery and treason as mutually related and incommensurate umbrellas through which to conceptualise artistic practice, relate to their respective differentiations in very different ways: whilst trickery founds its supposed distinctions from treason through its economically premised logic of operations, treason destabilises any account if not practice of trickery by undoing the very logic of economic accountability on which the differentiation could be based. Treason is an operation/ effect of expanded entanglement that goes beyond clear-cut operations and accountabilities. In contrast to contained betrayal, which consists in a more or less straightforward switching over of allegiances, treason in this sense fundamentally defies the very premise of allegiance as such, allowing through this suspension for an unbound movement between things, positions and situations. Treason's affirmative potential itself thus betrays the differentiation between trickery and treason and turns that distinction itself into a strategic operation which matters only in relation to the kinds of effects either modality allows to generate.

A juxtaposition between trickery and treason therefore never really sets up a relationship between distinct and mutually exclusive sets of characteristics and features. Instead it marks a shift towards new forms of engagement with corresponding sets of emphasis and interests. It constitutes a shift away from structures of intervention and analytically informed interference (trickery) and towards a sprawling entanglement and affirmative taking-elsewhere producing whatever effects. And if features in this relationship between inside and outside are unstable because they are generated under the terms of a dynamic premised on effective registers, then it must be possible too to modify or indeed invert most of these characteristics without necessarily altering/ undermining the attitude and stakes discussed above. If treason was above discussed as an outward move under these terms, then there must be a way too, to mobilise the multiplicity of its

---

<sup>275</sup> Deleuze/ Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p.15

direction towards a new kind of inward move that operates without re-containing and re-cohering the arrangement. In this inversion, the very distinction between different spatialities is only ever of tactical relevance in relation to what it allows to produce.

In this move, specificities of engagement and context are effectively replaced by attitudes. And these, as such, as attitudes, set up new forms of relations no longer only premised on the specific contextualities of a situation but also generative in return.

In an oblique parallelism, this move from trickery towards treason is mirrored in the attitudinal shift Deleuze outlines between irony and humour as two forms of the comic. "Humour is treacherous, it is treason"<sup>276</sup> in that both treason and humour allow for multiple modes of engagement. From this starting point, humour moves in relation to irony in a similar way to the way in which treason undermines trickery, in Deleuze and for the purpose of the following. Whilst treason defies the contained economy of trickery, humour in this take goes beyond the signifying parameters of irony and opens onto other multiply involved registers of engagement. Following and foregrounding Deleuze's proposed shift from irony to humour, Sigmund Freud's theorisations around the workings of *the joke* are here posited as operating at the opposite of engagements with the comic and can thus provide the kind of structured backdrop onto which the dynamics of humour as outlined above can be projected.<sup>277</sup>

### 3.1.1 Irony and patterns of closure in Freud's joke-work

Freud conceptualises the joke as an internalised resolution of incongruities in the world, and relates it closely to the unconscious, his other central figuration of the inside. Deleuze's notion of humour is an attitudinal form whilst Freud's joke is conceived as an analysable structure, and they are fundamentally incommensurable with each other. Yet even though they posit two diametrically opposed notions, they nevertheless overlap in their claims to 'the comic', and it is

---

<sup>276</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.68.

<sup>277</sup> The thesis here takes up Deleuze's proposition of a (polemical) move from irony to humour, and plays it through a consciously contrasting juxtaposition with Freud's notion of irony. This is certainly not even trying to work from more sophisticated notions of irony. To the contrary, this particular (and probably particularly blunt) template notion of the ironic is necessary in order to profile the shift Deleuze's move from irony to humour is trying to make available. Because of the polemical relationship to Freud throughout Deleuze's (and Deleuze/ Guattari's) work, Freud seemed an appropriate foil against which to project the shift. For a smoother discussion of Deleuze's notion of humour in relation to (postmodern) irony see Claire Colebrook, *Irony in the Work of Philosophy*, Lincoln/ London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002, pp.207-259 ('Inhuman Irony and the Postmodern'), re. humour and irony esp. p.237.

precisely by playing out the incongruities of this coming together that humour and the joke can be mobilised for a set of inward moves that translate treason's outwardly going-beyond into an equally ambiguous internalisation of world.

The following will therefore read Freud's take on the joke as a quintessentially ironic model, and juxtapose it with gestures<sup>278</sup> concerned with humour. As attitudinal gestures these stand in contrast not so much to the content of Freud's analysis as such but to the cohering attitudes informing its form of analysis and interpretation. Humour in this sense is not a model of intelligibility to be employed or a technique to be mobilised, but rather provides the possibility of generating encounters (outside of analytical and straightforwardly critical accountabilities) by setting up the slippery terms under which these can be produced and engaged with.

In Freud<sup>279</sup> and under the terms of an underlying conceptual fusion with the unconscious, the joke is a figure which produces an ambiguous challenge to signification, which can be recuperated through an expanded signifying economy very similar to and derived directly from the one Freud had previously developed in relation to dreams<sup>280</sup>. As "arbitrary connecting or linking, usually by means of verbal

---

<sup>278</sup>For a notion of *gesture* as production outside the parameters of functionality and economy, see Agamben's 'Notes on Gesture' in Agamben: *Means Without Ends*, pp.49-60. For their implied political dimension of 'free use' in contrast to "the dialectic of proper and improper" see his 'Notes on politics', *ibid.*, pp.109-118, p.117. In relation to contingency these are discussed above in 'Mode One: Contingency (Un-fitting settings)'

<sup>279</sup> Sigmund Freud: *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious*. Newly translated from the German and edited by James Strachey. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.

<sup>280</sup> Manifestations of the comic are here subsumed in the representational configuration of psychoanalysis itself which posits condensation, displacement and indirect representation as forms of expression or technical methods of the joke only as direct mirror projections onto the previously established structural characteristics of the dream-work. "We found that the character and effects of jokes were bound up with certain forms of expression, technical resources among which the various kinds of condensation, displacement and indirect representation are the most striking. But processes leading to the same results of condensation, displacement and indirect representation have become familiar to us as characteristics of the dream-work. Does not this agreement suggest to us that joke-work and dream-work must be identical [...]?" (Freud, *op.cit.*, p.160)

The entire Freudian configuration of the comic (through to its latter day repercussions in quantifying psychology and its careful calibrating of laughter as quantifiable research outcome, generated under supposedly verifiable conditions, see e.g. Mary K. Rothbart: 'Incongruity, Problem-Solving and Laughter', in: Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (eds), *Humour and Laughter. Theory, Research and Applications*, London/ NY/ Sidney/ Toronto (Wiley and sons) 1976, pp.37-54) rests on a fundamentally cohering attitude for which utterances are necessarily representational and legible. The two assumptions mutually constitute and determine each other.

This approach coheres the joke as psychological function and subjects it to overall legibility (as the very text of *The joke and its Relation to the Unconscious* in itself goes to great length to demonstrate). In the same move it also locks humour in a stimulus/response loop that re-constitutes overall coherence exactly at the point where this coherence might have been undermined through the operations, effects or phenomena of humour and the responses it evokes.

association, of two ideas which in some ways contrast with each other<sup>281</sup>, the joke produces a contrast “only because...we grant its words a meaning which, again, we nevertheless cannot grant them”<sup>282</sup>; on this premise, a joke is therefore “able to deceive us only for a moment”<sup>283</sup> because the comic effect is produced in the subsequent moment when the tension between two incommensurable registers of meaning is released in a “solution of this bewilderment”<sup>284</sup>. The joke’s negotiation between different investments and expectations occurs thus as a resolution, and in a particular and strictly related economy which is integral to the effect produced, and in which “a joke says what it has to say, not always in few words, but in *too* few words—that is in words that are insufficient by strict logic or by common modes of thought and speech”<sup>285</sup>. By shifting to a register outside of strict logic and common conceptual patterns, these words-of-the-joke then become sufficient to resolve perceived incongruities without however having to leave behind either logic or modes of thought as such.

Fundamentally, the joke appears to operate between two levels of sense interlinked through an experience of incongruity, which is approached as key dimension to be taken into account and processed/overcome by the joke itself. The modalities of this overcoming differ, from resolution of the incongruity as problem solving through to (where such resolution cannot be obtained) the acknowledgement of the joke’s particular status in relation to the world. “According to McGee(1972), a true humour response requires : (1) a concept, (2) awareness that the stimulus violates the concept and (3) ‘confidence in the impossibility or improbability of the stimulus elements occurring as depicted’(p.66)”<sup>286</sup> Either way in such structural accounts, jokes (and with them laughter, their index, as well as humour) are accounted for as ultimately cohering functions that stabilise and re-enforce pre-existing reality arrangements; “laughter may occur when an arousing stimulus is judged to be safe, when a problem is solved, or when an incongruity or improbable act has occurred

---

<sup>281</sup> Freud: op.cit., p.11

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., p.12

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p.12

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p.13

<sup>285</sup> Ibid. These observations are here brought together to foreground the fragmentary character (immediately eclipsed by Freud) of any overview and highlight it as a starting point rather than simply a preliminary and insufficient consideration. For a more structured account of humour theorisations (rather than humour) see for example: Patricia Keith-Spiegel, ‘Early Conceptions of Humour. Varieties and Issues’, in Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee (eds), *The Psychology of Humour. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*, New York/ London: Academic Press, 1972, p.4-39

<sup>286</sup> Rothbart: op.cit., p.51

and we can do nothing about it.”<sup>287</sup> In the latter case the recognition of this improbability as such safeguards the distance of a position from where to assess the arrangement, i.e. an imagined position on the outside of its workings.

All of this accounts for the joke as structure to be analysed and understood. In order to make use of its characteristics in an engagement with practice, it is therefore imperative to posit the joke as potential for praxis (rather than structure) under the same terms, in such a way as to transform the joke into joking and translate its terms and operations from a descriptive model into a performative strategy. In Freud, the sequence of inappropriate response, challenge and then ultimately resolution of the incongruity underlying the entire proposition, are accounted for as consecutive steps in the functioning of the joke. In a straight transfer, they can therefore also be posited as consecutive moves in the making of a joke as produced through the strategic arrangement of operational component parts.

In the perspective of such a functional appropriation of the joke as signifying pattern, Andreas Slominski's sequence of upside-down posters combining 1970s British children's TV programme *Bagpuss*<sup>288</sup> and Bernardo Bertolucci's 1972 movie *Last Tango in Paris*<sup>289</sup> with Muhammad Ali and presenting all of them and more glued onto a gallery wall,<sup>290</sup> can be told step by step as a joke in the Freudian schema. Going through the full sequence of inappropriate response and subsequent challenge to the categories of what the appropriate would have been, the incongruity of the arrangement seems to be ultimately resolved in the comic as effect of the recognition of this incoherence. But the work also pushes to the point of overflowing any such schema. Both readings coexist (strategically, it is argued here). They will be developed one after the other here and such that the effects produced are accumulative rather than mutually exclusive.

There are no apparent overarching criteria behind Slominski's arranged combinations, and this seeming lack of criteria in the choice of the works sets up the arrangement as incongruous in relation to the gallery space framing it. Their only coherence consists in the poster format as such. Supposedly disposable images, tokens of changing interests and tastes, the posters are here installed upside-down and glued to the gallery wall. Three of them were cut-out complete with their plasterboard background and then re-inserted the other way round in order to be

---

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., p.52.

<sup>288</sup> *Bagpuss*, TV series, directed/ animated by Peter Firmin and Oliver Postgate, UK 1974

<sup>289</sup> *Ultimo Tango a Parigi [Last Tango in Paris]*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci, Italy 1972.

<sup>290</sup> Andreas Slominski: *MUHAMMAD ALI vs SONNY LISTON*, 2003 (seven posters, cut plasterboard wall), in *Andreas Slominski*, Sadie Coles HQ, London, 8.10.-8.11.2003

right way up. Under the seeming plausibility of this set-up, the inversion is a joking response to the incongruity of the arrangement in that it shifts the frame of reference such that the absurdly excessive series of gestures necessary for the image's re-orientation seems to allow for a derisory re-dressing of the perceived incongruity. Over-explicitly addressing the posters' inverted appearance rather than the obvious idiosyncracies of the installation in terms of choices made and handlings implemented, the intervention does not re-dress the incongruity itself, only its manifest order. It is in the recognition of this displacement as inappropriate that the work operates as a joke in the way conceptualised by Freud.



fig.28

That the work should be considered under the terms of a conflict of different registers, different images and different worlds at all is set up in the heterogeneity of its material samples running up against each other. This same heterogeneous quality of their juxtaposition manifests itself also in the physically forced set of relations manifested in the foregrounded cutting and pasting of the plasterboard support upon which the arrangement is installed. Most prominently though, the works relation to an underlying and fundamentally structuring oppositionality is also

already signalled in the title, "MUHAMMAD ALI vs SONNY LISTON", taken from a boxing match between former heavyweight world champion Sonny Liston and the then holder of the title, Muhammad Ali, on May 25 1965.

The poster for the event is part of the series displayed in the gallery and one out of those three in the whole series which were cut-out and turned around. It is part of and caught in the series, yet the privileged attention it receives through the foregrounded inversion and the reference to it in the overall title of the work, effectively simultaneously removes the poster from the series and places it at the level of commentary and extra-structural contribution. It becomes module in and example for a different pseudo-structural paradigm under whose terms the series appears first and foremost as a sequence of conflictual encounters.

In this, the match signals not only the blunt oppositionality of encounters but also the multi-dimensionality of any such encounter. The event behind the poster itself, the heavyweight championship fight between Sonny Liston and Muhammad Ali, is itself conflict-laden in more ways than one. The clash was not just a boxing match because it involved more than one match, and because it articulated a claim that was only coincidentally involved in boxing, but was here negotiated through it.

The match of May 25 1965 was a second fight, a repetition of a first encounter between the two athletes on February 25 1964 when Muhammad Ali, who was still called Cassius Clay then, gained his first world championship title from Liston. The implicit pre-history produces a doubling that folds one event into the other and through this indicates a cluster of encounters in a broader and more diffuse sense that exists across different stories. When the two boxers first encountered each other in the ring, Muhammad Ali won his title through Liston not going back into the ring from his corner in round seven and conceding the title to a younger boxer with an unorthodox style based on surprises and misunderstandings, which in itself might or might not resonate with Slominski's work being concerned with the joke and the conditions around surprising moves. This was the fight before which Ali coined his strategy of 'floating like a butterfly and stinging like a bee', as challenge to the orthodoxies of fundamental and causal links in the tactico-stylistic make-up of the sport. It is assumed that Liston lost the fight to some extent because he mistook Ali's attitude for nervousness and therefore failed to develop adequate responsive tactics.

But this first clash was a boxer's match only as much as it was also part of a political and cultural moment it took off from. This the first fight is the one after which Cassius Marcellus Clay jr., named after his father who in turn was named after a Kentucky abolitionist, became Cassius X on inspiration by his then mentor and ally,

spokesperson of the Nation of Islam Malcolm X, with whom he publicly associated himself, and then Muhammad Ali, a name given to him by Nation of Islam founder Elijah Muhammad, at least partially also as a repositioning gesture. All of this is part of the story of the second fight as its prehistory and politico-historical charge, too<sup>291</sup>. And with Muhammad Ali winning the second fight under the name he only adopted after winning the first one, the victory is part of an afterlife that only confirms the outcome of the first one and validates it also in all the grandiose claims invested in the choice of name(s) that followed it. While Cassius X served as a marker for difference and for the will to inhabit this difference explicitly, Muhammad Ali operated as a new given name of belonging and patriarchal allegiance. At stake in this naming/ re-naming sequence is not only a positioning, but also an insistence on that positioning being solidified into a 'name' in such a way that it forms an unsurpassable interface with the social which needs to be acknowledged by others and is thus continually re-asserted in an involuntary performance of the social. In the fight against Ernie Terrell at Madison Square Gardens in 1967, who had refused, along with leading commentators, to use the new name, Ali continually challenged his opponent to finally acknowledge his (new) name whilst simultaneously winning the fight over him<sup>292</sup>.

Even though apparently simply a boxing match and thus arguably one of the most basic types of binary confrontation, there is inevitably more than one economy at play in this exchange because the play is never just in the fight. The fight is an encounter between two boxers as well as between an old school of boxing and its challenge, but then also a junction between the fight on one hand and the march towards a political, cultural or social elsewhere on the other. 'Muhammad Ali', in the perspective of this double fight, marks the endpoint of an opening from the boxer Cassius Clay toward the cultural and political persona of Muhammad Ali. And it asserts the aftermath of this juncture through the accomplished second victory which re-confirms all the stakes of the first encounter. All of this triggered through the name, and as such also only re-confirming the naming as strategic gesture indicating the unavoidable entanglement in supposedly unrelated concerns.

---

<sup>291</sup> Ali's famous refusal to go to Vietnam with the American army and ultimately successful claim for conscientious objector status resonate here too, and with them the often quoted statement that he "got nothing against no Viet Cong". The timeline of events does not hinder this reading-together because all are seen retrospectively and through reproduction anyway, in the same way in which the poster multiplies the original announcement into a retrospective trophy and confirmation of celebrity status.

<sup>292</sup> See Gregory Allen Howard, 'Biographical Sketch', *Ali.com*, Nov. 2005, available online under <http://www.ali.com/article.cfm?id=26> (last accessed 14/10/08). This was also the last fight for two and a half years due to the withdrawal of his boxing licence in response to his refusal to be inducted to the army to fight in Vietnam.

None of this adds up to an allegory, and the entire nexus is at best tangential to “SONNY LISTON vs MUHAMMAD ALI” the work and the way in which it incorporates the poster. Yet the poster-story’s dispersal across levels and registers of relevance and meaning including the very probable loss of at least some of these registers in the overall nonchalance with which it is presented, at least indicates and thus opens onto, an embeddedness that is always multiple. Clashes can be simultaneously blunt and complex, heroic as well as treacherous, transparent and/or opaque; and it is in this lack of clarity and the impossibility to assess the effective impact of any of this that the logic of the fight-poster is always both oppositional and multiple, contiguous also with the unstable economies of meaning as claimed through namings. Shifting allegiances and ideological as well as sports horizons overlap here in such a way as to generate a series of collisions between one economy and another which remains quintessentially unknown, and subject to an ongoing series of fights and rematches, across the other divide that is Muhammad Ali’s suspension for the Vietnam refusal.

Providing the title for the entire arrangement, ‘Muhammad Ali vs Sonny Listen’ sets the tone for an engagement in which combinations of posters and gallery space, sequencing and enforced re-orientation can be perceived as simultaneously oppositional and entangled. Overall, the entire arrangement sits explicitly uncomfortably in relation to what it could appear to present: As items of popular culture the posters do not quite cohere into a panorama because the choice is too broad and further dispersed through the different languages in which the various bits of text appear, irrespective of their countries of origin or particular cultural reference points (Italian erotic feature film, British children’s tv or Afro-American boxing history). And as items of teenage bedroom decoration they fall short of the kind of psychological profile one could aim to decipher, ranging too far both sides into adulthood and childhood. If anything, they could be argued to reconstitute the trivia of 1960s/ 1970s popular culture in the form of a memory assemblage that is simultaneously cultural, collective and autobiographical without however resolving the inherent tensions between a part-remembered, part-imagined and part-projected range of stimuli. The organising criteria fail to become clear in either take, yet bedroom and panorama both seem to offer possible ways to impose order on what appears in either case as a sample isolated from a much broader range. The effective horizon is irreducibly vast, not least through the way in which posters as such circulate as disposable fragments for the assemblage of equally disposable (short-lived) reference fields. Posters customarily serve as pin-up projection screens, identification templates and constitutors of (imaginary) collectivities, and

various combinations of all of these. That they occur here in different languages that further multiply the field of distribution these posters occupy, only enhances the implicit promise and necessary disposability of the poster as form.

For the image material in the installation this awkward fit is echoed as tension between forced and contingent conditions: between the choice of posters made here on one hand and the abundance of the whole available range of images on the other. In the same perspective gluing the posters onto the wall contrasts with and implicitly highlights what would normally happen to posters: pinning and other more provisional forms of temporary and fundamentally malleable arrangements the contingency of which normally tends to override the notion of choice and set sequences. Here, the work imposes precisely fixity and order as aim or promise onto the flexible overall promise of choice, to such an extent that in order for it to be changed, the wall supporting it has to be literally and physically cut out. And so whilst the underlying choice runs against coherence, its arrangement nevertheless defies flexibility and change. In doing so it also denies disposability, the other fundamentally defining condition of the poster as cultural carrier which undermines the economy of this kind of intervention.

All of these can be read as jokes (failed re-decoration, incomplete panorama, and over-abundant non-bedroom) consisting in an inappropriate act in relation to its respective field, and exactly as such can be seen to function as transgressions in relation to those fields. Testing out and thus indicating the limits of the respective field, these acts of transgression cohere the field they supposedly leave behind by marking out its perimeters. Physical cutting reinforces (ex-negativo) the notion of flexibility, the popular culture of a moment becomes cult material by standing in for the larger field it emerged from, and teenage psychograms are invoked as foil against which to assess the work.

In Freud too, who conceptualises the joke as near-breakdown of the foundational distinction between registers of experience and their processing, the pleasure derived from this displacement is only ever regulatory for the stable overall economy in relation to which it operates. The “localized economy”<sup>293</sup> of the joke “seek(s) to gain a small yield of pleasure from the mere activity, untrammelled by needs, of our mental apparatus”<sup>294</sup>, yet “the effort made by jokes to recover the old pleasure in nonsense or the old pleasure in words finds itself inhibited in normal moods by objections raised by critical reason; and in every individual case this has

---

<sup>293</sup> Freud, op.cit.,p.169

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., p.179

to be overcome”<sup>295</sup> and thus remains limited to a transgressive function; and as such, as is the nature of transgression, only consolidates overall coherence of the law and its totalising completeness: “Dreams serve predominantly for the avoidance of unpleasure, jokes for the attainment of pleasure; but all our mental activities converge in these two aims”<sup>296</sup>, and thus only stabilise each other in an overall balance of tendencies. The various features and occurrences can thus be subsumed, in Freud, under the generalised terms of a psychical process for which the actual manifestations and operations of humour in all their apparent confusion and lack of clarity are mere surface distractions to be overcome by appropriate re-cohering reading strategies.

Such transgression sets up role-templates. For “SONNY LISTON vs MUHAMMAD ALI”, the figure of the ‘artist’ as trickster is one such stable outcome. As fantasy/reality assimilation combining extravagance and commentary function, the artist/trickster constitutes a representational template that allows to posit Slominski as author behind the inversions of “Sonny Listen vs Muhammad Ali”. Slominski then, in this reading, becomes as trickster artist who engages with an existing range of conditions and framings from the particular vantage point of the artist as localised exception. It is then up to the artist, in the overall mess of lost references and unhinged coordinates, to restore a semblance of order. Under these terms, the work appears as a re-dressing of orientations (literally), as premised on the very particular economy of artistic intervention in relation to an overall economy of images, attention patterns and their globalised flux. Precisely this secured interdependence of both positions, image economy and artistic practice, as both separate and related (as separated so that they can be related), then allows to conceptualise the entire arrangement in terms of Freud’s notion of *pleasure from nonsense* and localised expenditure of energy.

The extreme formulation of this structurally cohering approach occurs in Freud’s account of irony as indirect speech that “comes very close to joking and is counted among the subspecies of the comic”<sup>297</sup>:

“Its essence lies in saying the opposite of what one intends to convey to the other person, but in sparing him contradiction by making him understand—by one’s tone of voice, by some accompanying gesture, or (where writing is concerned) by some small stylistic indications—that one means the opposite of what one says. Irony can only be employed when the other person is

---

<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p.171

<sup>296</sup> Ibid., p.179f

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p.73

prepared to hear the opposite, so that he cannot fail to feel an inclination to contradict. As a result of this condition, irony is exposed particularly easily to the danger of being misunderstood. It brings the person who uses it the advantage of enabling him readily to evade the difficulties of direct expression, for instance in invectives. It produces comic pleasure in the hearer, probably because it stirs him into a contradictory expenditure of energy which is at once recognised as being unnecessary.”<sup>298</sup>

Freud sets it off against both the joke and the unconscious (“A comparison like this between jokes and a closely related type of the comic may confirm our assumption that what is peculiar to jokes is their relation to the unconscious and that this may perhaps distinguish them from the comic as well”<sup>299</sup>), but also accepts it as “very close to joking”, counts it among the “subspecies of the comic”<sup>300</sup> and assesses it under exactly the criteria he applies to his reading of both jokes and dreams. Even though it is only ever a part of the entire spectrum of the comic and its operations (“The only technique that characterises irony is representation by the opposite.”<sup>301</sup>) this focussed reduction only highlights its functional dimension and makes for its (potential) applicability. Irony functionalises the cluster of conditions surrounding the comic into the very premise of its operations. After all irony is saying something, indirectly but ideally in such a way as to be understood). In Freud’s reading it is thus implicitly posited as a technology of the comic, as an application of the comic for a particular form of communication. The main difference to joke- and dream-work lies in the way in which they have to be deciphered differently. Both though, in Freud’s account, need to be read. Providing a (critical) commentary (on situation, on impossibility, ect) thus remains within the register of legibility and representation Freud so clearly and decidedly imposed on the joke and its workings. Irony as indirect form of communication is straightened out when compared to the dream-work.

This communication’s specificity and potential lie in the mutually shared conditions necessary for irony to be understood. The sharing occurs between partners who share reference points, and ultimately an attitude that sets the terms of its usage: That ironic statements can easily be misunderstood is not only the pitfall of irony, but also its critical potential. Along with the confusion about the speaker’s position, the slippage between manifest and latent content of the statement simultaneously

---

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p.174

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p.73

introduces the possibility of evasion and outlines irony as practice whose ambivalence creates a space of possible commentary and ultimately criticism. Irony is thus always potentially also an indirect talking about the conditions under which it takes place. Slominski's work too can then be seen to provide a comment on institutional framing, on the impossibility of redressing any kind of balance, as demonstrating the impotence of a gesture in the face of much broader exchange circuits, and as culturally gratuitous act responding to a generalised and uncontrollable assault of images. In this perspective of an attitude that combines strategic indifference and tactical evasion, irony goes beyond the frame work set up by Freud because the danger of being misunderstood which serves as a regulatory cautionary outline for Freud, can also be mobilised precisely as the beginning of an unravelling of coherently constituted statements and positions.. Once double talking is introduced, it can also become multiple, and in this irreconcilable multiplicity of registers (and approaches as spelled out here) irony as structured economy (Freud) reaches the limits of its applicability. The possibility of shifts between reading attitudes of commentary and evasion, for instance, or between strategy and play, mobilises irony exactly in order to unhinge the linkage between irony and conditions. If originally it seems to be offering an indirect way of talking about something (specific), it is precisely the unclear space of its indirectness that ultimately severs the links to a signifying register. No longer referable back to context, it becomes an engine for multiple attachments.

Irony as inscribed into this kind of tendency opens onto movements with a different validity and which Deleuze has described as the sideways movements of *humour*. These movements themselves, as shifts and displacements, play out the transition toward humour, and instead of replacing models of interpretation they allow to highlight this transition as marking the area where irony and humour are not opposed, but the latter undoes the former by flooding or overflowing its operations. Humour in this sense drowns out the cohering framework Freud develops from and applies to *the joke*.

### **3.1.2 Deleuze's ad-ventures of humour and the laterality of multiple engagements**

Freud's focus on outcome and closure, the *resolution of incongruities* as economic parameter for the operations of joke-work, structurally has to overlook and thus overcompensates for the fact that a joke is not always and necessarily proto-ironic, that this emphasis is itself the result of, rather than material for, cohering structural perspectives, and that humour as other distinct underlying mode of 'the comic' is

also at play in the joke and can be mobilised for and through it. Irrespective of the comic and irony as psychological and/ or communicative functions, the joke (or the comic) can also (potentially, even though obviously not in Freud) be thought in terms of what Deleuze calls 'humour'. Rather than engaging in and contributing to pre-existing exchanges, such "humour is atonal, absolutely imperceptible and makes something shoot off", and in doing so vacates the place of scripted engagements.

For Deleuze, "an ironist is someone who discusses principles; he is seeking a first principle, a principle that comes even before the one that was thought to be first, he finds a course that is even more primary than the others. [...] This is why he proceeds by questioning, he is a man of conversation, of dialogue, he has a particular tone, always of the signifier." Humour, on the other hand, "is completely the opposite: principles count for little, everything is taken literally, the consequences are expected of you (this is why humour is not transmitted through plays on words, puns, which are of the signifier, and like a principle within the principle). Humour is the art of consequences or effects."<sup>302</sup>

In contrast to Freud's reading of the joke as resolution, this latter notion of the comic as humour in motion shifts the focus toward the generating of effects and provides a mode of un-containing and un-cohering arrangements through the active operations of humour. In contrast to *joking* as direct activation of a joke's structural make-up as it was played through above in a first reading of Andreas Slominski's combination of posters, walls, cuts and glue, humour entertains a less defined and less directed relationship to the effects it produces. Installed as an active assemblage of component parts and operations, humour triggers off effects. Deleuze conceptualises this in forms of different spatialities and the kinds of movements they respectively allow for. Instead of hierarchical verticality, spatial and otherwise, acted out between distinct levels of signification, humour consists in sets of attitudes played out in (relation to) a flattened milieu of operations. What is required for it is "an odd inspiration" through which one can "know how to 'descend'" to a surface play as "twofold dismissal of heights and depths".<sup>303</sup> Deleuze describes it as a being-thrown that stands in clear contrast to clearer acts of conscious and directed movement,

---

<sup>302</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.68. For the distinction between irony and humour as "two ways of overturning the law", see also (albeit within a different spatial model) Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and repetition* [1968], transl. by Paul Patton, London: Athlone Press, 1994, p.5: "The first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears as an art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles. The second is humour, which is an art of consequences and descents, of suspensions and falls."

<sup>303</sup> Deleuze: *Logic of Sense*, pp.135f.

such as (in this case) particularly the “technique of the ascent” he ascribes to Socratic irony. The contrast between irony and humour then really is no longer one of directions, between descending and ascending, but takes place between different types of movement and the relations they establish to whatever their subject or object might be. Humour-effect (or ‘effect-humour’) is opposed to irony not as a differently featured correlate (as if humour and irony were simply two different forms of the joke), but as a fundamentally differing modality of effects.

As far as this can indeed be conceptualised in spatial terms, descent is only insofar spatially directed as it vacates any elevated position and leads towards a spatiality of lateral movement that ultimately defies the organisational logic of (spatial) dependencies and correlations itself. As fundamentally different mode, it is characterised by ‘lateral’ and ‘slipping’ movements and thus displaced from a spatialised model premised on structure (or on principles). “An ironist is someone who discusses principles”, argues Deleuze. “He constantly goes up and down [...], he has a particular tone, always of the signifier”. Humour, by contrast, “never goes up nor down, it is on the surface” and consists in “surface effects”<sup>304</sup>. Humour moves on a register of activity premised on the generation of effects, rather than resulting from or illustrating given dependencies, be they spatial or of the order of the signifier. Spatiality itself figures here as a signifying practice as soon as it establishes structuring splits between different levels of signification between which irony can then move up and down. Deleuze calls it an “art of pure events” precisely because it shoots off from the surface, irrespective of any underlying spatial organisation that would script its trajectory or indeed its operations. Humour, argues Deleuze, “has always undermined games of principles or causes in favour of the event”<sup>305</sup>. Ultimately the difference between irony and humour is again one of attitude, and maybe excess, overspilling the equation of irony through attention to the wrong details, putting the energy in the wrong place, insisting on it being important beyond the (ironic) function it fulfills in relation to the given situation/proposition.

This re-configuring of reading perspectives opens another way of looking at Slominski’s re-dressed posters in *SONNY LISTEN vs MUHAMMAD ALI*—not in

---

<sup>304</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.68

<sup>305</sup> Ibid., p.69. In Deleuze, events emerge from a surface of multiple dimensions, but without defined spatiality. For a fundamentally differently structured account of the event as necessarily imposing itself from elsewhere, see how Jacques Derrida develops ‘a certain impossible possibility of saying the event’ (Jacques Derrida, ‘A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event’, in W.J.T. Mitchell and Arnold I Davidson (eds.), *The Late Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp.223-243).

relation to balance as aim, but precisely aiming at the dressing of an imbalance in which a partial economy does not resolve the incongruity of the overall (impossible) economy, as Freud would have it, but to the contrary affects the overall economy by deserting it in such a way as to make it unravel. Read thus (if indeed this is still reading; one could talk of a projecting, or indeed a mirroring instead), Slominski's turning of three posters only re-dresses an inversion that was already skewed through its multiplication into different languages, different films, materials, and their circulations up and until the point when they occur as posters in different languages on street stalls in a market in London (as far as this is a legible subtext; or at least as artefacts in a London gallery, that are not necessarily London bound by any visible clues). The inversion of three posters from that upside-down series does not restore order because it does not operate on the same register as the incongruity of the 'list' of posters. Instead it juxtaposes the incongruity of belonging and translations that occurs in the forced (glued) juxtaposition of Italian, German, English and French posters for all sorts of visual productions with the spatialised logic of inverted directions, and in doing so presents one as entirely unresponding to the other. The result is not enough and too much, inefficient in its effect on the cultural non-logic of dispersal, and excessive in its physicality toward the gallery setting and its modes of framing: the frame created (made visible) through the incision outlines the upright posters in contrast to the rest of the gallery wall and highlights the plasterboard physicality of the gallery wall as always potentially immaterial and originally installed as sub-structural material in order to accommodate for exactly the malleability that Slominski solicits, but then defies by making it excessively visible. Plasterboard exists mainly for the purpose of being cut and pasted, only that this is normally so precisely because it allows for this operation to be performed without leaving any traces. The very material promise of plasterboard lies in the possibility of seamless montage it offers, a visually organised economy here destabilised through incision, an insistence on materiality and the visibility of traces that narrate exactly this story. The trace of the incision and re-insertion is visual only insofar as its visibility reveals the tactile/ physical/ sculptural operations the supposedly two-dimensional thinness of the poster has become entangled in. The inversions destabilise that economy too by insisting on a physicality that operates on an entirely separate register.

The real impact of these operations lies in the improbable fusion of different registers of the situation engaged with and the gestures put forward in relation to them, even if individually the interventions/ operations can be accounted for as ironic comments and challenges waiting to be resolved. In their coming together, as

in Deleuze's appropriation of humour, "there is no resemblance (nor should there be) between what one points out and what one has been asked". What Deleuze calls a "difficult relation, which rejects the false Platonic duality of the essence and the example" and which can be articulated in "this exercise which consists in substituting, designating, monstrations, consumptions and pure destructions for significance",<sup>306</sup> occurs here as a lateral con/fusion between situations and works, as well as works' registers and other works too. When posters are cut out complete with wall and re-inserted, the diagrammatic schema of the piece is shot through with a completely inappropriate materiality that is neither relevant nor truly metaphorical or symbolic. Instead it introduces physicality as other dimension and non-response.<sup>307</sup>

Similarly, when this line of posters which is in itself heterogeneous and multiple in make-up and in terms of the responses it invites, occurs next to another line which is an electric cable feeding an electric stove in the gallery but circumnavigating the street in front of the gallery before arriving there, connections become more unstable still: not simply because the relation between the works is unclear (if indeed such a connection is authored here), but because they mutually cancel out categories of sense and appropriateness by crossing the line of the posters (in the photo) with the 'line' of the cable, and vice versa. This crossing is not just a Duchampian confusion premised on the transfer to language; rather it insists on both the factual use / connectivity as well as the metaphorical one. Not just "the ground of bodies" but also "the groundlessness of their mixtures"<sup>308</sup> as Deleuze puts it. Materiality, metaphor, symbolic appear in an overall and decidedly 'flat'

---

<sup>306</sup> Deleuze: *Logic of Sense*, p.135

<sup>307</sup> Explicitly this is played out in Slominski's work for manifesta 2 in Luxemburg where the mobility of a ladder is underplayed in a similar way (*The Ladder*, 1998). In order to move a ladder into one of the exhibition cubicles, Slominski cut back the walls in order to make space for the ladder's sideways profile, moved the ladder, deposited it in the space and repaired the walls so that no trace was visible. The anti-economy of the installation is on one hand only revealed in the accompanying video, and on the other manifest in precisely this near-invisibility – disappearance and invisibility of the trace act as further challenges to a straight economic notion of intervention here (documented under <http://www.manifesta.org/manifesta2/e/artistes/slominski.html>, last accessed 14/10/08)



fig.29

<sup>308</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.135

juxtaposition, which in turn and in the exhibition occurs next to *Colour to Paint One German Tank*<sup>309</sup> which can now no longer be kept automatically separate either.



fig 30

Instead the various arrangements and embedded gestures start slipping between one joke and another, in such a way that the joke comes undone as operation of closure and instead recedes behind an overall 'movement' of humour. This "adventure of humor, this two-fold dismissal of height and depth to the advantage of the surface"<sup>310</sup> installs a new type of ground on which these things take place no longer in verticality of signification and legibility, but as lateral shifts in a flattened field of gestures, objects and moments, where aspects and sets combine in an overall unravelling of coordinates.

At stake in this approach (if not the work) is a take on humour as inward pull that operates like the outward proliferation discussed above: as arrangement of effects that remain unstable, simultaneously underperforming and overspilling any cohering function the joke supposedly serves. Freud's causal link and strict sequentiality of "bewilderment and illumination"<sup>311</sup> too comes undone then and is replaced by a

<sup>309</sup> Slominski: *Colour to paint one German tank*, 2003 (twelve tins of paint and one tin of thinner).

<sup>310</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.136

<sup>311</sup> Freud, op.cit., p.12

decidedly less determined 'coming together' of the "criteria and characteristics of jokes"<sup>312</sup> Freud pulls together in a challengingly heterogeneous list: a coming together in which "activity, relation to the content of our thoughts, the characteristic of playful judgement, the coupling of dissimilar things, contrasting ideas, 'sense in nonsense', the succession of bewilderment and enlightenment, the bringing forward of what is hidden, and the particular brevity of wit"<sup>313</sup> appear as series of dynamic possibilities, and precisely not as "*disjecta membra*, which we should like to see combined into an organic whole"<sup>314</sup>. In particular the "coupling of dissimilar things, contrasting ideas" and "sense in nonsense" can then be set free from the Freudian formula of "representation by nonsense and by the opposite"<sup>315</sup>, and become here in the following starting points for humour's particular forms of what Deleuze calls 'proliferation'. The list of observations about some of the key features and characteristics of jokes Freud assembles from then existing literature on the topic still holds but some aspects might come to the fore more than they ever could under the reading attention of cohering approaches; Freud dismisses the list as unsystematic and posits it as in need of structured organisation, whilst here it is productive precisely in its levelling of features through which the implicit hierarchy constructed in and through Freud's text comes undone. Shifting attention away from the psychological function of humour opens up a new use for exactly the incongruities diagnosed and criticised by Freud in his initial resume of existing accounts of humour. Once outside the optics of a cohering reading pattern, the incongruity of Freud's list itself can then finally become crucial as mirror and response to humour, rather than simply preparation for its containing framework<sup>316</sup>. With the heterogeneity of the list now opening onto humour under very different terms, it ceases to demonstrate a psychical (or psycho-social) function and indicates instead 'humour' in all its vagueness as an operating mode that can switch between qualities of the object and the subject (as Freud himself despairingly acknowledges when critiquing the disparity between accounts of humour in the

---

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., p.14

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Freud, op.cit., p.159. "We have now learned", claims Freud, "that nonsense in jokes is made to serve the same aims of representation" that he already suggested for dreams as "the way to a knowledge of the unconscious" (Ibid., p.175). Even where he acknowledges that "nonsense in a joke is an end in itself" (ibid., p.176), this besides functionalises nonsense for the pre-supposed "intention of recovering the old pleasure in nonsense" which he stipulates as "among the joke-work's motives" (ibid.).

<sup>316</sup> In Freud, the list appears as a vaguely dysfunctional sum total of existing accounts, all of which appear to be lacking in rigour and focus (according to Freud who imposes his own) and fail to see the representational function Freud accords to the joke.

subject and the object respectively by different writers<sup>317</sup>), and can start oscillating between quality and activity, function and operation, result and instigator. In light of this shift, the stimulus-response loop of psychological accounts of humour can then be replaced by humour as operational mode, to be internalised only ever as mode of dealing with world and thus never simply internal.

The above “list” Freud works so hard to cohere into features and possibilities of the joke and which he “should like to see combined into an organic whole”<sup>318</sup> becomes here an open field of possible beginnings, strategies and modes. The series of posters becomes precisely such a conjunctive list, too, and with it the entire work. Ceasing to exist within hierarchically defined parameters, the work enables an ambient configuration instead through which it exists in and generates multiple sets of relations simultaneously as well as incoherently. Instead of the economy of the joke, this is humour as a way of undoing economy as a relevant category.

### **3.2 Expanded traps and open forms of capture**

All this is only a range of encounters defined by the poles of closure on one hand and multiple engagements on the other if one wants to insist on their distinctiveness. But if distinctiveness as such is the result of (or at least affected by) registers of attitude and behaviour in relation to conditions (rather than responses to context), then even extreme forms of closure can be undone from within. And so, if Andreas Slominski has been building functioning animal traps for exhibitions since the mid-1980s, even these can and have to be re-considered in terms of what they set up, what (if anything) they enclose and what kind of mobilities they allow for. Although they obviously present, as tools for catching animals and their attention, rich technological metaphors for the making of art, this is only ever one dimension. “Even technology makes the mistake of considering tools in isolation: tools exist only in relation to the interminglings they make possible or that make them possible.”<sup>319</sup> As always in the logic of representational commentary, these traps can be looked at as ironic objects commenting upon the situations they are inserted into, objects thus to be understood as ironic comments in terms of an advanced position within institutional critique and informed by a Duchampian attitude through which function is transposed from an empirical to a metaphorical register. Or they can be read as organised around a Freudian set of moves of displacement and

---

<sup>317</sup> See Freud, op.cit., p.9f

<sup>318</sup> Ibid., p.14

<sup>319</sup> Deleuze/Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p.90

condensation as indicators for the interlocking registers of meaning and art historically framed promises of transgression.

Or, and that is informed by the fundamentally opposite perspective, they can also be mobilised as vehicles in a move to different sets of attitudes and questions. The underlying difference between both tendencies can be played out in the ways in which these traps produce capture. On one hand, capture can be the result of a completed function. On the other, it opens onto gradual involvements and modes of engagement which remain tentative and premised on a desired potential for contact. In this sense, what is being captured and in which mode, remains equally open-ended. Inside and outside, movement and stillness are then simply indications of different states on a sliding scale of forms and motions, and capture ceases to be a functional horizon and starts occurring instead in a whole series of attitudes, attractions and sympathies that prolong themselves right through to the inside of the trap, and out again.

The working assumption here is that Andreas Slominski's traps can be activated to push this shift from economic exchange to humorous dislocation to the extreme point where the very distinction underpinning the shift collapses. And in order to test how far this can carry, the following will read these traps formally/ diagrammatically in a micro-undoing. That and how they relate to surrounding phenomena and to what one would otherwise call context, is only accessible after that first operation. Projecting Deleuze's spatialised rhetoric onto them both enables and unhinges this formalist tendency such that it can be played out in the always unclear slippage between concept and shape.

### **3.2.1 Reaching out**

In a functionalist reading a trap only ever leads to the kind of capture which rigidly frames a creature into immobility that is otherwise and originally unframed in its inhabitation of the given shared environment. Waiting for the animal's movement and then body to complete the set-up, the trap's apparatus is a more or less elaborate device for bringing about closure, set in anticipation of an action acting merely as trigger and generating finite conclusions. They produce tangible, even quantifiable results: When the trap snaps close, the fulfilment of its function and the degree of its efficiency can be measured by what remains in its mechanical fangs. The intricate elements of its arrangement, its making, placing and setting are purely preparational in this scenario and important only as preliminaries to the outcome they facilitate.

But this is thought too much from the perspective of the end<sup>320</sup>, where the trap appears as point of closure for a movement it terminates and completes by cutting it off. And even this one is not necessarily definitive since the trap itself does not have to seal the fate of the prey. Rather the basic principle and sole common denominator of traps is the (more or less drastic and more or less temporary) restriction of movement. The use then made of that condition is a separate issue - killing is only one, close examination or even simply transit and transport are others. All of them are arrangements of movement that overflow the idea of even the closed trap as static. Yet even is one was to assume the finality of a full trap, up until that point, the trap is necessarily an arrangement of attractions and interferences, not simply an outcome. It consists not so much in an action comple(men)ting a given setting ['closure'], but rather in soliciting, facilitating and arranging encounters as partial overlaps between territories that only tentatively and seemingly blend in the moment of their coming together when the trap snaps close. Whilst a straight setting seeks completion by fitting action, traps are always multiple set-ups. There is a difference of movement where the setting flips into a set-up of a different sort, where setting and action cease to be parallel and appropriate and start overlapping in such a way as to generate much unclearer kinds of effects. A set-up is always multiple because it involves at least two courses of events (one empirical and one potential, one habitual and one exceptional, one regular and one illegitimate) and fundamentally negotiates their interferences. Its focus is shifted: unlike a setting, it does not so much allow for an action to occur or something to be enacted as it interferes with an action already taking place. Where it is an enhancement, it modifies an outcome by accelerating and facilitating one course of events over another, and is always closer to being abusive than to being appropriate.

From the start and in the very nature of its make-up, any trap is primarily an insert premised on the implicit assumption that there already is a territory - normally that of the elusive and/or dangerous animal -, that this territory is worth interfering with and that it is made up of patterns of movement (path) or of behaviour (habit) which can be known, at least vaguely, and translated into trajectories to be crossed. And rather than complementing this territory in the same way in which an action complements a setting by fulfilling it, a trap adds to this original milieu by doubling

---

<sup>320</sup> Cfr. Eva Meyer: *Faltsache*, Basel/Frankfurt am Main, Stroemfeld, 1996, p.45 ("Soweit Koch, doch ist dies zu sehr vom Ende her gedacht"). To refuse closure here means to turn it from an end into a starting point and to investigate what comes before and after it, and what happens against its horizon. Deleuze's anti-psychoanalytic project similarly claims that "the Freudian formula must be reversed" so that the unconscious can be understood as an object of production rather than of revelation (see Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.78).

parts of it, and reaches out for a movement (it is movement that triggers off traps) that takes place in its own separate milieu, its own set of conditions, possibilities and arrangements and is unprepared for the contact. One milieu is a supposedly given habitual set of patterns carried out by the animal, the other is set up by the trap and synthetic; but their crossing is of the order of the encounter and denaturalises both. The juxtaposition of these two milieus arranges an asymmetrical engagement precisely by maintaining an incommensurable qualitative difference which allows for an active (and actively triggered) exchange between the two fields. Movement and action are equally distributed: given on one set and solicited by the other, but also given in the latter in the very setting up of the approximating arrangement.

The trap is a mode of interfering that involves and requires<sup>321</sup> smell to be copied and re-placed, directions to be deviated ever so slightly, tension to be set up as potential and setting-up in general as the anticipation of impact. The hunt for food as way into the hole, the bite at the bait as snap of the trap operate first and foremost as replications. They replicate food as bait, jaws as steel and bite as snap, invert the bite at the bait into the snap of the trap and in doing so not only catch, but re-arrange elements that make up the animal's trajectory: its paths and preferences for certain spots over others, its most desired smells and tastes and forms of attention. By appropriating bits of processes, sequences of movement and patterns of preference, a trap assemblage encompasses both the trap and the animal as diagrammatic configurations. Necessarily accounting for the animal "less by its genus, its species, its organs, and its functions, than by the assemblages into which it enters"<sup>322</sup>, the trap replicates and appropriates the animal by turning it into a complex of operations. This translation affects the animal as much as its territory. Caught in the same overlapping connectivity of operations, the existing territory and the trap's setting too are assemblages, neither spatial nor natural but operational. As Deleuze argues in a different context, these "are not encounters between domains, for each domain is already made up of such encounters in itself"<sup>323</sup>, but

---

<sup>321</sup> The seemingly inevitable necessity of the arrangement arises as an aftermath of its original applications and their heightened sense of urgency. Even though more or less severed in the exhibition context, function constitutes the trap's unalienable horizon of expectation.

<sup>322</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.69. The assemblages are also constituted in different modes of attention that condition fundamentally different types of traps. Some are disguised and account for an ambient mode of perception, others functionalise a highly focussed attention to the bait that necessarily excludes seemingly more marginal information. In this model of the trap, its workings can be blatantly exposed because attention will not be brought to them.

<sup>323</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.28

“rather an encounter between two reigns, a short-circuit, the picking up of a code where each is deterritorialized.”<sup>324</sup> Setting a trap thus does not consist in the (re)creation of a complete environment to duplicate the supposedly natural habitat of the species at stake. For the trapper, a habitat only ever exists as a functional arrangement made up of attractions and needs and patterns and all the provisions to accommodate these. Understanding the environment means being able to break it down into an (always approximative) understanding of its make-up and thus being able to interfere with it by multiplying and/or substituting attractors, movements and trajectories.

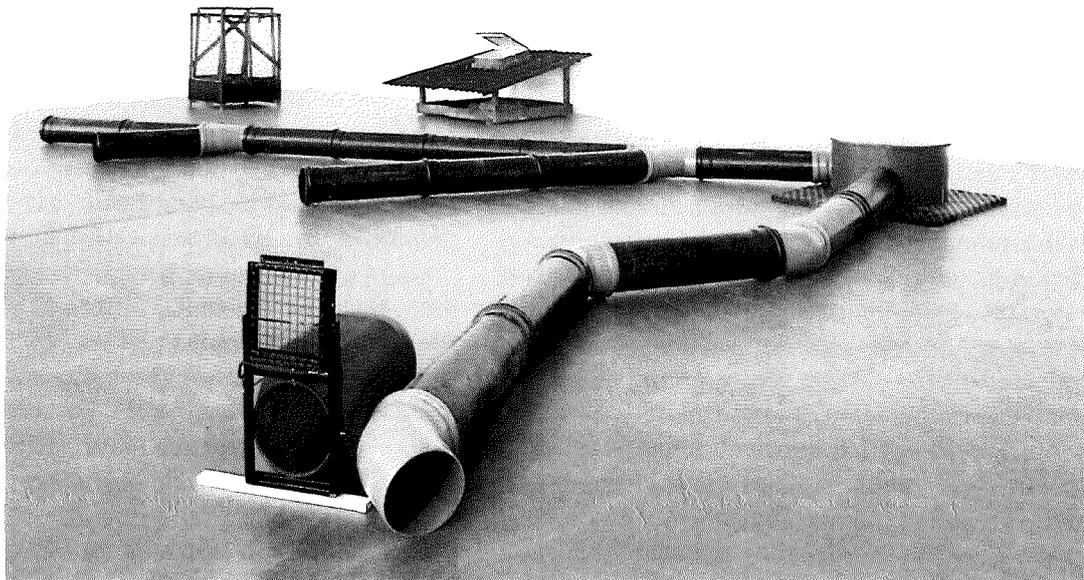


fig.31

This is how plastic tubing in *Fox Trap* (1998, fig.31) replicates the den without copying it through the kind of operation Deleuze and Guattari define as a “productive mapping” in contrast to a reproductive and representative “tracing”<sup>325</sup>. Slominski’s setting up of tubes and attractions is a fox’s den as diagram and not as image (copy), and sets up movement as trajectory and condition within which it can best take place. The narrow tube and its arrangement are an approach to the condition most suited for the particular capacities and preferences of the fox in movement. Rather than the replication of a natural given, coming close to the model here is an optimization of conditions.<sup>326</sup> Those that seem most appropriate,

<sup>324</sup> Ibid., p.44

<sup>325</sup> Deleuze/Guattari: *Thousand Plateaus*, pp.12f.

<sup>326</sup> Donna Haraway describes the transition from perfection to optimization as one of the features of emerging “informatics of domination”. With “biotic components” replacing the “organism”, both fox and trap can be understood as elements in a cyborg arrangement of feedback and control (Donna Haraway, op.cit., p.167).

promising and thus appealing for the fox are reconstituted in an attempt to appropriate and integrate its movements.

It operates by what Gilles Deleuze calls stealing in the context of a different kind of capture: a capture that does not produce closure (capture of the animal), but “takes hold of a form and a subject to extract from them variable speeds and floating affects”<sup>327</sup> as a way of interfacing through “capture and thefts”<sup>328</sup>.

Dislodging “combinations of fluxes, emissions of particles at various speeds”<sup>329</sup> and re-arranging them in an assemblage “the only unity [of which] is that of co-functioning”<sup>330</sup> stealing like finding become operations of the encounter, and contrast with the normative operations of “regulating, recognizing and judging”<sup>331</sup> that rely on clear-cut entities and established relationships between these. The trap is set up as an interface to, not as the opposite of the animal’s habitual movements in an overall smooth space of solicited entanglements.

Features (bifurcations and zigzag) and conditions (narrow long spaces to be traversed) of the den are appropriated yet re-arranged so as to constitute a different sort of territory. They differ above all else in their directionality: Whilst the den is an open-ended arrangement of entries, exits and lines of flight, the tubing is centred and one-way in character. Lured in by the scent of the bait, the fox is stopped from exiting. The trap aims at a convergence between the two movements that eliminates their distance in space and difference in character and interlocks them in a forced joint duration. That is the horizon of the trap as fulfilled potential where relationships are stable and lasting.

But whilst the den assembles a functional machine for engaging the world (survival), the trap consists in the reverse engineering of an approximative functional analogy for the purpose of closure (catching), and so relationships between den and trap have to be established before the trap can be imposed on the den. Any setting of the trap is firstly an attempt at setting up the sheer possibility of interference. The interception of the animal takes place in the collision between a movement on one side and a partial reconstitution of its setting on the other side. Any set-up is a trap only ever after having been a (partial) facilitator, and the “nature-artifice distinction is not at all relevant here” because both are synthetic if that term designates a compositum of functional elements. Once the given territory is understood as

---

<sup>327</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, *op.cit.*, p.99

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

assemblage, it too is a “nature which must be constructed”<sup>332</sup> and always already is.<sup>333</sup>

Setting it up is therefore to aim at contact between two assemblages that are different in nature as well as heterogeneous already in their respective make-ups. And so “the difficult part is making all the elements of a non-homogeneous set, making them function together. Structures are linked to conditions of homogeneity, but assemblages are not. The assemblage is co-functioning, it is ‘sympathy’, symbiosis”<sup>334</sup> and as such happens in the (partial) overlap of operations. Their encounter is an approximation along functional lines rather than mimetic ones and replaces the linear coming close of similarity with the multiple coming together of functional sets and their short-circuited operations. The trap is not a copy but an approximating re-arrangement whose working takes off from wherever contact is established because it consists much more centrally in interfering with the animal’s movements, perceptions and operations, than it does in potentially catching it.<sup>335</sup> First and foremost (and certainly here for the exhibition context), the trap adds to the existing animal assemblage, albeit in an attempt to subtract the very animal from the assemblage. And since the points of interference are multiple in terms of their elements, in terms of the way in which they encounter each other and in terms of the quality of their outcomes, the relationship between animal, environment and trap remains quintessentially unstable.<sup>336</sup> It is articulated through the very interrelationship between attitudes, forms and their mutual contaminations.

### 3.2.2 Sympathizing appeals

One place from which to revisit the trap in terms of such expanded connectivities is the difference between a model of ‘sympathy’ on one hand and patterns of

---

<sup>332</sup> op.cit., p.98

<sup>333</sup> That, in Kafka’s story, the den/ burrow can be a trap and vice-versa in a continual oscillation between protection and capture, plays on this fundamental proximity between both types of assemblage. What is installed as a safeguard against intrusion is inevitably polyvalent and also potentially traps the inhabitant (Kafka, ‘The Burrow’, in op.cit., pp.325-259).

<sup>334</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.52

<sup>335</sup> Boris Groys proposes this kind of sympathetic engagement as a central characteristic of Slominski’s practice. He sees it as an attempt “to say more with the fulfilment of expectations than with deviations from these expectations” (Bettina Funcke, Jens Hoffman, “SlominSki” – a conversation with Boris Groys’, in: *Parkett* 55, 1999, pp.99-102, p.100).

<sup>336</sup> Shifting the focus towards the making and the processes invoked solicited and triggered is – even though achieved through the art placement - not an art-effect. It is rather at the very core also of the trade and craft of the trapper and constitutes its particular form of knowledge. In relation to the notion of the trapper and the complication of the readymade cfr. also Nancy Spector, ‘Berlin Detours’, in: *Parkett* 55, 1999, p.70-75 and “Of traps, tricks, and other riddles”, in: *Andreas Slominski*, exh. cat. Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, n.p.

'seduction' on the other. *Seduction* places the emphasis on strategic functionality and is fundamentally uni-directional. The *sympathetic* exchange between trap and den is not only multiple but also multi-directional. Whilst seduction may indicate the trap's functional horizon, its making and operations are organised differently. Attractors and their arrangements have to be configured with "deepest sympathy"<sup>337</sup>, in a balance of variables that is always experimental: a tentative solicitation of the encounter through the setting up of attractions as connective sympathising, enabling a co-functioning lateral to given procedures, and allowing for attitudes to bear upon linkages without automatically re-inscribing agency. Suspended in hopeful anticipation that an encounter will take place, this lure is the effective condition of the trap and stands in stark contrast to the finite character of the projected outcome. Against the implicit claim of a close fit that collapses both territories into one that is manageable and under control, the set-up opens onto a multiplicity of possible contacts before the decisive moment of the trap snapping to or not.

For the individual sample of a targeted species, this is mainly a question of the relation to bait or scent or the appeal of a bit of environment. But for the trap as a device and an invention this interface is multiplied further because it always aims at a population, not just an individual specimen. This plural imposes its own approximative condition which distinguishes traps from weapons and improvisations. Weapons are applied in a specifically focussed way, directly aimed as they are at a target; improvisations feed directly on the immediate conditions of a given situation. Both are ways of responding to a specific set of elements and simultaneously projecting them as targets and set horizons for their operations. A trap by contrast works on assumptions of a more general kind. It is premised on a notion of plausibility that comes out of a history of uses made and having been tested on the real. Embodying the knowledge of a trade, traps have a history of development and optimization that constantly attempts to narrow the gap between their own workings and that of the territory preyed upon. But precisely because traps inevitably encompass this sum of experiences and failures and improvements, 'closure' inevitably remains evasive. The width of encounters and the notion of the population itself defy it and as such undermine any finitude.

---

<sup>337</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.52



fig 32

Instead of snapping close, *Mass Mousetrap* (1990, fig.32) is a device for continual processing that groups multiples in one direction and organises their movement as

an entry without exit. Often in traps, their re-setting is an implicitly acknowledged but well disguised background of their operations. Here, it is one of its most prominent dimensions and highlights the infinite populations it is set up to take on. Since the tube swings back into position each time a mouse has passed and tipped the tube into a slide, re-setting the device consists solely in emptying the bucket before the mice inside reach critical mass. The emptying has to be imagined as a repetitive gesture in a futile attempt to eliminate masses. And like the individual prey, these masses too have to be thought of as multiple. Additionally and always in the background lurk all those other animals that might not have responded to this set-up, that remain indifferent to the type of bait or are deterred by the construction itself, other active populations not reached by this machine that remain to be grasped by others, existing ones and those yet to be invented.

Plural in populations and multiple in attractions and modes of encounter, trap arrangements are never complete because there is no definitive trap and never just one register they have to answer to. Control is only ever containment (if that) and thus vague and only relative, constantly allowing for change and invention. This is why, in trapping, there is always a broad range of technically very different traps targeting the same species. And it is how, for Slominski, a whole range of traps targeting very different species can be juxtaposed in one and the same territory without this superimposition affecting their basic, always already multiple operations. Juxtaposing traps for different species and traps aiming at the same type of animal, some of them similar, some very different, in one and the same space, Slominski only highlights their mutual overlaps and necessary, fundamental lack of overarching efficiency. Where a trap for leopards (*Leopard Trap*, 2002, fig.33), a re-enforced container for aggressive dogs (*Trap for Combat Dogs*, 2001/2, fig.34) and a housing suggestion for guinea pigs (*Guinea-Pig Trap*, 1997/8, fig.35) come together and constitute an excessive overlap of solicited territories, they inevitably mark out more potential inhabitations than the one(s) they respectively target.<sup>338</sup>

---

<sup>338</sup> Slominski's overall installation of traps at Fondazione Prada, Milan, in 2003, is one such case that successfully stages the traps in their mutually overlapping claims (Andreas Slominski, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 10/04–13/06 2003). (By contrast, see for a musealised presentation of Slominski's traps for example the room installed at Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld (2008), which seems to display, rather than set, the traps. The room is furthermore roped off and invites viewers only to look at the works from a (safe) distance, from the entrance.) Throughout the discussion of Slominski's traps here, the Fondazione Prada installation serves as primary reference point.



fig 33



fig34



fig.35

One only ever multiplies the other in an always potentially expendable series. Setting them up remains a tentative activity on all levels - an elaborate staging that hijacks preferences to divert movements, to introduce altered trajectories by always only partially following lines of attraction. Against an ever-receding horizon of all-encompassing efficiency, the real activity of the trap arrangement lies in setting up a 'becoming possible' of contact and in arranging the coming together of trap and prey as an intertwining of potentials in a fundamentally multiple field of attractions to be encountered and/or followed. Sympathy here is an attitude enabling the co-functioning of the various milieus and their partial overlaps, as well as the possibility of a condition of closeness that is not bound by an established set of conditions any longer. The sympathies exchanged as well as the sympathies leaking from one juxtaposition to the next in contiguous jumps, constitute a field where sympathies can generate proximities without fixating them.

### 3.2.3 Forms of surfacing

For the situation set-up by the trap, this establishes a new type of grid. “A thing, an animal, a person are now only definable by movements and rests, speeds and slownesses (longitude) and by affects, intensities (latitude)” on a field of “cinematic relations between unformed elements”, as Deleuze outlines it rather than being defined as or indeed definable by established sets of characteristic features. The “map of speeds and intensities”<sup>339</sup> resulting from this kind of account can never account for results and closure and has to replace questions of particular characteristic qualities with an attention to modes of movement and their overlaps.<sup>340</sup>

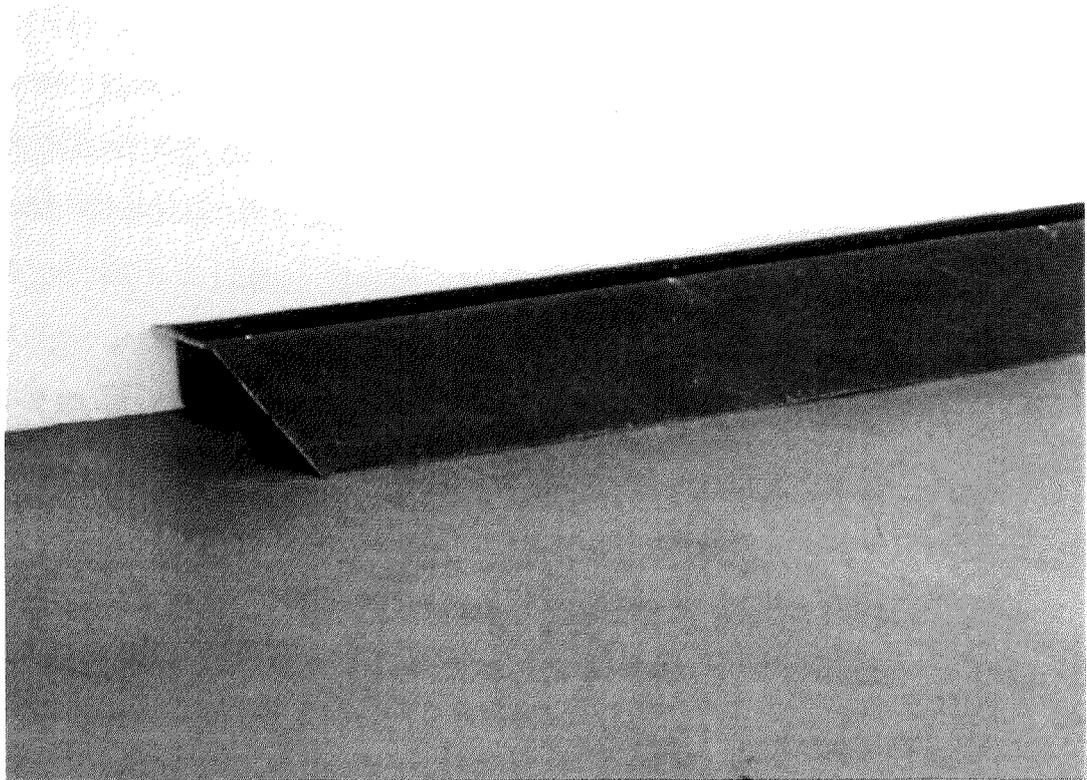


fig.36

---

<sup>339</sup> Deleuze/ Parnet, op.cit., p.93

<sup>340</sup> Even inside most traps, the animal is not still at all. Very often its movement is much more intense, because its expanse is more contained. Movement is not arrested but organised in a different way. Although this could appear as a blatant illustration of the structural opposition between the planes of “consistence” and “organization” (ibid., p.91f.), to read it as such would mean to reduce the trap to an outcome and foreclose an understanding of how its overall set-up aims at diverse (invisible) populations and potential inhabitations of space.

In Slominski, the crossovers of these multiple solicitations are negotiated on a ground where trajectories are organised along lines of attraction and directed across the adjoining surfaces of the floor and the trap. In a proliferation of traps for mice, hamsters, guinea pigs, the prey operates on floor level. The trap is set up as a continuation of this ground that directs movements by leading snails up a slope that continues the floor at a slight angle (*Ditch to Trap Slugs*, 1998, fig.36) and guiding mice up a ramp that takes off from it by continuing and diverting it (the ground) in a whole variety of mouse traps.



fig 37

What matters here is that this floor is sometimes tilted, sometimes folded up but never broken.<sup>341</sup> Rather than digging out a double ground as a challenge to the integrity of the given space, these traps project themselves onto it. Even in *Trap to Throttle Small Vermin* (1992, fig.37), the decisive gap is constituted between additional grounds that open only to then come down again. And in *Birdstation* (1998/2002, fig.38) it folds up in the form of nets that become a container of three-dimensional space only when activated.<sup>342</sup> In all of these, depth and the puncture of a given ground are replaced with the modulations of a plane that translates one movement into another.<sup>343</sup>

<sup>341</sup> Even the fox's den in *Fox Trap* is arranged on the surface and not underground.

<sup>342</sup> Even birds are caught only at the moment when they approach the floor. In *Trap for Birds of Prey* (1997), they are (imagined as) impaled on its spiky extensions, in *Bird Trapping Compound* (1998/99) contained in its vicinity by the activated nets.

<sup>343</sup> This flatness is not automatically a feature of traps; see e.g. Carsten Höller's children's trap made by digging a hole on a beach and filling it with jellyfish before covering it with sand and baiting it with a toy (Carsten Höller: *Jenny*, 1992, 13 mins, colour, sound).



fig.38

Deleuze elaborates such smoothly lateral type of motion as a form of *ad-venture*: It is “by sliding” that Carroll’s Alice arrives at “her climb to the surface, her disavowal of false depth and her discovery that everything happens at the border. This is why Carroll abandons the original title of the book: *Alice’s Adventures Underground*”, why Deleuze himself reads Carroll, and why Slominski places his traps on the surface of the gallery floor and negotiates encounters by overlapping trajectories on top of it. “Digging and hiding”, which are the beginning of Alice’s journey and conventionally prominent forms of making traps, here “[give] way to a lateral sliding” that stays at the surface. “It suffices to follow it far enough, precisely enough and superficially enough in order to reverse sides”<sup>344</sup> and get to the other side of the trap<sup>345</sup>.

---

<sup>344</sup> Deleuze: *Logic of Sense*, p.9

<sup>345</sup> In Deleuze’s reading of Carroll’s Alice, sliding is primarily a movement between the two sides of the surface. But it is also a mode of engaging with material that oscillates (‘slides’) between registers of description and affirmation, analysis and claim, following the work and re-arranging it. A similar approach is adopted here for the engagement with Deleuze and Slominski. “Her” ad-venture is Deleuze’s adventure with Carroll. Their coming together with Slominski is the author’s.

In Deleuze, this is played out as humour, “the art of the surface, which is opposed to the old irony, the art of depths and heights”<sup>346</sup>. Whilst irony introduces different distinct levels and occurs in their clashes, in humour “all height and depth [is] abolished”<sup>347</sup>. The shift from irony to humour marks a change mainly of direction. “One could say that the old depth having been spread out became width.”<sup>348</sup> Movement towards and into the ground spreads out into a continual lateral displacement that inaugurates an “art of the surfaces and of the doubles, of nomad singularities and of the always displaced aleatory point”<sup>349</sup>. No longer grounded, this art and the exposed trap<sup>350</sup> take up a random position on the floor, which becomes its sheer support rather than constituting its material.

This is why *Snow-Grouse Trap* (2002, fig.39) does more than simply integrate the transportation of the prey into the make-up of the trap as an additional function. Rather it places the image of an environment on the surface of the floor on runners<sup>351</sup>, and turns it into an explicitly mobile occupation. The perspective of the quest and its focus of direction are replaced with a laterality that occupies a plane by moving sideways along it.<sup>352</sup>

---

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., p.9

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., p.141

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., p.9. Even though Slominski often interferes with the very fabric of the gallery setting, he digs no holes as traps to fall into. In a similar way to Alice’s “digging and hiding [giving] way to a lateral sliding” (Ibid., p.9), Slominski’s solicitations can be seen as an engagement with space that supplants the more metaphysical/ transcendental depths of e.g. Beuys’ “Straßenbahnhaltestelle” in the German pavillon of the Venice Biennale or Gordon Matta-Clark’s cuts, which are always vertical as well as horizontal. In art historical references, Slominski’s traps are closer to the implied efficiency of Marcel Duchamp’s snow shovel set-up “in advance of the broken arm” than they are to these more obvious but fundamentally different excavations.

<sup>349</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.141

<sup>350</sup> Slominski’s traps are always exposed. In his actions/ performances, the question of visibility is itself challenged; yet his ongoing series of traps exist and operate exclusively under the condition of the exhibition venue’s hypervisibility. Max Wechsler argues that the exhibition space produces a visibility which contrasts with the trap’s functionally inevitable invisibility to the animal. For him, the traps’ art function consists in a making-explicit that relies on visibility to trigger thought (see Max Wechsler: Max Wechsler: ‘Kunst aus dem Hinterhalt: Ein Fall für Verblendung’, in *Andreas Slominski*, Zurich: Kunsthalle, 1998, pp.31-40, esp.p37f.) The problem is more complex though: challenging precisely the visible as guarantor of either insight or safety, the traps stage the compossibility of their being set and being exposed. Looking at a trap does not stop it from operating since it is not automatically defused through recognition. Often, vision does not even come into the functionality of the trap, either because the gaze is simply not a dominant sensory regime, or because it is bypassed by other, stronger stimuli through which the visual becomes potentially irrelevant in spite of its explicit staging.

<sup>351</sup> Or rather ‘skids’, which comes more explicitly close to the motion implied.

<sup>352</sup> Institutional critique is intrinsically ironic in its claim for revelation because it relies on a crossing of separate layers of meaning production, through highlighting hidden layers underneath (a surface of appearances) or beyond (a veil of disguises). Its premise is necessarily transgressive and clearly directed even where it operates in contiguities/ metonymies because the laterality of these moves gains its political, ideological and counter-



fig.39

### 3.2.4 In and Out

In doing so, the trap opens up to a proliferation of encounters not only with its prey, but also with other occurrences taking place on the same plane.

When a trap takes the form of a rocking horse (*Mouse Trap*, 2003, fig.40), it does not so much challenge the supposed idyll of a child's playroom than it incorporates it into the extended play of a becoming childish. Another one fuses the exhibition space as potential habitat with the festival by appropriating its decoration for yet another *Mousetrap* (2003, fig.41). In all of these, the trap is the ungrounded and blatantly exposed 'aleatory point' of more or less plausible encounters, and creates a level playing field for the different machines and milieus invoked. The diverse

---

institutional currency from the crossing of a supposedly given limit that normally blocks access. In the works under consideration here, *sliding* has to be understood as a different mode of movement that constitutes and operates in milieus, and is therefore aleatory rather than focussed, and generates encounters rather than addressing organising structures.

assemblages are grounded by the overarching condition of their supposed functionality, but grounded only ever as heterogeneous assemblages and in a mobile way, as an engagement with potential inhabitations. The trap serves as a working premise here and a particular operation of linkage, not as a metaphor for their motivation.



fig.40

Exceeding notions of and allusions to nature, these traps install a multiplicity of milieus that sets up environments as well as formats and attitudes of interference. Way outside the parameters of reasonable efficiency, the impossible horizon of function is supplanted by an indifferent excess of theft<sup>353</sup> that (re-)claims the cage,

---

<sup>353</sup> The level of their craftsmanship is only a further element in this arrangement; not the aim but the necessary condition of the trap and its functioning. Since they are either bought or reconstructed from existing models and functioning plans, craftsmanship is not the subject of perfection, but the embodiment of and response to processes. The traps incorporate and display a particular kind of knowledge rather than constructing it. Even the attitudes behind them are readymade parts of the assemblage. The work is not about the craft that has gone

the trap, domesticity,<sup>354</sup> but also the readymade, craftsmanship and the attitude of the trapper.



fig.41

Levelling different registers of the assemblage, they set up and incorporate potential sites ('aleatory points') of encounter. The obvious exposure of their workings and charges on the hypervisibility of the gallery floor forecloses the depth of analytic operations and detailed understanding and appreciation of the trap's making and

---

into their making and could be deciphered or appreciated in its product. On the contrary, the objects stand in as blatantly obvious embodiments of a skill base that does not have to hide behind the product but explicitly generates it as a particular form of knowledge; traps are machines, not objects. The craft of their making is invoked as a format that has its own tradition but then figures simply as a found attitude, a found history, a found charge in the overall set-up. All these elements and formats are 'captured', not 'produced', as is the formal vocabulary of sculpture (see also Wechsler, op. cit.). The obvious pilfering of kitsch domesticity is just another level of this activity.

<sup>354</sup> *Guinea-Pig Trap* (1997-98, fig.35) is probably the closest such fusion between habitat and domesticity in the form of a trap that emulates the cage as given condition of the animal.

mechanisms on the slippery surface of humour. Beyond the supposedly clear targets and prey, these traps cannot be “closed on recognition, but [are] open to encounters” and have to “always be defined as a function of an Outside”<sup>355</sup> that is in itself multiple. In and through the blur of the set-up, setting and trap as well as background and action are fused as a complicated form of mutual capture.<sup>356</sup>

In these forms, encounters with the object now occur under unclear terms because any possible spatiality of distance makes place for an involvement for which form is simply permeable : traps include by smoothing out transitions, blurring the edges of different realms to such an extent that it becomes a near-impossibility to designate an inside and an outside in relation to the trap. Arranged on the flat surface of the exhibition space and articulating precisely this flatness as a milieu for attractions to be inserted, played out and followed, the traps make a claim on the ground for the interplay of *lateral* movements dictated by attractions generated through a productive and generalised mode of continuity, smooth in its incorporation of the heterogeneous, as opposed to the striated arrangements of defined entities.

Whilst the pseudo-functional accounts of the traps account for a connective engagement that follows paths set up for other species, and made active through partial overlaps and identifications, the same multiple involvement also informs the aesthetic appeal these objects project. Never premised simply on functions, but project an overall field of attraction that also mirrors animal behaviourism into a play with aesthetic responses codified along stimulus response lines set up by decoration and advertising. Domesticity and the child’s playroom figure here as fields of strong visual appeal, whose decorated attraction is prolonged in the ornamental excess of other works, traps and lighting arrangements alike. The appeal follows the established patterns of fairground attractions (the ride might be another metaphor through which to regard the entire trap arrangement), colourful detail, ornate applications, and at times fuses all of these, e.g. when the box used for the construction comes from a different set of attractions: the advertising-led design of a brightly branded tin-drum coexists here with the new set of appeals for a new set of audiences set up by using the drum for a bird trap (*Bird Trap*, 2000/2001,

---

<sup>355</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, *Dialogues*, p.24

<sup>356</sup> Function is set up only in order to challenge appropriateness. Even the exhibition as (intellectual and factual) “minefield” (press release *Andreas Slominski*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, 10.4.-13.6.2003) or “landscape painting” (Julian Heynen, ‘Wordless’, in *Parkett* 55, 1999, p.96-97, p.96) viewers find themselves immersed in, is only ever a series of elements in an expanded “geography of relations” (Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.56) set up by the works’ multiple interferences. (Gabriel Orozco calls it a ‘home run’ and arranges it between circulations of art and the everyday, sculpture and gesture; see above, ‘Mode Two: Treason (Stories of play)’).

fig.42) which also exists under the conditions of an art piece. Especially where they come together, the traps then open onto a set of surround attractions for which seduction is not grounded in properties of the object, but in the way in which the object inscribes itself into existing fields of attraction.<sup>357</sup>



fig.42

Always already fully immersed, objects and situations both sympathise and solicit sympathy. In the place of a critical examination comes a movement within an always already pre-existing field. Light is probably its most expansive and most explicitly ideological carrier. The lighting works in Milan surround and envelope objects and produce leakages away from the object toward the glittering effects of a set of all-over surface appeals (and the other way round, from surround into the object as reflective surface for this kind of inscription). Similar in character and

<sup>357</sup> That these attractions are clustered around commodity status etc is secondary. The field of advertising, too, disavows the object more than it highlights it, surrounding and increasingly replacing it with fields of attraction only loosely and indirectly connected.)

effect to the way in which Felix Gonzalez-Torres' street lighting amplifications blur distinctions between generic decoration, seasonal celebration and customised agency, Slominski's lights too fuse appeal and embeddedness to create the ambiguity of an attraction that becomes involvement through its overall dispersal into (and emergence from) a broader field of pre-existing settings. Distance in time and space between Christmas from Belfast and spring in Milan, work as pointers toward the possibility of setting up always already displaced fields of surround attractions.



fig.43

When Felix Gonzalez Torres' installs piles of wrapped candy as an invitation to consumption as shared intimacy, this series of candy works is a trap of the same kind, setting the point of consumption as linkage into at least two pre-existing circulations emblematically caught between intimate portrait and anonymous consumption, specific invitation and surrounding mercantility. It follows both directions, one inward as lure and attraction, the other outward as leakage, sprawl and distribution.



fig.44



fig.45

And when Liam Gillick conceives of a pile of glitter particles as *discussion island: item a001* (1996, fig.45), this too emphasises the work as always suspended between attraction and spill. Combining both into a new form of contamination, the instruction for the work stipulates that “glitter should be purchased and sprinkled in private areas of a home. Under furniture, beneath rugs and inside cupboards. A very light sprinkling may also be made over general floor surfaces. The work designates a fragmented zone where it might be possible to consider the potential of discussion and compromise”. Slominski’s traps sprawl out as a result of the trap’s claims whilst the glitter particles are dispersed through physical leakage. Yet in either case, the physical operates as component part of a process in relation to displacements produced.<sup>358</sup>

This kind of involvement always starts with an engagement that precedes it, and eventually leads to a recognition of the nature of that engagement (the moment of the joke). Yet the aleatory point of encounter at which this linkage occurs, is aleatory point of linkage with a field in relation to which it is then impossible to develop a stable relation. Catching yourself is only to the fact that one is always already caught up in the set-up. Art is itself a trap here in which you are caught once you engage because it oscillates between metaphorical and literal readings and ways of engaging.<sup>359</sup>

Against these displacements, any engagement overflows diagrammatic clarity because it is always already caught up in the very fields of attraction it engages with. Slominski’s strategically behaviourist interlocking of metaphorical charge and morphological presentation thus opens his traps onto a generalised, simultaneously abstract and empirical morphology of humour. Slopes, sliding, lateral flat movements across pre-existing as well as proclaimed milieus take off from ‘aleatory points of encounter’ as multiple movements that destabilise the constitutive differences between formerly separate realms such as work and situation, spectator and object, human and animal and their possible contiguities and points of contact.

### **3.3 Ambient effects (“A certain piping”)**

In such expanded co-extensiveness of different registers, opposed directions “sense with nonsense”, “surface” and “doubles”, “nomad singularities” and “the

---

<sup>358</sup> One might consider the relationship between Gillick’s glitter and Slominski’s trapping at a point where they come close through internal juxtapositions. Similar to the way in which Slominski arranges traps and lighting devices/ fixtures in Milan, Gillick stages his glitter in relation to the coloured light carried onto it through the surrounding ‘discussion platforms’; both are playing with atmosphere as challenge to/ in indifference to normalised expectations of impact.

<sup>359</sup> Kafka’s *The Burrow* could be read as its allegory.

always displaced aleatory point”<sup>360</sup>, not only the trap is unbounded. In setting up a denaturalised milieu, the trap in turn denaturalises the pre-existing milieu it solicits into its making-contact by imposing a crossing along which encounters can occur. Once the trap is set up, it inevitably re-configures both arrangements, its own and that which it invites into fused operations, by importing them into an overall set of operations. “To enter or leave the machine, to be in the machine, to walk around, to approach it —these are all still components of the machine itself: they are states of desire, free of all interpretation. The line of escape is part of the machine. Inside or outside, the animal is part of the burrow machine. The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency.”<sup>361</sup> . The ‘problem’ in this adjacency is not one of avoidance, but to the contrary one of involvement under other terms where a ‘way out’ is equally a ‘way in’ because both animal and trap are now (posited as) assemblages. In their coming together, humour produces not only this erasure of different directions under one operation, in doing so it also inaugurates a contagious doubling: the visitor/ animal assemblage mirrors and echoes the trap’s assemblage quality by replicating what is already replicated in the trap as an approximation of the victim’s perception/movement/trigger assemblage. Mirroring of functions and operations, attractions and appeals becomes two-way, opening a feedback loop in which both come undone.

What Deleuze calls an *art of the doubles* operates here within the realm of partialised engagements, interactions as well as attractions and sympathies through which connections are instigated and a heterogeneous range of attitudes need to be inhabited. And the trap is thus no longer a question of sprawl and leakage exclusively, but also of internalisation. What is required is a particular form of internalisation that, again, undoes the very distinction between inside and outside and their corresponding directionalities. And through this becoming-indistinct, the “art of the doubles” opens onto an activation through “doubling” as heterogeneous appropriation.

In Kafka’s “Report to an Academy” it figures as a *thinking with the belly* which allows the ape to become human in the first place, and presents only at first sight an argument about embodiment. For the ape, access to humanity figures as “A fine, clear train of thought, which I must have constructed somehow with my belly, since apes think with their belly.”<sup>362</sup> What matters here is the improper fusion between the

---

<sup>360</sup> Deleuze, *Logic of Sense*, p.141

<sup>361</sup> Deleuze/Guattari, *Kafka*, p.7f.

<sup>362</sup> Kafka, ‘Report to an Academy’, p.253

two domains, not the replacement of one (rationality) through another (biological necessity). Similar to the way in which the audience in Slominski's trap scenarios as art figure performs movements "head over heels" and "sideways" in approximation of the animal, Kafka's ape assimilates reason perfectly, but by drawing on his belly. In doing so, he undercuts hierarchies as well as their adjacent sequences. For this, the belly is not about hunger or fulfilling basic needs either. What the ape describes instead is spitting and whiskey, the inverted mirror of food and drink intake<sup>363</sup>, and the pipe, and overcoming repulsion rather than satisfying desire.<sup>364</sup> What passes between these poles is not a development anymore but an unstable exchange, and one in which supposed/ pre-established hierarchies cease to impact.

For the ape in his report to an Academy, becoming human is simply a pragmatic way out (of the trap), rather than a desirable aim (accession to the realm of humanity). "The way of humanity" figures simply as a "special way out for me"<sup>365</sup>, and there is a very strong insistence that "there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason."<sup>366</sup>

The supposedly parallel development in which the ape in question as well as mankind at some point emerge from (or exit) the condition of ape in order to enter into humanity, is then also simply one possible way of co-evolution or conjuncture. Beyond the ape as "eager, too eager", as "impatient and desperate to emulate [man]", this becoming-human generates a combination of very different movements. One type of pose is stable, "One stands over oneself with a whip; one flays oneself at the slightest opposition.". But another one occurs too in response to it: Deleuze classes this latter with humour, and posits it as a lateral and discontinuous movement also and notably in jumps. "My ape nature fled out of me, head over heels and away, so that my first teacher was almost turned into an ape by it, had soon to give up teaching and was taken away to a mental hospital"<sup>367</sup>. In this latter, discontinuous movement, 'nature' now passes between ape and teacher, instead of the civilising influence the whole process is supposedly premised on, being passed on from one to the next (as is the case in the former, disciplined and disciplining movement). Exchange passes not just from one to the other, and certainly not in the

---

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., pp.255-57

<sup>364</sup> This is not about perceived splits between body and mind, to the contrary figures as inappropriate fusion similar to the way in which, for the mice in Josephine, "quiet laughter is always, so to speak, at our elbows" (Kafka: 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk', in *The Complete Short Stories*, pp.360-376, p.365).

<sup>365</sup> Kafka, 'Report to an Academy', p.258

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p.257

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., p.258

prescribed and necessary order of civilisational certitudes. Instead of being his teachers' malleable material, the ape is now the one who "used up many teachers, indeed, several teachers at once"<sup>368</sup> since the point at which his ape nature first fled him. Ways out and ways in start crossing over, and the real contrast is now between prescribed development and sprawling contamination.

In Slominski, this is the challenge laughed off and the horizon of the always already fulfilled immersion into an other constitution of self in response to the trap. Slominski can be seen to transpose trap machine onto culture (and vice versa) in such a way as to perversely combine machine as liberating and machine as ultimate instrument of capture.

For Deleuze the infinitesimal horizon of such mutual malleability is a becoming molecular, as augmentation of a becoming animal still limited to entities. The animal only ever really figures as decentred assemblage in relation to which traps serve as 'connectors'<sup>369</sup>. They operate as trigger devices in a generalised movement toward a becoming-molecular.

This becoming molecular is a way out also in that it stages the trap's operations whilst defying its economy of capture. Yet it provides no horizon of finally resolved incongruities. As 'the art of consequences or effects' which 'makes something shoot off'<sup>370</sup>, humour like treason is operating as a means of proliferation rather than reductive homogenisation, and constitutes (a connection with) an outside too; just that this outside is no longer opposed to the inside, rather constitutes the very configuration anew. The only possible way out is a way in, one that humanity seems to provide in the ape's case in such a way that humour here produces 'escape' as inward treason.

The trap thus understood as assemblage-machine topples assumptions about what a trap does and produces: rather than foreclosing movement, it now opens up connectivities that generate a way out by asserting escape as an inward as well as lateral movement: "The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway, an adjacency."<sup>371</sup> At stake is not "liberty" or "to flee his father", in the case of Gregor Samsa turning into a cockroach, "but rather to find an escape where his father did not know how to find one."<sup>372</sup>

---

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> Deleuze/Guattari: *Kafka*, p.61

<sup>370</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, op.cit., p.68

<sup>371</sup> Deleuze/Guattari, p.7f.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., p.13

In Report to an Academy, too, flight would only translate captivity into a continual series of equally caught up situations outbound.<sup>373</sup> What really matters, here and there, is inventing ('finding') an escape that allows for movement: a "way out", using the expression "in its fullest and most popular sense. I deliberately do not use the word 'freedom'", states Kafka's ape: "Only not to stay motionless, with raised arms, crushed against a wooden wall". In this shifting of perspective, any conventionally assumed functional relation between "way out" and "freedom" is inverted too: instead of a way out leading to freedom, the ape acknowledges that "he had to find a way out or die, but that my way out could not be reached by flight"<sup>374</sup>.

The question is not one of liberty as opposed to capture, but one of escape as opposed to immobility, and opening up through ambient dispersal. "No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out" proclaims the ape, "right or left, or in any direction; I made no other demand; even should the way out prove to be an illusion".<sup>375</sup> On the slippery scale of non-engagements, illusion for instance is a valid form of response then too, and with it fiction. As is the delirium that constitutes the first step of the ape's way out: it was his holding the whiskey bottle which started his being recognised as potentially human-like, which was the subject of praise and finally triggered, through intoxication, accession into the realm of the human: "because I could not help it, because my senses were reeling, [I] called a brief and unmistakable "Hallo!" breaking into human speech."<sup>376</sup>

Here too, in intoxication as elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'escape' is intimately entangled with a notion of effects that echoes this unframing of exchanges from registers of mutuality, causality or other inter-dependencies in that it needs to be and can be thought in terms of the a-directional perspective set up under these terms. The question of what an effective potential might be then becomes equally unclear within a horizon that includes illusion as simply another register of effectivity, paralleling them in such a way that effect is unhinged from a linear connection with outcomes and results but entangled with their generation. In the story of a mouse that make noises which may or may not qualify as singing,

---

<sup>373</sup> "[A]t that time I could have certainly have managed by degree to bite through the lock of my cage. I did not do it. What good would it have done me? As soon as I had poked out my head I should have been caught again and put in a worse cage; or I might have slipped among the other animals without being noticed, among the pythons, say, who were opposite me, and so breathed out my life in their embrace; or supposing I had actually succeeded in sneaking out as far as the deck and leaping overboard, I should have rocked or a little on the deep sea and then been drowned. Desperate remedies." (Kafka: *Report to an Academy*, p.255)

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, p.254

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253-255

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257

Kafka circumscribes such expanded (and unstable) notion of effectivity<sup>377</sup>. Josephine, singer of the mice folk, occupies a precarious status within her people which oscillates throughout the text in parallel to the ways in which her singing is accounted for. Her singing, if that is indeed what it is, remains resolutely unclear in terms of how it is produced and what it might give rise to, and is described primarily in terms of its indifference to and defiance of causality and categorisations: unclear as to whether it is “singing at all”, it may well be “perhaps just a piping”<sup>378</sup> which is “even in her lifetime” never “more than a simple memory”.<sup>379</sup> It is unclear throughout the story whether she is actually performing more than an effect, one that is nevertheless answered, albeit in indifference and defiance. The indifference is the narrator’s and more generally that of the mice people, the defiance is hers, “fighting for exemption from all daily work on account of her singing”<sup>380</sup>, but then also theirs in the mice people’s refusal to acknowledge her claims and ensuing demands when “our people draw other conclusions and quietly refuse it”. Yet neither challenge the very recognition of effects being generated.

What remains is a fascination, even though diffuse<sup>381</sup>, and a collective arena against which this fascination or its disconcerting nature can be articulated. Throughout the text, the particular “power of song” through which “there is no one but is carried away by her singing”<sup>382</sup>, is suspended as effect between its various circulations as collectively imagined and effective.

The whole range of dimensions is levelled in a smooth milieu of effectivities which encompasses the qualities of her singing and its attractions, the instances of comfort and protection it seems to grant protections, as well as—with the same intensity and lack of clarity—also diametrically opposed repercussions, including her positively endangering the mouse folk itself when the “large gatherings” around her performances “have been unexpectedly flushed by the enemy and many of our people left lying for dead”. In these instances too, it was Josephine “who was responsible for it all, and indeed perhaps attracted the enemy by her piping”<sup>383</sup>. Her amorphous signal also has effects for other ears, yet the way these are being assessed in the text only mirrors the lack of clarity about the very nature of the

---

<sup>377</sup> Franz Kafka: ‘Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk’, in *Complete Short Stories*, pp.360-376.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, p.361

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, p.376

<sup>380</sup> (371)

<sup>381</sup> “She gets effects which a trained singer would try in vain to achieve among us and which are only produced precisely because her means are so inadequate” (*ibid.*, p.368).

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, p.360

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*, p.371

singing's appeal to the mice in the first place. By suspending the dimension of a purpose, effects are thus flattened out in such a way that differentiations between effect and side-effect collapse accordingly because the prioritisations they rely on are always anchored in an assumed function and its relative fulfilment.

For any work to operate and to be considered under these terms, this also means that supposedly separate registers of effectivity can thus start overlapping. Drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze conceptualises effects in such a way that they can be physical and optical simultaneously: "We must also understand "effect" optically and not merely causally. Effects or signs are *shadows* that play on the surface of bodies, always between two bodies. The shadow is always on the edge. It is always a body that casts a shadow on another body. We have knowledge of bodies only through the shadows they cast upon us"<sup>384</sup>. Fusing supposedly separate dimensions and thus cutting across supposedly fundamental differentiations between the conceptual, the metaphorical and the empirical, effectivity can then be thought as at least double, generated through and generative of multiple involvements.

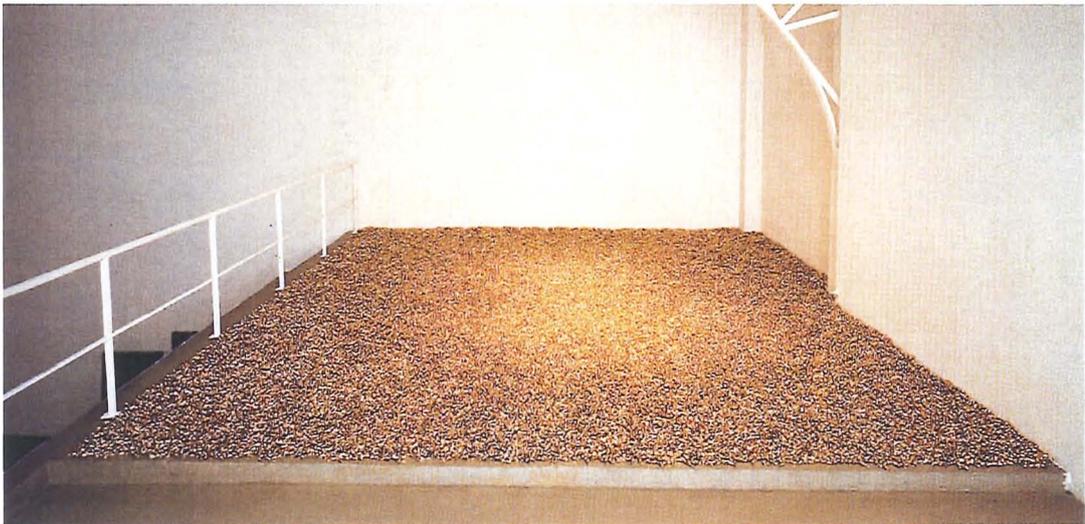


fig.46

The light that bounces off Felix Gonzalez-Torres' *Placebo Landscapes* (eg. *Untitled (Placebo Landscape for Roni)*, 1993, fig.46) produces, or at least points toward this double effectivity of a contact/ contagion in that the ingestion of sweets is doubled (announced, invited and anticipated) in the light bouncing off them. And similarly, in

---

<sup>384</sup> Deleuze, 'Spinoza and the Three "Ethics"', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, pp.138-151, p.141. Eric Alliez discusses this blurring as a materialist cinematicism in what he calls the "materialist programme" of a Bergsonian world. In this world, the identity of the real and the image (i.e., that which appears) results in the affirmation of an ontological indifference between Image, Movement (irreducible to any "pose"), Matter (the "in-itself" of the image), and Light." (Eric Alliez, 'Midday, Midnight. The emergence of Cine-Thinking', in Gregory Flaxman (ed.), *The Brain is The Screen: Deleuze and the Philosophy of the Cinema*, Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota, 2000, p.293-302, p.293)

Liam Gillick's *Discussion Island Preparation Zone* (1993, fig.47), any light bounces off glitter washed with vodka on the floor of a (gallery) space prior to an opening, and is prolonged in the glitter attaching itself to surfaces in contact, bodies and others.<sup>385</sup>



fig.47

<sup>385</sup> Gillick describes his floor-glitter works as follows: "The work involves the preparation of a space. A mixture of vodka, water and glitter should be used to wash down the floor of the gallery or the space under consideration" (*Smooth Space*, 2002). This floor treatment like the insertion of glitter into *The Wood Way* (Liam Gillick: *The Wood Way*, exh.cat. Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2002) echo *Discussion Island Preparation Zone* and amplify its ambiguities in that the glitter in the Whitechapel was not even referenced as a work and occurs in the catalogue too merely as image, without being reclaimed as work anywhere outside the image.



fig.48

Shadow and light share the same (inverted) working in the same way in which physicality and opticality start co-occurring here. In this sprawl, the glitter remains active precisely as carrier and reflector of light effects, blurring the very distinction between both types of 'effect' because both continue transporting each other. This does not produce a new morphology, all remains entirely flat, but constitutes fields of attitudes, sympathies and attachments that are a-directional. In the place of form and objects emerges a carrier in the full sense of a *milieu* as field and centre and medium to be animated by attitudes of attractions and sympathies. It fuses the milieu into an ambient trigger that is both effect and its carrier, side-effect and end-result.

Along the glitter particles as 'aleatory points of encounter', a sprawling 'lateral movement' of humour thus reproduces itself in the oscillation between different registers of impact. That this is then both a 'preparation' (of a *discussion island* to be activated) and an aftermath (of the party that would have left it behind) as well as a starting point for yet another circulation (of glitter particles on people and clothing and hair and shoes), only prolongs the work's ambiguous effectivity onto the temporal register it always inevitably collapses, too.<sup>386</sup>

---

<sup>386</sup> Like *Home Run*, the work ends with a preparation that is also an aftermath and manages to escape into a time that is doubly framed. When asked, in 2001, what he expects from an art institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Gillick projects such twofoldedness in spatio-visual terms, positing that "we must request a place that can act as a shadow and as a distant mirage" (*What Do You Expect From an Art Institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?*, Paris: Palais de Tokyo, 2001, p.11). The gallery washed in vodka and glitter appears as a mock embodiment of this function, inflected with time.

#### 4 Conclusion (“Arriving beside itself”<sup>387</sup>)

“The better it works, the more it leaks.”<sup>388</sup>

In a sense, the *Ambient Attitudes* project started with the ambition to outline a new type of criticality that seems to be emerging, in parallel and with different degrees of visibility, across recent cultural production, in artistic works, gestures and propositions on one hand and in esthetico-political theories and conceptualisations on the other. Its projected aim, originally, was to clarify this new mode, to argue it and, in doing so, to claim it as a new opening from which to re-assess possible intersections between theory- and practice-based elaborations. At its most ambitious, it set itself up to pick up on this mode as an emergent tendency<sup>389</sup>, announcing a dominant mode of the future.

For this purpose, the term *ambient* seemed to lend itself as a tentative descriptive template: it seemed to indicate diffuse qualities, dispersal, low intensity attraction thresholds and over-determined contamination with all sorts of pop-cultural and proto-scientific connotations as some of the key features of this new mode. Simultaneously, the term seemed to indicate the methodological challenge inherent in any attempt to address a similarly diffuse set of concerns and practices, especially in an academic context. It also seemed to at least announce the complicated relationship it entertains with a broader set of post-critical projects and their explicit political rhetoric and/ or determinations.

In addition to the notion of *ambient*, *Attitudes* emerged early on in the research as the other key dimension of this new series of modes animating the research. *Attitudes* attest to the ambiguities played out between the conjunctions that seem to be produced by the work, and the forms of attention and strategies of reading projected onto the work. The interplay between both sets of projections is integral to the project, and has provided one of its key engines.

---

<sup>387</sup> “But there where it comes is not “into itself,” as though into the interior of a determined domain. It is “beside itself”. *Beside itself* means into the dispersal of the dis-position, into the general element of proximity and distance, where such proximity and distance *are measured against nothing*, since there is nothing that is given as a fixed point of ipseity (before, after, outside the world). Therefore they are measured according to the disposition itself.” (Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, p.96)

<sup>388</sup> Gilles Deleuze, ‘Two Regimes of Madness’, in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, New York; Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006, pp.11-16, p.16

<sup>389</sup> For the notion of historical tendency, the way in which Negri appropriates it from Marx and how it relates to quantitative change and qualitative/ paradigmatic shifts, see Hardt/ Negri: *Multitude*, p.140-153 (‘Excursus 1: Method: In Marx’s Footsteps’), esp. 141-144.

It would have been plausible from the title and indeed to some extent the working brief for the project for the two dimensions of *ambient* and the *attitudinal* to come together in a clearly recognizable formation, to cohere into an *ambient attitude* as and through and with which to read contemporary practice (artistic as well as critical), and which could provide productive ways out of cohering and indeed limiting systems of meaning. The respective clusters of the thesis can be read as attempts of setting up this kind of oriented fusion through instances of a close reading-together into three (types of) ambient attitudes.

In this sense, the first chapter describes *Contingency* as a form of ambient dispersal across registers of indifference which are conceptual as much as formal and discursive as well as spatialised. Between work, situation and an approach to either, the chapter unhinges the notion of a close fit and generate a looseness instead through which a response no longer falls into place but remains ungrounded.

The second outlines *treason* as an ambient sprawl beyond established fields and sets of operations. It is created not by following contingent slippage, but rather through the willful juxtaposition of narrative fragments and devices into a plot of sorts circumscribing a new notion of use. In this outbound orientation, connections made have to be productive rather than enlightening.

And the third one stages multiple intersections of ambient fields solicited and crossed in works in metaphoric/material arrangements within a horizon of effects to be solicited, as *Humour*. Observations as well as horizons here are inward bound in such a way as to implode (and insist on) the notion of effect as crucial and unclear, confused, axiomatic and under constant revision.

Each cluster is mobilized against an existing explanatory framework mainly by challenging that framework's inherent cohering perspective. Against the representational distances diagnosed in site specificity and relational sociability in the first instance, structural accountability of games in the second and Freudian notions of irony in the third, these ambient attitudes insist on close forms of involvement (very different ones in each case) and replacing stabilizing perspectives with decidedly unstable ways of handling the material as well as its translation into other forms of knowledge. Rather than a question of new paradigms, this is the realm of reading strategies, but even these are ultimately only ever resulting from this fundamental shift toward an un-cohering attitude. And because this attitude challenges not only existing frameworks but also new ones being hinged upon it (contingency, treason and humour, as well as their relations), it affects the translation between work and theorizations as much as it concerns the translation of those approaches into an overall project.

In elaborating these clusters, the project as a whole has moved on only by always resisting to cohere around a single axis. Through producing the work whilst trying to outline its material as conjunction of attitudes and concerns and approaches, it turns out that what is tentatively described as *ambient* ends up manifesting itself very differently in each case. Various exemplifications of a whole series of attitudes are produced here that can fall under the category of the *ambient* only insofar as that category is itself subject to the dispersal it announces, rather than providing a neatly defined framework. In parts of the thesis, *ambient* becomes an entirely inappropriate category of description and in fact disappears as such in the text. Or rather, truer to the spirit of its use, *ambient* remains outside of the grasp of focal attention and operates as an animating background dimension, indeed operates as background as such, without ever really coming into the fore. It does not settle in a fixed dimension either in the making or indeed the writing of the project, and the methodological as well as conceptual problematic and challenge resides in the way in which *ambient* functions instead as a repeat trigger, as a device for generating the dynamics along which the project develops. To some extent, true to its spirit and tactical currency, it becomes a decoy of sorts, continually deceiving the coherence seemingly promised in the term as such, whilst simultaneously projecting it, as a supposedly binding theme or feature.

The *attitudes* around which the project is organized remain similarly distinct. *Contingency*, *treason* and *humour* as guiding modes and loose reading templates for the respective chapters, in each case fulfill the twofold function of leaving behind established critical (art-historical) models and opening onto new possible mobilizations of the works and materials solicited. In the first instance, the research points toward *Contingency* in order to outline an approach which overflows the theoretical confines of specific determinants to a situation engaged with by shifting away from a designated site of engagement and into contingent assemblages which abut against it. It engages in a de-centred playing with existing frameworks in the second instance where *Treason* tests the possibility of a fiction-driven departure from existing scripts and the playing fields (spatial and conceptual) upon which they are customarily enacted, moving outside of structural frameworks and into narrative leakages and plots as stand-in engine for a narrative sprawl moving the work along. And it concerns a modality of attention in the last one, where the broader horizons set up before implode into the near-indiscernibility of diffuse effects as key dimension for an engagement with the work—*humour* attempts to broaden and ultimately open up the notion of effect in relation to artistic interventions by imploding it into a set of formal/ conceptual involvements and toward an interiorized

becoming-smaller which underplays the hermetic remit of close (formal) readings by slipping away toward imperceptibility on one hand and de-regulated timeframes on the other. If any, the dimension of effectivity is what could and should be pursued from here, and seems in need of more, additional or maybe different attention. But that will have to be for another project.

All of these instances produce openings and are fundamentally evasive in an extended sense of the word—the project does not zoom in on a single recognizable attitude but rather goes through three, and suggests a question after the relationships set up between them, and what ever is produced in their interplay. If the thesis itself follows an evasive trajectory in the unfolding of its chapters as modes with increasingly involved modalities (from overspilling through invention to inversion) and if these modes also indicate the scope of the entire project, then one of the questions to be asked here is the one after the kinds of effects thus generated, if there are any at all, whether they ever become discernible, and how that might matter. Do they (and does it) all come together? In that sense the last cluster organised around notions of effects is the least and the most complicated one at the same time, risking complete implosion of all of the claims made for ambient into formalist aesthetic registers. But that too is necessarily at stake in the unclear notion of effects developed precisely here, and is where surprising results are generated in form of side-effects produced through the operations of these attitudes: they set up new terms for the project and new directions for the thesis, away from its cohering impetus. This expanded effectivity of the research sits alongside its more narrowly productive dimension (of insights, new readings, knowledges), and at times takes over from it. In their intersections, each of the chapters ended up being surprising in the way it shaped up: in the way in which open-endedness cuts through attempts to set up a problematic; how narrative elements allow to produce contingent frameworks through which to propel thinking forward; and how the perspective of an infinitesimally small deviation that borders on irrelevance constitutes micro-black holes also for an ever-refined close reading that verges on identification.

If the chapters can all somehow be bracketed under the dimension of ambient attitudes as strategic pointer, this pointer remains necessarily multiple. Rather than binding different clusters together as a qualifying umbrella, Ambient Attitudes (the project and the performative title) constitutes a permeable and malleable umbrella, an interface that allows to juxtapose different investigations on one hand and combine very different materials on the other. And in doing so, the concept, the invention of this non-category, combines them only insofar as it also spaces them

apart, and indicates how this type of combination is always a matter also of spacings rather than simply fusions.

If indeed *Ambient Attitudes* inscribes all of this into a shared horizon, this horizon needs to be understood in two fundamentally different and seemingly opposed readings of the term. Nancy describes the tension between a static and a dynamic notion of the horizon as tension between a line “which orients or gathers the meaning of a course of progress or navigation”, and the horizon as a function of suspension, which operates as “the opening or distancing of horizon itself”, and which can be inhabited only ever “as the opening itself” and the “fault line of a rupture”<sup>390</sup>. A lot of the thesis is produced around the double notion of *ambient* and *attitudes* and inscribed into a horizon very much under these terms.

In this sense *ambient* and *attitudes* and their various respective and combined formations never really come together, are never finally defined and remain suspended, in and of themselves and in their coming together. And that may well be in a first sense, a failure of the project, its fundamental lack: that there is no singular new mode, that the project remains plural, necessarily only ever posits a set of attitudes, never simply the one, which are here unfolded into three modes and potentially always extendable.

Yet Nancys double understanding of horizon always produces both inside and outside dynamics where everything “(all that is) [is] put on hold everywhere, pushed to the outside *just as much* as it is pushed back inside the self”<sup>391</sup>, and this project always encompasses both tendencies too, not just the one of spacing, but also one geared toward a particular kind of cohesion (not coherence).

In *Ambient Attitudes*, the tendential disparateness of solicited component parts attests to the spacing Nancy formulates for the kind of horizon he circumscribes as a horizon of (future?) criticality. Yet their combinatory juxtaposition within the framework (as such unchallenged) of the overall project also forces them together, and in itself produces the kind of inward pull exemplified in detail in the chapter around spatialities of humour. All of these instances are reclaimed for *Ambient Attitudes* so that their disparateness also takes on a tendency to implode. And this too is one of the modes of the thesis—a pulling together that produces its own

---

<sup>390</sup> Nancy, op.cit., p.xii

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

mode of contiguity<sup>392</sup> in which Ambient/ attitudes serves as a productive (invented) framing device that allows for juxtapositions, and adjoining.

The continual/ repeated and explicit absence of a single cohering axis is not a shortcoming of the conceptual framework but rather points to and exemplifies the necessary state of the project, as well as its stake. In that sense it is an ambient project, rather than a project about ambient. What appears as looseness in one perspective is also, when considered the other way round, an exercise of appropriating difference through forcefully imposing smoothness. If there was to be another dedication here, it would be to the gestures of the Pink Panther as Deleuze presents him, and the way in which he imposes sameness by “painting the world his colour”, pink. The panther makes the world his own without imitating or reproducing anything, so that it, the panther, becomes imperceptible itself in his ultimately involved form of appropriation.<sup>393</sup>

But then where does that leave the art in relation to the thinking around it? And vice versa? Ambient Attitudes is treading a fine line between a need for space that is available only by insisting on the loose fit between at least some of the elements assembled here and the insistence on all of these sharing a milieu of current modes: the dissertation plays out different modalities, from opening out through invention to inward pull and formalist reading, with each of them as another form of loose-fit or indeed un-fit. But insisting on the looseness of their proximity is only one way of looking at it, and a strategic one at that, leveled as it is against interpretation, knowledgeable analysis, expertise and control. The other dimension is having to make it work, as Deleuze and Guattari say, that it has to be productive of something, even if that something does not have to be defined yet and only ever exists in the realm of effects, rather than products. For a stage of sort it may then be necessary to follow all the wrong leads. For a play around baseballs and art it may then be necessary to project a whole other set of fictions. And for animal traps, it may then be useful to try out the diagrammatic spaces of philosophical spatialities. Somewhere between the raindrops reflecting all kinds of outsides back into the work; a baseball a son shares with his father and which a game shares with its outside and which the art shares with a novel; and the monkey Deleuze shares with Kafka, motives such as exit and exodus, inversion and confusion reoccur and that is also why the last chapter ends with the traps (and does not, in the way it invents its

---

<sup>392</sup> For Nancy, singularities only ever come together under a mode of contiguity, never continuity, so that “[t]here is proximity, but only to the extent that extreme closeness emphasizes the distancing it opens up” (ibid., p.5).

<sup>393</sup> Deleuze/Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, p.11

own way out). Not because there is something else that remains unreached, untouched by the traps and their workings. Rather because even traps can be turned inside/out and into something else entirely. Once they cease to be machines of capture automatically, they can become lures that operate as engines too. They are propelling devices toward the point where one needs to give up on the idea of capture and has to replace it by some other account of encounters as offering perspectives onto a series of shifts moving from specificity to contingency, from trickery to treason, from irony to humour.

And again, the works and the thesis are always multiplied through the doubling of works and approaches to these, and the feedback loops between the two levels. This multiplication too unhinges the stability of ambient: Rather than a question of dispersal as object of study, it disperses the work by setting it up in conjunctions along which it can diffuse itself (other works, concepts, other material, styles of writing etc). So also in the sense of a response to academic discipline, the thesis is dedicated to a monkey inventing ways out of a box which is also a cage, and as a research project and text enacts its own exiting from existing (reductive) models.

That this is set up in the biggest possible way, matters not in order to uphold that scale, not in order to operate on it, but in order for precisely this shift in dimensions to be recuperated and moved away from a perspective of 'failure' toward an undoing of scale which can make it possible to re-assess perceived relations between registers. And that has an immediate and absolutely crucial link to the stakes of the present project. It is a matter of imploding horizons, if anything, which is why this thesis goes from sprawl via invention to implosion, and in the process indicates 'three ways into thinking ways out' (where the fathers can't see one) which mark out their own movement from indifference and defiance through to affirmation (albeit never coherently).

This overall attitude cuts out the specificity of necessary connections. And it also undermines any claims for immediate political relevance (through to the sense in which Deleuze and Guattari claim that a minor literature always inevitably and immediately generates such relevance). Instead this approach re-arranges the way in which the different realms solicited come together: geopolitics and socio-cultural formations as well as the formal, the microscopic and the seemingly purely metaphorical are all subject to the same loose fits then, and thus continually to be re-arranged.

Whether there is a link back from the imploded effect-horizons of 'humour' as described in Andreas Slominski's traps to the stakes of current geopolitics is beside the point. That both open diagrammatic possibilities through which to re-assess and

construct differently the coming together of situations, agents, demands and factors, is where the constructive potential lies.

This also means that the connections between the different realms can then be thought in different ways, and notably both ways round, i.e. counter-intuitively in the relation between critical/political horizon and examined practice: Whilst on one hand the project takes off from current re-formations of critical thought and notions of post-critical practice through to their explicitly political manifestations, and diagnoses these new configurations in / projects them onto current artistic practice, the setting of terms can also be thought the other way round. Ambient dispersal as a new, fundamentally contingent milieu for contemporary practice and its articulation in qualities, effects and attitudes, it is argued here, has a quasi-paradigmatic relevance for resistant practices at large, including any theoretical involvement with them, precisely because it too does not cohere yet manages to generate. It too, like resistance, appears as a *diffusion* of singular behaviours (of resistance) and “accumulates extensively”<sup>394</sup> so that a close reading of effects in one offers a way of re-assessing them in the other, and thus to address a notion of effectivity in either. And under the terms of the extensive accumulation that this is subject to, precisely this inversion is one that cannot be proclaimed or indeed scripted, but can only be accounted for after having been generated. (Taking stock is then necessarily subject to the same condition of extensive accumulation as the production of the modes in question.)

This does very little to satisfy the original desire for a new mode, but does a lot to challenge the limitations its underlying desiring structures are built upon. And in the process it opens another attitude for assessing effects produced in the process. If indeed there is a register of change for which it is a matter, as Deleuze claims, of “loving those who are like this: when they enter a room they are not persons, characters or subjects, but an atmospheric variation, a change of hue, an imperceptible molecule, a discrete population, a fog or a cloud of droplets”, and if “everything has really changed”<sup>395</sup> once they do, and if love is an attitude here, then change really is produced as unclear, from here on, between effects generated and attitudes carried toward them.

---

<sup>394</sup> Negri, *Alma Venus, Kairos, Multitudo*, p.188

<sup>395</sup> Deleuze/Parnet, *op.cit.*, p.66

## Bibliography

- Natascha Adamowsky: *Spielfiguren in virtuellen Welten*. Berlin: Campus, 2000
- Giorgio Agamben: *Idea della Prosa*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1985
- Giorgio Agamben: *The Coming Community*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press, 1993
- Giorgio Agamben: *Potentialities*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999
- Giorgio Agamben: *Means Without Ends: Notes on Politics*. Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000
- Giorgio Agamben: *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004
- Jennifer Allen, '1000 Words: Liam Gillick and Philippe Parreno', in *Artforum International*, February 2005, p. 144-145
- Eriz Alliez, 'Midday, Midnight. The emergence of Cine-Thinking', in Gregory Flaxman (ed.), *The Brain is The Screen. Deleuze and the Philosophy of the Cinema*, Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, p.293-302
- Éric Alliez, Antonio Negri, 'Peace and War', in *Theory, Culture and Society*, 20:2 2003, pp.109-118
- Karlheinz Barck, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris, Stefan Richter: *Aisthesis: Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik*. Leipzig: Reclam, 1990
- Jean Baudrillard, 'L'esprit du terrorisme', in *Le Monde*, 2 November 2001
- Jean Baudrillard, 'La violence de la mondialisation', in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, November 2002, p. 18
- Nachman Ben-Yehuda: *Betrayal and Treason: Violations of Trust and Loyalty*. Oxford: Westview, 2001
- Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', in *October*, Fall 2004, pp.51-79
- Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents', in *Artforum international*, February 2006, pp. 178 – 183
- Holger Birkholz: *Kontext. Ein Problem kunstwissenschaftlicher Methodenliteratur und künstlerischer Praxis*. Cologne: VDG Verlag, 2002.
- Nicolas Bourriaud: 'Standards' in *XLV Esposizioni Internazionale d'Arte: Punti Cardinali dell'Arte*, Milan: Electa, 1993, pp.322-324
- Nicolas Bourriaud: *Relational Aesthetics*. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2002
- Nicolas Bourriaud: *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. New York: Lukas&Sternberg, 2002
- Joan Broadhurst Dixon and Eric Cassidy (eds.): *Virtual Futures. Posthumans and Cyberotics*. London: Routledge, 1998
- Jonah Brucker-Cohen, 'Hi There Leak Much?', on *Rhizome.org*, 20/10/2002, available online under <http://rhizome.org/editorial/924> (last accessed 29/10/08)
- Benjamin Buchloh, Gabriel Orozco, 'Benjamin Buchloh converses with Gabriel Orozco in New York', in *Gabriel Orozco: Clinton is Innocent* (exh. cat.), Paris: Musée d'art

- moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1998, quoted in Liliane Terrier, 'Le modèle Übersicht', in *Le récit interactif*, Roundtable, Paris: École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs, 6/12/00, n.p., available online under <http://www.ciren.org/ciren/colloques/061200/terrier/terrier.html> (last accessed 14/10/08).
- Lewis Carroll: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (1866). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971
- Claire Colebrook: *Irony in the Work of Philosophy*. Lincoln/ London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002
- Alex Coles (ed.): *Site - Specificity: the ethnographic turn*. London: Black Dog, 2000
- Paul Delany, George P. Ludlow (eds.): *Hypermedia and Literary Studies*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 1991
- Gilles Deleuze: 'Un manifesto di meno', in Carmelo Bene and Gilles Deleuze: *Sovrapposizioni*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978
- Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986
- Gilles Deleuze, Claire Parnet: *Dialogues*. London: Athlone, 1987
- Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia vol.II*. London: Athlone, 1987
- Gilles Deleuze: *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988, p.89
- Gilles Deleuze: *The Logic of Sense*. London: Athlone, 1990
- Gilles Deleuze: *Difference and repetition*. London: Athlone Press, 1994
- Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari: *What is Philosophy?* London/ New York: Verso, 1994
- Gilles Deleuze: *Negotiations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995
- Gilles Deleuze: *Essays Critical and Clinical*. London/ New York: Verso, 1998
- Gilles Deleuze: *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*. New York/ Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2006
- Don DeLillo: *Underworld*, London: Picador, 1999
- Jacques Derrida: *Writing and Difference*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2001
- Jacques Derrida, 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event', in W.J.T. Mitchell and Arnold I Davidson (eds.), *The Late Derrida*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp.223-243
- Timothy Druckrey (ed.): *ars electronica: Facing the Future*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 1998
- Brian Eno, 'ambient music manifesto', published with 'ambient #1': *music for airports* (1978 ), available online under [http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian\\_eno/MFA-txt.html](http://music.hyperreal.org/artists/brian_eno/MFA-txt.html) (last accessed 29/10/08)
- Sigmund Freud: *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960

- Bettina Funcke, Jens Hoffmann, "'SlominSki'" – a conversation with Boris Groys', in *Parkett* 55, 1999, pp.99-102
- Michel Foucault: 'Of Other Spaces' (1967), in *Diacritics* 16, Spring 1986, pp. 22-27
- Susanne Gaensheimer, Nicolaus Schafhausen (eds.): *Liam Gillick*. Cologne: Oktagon, 2000
- Alan Gilbert, 'In Concert', in *Artforum international*, May 2004, p.52
- Liam Gillick: *Erasmus is Late*. London: Bookworks, 1995
- Liam Gillick: *Ibuka! A musical in three acts based on the book "Erasmus is Late"*. Stuttgart: Künstlerhaus Stuttgart, 1995
- Liam Gillick: *Discussion Island/ Big Conference Centre*. Ludwigsburg: Kunstverein/ Derry: Orchard Gallery, 1997
- Liam Gillick: *Big Conference Centre*. Ludwigsburg: Kunstverein/ Derry: Orchard Gallery, 1997
- Liam Gillick: *McNamara Papers. Erasmus and Ibuka! Realisations. The What If? Scenarios*. Dijon: Le Consortium/ Hamburg: Kunstverein, 1997
- Liam Gillick: *Five or Six*. New York: Lukas&Sternberg, 2000
- Liam Gillick: *Renovation Filter. Recent Past and Near Future*. Bristol: Arnolfini, 2000
- Liam Gillick, 'Fifth Cousin Not Removed', in *Metronome* no.7, 2001, pp.181-186
- Liam Gillick: *Annlee You Proposes*, exh. brochure, Tate Britain, 7 Sept 2001 – 31 March 2002.
- Liam Gillick: *The Wood Way* (exh.cat.). London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2002
- 'Interview Liam Gillick/ Anthony Spira', in *Liam Gillick- The Wood Way/ Helio Oiticica – Quasi Cinema*, 3.5.-23.6.2002 (exh.brochure), London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2002, pp.8-10
- Liam Gillick: *Literally No Place. Communes, Bars and Greenrooms*. London: Bookworks, 2002
- Liam Gillick: *Spring in Kitakyushu*, in exh. brochure *Liam Gillick Annlee You Proposes*, London: Tate Britain, 2002, p.8-12
- 'Liam Gillicks Szenarien. Ein Gespräch mit Edgar Schmitz', in *Kunstforum international*, Jan/Feb 2003, pp.205-213
- Liam Gillick, 'Contingent Factors: A Response to Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics"', in *October*, Winter 2006, pp. 95-106
- Oliver Grau: *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 2003
- Félix Guattari: *Chaosmosis. An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*. Sydney: Power Publications, 1995
- Félix Guattari: *The Three Ecologies*. London: Athlone, 2000
- Donna Haraway: 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York: Routledge, 1991, pp.149-181
- Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri: *Empire*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: Harvard University Press, 2000

- Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri: *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. New York/ London: Penguin, 2004
- N Katherine Hayles (ed.): *Chaos and Order. Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*. Chicago/ London: University of Chicago Press, 1991
- Martin Heidegger: *Poetry, Language, Thought*. London: Harper Collins, 1974
- Julian Heynen, 'Wordless', in *Parkett* 55, 1999, p.96-97
- Johan Huizinga: *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1955
- Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, 'Centerfold: A Smile Without a Cat (Celebration of Annlee's Vanishing)', in *Artforum international*, January 2003, pp.110-111
- Donald Judd, 'Specific Objects', in *Arts Yearbook*, 8, 1965, p.74-82
- Mehdi Belhaj Kacem: *Théorie du Trickster*. Paris: Sens & Tonka, 2002
- Franz Kafka: *The Complete Short Stories*. London: Random House Vintage, 1999
- Patricia Keith-Spiegel, 'Early Conceptions of Humour. Varieties and Issues', in Jeffrey H. Goldstein and Paul E. McGhee (eds), *The Psychology of Humour. Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Issues*, Academic Press: New York/ London, 1972, p.4-39
- Christian Kravagna (ed.): *The Museum as an Arena. Institution-critical statements by Artists*. Cologne: Walther König/ Bregenz: Kunsthau, 2001
- Miwon Kwon: 'One Place After the Other. Notes on Site Specificity', in *October* 80, spring 1997, pp.85-110
- Miwon Kwon: *One Place After Another: site-specific art and locational identity*. Cambridge (MA)/London: MIT, 2002.
- Manuel de Landa: *1000 Years of Non-Linear History*. New York: Zone Books/ London: MIT, 1997
- George P.Landow (ed.): *Hyper/text/theory*. Baltimore/ London : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994
- Maurizio Lazzarato, 'What possibilities presently exist in the public sphere?', available online under <http://www.generation-online.org/p/fplazzarato4.htm> (last accessed 6/11/08)
- Herschel W. Leibowitz, C.L. Shupert, Robert B. Post, 'The two modes of visual processing: Implications for spatial orientation', in *Peripheral Vision Horizon Display (PVHD): NASA Conference Publication-2306*, Edwards: NASA, 1983, p. 41-44. (available online under [www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/pdf/87978main\\_H-1232.pdf](http://www.nasa.gov/centers/dryden/pdf/87978main_H-1232.pdf), last accessed 29/10/08)
- Sylvère Lotringer: 'In the shadow of the Red Brigades', in Sylvère Lotringer and Christina Marazzi (eds.), *Autonomia: Post-political Politics*, Los Angeles/ New York: Semiotext(e), 2007, pp.V-XVI
- Peter Ludlow (ed.): *High Noon on the Electronic Frontier*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 1996

- Peter Ludlow (ed.): *Crypto Anarchy, Cyberstates, and Pirate Utopias*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 2001
- Jean-François Lyotard: *The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986
- Lev Manovich: *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 2001
- Brian Massumi: *A User's Guide to Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Deviations from Deleuze and Guattari*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 1992
- Brian Massumi: *Parables for the Virtual*. Durham/ London: Duke University Press, 2002
- Emily Mast, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno (eds.): *No Ghost Just A Shell*. Cologne: Walther König/ Eindhoven: Oktagon, 2003
- Marcel Mauss: *The Gift: The form and reasons for exchange in archaic societies* [1950]. London: Routledge, 1990
- Herman Melville, 'Bartleby the scrivener', in *Bartleby; and, Benito Cereno*, New York: Dover Publications, 1990
- Eva Meyer: *Faltsache*, Basel/Frankfurt aM: Stroemfeld, 1996
- Eva Meyer: *Architexturen*, Basel/ Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 1981
- James Meyer: *Minimalism: Themes and Movements*, London: Phaidon, 2000
- Aleksandra Mir (ed.): *Corporate Mentality*. New York: Lukas&Sternberg, 2003
- Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Gravity of Thought*. London: Humanity Books, 1997
- Jean-Luc Nancy: *Being Singular Plural*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000
- Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Rumoration', in Rem Koolhaas/Harvard Project on the City, Stefano Boeri/ Multiplicity a.o., *Mutations*, Bordeaux: arc en rêve. centre d'architecture/ Barcelona: Actar, 2001, n.p.
- Jean-Luc Nancy, 'L'Intrus', in *The New Centennial Review*, Fall 2002, pp.1-14
- Antonio Negri: *Time for Revolution*. London/New York: Continuum, 2005
- Philip Nobel, 'Anlee, Sign of the Times', in *Artforum international*, January 2003, pp.104-109
- No Ghost Just A Shell*, press release, Institute of Visual Culture, Cambridge, 2002, available online under [http://www.instituteofvisualculture.org/2002\\_no\\_ghost.php](http://www.instituteofvisualculture.org/2002_no_ghost.php) (last accessed 15/10/06)
- Gabriel Orozco: *Empty Club*. London: Artangel, 1998
- Gabriel Orozco: 'A Thousand Words. Gabriel Orozco talks about his recent Films', in: *Artforum international*, Summer 1998, pp.114f
- Gabriel Orozco: *Chacahua* (exh. cat.). Frankfurt aM: Portikus, 1999.
- Gabriel Orozco: *Photogravity* (exh. cat.). Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1999
- Gabriel Orozco (exh.cat.). Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000
- Philippe Parreno: *Snow Dancing*. London: GW Press, 1995
- Philippe Parreno: 'Notes on Anlee', 1999, Galerie Air de Paris, Paris, available online under <http://www.airdeparis.com/annlee2.html> (last accessed 14/10/08)

- Philippe Parreno: 'Annlee monologue', 2000, PS1, New York, available online under <http://www.ps1.org/cut/animations/install/parreno.html> (last accessed 14/10/08)
- Sadie Plant: *Zeros + Ones: Digital women + the new technoculture*. London: Fourth Estate, 1998
- Mark J. Prendergast: *The Ambient Century: from Mahler to trance: The evolution of sound in the electronic age*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000.
- Ilya Prigogine, Isabelle Stengers: *Order out of Chaos. Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. London: Heinemann, 1984
- Juliane Rebentisch, 'Mythos "Betrachtereinbeziehung"', in *Texte zur Kunst*, December 2000, p. 126-130
- Irit Rogoff, 'What is a Theorist?', in Martin Hellmond, Sabine Kampmann, Ralph Lindner, Katharina Sykora (eds.), *Was ist ein Künstler? Das Subjekt der Moderne*, München: Fink, 2003
- Mary K. Rothbart: 'Incongruity, Problem-Solving and Laughter', in Antony J. Chapman and Hugh C. Foot (eds.), *Humour and Laughter: Theory, Research and Applications*, London/ NY/ Sidney/ Toronto: Wiley and sons, 1976, pp.37-54
- Edgar Schmitz: 'Liam Gillick. Annlee You Proposes', in *Kunstforum international*, January-March 2002, pp.379-80
- Edgar Schmitz: 'Hintergrund ist überall. Liam Gillick in der Whitechapel Art Gallery, London', in *Texte zur Kunst*, September 2002, pp.180-182
- Edgar Schmitz: 'Ambient effects. Symptoms and side effects of virtual centres', in *Centre of Attraction. 8<sup>th</sup> Baltic Triennial of International Art*, Vilnius: Contemporary Art Centre/ Frankfurt: Revolver. Archiv für Aktuelle Kunst, 2003, pp.169-174
- B.F. Skinner: *Walden Two*. New York: Macmillan, 1962
- Richard H. Y. So, Andy Ho, W. T. Lo, 'A Metric to Quantify Virtual Scene Movement for the Study of Cybersickness: Definition, Implementation, and Verification', in *Presence: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*, April 2001, pp.193-215
- Nancy Spector, 'Berlin Detours', in *Parkett* 55, 1999, pp.70-75
- Nancy Spector, 'Of traps, tricks, and other riddles, in *Andreas Slominski* (exh. cat.), Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2002, n.p.
- Neil Spiller (ed.): *Cyber Reader: Critical Writings for the Digital Era*. London: Phaidon, 2002
- Isabelle Stengers (ed.): *D'une science a l'autre. Des concepts nomades*. Paris: Editions du seuil, 1987
- Charles J. Stivale: *The two-fold thought of Deleuze and Guattari. Intersections and Animations*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998
- Martin Stingelin: *Das Netzwerk von Deleuze: Immanenz im Internet und auf Video*. Berlin: Merve, 2000
- Erika Suderberg (ed.): *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*. Minneapolis/ London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000

- Marcella Tarozzi: *Nonrepresentational Forms of the Comic: Humour, Irony and Jokes*. New York: Peter Lang, 1991
- Liliane Terrier, 'Le modèle Übersicht', in *Le récit interactif*, Roundtable, Paris: École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs, 6/12/00, n.p., available online under <http://www.ciren.org/ciren/colloques/061200/terrier/terrier.html> (last accessed 14/10/08).
- Sassa Trülzsch: 'Liam Gillick', in: *Kunstforum international*, June-July 2001, pp.188-193
- Gore Vidal: *Narratives of Empire: Burr: A Novel*, London: Random House, 1973
- Paolo Virno: *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, Los Angeles/ New York: Semiotext(e), 2004
- Robert Walser: 'The Monkey', in: *Selected Stories*, transl. by Christopher Middleton and others, foreword by Susan Sontag, New York: New York Review of Books Classics, 1982, pp.145-148, p.145
- Max Wechsler: 'Kunst aus dem Hinterhalt: Ein Fall für Verblendung', in *Andreas Slominski* (exh.cat.), Zurich: Kunsthalle, 1998, pp.31-40
- Peter Weibel (ed.): *Kontext Kunst. Kunst der 90er Jahre*. Cologne: DuMont, 1994
- What Do You Expect From an Art Institution in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?* Paris: Palais de Tokyo, 2001
- Stephen Wilson: *Information Arts. Intersections Between Art, Science and Technology*. Cambridge (MA)/ London: MIT, 2002
- Carey Young: *Incorporated*. London: Film and Video Umbrella, 2002
- Slavoj Žižek: *On Belief*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2001