

Contents

- i. Abstract
- iii. Images & Illustrations
- 1. Introduction
- 15. A Brief Historical Review of the Art Object in the Twentieth Century
- 32. Distributed Authors
- 49. The Fabrication of Objects
- 70. The Inalienable Artist
- 86. Ownership & Possession
- 106. Leading Material Lives: Transport, Handling, Insurance & Storage
- 119. Raw Materials
- 135. Conservation & Preservation
- 156. Repeats & Authenticity
- 170. Destruction & Afterlives
- 191. Discussion
- 202. Appendices
- 223. Bibliography
- 231. Acknowledgments

Images & Illustrations

Front cover:

Cai Guo-Qiang, *Inopportune Stage One* (2004)

Chapter 3:

- 3.1 Marc Quinn, *Self* (1991)
- 3.2 Mona Hatoum, *One Year* (2005)
- 3.3 Gabriel Kuri, *Self-Portrait as a Retention & Flow Diagram 2* (2009)
- 3.4 Janine Antoni, *Gnaw* (1991)
- 3.5 Tracey Emin, *After My Abortion* (1990), 1 of 32 watercolours
- 3.6 Tracey Emin, *After My Abortion* (1990), text panel
- 3.7 Tracey Emin, *Tower Drawings/Dark World* (2007) 1 of 7 monoprints
- 3.8 Mirosław Balka, *Zoo/T* (2008)
- 3.9 Damian Ortega, *Controller of the Universe* (2007)
- 3.10 Damian Ortega, *Controller of the Universe* (2007) sketch
- 3.11 Raqib Shaw, *Adam* (2008)
- 3.12 The material fabrication of Raqib Shaw's *Adam* at MDM studios
- 3.13 Raqib Shaw, *Garden of Earthly Delights X* (2006)

Chapter 4:

- 4.1 Thomas Schutte, *Ringe* (1981) newly installed at the HMI in 2007

Chapter 5:

- 5.1 Anya Gallaccio, *Stroke* (1994-2010)
- 5.2 Gustav Metzger, *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965 – 2010)
- 5.3 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, *Untitled (Portrait of Ross in LA)* (1991)

5.4 An example of a certificate of authenticity

Chapter 6:

6.1 Anselm Kiefer, *Palmsonntag* (2006)

6.2 Walead Beshty, *FEDEX LARGE CRAFT BOXES...* (2008)

6.3 Seattle Art Museum Olympic Sculpture Park

6.4 The reverse of a Marlene Dumas artwork (2010) acquired into Tate's collection

6.5 Example of a typical commercial gallery sales invoice

6.6 A custom-built case for a film artwork

Chapter 7:

7.1 Images of custom-built packing for an Antony Gormley sculpture

Chapter 8:

8.1 Tracey Emin, *Uncle Colin 1963-1993* (1993)

8.2 Doris Salcedo, various *Untitled* works (2008)

8.3 Paul McCarthy, *The Garden* (1991)

8.4 Fred Tomaselli, *Dec 18 2008* (2009) and *Aug 31 2005 no 2* (2008)

8.5 Mona Hatoum, *Marble Slicer* (2002)

8.6 Kris Martin, *Golden Spike* (2005)

8.7 Kaz Oshiro, *Washer/Dryer* (2005)

8.8 Simon Newby, *Untitled* (2009) (sellotape & paint tin)

8.9 Simon Newby *Untitled* (2008) (washing up sponge)

8.10 Jason Rhoades, *Twelve Wheel Wagon Wheel Chandelier* (2004)

8.11 Paul Fryer, *Pit* (2008)

8.12 Zhang Huan, *Zhu Gangqiang* (2009)

- 8.13 Anselm Kiefer, *Die Welle* (1990)
- 8.14 Alexis Harding, *Burial at Sea* (2009) and *Drifter's Escape* (2005)
- 8.15 Alexis Harding *Untitled* (2009)
- 8.16 Alexis Harding, *Temporary Wet Painting No 11 (Albermarie Street)* (2009)

Chapter 9:

- 9.1 Paul McCarthy, *Alpine Man* (1992)
- 9.2 Mike Nelson, *The Coral Reef* (2000)
- 9.3 Mike Nelson, *The Coral Reef* (2000)
- 9.4 Janine Antoni, *Gnaw* (1992) collapsed

Chapter 10:

- 10.1 Cai Guo-Qiang, *Inopportune Stage One* (2004)

Chapter 11:

- 11.1 Photograph of Richard Long's *A Smell of Sulphur in the Wind* (1994) and a 1/20,000 fraction made by Bill Drummond
- 11.2 Michael Landy, *Art Bin* (2010) view from platform
- 11.3 Michael Landy, *Art Bin* (2010)
- 11.4 Gustav Metzger, *Recreation of First Public Demonstration of Auto-destructive Art* (1960 – recreated 2004 and 2011)
- 11.5 The ghost of Doris Salcedo's *Shibbolith*

The Material Lives and Deaths of Contemporary Artworks

Abstract

This study is about the active lives of contemporary artworks. They are followed across their life trajectories, from their inception to material fabrication, exchange, exhibition and maintenance. Later in life, artworks are considered as they age, are materially re-fabricated, destroyed and memorialised. The hypothesis is that a contemporary work of art is not only an art object, but an object in an assemblage *with* people, documentation, other material things, names, space, images, places and more. I examine art objects as actors in collectives of activity with many persons and other material things. Anthropological theories about agency and distributed persons are utilised to identify the bonds among people, artworks and specifically the material parts of artworks. I also consider 20th century art historical questions about authorship, formalism and de-materialisation with reference to these anthropological theories. A principal goal for the thesis is in the examination of the roles and extent of the materiality of art. Further to observations of how decisions are reached and negotiated in practice over fabrication, conservation, re-makes, documentation and ownership, the study offers practical implications for contemporary art collections management.

Front cover image

Cai Cuo-Qiang

Inopportune: Stage One

2004

Cars and sequenced multi-channel light tubes

Image courtesy Seattle Art Museum

1. Introduction

This thesis follows the lifespans of contemporary artworks as they are made, exchanged, owned and possessed, maintained, preserved, replaced and sometimes destroyed. The study has a special focus on art objects and materials. If this seems obvious for a project about art, my hypothesis is that art objects and artworks are not one and the same. An art object is part of a work of art – a highly important part, and I find ultimately that it is an essential part – but I propose that it is only one part. In this thesis I examine how a work of art is an art object in an assemblage¹ *with* people, other material things, names, space, images, places, institutions, time and more.

My hypothesis was developed further to the doctrines, challenges to and experiments with materiality and objectivity in art in the last century. After Marcel Duchamp's Readymades, any material thing could become art if an artist designated it so. Conceptual artists asserted that an artwork was primarily an idea instead of a material thing and the notion was taken to the extreme by some artists' demands for the dematerialisation of art altogether (Lippard 1973). Minimalists and later those concerned with site-specificity, claimed that the space around art objects and the environments within which they were installed were as essential to artworks as materiality (see Meyer 2001: 80). For Duchamp, Conceptual artists and Minimalists, the viewers' receptions of artworks were also essential to what they were. These ideas were in response to – and often in conscious opposition to – the establishment's ruling formalist ideas which saw artworks as entirely autonomous objects (O'Brian 1988: 139). Then further challenges were made that defined art as more of a verb than a thing. In turn, Joseph Beuys' Actions were also art that 'happened', but his material leftovers, imbued with the powers of his rituals, have been kept as lasting works of art in themselves (see Speck 2003).

¹ I am aware that Gilles Deleuze is most often credited when the term 'assemblage' is used. My use of the word follows more Bruno Latour's definition. In his book *Pandora's Hope*, Latour writes about when people and things are 'assembled' together to make new entities. These assemblages are different to united, coherent 'networks' because they are dynamic and changing (see 1999: 162-163). Assemblages are collectives of activity made up of people and material objects as well as, potentially, laws, morals, signs and more (see for example 1992: 230).

During the encounters of my research, I learned that contemporary art ‘today’ is made and consumed with much awareness of the art events and theories of the 20th century that account for the work of art as being something more than an object. Notions such as readymades, ‘conceptual content’ and site-specificity are used liberally when art is talked and written about. In practice however, I observed that when art is made, exchanged, owned and preserved, it might be done so in ways that appear to contradict these ideas. I found that artworks may still be kept as primarily material things. For example, when I shared a conversation with a gallery technician about Conceptual art, he quoted from Lucy Lippard’s 1973 volume about *The Dematerialisation of Art*, and said that the artist he was working with that day was not concerned with preserving original objects. At the end of our tea-break he put on his white art handling gloves because he had to move one of the artist’s rusting figures a few inches to one side. In another instance, a registrar who works for a gallery that deals in film artworks explained to me that this is ‘immaterial’ art, and that collectors of it are not owners but custodians. On my next visit with this registrar, we discussed suppliers of the best quality fine art crates that film works are shipped and stored in for collectors to whom they are sold.

In this thesis, my hypothesis is explored with three main lines of enquiry. Firstly, it is to compare contemporary art theory about the material with the ways that the material in art is dealt with in practice. While this is an anthropological and ethnographic study of artworks being made ‘currently’ (within the last decade and no earlier than 1991) and encountered in person, I do so with consideration of the legacies of 20th century art history. I also tackle some questions posed in art theory using anthropology. Further to the debates about formalism versus Conceptual art and dematerialisation, I consider the *roles* and *extent* of materiality for contemporary works of art. What do we find if we acknowledge that the art object is just one part of an assemblage that is an artwork? I do not propose that there is a single answer as to *the* role for the material, but I consider and compare how much of the artwork is material, and ask what is it for, what does it do and how is it treated?

Art historian Hans Belting suggests that a role for the material medium is in the provision of a physical *body*. (2005: 5) He considers how art objects are actively animated to produce images, an act for which viewers’ bodies/imaginings are essential too. Belting ultimately describes a “triangular interrelation between image, medium, and body (of the viewer)” (2005: 4). He writes:

the mediality of images is rooted in a body analogy..in the sense that our bodies function as media themselves, as living media against fabricated media. Images happen between us who look at them, and their media with which they respond to our gaze. (2005: 5)

and

images are liberated out of their primary materiality by viewers and the boundaries of the medium are opened; the medium is animated and we receive images back from it.

(2001: 239)

For Belting the medium is a body with which we as viewers interact with our own bodies; images are produced as an *activity* that takes place between people and material things. Images generated by art objects “only make sense when there are we who ask it, because we live in bodies in which we generate images of our own .. and..play them out against images in the visible world” (2003: 2). Belting’s essays are focused on the creation and experience of images, whereas in this thesis, my pivotal focus is on objects. In the same way nonetheless, the point is that one cannot study the material parts of artworks in isolation. Rather, they must be considered in interrelation with the people who look at them, make and use them and what they cause between them.

It is because of the ‘human experience factor’ that Belting finds the matter of images and material media to be anthropological. This project is in part in answer to his call to anthropology from art history and to demonstrate what an application of anthropological theories and research methods might lend to a study of art. But as Roger Sansi-Roca suggests anyway, there is a natural alliance between art and anthropology due to some “common origins...what brings them together is a systematic doubt of the ontological distinction between people and things.” (2007: 1) Belting is not alone among art academics to consider the activities of art objects. WJT Mitchell asks of images “what they want?” (1996) and James Elkins considers the ways that “objects stare back” (also 1996). Art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud’s essay *Relational Aesthetics* (2000) is about artworks very purposefully created by persons’ social encounters, but he also suggests that all artworks may actually be defined as ‘relational’. Bourriaud writes that “the work of every artist is a bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations”, and cites another art historian,

Thierry de Duve, who says that an ‘artwork is a sum of judgments’ (2000: 22). In a sense, the discussion represents a turn of attention by art historians away from art objects alone to people, which seems to have coincided with a turn of attention by anthropologists from people alone to objects. In the end, the academic disciplines overlap because it is realised that we cannot understand one without the other.

Thus another of my three principal lines of enquiry is about people and things: their bonds, their activities together, and, as per the title, what I perceive as some similarities between the ways that persons and artworks, human bodies and art objects, live and die. The chapters are arranged to follow artworks’ material lifespans, beginning with authorship and fabrication, to art objects leading their lives as they are exchanged, possessed, exhibited and maintained, to then follow them as they materially age, are restored, replaced, destroyed or die altogether. I do not want to say that artworks have lives and deaths exactly like persons; obviously they are the not same, but then, in certain respects, some ways that artworks are ‘made’, change, experience relationships, live in physical bodies that age, are memorialised, and lead their lives in other ways are comparable, and dealt with similarly, to lives lead by people.

That things may lead social lives “like persons” (2001: 3) are seminal anthropological theories about value and exchange that were asserted by Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff in 1986. They suggested that rather than focusing on the ‘forms and functions’ of exchange that attention is turned to things themselves (2001: 3). Instead of focusing on single events in an object’s life such as its production *or* its consumption, Appadurai proposed that things may be followed across their life trajectories from production to multiple exchanges, as they circulate amongst and between social and economic arenas, or what he and Kopytoff termed “regimes of value” (2001: 4). If they are followed throughout their social lives – throughout their biographies - they may be analysed as devices that produce social relationships (2001: 25).

Appadurai and Kopytoff’s theories were part of a revival of interest in material culture by anthropologists, and the analysis of relationships between people and objects. This involved a return of attention to aspects of Marcel Mauss’ 1925 essay *The Gift*. Mauss wrote “the thing itself possesses a soul, is of the soul. Hence, it follows that to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself” (2000: 12). According to Mauss, things may contain the souls of persons, so when they move and circulate, they

may carry persons with them.

Further to these principles, Marilyn Strathern observed in Melanesia how some objects rather than merely symbolising persons, could be understood as real parts of them (1988: 161). She argued that the subject versus object dichotomy was invalid in Melanesia where persons were both human bodies and things (1988: 171). Nancy Munn also observed with the Kula Ring in Gawa the potential for the “expansive spatiotemporal construction of the self” through objects (1986: 109). Strathern and Munn’s theories were forerunners to a significant concept for my study, coined by Alfred Gell as distributed personhood (1998: 21).

Gell proposed anthropological theories of art in which artworks do not merely represent persons in symbolic ways, but rather, that artworks *are* persons containing the ‘substance of their bodies’ and their ‘wisdom’ (1998: 231). Art objects are the distributed bodies and contain the extended minds of human agents, and are therefore inferred by viewers of them to have complex intentions. In other words, it is not just that people may have social relationships *with* things, what these anthropological theories assert is that persons may be *in* things, or more specifically that parts of them may actually *be* things. These things are mediators of the social agency of persons, acting out their intentions, and enabling them to have social encounters and share activities with other actors at a distance from their human bodies.

My thesis begins (following a brief art historical review of the art object in the 20th century that is chapter 2) with a focus on artists who are, obviously, most significant agents acting through works of art at the start of their lives. I consider how contemporary artworks *are* artists' distributed persons: their work, their intentions, their bodies and other parts of them (although this is not to suggest that these ‘parts’ are necessarily decipherable from each other). The art object provides artists with an additional body with which she may continue her work, make things happen and make her visible away from her human body. Because artworks *are* (something of) artists and not products made by them, they are inalienable. I propose that artworks *are* artists’ work, rather than alienated *results* of it. This discussion offers some anthropological insight into a much considered question in art about authorship. Again, with reference to the legacies of formalism, conceptual art and other sets of modern and contemporary art theory, I consider what the anthropological theories of agency and distributed personhood might lend to debates about authorship and the connections

between persons, material things and work.

That inalienable bonds are established between artists and artworks at the beginning of their lives is a necessary start to this thesis. This is because artists are essential to what artworks are and how the works are treated throughout their lives. In chapter 5, I describe how the inalienable bonds between artists and artworks are asserted in practice when they are exchanged and even commodified and sold. I consider how the gift versus commodity dichotomy does not seem to hold water when it comes to the practice of the exchange of contemporary art. As per Annette Weiner's theories, the exchange and circulation of *Inalienable Possessions* (1992) is largely a matter of power and control. My observations over the maintenance and vying of artists' control over their inalienable works is a persistent theme throughout the study.

This study is not just about artists though. In Alfred Gell's 'art nexus of social relations' there are several more potential agents who may act through – and be distributed in – works of art (1998: 12). In chapter 4, I introduce a number of parties who contribute towards the fabrication of art objects including studio assistants, foundries, and craftspeople who work with a variety of materials. I consider a difference between the bonds that artists have with artworks versus a perceived degree of severance that fabricators may have with the 'products' of their labour. Ultimately I find though that art objects may still be *made out of* persons - their skills, knowledge and craft. The principal difference between fabricators and artists is that the former make objects whereas the latter make works of art. In later chapters, it is also demonstrated that when it comes to decisions being reached over restoration and re-fabrications, long-term bonds between fabricators and art objects may be essential.

But if others than artists make art objects, even the making of works of art is carried out by more people. As Marcel Duchamp said 'the creative act is not performed by artists alone, viewers of art add their own contribution'². Chapter 6 is about the ownership and possession of art. I suggest that the *making* of artworks *continues* when others than artists create their own meanings for them. Because however, artists remain inalienable for their works, ownership or possession of them must be shared. I present how this shared

² From *Session on the Creative Act*, Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, April 1957. This presentation is transcribed at many online locations such as www.rae.com.pt/Duchamp%20THE%20CREATIVE%20ACT.doc

ownership is defined in practice, and how this is reflected with documentation and other aspects of artworks' materiality.

The thesis thus involves the identification and description of the activities of a number of human agents acting through art; these include artists, numerous fabricators of art objects, many people handling and caring for art objects, conservators, collectors, curators, museum directors and acquisition boards. In my descriptions of these participants' activities, Alfred Gell's theories of *Art & Agency* are helpful, and all these human actors could be placed and analysed in his art nexus of social relations. But there is more than this that I want to do with this study.

Gell's theories are ultimately about how *human* agency is enacted through art objects; he does not really find that things have significant agency of their own (1998: 31-32). Bruno Latour on the other hand grants more to the actions of objects themselves and this is something that I find worthy of exploration too. Latour asserts that things can have goals and be 'full-fledged actors in collectives of activity that includes humans and non-humans' (1999: 174). To deny it, is to make what Latour believes the great "mistake of starting with essences, those of subjects or those of objects." (1999: 108). For him, it is not just that in the intellectual analysis of things that they may be treated *as if* they are persons (as Gell [1998: 5] and Appadurai [2001: 3] suggest) but, that making a distinction between persons and things is false to begin with. Thus with chapter 7, I focus on the powers and capabilities of the raw materials that are used to make art; I examine their energies, histories and the ways that they can change and cause change in others by accord of their own physical properties. The unlimited range of materials that can be used for contemporary art means that in contrast to 'traditional' art media such as bronze or oil paint on canvas, materials such as mud, neon and chocolate have active yet short lifespans. *As with all living things* therefore, contemporary art materials follow natural processes of entropy; life is in part defined by the inevitability of, irreversibly in time, deterioration and death.

My consideration of objects and materials is hardly though limited to the focus of a single chapter. Moreover, the materiality of art I observe is not only that which makes up sculptures and canvases etcetera. The artworld in which I conducted my study is highly populated with people and a great variety of material things. There are crates, certificates of authenticity, kilns, air-ride suspension trucks, a tremendous variety of technical tools, sales invoices, installation manuals, the walls of museums, galleries, studios and homes; all can

play prominent roles in the material lives of art.

Thus among the many people and many things, I describe and discuss some of the 'social lives' and 'social relations' of and through them. Bruno Latour recommends further however, that the task of the anthropologist and everyone else studying “social stuff” (2005: 66) should be, instead of focusing on what he perceives to be ‘ambiguous systems of social relations’, to consider *collectives of activity*. Our task is then to consider the traces left by the activity (2005: 34). Ultimately, once Latour’s assertion is clear that humans and non-humans play roles in collectives of activity, he is not very interested in analysing *who/what* each of them are; he is more concerned with *what* they cause to happen and how. There is masses of ‘diversity amongst agencies acting at once in the world’ (2005: 48) and rather than identifying them we should look at what they *do* collectively.

With this thesis, I present the collective actions of many art objects, other material things and lots of people and I am interested in what *happens* among them. As an anthropological study, while I present numerous artists’ names and the titles of works – and with this should have something to offer the ‘art historical record’– the names are not the most important details. The goal is to consider what materiality in art *is* by an exploration of what is *done* (with it and by it).

This brings me to my third line of enquiry which is to explore what happens in practice as contemporary art objects lead their lives. An area in which my study may offer practical implications is broadly termed in the art industry as ‘collections care and management’ which covers matters such as maintenance, preservation, transportation, documentation and archiving.

A recurring theme is about *control*. In early chapters, I consider questions such as who makes decisions over how art objects are fabricated? If artists maintain inalienable ownership over their works, can ownership be shared, and if so in what measure? How is control shared between artists, collectors and dealers in the exchange of artworks for sale or exhibition? What happens if materials behave in ways unexpected by artists or other owners? How is all this expressed in the official documentation of artworks?

Thus in the second half or so of the thesis, my focus shifts from the agents who have control, to more analyses of instances in which control is played out and decisions are made in practice. In chapter 7, I consider the transport, storage and insurance of art objects, and these observations offer some insight into the ways that art objects are valued. Further, this

chapter introduces masses more people and material stuff working behind the scenes with art. In addition to the obvious - artists, collectors and art objects – I find the contemporary art world is very populated and highly active indeed. This is illustrated again in chapter 9, in which I introduce an 'international conservation community' and describe the difficult tasks of conservators' negotiations and decision-making amongst so many different people and things. Matters of control and negotiation are key again in chapter 10, where I consider how authenticity is defined when materials are repeated or replaced. And then, in chapter 11 just before my discussion, I explore and present some instances about the demise and/or destruction of art materials and consider a tension between artists and the 'establishment' for physical life expectancies. Art historian Dario Gamboni suggests that the destruction of art, in the departure of this norm, is 'useful for illuminating' what norms and expectations are. He likens the matter to psychoanalysis, in that what is learned is 'by way of crises and dysfunctions.' (1997: 11) Bruno Latour suggests too, that an 'object's activity is made more easily visible when there are accidents, breakdowns and strikes' (2005: 79-81). In other words, what materiality is supposed to do may be highlighted by what happens when it does something else.

Methods & Scope

My research was conducted amongst individual and institutional participants of a contemporary art world for which my main base was London. To offer a concise inventory of people, I formally and informally interviewed in person and with e-mail and telephone correspondence: artists, studio assistants, fabricators, foundry-workers, a neon-maker, gallery and museum registrars, dealers, museum and freelance curators, art handlers, art shippers, gallery and museum technicians, museum and independent conservators, insurers, a loss adjustor, collectors, archivists, museum and gallery visitors.

Whereas New York City was the undisputed capital of the modern art world, as art historian Chris Townsend points out "the contemporary artworld no longer occupies a bounded, certain place and it does not have a permanent spatial centre." (2006: 14). Townsend also says that a "young artist in London probably has more in common with a young artist in New York, Helsinki or Beijing than an estate agent in Stratford-Upon-Avon or an office cleaner renting a room next door to their studio in Hackney Wick." (2006: 15-16). I traveled to carry out research in Leeds, Los Angeles, Seattle, Venice and Mexico City.

While I was physically in London for most of my research, I carried out correspondence with people in places all over Europe, North, Central and South America and parts of Asia as well. I calculate that less than half of the people who participated in my study are British, and perhaps one third are not permanently based in the UK. All of those who participated in my study have occasion to work within the UK though; each of the artists of whom I write have exhibited in London, where almost all of them also have commercial gallery representation.

The geography of the international contemporary art world is a research topic in itself³. While I do not analyse it as such, some of its scope is illustrated with this study. In chapter 4, for example I write about the shipping of a twenty-four foot bronze sculpture from Oregon to Italy which was created in Seattle by a Salish artist and commissioned by the mayor of Perugia, Umbria. In chapter 11, I present the case of the destruction of a photograph that involved a museum, a dealer, an insurance company and an artist each of whom reside in different countries. I also present observations about art fairs in New York and Paris, and biennials in Venice and Sharjah.

I find that professional networks are well-organised and close-knit in the international artworld. In chapter 6 for example, I write about how Tate in the UK and MoMA in New York devised their policies for acquisition documentation in discussion and cooperation with each other. Obviously institutions do things differently from each other but I believe that this is due more to organisations' idiosyncracies than because of national differences between the USA and the UK. In chapter 9, I describe the scope of a professional network of conservators which has written codes of ethics, organises well-attended conferences and has online databases of information which professional conservators are required to update throughout the year. The well-connected artworld greatly assisted my research because I was able to make contacts through contacts. When I met people for interviews, our conversations were often peppered with finding out who we mutually knew.

Although I bought a dictaphone in Venice for the 2007 Biennale at the beginning of my research, and carried it with me for the first six months, in the end, I did not use it to record a single interview or conversation. As Sarah Thornton learned from her

³ Indeed, this was actually in part what I proposed to study in my application to the MPhil/PhD programme at Goldsmiths in 2006.

ethnographic research too, the artworld is a secretive and suspicious place (2008: xvii) and one should not recount in an ethnography everything that is witnessed. This, however, is not just paranoia; I met with and interviewed professional people about their personal careers, their perspectives on their institution or companies' official and unofficial ethos, monetary values (sometimes in seven or even eight digit sums) and business relationships with others. I believe that an ethnographer working in any industry would need to show sensitivity with the recording and use of interviews on persons' professional matters. Several people whom I met told me that they were relieved and grateful that I did not want to audio-record our conversations, and I had to provide reassurance to even more that I would write of their accounts anonymously. In this way, I believe, I was offered more 'honest' and frank information. Throughout this thesis I describe several instances without mention of artists' names, artwork titles or institutional names; but in each case it is what happens that is interesting rather than whom it happened to. Further still, while some happenings discussed in conversations were useful for my understanding of issues, I was prohibited from writing of them at all. Readers of this thesis will never know what I leave out, but for the record I feel that I must state that negotiating matters of confidentiality and making decisions about what is acceptable to include or exclude have been among the greatest challenges of my project.

I carried out research in some public institutions including Tate, Guggenheim New York, the Henry Moore Institute and Seattle Art Museum. I interviewed a variety of staff members and was given access to documentation such as certificates of authenticity, condition reports, conservation files, acquisition reports, loan agreements and installation instructions. In these ways, I learned a little about these organisations' working systems and some official and unofficial institutional goals. For three years while I carried out this project I was a registrar at the commercial gallery White Cube⁴. In this role I learned about and was involved with making decisions about the transport, storage, insurance, documentation and maintenance of contemporary art objects and artworks. In October 2008, I received an AHRC 'Collaborative Doctoral Award' with White Cube designated as my institutional collaborative partner. My registrar duties were reduced and I began an

⁴ I began in May 2007 one month before Damien Hirst's exhibition there which included the £50,000,000 platinum and diamond skull *For the Love of God* (2007); this was the pinnacle of the contemporary art market boom.

archival project for the gallery's technical documentation which included conservation and condition reports, installation instructions and fabrication details. I write about this project in chapter 10. One of the greatest benefits of being at White Cube was that I was able to attend the gallery's artists' talks and interviews. These are for staff members just prior to exhibition openings and I was also able to listen to recordings made of the talks. It is my understanding that I am the first to use these for academic research purposes. The talks are relatively informal events and they are principally for the purpose of enabling gallery staff members to sell, market, write about and physically care for the work. In February 2011, towards the end of my writing period for this thesis, but still thinking through my ethnographic examples and formulating arguments, I have been employed as a registrar at Hauser & Wirth gallery. I must stress however, that my research was not and was never intended to be an ethnography of a gallery or any other institution. My relationship with these institutions enabled me to utilise in-house resources such as archives and publications and provided bases for me to make contacts with other individuals and organisations.

I also carried out research within and amongst several other commercial galleries in both London and New York including Thomas Dane, Marianne Goodman and Luhring Augustine. It is not my intention in this introduction to list everyone and every place with whom I carried out my research since everyone is introduced eventually anyway and my acknowledgement pages bear testament to numbers.

I understand that introductions to anthropology PhD theses are meant to provide definition of one's focus groups, in this instance though I cannot do it very well with maps or charts of demographics. Bruno Latour writes "there are no groups, only group formations" (2005: 27) and it does seem incongruous to say that this is an ethnography of a group that we might call *the artworld*; it is not so easily defined. Rather I feel it is genuinely most accurate to simply state that this is a study in which *I utilised ethnographic methods to research contemporary art materials and objects and the people who interact with them.*

I have outlined the people and institutions with whom I carried out my research, but my reason for meeting them, what we discussed, how we conducted our meetings was *with* art objects and a good variety of other material things. A recurring prominent theme throughout the study is that of the documentation of art and I browsed (and actually wrote up) countless condition reports, installation manuals, sales invoices and certificates of authenticity. Understanding the ways that these documents are created, used and kept was

very important to my research. My principal objective for the 50 or so images included in this thesis are as illustrations. Since I am writing about visual art, the intention is for the images to provide readers with a picture of what the artworks I write about look like. But gathering the images was also an illuminating research method. In chapter 7 for instance, I include images of an artwork by Antony Gormley packed in a custom-built crate; it was required that I obtain permission to do this from the artist as well as the crate-makers. In chapter 11, I include images of *Art Bin*, permissions for which were obtained from the artist's commercial gallery and the South London Gallery (a public institution) – the artist was not involved with the images at all. In short, the process of learning who to approach and how for image permissions is very much integrated with matters of authorship, ownership and control of artworks and the ways they are kept, documented, remembered and consumed.

I am guided by the theories of Hans Belting and Bruno Latour not just in abstract philosophical ways but also because they directed my research practice and my writing of this thesis. Hans Belting finds that anthropology is suited to the study of art because it takes into account the experience of it in person, again, 'because it only makes sense when there are we who ask it.' (2003: 2) As art historian James Elkins laments, 'it seldom seems appropriate among members of his profession to connect their own lives to the pictures they study' (1996: 31). Art historians' turns to anthropologists for the study of art are not just for theories, but also for our way of carrying out research. Ethnography enables a study of art in participation with it; in exploring collectives of activity among people and things as Latour suggests, it is important that I join in. Instead also, of carrying out an art historical study of events that happened in the past, my findings are further to my experiences in the present.

More actually than the humans with whom I conducted my research - because there are several persons with whom I only shared e-mails with - as a self-imposed rule, I physically encountered in person art objects for almost every single artwork that I write about. Often these were installed and exhibited, but as I describe in chapter 3, I observed some as they were being made or assembled in studios, foundries and fabrication workshops. In chapter 8 I describe art objects being packed and residing in storage facilities. In chapter 9 I write about art objects in conservation workshops, which, journalist Rebecca Mead has likened to hospital operating rooms (2009: 58). In chapter 11, I describe my witnessing of art materials being destroyed.

Anthropologist Daniel Miller argues that while the philosophy of doing away with the duality of persons and things is all very well, he believes that since anthropology is rooted in the practice of ‘normal’ life as observed in ethnography, that “we may find ourselves conducting research among people for whom ‘common sense’ consists of a clear distinction between subjects and objects, defined by their opposition” (2005: 14). But in my research with art, I found that humans’ entanglements with things, as well as objects’ own very active capabilities and powers were clear and obvious to all. If the ethnographer’s task is to describe reality for those they study I do it without much theoretical embellishment. They may not be labeled as such in conversation, but I found that concepts of distributed persons and the non-objectivity of objects are quite taken-for-granted when it comes to art. The ‘common sense’ of the many people whom I met and worked with does not find art objects to be *mere* things. Making, living with, preserving, transporting and causing a stir with art *objects* is the *raison d’être* for thousands of people in their working and non-working lives, and a massive cultural and commercial industry. There is certainly enough to do with them, hear about them and think about them to have kept me occupied and engaged in a study of them for almost five years.

2. A Brief Historical Review of Art Objects and Artworks in the 20th Century

Some anthropologists learn new languages to carry out their research and some ethnographies begin with descriptions of political, geographic and economic histories of field-sites. For my study, I have had to learn the history of art. What follows is a review largely based on literature and it is very condensed; entire art history theses might be created from each section heading.

My thesis hypothesis is, that an art object is one part of an assemblage of other elements that make a contemporary work of art. I developed this hypothesis further to learning about how the roles and extent of materiality were considered and experimented with by artists in the last century. In this chapter I describe how Marcel Duchamp added titles and placement to objects in the assemblage that makes a work of art. Conceptual artists added concepts and ideas. Minimalists added space. The Situationists and Joseph Beuys added events and actions. What were also considered by many of these artists were the roles of themselves as authors, and the roles of other people in the making of works of art. The connections – physically, intellectually and otherwise - between authors and the making of art objects and artworks were experimented with. The relationships – spatially, meaningfully and more - between art objects and viewers of art were also explored. In these ways, in my terms, people were added to objects and other important elements in the assemblage that makes up an artwork.

One of my goals for this study is to compare art theory with the making and keeping of artworks in practice. Contemporary art theory has grown out of the events of the last century. Whether or not contemporary artists today consciously reference their predecessors' works and ideas, all of the artworks I discuss in the rest of this thesis follow in some measure what happened before it. In the first instance, any manufactured or found object utilised in a work of art is connected with Marcel Duchamp's readymades. I am aware that whether historicisation is necessary or even appropriate to ethnography has been much questioned and in turn defended. Entangled with the same debate has seen art academics questioning historical narratives of art; indeed the placement of art objects in time and history is a topic that I consider in this thesis. But, my intention for this necessarily brief historical review is not to *place* the art I discuss in art history. Many theorists including Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) and Roger Sansi-Roca (2010) have described how contemporary artists do not see themselves in opposition to

their predecessors, nor balk at utilising art theories and techniques already used. More important to contemporary artists than their placement in and their development of an art historical narrative is, how they can use art theories and techniques in the present, and whether or not they enable them to achieve what they want to achieve. Fairly simply therefore, I offer some description of events from the last century here, so that I do not have to revert to explanations in later chapters when I write about artworks made more recently.

Any Objects: Readymade or Found

In 1917 Marcel Duchamp created a 'Readymade' artwork by nailing a coathanger to a gallery floor and titling it *Trebuchet* (Trap). The coathanger had previously spent some time on the artist's studio floor where, irritatingly, he had repeatedly tripped over it. The coathanger became art when Duchamp, an artist, selected and assigned it so. By fastening it on its back to the floor, it was removed of any function except as art. The title was a pun on what the object did; it was a trap to trip over. *Trebuchet* was also a reference to a chess movement 'trebucher' which means to stumble over (explained in Judowicz 1998: 95)¹. Duchamp enjoyed a play on words², and key to the selection and arrangement of his readymade objects were the way that, accompanied by their titles, they created three-dimensional puns or even three-dimensional poetry (Judowicz 1998: 91).

The most famous of readymades, the urinal minus plumbing placed in a gallery and titled *Fountain* (1917), was again an artwork achieved by Duchamp's nomination of an object, its arrangement and its title. It was very significant that the urinal was a mass-produced, factory-made one. Duchamp specially chose manufactured items which should be distinguished from 'found objects' (which I will write more about shortly). He championed manufactured objects over 'normal' crafted artworks made by hand, because, according to art historian John Roberts, they were more "homologous to the experience of modernity, of living in a world of hard, reified things." (2007: 23). In artist Robert Smithson's words, Duchamp wanted to 'transcend production and held the manual work process in contempt' (in Judowitz 1998: 166). The argument was that the use of manufactured materials in art was not-so-radical; painters have always (since the

¹ Duchamp was an avid chess player and he often discussed the game in tandem with art.

² Dalia Judowicz has explained how Duchamp's "pleasure generated by wordplay cannot be construed merely in terms of wit.. but is endemic to his description of intelligence.. Duchamp speaks of liking words in a poetic sense, his examples demonstrate that the poetry in question is conceptual, rather than literary" (1998: 91).

Renaissance at least) used pre-manufactured – readymade - paints and canvases (Judowicz 1998: 118). Most importantly, rather than resulting from unconscious brushstrokes or sculpting of hands, Duchamp shifted artistic labour practices to very conscious acts of nomination and placement. John Roberts writes that the ‘introduction of the readymade is the point where traditional skills in art were stripped of their continuity with the past’ (2007: 24). Duchamp made the break from artistic skills being limited to painting and sculpting and declared instead that they could be entirely intellectual. In this way, his readymades were forerunners to Conceptual Art of later decades (although they are not the same thing. Readymades are conceptual, but should not be bound together with Conceptual Art; I will explain more about this shortly).

The mass-produced, manufactured aspect of Duchamp’s readymade selections was also a challenge to the uniqueness of art objects and “notions of artistic originality” (Judowicz 1998: 122). In an attempt to displace his authorship, Duchamp attributed his works to the authorship of pseudonyms Rose Selavy or in the case of *Fountain*, R. Mutt, whose signature was placed on the urinal. When this work was submitted to the Society of Independent Artists Exhibition in 1917 ‘by’ Richard Mutt, the Society did not realise until later that it was actually Marcel Duchamp’s artwork.

Fountain was famously rejected from the Society of Independent Artists Exhibition. In exile as such, the urinal was photographed by a photographer called Alfred Stieglitz. What I find interesting about this photograph is that it emphasises some aesthetic formal qualities of the urinal; the curvy shadow that appeared on the back of the urinal caused it later to be named the *Madonna of the Bathroom*. After this though, the urinal was lost – presumably thrown away by Steiglitz. Dalia Judowicz has written about this:

What is most striking about *Fountain* is the fact that despite the extraordinary controversies generated by the urinal, the object in question, artistic or otherwise seems to have barely existed.

(1998: 125)

What remains of *Fountain* are Steiglitz’ photograph, Duchamp’s letter/editorial directed to the exhibition board in protest of the work’s exclusion, and upwards of 15

replicas made Galeria Schwarz and Duchamp between 1951 and 1964³. That the first urinal used for *Fountain* was so easily discarded at the time, seems to be in line with Duchamp's non-adherence to the usual ideas of the authenticity and originality of art objects. On the other hand, the fact that so much of the literature about Duchamp and *Fountain* surmising about what happened to *the* very first urinal, suggests that it remains unfathomable that even for the ultimate *unoriginal* art object, thoughts about *the original* cannot simply be let go.

But did Duchamp's readymades suggest that objects were unimportant? They made clear that 'Art' is not something intrinsic to objects but is something assigned, applied and interpreted. An artist's intellectual process, a viewer's understanding of this, the selection and placement of an object, and the composing of word-play into a corresponding title are as important to Duchamp's artworks as objects. But the object remained essential in Duchamp's work as Dalia Judowicz has suggested:

The readymade is not merely an art object on display but one that displays the constitution of the objective character of art. The ready-mades thus emerge as the paradoxical symptoms of an age obsessed with materialism. (1998: 99)

Far from negating the objecthood of artworks, Duchamp's readymades opened wide the possibilities for Art's objects and methods of production. More than paint, bronze, canvas, paper, ink or marble, any material thing could become part of a work of art after Duchamp. In 2004, the press reported⁴ that 500 artworld 'experts' voted *Fountain* to be the most influential artwork of the twentieth century. In a nutshell, all contemporary artworks made with non-traditional art materials are in some measure a descendent of the first readymades.

³ I say *upwards* of 15 because while Duchamp authorised an edition of 15 to be made by Galeria Schwarz, in 2010 art writer Sarah Thornton reported in the Economist magazine that at least three or four more than 15 seemed to be in circulation. In response to Thornton's investigations, Schwarz has explained that "these additional works were made in 1964 under Duchamp's direction, but were not included in the original edition due to 'imperfections'". While this statement has been accepted, the controversy stems from the story that Schwarz has been allegedly trying to sell one of these 'imperfect' urinals for two and a half million dollars; a suitable going rate for an 'authentic' *Fountain* perhaps but probably not an inauthentic one. Reported in Artforum, March 25th 2010; <http://artforum.com/archive/id=25192> and the Economist see - <http://moreintelligentlife.com/content/art/artview/rogue-urinals>

⁴ See for example www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/talking_point/4061491.stm and www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2004/dec/02/arts.artsnews1

Duchamp was allied with the Dadaists who originated in Zurich but had protagonists in Berlin, New York, Paris, Hanover and Cologne (Waldmen 1992: 102). Dada was an Anti-Art movement and it, in art historian Diane Waldman's words, "came to stand for rebellion, disruption and change" (1992: 100). Its objects and materials could be anything as long as they were non-artistic, but the focus was on chaotic activities and events. Waldman wrote that "the use of ordinary objects as a way of describing a subject or belief was a fundamental premise of Dada" (1992: 112). While Duchamp (and his Dada contemporaries) continued to cause stirs during the years between the wars, protagonists of Formalism and Minimalism were at the forefront of Modern art in the USA and Europe (more about this shortly). The 1950s and 1960s however, saw renewed attention to Duchamp's work (Buskirk 2005: 66).

By the 1960s, the term 'Assemblage' grew out of assisted readymades, collage, *papiers collés* and juxtaposed found objects. The Museum of Modern Art in New York held an exhibition in 1961 titled *The Art of Assemblage* and included artworks "predominantly assembled rather than painted, drawn, modelled, or carved" (Seitz 1961: 6). The artworks were made from natural and manufactured traditionally non-artistic materials and *objets trouvés* assembled into three-dimensional structures. As much as by the nature of objects and materials used, the technique was characterised by the way in which they are treated. Surrealists such as Brauner were inspired by what Duchamp called 'Assisted Readymades' in which objects were unusually juxtaposed and assembled together. Daniel Spoerri's *Kichika's Breakfast* (1960) was a chair, table and used breakfast dishes hung horizontally onto the wall (see Seitz 1961: 132). Joseph Cornell showed cabinets filled with artefacts such as *Apothecary* (1950) which was a wood and glass cabinet containing medical powders and liquids. (see Seitz 1961: 71). Ultimately, *The Art of Assemblage* exhibition demonstrated, as Eva Diaz has written, that by the 1960s the fact that any object could be used in works of art was no longer "cause for alarm" (2007: 206).

Later, 'Appropriation' was the new way and term for a generation of artists in the late 1970s and early 1980s to use readymades and found objects. Jeff Koons' *New Hoover Convertibles* (1981-1986) – two gleaming new hoover vacuum cleaners displayed in Perspex boxes – followed Duchamp's readymades in that functional objects were pulled away from any use except as art. The use of readymade and found images was predominant amongst Appropriation artists such as Richard Prince's framed magazine advertisements including those of the Marlboro Man, *Untitled [Cowboy]* (1984). In this

way, even artworks themselves could be 'found things'. Sherrie Levine took images from Walker Evans' and Edward Weston's photographs and gave them titles *After Walker Evans* (1981) and *After Ed Weston* (1980). It should be emphasised that Levine appropriated these artists' works' *images* and not the objects themselves. The appropriation of original non-remakable art objects was much more risky, potentially even taboo, because this was always carried out with the first artist's permission. De Kooning famously allowed Rauschenberg to rub out one of his drawings with an eraser in 1953. In 1969 artist Salvo appropriated some letters written by Leonardo di Vinci but he did not alter the material things at all (in Lippard xv: 2001). After their exhibition, the letters resumed being di Vinci's letters. Argentinean Conceptual Artist Eduardo Costa appropriated a conceptual work for which there was no object titled; *A Piece that is Essentially the Same As A Piece Made by Any Of the First Conceptual Artists, Dated Two Years Earlier than the Original And Signed By Somebody Else* (1970). There seem to be thus, no obvious examples from these decades of artists appropriating and irreversibly changing other artists' art objects without their permission. As I demonstrate in later thesis chapters, it is only more recently that contemporary artists have dared to cross this line.

Formalism: Autonomous Objects

Of course in their challenges to established ideals, Duchamp, Dadaists and their rebellious counterparts, knew what coherent establishment expectations were. The dismantling of criterion for works of art surely meant there were criterion to be dismantled.

The modern art establishment from the 1930s was defined by Formalism, and the predominant mode of this has been "collapsed with the proper name of Greenberg" (Yves Alain Bois⁵ in response to Drucker 1996: 751). Critic Clement Greenberg believed that art's values rested in forms over meanings or representations. This was not to deny entirely that artworks had meanings; he wrote; "when a work of art or literature succeeds, when it moves us enough, it does so ipso facto the 'content' which it conveys: yet that 'content' cannot be separated from its 'form'." (1971: 175). With regards to artworks such as David Smith's sculpture titled *Interior* (1937) Greenberg wrote in a review that it "does not stand in its symbolism but in its formal energy" (in O'Brian

⁵ Yves Alain Bois' intention in this paper *Whose Formalism?* (1996) is actually to argue that art historians should consider more than Greenberg's ideas alone in an analysis of Formalism. For my purposes of contextualising Formalism in so few available words here though, I believe that even Alain Bois would concede that to focus on Greenberg makes sense.

1988: 139). He pressed that aesthetic value was the ultimate, most intense form of artistic value (1971: 173-174) and that this was intrinsic to form. Greenberg called for the maintenance (and actually the restoration of since Dada [1971: 173]) the drive for *quality* and aesthetic value in works of art. He believed in Kantian “formulations about intuitive experience and aesthetic judgement” (O’Brian 1988: xxiii) and wrote that artists must strive for "superior artistic standards" and the mastering of techniques (1971: 173) Despite Greenberg’s fanfare endorsements of celebrity artists such as Jackson Pollock, he argued that forms, art objects themselves, were far more important than the personalities of artists. Artworks - which *are* objects - must exist, achieve and be valued autonomously from their makers. Since value was thoroughly intrinsic to form, the quality of mediums themselves made a difference. Urinals for Greenberg, were unworthy as art objects.

A compatriot of Clement Greenberg’s, Critic Michael Fried, queried in 1967:

What is it about objecthood as projected and hypostatized by the literalists that makes it, if only from the perspective of recent modernist painting, antithetical to art?

(In Meyer 2000: 234)

Fried believed that the de-materialisation of art was to negate art entirely. With formalism, a work of art *is an object*. What ‘literalists’ and every other artist who denied formalist principles were creating, according to Fried, was not (visual) art but *theatre*. He lamented:

Whereas in previous art, ‘what is to be had from the work is located strictly within it’, the experience of literalist art is of an object in a situation – one that, virtually by definition, includes the beholder.

(In Meyer 2000: 235)

Minimalism & Site-Specificity: Objects..and Space, Place, Persons

Minimalism was led by artists in the USA during the 1960s (see Meyer: 2000). As usual for artistic movements it seems, 'Minimal Artists' are not an easily defined group⁶. Artist Donald Judd said that minimalism could not be a movement because it did not have any ‘principles or rules’ and the similarities were selected from the work’. With

⁶ According to Matthew Collings, Carl Andre was one of the few who accepted the label (1999: 154).

minimalism, *the* work is construed very *specifically* to be *the* object(s) (Donald Judd *Specific Objects* in Meyer 2000: 207).

Minimalism was new and provocative but not necessarily anti-establishment. It was fashionable, and some of it was endorsed by conservatives such as Greenberg. Art historian Hal Foster describes minimalist artists as the “formalist avant-garde”, who sought to preserve what the transgressive avant-garde (Dadaists and those concerned with dematerialisation etcetera) sought to transform” (1996: 56). Minimalism was, after all, very much focussed on objecthood. Foster points out that Judd appropriated Greenberg’s formalist notion about the objecthood of paintings to the extreme by “exceeding painting altogether in the creation of objects; ‘what could be more objective, more specific, than an object in space?’ (1996: 46).

Where Minimalism (in some respects) broke from formalist notions was the way in which its objects were not aesthetic or meaningfully complex - they were everyday and 'dumb' (Godfrey 1998: 112). Hal Foster suggests that minimal artists substituted formalist requirements for “*quality* with the *experimental* value of *interest*” (1996: 57). Carl Andre's famous *Lever* (1966) was a row of bricks which he ordered from a brick-maker and had placed on the gallery floor. Donald Judd said of his aluminium bars, "their only enigma is their existence" (in Godfrey 1998: 111) (although according to Critic Matthew Collings, Judd liked objects to be “really well made” [1999: 149]). Conscious to break from Abstract Expressionism, minimal artists often had objects industrially manufactured by others to ‘remove traces of emotion or intuitive decision making’ so ‘that they did not allude to anything beyond their literal presences or their existences in the physical world’ (Meyer 2000: 15). The need for skilled industrial fabricators by artists including Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Robert Morris enabled the start-up of specialised industrial art fabrication companies in the 1960s such as Carlson & Co in California and Lippencott Inc in Connecticut/New York. A foreman from the latter in an interview for Artforum said “we’re like their hands, their seeing-eye dogs” (Kuo October 2007: 313). While much minimal art was (often very) large scale, industrially produced ‘sculpture’⁷, minimal artists also painted. Frank Stella insisted that all there was of his paintings was the paint on canvases. He denied the expressiveness of the hand, which was not to be dismissive about his authorship, but rather that he wanted the focus

to be entirely on the object itself and not what it expressed⁸. Critic Susan Sontag wrote in a championing of minimalism in 1964:

Whatever it may have been in the past, the idea of content is today mainly a hindrance, a nuisance... What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to *see* more, to *hear* more, to *feel* more. Our task is not to find maximum amount of content in a work of art... our task is to cut back content so that we can see the thing at all.

(*Against Interpretation* in Meyer 2000: 201)

So while objecthood is essential with minimal work, the viewer's interaction with the object is essential too. Minimalism pledged an affinity with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's version of phenomenology who surmised that 'one cannot grasp the unity of objects without the mediation of bodily experience' (2007: 203). In the Green Gallery in New York in 1964, Robert Morris installed giant plywood geometric structures of differing heights and shapes on the floor and affixed to the walls. Visitors had to walk around, step over and duck the shapes to move within the gallery. The artwork was to be experienced by viewers with an awareness of their own bodies, in interaction with the material structures and the conditions and dimensions of the room itself (described in Meyer 2001: 80). In short, the essential elements of minimal artworks were objects *and* viewers' bodies *and* space. Minimal art introduced notions of 'positive' and 'negative' space. Positive spaces were filled with the material things, or colour in the case of painting, and negative spaces were those unfilled.

Hal Foster suggests that minimalist "sculpture is reduced one moment to the status of a thing 'between an object and a monument' and expanded the next moment to an experience of sites." (1996: 54). Richard Serra, created monumentally sized structures in undulating shapes of steel specially planned and fabricated for chosen sites. A work titled *Tilted Arc* was commissioned and created *for* the large open space of Rockefeller Plaza in New York in 1981. The work however, was disliked by many members of the public and a campaign was launched to remove the structure from the plaza. Since the work had been commissioned and was therefore legally owned by the GSA (a local government body) initial calls were for it only to be relocated to another place. The

⁸ See *New Nihilism or New Art* in Meyer (2000: 199)

problem was, that Serra argued that the structure was *physically* inseparable from the site for which he made it. He said during the trial about the piece:

I make works that deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size and location of my site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site... My works become part of and are built into the structure of the site, and they often restructure, both conceptually and perceptually, the organisation of the site.... *To remove 'Tilted Arc' would be to destroy it.*

(My emphasis. McClean 2007: 196)

And destroyed it was. In 1991 the court decided that the structure for *Tilted Arc* was to be dismantled and removed from Rockefeller Plaza. The de-installation was carried out carefully and the structure was unharmed, but it was placed in a government storage facility.

From the 1970s, the principles of minimalism developed into what was termed 'Site-Specific' art (Kwon 2004: 3). Art moved outside of the confines of gallery walls so that the personal and bodily experience of 'space' in interaction with art objects, could include natural landscapes and lived-in environments (Kwon 2004: 11). In art historian Miwon Kwon's words, early site-specific art aspired to:

exceed the limitations of traditional media, like painting and sculpture, as well as their institutional settings, the epistemological challenge to relocate meaning from within the art object to the contingencies of its context; the radical restructuring of the subject from an old Cartesian model to a phenomenological one of lived bodily experience; and the self-conscious desire to resist the forces of the capitalist market economy which circulates artworks as transportable and exchangeable commodity goods – all these imperatives came together in art's new attachment to the actuality of the site. (2004: 12)

This imperative to 'resist the forces of the capitalist art market', brought artists concerned with site-specificity, albeit art theoretically in-line with minimal artists, but politically, it shared an affinity with the 'transgressive avant-garde' (to return to Foster's term) who dared to challenge art establishment formats.

Conceptual Art & Dematerialisation

Conceptual Art emerged in confrontation with the formalism and conservatism of the establishment and a burgeoning modern art market. Again it is rather indefinable as a coherent movement or school⁹, but a principle uniting many artists from the late 1960s was that of *ideas over objects*. To these artists, art did not exist in unique, special objects, but in their own ideas and the reception of these in the minds of viewers. At the extreme, artworks did not require materiality at all. In Sol le Wit's words in 1969:

Ideas alone can be works of art; they are a chain of development that may eventually find some form. All ideas need not be made physical.

(In Lippard 2001: xiii)

Art Writer Lucy Lippard explained how "Sol le Wit's premise was that the concept or idea was more important than the visual results of.. the object undermined formalism by insisting on a return to content." (2001: 5). Artist Yves Klein too 'detested the mystique of the medium and the goal of his work was immaterial.' He said "I want to create work which will be spirit and mind" (In Godfrey 1998: 68). Describing the production techniques of Conceptual art, Sol le Wit famously said "the idea becomes a machine that makes the art"(in Lippard 2001: 28).

Le Wit's statement was included in Lucy Lippard's 1973 article and volume of transcribed interviews, texts, photographs and other documentation titled *Six Years: The De-materialisation of the Art Object*. Dematerialised artworks could be ideas alone without any materials at all. They could also be those that used and involved materials, but drew a distinction between art objects on the one hand, and works of art on the other. Artist Joseph Kosuth said:

It is not by mere chance that the..work done by me.. is labelled 'model'. All I make are models. The actual works of art are ideas. Rather than 'ideals' the models are a visual approximation of a particular art object I have in mind. It does not matter who actually makes the model, nor where the model ends up. The models are real and

⁹ Lucy Lippard writes "Sol le Wit distinguished between conceptual art with a small 'c'(.. in which the material forms were often conventional , although generated by a paramount idea) and Conceptual Art 'with a capital C'...(anything by anyone wanting to be part of a movement...)" This has not kept commentators over the years from calling virtually anything in unconventional mediums "Conceptual Art" and this book muddies the waters as well.... There has been a lot of bickering about what Conceptual art is/was; who began it, who did what when with it; what its goals, philosophy and politics were and might have been. I was there, but I don't trust my memory (2001: vii).

actual and are beautiful no more or less proportion to other models and who they are being viewed by. Insofar as they are, as models, objects concerned with art - they are art objects.

(February 1967 in Lippard 2001: 25)

The challenge to art's commoditisation was paramount to dematerialisation. Artist John Clay, who photographed arrangements of things such as grass and sand said in 1969:

Anyone ought to be able to reproduce my work..... Sell my work? To sell isn't part of the art. Maybe there will be people idiotic enough to buy what they could make themselves. So much the worse for them.

(in Lippard 2001: 59)

Conceptual artists also continued from Dada and Minimalism to question expectations with regards to originals, quality and particularly artistic authorship. As a backlash to the celebrity artistic geniuses of the time such as Picasso and Pollack, whose work and personalities were so much in demand, in 1961, Piero Manzoni sealed and preserved cans of *Artist's Shit*. Manzoni said; "if collectors want something intimate, really personal to the artist, there's the artist's own shit, that is really his" (in Battino and Palazzoli 1991: 123).

Artist Daniel Buren also argued:

Each individual can dream himself, and without doubt much better than by the trickery of an artist, however great he may be. The artist appeals to laziness, his function is emollient. He is 'beautiful' for others, 'talented' for others, 'ingenious' for others... the 'others' must find their own beauty their own dream. In a word, become adults. Perhaps the only thing that one can do after having seen a canvas like ours is total revolution.

(In Lippard 2001: 41)

With this in mind, Buren repeatedly painted the same canvases for several years so that his works never reached a state of 'completion'. Rather than choose the colours for his paintings, he worked with whatever was offered him at the shop when he bought the canvas.

Many Conceptual artists were politically radical, but the principal focus tended to be on challenging the ways that *art* was made, circulated and received. In turn though, the wider social and political context of the 1960s did affect and inspire many of them. Gustav Metzger developed the premise and wrote three short manifestos (1950, 1960, 1961) for Auto-Destructive Art. As the name declares, Metzger's materials self-destructed. *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965) was made by liquid crystals placed between slides of glass which were mounted on projectors. When the slides were heated and cooled the liquid crystals deteriorated, producing a moving, multi-coloured psychedelic effect which were projected onto a dark wall. Autodestructive Art was a challenge to the art-establishment and particularly the art market. But Metzger also believed that art could be used as a political tool on a wider social plane than the art-world alone. He vehemently opposed nuclear armament and proclaimed in his manifestos:

Auto-destructive art re-enacts the obsession with destruction, the pummelling to which individuals and masses are subjected.

Auto-destructive art is an attack on capitalist values and the drive to nuclear annihilation.

(1960 - 1961)

But despite Conceptual artists' anti-commercialisation endeavours, Lucy Lippard lamented in 1973:

Hopes that conceptual art would be able to avoid the general commercialisation, the destructively 'progressive' approach of modernism were for the most part unfounded...it seemed that these artists would be forcibly freed from the tyranny of the commodity status and market-orientation.... Three years later, the major conceptualists are selling work for substantial sums here and in Europe... Clearly, whatever minor revolutions in communication have been achieved by the process of dematerialising the object...art and artist in a capitalist society remain luxuries.

(2001: 263)

Art historian Alexander Alberro has written about the commercialisation of Conceptual art. He claims that the dealer Seth Siegelau, as much as the main artists, played a central role in the establishment of how conceptual art was 'made' and exhibited (in New York at least). Siegelau certainly defined how Conceptual art was packaged,

sold and exchanged (2003: 3-4). Alberro writes that the dealer developed ways to ‘transfer ownership and satisfy the collector’s desire to own an authentic art object – even when there was no art object in the conventional sense’ (2003: 4). This was achieved with documentation. Siegelau is quoted saying; “each sculpture will come with photographs, drawings, maps, descriptions and other relevant documents to certify ownership.” Alberro suggests that “not only did the documentation make the piece exist, it also served to authenticate the work and give it provenance... the bulk of the material object was eliminated and replaced with documentation” (2003: 73).

Documentation was an important aspect of Conceptual Art whether or not artworks were available for sale. Lucy Lippard’s entire volume about dematerialisation is first and foremost a collection of documents including photographs, letters, maps, wall labels, transcribed interviews from participants of art events. The first edition of Lippard’s book in 1973 became an expensive collector’s item in itself (author’s note 2001: 3).

There was discussion about whether ‘de-materialisation’ was a misleading term. The consensus seemed to be that it was not about doing away with objects and materials altogether, but that ‘art’ shifted from *being* things, to *being* ideas, processes, actions. Objects may have been necessary to art, but this was because of what they could *do* rather than what they *were*. A letter from the Art-Language group to Lucy Lippard illustrates the point:

All the examples of art-works (ideas) you refer to in your article are, with few exceptions, art-objects. They may not be an art-object as we know it in its traditional matter state, but they are nevertheless matter in one of its forms, either solid-state, gas-state, liquid-state..... Matter is a specialized form of energy; radiant energy is the only form in which energy can exist in the absence of matter. Thus when dematerialisation takes place, it means, in terms of physical phenomena, the conversion (I use this term guardedly) of a state of matter into that of radiant energy.

(2001: 43-44)

Art as Situation & Action

The word 'art' is becoming less of a noun and more of a verb.

(Artist Robert Barry 1964¹⁰)

'Situationism' emerged in Europe in the latter half of the 1950s and followed from Dada's provocativeness and anti-art demonstrations (Godfrey 1998: 76) As the name describes, situationism was more about the creation of situations than the creation of art objects. In 1958, an event was launched against the Association of International Critics of Art at a conference by throwing pamphlets with the words "The classless society has found its artists. Long live the Situationist International!"¹¹ The Situationists aims were not antagonistic to materiality per se; Guy Debord wrote "in a classless society there will no longer be painters, but only situationists who, among other things, paint" (2006: 41). They were concerned with creating play-like social events, and because they questioned capitalist alienation (Sansi-Roca 2010: 2) the materials they created were not autonomous and profound, but relational and integral with their playful artistic processes.

Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni's critical treatments or 'inquiries' (to use Godfrey's term [1998: 79]) of art materials followed from Situationism. Manzoni drew lines on pieces of paper and sealed them in cardboard cylinders. The 'art' was in the faith that the drawings were in the boxes or in the mind's eye. Manzoni insisted that if the seals were broken, the artworks would cease to be. Klein sold entirely immaterial artworks titled *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility* (1959). He was paid in gold-leaf which he threw in the Seine, and buyers were required to burn their receipts. In this way, Tony Godfrey writes 'the making, purchase and ownership of the work of art became a mystery, a ritual'... the emphasis of the art was on making and doing (1998: 81-82). Again, however, Klein and Manzoni's work were not to suggest that materials were unvalued. Klein did not throw *all* of the gold-leaf into the Seine from the proceeds of the *Zones of Immaterial*... and used some to make *Monogold* artworks. Whether or not Klein would have approved, these have been taken to be most definitely objects; I learned that one was sold at Christies for \$1,472,000 in 2006. Klein enjoyed the symbolism of gold and apparently loved to watch the gold-leaf that was thrown into the river 'fluttering down'. Christies' blurb for the 2006 *Monogold* auction lot quotes Klein as saying; "the

¹⁰ In Alberro (2003: 55).

¹¹ Situationist International Online; www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/index.html

gold of the ancient alchemists can actually be extracted from everything. But what is difficult is to discover the gift that is the philosopher's stone and that exists in each of us."¹²

Joseph Beuys during the 1960s also held rather mystical beliefs about materials. He too used gold because of its connection with alchemy and myth¹³ and also other metals such as iron for its relationship with war, mars and the phallus. More than materials being symbolic of these things, Beuys believed that materials contained energies which could be utilised and channelled into his art activities. He used a considerable amount of organic materials, and fat was specially valued by him for its ability to heat and nourish and change from solid to liquid at different temperatures.

Beuys' materials then played roles in what he called Actions. Actions entailed repeated movements, gestures and spoken phrases to the point that they became ritualistic. The intention was to incite a spiritual response in the artist and the audience. An action called *MANRESA* took place in Galerie Schmela in Dusseldorf on December 15th 1966, and by the end of the event, Beuys had covered the entire gallery in fat (according to Friedhelm Mennekes in Thistlewood & Macphee 1990: 157). Beuys also used animals in his actions. He famously shared a gallery space with a coyote in *I like America and America likes me* (1974). In *How to Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare* (1965) Beuys walked around a gallery hung with paintings, holding and speaking to a dead hare, appearing from behind the window where visitors were watching, to do just as the title says.

Beuys' art was achieved in Actions but the materials were highly significant too. Drawing plans were made by Beuys beforehand and photographs, films and interviews were made during and after. These plans, props and documents could then be taken to be lasting "artworks in their own right."¹⁴ A collector and close friend of Beuys, called Reiner Speck, told an art historian in an interview about how he attended dinner at the artist's home where they ate medicinal herbs that had been grown in the garden. After dinner, Beuys wrote the names of the herbs on the carton from which they had been

¹² www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=4705681

¹³ Walker Art Centre archival notes written by Emily Rakow; www.walkerart.org/archive/C/9C43F9ACA34F1B386167.htm

¹⁴ These are the words at least of a Tate curator in a text that is available on on-line. www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/beuys/room4.shtm. As I consider in later chapters of this thesis, this evidences a propensity I observed at the museum to keep material leftovers as lasting works of art. In the case of Beuys though, as per accounts such as from Rainer Speck (2003) and Adriani (1979) if I have not found a quote in which the artist explicitly said it should happen, I have neither found any suggestion that he objected to it either.

brought in from the garden. He then “dedicated” it to Dr. Speck who thus said “so now I had another piece by him” (2003: 20).

Chapter Remarks

My hypothesis about the roles of objects in contemporary works of art, and the extent of artworks’ materiality, follows a century of artists’ questioning and experimenting with it. At the extremes, Formalist principles found the work of art to be an utterly material thing. Partly in response and taking it to the other side of the material spectrum, some Conceptual artists attempted to make artworks entirely *immaterial*. But as is often the case with extremism, a spectrum may be less of a straight line and more of a curve with poles that actually end up quite close together. Conceptual Art *and* Formalist notions demonstrate an obsession with objectivity. As anthropologist Christopher Pinney has pointed out, to be ‘for’ or ‘against’ materiality does the same thing in the ‘affirmation of the subject versus object dichotomy’ (2005: 269). These art theories both seem to attempt to purify and separate objects away from people.

This is further demonstrated by how some primary questions that were addressed were about the bonds of authorship and the roles of viewers in the making of art. On the one hand, their interactions were explored and deemed essential. From Duchamp to Beuys, artists and viewers were crucial participants in the making and happening of art. In turn, art objects were considered by Formalists to exist as art entirely autonomously from people; a masterpiece was a masterpiece irrespective of who had made it and whether or not anyone was looking at it. At the other end of the spectrum (which, again, in some respects suggests similar formalist thinking over objectivity versus subjectivity) conceptual artists experimented by disconnecting their authorship from art objects by physically distancing fabrication from their bodies and especially their hands.

A consideration of authorship and the connections between artists and objects is the topic of the next chapter. With the assistance of anthropological theories about distributed personhood and agency, I explore how questions about authorship and the bonds and separations between artists and their work might be responded to with reference to some contemporary artworks that I encountered with my research.

3. Distributed Artists

In this chapter I consider how artworks *are* something of the artists who make them. More than merely finding that artists have ‘relationships’ with works of art, I explore how artworks may be understood as distributed parts of them. In this way, artworks have the agency of artists. What an artist is able to *do* with an artwork is essential to what the artwork is. I propose that in my terms, an artist’s distributed person is part of the assemblage that makes up an artwork. I find this proposition does not require much forcing of theory. Throughout the course of my research, I perceived what seems to be a fairly taken-for-granted assumption, that we may *see* artists, *interact* with them and *know* them by their works of art. This is an important beginning to this thesis, because I find that the agency of artists enacted through artworks at the beginning of their lives may remain active for the rest of their lives. The inalienable bond forged between artists and their artworks when they are first made has important implications for the exchange, exhibition and maintenance of artworks in practice – topics I consider in detail in later chapters.

The anthropological theory of distributed personhood follows Marcel Mauss’ essay of *The Gift* from 1925. The crux of which (for my intents) is that “the thing itself possesses a soul, is of the soul. Hence, it follows that to make a gift of something to someone is to make a present of some part of oneself” (2000: 12). In other words, ‘we give ourselves while giving.’ In a discussion of Maori *taonga* (things/articles), Mauss considers the *hau* (the spirit) of things; this is not some arbitrary spirit, but the spirit of whom the thing is personal to (2000: 11).

Much has been said about how works of art in the West are illustrative of Mauss’ thesis about the gift. That artworks contain the spirits of artists is taken to be so obvious that Mauss himself refers to art so that Western readers might appreciate the spirits in things understood by Maori, Trobrianders and Kwakiutl (see 2000: 67). Then Lewis Hyde’s 1979 “Modern Classic”¹ *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (1979) is a wholehearted application of Mauss’ ideas to art-making. For Hyde, “where there is no gift, there is no art” (2007: xv) and he spells out his belief that artists’ inalienable gifts are the antithesis to alienated commodities (2007: 276).

Marilyn Strathern’s findings from her fieldwork in Melanesia are that objects, more than symbols of persons, can be understood as *parts* of persons (1988: 161). She

¹ As per the back-cover blurb of the book, and endorsements all over my edition (2006) from famous authors such as Zadie Smith, Bill Viola and Margaret Atwood.

takes issue with the positing of the individual versus society and the object versus the person and suggests that singular persons may have multiple identities (1988: 13-15). Strathern argues that the concept of the person – the single identity as male *or* female in a body that is either ‘owned’ by the self or another – presents a flawed concept with which to understand Melanesian relations between men and women; according to her, the Melanesian *person* is *both* male and female, a human body *and* numerous objects. To be clear, this is not that valuable objects should just be understood as personifications, “since this implies an unwarranted double participation in the equation between subjects and persons”. In short, Strathern asserts that objects may be distributed *real parts* of persons. (1988: 171).

These ideas were forerunners to Alfred Gell’s book *Art & Agency* (1998) in which he outlines his theories about the distributed person and what he coined the extended mind. In line with his agenda for an action-focussed, anthropological theory of art in the vicinity of social relations, Gell asserts that artworks may do more than depict or ‘stand’ for persons in symbolic ways – we might find that artworks are persons, with bodies, minds, spirits/souls, sensibilities and intentions (1998: 131-132). Key to Gell’s theory is that artworks enable artists (and other agents, although that is a discussion for later chapters) to act on viewers/participants, as physical substitutes for them, at a distance from their human forms (1998: 5).

Art objects then may provide physical bodies for persons ‘beyond the human body boundary’ (1998: 104) and Gell suggests that they have the ability to make absent persons visible (1998: 98). These additional physical bodies can act as ambassadors of the artist beyond temporal and spatial confines. They enable him to be in many places at once and may even provide him with a vessel after the death of his human body (1998: 225²). Art objects may thus enable artists additional bodies to travel and have agency beyond their human body boundaries. Interaction with these objects then count as interaction with them; as distributed bodies, the objects carry artists’ names, their actions and intentions. Further to her ethnographic fieldwork in Gawa (1986), Nancy Munn considers how the circulation of Kula shells allows “the expansive spatiotemporal construction of the self?” (1986: 109). She describes fame or *butu* as:

an enhancement that transcends material, bodily being and extends beyond the physical body but refers back to it. Fame is a mobile, circulating dimension of the

² This page reference is for Gell’s discussion of New Ireland Malangan, that temporarily “provide a body, or more precisely a skin for a recently deceased person of importance” (1998: 225).

person: the travels (*taavin*) of a person's name (*yaga-ra*) apart from his physical presence. In fame, it is as if the name takes on its own internal motion travelling through the minds and speech of others (1986: 107).

In *Art & Agency*, Alfred Gell briefly addresses a definition of 'personhood', but then ducks away from it by saying that as an anthropologist it is not his 'task to offer such a definition' (1998: 223). He settles by citing Roy Wagner's theory of 'fractal personhood' which defines a person as a many-layered entity with indistinct boundaries. Ultimately for Gell, personhood is an assemblage of "biographical layers" with potentially any number of bodies (1998: 139-140).

In this thesis, I write using Gell's term of distributed persons rather than 'spirits of things', but Mauss' principle remains key; the following discussion is about how 'some parts' of artists are in and carried by artworks. I begin the discussion with a presentation of how some artists forge a physical connection with their art by literally using parts of and from their human bodies. In these examples the physical lives of the artworks are bound with the physical lives of the artists.

I find that how an artist's *work* is distributed in an art object has particularly interesting implications for both anthropology and art theory. This is because it is not alienated work, whereby an artist produces a 'product' separate from herself, but rather the work that goes into the artwork is made out of her, thus the work is bonded with her, and forged as *inalienable*. In this chapter, I consider examples of how artists make their work (labour) material and visible. The art objects bear traces of physical bonds with the artists but further, by acting as additional bodies, they enable artists to *continue* their work. An *artwork*, I suggest, allows the artist to carry out her work and achieve her intentions at a physical and temporal distance from her human body.

I then go on to explore how artworks make it possible for artists to act on their intentions. At several points in this thesis though, I question the definition of 'artists' intentions' – a term I find often cited in art theory as well as in practice. Though it tends to be interpreted that artists' intentions for conceptual works are primarily intellectual, in this chapter I show how physical bonds can exist between so-called conceptual artists and art objects nonetheless. I then consider how the life of the artist and his work (his oeuvre) develops over time. This also has important implications for an understanding of intentionality because the examples I present suggest that it is not fixed in time.

The theory of distributed personhood is essential to understanding how the inalienable bonds between artists and artworks begin. It is necessary to start this thesis with it, because an artwork only begins because an artist chooses to make it, because she wants to *do* something. The theory is important anthropologically because it is about how persons have social agency through material things (see Gell 1998: 96). As an offering from anthropology to art theory, I believe this provides some insight into the much experimented with question in art of ‘what is an author?’

The Literally Distributed Body

Much to art historian Donald Kuspit’s dismay³, many contemporary artists initiate an immediate physical bond with their artworks by using their own bodily fluids and remnants in their artworks. Marc Quinn has made four self-portraits titled *Self* (1991, 1996, 2001, 2006) (image 3.1). They are frozen casts of his head made with approximately nine pints of his own blood. A new mould is created for each one so the ageing artist becomes apparent between them. In theory, if they remain frozen, the heads should last a fairly long time. They are nonetheless organic and dependent on mechanical refrigeration units so they will not survive forever. This fragility and that it is Quinn’s *own* blood that is used are essential, so when he dies, or personally chooses not to offer replacement blood, so does the possibility of them ever being restored or re-made. The works’ physical life is dependent on him; their lifespans are bound together and synchronised.

Mona Hatoum has used her own blood to stain paper for a *Blood Drawing* (2003). She also weaved her own hair on a loom, which she had collected from brushes and drains for six years, for an artwork titled *Recollection* (1995). For two years she saved her nail clippings and suspended them in resin cubes to create *One Year* (2003) and *One Year* (2005) (image 3.2). The artist kept cutting her nails but they grew back; the works are documents of those years of the artist’s living, growing body. Adrian Piper’s work titled *What Will Become of Me?* also makes use of meticulously saved hair and nail clippings. Not yet complete (and therefore as yet un-dated) over the last twenty-five years the remnants have been collected and stored in jars. When Piper dies a final jar will contain her ashes. The work completed in this way has already been bequeathed to MoMA in New York.

³ He spends much of his book *The End of Art* fuming over it. For one of several examples: “Art’s turn to faeces as a subject-matter/theme – the perfect formless content – also suggests its impotence, its sterility, for if faeces replaces the penis, and child art is no longer a creative act, then art is simply a matter of moving one’s psychic bowels” (2004: 120).

'What will become of Piper' is an artwork that will remain and be cared for in an art museum for a long time past her biological death.

Gabriel Kuri uses a bag of his urine balanced with a bag of clear liquid in his simple yet effective *Self-Portrait as a Retention & Flow Diagram* (2009) (image 3.3). Kuri told me, it is “both a form of self portraiture and charting. Two bodies connected by a line”⁴. The work does not have a single closed autobiographical meaning but it draws on the artist’s memories. He told me about how when he was a boy he used to buy fizzy drinks from the corner shop in plastics bags because there was a trade war between the Cola companies over glass bottles:

The image/sensation of a bag with a product ..was too similar to a bag with its waste (a lot of us have at least once peed into a plastic bag and don't forget what it feels like to hold it, tie it in a knot, etc...). Somewhere in the middle of all this is where this rather mute and fragile piece comes together. Somewhere in the middle of this physical/contextual dialectics (the string/line of relationship maybe?) it also becomes a form of self-portraiture.

(E-mail February 2010)

As per the examples from Quinn, Hatoum and Piper, Kuri has created an art object by literally distributing the emissions of his human body. It is however, not only a physical distribution of him, because his body, and more specifically a feeling in his body, is connected with a memory. The art object thus induces and activates memory. In his discussion of distributed personhood, Alfred Gell cites the philosopher Lucretius who wrote how objects may:

emit bodies in a state of loose diffusion like smoke with logs of oak, heat and fire emit; some of a closer and denser texture, like the gossamer coats which at times cicadas doff in the summer, and the films which calves at their birth cast from the surface of their body, as well as the vesture which the slippery serpent puts off among the thorns; for often we see the brambles enriched with their flying spoils: since these cases occur, *images likewise must be emitted from things off their surface.*

(see Gell 1998: 105 my emphasis)

⁴ E-mail February 2010.

Gell then writes that this bears ‘resonance with the Epicurean theory that sees the generation of simulacra as a growth process – the shedding of ephemeral skins induced from within’ (1998: 108). The discarded gossamer coats of the cicadas provide the distribution of both parts and *images* of the living creature (1998: 106). This suggests that artists’ use of the surplus substances from their human bodies have the ability to emit images of those bodies to viewers of the works.

Artists’ Work

Art historian Hans Belting’s thesis is on the same theme. He suggests that art objects may act as bodies that mediate images (2005: 5). In the images they produce therefore art objects have the ability to make absent artists visible. Janine Antoni is another artist who uses her body to make art. Her works are often performative in that audiences may be invited to watch her at work. She then leaves behind the objects of her performances, as traces of her work and her engagement with the materials.

For example, Antoni carved *Gnaw* (1992) from a cube of chocolate and a cube of lard using only her teeth (images 3.4). She bit and ground pieces away and emptied her mouth of them to form a pile. It has been made evident that the making of *Gnaw* demanded a great deal of physical exertion for Antoni over several days. Martha Buskirk has recounted how they caused for Antoni “a mouth full of blisters” (2003: 8) and Nancy Spector has quipped with reference to *Gnaw* that while some artists “realise their work simply by thinking about it, our artist [Antoni] worked very very hard.” (2000: 10)⁵ The physically laborious task of creating the cubes of lard and chocolate was not actually observed by an audience and photography of the process was intentionally avoided⁶. The process is inferred from the evidence of the tooth-marked cubes. The ‘performance’ takes place in our imaginations when we encounter the objects. Although the artist is physically absent, we ‘see’ images of her working nonetheless.

Antoni’s work draws parallels with that of Tracey Emin’s. Emin’s art objects and materials tend to bear evidence of her bodily interaction, and she uses various strategies to make evident – to make us see - the hard work that she puts in to them. In her frequent public appearances, and often in a column she used to write for the

⁵ Dan Cameron has also written that in sculpting *Gnaw* “using her mouth as a tool.. the work emphasises the quality of duration as a function of the artist’s own physical limits” (in *Janine Antoni* 2000: 27).

⁶ Explained to me in an e-mail from Caroline Burghardt of Lühring Augustine Gallery, February 2010.

Independent newspaper, Emin talks and writes a lot about the emotional and physical processes of her art making. For example:

I've felt so much happier the last few days. My mood has lifted enormously, simply because of some late-night Saturday artistic recreation. Last week I was really struggling with my painting. I was struggling so badly that I actually hated myself. I sat in my studio feeling really morose and every brushmark felt like another tick of failure.

(Independent Newspaper, Friday 5 October 2007)

Emin is sometimes criticised for self-promotion⁷ but in talking so much about herself and making art she enables us to visualise the moments in which *she* creates her work. For example, the watercolour series *After My Abortion* (made in 1990 but exhibited for the first time in 2007 with text) begins with a text panel explaining how Tracey created the series, alone in a hotel room, following one of her abortions (images 3.5 & 3.6). The series, thirty-two watercolour panels plus a single text panel are classified as one work of art; it is essential that we read the text to experience the images. The significant images that we may actually experience therefore, are perhaps, less the 'poorly painted' shapes and marks on the paper, and more the images in our imaginations, of the artist working alone and emotionally charged in a hotel room; the paintings allow us to share the emotional moments with the artist⁸.

The importance of Emin's emotional hard work and physical engagement with her materials is also asserted by one of her most favoured techniques of monoprinting (see images 3.7). This is a method which produces one-off results by scratching paper laid flat onto ink-coated glass. The artist only sees resulting images when the paper is pulled back and the process is over; monoprints are a result of a spontaneous physical

⁷ See for example *Something's Wrong*, Melanie McGrath on Tracey Emin Tate Magazine, Issue 1, September/October 2002 and *Tracey Emin is Far From a Narcissist*, Jonathan Jones Guardian, 15th June 2009

⁸ I am aware that the notion of art as the externalised inner feelings of artists is a romantic analogue as considered by theorists such as M.H Abrahms with his book *the Mirror and the Lamp* (1953). This is also the basis for Expressionism and it worthwhile to note that Tracey Emin is often described as a Neo-Expressionist. That these are common perceptions of artists is relevant to this ethnographic study. Further however, I suggest in departure from Expressionist theory, that it does not make sense to isolate the artist's emotion from the rest of her. Emin's work is not only what her emotions on 'her inside' look like 'on the outside'. Her body, skills, ideas, labour and more are indecipherable from each other and may be distributed among her artworks too.

engagement. Emin's fingerprints and hand pressure marks are often left detectable on her monoprints – evidence of her once physical engagement with them.

The work processes by which Simon Starling made his 2005 Turner Prize winning artwork *Shedboatsshed* (2003) are also physically apparent. Starling found a shed with a paddle nailed to it during a trip along the Rhine. He decided to turn the timber into a boat which he paddled along the river. Upon arrival in Basel, he turned the wood back into a shed again, which he then put in a gallery. Inside the shed, one can see marks of the cutting and the cotton stuffing that was used to keep the water out of the boat. Starling said of this in an interview at Tate:

I deliberately make things myself, by hand, and tend to take the long-way round. So much of contact with the way objects are manufactured is now so distant from us because things are manufactured in multiple countries by large corporations and you kind of lose a sense of connection with the things you are using every day.

(Tate Britain 2005⁹)

An encounter with these *works* by Starling, Emin and Antoni, is an encounter with their *work* (as the term indicates). It is not just that the artworks are a *result* or a product of these artists' work - they *are* their work, and in new non-human bodies provided by art objects they *continue* their work. The objects enable us (cause us) to visualise the way that they were made and they tell the artists' stories of what happened.¹⁰ The objects continue to carry out the work of the artists, or we might say they continuously re-perform the event of their making. It is also significant to note that for these artists, a physical interaction was vitally important in the forging of the bonds between themselves and the artworks.

Artists' Intentions

The ways that artists carry out what they want to achieve – act out their intentions – with art objects is the subject of Alfred Gell's essay *Vogel's Net: Artworks as Traps* (1996). Gell likens artworks to traps because traps are devices created by humans that actively carry out their makers' actions and intentions. When we encounter a conceptual contemporary artwork in a gallery-space, Gell writes that it is not just that we

⁹ www.tate.org.uk/britain/turnerprize/2005/audio/starlingintro.mp3

¹⁰ The wall description of Simon Starling's work at the Barbican's Radical Nature exhibition (June to October 2009) said that he uses "materials to tell stories."

see a 'sign' from the artist, but that we encounter a surrogate version of him, an object that physically acts out his plan (1996: 227).

Mirosław Balka's *Zoo/T* (2008) is a steel model of a menagerie that housed birds and foxes in the Nazi concentration camp at Treblinka (images 3.8). Balka learned that the menagerie had been installed at the camp in an attempt to alleviate the stress of the prison officers. I heard Balka say that he found it incredibly strange however, that it was thought that stress caused by the imprisonment of people might be eased by the caging of wild animals¹¹. Balka then decided to make a sculpture which is a scale model of the menagerie for people. He instructed the foundry to make it to the dimensions of exactly his head height when he stands in the centre (just under two metres). Viewers are invited to climb into the structure to feel what it is like to be inside – to be trapped inside the menagerie (it is not straightforward to climb in or out), and also to feel this in relation to the physical dimensions of Balka himself.

Accompanying *Zoo/T*, is a projection artwork titled *170 x 126 x 10/T.Turn* (2008). From inside the site where the camp at Treblinka used to be, Balka filmed a cloudy sky dotted with flying birds by circling a hand-held camera around his body. The film flips towards the ground at the end of each circle as the artist twists his hand¹². Again, when we encounter the work, we see and experience the view in the prison-camp from a perspective of Balka and in the way he wants us to see and experience it.

In *Vogel's Net*, Gell poses an idea for an exhibition about traps filled with functioning ethnographic artefacts as well as contemporary artworks (1996: 222). I think that Balka's works from Treblinka would be good contenders. They physically trap viewers inside them and they are about entrapment. But further, these works are traps because they *act out* Balka's intentions; they trap us into seeing and feeling what he has seen, felt and thought. As Balka's traps they carry out his work on us. They do it with objects and materials that are surrogates to his human body form.

Like Balka, Damian Ortega is an artist who tends to be labelled a contemporary conceptual artist – his art objects are understood as physical manifestations of his ideas. Ortega's sculpture titled *Controller of the Universe* (2007) is made from suspended found and used tools (images 3.9). As with much conceptual art practice, its first physical installation was consciously done without Ortega in situ, over two weeks by six technicians from a fabrication group or 'Prop-shop' called MDM (I introduce MDM in

¹¹ As told during his talk to gallery staff at White Cube, December 2008.

¹² Curator Michael Archer also describes this process in an exhibition catalogue for these works (2008: 11).

greater detail in the next chapter). The technicians worked from detailed and carefully made sketches supplied by Ortega, whom I heard say the following about them at an accompanying exhibition opening (image 3.10):

It's fun because I like the idea...to use these graphic works which I use only for as a reference to build the sculptures. It was really nice, the jump from one page to the other because they [the sculpture and the graphic works] look really similar, it was a big surprise for me [said with amusement]...

Well I think it is really interesting. The drawings, for me, are the most natural experience, for the artist, the most personal, the simplest and the more direct idea. Then it is the construction that involves more people and other things, different contexts and conditions. But the drawing is personal and great and is for me the purest idea of the artist. The real art is the idea in the sketchbook.

Tim Marlow:Is drawing the root?

Ortega: Yes, it was nice... to work on sketches ... I think it was really a good system to understand the objects and the situations. [The sketch].. this is the idea.

(Hoxton Square, July 2007)

Firstly, Ortega's sketches enacted his intentions because they enabled him to communicate with the MDM technicians as to how the sculpture should look. Also though, even more than the subsequent sculpture, the sketches have a connection with his ideas - his thought and work processes.

In *Art & Agency*, in development of the ideas that were introduced in *Vogel's Net* two years earlier, Gell writes about 'external minds' and 'presupposed intentional psychology' (1998: 122-33). I question however, (here and throughout this thesis) whether 'intent' and 'agency' must necessarily be psychological and of the mind. As will be demonstrated in chapters that follow, I found with my research that "artists' intent" is a phrase used a great deal in art theory and very much so in practice in the artworld. It is however, potentially difficult to articulate and conceptually define. This is not to argue that Balka and Ortega's intentions were *not* intellectual processes, but I find it significant that each of these examples bear physical connections with their human bodies as well as their 'minds' and for Ortega, with his hand no-less. Thus, while I suggest that what it is of these artists that is distributed in their works *is* their intention – what intention *is*

should not be limited to coming from their mind or body or any other individual ‘part’ of them. Additionally, while both Balka and Ortega in these instances had intentions that they were able to articulate at the time that these works were first made, (I heard both of them discuss them in talks) it may be problematic to suppose that their intentions should remain the same over time.

The Oeuvre as a Distributed Artist Over Time

An artist’s life is a continuum and not a series of moments.

(Artist David Novros¹³)

The sculpture *Adam* (2009) – a bird-man locked in violent embrace with a lobster – is a sculptural version of characters from Raqib Shaw’s elaborate, fantastical, luminous and sometimes precious stone-encrusted paintings (image 3.11). With no autobiographical intention, the bird-man’s outreaching hands were cast from Shaw’s own hand (image 3.12). During a talk to the staff at White Cube just before his 2009 exhibition opening there, Shaw explained who *Adam* was and where he came from:

He first appeared in the (painting) *Earthly Delights III* but he didn’t have a face - he appeared as a miserable thing in the corner - and then he appeared again, slightly more complete (as a small sculpture) in *Earthly Delights X*. And the reason why – I thought it is a very good idea to choose a very simple pair from the paintings and translate that 3D.

(May 2009 Hoxton Square)

Earthly Delights X was shown at Tate Modern in 2006. This first “miserable” 3D version measured only around forty centimetres and was considered part of a comprehensive installation rather than a stand-alone sculpture (3.13).

Shaw is a painter, so in his decision to make a sculpture he had to employ studio assistants and the prop-shop MDM for the fabrication. In the next chapter, I describe in greater detail the processes of fabricating the object that became *Adam* with Shaw working in collaboration with MDM. The fabrication of the object was very much a

¹³ Said during a panel discussion at the *Object in Transition Conference*, Getty Institute, January 2008

developing process of discussion, research and refinement further to the artist's provision of drawings, samples and direction.

Before *Adam* was ever thought of as a sculpture, Shaw had worked with the character in his paintings and drawings in several versions for a number of years. Although the White Cube exhibition officially included nine individual artworks, (eight paintings and *Adam* the one sculpture) all available separately for sale, Shaw spoke of the exhibition as if it were a single coherent piece, yet also not disparate from earlier works or those still to be made. We were told in the gallery surrounded by the paintings:

The drawings made specially for the series, they actually started as early as 2004. So it is maybe right to say that various elements of this work, the images, have been made since 2004. It's five years.... The scene has taken all that time to actually.. be realised.

When Tim Marlow asked if the work was now 'resolved' Shaw responded:

Oh no, this is a study for the *Paradise Lost* series..... The *Paradise Lost* show - which I've been planning for years – it is going to have three big paintings; ten foot by thirty, ten foot by forty and ten foot by fifty. So they are the three big chapters. The only problem I had with this one, the studio did not have fifteen-foot walls so we had to stop at ten. So it is a bit squashed, I wanted it to have maybe two more feet at the top so I think maybe it would really work more, but we'll leave it until next time.

With specific reference to *Adam* the sculpture:

I think we got the language right, *although* it does need *tweaking* in the future ... and we'll get it right as a *Paradise Lost* installation. Which is going to have a room with about ten or fifteen of these pairs. Where we actually have a physical space where we can *walk into* a section of the painting....

Now since we know now what we want to achieve, they will become much more complicated....I think that will be the next challenge which I'm very much looking forward to, where there is more motion, where the bodies are more complicated, the visceral bits are more refined and more resolved.

(May 2009 Hoxton Square)

Alfred Gell makes the fairly obvious point that the artist's oeuvre is a *lineage* of artworks "that are ancestral to, and descended from, other works in the oeuvre" (1998: 233). An artist's life's work is a process and one work leads to another over time. Further, Gell asserts that the oeuvre is an *observable* process of artistic consciousness "writ large and rendered public and accessible" (1998: 236). We may approach the oeuvre as the artist's distributed person *over time*. With reference to Duchamp, but of course applicable to other artists, Gell then says that the oeuvre "as a distributed object of [the artist's] consciousness, the very flux of his being as an agent, is not just 'accessible to us' but has assumed this form. The artist has *turned into* this object, and now rattles around the world, in innumerable forms, as these detached person-parts." (1998: 250) What this suggests is that as an artist has new experiences, develops and changes, his artworks as parts of him will also develop and take new directions. In other words, since an artist leads an active, changing and developing life, so too will his artworks change and develop with him.

Present and Recognised

While Alfred Gell's theory is written with great intellectual depth and is often quite abstract, I find that much of what I have suggested so far in this chapter about artworks being distributed artists is fairly easily illustrated by listening to people's expectations, the ways that artworks are dealt with in practice, and how they are talked about.

In 1995, Bill Drummond purchased a Richard Long print from Anthony D'Offay gallery for \$20,000. Richard Long is one of Drummond's favourite artists because 'he makes art by walking and doing things' (2009: ii). After a time though, Drummond became bored of the print and started to ignore where it hung on his bedroom wall. In later thesis chapters, I describe in more detail what lead Drummond to do it and then more of what followed, but to cut a long story short, at four 'o clock one morning, Drummond decided to slice the print into 20,000 pieces. He then went on tour around the UK to make presentations in coffee shops, libraries and art galleries, to try sell each of the 20,000 pieces for one dollar a throw (he wanted to raise the original sum of money that he had paid). Although Drummond had been a admirer of Richard Long for decades he had "never seen a photo of him", he did not know what his face looked like (2009: 152). Sometime through the tour however, Drummond went to sell some of the fractions of the print at the Arnolfini centre in Bristol. A man wearing a t-shirt that

Drummond recognised as having been printed with a poem written by Richard Long asked him “can you tell me what is going on?” Drummond explained, and the man said that he would like to buy a 1/20,000 fraction of the print. The man was then required to write down his name and e-mail address, so that Drummond could contact him among the rest of the purchasers of the fractions when he implemented the next stage of his plan (again, I provide more details about this plan in later chapters). After learning that this purchaser was actually Richard Long, Drummond had to give his presentation with the artist he so admired not nine-feet away; of this Drummond said “it was almost too much to bear, and I contemplated doing a runner”. After the presentation, Richard Long said “I think we have some things to discuss, Bill”; among other questions, Long asked Drummond “why had he chosen *him* to have a go at the art world” (2009: 152). In Richard Long’s eyes, a part of *him* had been used in Drummond’s experiment.

Michael Landy is another artist who believes that the destruction of art materials may be of greater consequence than the destruction of ‘mere objects’. In what he titled *Break Down* (2003), in which he destroyed all of his ‘worldly possessions’ on a conveyer belt, Landy said during an interview for Artangel:

One way or other I'm trying to get rid of myself.. it's kind of the ultimate way without actually dispensing of me.

(Artangel 2001¹⁴)

After *Break Down*, Landy turned to making quieter, more solitary work by creating etchings of wild flowers and weeds. In an interview for a documentary, he was asked:

Are the etchings self-portraits?

Landy: *Me?! Are they portraits of me? No.. no!* (said with surprise then amusement).

(Michael Landy; Illuminations Productions 2005)

Despite the answer in the negative, that the interviewer thought to ask this question is significant. Self-portraits do not have to depict artists because artworks are

¹⁴ www.artangel.org.uk//projects/2001/break_down/about_the_project/break_down

always, to abridge Gell's phrasing, 'an index of the spatio-temporal presence of an artist' anyway. In other words, Michael Landy does not look like his artworks, but his artworks look like him' (1998: 98).

In a similar way, Anya Gallaccio has made identifiable to her the use of gerberas and roses. During an interview at Tate she spoke about how she does not like to be photographed but a book was being published about 'significant women artists' of the period and since she was asked 'she didn't want to be left out'. She said:

I couldn't bear the idea of having my picture taken.. so I came up with this idea.. of having a photograph of me taken face down in a pool surrounded by flowers. Because I thought well I'm the flower girl so if everyone sees the gerberas, they still won't know who I am, they won't see my face, but they'll realise *it's me* because of the flowers.

(September 2002 Tate Britain¹⁵)

It does not matter that we do not know Anya Gallaccio's face, because we *know her* and *recognise her* through her favoured choice of materials.

As per his essay *The Death of The Author* (1967) Roland Barthes and his post-modern contemporaries attempted to de-centre authors from artworks and some conceptual artists experimented with trying to sever ties altogether, mainly by the tactic of physically distancing themselves from material fabrication. Further to his own experiments with separating his authorship from his work, Bill Drummond has said with typical honesty:

My ideal was that people would come across what I do and respond to it and engage with it without even knowing it was the work of an artist, let alone one named Bill Drummond.... [But] the *How to Be An Artist* [work] was all about me. It was and still is, all about me going 'look at me and my over-convoluted relationship with this thing'. I might try to convince you at times that it is really about everyone's relationship with art in these modern times, but I don't know if that washes even with me, let alone you.

(2009: 148)

¹⁵ Tate webcast; <http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/26066124001>

Artworks as Distributed Authors

Works of art seem to offer a particularly good type of example for anthropologists to consider when it comes to an examination of agency through things, inalienability and distributed personhood. Following the encounters of my research, I believe that to say artworks are distributed artists does not require a great conceptual stretch of the imagination. As per Mauss and Hyde's theses, works of art are 'commonly' understood to be gift-like and thus contain the 'spirits' of their makers¹⁶. Anthropologist Annette Weiner, in her book *Inalienable Possessions* (which I present in more detail in a later chapter) also cites works of art and artists as the quintessential example of an inalienable relationship between people and things in the West (see 1992: 35). After all, the language used suggests that artists are recognised and known by their art; we can say "I went to the Venice Biennale to *see* Tracey Emin". As distributions of them, artworks take on authors' names and fame. This does not suggest that artists merely have a 'relationship' with their artworks; we seem to think, to know, that artworks *are* something of artists.

With this study, I am particularly interested in the role of the art object for the distributed artist. I suggest the object provides the artist with an additional body which can travel, physically act out his intentions, make him visibly recognisable and continue his work without him being present in human form. To focus on the art object though is not to separate it from the work of art. It is the same as focussing on the human body of the person; it is an essential part of who/what we are, but it is one among other essential 'parts' of our person such as, perhaps, our spirits, names, work, childhood memories of fizzy drinks, ideas, journeys in boats and post-abortion traumas.

It seems that the principles of distributed personhood make redundant the challenges to 'authorship' that some artists have attempted simply by spatially distancing their hands/bodies from the manual fabrication of art objects. Art Historian Martha Buskirk has written too that among conceptual artists 'the removal of the artist's hand, rather than lessening the importance of artistic authorship, actually made the connection between work and artist that much more significant' (2003: 3). By examining the bonds between artworks and artists using the theory of distributed personhood, it is illustrated how the artwork is not just a *product* of an artist's work. More importantly for this anthropological understanding of an author, is how he *does* something with an

¹⁶ Mauss (2006: 11) and Hyde (2007: 60)

artwork – how it is a source of his agency. Ultimately a work of art exists because the artist decides to make it, chooses with what and with whom to make it, names it, and has an intention for what he wants to make happen.

The next chapter is about the fabrication of art objects, and I introduce people including studio assistants, foundry workers and neon-makers who work with artists. I continue to examine the matter of authorship, since I find a distinction between artists as authors of artworks and fabricators as makers of objects. We may learn more about what an artist author *is* by observing what non-authors are not.

4. The Fabrication of Objects

It's not worth anything until it leaves MDM. It's not art. It's got no value.

Nigel Schofield, Fabrication Workshop, MDM¹.

With reference to the installation *Earthly Delights X* exhibited at Tate Britain in 2006, Raqib Shaw said²:

With the sculpture I realised that - it's fascinating to realise that for my vision, I need certain people from certain backgrounds. So for the body I wanted from the very beginning an Italian sculptor who really understands Michelangelo. So that was sorted out. And the lobster was cast and made totally perfect. And the bird's head that is totally taxidermy. And there are the jewellers for the lobster. And I found it incredibly fascinating that there are so many people, from so many different walks of life, and totally excellent at what they do. And I didn't even look for them, they just came. They said, you're vision is rather unique and they said let's do it! So I said, let's do it!

(Tate, December 2006³)

The primary goal of this chapter is to introduce some of those who fabricate art objects which are parts of works of art. Sociologist Howard Becker's book *Artworlds* is about art-making as a collective activity (1982: 1). It is about the numerous and varied parties other than individual artists who contribute and who are involved with the creation of artworks. All of the examples of works I presented in the previous chapter required people other than the artists to source, fabricate or assemble the objects. Still more people were involved with framing and the creation of plinths as well as their installation.

With this thesis I make a distinction between art objects and artworks; the principal tenet is that an object is only one (albeit an important one, but one of several) parts of an assemblage that makes an artwork. In this chapter a distinction is drawn between artists as makers of artworks and fabricators as makers of objects utilised by artists.

¹ In Katie Kitamura's Wired Magazine article February 2009

² For *Earthly Delights X* see image 3.13 in previous chapter.

³ Tate webcast interview: www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/artnow/raqibshaw/video.shtm

I proposed in the previous chapter that works of art are distributed artists. Art objects provide them with additional bodies that make them visible and carry out their work at any distance from their human bodies. Further, in the first instance, an artwork only exists because an artist intends to make it. Fabricators then, respond to and act on artists' intentions and instructions. Art Historian John Roberts describes those whose skills are utilised by artists as tools or prosthetics (2007: 103). The argument is debunked that artists who do not manually create art objects are not (or lesser) authors of artworks. Tools and prosthetics have always been utilised in art, why should we differentiate between a paintbrush, a mechanical digger, or the hands of a studio assistant? Fabricators as prosthetics extend artists' technical capabilities to achieve what they want to achieve.

A principal enquiry for this chapter, is to compare fabricators and artists and the bonds they have with their work. Some evidence points to a very simplified answer that artworks are inalienable from artists whereas fabricators employed by artists are severed from the products of their labour with pay-cheques. I find, however, more evidence to suggest that art objects are still *made out of* these persons' skills, knowledge and craft and are therefore intimately connected with them; it is for this reason that artists' choose to 'utilise' them. Also, that people other than artists make art objects, widens the scope for people making decisions for them and becoming responsible for them. Specialist material and technical knowledge is dispersed, and this knowledge may become crucial for artworks later in life, when the maintenance and conservation of objects can rely on technical and material information from the time of their fabrication or initial installation. That in later chapters I return to several of the fabricators that I introduce in this chapter, is evidence that the connections formed between them, the art objects, the artists and therefore ultimately the artworks, can be firm, far-reaching and lasting for the long-term after all.

Studio Assistants

One artist's 'studio' may be quite different from another's. It can be a place, a room, in which a lone painter creates work and stores it. Paul Ashurst, for example, creates most of his paintings by himself in his studio which is the ground floor of his Clerkenwell home. Alexis Harding creates most of his paintings in a rented space in East London. For larger canvases and MDF boards he employs an assistant to help with turning them which is an essential part of his practice. For 'more conceptual' artists, the

studio, as described by John Roberts may be less “a place where assistants are taught in the style of the master, nor the primary place where the subjectivity of the artist is performed in a confrontation with his materials. Rather it is a place where plans are executed, research pursued, conversations conducted, decisions and connections made, and materials sorted and assembled.” (2007: 146) In this sense, ‘the studio’ might not even be a single place but a title given to an entity without walls with which the artist produces work. ‘The Studio’ may also encompass the *people* that an artist directly employs. In my work as a gallery registrar, when a basic question is raised about an artwork (about installation requirements for instance) I say that the question will be referred to ‘the studio’, meaning usually I will e-mail or telephone a question to an artist’s assistant.

The extent to which artists make use of studio assistants varies a lot. Art writer Caroline Jones explains in her Artforum article on Olafur Elliasson (2007: 316) how his studio employs art historians, archivists, babysitters and a cook who are acknowledged as vital to studio production as are the technical staff who physically put objects together. Antony Gormley too, in addition to a substantial workforce of technical staff, employs a studio manager, an archivist, a registrar and a personal assistant. In the studio kitchen each day, the staff takes turns to prepare a cooked lunch that is eaten together. Twice a week in the mornings, the staff have a break from their tasks to take a yoga class in the large studio space⁴.

In some studios, assistants may be charged with keeping them tidy and carrying out administrative tasks. In others, tasks might include assisting with the construction of large art objects under the artist’s close supervision. At the other end of the spectrum, assistants, unsupervised by artists, may be asked to utilise their own skills and creativity in the fabrication of objects; an end product is requested but how this is achieved may be left to the assistant. The range is illustrated with some accounts I received from studio assistants for my research. For example⁵:

⁴ Explained to me by Gormley’s studio staff, studio visit, Spring 2009.

⁵ Just days after asking one assistant some questions, I received an e-mail from him saying that coincidentally he had also just been contacted by Michael Eddy who was carrying out a survey of studio assistants’ experiences, and who had asked similar questions to mine. Eddy and I therefore corresponded and we decided to pool our accounts. Eddy’s research is not for any formal purpose but he told me he was doing it because he found it “interesting” and he wanted to make a “collection of stories”. Responses received initially by Eddy are marked* and may also be viewed at; www.vitamincreativespace.blogbus.com/logs/41023558.html

I've worked for a few artists on various pieces, bits and bobs really, but my most prolonged experience was with a stone carver who worked in a small town in Canada. This type of practice is probably less controversial than, say, a painterly one, because the manual tasks involved to get a stone to the ready are more similar to stretching and priming a canvas as opposed to actually being responsible for the draughtsmanship and paint application.

Another assistant, who had worked for two artists said:

*For one... I was almost a co-author as I was editing the artist's video, and I also compiled the soundtrack for it. The research for the soundtrack being the integral part of the piece, and the fact that the direction of this research was pretty much up to me somewhat made me feel closer to the authorship of the piece. However, I am inclined to think that that is an illusion. I wouldn't have done anything like it if I wasn't getting paid to do it. For the other job, I was helping the artist's performance, looking after live video mix. That was very straightforward, I did what I was told to do.

One assistant I spoke with was asked to do very detailed work for an artist – more than she felt was reasonable:

She gave me drawings that were done on a film or frosted mylar - they were just outlines of a body, with a few references to wrinkles or anatomy. The lines were very light, and the drawings were of varying quality. She relied heavily that 'something' would happen during the printing process to transform her image, then she would manipulate it further. The complex part of the process was left to me: I had to expose photo-sensitive lithographic plates to light, develop them in chemicals and bathe them to transfer her line drawing to the plates. If I exposed the plates too long, all I got were her lines - no tones on the bodies; if I underexposed the plates with too little light, the plates would be very dark and pick up too much ink and the image would print black or start to 'fill in' with ink. Then I had to print the plates on a lithography press - controlling all the ink and trying to coax some image out of her drawing. What she demanded above all was a 'full range of tones' of shading in her figures. The frustrating part was that she didn't shade her figures at all in her drawings! It was all left to me to figure out a way to do it. Often after a work was printed (I printed everything on Nepal rag paper) I had to manually draw on top of the paper with charcoal to give it some tone. As long as one couldn't tell that they had been drawn manually, she was happy. She'd then take the figures and paste them together on larger papers to make wall murals, or she'd move the body's limbs around and arrange them with wolves or deer which I had printed as well.

Providing a suitable illustration of John Roberts' idea of the assistant as prosthetic, a technician working to install Anselm Kiefer's *Sternenfall* exhibition at the Grand Palais in Paris in 2007 heard him say to an assistant operating a bulldozer:

In his imperious yet mischievous style, that 'you are my pencil'. And proceeded to direct the destruction of one of his container towers the way a ballet choreographer would direct his corps.

Ethnographer Sarah Thornton describes how the names of Takashi Murakami's studio assistants are listed on the reverse of canvases that they have worked on (2008: 191). This direct identification of studio assistants is unusual though. The extent that studio assistants expect named acknowledgement and how they expect it to be given is varied as the following accounts illustrate:

I certainly feel that assistants should be acknowledged for their contributions, but they don't really need to have their names on the museum information plaque. Apparently some would-be buyers of Hirst at his Sotheby's auction were demanding to know the identity of painting assistants that worked on his FACT paintings, justifying their requests with "well, what if they become famous someday?" That becomes interesting trivia perhaps, and maybe biographical fodder 50 years down the line, but I can't see any tech or assistant I've ever known to insist on outward credit like that, no matter how responsible they might be for the final output. It's like when you repaint a white wall white: the worst thing that can happen is that somebody notices that you've done it.

Another assistant said:

I felt pride in completing a task to the best of my ability, but no real sense of ownership or entitlement. You're really just earning your place on the acknowledgement list in the catalogue. Is this true of artists who let you/get you to do most of the work on your own? For the most part I would say yes, because again, even if you're entrusted to make aesthetic decisions normally associated with the ideal of the Artist As Romantic Genius, it's not being presented as your own work, and the starting points in the development of the piece can be rather distant from where you yourself would begin.

Another assistant was less happy about the credit she received:

It felt like I was getting a raw deal out of it - I got paid about 10 dollars an hour, and to me it was clearly a collaboration. I got no credit. One of the pieces I printed for her was for sale for \$60,000... bait was held before me that one day she'd give me a print and sign it - this never happened.

Despite this assistant's degree of resentment at the pay and lack of acknowledgment, throughout the account she described the *artist's work* as *her work*. This non-questioning of authorship was verified time and again with everyone I spoke to throughout my research. Nonetheless, the matter of studio assistance can be a contentious one. Anselm Kiefer who employs a large workforce of studio assistants said at his *Aperiat Terra...* exhibition (2007) press conference:

I do paint myself you know.. It's very un-modern I know [murmured laughter from press audience] most artists today have assistants who paint. I do it myself. But [my assistants] put the painting on the floor and they lift it up later.. and they do all this kind of stuff.. and they get the earth somewhere. But [said with humour] I paint myself.

(Royal Academy 24th January 2007)

But then I read a comment from Gustav Metzger about this exhibition of Kiefer's at the Royal Academy, that although he used to admire Kiefer's work:

The works he is showing now are unbearable for me, they are simply appalling, and if you think about his assistants, I do not know what they do!

(To Katarzyna Bojarska, January 2007, Tate Archive⁶)

Artists' opinions of each other aside, I learned that research into the experiences of studio assistants had to be broached sensitively. All of the accounts from studio assistants that I quote in this chapter were gained on the condition of anonymity. This is mostly due to a matter that I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis that a researcher who asks questions of people's professional experiences needs to be cautious

⁶ This is from a transcription of what appears to be an unpublished interview between Metzger and Bojarska in December 2007. I found the transcription in Tate's archive 'Material relating to Gustav Metzger 2002-2007' TGA 200217/3.

and respectful of professional integrity and reputation. Relationships between artists and assistants are working relationships between employers and employees, directors and aides, teachers and students. These are affected by factors that influence working relations generally: personalities, budgets, deadlines etcetera. Assistants told me:

Working directly for an artist.. is the same as any human relationship - there is a gradual understanding of that person's interest, ability, and creative personality, which tend to dictate (depending on the interaction of those factors with your own) how much input is sought, proffered, considered and accepted from assistant to artist.

Another said:

In my case, I found the woman I worked for open to my ideas, and as she grew to trust me and my abilities... I was handed over more responsibilities. What was most important to note from the experience, however, was how, no matter what amount of hours I put into any given piece, and how much I felt some sense of ownership towards it, everything that came out in the end was emphatically not my work. Now, this may be because I trained as an artist as well, and Moore/Noguchi formalism isn't my thing. The instructions from the artist meant that, whatever my contributions were, the construct linking all the pieces together was bound to be hers, and as such there was nothing but gratefulness on my part for teaching me certain skills and keeping my belly full.

Since the Renaissance, the studio assistant has been an apprentice to the artist who has a more developed career⁷. Every technical studio assistant that I met during the course of my research is a practicing artist⁸. Beyond receiving a salary some of the benefits of working for another artist can be to practice and develop skills in art-making with access to resources and specialist equipment (large metal-work tools or kilns for example) that may not be accessible otherwise. But even if assistants work for artists whose artwork is very different from their own, the assistant may observe and gain advice about career-development and making contacts. I was told:

⁷ John Roberts gives a good historical account of this from the Renaissance to Rodin (2007: chapter 5)

⁸ By *technical* studio assistants – ‘Techs’ - I refer to those who actually work on art objects themselves. I have come across administrative studio employees – registrars, archivists for example – that are not necessarily artists themselves although usually their educational background is Art History.

This is perhaps the symbiotic nature of artist/assistant: the artist needs the assistant to create the work, but the assistant needs the shield, the contacts, and the prestige provided by their association with a more established creative agent.

Another assistant said;

*Hmmm, about your questions, I guess they have to remain anonymous since people could maybe lose their jobs if they speak their minds... I don't do too much assistant work..more making their [artists'] websites and catalogues and what not, so at least you have the relationship of a kind of 'expert'.. My own artwork doesn't really benefit from my design work (for design I author everything via a studio name to keep my proper name out of it, and also not to confuse Google searches...) For sure you can meet some people, and they find out you also make work, but it's been my feeling that they prefer you keep it professional and not bring too much your own art stuff into the mix. So basically in order to keep a good client relationship to get money, I generally keep my own things and interests out of the discussion.

Another said:

*Working as an assistant has simply been the search for money. It has never benefited my own work nor have I ever felt it compromised my position by working for others. The benefit of working as an assistant is the lack of conviction usually allotted to the assistant and in my case, a lack of a long term commitment...It has been a rarity while working for another artist where I identify or even support the work that is being inevitably produced. My hands are offered, not my opinion, and that is all I am really willing to offer.... Maybe the payment itself creates the disassociation... I know these answers aren't profound, and if you are going to publish it, please don't use my name!

And one more:

*As I said, being a student of both artists before working for them made my relationship to their works less complicated in terms of possible influence I was getting or feeling of being less successful as an artist compared to them etc. As a student of those artists, those questions became somewhat irrelevant.. it's natural to be influenced by your teachers. I think it's pointless and misleading to have a sense of authorship to the works you assisted. The economic relationship you have to your boss, and the manager/director position he/she takes is enough to make this point

unambiguous.. In terms of exposure/contact, hell yeah, being an assistant of successful artist helps big time. I can think of one or two examples around me, though I am not going to name names...I don't mind having art related work as a money job. My own practice is also directed toward commerce, so no contradiction there... I can't really think of assistance in terms of its interest. It's a structural necessity in keeping the art trade going the way it is at the moment.

A significant theme within these last accounts is about the separation that the assistants feel in relation from the artworks to which they have contributed. This appears due to it not being their *own* artistic work or the disassociation that can come as a result of payment for their labour. There is more to say on this matter, but there are more accounts from fabricators to introduce first.

The Foundry

Blue Mountain Fine Art is committed to facilitating the creative process. Our mission is to provide our artists every means possible to translate their artistic visions into realities of the highest quality and durability.

Blue Mountain Foundry homepage introduction⁹.

In 2005 the Mayor of Perugia, Umbria commissioned Marvin Oliver, whose studio is based in Seattle, to create a twenty-six foot bronze sculpture titled *Sister Orca*. A cast for a sculpture from 1996, called *Spirit of Our Youth* was to be re-used for the main body of the piece. This was done at Blue Mountain Foundry in Baker City, Oregon where the cast had been stored since that time.

The Seattle based company Boeing had originally agreed to fly *Sister Orca* from the USA to Italy free-of-charge in one of their planes as an act of sponsorship. For logistical reasons at Boeing however this fell through so instead Boeing pledged to give \$10,000 *towards* the costs of the shipment. Unfortunately, fine art shipping quotes for the piece to travel from Oregon to Perugia were between \$18,000 and \$50,000. To avoid these costs, Oliver was asked if it would be possible for the casting to be carried out in Italy but he insisted that the piece had to be cast at Blue Mountain Foundry in Oregon;

⁹ www.bluemountainfineart.com

“Tylor Fouts had to do it” Oliver told me “he’s the only one who knew how to do it”¹⁰. Fouts had worked through the technical challenges of *Spirit of our Youth* which had been significant on account of its size and the detail of Oliver’s carving from which the cast had been made. The trusting relationship between Oliver and this one foundry was essential so Oliver and his wife Brigitte Ellis decided to fund the missing difference in the shipping costs from Oregon to Perugia themselves.

AB foundry in Limehouse is entrusted by many of London’s contemporary artists including for example, Rachel Whiteread, Barry Flanagan, Marc Quinn, Gary Hume and Anish Kapoor to make art objects in bronze, aluminium, lead and steel.

During a visit there, I was walked and talked through the skilled and labour-intensive process of casting in bronze. Artists tend to arrive at the foundry with small maquettes in any variety of materials. Rachel Kneebone, for example, supplies carefully crafted clay models she has created herself and that have taken a great deal of time and manual skill to achieve. The Foundry then works closely with her to scale-up the maquette to the size that she wants in metal. Another artist, Gavin Turk, as part of his conceptual practice, purposefully distances himself from fabrication. Instead of bringing hand-made maquettes, for his series *Nomad* (2004) and *Habitat* (2004) he simply arrived at the foundry with some used sleeping bags. The challenge of replicating their shape, textures and colours on the models was left entirely to the model-makers.

Mould-makers at AB Foundry then create moulds from the models out of plastic and rubber. The next stage of the casting process is to fill the moulds with wax to create a hollow version of the final object. This, called a wax pattern, is then attached with wax pipes called sprues, and a funnel through which the molten bronze is eventually poured. This is all covered in a ceramic and what is known as a silica investment or shell - a delicate, yet heavy and repetitive task of dipping what has become a bulky, unrecognisably shaped object, into vats of slurry and stucco. It is then heated in a kiln to melt the wax which is poured away, leaving the investment ready for the molten bronze, poured at a temperature of 1200°C. Careful checks of the objects have been carried out during each of the, sometimes precarious, steps. Unevenness or cracking may require repeating the entire process again.

Large sculptures are usually created out of several separately cast sections. It is the task of metal-workers, called Chasers, to weld these together and to grind the joints away. It is impressive to observe how perfectly smooth and undetectable the joints can

¹⁰ In conversation in Seattle, April 2009.

be made to be. Patination, waxing, colour fixing and buffing – more hot and heavy yet tenuous and detailed work – follows to finish.

Although it makes a major contribution to the London artworld, when I visited AB Foundry it did not feel *artworldly* so-to-speak. Many of the discussions and interviews that I conducted during the course of my research meandered between practice and art theory or often, frustratingly so at times, they were very centred on art theory. This was not the case at AB Foundry. I supply a fairly detailed account of the casting process here because the foundry workers were keen that I understood and observed each of the skilful and difficult stages. Another topic of our meetings was about the frustrating demands of the art market to produce at speed. Since they knew at AB Foundry of my work as a commercial gallery registrar, they were intent on making clear to me that their priority was in the perfection of the objects which can take an indefinite amount of time to achieve. As well as physical labour hours there are setting and drying times of materials which cannot be forced. The foundry's experts make attempts to control the variables but certain stages of the casting process are precarious and, since objects are often unique, trials may be required. In their telling of this, the foundry sees that it works for, and is answerable to *artists* alone. For sculptures which are editions, it is not uncommon for an edition to be sold by a dealer before the order is placed at the foundry. But even if a gallery pays AB Foundry, the foundry believes that it makes the cast for the artist. The Foundry's list of 'clients' on its website bears testament to this because it lists only artists' names. The Blue Mountain Foundry's website introduction, that I quote from at the beginning of the chapter, suggests that their position is the same.

The Fabrication Workshop

Although in principle the fabrication workshop or 'prop-shop' that goes by the name of MDM, are not limited to making objects for artists, much of their work is indeed for art. Their clients include Anish Kapoor, Damien Hirst, Mona Hatoum and Anselm Kiefer.

Just like those who go to the foundry, there are varied differences between artists with their approaches and relationships with MDM. In the footsteps of Maholy-Nagy

and Sol le Wit¹¹ for example, some artists, purposefully distancing themselves from fabrication, simply place their orders by telephone. MDM is then left to devise with what and how they will be made. On the other hand, some artists work very closely with MDM, having employed them because they want to work *with* their technical expertise and have access to their specialist equipment. Coincidentally, as I was told at AB Foundry, Nigel Schofield who runs MDM mentioned to me that Rachel Kneebone is an example of an artist of the latter description. MDM's task for her was limited to engineering a frame for a very large ceramic sculpture which the artist was crafting by hand. Schofield commented that Kneebone is very well respected by his staff for her craft skills and her work ethic. She starts work in her studio at 4.30am seven days a week.

Other artists are deeply involved at a directorial level with MDM as to how they very specifically want objects to *be* and *look* although the engineering and the physical construction will be left to the prop-shop. Raqib Shaw's *Adam* (2009), introduced previously, was such an object¹². Hayley Embleton, White Cube's Fabrication Coordinator, told me that it was a challenge (in a positive, exciting way) for Shaw - so adept at creating images of his own with paint on canvas - to interpret to others how his images should be formed using sculptural materials of which he had little crafting experience. During an interview at Tate, Shaw had said "painting is a very intimate experience."¹³ Creating *Adam* on the other hand meant working through the process with many other people. MDM were first approached with a small, relatively undetailed maquette that had been made at the studio¹⁴. From there, a meticulous process followed involving meetings with MDM in which Shaw would articulate his ideas with words, drawings and images, MDM would respond with sample upon sample and many drawings to which the artist would again respond with directions for refinement.

Shaw offered MDM visual and material examples as much as possible. Early in the process, the artist arrived for a meeting at the workshop with several enormous live lobsters to study. About 50 photographs were taken which were quite worn by the time I saw them since they had been circulated and handled so much for reference. Lynn Thompson at MDM showed me a substantial computer file in which she had collected many images of colourful insects and grubs that Shaw and his assistants had e-mailed to

¹¹ Maholy-Nagy ordered a series of paintings from a factory by telephone in 1922 which he titled the *Telephone Paintings*. Michelle Kuo mentions that Sol le Wit used to order fabrications at Carlson & Co by telephone in her Artforum article *Industrial Revolution* (October 2007: 310).

¹² For *Adam* see image 3.11 in previous chapter.

¹³ Tate webcast interview: www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/artnow/raqibshaw/video.shtm

¹⁴ This was basically taken from the small sculpture that was part of *Earthly Delights X*.

her over the course of the project. Skilfully created pencil sketches were made to reach a decision about the colouring for the lobster's body. These were amended several times before and during the paintwork. The placements of the jewels on the lobster were very carefully planned in drawings. These were amended again and again under Shaw's direction before the painstaking work began for three of MDM's technicians to place the sapphires with tweezers onto the body. Even the eyes took four days of full-time work to create. MDM's initial plan was to incorporate manufactured eyes used by taxidermists but Shaw was dissatisfied with their inhuman look. Unique eyes were then created by layering silicon until the desired effect was achieved.

MDM perpetually experiment and research. During my first visit, they were working on how to make a certain silicon last longer. They had just solved the problem of making a refrigeration unit for an art object, that would ensure it would not experience condensation in the changing cabin-pressures of international flights. I also witnessed the experimentation for *Adam's* pool of crude oil. One person's task for the day was to find a way to make a pump create pulses of slight movement through the oil without producing large bubbles.

The workshops caused me to think of Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. There are unique rooms for working with different kinds of materials - plastics, glass, wood, metal, liquids, clay, textiles and precious stones (a room built specially for *Adam*). Each workshop has its own smell, audio volume, they may be spotless or covered in dust and technical staff are wearing various kinds of protective clothing and using many different types of specialist equipment.

Other than an article by Katie Kitamura in *Wired* magazine (February 2009) there appears to be no literature that refers MDM's contribution to artworks made in London. Schofield is very respectful and concerned about his clients' confidentiality. He is aware that the fact that some artists do not physically make art objects is a potentially sensitive issue. Schofield's comment to Kitamura that heads this chapter is significant. There are no artwork titles at MDM and objects are described as 'the lobster'/'Kate Moss'/some medals/those torsos. MDM does not place their own labels or stamps on any object that is produced there. For 'security purposes' it was explained to me that they purposefully keep samples and maquettes of famous artworks dusty, incompletely assembled and irregularly placed around the workshops. This is due, in part, to some kind of insurance clause, but philosophically too, it appears to be vitally important and clearly understood that *works of art* are not officially housed there. As per the premise of this chapter,

MDM's tenet is that it creates *objects* that *become* works of art once artists designate them as such. Artists are clients and there is absolutely no question about authorship over works of art.

MDM's denial to authorship of artworks does not mean that they are free of responsibility and accountability for the objects. They extensively research materials and engineering for longevity, and are frequently required to offer guarantees for a specified number of years. Schofield told me that museums are fastidious about the provision of information on materials. One museum requested that MDM provide a guarantee that a certain new kind of material would last two hundred years! MDM is also responsible for safety in the vicinity of their objects - should an art object topple, explode or injure someone in a museum down the line - MDM could be held accountable. On the other hand should an artwork such as Paul McCarthy's obnoxious *The Garden* (1991) for example (an artwork I present more about in later chapters¹⁵) offend or traumatise, liability rests of course with the artist himself and not its material fabricators.

Museums & Non-Profit Institutions

Art Historian Arthur Danto asserted that the very placement of objects within art institutions may transform them into art (in Yanal 1998: 2). George Dickie developed this institutional theory of art to point out that the status of art objects is therefore relational instead of material (also in Yanal 1998: 2). Our interaction with objects in the gallery space is different to our interaction with those same objects in a different context – objects are socialised in galleries in a unique and specific way for art. In his call for a move away from the white walled gallery, Brian O'Doherty has written more recently that the gallery space has thus become a medium itself “with its mysterious alchemy. It transforms while remaining itself unchanged” (2008: 39).

This is all valid and relevant to this thesis, but what I want to focus on in this chapter, is that the way that institutions turn objects into works of art is not just philosophy. On a very practical and observable level, institutions (museums and commercial galleries which I write more about shortly) may also contribute a great deal to the processes of the physical production of art objects.

For example, the Henry Moore Institute is a public ‘exhibition venue’ in Leeds which holds three or four exhibitions each year of both ‘historical’ and contemporary

¹⁵ See images 8.3.

art¹⁶. It employs fifteen people including installation staff, curators, invigilators, a receptionist, librarians and a few others. Stephen Feeke, Curator¹⁷, told me that at the time of installation of new exhibitions, the entire staff may be called upon to help with the physical work. The Thomas Schutte exhibition in 2007 for example required all of the Institute's staff to help the artist hang *Ringe* (1981) (image 4.1) and other works late into the evenings.

For contemporary artists' solo exhibitions at the HMI, works are decided upon together by artists and the curators. Job Koelewijn, who likes to play with and change the environment with his works, had an exhibition at the HMI in 2003. Feeke told me that one of the artist's first ideas for the show was to cover the institute's walls in Vicks Vaporub. The curator however, in knowing the space, knew that it would be very difficult to achieve in practice and was also concerned that it would be difficult for himself and his colleagues to work in the adjacent offices "in the stench"! Together, Feeke and Koelewijn decided to do something else.

Feeke was also required to be very 'hands on' with the creation of a Marc Quinn ice sculpture of Kate Moss titled *Beauty* (2002). The sculpture in ice was cast in an industrial ice-hold twenty-five miles outside of Leeds. As the water froze, it was necessary for the centre of the ice water to be agitated with a drill so that it would not rupture when it was complete. Marc Quinn's assistant who was nominated to the task however was slightly-built and not strong enough to hold the heavy drill at the necessary angle while on a ladder. Feeke therefore, under the instruction of the assistant, actually carried out the physically challenging task of the drilling. He later received a telling-off from the HMI's Director who was concerned about health and safety with respect to the ladder, the heavy drill, and temperatures not meant to be endured for more than ten minutes.

Dealers and Galleries

Sociologist Olav Velthuis writes about 'Father Relationships' between artists and dealers in his ethnography of the art market. He asserts that this kind of relationship emerged in France at the end of the 19th Century (2005: 55), and he goes on to describe how dealers such as Leo Castelli provided stipends for Richard Serra and Donald Judd's

¹⁶ The HMI does not call itself a museum. See website homepage wording; <http://www.henry-moore-fdn.co.uk/hmi>

¹⁷ At the time of our meetings September - December 2009. Stephen Feeke moved to the New Art Centre Sculpture Park & Gallery in January 2010.

artwork materials as well as living expenses in New York in the 1970s (2007: 66). With reference to what actually became a wrecked personal relationship between Sonnabend Gallery and Peter Halley (2005: 66) Velthuis describes how the relationship between artists and their galleries may be intimate and founded on trust rather than on legal contracts. During the course of my research, I also encountered instances in which dealers' support of 'their' artists extended beyond the formality of a salary and into artists' private and familial lives. I learned, for example, of a gallery who pays the salary of an artist's child's nanny and another who has paid for an artist's visit to an addiction rehabilitation centre¹⁸. Gallery staff may be required to cat-sit, fix studio plumbing or, as told to me by an assistant of a small New York gallery¹⁹ attend a daughter's school violin recital in place of the artist who was needed on gallery business.

Sometimes discussed in a way that hints that the figure is unreasonable²⁰ the standard commission for primary market galleries and dealers is fifty-percent for new sold works. Justification may be found in that dealers and galleries might pay for one-hundred-percent of fabrication costs and other essential material resources. With framing, exhibition cases, special lighting, changing floor surfaces and mounts - the preparation and organisation of exhibiting new works can be very costly and labour-intensive. Gallery staff may also be required to act as studio assistants for some artists and spend substantial periods of time and work on the fabrication of new objects. One gallery technician told me:

Working with artists indirectly, via a gallery, is different than working in their studio, mostly because there are more layers of red tape to wade through, but also because costs need to be approved on either side of the transaction. As a tech, you're also removed from direct contact with the artist, which can sometimes be useful as insulation against day-to-day aggravation, but is also a hindrance because you don't have the luxury time in which to plumb the depths of the artist's head, therefore having to either guess or stall when the decision making is left to you. It's a halfway house that can be very frustrating, especially when you're working with somebody who is on a different continent.

¹⁸ These cases must obviously remain anonymous.

¹⁹ This assistant has left this gallery and I have been unable to contact her to ask if I can name her.

²⁰ While this is the average or standard it is of course frequently re-negotiated and changes from instance to instance. I have found many mentions of the rate in the press, see for example; *The Debating Club*, Frieze Magazine, 8th October 2008 and *The Woman who Loves to Show off her Nylon*, Independent Newspaper, 24th October 1998

Another technician said:

I was charged with organising the assembly of the concrete half of a piece by [name deleted] and trying to create a relationship with him while at the same time managing to manoeuvre around the exhibition budget constraints was quite tricky, and I ascribe most of the difficulty to there being a five hour time difference between us. Clear communication becomes essential, and slow email responses, unclear directions or instructions, and lack of prep time all contributed to problems and delay. In the end we reached a concord, but the process was pretty gruelling.

With reference to a large-scale sculpture that filled an entire gallery:

I know the people who helped design it, test it, prototype it, and I helped assemble the final object (twice). Now, because I don't work for his studio, my feeling when it was done, both times, was more of a "good job" feeling rather than a "look what I did feeling" - but I think that my studio friends tended towards the latter. After the first install we were all taken to dinner by [the artist] which was appreciated and certainly not the norm.

As per the accounts that I received from studio assistants which I transcribed at the beginning of this chapter, there are mixed feelings and responses over the connection that assistants feel with the art objects they produce. Several of them mentioned the distancing they feel due to their salary. The above statement from a gallery technician suggests that he feels one step further removed from the studio assistants' connections.

Production costs are calculated by MDM in terms of material costs of course, but also in labour time. Raqib Shaw's *Adam*, incorporated several thousand sapphires (between 0.04 and .014 carats) and as I mentioned previously, the object's production was a long and detailed *developing* process of discussion, research and refinement between the artist and MDM; in a nutshell, *Adam's* object was expensive to fabricate. But then, still more new materials, still more new suggestions for the look of the paintwork, were still at play during the week before the sculpture was due to travel to White Cube. It begged the questions would it be 'ready' on time? and what would the final invoice for the material fabrication read? The gallery however, had planned the exhibition opening date months in advance and had tracked and approved one at a time the mounting costs of the fabrication. In other words, the gallery's goals had an effect on what the object became; the agency of the gallery's directors, who managed the budgets and set the

deadlines, were enacted through it. In my terms for this thesis, the gallery as an institution and those who work within it joined the assemblage of elements that made this artwork.

Outside Artworld Experts

The unlimited range of materials used in contemporary art means that people with expertise of working with materials in non-artistic ways might be approached by artists for hire. Anya Gallaccio said during an interview at Tate:

What I think I do is I find experts, I find people, and I get them to do what they don't want to do. [With reference to a work that involved an entire oak tree], the tree people initially said we couldn't chop the tree down.. that's not the way to a cut a tree down. But, you know, it took a day... we dug around the root-ball and pushed it over. But it's about trying to find a way with the people that I need to help me, to facilitate what I need them to do. I'm pushing them, to do what they think their material won't do because that's not the way they want the materials to work. I was in Oxford in January and February and I kept going to these funny high table dinners, and causing chaos because I'd ask these ridiculous questions, like, 'oh you're a scientist' ..I wanted to make a great cube of sugar and they'd say you can't do that, it's impossible. And I'd say, it's not impossible, how are we going to do it? It was asking just dumb questions really and pushing people to look at something they think they know really well and getting them to look at it in a different way. The work always is a combination of how far I can push.. and I have half an idea about what I want it to be like.. it's a process of negotiation really.

(Tate, September 2002²¹)

Kerry Ryan is an expert neon-maker in London. He left school when he was 14 years old, and learned how to make and work with neon shortly afterwards. Although his company *Neon & Signmakers* started out and continues to make commercial neon signs, within the last few years, more and more of Ryan's work has become focussed on making neon for artists such as Tracey Emin, Cerith Wyn Evans, Joseph Kosuth and Jonathan Monk.

Rather like the prop-shop and foundries experience, Ryan told me that some artists might be very hands-on and involved in all decisions about the look of a neon or

²¹ <http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/26066124001>

the way it works. Other artists might just telephone him and ask for a sign that reads something-or-other in pink.

He is well respected by artists and he is used to working with them – he knows that his job is to make neons according to their intentions (Ryan’s use of words). Ryan also told me that neon-makers around the world are able to recognise the individual work of their counterparts. Even though neon-makers may create templates from artists’ drawings, they all make them slightly differently according to their own preferences in the craft and the resources that they use (for example the suppliers of the neon tubing). Kerry showed me some images of an edition of 3 artworks by a certain artist. As is usually the case with editions, all three were meant to be identical. Yet, because one of the editions was sold by the artist’s London gallery to a collector based in London and another was sold by the artist’s New York gallery to a collector in New York, the artist decided that Kerry would make one of the editions whereas a neon-maker in New York (of the company *Let there Be Neon*) made the other. Although they were both made from the same template provided by the artist, even I could tell by looking at images of the editions side-by-side that they were different and had been made by different people.

In later chapters of this thesis, I write more about Kerry Ryan’s bonds with neons. The material lifespans of neons are relatively short, so much of his work is in making adjustments, repairs and entire re-fabrications when necessary. He is also, obviously, an expert in the installation of neons, so he may be called upon if a collector or artist wants one moved. I also write more about how Ryan’s relationships with art objects are extended because he works so closely with artists. Kerry counts many of the artists he works with as friends. They trust him for his craftsmanship and attention to detail as well as for the relationship that they have.

Bonds with Artworks and Art Objects - Severable or Lasting

If an artist lacks the technical knowledge and craft skills to make the art objects she wants, she may utilise others, as prosthetics we might say, who *do* possess the skills that she needs. As art historian John Roberts suggests, the identification and selection of means to achieve one’s intentions is a contemporary artistic skill in itself (see 2007: 103). Artistic expertise is demonstrated in the guidance, direction and negotiation with those who possess the technical knowledge and crafts to achieve what an artist wants to happen, with what she wants it to happen with.

While art objects are attached to artists' names (and I write more about their signatures in later chapters) the MDM company policy is that their name is not stamped or labelled on anything that is fabricated there. Neither are its individual employees' names identified in any associated documentation. Artists' assistants tend to be referred to generically as 'the studio'. AB Foundry's name is not identified on the objects it casts. In theory an object's origination there could be identified in future with papertrails of invoices and receipts for example, but the individual Model-makers, Mould-makers and Chasers would not be found to be personally named. Attaching technicians and craftspeople's names to objects is generally deemed unimportant and they tend to be anonymous participants in the creation of art.

As proposed, as artists' distributed persons, artworks are inalienable, and they carry their authors' names and deeds. The anonymity of fabricators could be taken to be in contrast with this as is potentially demonstrated by the language that some of the studio assistants used in our interviews. To reiterate, one studio assistant said, "I think it's pointless and misleading to have a sense of authorship to the works you assisted. The economic relationship you have to your boss, and the manager/director position he/she takes is enough to make this point unambiguous". Another technician suggested "maybe the payment itself creates the disassociation". Does this suggest therefore, that artists' *inalienability* from their work contrasts fabricators' *alienation* from theirs?

I do not actually find that the matter is as clear-cut as this. As demonstrated by *Sister Orca*, it is because of Tylor Fouts' skill and craftsmanship that he puts into casting, that Marvin Oliver insists on only working with him. Although Anya Gallaccio's artworks are further to *her* experimentation and "pushing" of ideas, the technical knowledge of experts – of people whose own lives' work is bound amongst their activities with certain materials – is essential for her to make what she needs. As demonstrated in later chapters, Kerry Ryan's knowledge of neon materials means that he makes significant decisions for them later in their lives, and the strong friendships between him and the artists he works *with* – not just *for* - is a topic I return to several times. I even present evidence of how the personal selves – their ideas, work and goals - of money-making-driven dealers may be intimately bound with the things they contribute towards making.

In addition, the fabrication of objects can entail long-term *responsibilities* for them. The foundry and prop-shop, like all manufacturers, may be held accountable for their products' safety and durability. When matters of conservation and maintenance are

raised over an object later in its material life, information over production methods, materials and details over fabrication are essential to decisions and treatments. These requirements represent real needs for conservators, artists and collectors to maintain relationships with fabricators, and to ensure that their bonds are maintained with the things they make.

More than therefore – and I think more interesting - of questioning the difference between artists as authors and fabricators as non-authors as a matter of alienation, the evidence I observed supports my hypothesis that an artwork is more than an object. Artists are authors of works of art because they are distributed in more than objects alone. Fabricators may also make something out of themselves, but their bonds are with art objects and not works of art.

Yet, to point out that there are more parts to an artwork than an object is not to belittle the object, or the skills, knowledge and work that went into making it. Throughout my research for this chapter, I witnessed exceptional and impressive craftsmanship, technical expertise, imaginative problem-solving and plenty of hard work among studio assistants, gallery technicians, foundry-workers and prop-ship engineers. These people do not just create products in exchange for money, but put something of themselves into the things they make. Authors including art historian Donald Kuspit (2004: 69) and philosopher Paul Virillio (2006: 48) have lamented a lack of craft and material quality in contemporary art. I have seen *much* evidence to the contrary.

5. The Inalienable Artist

Things sold still have a soul

Marcel Mauss (1924: 66)

In the previous two chapters, I considered artworks at the start of their lives: how their objects are fabricated, and how when they are first made bonds are forged between them and artist authors. This chapter is about artworks moving on in life, having left the studio and their first exhibitions, to the event when they are exchanged. The principal point is that as distributions of them, when artworks are exchanged – given away or sold – they take something of artists with them; their bonds are unseverable, they are inalienable. I describe how the inalienable bonds between artists and their artworks is demonstrated, asserted and maintained in practice in the art market and among other artworld systems.

As I proposed in previous chapters, it seems taken-for-granted that artworks *are* parts of artists and seen thus as gift-like and inalienable. In her discussion of ethnographic examples of inalienable possessions in the Pacific, Annette Weiner repeatedly refers to artworks to illustrate and clarify her definition of them to a Western audience (see 1992: 35,42,102,154)¹. Mauss also, in the conclusion to *The Gift*, describes how the inalienability of artists from their work is recognised by French law. The 1923 Droit de Suite law gives artists and “inheritors a ‘right of succession’ over the series of additional gains made during the successive sales of artworks” (2000: 67). This law was implemented in the UK in 2006 and I write about it in this chapter. While artists’ inalienability is supported by law and legal contract, I also describe how it is commanded by etiquette and expectation. Lengths are taken in the artworld and the art market to record artists’ ‘intentions’ so that they may be adhered to throughout artworks’ lives.

Weiner suggests that inalienable possessions are imbued with such power that they possess a “higher dignity” which places them above exchange value (1992: 33). She asserts that they are never truly exchanged since they retain the spirits of their true owners to whom they might eventually physically return [1992: 31-33]. Authentic historical relations between people and things are central to Weiner’s argument and since inalienable possessions contain

¹ I find it is worthwhile to note that Weiner was an artist before she became an anthropologist (in Myers 2001: 169).

histories they are unique even if they are physically identical to something else. In essence therefore as well as symbolically, inalienable possessions are intrinsically powerful and how to *keep, control and exercise this power and authority* is key to Weiner's argument.

The ways in which artists maintain control and authority over their artworks, further to exchange, is also central to this chapter. I describe procedures that allow artists knowledge of future exchanges of their works by sale or gift. Documents such as installation instructions enable artists to enforce their intentions and control over artworks at a distance. I consider how signatures and certificates of authenticity ensure that artists' names and physical traces are carried by their works. There are also mechanisms which require that artists are informed of decisions affecting artworks throughout their lives such as their material care or their inclusion in exhibitions.

In that they are bonded with artists – as their distributed persons or carriers of their souls - artworks are demonstrated to be gift-like in their exchange. But this chapter is also about how they are bought and sold. As Nicholas Thomas points out, anthropological thinking has tended to mark gifts in stark opposition to commodities, but when scrutinised with ethnographic examples in practice, these grand polarities may turn out to be implausible (1991: 26-27). Under differing conditions, an object might vary in its status as a gift and a commodity – it may move “promiscuously” between regimes of value (to use Appadurai's term [1986]). Thomas suggests therefore that theories of the gift are scrutinised with specific ethnographic examples (1991: 34). Further to his ethnography, with a focus on the practices of the contemporary art market, sociologist Olav Velthuis finds that the making of a ‘sharp distinction between ideal gift economies and corrosive market economies is untenable’ (2007: 7). My observations support this, and in this chapter I present some ways that artworks may behave and be treated as both gifts and commodities at the same time. In other words, it is not only that artworks move *between* the spheres of value of gifts and commodities, I find that they may be valued in a single sphere as both. In the last chapter I briefly introduced some of the activities of dealers and the almost familial relationships that they might share with artists. In this chapter I describe in more detail some of the strategies and roles that dealers can play in the unique task of selling works of art for money while at the same time having to maintain their gift-like qualities. Since an artwork's monetary value may actually be dependent on its unsevered relationship with the artist, it is essential for

business that dealers ensure that inalienable bonds are maintained between artists and their work.

Primary Market Placements

It is a common procedure of the primary market (i.e. the first sales of new works) for works of art to be sold under legal contract which require that when they are re-sold, that the gallery and the artist are notified and asked if they would like to buy the work back. The artist and gallery may either buy the work back for themselves (at a figure determined by the sales value of similar works by the artist at the time²) or attempt to 'place it' with a collector of their choosing. Even if this is not stipulated in a legal contract it is dictated by strict etiquette. The *Contemporary Art Collector's Handbook* states that "there is no surer way to ruin the collector-dealer relationship than for a collector to put an artwork into auction without first offering to sell it back to the primary market gallery where it was originally purchased" (Buck & Greer 2007: 129). The rule allows dealers and artists a level of control over the supply and prices of an artist's work. But it also allows dealers and artists to 'place' artworks; to *decide* and to *know* exactly where artworks go.

Since I began my research in the summer of 2007, the art market has seen boom and bust and recovery. Yet, even at the lowest point of the art market recession, the idea persists that the unknown first-time art buyer cannot walk into many galleries off the street and simply buy a work of art by a premier artist. Buyers are *selected* by galleries and there can be waiting lists. More important than the highest bidder, collectors must be known or be able to prove their intentions, that they are buying the artwork for the 'right reasons'. Olav Velthuis, in his ethnography of the contemporary art market identifies the 'right' and 'wrong' reasons for buying art. The right reasons are for the love of the work itself, 'Art' as an "intellectual pursuit" and ideally out of the desire to create and maintain a collection (2007: 43). A principal wrong reason for buying art is as financial investment.

Sarah Thornton was also intrigued by the *selection* criteria of dealers in her ethnography of the art world. Barbara Gladstone told her that 'placing works in collections "which are formed for the sake of living with and enjoying art' is [still] paramount" (2007: 86). Thornton witnessed amongst the stands of (the art fair) Art Basel the "hard buy... this

² This information is spelled out in commercial gallery invoices that I have seen.

takes the form of the collector describing his own unique selling points including notable works in his collection.. and.. the way he is committed to loaning works" (2007: 86).

Lisa Maddigan, artist Simon Newby's partner and formerly Antony Gormley's archivist, told me³ that a tremendous amount of artists' trust is placed in galleries choosing suitable buyers for artworks, and it is important to know that works will be owned and cared for by respectful collectors. This selectivity of clients may seem elitist – but dealers may argue in return that they are only working in the best interests of their artists. In a chapter in his book titled *Promoters [dealers] versus Parasites [auction houses]* (2007: 77), Velthuis heard auction house sales of new contemporary artworks described as “immoral and very unethical” (2007: 81). The sale of relatively new artworks through auction houses without the permission of artists seems to be disdainful because it renders the artist and their agent unable to control their destination. Auction paddles are distributed to anyone who can prove that they can pay.

Clare Coombes, Sales Executive at White Cube told me that government funded museums are the ‘ideal placement for artists’ key works. This is in part because “although museum acquisitions may involve long and bureaucratic processes... it is very hard for a museum to de-accession its collection”⁴. For example, in 2009 Brandeis University attempted to sell some works from the University's Rose Museum collection, but was met by a lawsuit filed by the families of some of the museum's founding members. The sale was seen to “contradict the charitable intention of the museum's founders, abrogate Brandeis' promises that the Rose would be maintained in perpetuity as a modern and contemporary art museum, and violate its commitments to those who donated art to the museum”⁵. Museums are expected to keep their art collections forever, and this is what makes them the ideal recipients of artworks for artists.

Droit de Suite; Re-sale Rights

Marcel Mauss' mention in *The Gift* of the 1920's French law over succession rights of artworks is called ‘Droit de Suite’. It was a pre-cursor to it being extended, non-obligatorily, across Europe following the 1948 Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and

³ In person July 2008.

⁴ In an e-mail March 2010.

⁵ New York Times, *Lawsuit Seeks to Save Art Museum at Brandeis*, July 27th 2009.

Artistic Works. Since then, several European countries practiced this right in different measure but in 2006 ‘Droit de Suite’ became law across the EU although it is not applied in uniform ways. On a sliding scale⁶ visual artists are entitled “to a percentage of the re-sale price of their works after the original sale, whenever they are sold by commercial dealers or auctioneers. The resale royalty right is typically inalienable and lasts for the life span of the artist and 70 years beyond: it therefore only affects trade in contemporary art” (McAndrew and Dallas-Conte 2002: 14).

In practice, I find however that perhaps the most interesting aspect about Droit de Suite is that it exists at all and is suggestive of the philosophical underpinnings of cultural definitions of artworks as inalienable. Over the course of my research, I did not encounter a single instance in which an attempt was made to implement the law. I learned of Droit de Suite close to the start of my research and often brought it up with artists and others in interviews and conversations thereafter. Many people had not heard of it or their knowledge of it was slight.

One reason for this perhaps is that it is difficult to implement Droit de Suite. This seems to be particularly true for artists who are not in the top tier of the market for whom the law would be most beneficial and appreciated. For example, Marko Kratochvil is a professional artist whose sales provide a sole means of income. He does not though, have singular gallery representation and he is happy to consign his work to almost any gallery who wishes to sell it. Droit de Suite requires a diligent dealer’s watchful eye to keep track of the movement of works in the market. Kratochvil’s galleries do not attempt to help him to maintain connections with his works, they do not ‘choose’ his collectors, and so his works can and do disappear from his sight and knowledge when they have been sold. On the other hand that the law exists at all supports the notion that works of art are understood at least philosophically to be inalienable. Even though it may not be straightforward in practice for artists and dealers to maintain control over the whereabouts of artworks, I observed clear efforts being made that demonstrate the great importance that is attributed to it.

⁶ Four percent for works up to 50,000 Euro, 3% for works between 50,000.01 and 200,000 Euro, 1% for 200,000.01 to 350,000.01 to 500,000; 0.25% for works over 500,000 (McAndrew and Dallas-Conte 2002).

Visitation Rights

Many artists request, and some insist, with written instructions that they be invited to attend each new installation of their work. This is often the case for artists working with time-based medias (see supporting statement in Buck & Greer 2006: 124). I have seen examples of this in film installation instructions for Sarah Morris, Christian Marclay and Runa Islam among others. These artists, at the very least, are likely to require being *informed* of each new installation. If it is not possible for them or their studio assistants to attend, they may request being supplied with space plans, floor plans and photographs of intended galleries.

For example, Runa Islam requests for one of her films that “the minimum size of the space required is 7m x 9m x 3.5m (height). The space must be fully darkened. Carpets may be required for the floor. The architectural proportions of the room are vital for achieving the correct installation, please supply plans of the space to the artist beforehand.” This latter request, means that even if Islam does not visit the new space each time the work is installed, she will know where and when it will happen and can advise at a distance.

Rebecca Horn also insists that she is informed of each new installation of her sold works. For some of those in Tate’s collection, the museum is required by contractual agreement to contact Horn when they receive loan requests. In the contracts, Tate is referred to as the ‘recipient’ of the works instead of, as purchasers of things tend to be referred to, as ‘buyer’ or ‘owner’ (I return to the subject of ownership in the next chapter).

James Turrell whose principal medium is coloured light also retains considerable control over his sold works⁷. Commissions and sales are made under the agreement that he is invited for site-visits of each installation so that he may ‘tune’. Coloured shades and intensities of light are not fixed for each work. Turrell’s tuning results in adjustments for different spaces, and so each time the work is installed, it may be quite different from the last. Collectors of Turrell’s artworks must be prepared to accept that ‘purchases’ will entail a lifelong relationship with the artist and that he maintains the right to change ‘their’ work.

⁷ As discussed by Andrew Perchuck and David Turnbull at the *Object in Transition* conference at the Getty Institute January 2008.

Control of Space in Written Instructions

In the international artworld, artworks travel substantial distances, yet artists can and do retain considerable *physical* control over them with written installation instructions. As much as to describe how to attach and install components, installation instructions allow artists to control the environments in which they will be installed and consequently the way that they will be experienced.

Very specific instructions for spaces are common. I have seen a set of instructions for a Christian Marclay piece which specifies that adjoining spaces for a film must be ‘7 meters square with a height of 3.5 metres and 9 metres square with a height of 5 metres... there should be no seating at all.’ This is not a technical specification - the film could be *seen* in a different sized room - but these notes are about the control of space and *how* the film will be viewed and experienced.

Installation instructions for Anya Gallaccio’s chocolate room piece *Stroke* (1994) offer a good example of directions that encompass essential technical information as well as ensuring that the work is experienced in Gallaccio’s intended way (image 5.1). It reads:

Dark chocolate, couverture, minimum 50% cocoa solids. 600 grammes per 1m2 for 3 coats. Solid vegetable fat, preferably coconut butter – clean without bad smell. The fat makes the chocolate easier to work... It is easier to work with a series of pans in smaller amounts as you do not want to overheat the chocolate and change the texture. It will become grainy if burnt or overheated. The walls should be painted from the floor to a height just out of reach, approximately 2-250 depending on the space being used. The chocolate should cover every contour within these limits. To get the most even coverage, the base coat should be applied with strokes in every direction. The chocolate for this layer can be quite liquid – 1 part fat/4 parts chocolate. You can make the mixture thicker if necessary...Apply the mixture with short, vertical strokes. Do not overwork the brush as this will break up the surface texture which should be shiny and perfect as possible. ... Place a gallery bench in the centre of the space. The bench should ideally be long and large enough to lie on, with no back so as to preclude any sense of direction.

The chocolate mixture ratios and ingredients have been found in practice to make the task of painting the chocolate most easy⁸, but as well these ratios ensure that the substance is ‘cocoa enough’ to create a genuinely chocolate room which is perfectly smooth

⁸ Explained to me by Tom Dingle at Thomas Dane gallery, in person December 2009.

and shiny. The ingredients are stated to ensure that the work smells in the intended way, and the instructions for the bench guide ‘viewers’ in their encounters with it.

The installation instructions for Gustav Metzger’s piece *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965-66/2005/2009) similarly cover the technicalities of making equipment work and the control of the environment for the experience of the viewer (image 5.2). They state:

The gallery should be fitted with oat meal coloured carpet (warm light beige) similar to Pantone 7500 U. It should be fluffy (shag pile) so that people are comfortable to sit and lie on it. Neither floor nor ceiling should have a reflective surface and it is necessary to dismantle any additional lighting accessories. If possible it is best to set the room environment to a cool temperature as this enhances the visual characteristics of the liquid crystals, however the temperature should not be so cool as to make the visitors uncomfortable.

These specifications are but a few sentences from an extensively detailed thirteen-page document compiled by Tate for the installation of the work. Much of the information was amassed further to consultation with the artist at the time of acquisition over his ‘intentions’. As mentioned in previous chapters, ‘artists’ intent’ is an oft cited term among artworld practices, and I continue to consider its implications and meanings in later chapters too. The point to note here is that museums deem it extremely important to record and document as much information as possible as to what artists say about the handling and installation of their works at the time of acquisition.

A reason for this, is that the life-expectancy of artworks in museum collections tends to be long – potentially much longer than the conscious human lifespans of artists (this is also something that I write more about in later chapters). Felix Gonzalez-Torres created many installations which involved wrapped sweets piled and spread across gallery floors (commonly known as ‘Candy Spills’). When these works are installed, gallery visitors are invited to take the sweets; the artwork is ‘made’ by people other than the artist as the materials are consumed. *Portrait of Ross* (1991) was made after the death of the artist’s partner, Ross (image 5.3). It starts as 175 lbs of wrapped sweets which was Ross’ ideal body weight. The diminution of the sweets by gallery visitors corresponds to the loss of body weight when he was ill. Periodically during installation the sweets for this work are meant to be replenished back to 175 lbs with the suggestion that Ross’ body might be ‘replenished’ in

this way too. This procedure, the amount of sweets, and that they should be “multi-coloured wrapped sweets” are detailed in installation instructions. Gonzalez-Torres died in 1996, but his candy-spills continue to be regularly installed and circulated (I have encountered several in different exhibitions). Illustrative of the special responsibilities of dealers, Andrea Rosen’s gallery, now runs and houses the archives for the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. Rosen herself has been bequeathed with the task of managing the artist’s estate and significantly, ensuring that his intentions continue to be carried out for his art.

Upholding Relations

Martha Buskirk describes how some serious problems arose when Donald Judd’s intentions were not articulated and documented and a work was consequently mishandled by a collector. As a result, Judd publically and formally withdrew his name and authorship from the piece (2003: 36). The collector, Giuseppe Panza, had bought plans for a work titled *Fall* (1968) and then had the work materially fabricated from those plans for an exhibition at the Ace Gallery in Los Angeles in 1989. The misunderstanding stemmed from Panza’s belief that the plans constituted the artwork, and that since he had paid for it that he therefore ‘owned’ the piece and could authorise its fabrication (which he also paid for). Judd however, believed that Panza had just bought an “initial sketch” for an artwork yet to be realised and expected that he would be contacted and consulted at the time of its fabrication (2003: 40). Panza and Judd’s relationship was generally contentious, and their disagreements stemmed from more than the decisions of this one work. Subsequently, Judd disowned *Fall* by posting a notice in *Art & America* magazine stating:

The Fall 1989 show of sculpture at Ace Gallery in Los Angeles exhibited an installation wrongly attributed to Donald Judd. Fabrication of the piece was authorized by Giuseppe Panza without the approval or permission of Donald Judd.

(in Buskirk 2003: 1)

As well as learning about museums’ drive to have artists articulate their intentions and for this to be documented, I also encountered instances in which individual collectors took similar steps, which would ensure against their own Panza – Judd situation. Many collectors demonstrate an eagerness to maintain artists’ connections to their work by

adhering to instructions and asking for clarification when they have not been explicitly stated. Examples of questions I have encountered include: does an artist have a preference over whether electrical transformers for a neon work should be visible or hidden? How should an artwork be lit? At what height does an artist believe her prints look best above the floor? Artists do not always have answers but I have noticed that it is deemed good etiquette to ask. In lieu of an answer to the latter question, a common idea is to hang a picture at a height that would be approximate to an artist's eye level. An art handler told me⁹ how he had seen a Warhol self-portrait hung at the artist's eye-level *sitting down* in a Park Avenue collector's dining-room. The collector told the handler that he knew this height since Warhol had dined there at one time.

During a panel discussion, sculptor Rachel Kneebone told the UK Registrar's Group, made up largely of museum representatives, that although she does request it explicitly in contractual agreements, she believes it is 'simply good manners' for artists to be informed by museums when their works are requested for loans. She would like to know where and how her work is being viewed.

The importance of etiquette and manners may seem unusual considering the veraciousness, if not downright aggressiveness, of the contemporary art market at times. Yet another attribute of a 'good collector' identified by Olav Velthuis sought by dealers for 'their' artists, is one who is willing to form a relationship with artists – to want to 'get together, to travel to openings of their shows and to show an interest in their career' (2007: 43). Velthuis further writes; "since collectors often wish to get involved with the work of artists they collect, objects ultimately remain entangled with their makers" (2007: 182). The crux of Velthuis' thesis is the way artworks are priced and valued in the market bears less relevance to classical economic theories of supply and demand, and is rather, a symbolic value of the relationship between artists, collectors and dealers (2007: 181).

I learned of an instance¹⁰ in which a collector felt that a painting he bought would look better in his home if the frame were a different colour. Instead of just changing the frame he contacted the artist and the dealer through which he had bought it, to ask for their permission and opinion over a new frame. The artist, also wishing to keep the relationship amicable, agreed for the original frame to be re-sprayed a different colour. The decision was

⁹ I have been unable to reach this art handler to obtain his permission to name him.

¹⁰ All parties involved must remain anonymous.

finalised with a written agreement stating that should the collector ever decide to sell the work (which it was hoped would not happen but if it did would be as usual, further to first offering to sell it back to the artist and the dealer) that the frame would be re-sprayed to its original colour at the collector's expense.

Contrasting this, I learned of a case¹¹ where a collector wanted to go against an artist's wishes. The collector contacted the studio to obtain technical details about the materials of a sculpture because he wanted to have it chemically treated so that it could be installed outdoors in his garden. The artist's response was to inform the collector that it was intentionally an indoor sculpture and since the space around it was integral to the experience of the work, she would not consent to the treatment. The collector argued that since he had paid a six-figure sum for the sculpture and *owned* it, that he was not asking for - did not *need* - the artist's consent (he just wanted technical information). Everyone involved with the matter and with whom I discussed the case agreed that since the collector (who was described to me as "obnoxious") had paid for the piece, he could legally do whatever he wanted to the object. Yet paradoxically, should the collector have chosen to go ahead with the unapproved change, the monetary value of the artwork would be lost. Its monetary value was dependent on it being a work of that particular artist, and deviation from her intention could cause her to, in principle, sever her connection with it. If the collector had proceeded with the outdoor treatment, he risked losing the six-figure value which concerned him so much¹². In other words, the monetary value of the artwork was dependent on its unsevered connection with its author.

Keeping While Giving

The crux of Weiner's study about inalienable possession is "how to keep while giving" (1992: 5). Should we suppose that *all* artworks are inalienable from artists? To reiterate (from my earlier discussion of distributed artists) Damian Ortega's comments with regard to his sketches for the installation of *Controller of the Universe* (2007) he said:

¹¹ All parties involved must remain anonymous.

¹² I understand that the gallery and the artist lost touch with the collector at this point so it is unknown whether it was treated for an outside installation in the end or not.

The drawings, for me, are the most natural experience, for the artist, the most personal, the simplest and the more direct idea. Then it is the construction that involves more people and other things, different contexts and conditions. But the drawing is personal and great and is for me the purest idea of the artist. The real art is the idea in the sketchbook.

(Hoxton Square, July 17th 2007)

Ortega granted permission for images of the sketches of the piece to be published in the accompanying exhibition catalogue (2007: 59)¹³. The sculpture was installed in a private viewing room, seen only by a few clients selected by White Cube to one of which it was successfully sold. While the artist was physically absent for the installation, he was very pleased with the outcome of the sculpture but it was not personal to him like the sketches - it was different in that it involved “more people and other things”. Though it is not uncommon for artists to make their planning sketches available for sale it is important to note that in this instance Ortega requested their return to his studio. Though the sketches were attractive, skillfully made, and not just for these reasons desirable to buying collectors, they were *not for sale*. It makes sense that an artist sells art for the means to make more art, and as I will quote Ernesto Caivano saying shortly, art needs to leave the studio to enable “room for more”. So while Ortega was happy to sell the sculpture he was also sure to keep the “real art” for himself.

Signatures and Certificates of Authenticity

The signature identifies and authenticates an artwork; it is the ultimate mark of the author. With reference to my earlier discussion about physical connections between artists and so-called conceptual works, I find it significant that for objects not fabricated by artists the signature is also evidence of the artist’s touch – a physical interaction. Damien Hirst’s spot and spin paintings for example, are not painted by the artist but they are signed by him. Likewise, Anish Kapoor’s wall-mounted mirrors and dish works are fabricated in foundries by foundry-workers, but they are signed on the objects by the artist by hand. The timing of the placement of the signature on a work is significant; it happens when an art object is

¹³ For Ortega’s sketch of *Controller of the Universe* see image 3.10 in chapter 3.

deemed ‘complete’ by the artist, or maybe it is more appropriate to say, when it is deemed ready for exhibition or exchange.

Not all art objects are signed by artists though, but usually in lieu of signatures, certificates of authenticity are drawn up instead (illustration 5.4). Certificates of authenticity behave the same as signatures on art objects; they are signed by artists by hand, and again they are only drawn up when artists deem art objects to be ‘complete’ and ‘ready’ for exchange. Catherine Belloy, Archivist at Marion Goodman gallery, confirmed to me that Certificates are only drawn-up at the point of sale of an artwork¹⁴. ...once an artist’s signature is placed on an art object or certificates of authenticity, the names and what are essentially physical marks of authors are carried with them for all future movements and exchanges. As the copy of the Allan Kaprow certificate that I include on the next page notes, it “must accompany the work through all changes of ownership and documents its authenticity.”

Keeping Track

Ernesto Caivano’s White Cube exhibition *Echo Gambit* in 2008 consisted of small and large ink drawings. During the exhibition opening talk to the gallery staff, the artist spoke eloquently about how all the works were inspired by metaphysical and mythological epic narratives. The way that the drawings were hung and the way that Caivano spoke about them suggested some unity, but for commercial purposes, each drawing was defined as a separate artwork and they were each available separately for sale. Tim Marlow asked Caivano:

Does it in any way bother you that each one of these individual component parts in theory, probably in practice, will go to different parts of the world, is that the point, as an artist are you happy to see these dispersed and sold, or ideally would you prefer it for these to be kept together as one installation – don’t worry Sales [turning to the gallery Sales Staff] I know that that’s not the deal, that’s not what I’m asking to happen – but [returning to address the artist] is that an ideal scenario in your mind, that everything is kept together or brought back together in the end?

¹⁴ Email April 2010.

Caivano: I actually like to get rid of the work and let it circulate, and the reason for that is then there is room for more. I've kept works at home and I end up finding mistakes and trying to correct them instead of advancing. But.. I have a hope that at some point I will be able to bring back all the puzzle pieces together and show the narrative in its linear sense.. I don't work in a linear sense in relation to the narrative.. [but] if the work were to come back together, I could show relationships between a piece that was in a group show four years ago and three drawings from this show.

(July 2008, Hoxton Square)

Caivano was confident that although his works from this exhibition would be sold separately, that at some point in the future, it would be possible to track them and bring them together again for an exhibition. The retrospective exhibition of course, is a highlight in an artist's career and for a young artist like Caivano, something to aspire to. It is important to note that most museum (or public institution) exhibitions consist largely, if not entirely, of loaned artworks from other collections. The most common way for curators to bring artworks together is to contact artists and their dealers. That dealers know exactly who to contact to make loan requests requires diligent record-keeping. In short, most retrospective exhibitions (indeed most other museum exhibitions if they are not made up from the permanent collection) are testament to the careful tracking and control of the destinations of artworks by artists and their dealers.

Inalienable Bonds

In this chapter I have described how artists' inalienable connections with artworks are maintained when they are "released into the world", as I have heard artist Marvin Oliver say¹⁵. By some accounts, this moment might be marked as the 'completion' of an artwork. But, as I demonstrate in chapters that follow, the 'making' of artworks continue. At the time of exchange then, it is important that arrangements are put in place to ensure that the artist's control, and what tends to be described as their 'intentions' for their work, are maintained for the long-term, throughout an artwork's life, potentially beyond the lifespan of the artist's human body.

¹⁵ I attended what is usually termed as the 'unveiling' of Oliver's sculpture *Sister Orca*, but he always called it, and spoke of it during his speech as "the release".

As I found with the notion of distributed personhood and artists, it seems to be widely expected and accepted that the work of art is inalienable from its artist author. While the notion is understood philosophically it is also asserted in practice. With my research, I found life-long connections between artists and their works upheld by expectation, etiquette, law and practical artworld systems. What is interesting with regards to anthropological theory, is the way that contemporary artworks seem to maintain their gift-like qualities even when they are commodified and circulating in the contemporary art market. I find that the inalienable gift versus the alienated commodity dichotomy does not hold when it comes to contemporary art. Collectors are chosen by dealers to be purchasers of artworks on condition that artists' connections are maintained and their intentions are adhered to¹⁶. This is demonstrated when an artwork's monetary value is dependent on upholding the inalienable relationship between the artist and his work. In other words, an artwork's treatment as a gift, is essential to the way it is regarded as a commodity; its monetary value is maintained when it is considered to be a gift. Even if an artist is not conscious of the whereabouts of his work (including after death), artworld procedures and rules ensure that a connection persists so maintaining its value. I find that documentation plays a crucial role in this. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, documentation is created for artworks throughout their lives, but the exchange of installation instructions and certificates of authenticity are essential to the procedure at the junction of their first exchange.

In this chapter I have shown how documentation is added to a growing assemblage of materials and people that constitute works of art. As well as artists and fabricators, the important roles of dealers in the art assemblage are demonstrated. Of course, other important persons introduced in this chapter are the collectors who enter into binding relationships with artists; they are after all taking possession of something that is a part of artists (their distributed person). Annette Weiner stresses that recipients of inalienable possessions are recipients of individuals' power; she writes:

¹⁶ This is further to my research in 'top-tier' contemporary art galleries such as White Cube, Marion Goodman and Hauser & Wirth who operate in the artworld centres of London and New York. As per the example of Marko Kratovil, smaller galleries with less sought-after artists might not operate in the same way. On the other hand, I believe it is quite possible that in some smaller, local art galleries, such as some as I have encountered in Seattle, there are also close relationships between gallerists, collectors and artists.

taking a possession that so completely represents... an individual owner's identity and giving it to someone outside the group is a powerful transfer of one's own..very substance. This transfer is [a] most serious step in the constitution of hierarchy.

(1992: 104)

The next chapter focuses more on the shared ownership of art, transferences of power and control, and the continued making of artworks. While the bonds between artists and artworks are adhered to, I find that the bonds between collectors and artworks may be quite powerful too.

6: Ownership & Possession

The creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.

Marcel Duchamp¹

I took the Richard Long out...and wondered what I had bought.

Bill Drummond (2010: 113)

In previous chapters I have written about artworks as the distributed parts of artists. This thesis though, is not only about the agency of artists. Other persons may be distributed, active amongst and connected with others by works of art.

This chapter focuses on the ownership and possession of artworks by others than artists. I present some accounts of private ownership from collectors who have purchased artworks or received them as gifts. I also write about the procedures for museum acquisitions and what this suggests for the ways exchanges are defined in practice. I demonstrate how public museums acquire artworks that 'belong' to nations and local communities. Principal questions for the chapter are, what of an artwork is owned or possessed? What is exchanged, what does one *have*?

This chapter is about 'legal' ownership but it is also about the possession of artworks, which I suggest can happen with engagement. In a similar way that artists are distributed within their works through making and intention, others may contribute towards what artworks are and do through making too. As Duchamp said, spectators are as essential to the 'creative act' as artists. To put it another way, if we consider artworks as gift-like, they are defined by there being *both* givers and recipients. As Lewis Hyde describes, artworks are gifts because they establish relationships between people (xvii: 2006). I propose that it is through the *making of meaning* that other persons can become distributed within artworks, and potentially turn them into their own inalienable possessions.

¹ From Session on the Creative Act, Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, April 1957. This presentation is transcribed in many online locations such as www.rae.com.pt/Duchamp%20THE%20CREATIVE%20ACT.do

Jean Baudrillard wrote of collections in his book *The System of Objects*; “they become things of which I am the meaning, they become my property, my passion” (1996: 91). Baudrillard was influenced by Marcel Mauss’ ideas about the gift, and believed that things could have ‘souls’ (1996: 96) and be extensions of selves (1996: 92, 97). In his essay on *Simulacra*, he asserted that artworks created for the purpose of symbolic exchange are capable of turning into “living social matter” (1995: 82). Baudrillard wrote “what you really collect is always yourself” (1996: 97) and “we are concerned not with having but with being” (1996: 109).

Baudrillard though was particularly concerned with the ways that the consumption of art operates as a ‘sign’ to others. He argued; ‘whether status-related, cultural or commercial, an object [can] bring one human being face to face with another at which point the object becomes a message’ (1996: 113). Baudrillard assumed that the way art (and other consumed things) was valued was inescapably a part of totalising systems of power (see Graeber [2001: 30]). He accused collectors of narcissism (1996: 95 & 97) sexual perversion (1996: 94, 107) and argued that they “invariably have something impoverished and inhuman about them”! (1996: 114) Pierre Bourdieu’s famous thesis of *Distinction* is also about the consumption of art as a “stage in a process of communication” for those of a certain class who know the code (1996: 2). Ultimately for Bourdieu, the consumption of art primarily fulfils the “social function of legitimising social differences.” (1996: 7)

I cannot deny that during the course of my research I observed much conspicuous consumption of contemporary art. Whether lawfully ‘owned’ or meaningfully ‘possessed’ artworks are definite status signs and I am sure, if the ways that they are valued and consumed are analysed, illustrative of a variety of macro socio-economic matters. Nonetheless, with this chapter I believe there is more that might be addressed and explored with the micro-assemblages of relations amongst people and works of art, and the personal accounts of meaning and value that I learned of during my research. Anthropologist Daniel Miller, actually writes that Bourdieu set the precedent for all of his work on material culture (2010: 51) yet Miller grants much more positivity to the profound and powerful connections between individuals and their possessions. He learned this by asking people about their possessions and then ‘asking’ their possessions about them (2008: 2).

Sociologist Olav Velthuis, in his ethnography of the art market, also considers lived relationships between individuals and finds “that there is more to markets than

social structure.” (2005: 6) The main thrust of Velthuis’ thesis is that art prices are symbolic of relations in what he calls “circuits of commerce”, the three primary participants of which are artists, dealers and collectors (2007: from 5). In this chapter, I also focus on what I observed to be a close three-way relationship between these parties. Further to finding artworks as symbolic or representative of relations between artists, dealers and collectors, I continue with my examination of how art objects *are* persons and at once *make* persons. Bruno Latour and James Elkins offer a very similar example to each other about how possessions make people and people make possessions; their premise is; ‘you are different when you have an object and an object is different with you having it’ (Latour [2005: 179] & Elkins [1996: 43])².

While this chapter then is focussed on the ownership of art, and is a continuation of my examination of artworks as distributed persons, it is not just about the one-way control of artworks by individual owners. Artists, fabricators and dealers continue to feature in this discussion and crucially, I explore the ways that rather than being passively controlled, materials are active participants in these relations. I find that this is illuminated in a distinctive light by a consideration of artworks that are meant to have little or even no materiality. A significant question for this chapter is how ownership is formally defined, asserted and transferred for ephemeral artworks or those with little or ‘variable’ (changing) materials? What is actually bought and owned in these circumstances? I demonstrate that the creation and exchange of documents, including installation instructions, certificates of authenticity and sales invoices are key. Martha Buskirk writes that installation instructions and certificates of authenticity ‘enable artists a form of control over their work’ further to exchange (2005: 55). Moreover, since ‘ownership of works of art are affirmed with the publication of certificates’ (2005: 30) and other documentation, that the documents therefore have a dual purpose in the identification of artists as well as new owners of works. I suggest that a bond between artists and owners appears to be affirmed by the information stated on documents and by the ways that they are formatted.

Buskirk echoes Alexander Alberro who writes “possession of the information or the documentation of (a) work signal(s) ownership.” He goes on; the ‘bulk of material objects is eliminated and replaced with documentation’ (2003: 73). But I would argue that surely documentation is still more material than an idea? Daniel Miller writes in his

² It is an intriguingly similar example about guns, but Latour, writing almost a decade later, does not reference Elkins.

introduction to the book *Materiality* that “the de-materialisation of art follows a long history of humans attempting to reject/transcend the material” . As with religious attempts though, transcendence from materialism seem to be “inherently impossible” (2005: 22). During my research, I observed what appears to be a propensity for materiality to play a role even when an artist has not created it as a material facet of an artwork. In short, while the ownership of an artwork in principle does not necessarily assume ownership of an art object, in practice I find that *something* is usually exchanged and kept.

The Making & Possession of Meaning

Much of Anselm Kiefer’s work is very serious and inspired for him in deeply philosophical, frequently apocalyptic narratives (such as the holocaust or the Norse Sagas). His work can be very large-scale and he uses materials of the earth such as stone, mud and ash to extremely powerful and often dark effect. His 2006 Royal Academy/White Cube exhibition *Aperiat terra et germinet salvatorem* (Let the Earth Open and Let Them Bring Forth Salvation) (2006) was no exception. While his work titled *Palmsonntag* (Palm Sunday) is clearly ‘about’ Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem, Kiefer says that he expects for the interpretation of meaning in his work to vary from person to person (image 6.1). At the *Aperiat Terra...* press conference he said with regard to *Palmsonntag*:

What does a palm tree lying on the earth tell *me*? And then I came to this story of Christ going before his Calvary and he goes into the mausoleum and people take off their clothes and put it on the floor and let him go in.

But:

I don’t say that people have to know about the Isaiah. If they don’t know it - they know other things. And very often I’m asked if they have to read now all this...about Christendom about all these things, and I say no you don’t have to. You can see something, you can see even if you don’t know the Isaiah, you can see there is a painting and even I prefer in some ways ... [they] see something else, what I didn’t see....My work doesn’t go in the brain only, it goes through deeper structures.

(Royal Academy, December 2006)

I learned of a case in which a purchaser of one of the Isaiah related artworks wanted it installed in her English countryside home (as opposed to one of her city apartments or other countryside homes). The collector mentioned to me that she “loved this gorgeous work” and with the straw, ash and mud, the “earthy colours” would better suit the “rustic décor” in that house. This seemingly banal statement for such heady philosophical work took me by surprise; she clearly did not know - or care - about the Isaiah. When I recounted the story to an art dealer however he told me that this collector is well-liked and philanthropic in the artworld. As per my description of a ‘good collector’ in the previous chapter, she does not purchase art (and she buys a lot) for financial investment purposes and she has never been known to sell. I learned too that she also has a large family to whom she likes to gift works of art. Daniel Miller suggests further to his ethnography of people’s possessions in London that “usually the closer relationships with people, the closer the relationship with objects” (2008: 1). He found that those who lived their lives caringly and “full” with family and friends, also lived their lives “full” caringly and intimately with material possessions (2008: 9). If the Kiefer painting does remain in this collector’s English countryside home for the long-term it might very well shed its relationship with the Isaiah altogether. On the other hand, as it is lived with by this woman and her family, I suspect that it might become meaningful in her very own ways.

Collector Koryn Rolstad, whom I met in Seattle, told me about how the artworks that she has bought and been gifted are valuable to her in their connection to times, people and events in her life. She spoke of two William Kentridge wood block prints:

I saw the Kentridge retrospective in 2001 at the Hirschorn Museum in Washington DC. I was lecturing at Howard University [at the time]. The show dropped me to my knees so-to-speak. Later that weekend I visited a gallery that represented Kentridge and they showed me the two prints. At that time they were too dear for me and I passed. The next summer Greg Kucera [Gallerist] in Seattle had a show of his work including the two woodblock prints, [for one reason and another the prints did not sell], so I jumped in, bought them, had them framed and they have lived with me since. It took a year to pay for them, but I never regretted it. During the last decade I was the victim of fraud. I fought in the courts for years and many times my attorney and my advisers wanted me to sell my collection - including the Kentridges. I refused. The story ends with finally settling the issues and I still have my art and my Kentridge wood blocks in fine order.

Koryn then spoke, in what I find a significant choice of words, of her “reward for such loyalty:”

In 2009 a small opera company put on the Monteverdi *The Return of Ulysses*. The direction and set design was by William Kentridge and his collaboration with the ‘SA Hand Spring Puppet Company’.

Koryn decided to throw a party and she invited the opera’s production cast, crew and William Kentridge:

There I was showing Mr. Kentridge how to take the head off of a 10lb salmon and throw it on the BBQ. We ate all night and his puppeteer 'Boozie' taught us how to dance the 'electric slide' to her music CD. In the middle of my living room Mr Kentridge jumped in and showed us all his dance skills. I was in heaven. My reward for loyalty [for not selling the prints] was a new friendship and a connection with a great man.

(Emails to me November – December 2009)

Koryn has met many of ‘the artists in her collection’ and she counts several of them as friends. As well as purchasing artworks she has also received many as gifts from artists.

Neon-maker Kerry Ryan (who I introduced during my discussion about Fabrication) has also amassed a substantial art collection that began with gifts from artists that he worked for. From these he said, “he got the bug”, and he began to buy art too³. Only a few of those that he has bought has he sold again when he learned that they had appreciated significantly in monetary value. But then, when he was showing me images of works in his collection we came across a picture of a drawing he had sold. Looking at the image he tutted and said “I liked that one, I wish I hadn’t sold it now.” Of works that were gifted to him he told me that he would *never* sell them. Neon artworks are often created in editions and Kerry has asked artists if he would be allowed to keep an edition of works he particularly likes - usually an Artist’s Proof - for himself.

Shortly, I write about the importance that is deemed (particularly by museums) for the creation and keeping of documentation with the formal exchange of art. Kerry Ryan, on the other hand, has never been concerned with paperwork. Numerous people

³ In conversation with me in person June 2010

have mentioned to him that he ought to ‘sort his archives out’ and he concedes that he ‘probably should’, but I had the impression that it was not and would not be a priority. Firstly, Kerry would hardly request neon installation instructions from artists and their dealers since he is the number-one neon handler in London and knows better than anyone how neons should be installed with regards to both technical aspects and artists’ preferences. If he wanted to formalise ownership he could request certificates of authenticity from studios and dealers, but he does not seem to do this either.

I suspect that for Kerry Ryan there is an unclear even *irrelevant* distinction between the neon that he keeps being an *artwork* by the artist and a neon *object* that he has made, often in close collaboration with an artist. Neons remain utterly connected to artists in Kerry’s mind. Of course they are created to artists’ intentions and instructions – it is just that the meaning of the objects for him is created in the crafting and making of them rather than as artworks to be exhibited. Referring back to my discussion about Fabrication, if Kerry keeps a neon AP, it means that his relationship is not severed with it, he is not alienated from it, as can be the case for hired fabricators. To be clear, this is *not* to propose that Ryan is a co-author of the artworks the neons become. The objects become meaningful by the bond created when Kerry made them, and they are also part of his relationships – friendships in several cases - with artists, and the timings and events of working with them.

The Making & Possessing of Objects’ Forms

I wrote in the previous chapter that collectors are often keen to know about and adhere to artists’ intentions and instructions for installation. This is not always the case. Artist Marko Kratochvil told me about a collector who wanted to put one of his sculptures on a very tall plinth. Kratochvil strongly protested the idea at first and insisted that he had made the work with the intention for it to be installed on the floor. The collector went ahead though and had the plinth made. When Kratochvil visited the collector’s house he found, to his surprise, that the sculpture looked “fantastic”⁴ on the plinth. It made such an impression on him in an unexpected way, that he said it changed his direction for his next series of sculptures.

While collectors’ making of meaning is commonly invited as per Anselm Kiefer’s philosophy, or at least understood by artists to be inevitable, some artists actually want owners of artworks to be involved with, manipulate, and make decisions for the objects.

⁴ Further to a conversation in person with Marko in December 2008.

As the name suggests, Gabrielle Orozco's *Erosion* (2008) series are meant to erode with use. A set of painted semi-spheres made of plaster sit within each other like stacked bowls of diminishing size. People are encouraged to handle and play with the semi-spheres by rolling them inside each other; eroding and marking the plaster as this happens. White Cube at Frieze 2008 initially showed the first of the series of *Erosion* where visitors were encouraged to handle it. Once the piece was actually purchased though, the spheres were returned to the studio for restoration to a pristine unhandled state. While it is the artist's intent that the object erodes, and interested purchasers were able to try it out, ultimately, only the official owner would be able to make their mark upon it. In a sense, a new shaping of the artwork's object *begins* at the point when it *leaves* the artist and his studio.

With similar intent to personally involve collectors, Damien Hirst created an edition of 35 medicine cabinets, which unlike his other cabinets (such as *Lullaby Winter* [2002]) are not pre-filled with medicines and pills. The idea for the *Day-by-Day* (2003) cabinets is that collectors fill them with their own pills; as the name suggests, they are meant to be records of their owner's daily medicinal lives. What is interesting though is that on Artnet and a Phillips de Pury catalogue, I found evidence of two *Day-by-Day*'s at auction in 2009. Both include pills in the works' media descriptions.⁵ Are they the day-by-day medicines of the cabinet's first owners? Could a new owner replace the pills with their own daily medicines? The answer is not clear. Damien Hirst will hardly supply it in documentation because (as per my discussion about the disdain that is felt amongst artists for sales in the secondary market in the previous chapter) he prefers that his artworks are kept and never sold by their first owners.

Walead Beshty's copper and glass boxes are documents of their travels and handling by Fedex (image 6.2). The artist ships glass cubes in simple cardboard boxes between exhibitions with the courier service. The works' titles accumulate with their travels such as *FEDEX LARGE CRAFT BOXES 33058, INTERNATIONAL PRIORITY, LOS ANGELES – TIJUANA, TIJUANA-LOS ANGELES, LOS ANGELES-LONDON* (2008). The cracked and chipped glass boxes are exceptionally fragile⁶. They can be repaired to an extent but if they fall apart entirely, the works 'end'.

⁵ http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/news/artmarketwatch/artmarketwatch3-4-09_detail.asp?picnum=5

February 13th 2009, Contemporary Art Day Sale; <http://www.phillipsdeputy.com/auctions/lot-detail.aspx?sn=UK010209&search=&p=&order=&lotnum=121>

⁶ Explained to me by Tom Dingle.

For this reason, to date, only unsold boxes still under Beshty's control have continued their travels with Fedex. I asked Tom Dingle at Thomas Dane gallery whether a collector could *choose* to continue the shipments, and he believes that it is not ruled out by the artist. On the other hand, no purchasers have actually requested to do this yet. A sales representative posted at Frieze 2009 for Thomas Dane told me that she believed collectors are drawn to these artworks as objects. They like what they have become with Fedex, they like the *look* of them at the point when they buy them. Although the *action* of their making – their handling, their travels and time – are most significant elements of what these artworks are, at the point of sale, the action stops. For collectors the artworks then become primarily physical lasting things.

Public Ownership

Seattle Art Museum opened its sculpture park in 2006 (image 6.3). It holds sculptures of Richard Serra, Louise Bourgeois, Alexander Calder and Richard Long among others from the museum's collection. The land is formally owned by the museum, but the park is un-gated with free entry and several public footpaths run through it. It feels like an open public space and this is by deliberate design. Museum Director Mimi Gates who oversaw the four-year development of the sculpture park wrote in her retirement farewell letter in 2009; "what has given me great pleasure is not only increasing SAM's artistic excellence but also giving this museum broad community ownership"⁷. The museum's brief introduction to the park reads; "This new waterfront park gives Seattle residents and visitors the opportunity to experience a variety of sculpture in an outdoor setting."⁸

Nicholas Dorman, SAM's Chief Conservator, supports the museum's ethos of Seattle's community ownership. This essentially public park, however, poses challenges for the conservation and maintenance of the art objects. Experiments were carried out for different types of signage around the park to signal that the objects were not to be touched or climbed upon. These have ranged from large poster-sized, bold blue signs with 'Ouch! Don't touch the Art!' to what is there now, frequently placed small black and white signs that read with less furore 'Do Not Touch'.

Nonetheless, Nicholas had to raise the issue in a meeting with the museum board of trustees that park visitors were carving their names into Serra's *Wake* (2004). To

⁷ <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/mimi/farewell.asp>

⁸ <http://www.seattleartmuseum.org/visit/OSP/AboutOSP/default.asp>

Nicholas' surprise though, one of the principal trustees responded by raising the question, 'is this such a bad thing?' Despite the conservation staff's certainty that it was indeed a bad thing, the question was forwarded to Richard Serra himself. The artist's response was unreservedly "no" - he did not want people to carve their names into the structure. The artist's word once given was taken as final and the park's security staff was alerted to stop anyone attempting to mark the steel.

There was a rare snowfall in Seattle in January 2009. The public with their day off from work, flocked to the park to build their own sculptures in the snow. The Serra piece in particular seems to draw people to write their names on it because when Nicholas Dorman arrived he found names written all over it in the snow. He was not concerned about this as such, but his intention was to brush the snow from all the art objects in the park. As he carried out the task, he was however, chastised by an angry visitor for brushing away her name. He tried to explain that he was a museum staff member and that the snow if left alone could damage the steel yet she interrupted with the response 'but I'm a museum member'!

Seattle Art Museum very much wants for its collection to 'belong' to the city's residents and museum members. The sculpture park is in a very picturesque residential neighbourhood looking out onto the Puget Sound on one side and the Olympic Mountain range on the other. There is great potential for the park and its works of art to become a meaningful part of local people's daily lives. In this way, the public may indeed come to 'own' and 'possess' artworks through the creation of personal and local collective meanings. On the other hand, this example raises a question about there being a difference between ownership of meaning and ownership of objects. The creation of personal meaning is encouraged as a benefit for the public, but it is not the same as having formal ownership of artworks' material forms.

Museum Ownership & Acquisitions

During the course of my research, of everyone with whom I discussed my hypothesis concerning the inalienable ownership of artists, staff members from Tate seemed the least willing to concede the idea. I learned that the consciously worked-from principle at the museum, is that upon acquisition Tate takes full-ownership of artworks; they do not belong to artists anymore.

During a panel discussion for the UK Registrars' Group in October 2009, artist Rachel Kneebone said that she wants to know when museums, which have her work in

their collections, decide on loans of her work to other institutions. She said that she felt that it was a matter of good manners and that she would just *like* to know where *her* artworks go. Catherine Clement, Tate Collection's Loan Registrar, responded that although Kneebone's comment seemed fair, it would be impractical for a museum the size of Tate to do this. It would be impossible for the museum to have to contact every living artist each time a work of theirs in Tate's collection was loaned to another institution. Catherine also said, she hoped that artists would feel the museum could be trusted to make appropriate and responsible decisions for agreeing to the inclusion of artworks in others' exhibitions.

I followed the matter up with Catherine Clement during a very interesting visit to Tate's storage facility in South London. She verified Tate's stance about its full ownership of artworks in the collection (which I had first learned from the museum's conservators whose work I will write more about in later chapters) and she discussed how it affected her task of organising loans from Tate's collection to other institution's exhibitions. For example, Clement told me about an art object belonging to Tate that was damaged in transit on loan to another museum. The artist had already been directly invited by the borrowing museum to help with the installation. When the damage was revealed upon unpacking the object the artist immediately repaired it himself but it resulted in a changed look. Tate were only informed of the damage and repair after the event, and to the *surprise* of the artist and borrowing museum, Tate responded with alarm and frustration. Tate made an insurance claim for the full purchase value of the artwork⁹. That the borrowing museum and the artist did not think to involve Tate with the repair of the object suggests a belief that Tate's rights over the decision-making for its maintenance was secondary to that of the artist.

The acquisition of new works into Tate and other large museums' collections is a stringent process. It involves several departments and a substantial amount of paperwork. A joint project with regards to the acquisition of time-based media between Tate, MoMA, SFMoMA (titled *Matters in Media Art Acquisitions*) defined it as a three stage process (pre-acquisition, acquisition and post-acquisition). During each phase the museums decided that it was necessary to obtain, format and archive (what I find to be) masses of detail and documentation for each artwork. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Nigel Schofield at the fabrication workshop MDM, told me that in their pre-acquisition phase, museums are fastidious over obtaining details from him as to the

⁹ The outcome of which was not made clear to me.

material makeup and expected physical lifespan of art objects which have been produced there. Once acquisitions at Tate are agreed, purchase agreements and contracts detailing decisions over exhibitions, loans and copies between the museums, artists and dealers are produced and exchanged. Upon arrival at the museum an artwork is photographed, catalogued and as many details as possible about it (bibliographies etcetera) are collected and archived. In a later chapter, I present and discuss the substantial procedures and documentation that are carried out at Tate by the Conservation Department alone for acquisitions. One act carried out by conservators that bears mentioning here, is that they tend to add protective custom-made backings to framed art objects. To this, a label bearing Tate's name and logo, is added to newly acquired artworks (image 6.4).

Museums' acquisition procedures are implemented when possible in collaboration with living artists and often their dealers. Artists' intentions' are among the details articulated, documented, recorded - *obtained*. The history of an artwork – what the artist chose and intended for it - is recorded until the point of acquisition. I speculate though whether in their articulation and recording, artists' ideas for their works can be *pinpointed* so-to-speak at the moment of acquisition. This does not as much sever artists' connections with their works – inalienability persists – but artists' meanings, interpretations, intellectual intentions etcetera– are potentially *fixed* in documentation at that time of their exchange. Intentions for artworks when they were made and principally controlled by artists are recorded for posterity, but in a way a line is drawn underneath them. In taking over ownership, the definitions, meanings and activities of artworks also appear to be taken over by the museum.

Conservator Kiffy Stainer who runs a private practice but works frequently with museums, told me that "Tate have taken on the responsibility of being caretakers for Britain's Art". This includes their own collections of course, but apparently also the rest of the art in the country. The mind-set that the nation is a unified self, with its own ownership of an art collection, seems to be shared with other big public museums such as MoMA for the USA's contemporary art. The details of the *Matters in Media Art Acquisitions* project are publically accessible on-line and templates are provided which the museums "advise" private collectors to use at the time of the purchase of an artwork. The logic, in part, is that if/when private collections are bequeathed to museums, they come with all the documentation that museums deem essential. Several long and detailed

documents are recommended for completion¹⁰; to offer just one for illustrative purposes I have placed a copy of the template for ‘Purchase Agreements’ in the appendices to this thesis (it is too long and detailed to place here) (see appendix 1). If my description is a little laborious, the point I wish to make is that museums’ procedures for the acquisitions of artworks *are*, it seems, rather long and laborious processes. This is not just a matter of museums’ internal bureaucratic requirements, but further that they recommend their procedures are essential for the production and exchange of art more widely. The definitions of these significant art contextualising institutions are projected, if not exerted, beyond the confines of the museums’ own walls and collections into smaller institutions and among private collectors of art.

Documentation and the Commercial Artworld

Documentation also plays a role in the exchange of artworks in the commercial system. The receipt of installation instructions is key for new owners, because they ensure owners have the knowledge to effectively ‘re-create’ artworks to artists’ specifications. Gustav Metzger for example, when selling or gifting an artwork, usually does not supply materials to make it¹¹ but the transfer of installation instructions with details of the essential materials signals his authorisation of the exchange.

The possession of certificates of authenticity also identifies owners (see illustration 5.4 in the previous chapter). Significantly, artists only draw up certificates of authenticity at the time of the exchange of a work – studios do not keep them in filing cabinets of works which are not on the market. The production of the certificate therefore signals that the artist is ready and authorises the ‘release’ of the artwork. To be clear, certificates are also only exchanged when the ownership is exchanged - the recipient of a loaned artwork would not receive a copy. Returning to a Metzger example, when Tate loaned *Liquid Crystal Environment* to the Serpentine in 2009 – although the installation instructions were exchanged Tate safely kept the CoA with the artist’s signature in its Curatorial Department¹².

Some artists’ studios will format certificates of authenticity on their own business letterhead paper, but more commonly, galleries generate them using their own templates

¹⁰ The seven templates provided are: Structure & Condition reports, Installation Specifications, Cost Assessment, Purchase Agreement, Copyright Agreement, Deed of Gift, Record Establishment.

¹¹ Explained to me in conversation with Sophie O’Brien, curator at the Serpentine.

¹² Also verified by Sophie O’Brien.

that are then signed by artists¹³. In this way, the gallery's name (and its branding so to speak: logos, formats etcetera) is added to this all-important document which will stay with, if not materially represent, the artwork for its lifespan. With reference to the copy of the Allan Kaprow certificate of authenticity that I provide in the previous chapter, the original is actually to be signed by a representative of the gallery as well as the artist.

Not all artists choose to create Certificates of Authenticity though (and it is up to the artists to decide; a gallery will only generate one from their template with the agreement of an artist). In lieu of a certificate of authenticity, a gallery/dealer sales invoice acts as a formal and sufficient authentication of an artwork (illustration 6.5). Sales invoices supplied by galleries state on their business headed paper, the name and address of the purchaser with the details of the sold work; artist's name, artwork title (even if this is *Untitled*), year of creation, media, dimensions and artwork reference numbers from galleries and studios if they exist. I also find the layout and detailing of this vital, authenticating document to be significant. That sales invoices are formatted with three names, demonstrates that the first exchange of an artwork is an agreement between three parties: artist, dealer and collector. This significant three-way relationship may also be demonstrated with labels on the back of framed artworks. When Tate adds its own label to the back of framed artworks it can join a gallery's label and the artist's signature.

While the sales invoice supplied by a gallery is understood to be an authenticating important document, it is interesting to contrast that single page with the masses of documentation created by museums. A Gallery Director told me that when an independent accountant had been consulted on some gallery business, the accountant had exclaimed in surprise at the mere five points of the terms of sale. Artworks exceeding the price of the average London house (the sale of which obviously involves reams of legal documents), may be exchanged with a legally-binding single piece of paper.

One of the reasons for this is that dealers want to keep purchases by private collectors simple and intimate with sales agreements seemingly based as much on personal trust as legal contract. I wrote in my discussion about the fabrication of objects about the close, almost familial relationships which are forged between dealers and artists. Collectors can be invited to join these intimate circles too. As described in the

¹³ Catherine Belloy, Archivist, also told me that this is always the case at Marian Goodman gallery, April 2010.

previous chapter, someone considered to be ‘a good collector’ has shown to be willing to form personal ties with artists. Olav Velthuis, with his ethnography of the art market, also describes how efforts are made to characterise relationships between collectors, dealers and artists as being more intimate than business associates. Collectors were described to him by dealers as ‘gallery supporters’ and friends. Velthuis observes how dealers intentionally avoid business contracts at the time of transactions which are regularly accompanied by gift-giving (2007: 58). He suggests that this is a purposeful attempt to suppress the ‘commodity character’ of artworks (2007: 7). One of the perks of my research was in the encounter with a lot of champagne and parties! It is important that the exhibition of new work, museum show openings, art fairs – crucial times for dealers to make sales – are enjoyable and carried out in an atmosphere of celebration. Too much paperwork at times like these would be tedious, seemingly distrustful and could spoil the fun. Velthuis proposes that purchased artworks are symbolic therefore of the close relationships between collectors, artists and dealers. I propose that even more than this, the close relationships and memories of good times may actually come to be connected and entangled *within* artworks; they become a part of the assemblage of what artworks *are* to their new owners.

Ownership of Variable Media or Ephemeral Artworks

What is owned and how this is asserted when art is purchased or gifted is highlighted in a distinctive way by artworks with ephemeral, impermanent or ‘variable’ media. Illustrative again of the key three-party relationship, Tom Dingle from Thomas Dane gallery said to me¹⁴ that when ephemeral artworks are purchased, he believes that ‘a collector buys into an agreement with an artist and a gallery to show it’. Thomas Dane himself, I was told, prefers to say that purchasers of ephemeral works are custodians rather than owners. In other words, when artworks are ‘bought’, it is less outright ownership that is paid for, but purchasing the right of shared possession, and control, with artists and galleries/dealers.

But, the exchange of (potentially) large sums of money for joint custodianship of an artwork without objects seems to require the need for the exchange of *something* tangible nonetheless. For example, a simply labelled DVD sent in the post might be anti-climactic to a collector who has paid a six-figure sum for it. Instead therefore, galleries might package it inside a glossy hat-boxed sized container and then again inside

¹⁴ Conversation in person October 2009.

a custom-built plywood case if it is to travel abroad (image 6.6). Again, this packaging allows galleries to make their names visible with branding. Inside this neat film-pack, in addition to *the* copy of *the* film work, there is likely to be another DVD for exhibition viewing. This copy will be identical to *the* artwork DVD in every way except for the label that designates it so; most likely the discs will be from the same shop-bought pack. Accompanying the DVDs may be a gallery or studio custom-made bound folder with images of stills from the film, an artist's biography and curriculum vitae, an exhibition history list of the film and a bibliography in which the artwork is referenced. A CD is often included with digital files of the documents. All importantly, professionally formatted and printed installation instructions, plus a certificate of authenticity signed by an artist, on good quality letterhead paper are likely to be packaged with the film. In short, *the* artwork that is placed on a cheap, insubstantial and easily copied DVD (I will write more about film copies in a later chapter) is given a glossy, formally presented and quite generous materiality for an owner to receive and keep.

Documentation therefore creates a materiality for art that enables it to be formally exchanged. For example, when the British Council loans Martin Creed's Turner Prize piece *The Lights Going On and Off* (2001) to other institutions' exhibitions, a loan contract is drawn up the same as any official loan of an art object. Copies of this are printed and signed, and these are exchanged with a hard copy of installation instructions for the work supplied by Hauser & Wirth gallery¹⁵.

A Felix Gonzalez-Torres 'candy-pile' piece, *Untitled (Public Opinion)* (1991)¹⁶ is in the Guggenheim Collection in New York. At a conference¹⁷, Nancy Spector, Guggenheim Curator, explained that the artwork:

Wasn't acquired in physical form. When we purchased the work, we didn't buy the candy, only the right of ownership. Gonzalez-Torres' former gallerist and estate executor Andrea Rosen was in the process of translating the certificates that accompany his replenishable works. The contemporary versions of these certificates try to capture the various, open-ended scenarios surrounding the re-creation of these works, ensuring the artist's desire to convey that meaning is never secured in any one way and that the owner has the responsibility to reinterpret the work each time it is fabricated.

(Transcribed in the Variable Media Publication [94: 2003])

¹⁵ Explained to me in conversation by a registrar from the British Council, October 2009.

¹⁶ See image 5.3 in chapter 5 of *Portrait of Ross* (1991) for reference to a similar candy-pile artwork by Gonzalez-Torres.

¹⁷ Variable Media Network Conference, Guggenheim, New York, 2003

The special relationship between dealers, artists and owners is once more illustrated in this case. When Gonzalez-Torres died in 1996, his gallerist Andrea Rosen became executor of his estate and Chair of the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation. She has since carried out the central role in the authentication of, and bearing responsibility for, the care and interpretation of his works. Lauren Hinkson, Guggenheim Assistant Curator, confirmed to me that the Certificate of Authenticity for *Public Opinion* in the Guggenheim collection was created by Andrea Rosen Gallery and printed on their:

'letterhead' that includes the telephone, fax, and address for the gallery. The certificate includes a description of the work, establishes the work as unique, outlines maintenance of the work when on exhibit, and describes the terms of transfer of ownership in the event of resale. The certificate is signed by the artist and a representative from the Estate (chaired by Andrea Rosen) and dated December 1992.

(Email August 2010)

What I find fascinating is that the *original* certificate of authenticity, Lauren Hinkson explained to me, is kept in an “archival flat file” in the Guggenheim’s art storage facility. What this suggests is that it is *treated as an original, unique and precious art object in itself*. While members of staff at the Guggenheim were very helpful with my research on this piece, and invited me to see the original documents in person, they were not allowed to copy and send me a scan of the certificate of authenticity. This is another indication of the preciousness of the document and the importance of keeping it unique¹⁸.

Artist Tino Sehgal, has responded in a radical way to the great proliferation of documentation that is created for ephemeral art. Sehgal prohibits the association of any materials with his work. His works are meant to be entirely non-material (yet he does not call them performances¹⁹) such as *This is Contemporary* (2005) in which museum guards dance around a gallery space singing “this is so contemporary, contemporary,

¹⁸ I was similarly refused by Tate to include a copy of *any* certificate of authenticity in this thesis when I asked for a random sample. It is only because I work at Hauser & Wirth, and obtained direct permission from Gallery Director Florian Berktold that I have been allowed to include the copy of the Allan Kaprow certificate in chapter 5. The mark of “copy” so that it cannot be signed is essential.

¹⁹ To Danielle Stein. *Tino Sehgal* W Magazine October 2009.

contemporary...”²⁰. Sehgal’s work however is not an anti-art gesture or even an anti-art market gesture; his works are bought and sold. This is done though, without invoices, written instructions, contracts – any documentation at all. Photography of events is entirely prohibited. A sale is conducted in the presence of a notary, further to the purchaser spending up to several days with Sehgal in person and memorising his instructions. These include providing participants with a certain minimum salary, that ‘installations’ must last a minimum of six weeks, that no photographs or documentation of the work is created, and that should it be re-sold that the sale will be carried out according to these same stipulations²¹. Marian Goodman’s archivist, Catherine Belloy²², informed me that articles which have been written about the artist are the *only* form of material that exist about Sehgal’s works at all.

Yet, I find that even Tino Sehgal cannot entirely avoid materiality and documentation. A material anthropologist could argue that there are the participants’ bodies, the clothes they wear, and the rooms wherein the artworks happen. Museums such as the Guggenheim, which have performed his works claim “Images of Tino Sehgal are not available, in accordance with the artist’s practice.”²³ On the other hand, MoMA, who acquired a new Tino Sehgal work in 2003 - *The Kiss* – although they do not possess images, have still created an acquisition record for the artwork. Admittedly it is a sparse record compared to those for other artworks in their collection, but it is a physical record that proclaims the existence of the artwork and its formal inclusion in the collection nonetheless.

And then, there is plenty of non-institutional documentation of Tino Sehgal’s work happening illicitly. There are several recordings of Sehgal’s works on Youtube²⁴. As per the Youtube way, many of these filmmakers have placed their own music, narration and text with the images. One contributor, has filmed himself wearing a t-shirt that reads ‘I Love Tino Sehgal’, for a five-minute dance to a song *Love is in the Air*²⁵.

²⁰ This was first performed at the Venice Biennale 2005.

²¹ This process is described in Danielle Stein’s article *Tino Sehgal* in W Magazine October 2009. Marian Goodman gallery sent me this article (thereby endorsing this description) further to my question to them that I wished to understand the sales process.

²² In an e-mail; September 30th 2009.

²³ <http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/press-room/releases/press-release-archive/2009/3147-tino-release>

²⁴ See for example *Saturday Afternoon at the Guggenheim*; www.youtube.com/watch?v=El9jSLGUVGE. This appears to be Sehgal’s performance at the Guggenheim during the spring, 2010.

²⁵ *I Love Tino Sehgal*: www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnhOkTaKu-w

Tino Sehgal might not want anyone to create materiality or recorded documentation related to his work, but others - *in making what he does their own* – are doing it anyway.

The Possession of Meaning and the Ownership of Things

Artworks may ‘belong’ to people in profound ways. Artists’ intentions and meanings are added to by and with others’, so actually after leaving studios and their first exhibition spaces, artworks *continue to be made and re-made*. Artworks are borne of artists but they become *more* as they lead their lives with others. By making their own meanings for art – by having artworks *do* what they have them do – artworks may contain the distributed persons of those who own and possess them. Owners and possessors of artworks become part of what they *are*.

William Pietz famously defined a fetish as a material object that embodies an ‘historicised meaningful *event*, territorialised in space, reified and intensely personal’ (1985: 11-12). Again, as Annette Weiner, Marcel Mauss and Alfred Gell have done, Pietz uses the example of the work of art to illustrate this thesis to a Western readership (1985: 7). As the owners of art I met for my research describe, their works of art have played important roles in their lives. The artworks *are made* meaningful by significant events, people and places, but as well, the artworks *make* their lives meaningful. What one gets, what one *has* with an artwork therefore, are experiences and bonds with people and places and times.

But crucially, Pietz’ definition of the fetish is of an historicised, territorialised and personalised *object*; he writes “essential to the notion of the fetish is its irreducible materiality” (1985: 7). With my research, I learned that *some* materiality does seem to be essential to the possession and ownership of art. It is necessary for the immaterial facets of artworks to have some form of material embodiment. Thus even if an artwork does not have much of a material existence as intended by an artist, materiality is created for it as well as meaning.

In the art market, I observed that this may be dealt with in interesting ways. There appears to be an understanding among dealers that the experience of the acquisition of an artwork needs to be a good and memorable one, which ideally includes the forging of a relationship between artists and new owners. Dealers need to enable buyers to create their own ephemeral meanings for artworks and to assist them in forming personal bonds with them. Once again, we might think of this in terms of dealers cultivating the ‘gift-like’ qualities of artworks – to ensure that they carry persons

and enable the forging of relationships between persons - when they are commodities at the same time.

But then, when large sums of money are exchanged and/or artworks enter museum collections, the dynamic, fleeting, personal facets of artworks are problematic. More definition is required, more *control* is necessary. Materiality may assist with this; the formal owner of an artwork is he who *has*, and thus controls, the materials. If an artist has not created much of an art object, documentation takes its place. Documentation has physical endurance and crucially it enables ownership and other facets of artworks to be articulated and defined.

While I believe there is good evidence to understand the work of art as an active assemblage of people, places, events, times, relationships *and* material things, this may be problematic when it comes to formal artworld practices of buying, selling, owning, shipping, keeping and crucially, fixing a value. As I examine further in the next chapter, these practices are much easier when an artwork is taken *to be* an object.

7: Leading Material Lives: Transport, Handling, Insurance & Storage

In his introduction to *The Social Life of Things* Arjun Appadurai coins the term ‘regimes of value’ (14: 1986). The way that things are valued varies from situation to situation and their classification in and between different social arenas (1986: 15). Igor Kopytoff, (in an essay partnering Appadurai’s *Social Life...*) suggests that anthropologists consider the ‘cultural biographies’ of individual things to track how their meanings change across the trajectories of their social lives (1986: 66). Whereas Marx focussed on value at production and several theorists such as Baudrillard have focussed on value at consumption, Appadurai and Kopytoff, inspired by Mauss and Simmel, suggest that value may change, as objects “circulate in different regimes” from production, through to their exchange and consumption (1986: 4). An objective for this chapter is to present some activities often encountered by art objects as they lead their lives and to explore how these may illustrate the special regime of value for art. How is the re-evaluation of (often initially low value) materials and objects upon becoming art reflected in the ways that they are transported, handled, maintained, stored and insured?

Biennials, touring exhibitions and loans between museums and collectors necessitate the transport of contemporary art across and between continents. Art Fairs tend to have more booths from international galleries than local ones¹. Wealthy collectors may house their collections across several addresses, and artists may run multiple studios in several different locations as well². Long-distance travel for contemporary art is at such levels that Gustav Metzger initiated the environmental campaign *Reduce Art Flights*³ in 2007. In short, the events and geography of the international artworld have caused the need for contemporary artworks to travel a great deal. Art’s regime of value may be illustrated by legal definitions and requirements at customs that affect art objects as they cross and re-cross international borders. Although there is no room for some comparative anthropology here, to ask why requirements for and definitions of art at customs between two or more countries are different (which

¹ For example the Basel art fair in 2010 had booths for 24 Swiss galleries out of 254 galleries in total. The Miami Beach art fair (also run by Art Basel) in 2009 had booths for 81 USA galleries out of 188 and *none* of the US galleries were based in Florida. <http://www.artbasel.com/>

² For some examples; Mona Hatoum works between London, Berlin and Lebanon, Gabrielle Orozco has studios in Mexico City and Paris, Christian Marclay works between New York, London and Zurich.

³ www.reduceartflights.lttids.org

would certainly be an interesting line of enquiry) in this chapter I present examples of how they can differ and describe some of the implications of this for the travel of artworks in practice. As the essays in Daniel McClean's edited book *The Trials of Art* (2009) demonstrate, since the Renaissance⁴ legal systems operating outside the immediate production and consumption of art have taken time to catch up and approve of new ideas. Constantin Brancusi argued in court in 1928, for example, that his sculpture *Bird in Space* (1925) was a work of fine art rather than an utility object and therefore taxed upon import accordingly (there was and is no import tax for works of art arriving in the USA). The crux of the issue at the time was, that the sculpture was abstract rather than representational of a 'bird in flight'⁵, but after testimonies from 'art experts' (other artists, critics, curators) the sculpture was deemed to indeed be a sculpture⁶. Abstract art is of course no longer an issue at customs, but in this chapter I describe how formal criteria at customs assumes that artworks *are* always non-utilitarian *objects*.

To enable travel, custom-built packing is often necessary and specialist workshops and equipment are needed to build it. Installations in all their variety require a great assortment of tools and equipment (scaffolding, fork-lifts, secure refrigeration units as just a few examples). As well as art objects themselves then, contemporary art seems to have created the need for a great deal of other material *stuff*. It is owned by artists, galleries, museums and art handling companies and it all requires suitable storage facilities and space. In a nutshell, it seems that the materiality of art creates the need for yet more materials things. This chapter therefore continues on a theme introduced in the previous chapter about how materiality is created for art even when artists do not create it.

Despite high sales prices, corresponding insurance values for contemporary art, and art handling companies' emphasis on the security of their services, a comment in the *Contemporary Art Collectors Handbook* alerted me to, at first consideration, a curious phenomenon that contemporary artworks are apparently never stolen as art (Buck & Greer 2006: 182). I propose that a possible reason for this may be that stolen art is no

⁴ Sadakat Kadri presents the censorship trial of *Veronese's Feast in the House of Levi* (1573) in McClean's volume (2007: 19)

⁵ Museum Director Edward Steichen, explained to the court in defence of the piece "it gives you the feeling. Not because it is called a bird but because it suggests the quality of flight." (McClean 2007: 50).

⁶ Thierry De Duve's take on the trial in his essay in McClean's volume, is that it actually had less to "with criteria set at customs and everything to do with the official's refusal to ratify abstract art.... One farcical example of many disagreements between modernity and philistinism." (2007: 91)

longer circulating in art's legitimate regime of value. Art objects are only art objects (and valued as such) within art's recognised social arena. If this is the case, however, what might account for such stringent, broad security measures? Concerns of theft aside, I also observed during my research, ways in which the extreme caution and expense afforded to art handling and storage neither seemed entirely logical for the physical safekeeping of objects from damage or change. I explore this matter in this chapter with reference to a quandary that bears a resemblance to philosopher George Berkeley's enquiry - to be is to be perceived (or if a tree falls in a forest and there is no-one there to hear it, does it make a sound?) - : if an art object is placed in storage and cannot be seen (and is therefore not being actively seen/used as an artwork) is it still an artwork and valued as such?

While artists, individual collectors, museums and dealers are people who participate with art on the front-line so-to-speak, in this chapter I introduce many more people who work with art 'behind the scenes.' Bearing some resemblance to the ways in which fabricators are essential to the making of art objects, storage managers, crate builders, registrars, shippers and insurers are essential to how art objects are maintained, moved and stored. These participants represent a substantial, knowledgeable and skilled workforce, in a large and profitable industry with spaces and equipment which has grown – and continues to grow - out of the requirements for the ways in which artworks lead their material lives.

Transport, Packing and Storage

Art-handling giants of London include the companies Martinspeed, Momart and Constantine and there are a host of smaller rivals⁷. The British art handlers work with partners of a similar size in other art world centres⁸, and all of these companies appear to be maintaining sufficient levels of work to weather the recession.⁹ In October each year for instance, every London art handler's schedule is fully booked three weeks in advance

⁷ Mtec, Gander & White, Cadogan Tate, Oxford Exhibition Services, Art Logistics, Hedley's to name a few.

⁸ Leading New York City companies include Dietl, Transcon, Masterpiece International and Winchester Fine Art. Switzerland has Moebel and Arts Franc. Germany has Hasenkampf.

⁹ The only large fine art handling company that seemed to fold because of the recession was Baumer & Model in Israel.

of the Frieze art fair and the many other coinciding art events in the city that week¹⁰. The larger companies boast fleets of trucks specially adapted for the transport of fine art. Martinspeed, for example, currently owns ten vehicles with air-ride suspension and several of them have temperature and humidity control. The insides of the trucks are adapted so that art objects can be tied-in and secured. About half have seats in the cabins specially reserved for private couriers who are hired to attend and monitor each movement of the object that they are caring for. Also highlighted by the art handling companies are the trucks' security alarm systems which are advertised as important features¹¹.

The creation of custom-built packing for storage and transport is a principal service offered by the art handling companies. The many varied materials of contemporary artworks necessitate skill and imagination in this task. The company Momart, for example, works closely with Antony Gormley's studio to design and make the best packing for his sculptures. The packing for his *Quantum* series are especially challenging (image 7.1). These sculptures are made from small mild steel bars welded together, but the joints are sensitive to pressure which render wrapping and padding unsuitable. The best system devised by Momart and the studio, has been found to suspend the sculptures within their crates by tying them at several balanced points with soft cotton wraps. A volatile compound inhibitor ('VCI') is added to the crate to inhibit rusting. The building of a single crate and the task of packing a sculpture into it amounts to *several* days' work for experienced people in Momart's workshop and Gormley's studio. It is significant to note, that permission had to be obtained from both Momart and the artist to include the images in this thesis of the Quantum sculpture in Momart's casing ; control and ownership is once again shown to be entangled.

During the course of my research, I noticed a trend of art handling companies advertising additional and larger storage facilities. Kate Chadwick, Storage Manager at Martinspeed told me that in her "experience in the industry (12 years)" she has "seen the need for storage space increase ten fold. It seems that as soon as a new space is acquired it fills up and more is needed."¹² Malcolm Clark from Mtec who have a storage facility in Hertfordshire, told me that it is not uncommon for artworks to be placed in storage for

¹⁰ Further to a conversation with Vicky White at Momart in 2009, and Sarah Ward at Momart in 2010. An employee from Oxford Exhibition Services also told me that her working days were eighteen hours long during Frieze week.

¹¹ <http://www.martinspeed.com/roadfreight.htm>

¹² From an e-mail October 1st 2009

year upon year. Although it is clear that some of these have been bought for investment purposes with buyers biding their time to sell, Malcolm said that this is not always the case. He has heard collectors say that they had temporarily forgotten about works they had bought, and on a few occasions had no recollection of owning them at all. Although collectors receive quarterly bills for storage fees, which we might suppose would act as a reminder, Malcolm said that often these are dealt with by assistants, collection managers or at further separation, through a trust. It is also common for collectors to have bases and homes in several countries, so it could be difficult for them to keep track of all their possessions. Malcolm told me that a common scenario is for works to be bought which do not physically or aesthetically fit into an intended space. This is another reason why they might languish in storage for indeterminate lengths of time. Kate Chadwick corroborated Malcolm's story and told me that while some contemporary artworks see a lot of activity moving in and out of storage – “mainly driven by sales but also by inefficiency in some cases” - others “do stay in storage for ever and there are definitely things here that have been forgotten.¹³”

Painter Alexis Harding told me about a painting he had stored for one year. Upon opening the crate after the term, he noticed that a cream coloured paint had turned to a golden hue. In the chapter that follows this one, I present Harding's work and attitudes towards changing materials in greater detail, but in a nutshell, his reaction to the change of this painting was more of intrigue than great concern. Harding's paintings are materially active; in this instance the colour of the paint changed but more commonly, the paint itself which Harding mixes with linseed oil tends to slide and move over periods of time. In this way, Harding's paintings *happen over time*. The reason that I mention it here is that, if one of Harding's paintings 'happens' while it is in storage with no-one there to see it, some of this painting's time is, perhaps, missed forever.

On a similar theme, in 2007 the Henry Moore Institute held an exhibition for Thomas Schutte. Stephen Feeke, Curator at the HMI told me that instead of works being selected by himself and his colleagues for the exhibition¹⁴, Schutte decided himself what would be included. He did not choose the works in advance though, but many crates and boxes with objects that he had made by hand at the end of the 1970s and the 1980s were shipped to the museum, and the artist made his selections as he unpacked the objects and thought about them in relation to the museum's walls and spaces. Stephen

¹³ From an e-mail October 1st 2009

¹⁴ The exhibition catalogue notes that the exhibition was “coordinated” by Stephen Feeke not curated.

told me that the unpacking of the older objects was a visibly emotional experience for the artist. This seems to have been in part because Schutte was finding things that he had not seen for a very long time, but also because many of them were in a much-changed physical state. In 1981 he created many¹⁵ wooden rings painted in different colours which were hung on the wall to make a work simply titled *Ringe*¹⁶. Since then they had been stored in Germany in boxes also hand-made by the artist. Stephen explained to me that many of the rings were so changed that it was decided to show only about fifty-percent of them pinned to the wall at the HMI. With the rings changed, the original volume halved and in the entirely new space and walls of the HMI, to Schutte, it was as if he were creating a new work.

The experience of encounter with a familiar artwork in storage - unlit and 'waiting' in its travel frame - can be quite different from viewing it in a gallery. Igor Kopytoff in his discussion of cultural biographies mentions a hypothetical painting of Renoir's "being neglected in a museum basement" (1986: 67). He implies that in storage it could not be appropriately valued as art; art must be exhibited, hung, lit and *seen* appropriate to its status as an artwork, to fulfil its function. This question is perhaps even more pertinent for a readymade or found object. Returning to Damian Ortega's *Controller of the Universe* (2007), this was created out of dirty and rusting used hardware tools that were bought from a second-hand tool supplier in East London. When the tools are packed in their crate and placed in a storage facility, do they shift from art's regime of value, do they revert to a non-art state? I would suggest that this is not so; custom-built crates, climate control and twenty-four hour security attest to the upholding of reverence for objects that *are* art in storage.

The Rules of Respect and Safety

In advertising and lists of credentials, art storage companies tend to stress their security facilities¹⁷. At Dean Hill in Wiltshire an enormous complex of bunkers that housed armaments for the British Military from 1938 to 2004 has been adapted to a fine art storage facility. It is used by Oxford Exhibition Services, Tate and the Victoria & Albert Museum among others. Along with its 12-foot high perimeter fence, that the

¹⁵ "Thousands" according to my notes further to my conversation with Stephen Feeke – although I am not sure if this is an accurate number or an expression.

¹⁶ See image 4.1 in chapter 4.

¹⁷ For another example, security represents one of the six indexed categories of information on Martinspeed's website (i.e. Home, Services, Security, Contact, News, About Us).
www.martinspeed.com

bunkers were purpose-built for very high levels of security which is advertised as making them particularly suitable for fine-art storage. In its adaptation to the storage of fine art objects, the site has been fitted with climate control, CCTV, “anti-spark lighting, fire and security alarms, as well as overhead gantry cranes to make the placing and removal of objects as risk free as possible.” (OES Spring Newsletter 2009)

The great attention to detail for the well-being of art objects is easily observed. For example, the British Council’s condition reports for Gilbert & George’s works that were in the British pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2005, note every speck of dust. In one report I counted sixty specks of dust – the position of each carefully identified on images of the printed panels. The panel of prints was then deemed to be in ‘excellent condition’ so it meant that the dust was not considered to be problematic to the work’s physical wellbeing or aesthetic. What other kind of object would provoke such care and attention to their minute physical details, when the details do not inhibit their purposes?

A Director of the Swiss art handling company Mobil¹⁸ spoke to me quite heatedly about his disdain for those who attempt to save money on transport by using non-specialist fine art shippers such as Federal Express. A collector of contemporary art himself, he said that great artworks *deserve* professional handling and he told me “the artwork will *tell* you which shipper to go with”¹⁹. Gavan Misa from Martinspeed said something similar about a question of airport supervision (at a five-figure additional cost for the shipment) for the loading and unloading of a painting by Anselm Kiefer. Gavan said that it was a question of *respect* to the *work* as much as a matter of caution.

The Mobil Director is not alone in his disdain for the use of courier services such as Federal Express or DHL²⁰. There are arguments (not necessarily without foundation) that the couriers’ handling is too brusque and they are unable to provide sufficient export documentation for the tax purposes of the commercial sector. Fedex is, however, still unlikely to be used for the shipment of artworks travelling from the UK to somewhere within the EU (for which export documentation is not required) and for well-packed works that are not especially fragile. Curiously, fine art shippers such as Martinspeed and Constantine, offer a less expensive service that actually sends crates on Fedex and DHL aeroplanes. For these, the courier services do manage the loading and unloading at the airport (a particularly risky time for brusque handling) and some of the ground transport. Works transported in this way, however, are collected, and therefore

¹⁸ Unfortunately I did not make a note of his full name and have been unable to find out.

¹⁹ In person August 28th 2007

²⁰ Further to my experience as a registrar, and numerous conversations with other registrars.

visible to the sender, by uniformed Martinspeed or Constantine art handlers in their own special vehicles. The art handlers complete and stamp the shipping paperwork. They also liaise and manage the communication with the sender and recipient. Although the art handlers are not always physically in control of art objects that are shipped with Fedex or DHL, confidence seems to be gained in Martinspeed and Constantine's brands as *art* handlers, and that 'packages' are this way acknowledged as art objects throughout their journey.

As well as art handling companies managing transport supervision, it is not uncommon for couriers to accompany important and high monetary value art objects on long journeys. Melv Thomas, a White Cube technician, told me about his experience when escorting a Raqib Shaw painting from the Kunsthalle Wien to the HS Art storage facility on the outskirts of Vienna. He said it was clear that his supervision was unnecessary when six of the company's art handlers' coordinated the loading of the piece into their state-of-the-art air-ride truck. There was a two-hour journey by road to the storage facility with Melv "feeling pointless" watching as the painting was smoothly unloaded with high-tech equipment into HS Art's high-security, climate controlled and immaculately clean loading bay.

The special lengths taken for art handling methods are illuminated when artworks are created out of objects which were treated with less care before they became art. For example, Walead Beshty's glass boxes introduced in the previous chapter²¹, are 'created' when Fedex ships them between different places. The glass is simply packed in cardboard boxes so that cracks and breakages are caused by the courier company's *careless* handling methods. Upon the delivery by Fedex of some of these works for an exhibition at Thomas Dane gallery²² in 2009, the broken glass boxes were then very carefully unpacked at some expense by professional handlers from Gander & White. On a similar vein, I have observed exceptionally careful white-gloved handling of cast-iron Antony Gormley sculptures, even when they have been installed laid-bare to both the British weather and pub-drinking public. I learned that Gormley himself might unceremoniously take a harsh steel brush to adjust building rust areas on these iron sculptures²³.

²¹ Such as *FEDEX LARGE CRAFT BOXES 33058, INTERNATIONAL PRIORITY, LOS ANGELES – TIJUANA, TIJUANA-LOS ANGELES, LOS ANGELES-LONDON* (2008) see image 6.2 in chapter 6.

²² Explained to me by Tom Dingle, Registrar at Thomas Dane.

²³ Explained to me by a member of Gormley's studio staff.

The crucial point, is that it seems the rules for artists' handling of their own work are quite different to everyone else's. Jessika Green at Kate MacGarry gallery told me about how a ball of thin aluminium (*Untitled* 2008) by Matt Bryans was delivered at some expense by a fine art transport company to the gallery. It was carefully unpacked from its custom-built case by an art handler wearing white gloves. When Bryans came to see it, however, he barely noticed when the child he had brought with him climbed on the ball and rolled it around the gallery floor. An unframed work on paper affixed to the wall for the same exhibition had floated off at the corner. Jessika had dared not touch it, but when she showed it to Bryans, he simply stood on a chair and pressed it back to the wall with blue-tack.

Shipping and Customs Law

A case was reported in *The Art Newspaper* February 2009 in which Haunch of Venison gallery had had to defend to HM Customs in court that a Dan Flavin neon and a Bill Viola video were works of fine art. Similar to Brancusi's 1928 *Bird in Flight* trial, the question was whether the Viola and Flavin upon arrival in the UK were eligible for just five percent import duty charged for works of art, or fifteen percent VAT, the standard rate for the import of electrical goods. The tribunal ruled in favour of Haunch of Venison, the objects were deemed to be sculpture, and the works were imported accordingly²⁴.

Current customs coding for the UK and the USA does actually assert that artworks can be made of *any* material²⁵. But how then does one ensure that something is defined and evidenced as an artwork? As discussed previously, documentation is key. Artwork shipping documents must show that an artist has made something that has an artwork title (even if this is *Untitled*), that it has a year of production, dimensions and that it has a medium. The medium should be accompanied by the correct article description code for works of art which all begin with the digits '97'. There is one code for paintings, drawings, pastels executed entirely by hand, collages and decorative plaques

²⁴ *The Art Newspaper*. No 199 February 2009 *When Art Isn't "Art" for HM Customs*.

²⁵ This has not always been the case. At the time of the Brancusi *Bird in Flight* trial the United States Customs 1922 Tariff Act stated; "The terms 'sculpture' and 'statuary' as used in this paragraph shall be understood to include professional productions of sculptors only, whether in round or in relief, in bronze, marble, stone terra cotta, ivory, wood, or metal whether cut, carved or otherwise wrought by hand from the solid block or castpoop of marble, stone or alabaster, or from metal, or cast in bronze or other metal, or substance, or from wax or plaster, made as professional productions of sculpture only" (in McClean 2007: 88).

(9701)²⁶, another (9701.10.00) for paintings, drawings and pastels executed by other means, and another (9702.00.00) for engravings, prints and lithographs. There is also a code for ‘original sculptures and statuary *in any material* (9703.00.00) and also, simply and all encompassing, there is an option for artworks made from *Other...* (9701.90.00).

The UK and the USA are exceptional in their acknowledgement of the ubiquity and variety of contemporary art materials. With research, I found that all other countries have restrictions for materials that may be classified as fine art, even if they experience high volumes of contemporary art traffic and production. Germany, for example remains reluctant to define photographs and prints as fine art. South Korea does not accept films on DVD. To ensure that films are taxed for art upon import to Korea, their travel documents must state that they are ‘fine art installations’. With reference to a DVD shipment, as a registrar from Lisson gallery pointed out to me, it also helps at customs if a sales value of an artwork is clearly shown; mass-produced feature films on DVD are not purchased at three, four, five and six-figure sums.

An official customs form that deals with artworks in Momart’s bonded warehouse is titled “Undertaking for the Temporary Removal of *Objects* from Momart’s Bonded Warehouse” (my emphasis). Each of the points on the form start with “Objects can...” “Objects must...” “Should objects..”. While many artists, art theories and my subsequent thesis hypothesis find that an artwork is an assemblage of ideas, environments, documents, experiences, values *and* art objects and more, customs and tax officials define artworks as entirely physical single *things*. Returning again to Ortega’s piece *Controller of the Universe* (2007)²⁸, the used tools become an artwork when they are installed in a very specific way according to formal installation instructions. When this ‘work’ is shipped internationally, the tools are packed in their crate and exported as *the* work. In turn, the document with installation instructions, arguably as important to the ‘work of art’ as the tools, is sent to the recipient merely as an e-mail attachment.

Also, with many artists having studios and relationships with fabricators in several countries it is not unusual for multiple components of artworks to be made in different places and to travel to come together. Cerith Wyn Evans’ Morse code chandelier pieces for instance, are made up of a hard-drive programmed with Morse code in London, a chandelier from a Murano (Italy) workshop, and other computer

²⁶ The wording in full is; Paintings, drawings and pastels, executed entirely by hand, other than drawings of heading 4906 and other than hand-painted or hand-decorated manufactured articles; collages and similar decorative plaques: all the foregoing framed or not framed.

²⁸ For *Controller of the Universe*, see image 3.9 in chapter 2.

components that are usually ordered directly in the country the artwork will reside in. Although each component is equally essential to the work it is invariably the chandelier, representing the component *with the largest physical mass* whose movement is tracked as *the* work by customs.

Insurance & Theft

There is a quote in the *Contemporary Art Collectors Handbook* by Louisa Buck & Judith Greer from an insurance broker, that she has never known an insurance claim for the theft of contemporary art (2006: 182). Peter Milne, from the insurance firm Arthur J. Gallaghers²⁹ supported this. He told me that contemporary artworks are only stolen for the value of their raw materials, or more precisely, for the value of what those materials can be sold for.

Indeed during my visit to the Durham Arts Festival in 2008, a disused building housing an installation created by the group 'Cutup' was broken into and several DVD players with copies of the film works inside were stolen. The thieves also graffitied over some artwork panels covering the windows, so one member of the group, perhaps in an attempt to raise spirits, suggested that it could have been a stirring 'art guerrilla attack'. It seemed obvious, however, that the thieves just wanted the DVD players as DVD players, and it was ultimately a distressing and irritating situation for the artists.

I asked Mark Dalrymple, an Art Loss Adjuster, about the question of theft. He verified Peter Milne's point, and said that artworks (and not just contemporary pieces) are *never* stolen for the love of owning art. Mark was actually a consultant for the 1999 re-make of the film *The Thomas Crown Affair*. The story is about a loss-adjustor who investigates the theft of a masterpiece from the Metropolitan Museum by a billionaire who stole it for the love of the work (and the fun of the scam). The idea though that anyone would steal fine art out of desire for the object was "preposterous" according to Mark. Artworks are stolen for the value of their materials, or if as art, for the cost of selling it at a sum entirely detached from its purchase value in the legitimate art market³⁰. In other words, the value of art, monetary and otherwise, is absolutely dependent on its inclusion in art's formal context.

²⁹ At the time of our interview in June 2008. I have since learned that Peter has left AJG.

³⁰ I am sure that it was not a sincere, actual instance, but as an 'off-the-top-of-his-head' example to make his point he suggested that a thief might "get £500 from someone down the road for a Brancusi sculpture".

Objects Valued as Art

HM customs and art handling companies view art materials and objects as very precious, unique and autonomous works of art. This serves their businesses; it is easier to monitor and charge tax on the import and export of *objects* than the import and export of ideas; it is more profitable for art handlers to encourage the notion that only their most ultra-safe storage and transport of objects will suffice for *artworks*' well-being. The ways that art objects are stored, suggests in answer to the George Berkeley question (that I posed in the introduction to this chapter), that art objects placed in storage *are valued as art* even when they cannot be seen. Initially this suggests a contradiction to the notion that objects are only artworks in relation to viewers in art viewing contexts. I believe though that what this actually demonstrates is that art handling, transport and storage companies have been resourceful and clever. They have created environments and cultivated perceptions so that their premises and methods are *encompassed* within contexts for art. They have effectively extended the institutional theory of art to include their own institutions and spaces. When art objects are handled by art handlers and placed in art storage they are in art's regime of value. Within this regime, they are treated in very specific ways appropriate to art. This is respectfully and safely and utterly different to the regime of value that the materials may have existed in before they were artworks, earlier in their biographical lives. Appadurai and Kopytoff's belief that value may be best understood as things circulate between regimes of value is shown to be effective. An analysis of the handling and care of objects in art's special regime of value compared to the handling and care of objects in the regime of value they existed in before they became art demonstrates how far they may change in immaterial ways.

This suggests that artworks may remain *active* in storage. Yet, in the cases of Alexis Harding's painting which changed colour and Thomas Schutte's deteriorated rings, the *very art materials* were *active*. These kinds of activities and capabilities of materials are the topics of the next chapter. But art objects' continuing activities can take place in storage in abstract ways too – the collector who purchases an artwork which does not fit inside his house 'possesses' and keeps it in a respectfully suitable place for art in a fine art storage facility. Entire collections may be amassed in storage in this way to the point that collectors may no longer remember the individual works that make up their collections. More than any other experience of my research - more even than my observations of art fair buying frenzies - it was my visits to art storage facilities and interviews with storage managers, that highlighted to me the exceptional proliferation of

the creation and *amassing* of contemporary art objects and related material things that seems to be underway. In 1973 Lucy Lippard surmised that dematerialisation's "minor revolutions" were thwarted by art's 'luxury' status (1997: 263). Forty years later, in practice, there is evidence to suggest that for many people contemporary art is as material as can be and valued as such; this is reflected in the exceptional lengths that are taken for art's material care.

8: Raw Materials

Gary Hume said during a talk at White Cube:

Initially what I wanted to do was to make a show where you first came in and you thought - is there something, did someone put something in the air? What's going on? But I made three or four paintings like that..and then I did another painting... and it didn't demand it – it demanded something else. So..the clarity of my idea gets broken because the painting wants something more than..my wish for it.

I draw, I have an image, and I trace the image. And then from that traced image... that normally tells me how I can make a painting. I see a painting in image... I trace it leaving out bits.. and then I project the image, either just onto a blank wall and get the scale I need or onto some panels that I have lying around, and then I find a panel that will fit the painting.. and then I draw it... Well, it all changes constantly really. It used to be that I'd paint the whole painting in white and by the time I'd finished painting the painting in white, the painting would have told me what colour it wants to be. More and more the painting knows what colour it wants to be before I've even started it.

They keep on changing until they get.. they have to become.. self aware, and as soon as they're self-aware and have no interest in me whatsoever ..then the painting is complete. But when they're still going like that.. when I'm going like that in front of it.. then it's not complete.. because I'm still wondering about it.... I don't even have to like it for it to be finished.. because the painting will be satisfied. Sometimes they can say 'I can be better' I can look at it and think 'I can make you so much better, I can make you so much more likeable' and the painting goes 'ppoofff what do you want to do that for, I'm perfect, I'm not likeable, but I'm the perfect not likeable being. Don't bugger me up'.

(Hoxton Square, September 2007)

While this entire thesis is about art objects, in this chapter I focus on their raw materials. I explore some of the ways that objects and materials are used and allowed by artists to *act* and *express* themselves. Medias may be selected for perceived intrinsic qualities, for what they *are* and can *do* more than merely for what they symbolise. So far in this thesis I have presented artwork assemblages that include distributed artists, fabricators' craft skills, ownership, the value of art and more. In this chapter I examine the inherent matter of art objects, and how they are enlivened and active.

Alfred Gell's theory of art and agency is ultimately about how *human* agency is enacted through art objects and inferred by other humans. Although the art object, the index, is a participant in his nexus of social relations, he does not really grant objects with significant agency of their own. While viewers of indexes might infer "physical, spiritual, political etc as well as aesthetic" agency from them (1998: 31) on the other hand, Gell writes, "it is difficult to cite a 'pure' case". As with the kissing of a holy icon, "there is an imputation that there is inherent agency in the material index, [but] this is not to say that the agency of the prototype is excluded in these instances." (1998: 32).

Bruno Latour grants more to the actions of objects themselves and believes that things can have 'goals' of their own. If it is uncommon for the term 'agent' to be applied to non-humans we can describe instead objects as *actants* (2005: 180). He writes:

If action is limited to what 'intentional', 'meaningful' humans do, it is hard to see how a hammer, a basket, a door closer, a cat, a rug, a mug, a list or a tag could *act*. They might exist in the domain of 'material' 'causal' relations, but not in the 'reflexive' 'symbolic' domain of social relations.

Latour suggests that *the* question to ask though is:

Does it make a difference in the course of some other agent's action or not?... The rather common sense answer should be a resounding 'yes'... These implements are actors, or more precisely, participants in the course of action waiting to be given a figuration. (2005: 71)

Gell and Latour's ideas were considered at a symposium in Cambridge¹ to mark the ten-year anniversary of the publication of *Art and Agency* (1998). An artist called Jeremy Millar said to me during the tea-break that he believed 'much of what was being discussed was "taken-for-granted" by artists – "of course" materials and objects share active participation with artists and everyone else in art.

While this chapter focuses on the fundamental materials of artworks it is also about the encounter with them in person, their effects and what they do. I strived for self-awareness and to participate 'within' events throughout my research, but while, for instance, I observed art objects being made I did not actually fabricate anything, and although I interviewed conservators I did not really carry out treatments. My research

¹ *Art & Agency: Ten Years On* 15th November, 2008 CRASSH, Cambridge University

for this chapter, on the other hand, is almost entirely about *my* experiences of artworks where I found them installed. I describe my encounters ‘in person’ with works, in shared spaces, looking at them, thinking about them and feeling them. I am able to test what they *do* with first-hand accounts of what they do to me. I put Hans Belting’s theory into practice that art objects act as bodies which produce images for viewers (2005: 5). In a “triangular interrelation between image, medium, and body (of the viewer)” (2005: 4), Belting writes:

the mediality of images is rooted in a body analogy..in the sense that our bodies function as media themselves, as living media against fabricated media. Images happen between us who look at them, and their media with which they respond to our gaze. (2005: 5)

Images generated by art objects “only make sense when there are we who ask it, because we live in bodies in which we generate images of our own .. and..play them out against images in the visible world” (2003: 2). In this chapter thus, I describe my interactions with art objects - what happens, and what I ‘see’.

History As Inherent Matter

In earlier chapters I considered how artists, owners and other persons may be distributed in art objects. The same principles of distributed persons may be applied to materials selected by artists because of their connections with people. For instance, *Uncle Colin 1963-1993* (1997) is Tracey Emin’s homage to her uncle who died in a car crash (image 8.1). The arrangement of objects that make up the work include an original newspaper report of the accident, photographs of Uncle Colin, a toy seagull that he found during a walk on the beach with the artist’s mother, and a crushed packet of Benson & Hedges cigarettes apparently found in Uncle Colin’s hand at the time of the accident. The objects contain Uncle Colin’s biographical layers as constructed and remembered by the artist.

The notion that biographies may be within things is also central to Doris Salcedo’s sculptures created with the furniture of missing people from Colombia’s civil war (images 8.2). Even if we do not know this, the sculptures are very strange and uncomfortable. Furniture types that are not usually placed together, a living room bureau with a bed for example (*Untitled* 1996), are forced together and into each other. The grey concrete poured into them renders them imposing, heavy and impenetrable and

the furniture is dead and ruined of function. If the exhibition wall panels or catalogues are read, we learn that these objects contain tragic stories of those who used to use and live with the furniture. No one knows what happened to these people in Colombia. Their relatives' lives are suspended without knowledge or proof of whether their loved-ones are alive or dead. The pieces of furniture have histories, but in turning them into art, in Curator Rod Mengham's words; "Salcedo's practice removes meaning from things by declassifying them, wrenching them out of one form without supplying another, since the hybrid condition they end up in leaves them suspended in a permanent state of formal hesitation." (2007: 25). Salcedo's works are not just to present objects with sad and disturbing histories - the forms that they become as artworks echo the state of the people that they speak about.

When artists make use of other artists' artworks, the first author's distributed person and inalienable connection is essential to the new work. As I introduced in a previous chapter, Richard Long upon learning that Bill Drummond had sliced 'his' print into 20,000 pieces was personally affronted and wanted to know why Drummond "had chosen *him* to have a go at the art world" (2009: 152). There has been much speculation about how Hogarth and Goya would have responded to Jake & Dinos Chapmans' 'rectifying' of their original prints and paintings. The Goya prints *The Rape of Creativity* (2003), and Hogarth's paintings *Dinos & Jake's Progress* (2008) were, according to the Chapmans, 're-worked' with cartoon illustrations in *homage* to and in *collaboration* with their original authors (see Baker 2005²). Hogarth and Goya were antagonistic contemporary artists of their own times and it has been suggested that they may have found humour in the Chapmans' methods (Baker 2005). Further to hearing these arguments, when I looked at these works, I imagined the artists working in cahoots together equally serious and laughing. The defacement of Adolf Hitler's paintings in a series which the Chapmans' titled *If Hitler had been a Hippy How Happy We Would Be* (2008) were made to torment their first painter. The Chapman's hoped that these works would cause – and invoke in our imaginations - "Hitler to spin in hell" (Times Newspaper 20 May 2008).

Paul McCarthy's installation titled *The Garden* (1991) incorporated objects with histories that added to its meaning, but marginally so, in that it was originally unintentional and only known and amusingly significant to the artist and his confidants

² See also

<http://www.tate.org.uk/liverpool/exhibitions/jakeanddinoschapman/guide/room2.shtm>

(images 8.3). The piece features male mannequins having sex with a tree and a hole in the ground amongst a ‘movie-like set’ garden made up of artificial turf, rocks and trees. The first installation in Los Angeles in 1991 was carried out on a low budget and McCarthy rented many of the materials. The artist told an audience during a panel discussion at the Getty Institute³, that when asked to re-install the piece a few years later, he was unable to rent exactly the same materials that he had used before. The trees had been rented from the original set of the 1960-70s cowboy television series *Bonanza*. Although the first trees that he used were not initially essential to the work, McCarthy felt that their ultra-macho histories were appropriate for his intentions for the piece and he was disappointed when they could not be incorporated again. Since I heard this story (which was admittedly after I had seen the piece exhibited) whenever I think of the artwork (including as I write this) the *Bonanza* theme tune comes galloping to mind.

These examples suggest that objects can contain persons, places, events, actions and songs. Thethis Blacker’s St Cuthbert shrine banner is understood to contain prayers. In 2001 the artist was commissioned to create a textile banner for Durham Cathedral. A layering of batik was achieved using the wax from the cathedral’s used prayer candles so that the prayers could live on through it.

John Berger writes that a “photograph cuts across time and discloses a cross-section of the event or events which were developing at that instant” (1982: 120). I heard Michael Taussig say in a lecture at Tate that drawings may represent a “compaction of time.”⁴ As well as everything else then, materials may *contain* time too. Gerhard Richter has titled work with dates since the nineteen sixties. Much of Richter’s work is personal, biographical and from everyday life⁵. At an art fair I saw twelve of Richter’s photograph and paint collages hung together that were made between 2003 and 2008. Each titled with a date, the works are *located* in specific days. Similarly, Fred Tomaselli has made several paintings on front-page New York Times articles. *August 31st 2005 #1* (2009) for example is a painting on the headline article ‘..EW ORLEANS IS INUNDATED AS 2 LEVEES... (unreadable)...UCH OF GULF COAST IS CRIPPLED; TOLL...’. (images 8.4) The New York Times header and the date is left

³ *The Object in Transition* conference, the Getty Institute, Los Angeles January 2008.

⁴ Lecture at Tate Britain *I Swear I Saw This*, October 27th 2009.

⁵ He said during an interview with Benjamin Buchloch in 1986; “I looked for photographs that showed my present life, the things that related to me. And I chose black-and-white photographs, because I realised that they showed all this more effectively than colour photographs, more directly, more inartistically, and therefore more credibly. That’s why I picked all those amateur family pictures, those banal objects and snapshots.” (In Gerhard Richter *Atlas A Reader* 2003)

without paint and clear to read, which situates the material thing in an event, a time and place. It is worthwhile to note, however, that the artwork is dated 2009 since this is when Tomaselli made the painting.

Tim Ingold writes about what he calls the 'dwelling perspective', when "landscape is constituted as an enduring record of - and testimony to - the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in doing so, have left there something of themselves" (2000: 189). Literally containing something of a place, Santiago Serra's piece *200 litres of Water from the Dead Sea* (2004) is this in a glass tank. There is no indication other than the title that the water in the tank is from the Dead Sea. It requires topping up from time to time due to condensation so I asked a representative of the Alvear gallery at Frieze 2009 whether it was always *really* topped up with water from the Dead Sea? He looked at me wearily as if he had heard this question before and replied unequivocally "yes". Seawater is arguably the most easily available material on the planet, so this very specific origin of the water is what defines the artwork's authenticity and grants it preciousness.

The potential for objects to contain places, events, people and time brings me again to William Pietz's account of the principle of the fetish. He finds that the fetish object is territorialised, personalised "and is always a meaningful fixation of a singular event; it is above all an historical object, the enduring material form and force of an event" (1985: 12). It is not that the fetish *symbolises* such histories (or represents some false value as Marxist accounts of fetishes suggest) but that an object *becomes* history in physical form. In this way, events, people, places and times – their values and virtues - become part of the inherent matter of the thing.

Alchemy

In their book of conversations, Damien Hirst said to Gordon Burn with reference to *Hymn* (1996) the six-metre bronze toy medical man:

[At the foundry] he said, 'what do you want it to look like in the end?' And I said, 'Plastic!' He nearly had a heart attack. He said, 'but it's a bronze. I said, 'I want it to look like plastic.' Well, why do you want it to be bronze?' 'Because I want it to be grand, and I want it to be bronze.

(2001: 147)

Mona Hatoum created a giant egg-slicer in Marble called *Marble Slicer* (2002) (image 8.5). Similar to Hirst's *Hymn*, one of the goals for this work is to turn an everyday object into something monumental. This is achieved with size but is also due to the distinguished qualities of 'artistic' materials. On a similar vein, Kris Martin produced an eighteen-karat gold nail titled *Golden Spike* (2005), which is hammered into walls for installation (image 8.6). The intention is to turn a cheap, functional and everyday object into something precious.

Jeff Koons has been making what appear to be plastic inflatables out of carefully hand-painted bronze since the late 1970s (for example *Inflatable Flower & Bunny* [1979]). Gavin Turk has made filled bin-bags (*Tip* [2004]) and slept-in sleeping bags (*Nomad* [2003]) in bronze and Jake & Dinos Chapman have created bronze 'latex' blow-up dolls (*Death I* [2003] and *Death II* [2004]). The intention with these bronze works is to turn vulgar, throwaway and functional forms into non-functioning, materially long-lasting and expensive art objects.

In the previous chapter I considered how unvalued, found objects in their entrance to 'art's regime of value' are treated as precious valuables. Kaz Oshiro's *Washer/Dryer* (2005) plays on this idea; it is very cleverly made and looks exactly like a washer/dryer except that it is made out of stretched white canvases (image 8.7). Its everyday use form is playfully contrasted with the fact that it cannot actually be *used* for anything except art. In this way, in David Graeber's words, art "has the ability to transform the basest of materials into objects worth far, far more than gold" (2008).

Simon Newby is a master of disguise. He has created sellotape rolls out of honey (*Untitled* 2009), washing up sponges out of bread (*Untitled* 2008) (images 8.8 & 8.9) and illusionary solid walls out of nothing but delicate toilet paper (*Untitled* 2008). Newby was pleased that the toilet-paper wall remained intact for its week-long exhibition at the Royal College of Art. These works represent the flip side of the ever-lasting bronze inflatable - in that forms for hard-working daily functions are made out of delicate and fleeting materials.

To offer one more example on this theme, Simon Starling too plays with the charge of materials and substances in combination with different forms. For example *Work Made-Ready Les Beaux de Provence* (2001) shows aluminium as it is mined as bauxite rocks, then as a metal following extraction, then as an aluminium bicycle. Actually, the bicycle is the start and the end of the circular installation. It follows a trip on an aluminium bicycle that the artist took to an aluminium mine in Provence. At the mine he

collected the bauxite rocks and carried out a do-it-yourself aluminium extraction from which he cast another bicycle. Starling's *Shedboatsbed* (2003) also tells a story⁶ about material transformation and form. He found a shed during a trip along the Rhine, which he turned into a boat, paddled along the river, and upon arrival in Basel, turned back into a shed once again (and put in a gallery). These artworks suitably illustrate the first law of thermodynamics; energy is neither created nor destroyed, it just changes shape⁷. I will return to more discussion of natural science laws shortly.

Energy

Neon light is utilised by many contemporary artists including most famously perhaps, Joseph Kosuth, Jason Rhoades, Martin Creed, Cerith Wyn Evans, Pierre Huyghe and Carsten Holler (and the list can go on)⁸ (image 8.10). Obviously neon has a light of its own but it also has an electric hum and a static energy. Philosopher Paul Virilio complains vehemently in his essay *Art & Fear* about the 'sonorisation' of contemporary art (2006: 45). Although I do not subscribe to his rants - it is true that neon light is a little audibly, and extremely visually, LOUD. Tracey Emin's neon *Love Poem* (2007) in the cool, quiet and still of the British Pavilion at the Venice Biennale SHOUTED at everyone walking by. If artworks can act on us and speak to us, they can SHOUT and SCREAM to us too (Virilio 2006: 46).

Other electrical equipment in sculpture allows for even greater electrical physical sensations. Loris Greaud's *Frequency of an Image, White Edit* (2008) was an installation in which the artist's brainwaves were transformed into electrical frequencies. A computer fed these frequencies into long strings of micro-vibrators and these over-flowed from the computer up and around a gallery producing a very physical buzzing sensation for those who entered the room. Very bright white lights added to the full-body energy effect. Resulting in a similar electrical experience, Paul Fryer's *Pit* (2008) involved a cast iron skull radiating an intense pulse of red heat (image 8.11). It was exhibited with a warning to visitors at the White Cube Edgar Allen Poe exhibition since the pulses produced by

⁶ The wall description of the artist at the Barbican's Radical Nature exhibition (June to October 2009) said that Simon Starling's "materials tell stories".

⁷ <http://www.entropy.com/entropyenergy.html>

⁸ Because it was funny, one of the very few points that I found to be worthwhile made by Ben Lewis in his 2008 BBC documentary *The Great Contemporary Art Bubble* was that 'neon seems to be the cheese sandwich of contemporary art'.

the powerful electric magnets of the induction heating plate could pose a problem to visitors with pacemakers.

Ernesto Neto's *Life fog fog fog... fog, frog* (2008) is a mesh structure inside which there are hanging bags of spice. While the undulating structure is visually interesting, 'viewers' senses of smell engage with the piece too. The scent of cinnamon, cloves and pepper envelops those who walk inside. The unique smells of certain materials are something to consider even when the artist does not necessarily plan them. Anya Gallaccio's decomposing flowers and vegetables have a damp and pungent scent and any of Damien Hirst's unframed or unenclosed works involving flies smell absolutely vile (see/smell for example *The Fear of Death* [2008]). The perpetual smell of fresh paint familiar to most new gallery exhibitions was strangely replaced for five weeks at White Cube Mason's Yard when two Oxford Sandy & Black pigs lived there for Zhang Huan's piece *Zhu Gangqiang* (2009) (image 8.12).

Joseph Beuys' use of fat because of its powerful life-giving and energetic capabilities has inspired many artists. Janine Antoni's use of lard and chocolate for *Gnaw* (1991) is one such homage to the connection Beuys made between the living body and fat⁹. As per my discussion with regards to distributed artists, the cubes of lard and chocolate of this work are performative objects; when encountered in the gallery they re-perform their engagement with Antoni's body and enable us to 'see' (imagine) her at work. Antoni's chocolate and lard cubes' impermanency and softness, sculpted with her mouth contrast masculine high-minimalist cubes made from 'permanent', hard materials such as aluminium and glass which tended to be industrially fabricated at a distance from the bodies of their male authors (Andre, Le Wit, Judd etcetera). For women especially perhaps, *Gnaw's* cubes have the potential to prompt a physical awareness of one's body; the energy of chocolate and lard is the cause of our struggles between pleasure and the fight against fat.

Anselm Kiefer attended Professor Beuys' lectures in the 1970s and although he has outspokenly rejected much of Beuys' politics and idealism (Lauterwein 2007: 45) he was inspired by his beliefs in the energetic abilities of materials. Kiefer's utilisation of earth, ash, straw and other plant-life is not just because they represent life but because they have had life and as fertiliser can continue to nourish it (see Lauterwein 2007: 167). He also works with the weather and elements to form his paintings. I heard him discuss the process with Tim Marlow during an interview for the press:

⁹ For *Gnaw* see images 3.4 in chapter 3.

I did these paintings. I did them quite traditional... I made the vanishing point and then the ploughed earth and then... I thought now I have to do something because it was quite conventional paintings. So I put them on the floor and I throw earth on them because I had then the idea of opening this earth, and so from very high I throw just earth on them, and they stayed there for a week and dried.....

Tim Marlow: So actually - just to re-iterate for those who don't know you - you would leave them out in the heat in the South of France, in Barjac where your studio is, so these are baked literally by the sun.

Yes by the sun, or by the rain too. We had a lot of rain on this one - you can see that the earth got very liquid and flowed everywhere.

(*Aperiat Terra* Press Conference at the Royal Academy, December 2006)

The *making* of Kiefer's works by their materials and the elements may continue even when they leave the studio. Tom Hale, Artwork Services Director at White Cube has dealt with their care and explained to me that the artist is accepting about continuing gradual material changes; falling pieces of mud and straw and discolouration of lead are to be expected and not inhibited. A work would have to experience greatly significant losses, actual damage, for restoration to be considered. This point was verified to me by Nicholas Dorman, Chief Conservator at Seattle Art Museum, who told me that he firmly tries to curb the movement of *Die Welle* (1990) (image 8.13) in the museum's permanent collection in an attempt to limit its inevitable and irrestorable material losses. The artist is notoriously uncooperative with conservators. Tom told me about how one museum contacted the artist with a concern about loose straw from a piece attracting mice to the store. Kiefer's only suggestion was that the museum "could get a cat". Art Historian Andrea Lauterwein suggests that the artist's use of straw is intentional for its connection with pests, [2007: 113] they are, after all, another form of life - an essential element of Kiefer's works.

Letting Go

The following examples are of art objects and materials that artists allow to 'do their own thing'. Anya Gallaccio often chooses to work with materials in this way. She has said "making a piece of work [can] become about chance – not just imposing will on

something, but acknowledging its inherent qualities”¹⁰. In 1998, Anya Gallaccio was commissioned by the Art Trans Pennine festival to create a site-specific work for the Minerva Pier in Hull. She created sculptures titled *Two Sisters* (1998) out of chalk. The idea was that the tides would gradually dissolve away – sculpt - the shapes of the blocks, over the course of the festival which lasted a couple of months. In practice though *Two Sisters* lasted for less than a week. Stephen Feeke, Curator at the Henry Moore Institute who was involved with the work, told me that it neither really looked as he and Anya had expected either; he said it looked dirty and was not at all beautiful. Nonetheless, Stephen said, Anya was not disappointed – it simply did not happen as she thought it might.

Of course many of Gustav Metzger’s choices for his ‘auto-destructive’ materials are based on the ways that they disintegrate and change. *Liquid Crystal Environment* (1965-66/2005/2009) is a result of liquid crystals placed between slides of glass which are mounted on projectors. When the slides are heated and cooled the liquid crystals deteriorate, producing a moving, multi-coloured psychedelic effect which is projected onto a dark wall. The materials have to be replaced once a week or so.

While Gallaccio and Metzger’s materials are meant from their conception to change and disintegrate, sometimes materials unexpectedly ‘do their own thing’ but meet artists’ approval nonetheless. During a panel discussion at the Getty Institute, Rachel Harrison told the panel and the audience about a work titled *Hail to Reason* (2004). It had four packets of paper doilies nestled into the top of a lumpy six-foot tall column. During an exhibition in San Francisco, probably due to humidity changing the doilies’ cardboard packing, the curator arrived one morning to find some of the doilies on the floor. Harrison worked with a conservator to find a better way to re-secure the doilies, but she was keen to do this without affixing them. She said:

I don’t really want to be gluing everything into my work. I kind of like the idea that they’re objects in the world, that they have autonomy, and integrity, and that they are the way you find them in the 99 cents store.

(January 2008 Getty Institute).

Another accident with materials that adjusted the artist’s ‘intent’ was with Anish Kapoor’s *Untitled* acrylic cubes. A Lisson gallery registrar told me that when they were initially made, Kapoor had expected them to be entirely transparent but tiny air bubbles

¹⁰ See artist’s statement on her New York gallery’s website; www.lehmannmaupin.com/#/artists/anya-gallaccio/

emerged unexpectedly during fabrication. Fortunately Kapoor liked the appearance of the bubbles and they became a continued feature of the works. Yet one more response to the hard, permanent and stable minimalist cubes of 1960s versions¹¹ are Walead Beshty's glass cubes such as *FEDEX LARGE CRAFT BOXES 33058...* [2008]¹². The works are made by their travels with Fedex which cause cracks and knocks to their glass. This continues until Beshty (or, as per my discussion about this work with regards to Ownership, in principal a collector) decides that they have travelled and been fractured enough. The periods of space and time in which the cubes travel and are re-formed are entirely out of Beshty and collectors' control. They find out what the cubes have become when Fedex delivers them and they are removed from their flimsy card boxes. Tom Dingle from Thomas Dane gallery told me that upon opening some boxes, Beshty has found that the glass has disintegrated altogether; thus marking their 'ending' as works of art.

Alexis Harding's Paintings

Alexis Harding mixes linseed oil with paint in varied and unmeasured ratios. The mixtures are poured, dripped on or applied with tools to medium-density fibreboard (MDF) (images 8.14). For untimed periods, Harding allows time, gravity and the materials to do their own thing, but when he feels it is the right moment, he intervenes and manipulates again: to add more paint and oil solution, to push or pull, break slowly formed skins, angle or turn the board to change a direction of movement. From there again, Harding might watch and wait or leave the studio entirely to find in the morning what time, gravity, air and the materials have achieved in his absence.

Earlier paintings often included the placement of lightweight metal gutter grids into the paint (image 8.15). The grids were lightweight enough to be easily split and moulded by the artist and they would also stick to the paint and slip with it. Over the last few years, Harding has also been working with linseed oil and paint mix on MDF alone. Many paintings do at some point seem to reach a set stasis. They are often characterised by the paintings' skins extending beyond the edge of the boards. Although they can be moved in travel frames¹³ these finished works may leave pools of paint and pieces of guttering behind on the studio floor.

¹¹ They start looking identical to Larry Bell's from the 1960s.

¹² For Beshty's Fedex boxes see image 6.2 in chapter 6.

¹³ Very carefully though since they *are* fragile – explained to me by Andrew Mummery (Director of Mummery & Schnelle) in an e-mail.

It should not be assumed that since Harding allows the properties of paint to ‘do its own thing’ that he is blasé about what his paintings become. He feels anxious about what they do when he leaves them overnight. I asked him whether the changes he encourages of his paintings – the sliding and pulling movements – were acceptable, but changes such as discolouration which he has seen, or cracking, which has not really happened yet but seems likely in years’ time, would be unacceptable. On the contrary, he told me:

I am happy if a painting changes, in accordance with its own idea, i.e., the idea the painting attempts to carry... Often these ideas have been to do with change, an incompatibility, the ruin, an optimistic tussling and stretching.....so for me it makes sense the materials go through this literally as well. What the painting pictorially looks like is tantamount to how it is constructed...The work is controlled to a high degree in order for it to be allowed to be effortless and to make it itself. [One painting at the studio] needed light and it was fantastic to see it stop sulking and revert back once it was given some.

(In an e-mail, August 2009)

Harding also produces what he calls temporary paintings in which the paint has been allowed or caused by him to entirely leave the boards. These are process works that do not ‘happen’ at the point of departure from the board but are ‘happening’ as they change (image 8.16). They are effectively performance works, as was made explicit when he made one in the public galleries during opening times OCAD’s Professional Gallery in Toronto in June 2009. Harding told me that the temporary paintings are not actually new and he has always made them. Until recently though, they had almost always only happened for his and his assistants’ experience in the studio. They may be best described as making use of *time*. Harding agrees that Hans Haacke’s term ‘real-time systems’ is a suitable reference. Unlike however, Haacke’s *Grass Grows* for instance, created first in 1969 but feasibly re-created again and again with earth and grass seeds, the time and movements of Harding’s paintings only happen once. Each work is absolutely unique and non-repeatable.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, storage poses a problem for these paintings since some of their ‘time’ is likely to be missed. Gravity’s movement of the paint and oil are the most likely changes. Harding showed me one painting that had been stored in a case for over a year. When the case was removed from storage and

opened up it was discovered that the air had turned a pale cream paint into a yellowy gold.

Harding told me that he, and those who have written about his paintings, have found it difficult to find the best words to describe his paintings' changes. Expressions often used tend to be quite pessimistic; such as the 'collapse' and 'falling' of the paint and the 'damage' that the artist inflicts. Harding *controls* his paintings but *allows* them 'ideas' and 'to make themselves' - lives of their own. Such with life, *change* to these paintings may be better described and accepted as something unpredictable, exciting and inevitable.

Entropy

One word that Alexis Harding has heard with reference to the activities of his paintings, which he finds appropriate, is entropy; disordered energy is ordered while some amount dissipates into chaos. The 'Entropy law' is the second law of thermodynamics, "the key insight" of which is that the world is inherently active." Significantly then, entropy applies in the same way to what are usually classified as living and non-living things (Udgaonkar¹⁵ 2001: 61). Entropy is the result of active processes – hot and cold water for example - that in their meeting cause the dissipation of each other, and some displacement of energy too. Order is achieved as the mixed hot and cold waterdrops become uniformly lukewarm, but in the process some energy is randomly displaced (i.e. it leaves the cooking pot entirely). In biology, the process of entropy is the movement of energy "towards a state of equilibrium" or in other words "death is the thermodynamically favoured state" (Udgaonkar 2001: 62). With reference to Simon Starling's work, I already mentioned the first law of thermodynamics, which is, that energy is not created or destroyed but it just changes shape. There is, however no *time* in this first law; "the past, present, and future are indistinguishable" (2001: 62). The law of entropy on the other hand, takes time into account. The process of entropy moves in only one, irreversible, direction in time; the course towards energies' equilibrium is ageing, and inevitably dissipation/death.

So Alexis Harding's paintings seem to demonstrate the process of entropy very well. The artworks are a result of the meeting energies of paint and oil solution, MDF, metal grids, gravity and the artist's physical interventions. The time-scale of the making

¹⁵ Jayant Udgaonkar is Professor and Dean of the Faculty at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bangalore. I quote from an article of Udgaonkar's in *Resonance*, Journal of Science Education (see bibliography for details).

of the paintings – particularly the temporary paintings – renders entropic processes in time physically observable.

But entropy is happening in all things, all of us, and all art objects; it is just a matter of different rates of visibility. The processes of dissipation of Gallaccio's salt-columns, Harrison's doilies, Metzger's liquid crystals and Newby's tremendously delicate toilet-paper wall are also quick and therefore evident; it is *because* of these abilities that artists have selected them. Art materials that can be actively *felt* by us viewers of art, include *us* in this meeting of energies. They serve to demonstrate that we live in an exceptionally active, energetic world of buzzing electricity, extreme temperatures, dynamic, growing and disintegrating things.

Yet artists' choosing of materials may also demonstrate an intentional attempt to stave-off entropy. The creation of disposable forms in long-lasting materials, such as Gavin Turk's filled rubbish bags in bronze, is about defying processes of decay. Salcedo's concrete-filled furniture artworks are fascinating to think about in these terms. 'Living' pieces of furniture made active with the lives of people who lived with them are stopped dead with rock-solid concrete; disorder is forcefully ordered.

There have been some attempts to apply entropy to social theory, and Levi-Strauss considered it in *Tristes Tropique* (1955). I have found however, little evidence of papers and books about 'social entropy' that have had very much influence¹⁶. What social entropy theories tend to do though is to use a term and phenomenon '*from* the natural sciences' as a *metaphor* for something social. This is not my purpose. My interest is literally about the entropic processes of material things that is usually considered to be the realm of biologists, chemists and physicists. But Bruno Latour takes issue with the positing of matters 'social' as being entirely separate from matters 'biological' (or economical, mental or linguistic and other realms we tend to separate [2005: 1]). As an anthropologist (social scientist) I should not be limited to only studying matters social while strictly ignoring biology, chemistry or anything else. Latour suggests that this would be like trying to understand an elephant by being entirely focussed on its leg or ear or trunk. To understand an elephant, one must consider its entire body, where it lives,

¹⁶ For example, sociologist Kenneth D. Bailey wrote a book in 1990 titled *Social Entropy Theory* in which he considers "the social implications of entropy into a coherent theory of society as a whole. His approach is based on a synthesis of functionalism and general systems theory". This is at least Thomas F. Mayer's understanding of the book (1991: 1554) who in his review of it, reluctantly concludes that "not many people will understand the social world better from reading '*Social Entropy Theory*'" (1991: 1546). I could not find the book anywhere to check for myself which suggests that Mayer's prediction was accurate; it does not seem to have had much impact.

how it interacts with other elephants, other animals, its environment and, crucially, what it does (2005: 35).

I am interested in the social activities of artworks and this is entangled with their physical makeup. Artworks do what they do in part because of their material capabilities. I am not about to argue that as per Alfred Gell's definition of agency, that the objects have agency further to "cognitive operations" of their own (see 1998: 13). Bruno Latour's expectation however, that objects and materials are 'actants' with 'goals', is more clearly supported by the evidence I encountered with my research (2005: 180). The materials I have considered in this chapter are actors because they act – they make things happen. The phenomenon of entropy illustrates that there is no distinction between the 'natural' physical processes of 'living' humans and material things. All physicality ages and *dies* and this affects what we do and how we *live*.

9. Conservation & Preservation

Conservators work within extensive and well-connected professional networks among which there is much research and academic debate. Conservator-restorer codes of ethics actually require that conservators carry out studies, disseminate their findings, and consult with others in ‘the conservation community’ (to use ICON, the British Institute’s term) over decisions about treatments. Discussions are carried out and research findings are presented amongst international conservation conferences, conservation journals, and a swathe of online databases and archives (some of which I introduce in this chapter). A much considered question at this time concerns the special requirements for the conservation of contemporary art, vis a vis the conservation of other kinds of art and ‘material cultural heritage’. The discussion that I present over the following pages then, serves as a small introduction to some big questions which are currently being addressed about contemporary art conservation.

The British Institute of Conservation, ICON is partnered with ECCO¹ the wider European organisation and the AIC² in the United States. Between them, these organisations have developed ethical codes and guidelines for the profession which do seem to provide an anchor for working conservators³. All of the conservators whom I met for my research referenced them during our discussions and directed me to look at them so that I might understand how they work and make decisions⁴. ICON and ECCO’s shared code begins with the key point that conservators are to “act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future”. Cultural heritage is defined as “objects, buildings and environments” which “constitute a material and cultural patrimony to be passed on to coming generations”. The second point is that the conservator is responsible for and to “not only the cultural heritage itself..”, but also to the “owner or legal guardian, the

¹ European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers Organisations

² The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works

³ The guidelines and code of ethics for ICON and ECCO are detailed in a shared six-page document (see appendix 2). The AIC have their own eleven-page document but since this includes an account of the history of the document, and is more sparsely formatted than the European version the directives are basically the same as for their European counterparts.

⁴ Illustrative of this point, conservator Christian Schiedemann has commented that one possibility for dealing with a Beuys piece was discarded because it would have been in breach of the AIC code of ethics (even though he hints of feeling that it would not have been entirely unsuitable to the work (2009: 8).

originator or creator, the public” and “to posterity” (page 1). As well as working with each other therefore, conservators work for – have responsibilities to - artists, fabricators, private owners, public institutions and dealers acting as guardians; in other words, all of the persons whom I have introduced in this thesis so far. In a sense, conservators are positioned right in the hub of the meeting of all these parties and where issues of authorship, artists’ intent, control, individuals’ personal meanings, institutions’ responsibilities to posterity and public ownership and other affairs of artworks’ material lives are negotiated amongst them.

It is important to be aware that ICON, ECCO and the AIC’s codes of ethics and guidelines are for conservators of all kinds of heritage which include art but can also be for those working to preserve objects, for example, in architecture, costume or landscaping. For art conservation, there is no distinction in the ‘rules’ between contemporary art and ‘other’ kinds of art. Conservators tend to specialise in media – divisioned between painting, sculpture, works on paper, textiles etcetera – rather than period.⁵ All except one (Scheidemann) of the conservators who I have consulted for my research works on art objects unlimited by geographic origin or time of making. But even Christian Scheidemann – a figure-head for the specialisation of the conservation of contemporary art – was trained as conservators must be by looking at Renaissance paintings, sixteenth century church sculptures and French Romantics⁶ among others.

It is clear to all however, that contemporary art does have its own unique conservation needs. In response to this, an International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art - INCCA⁷ - was set up in 1999. Central to INCCA is a database which contains details about technical treatments carried out on art objects, and crucially, calls for the recording of information of artists’ intentions. Compared to ICON’s code of ethics in which a responsibility to ‘originators-creators’ is noted but secondary to responsibilities to objects as heritage and actually listed *after* ‘owners/legal guardians’, INNCA acknowledges that for the conservation of contemporary art, artists’ intentions are key. In this chapter, I

⁵ For example, Nicholas Dorman is a Paintings Conservator who specialises in early Italian Renaissance Painting conservation. As Chief Conservator at Seattle Art Museum though he oversees a collection with a substantial amount of contemporary and modern art, but also European, African, and Asian artworks several thousands of years old. Kiffy Stainer is now primarily a Paintings Conservator working on paintings from English medieval times as well as Damien Hirst’s butterfly paintings. Her first diploma was actually for working with wood and stone.

⁶ Some of Scheidemann’s training is described in Rebecca Mead’s New Yorker article *The Art Doctor* (2009: 62)

⁷ The International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art.

describe how the recording of information over artists' intentions is attempted in practice - the successes of it and the difficulties. Some of the reasons why the articulation and subsequent documentation of artists' intentions may be problematic for conservators have already been mentioned in this thesis. While I suggest that artists' intentions are significant to what artworks *are* and *do*, I propose that intentionality is not necessarily intellectual and/or possible to articulate. I also find that intentionality may not remain the same over time. Further, the achievement of artists' intentions in material form, can follow their utilisation of fabricators' craft skills and technical material expertise. Artists therefore may not be best placed to answer technical material questions posed by conservators about how objects were made. And then, it may be an artist's intent to allow artwork owners and others to manipulate and make decisions for forms or to allow materials to act in their own ways. This raises the question, that when it is an artist's intention to allow for a variety of other actors intentions to be enacted, how can they be pinpointed in documentation? In a nutshell, in this chapter I describe how despite conservators' best intentions, artists' intentions are difficult to articulate, define and record.

In having to negotiate among these complexities, each of the conservators with whom I spoke confirmed to me that they turn to what is understood as their chief responsibility; they ask "what is best for the art *object*?" But, as I have proposed, in contemporary art, varied, deep and complex powers and capabilities are imbued within and intrinsic to art objects. It is not really possible to extricate works of art from the numerous people who make them, and objects have their own material capabilities. In this chapter I present how conservators' tasks of preserving art objects require so much more than a knowledge of material chemistry alone.

As chapter 9 in this thesis, what follows is largely about artworks in 'later life'. Running themes of this thesis so far are the ongoing developments and changes of artworks. That conservation is *preservation* brings the question of artworks and *time* to the forefront. In this chapter it is necessary to once again draw a distinction between art objects and works of art. I propose that the *times* that each are in should not be confused with each other and that the preservation of a work of art is not the same as the preservation of an historical artefact. As per Walter Benjamin's description, authenticity of 'traditional' artworks is imbued in 'original objects' (1992: 214) Another question for this chapter then, is where does

authenticity reside in contemporary art if not in objects (a question that comes to the forefront in the chapter following this one)?

Conservation of Artists' Intentions

Christian Scheidemann, whose practice 'Contemporary Conservation' is based in Manhattan, is arguably the world's leading conservator for contemporary art. Before I contacted him directly about my study I was inspired and found justification for my argument about artists' inseparable bonds with their works in Scheidemann's mantra; "*the artist is always right*"⁸. Upon confrontation with an art object that requires conservation – independent of who brings it to him – his first task is to attempt to contact the artist to find out as much as possible about the artwork and her intentions for its material life. How and what does the artist want of the artwork to be preserved and/or restored? For example, Scheidemann was contacted by a private collector in Austria about wear and tear on Paul McCarthy's *Alpine Man* (1992) (image 9.1). The piece is a male mannequin with his trousers around his ankles and "humping a barrel" (to use the artist's terms). The first thing Scheidemann did was to telephone McCarthy, who told him that he wanted to replace the mannequin with a 'younger version', and have the old one back so that he could turn it into a 'new' artwork called *Worn Out Fuckers*⁹.

Scheidemann is a figurehead with his 'artist-centred' approach to the conservation of contemporary art, but the model, at least in theory, is a predominant one for contemporary art conservation¹⁰. Museum conservators are also dedicated to obtaining information about artists' intentions at the time of acquisition of a contemporary artwork into their museum collection. Some larger museums, which have their own conservation departments, have created conservation questionnaires about 'intentions' to send to artists, (which are usually sent to artists via galleries/dealers if they were involved with the acquisition).

⁸ I learned of this for the first time when Scheidemann was part of a panel discussion at a Getty Institute conference *The Object in Transition*, January 2008. We also discussed it in our e-mail correspondence.

⁹ This account was given by Paul McCarthy and Christian Scheidemann together at a Getty Institute Conference, *The Object in Transition*, January 2008.

¹⁰ Several of the conservators that I interviewed referenced Scheidemann during our conversations and he has spoken at every international contemporary art conservation conference that I have encountered. In Rebecca's Mead's New Yorker article, she quotes Ann Temkin, Curator at MoMA, describing Scheidemann as a "pioneer" (2009: 60).

The Brooklyn Museum of Art's Conservation Department for example, has an artists' questionnaire for paper, paintings, objects, and 'new media' installations. They include standardised questions seeking basic information regarding manufacture and materials, and then specific questions further to the museum conservators' examination of the art object. Artists are asked at the end for "any additional information with regards to your wishes for the preservation or restoration of *your* artwork?" (My emphasis for what I always think is a significant choice of words).

I introduce some of the pitfalls of these questionnaires shortly, but Lisa Bruno, Conservator at the Brooklyn Museum, told me "they are important". She and her colleagues had:

An experience with the artist Chryssa - where we had to find out about either repairing or replicating a Plexiglas block for one of her neon pieces. We managed to locate her and have a conversation with her about one month before she passed away.

(Email January 2010)

When Tate receives a new contemporary artwork into its collection, it is the task of the conservation department to create an 'Installation File' with details of the art objects' condition upon arrival and as many details as possible about artists' intentions for care in the future. As a matter of policy, attempts are made to contact living artists upon the arrival of new works. Installation Files are best achieved with artists present for the installation so that each component may be discussed with them and their answers recorded. The task of creating records at the time of acquisition is so significant that it represents the core job description of several Tate conservators (with the title "Tate Acquisition Conservator").

Mike Nelson's *The Coral Reef* (2000) is a cacophony of dingy rooms inhabited by grungy artefacts and furniture that are lit moodily in different colours (images 9.2). The piece entered Tate's collection in 2008. On account of its scale and the masses of individual objects it contains, the creation of the installation file for *The Coral Reef* presented a significant task to Melanie Rolfe, Tate Acquisition Conservator, and her colleagues over several days. The bulging paper file of notes and photographs of the objects was more than twenty centimetres thick when Melanie showed it to me and it was still not complete.

Melanie told me that it was good to work with Mike Nelson because he was enthusiastic to work together with Tate over the future material care of *The Coral Reef*. Many of the objects in the piece were found by Nelson. His task was to decide when and how their origins were significant. This would determine whether original objects should be preserved or which could be replaced should they be found to deteriorate or become damaged or go missing (previous installations outside of Tate had seen the theft of some items by gallery visitors). The issue with finding replacements was dependent on what Nelson found significant of those objects. For example, there is a crate of empty fizzy drink bottles, which might look easily replaceable but the artist told Melanie that he particularly liked those specific ones because the bottle designs and brand logos were just being changed at the time that he found them (images 9.3). He likes to use objects that have ‘just gone out of style’ from a moment in time that has just passed. Another example of an irreplaceable object is a Castro oil-can because Nelson really likes the colours and the design. This branding had already changed between 2000 and 2010, when the piece was created to the time when the installation file was being put together. In short, since it is unlikely that the fizzy drinks bottles and the oil-can could be appropriately replaced, the conservators were advised by Nelson to try to preserve the original objects.

One item that Nelson said could be replaced if necessary was a clown mask. Jackie Heuman, Head of Sculpture Conservation at Tate, told me that she was concerned about the longevity of the plastic that it was made from. She and Nelson were looking for another mask that they could safely store at Tate for use in the future if/when the original mask deteriorated too much. They were not however, trying to find an exact visual replica of the original. *The Coral Reef* is a very atmospheric piece. The main concern was to find a mask that would meet Mike Nelson’s approval that had a similar *expression* to the original and created the same kind of *feeling*.

The Coral Reef demonstrates that even with a single artwork, the artist’s intent for its objects’ preservation is not easily defined. It is not so simple that the artist can say that all of the original objects should be preserved, or all can be replaced if they deteriorate. It depends on why and how each object was chosen for that particular work. At least Mike Nelson was able to articulate his ideas for his work and willing to discuss them with Tate’s conservators. This is not always the case.

The Difficulty with Defining and Recording Artists' Intent

Artists' lives are continuums - not a series of moments.

Artist David Novros¹¹

The general consensus is that it is best to gather information about artists' intentions for material conservation as early as possible. Kiffy Stainer, a private paintings conservator, stressed this point in a conversation with me. She believes that commercial galleries, when involved with production, should engage with this by making detailed records of production methods and materials and asking artists questions about material care for the future. Buck & Greer's *Contemporary Art Collectors Handbook* also advises collectors to obtain information about artists' intentions for conservation and material care when artworks are purchased (2006: 215). As per my earlier discussions about the ways that museums might advise private owners on collection care and management, museum endorsed initiatives recommend that detailed reports on art objects are made at the time of acquisition. For this purpose, Tate actually provides free publically accessible templates for condition and structure reports on their website¹².

At White Cube, I took on the responsibility for the creation of an archive for the technical department which included paperwork and details for new works on materials, condition reports, conservation treatments and, crucially, details of artists' intentions. The latter point was not however, straightforward to achieve in practice. This project was central to my AHRC award in the Beyond Text programme for this research. It is interesting to refer back to my proposal to the programme and initial plans for carrying out the project in practice. With much support from those at the gallery, my goal was that artists would be asked, in interviews or even structured questionnaires (inspired by those I had seen developed by institutions such as the Brooklyn Museum) about their intentions for conservation at the time art objects for new works were first fabricated and exhibited¹³. Time and again though, as new works came and went through the gallery good opportunities

¹¹ Getty Institute Conference, The Object in Transition, January 2008

¹² See for example;

www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/mediamatters/acquisitions/structureconditionreports.shtm

¹³ White Cube has two galleries for its exhibitions, which usually an artist's solo exhibition in each for a period of five weeks.

never arose to broach the matters with artists, or the questions did not seem relevant, or the Artist's Liaison¹⁴ felt that an artist would not respond favourably to the questioning.

At the time of exhibition of new works, artists' time and attention is very much in demand. The de-installation of one exhibition and installation of the next usually takes place over just a few days and almost always within a week. Artists and everyone involved with fabrication and production are likely to be extremely busy, possibly stressed, and entirely focused on preparing and installing the works. Once artworks are 'up', artists' schedules then become booked with meeting collectors and the press etcetera. Pinning artists down amidst the flurry of exhibition time, to ask questions about what they want to happen to the materials of a new artwork in several years' time, is difficult, if not, in some people's minds, inappropriate. Conservator Kiffy Stainer said to me once "contemporary art is meant to be bright, new and blingy"¹⁵. No one wants to think about worrying things like maintenance and ageing, at what is supposed to be an exciting time for *new* work. As I have mentioned before with regard to dealers keeping formalities to a minimum at the time of showing and selling latest works, it does not do to risk spoiling the enchantment of 'bright' and 'new' artworks for artists or collectors with boring bureaucracy.

Lisa Bruno (Conservator at the Brooklyn Museum) told me that her department only receives about a fifty percent response rate from artists to their conservation questionnaire.¹⁶ Of the fifty percent, answers to the standardised questions tend to be left out. It is usually only specific questions on artworks that receive a response. As Curator Caitlin Jones asks, with reference to the development of the Variable Media Network (which I introduce more about shortly) "how can we quantitatively gather information that is so qualitative in nature?" (2003: 62) The range of materials and production techniques that are utilised to make contemporary art is so vast that it is extremely difficult to devise single, standardised questionnaires that can apply to different works.

A closer reading of the Brooklyn Museum's sculpture questionnaire also finds that most of the questions are technical questions about the materials. For example, artists are asked to "confirm media, technique and process" and to "include the names of manufacturers and names of products (such as paint brands, names and codes).. what tools

¹⁴ Job title for individuals at the gallery whose chief responsibility is to manage the interests of artists.

¹⁵ In person, April 2010.

¹⁶ In an e-mail January 2010

were used, and special coatings?” I believe one reason that the Brooklyn Museum might receive so few answers to the questions is that artists might not actually have detailed technical knowledge of how and with what objects have been made. Studio assistants and fabricators are probably better placed to answer questions about coatings and welding techniques. In short, artists may choose not to, or be unable, to answer very general questions about materials and fabrication. The open question of ‘what is your intent for the conservation of this artwork’ also seems too open to be met with a clear response.

In the previous chapter I mentioned Anselm Kiefer’s resistance to conservation and intolerance of conservators; I learned that he told a conservator who was anxious about falling straw and mice that the museum “should get a cat”. Some artists may be aggravated by requests to define their ‘intentions’ for the ‘benefits’ of preservation. Artist David Novros’ said to a conference audience of conservators with a degree of frustration, “an artist’s life is a continuum, not a series of moments”¹⁸. His concern was that a call for the articulation and recording of artists’ statements, at a particular time, could cause them to become *fixed* for *all* time. Artists should not just be thought of by conservators as those who produce art objects, their works are continuous with their lives, their distributed persons over time. At the same conference, Paul McCarthy explained how artists might change their minds about how an artwork should be. He said:

I think there’s this question of when a piece is completed and when an artist knows whether a piece is completed. At times, something may feel like there’s a completion, you’ve finished it, and then you realise something about it. And then it changes, and you realise you’re interested in that change. So maybe you give one answer and then two or three years later there’s another answer.

(Getty Institute, January 2008)

Paintings’ conservator Kiffy Stainer always attempts to contact living contemporary artists upon receipt of new jobs into her workshop. She confirmed too that she experiences varying degrees of success with responses. She said wearily to me that while sometimes artists respond to her questions others “just can’t be bothered”. When I shared some of my

¹⁸ Getty Institute, Los Angeles, January 2008.

thoughts with Christian Scheidemann about artists 'extended minds' he cautioned me with the response:

You are trying very hard to understand the artist's mind... This is the central question in contemporary art... (But) not even artists can answer this question, it is open for discussion. What I experienced over several years is that every artist has a different approach to making art. Often, they do not know exactly what they are doing, they just have to do it. Do not trust any artist who can explain his/her work to you. I always find that art historians - and conservators too - are trying to analyse the artist's mind like an ornithologist would study the birds. Strange species.

As I have considered with my discussion about distributed authors, artists' intentions may not be intellectually conscious and possible to articulate. Although contemporary artworks, by definition so-to-speak, always have some conceptual bonds with artists, other connections with their 'personhood' may exist that cannot be expressed in words. The bonds artists can have with artworks may be with their human bodies, with work, in manual craft, with memories or any manner of other 'person parts', bodies or 'biographical layers' to use Alfred Gell's term (1998: 140).

The Preservation of Objects & Materials

Despite then, the good intentions of conservators to pay attention to 'artists' intentions', actually obtaining and recording details of them can be quite difficult in practice. In these circumstances, Conservator Hugo Platt, said to me that he turns to the guiding principle; "what is best for the art object?"²⁰ Melanie Rolfe and Jackie Heuman at Tate told me exactly the same; their primary responsibility is to art *objects*. While, however, conservators receive extensive scientific training and become specialised in techniques for the preservation of their chosen material – paint, metal, textiles or paper - their task is not only to preserve chemical matter. As per my discussion in the previous chapter, conservators also have to preserve the complexities of the abilities, behaviours and powers

²⁰ Hugo actually said at first that their primary responsibility was to artworks. This however raised the question of what *is* the artwork, and we discussed my hypothesis about artworks being more than objects alone. In the light of this, Hugo said he would adjust his comment to be "what is best for the art object"?

of objects and materials imbued with such things, for instance, as time and social relationships.

For example, in the atrium of Seattle Art Museum Richard Long painted a spiral directly onto a wall using unexceptional brown mud from a near-by beach called Mud-Bay. The piece was titled *Puget Sound Mud Circle* (2002). In preparation for restoration in the future, since it is understood that not ‘any mud will do’, the museum conservation department has a bottle of Mud-bay mud in storage. The origin of the mud is absolutely essential to this artwork. So while, it is the *material* that is preserved, it is the *place* imbued in the material that is preserved, as much as the chemical composition of the mud.

Melanie Rolfe told me about a Brian Jungen work in Tate’s collection titled *The Evening Redness in the West # 1* (2006). It involves a vibrating chair/saddle for viewers to sit in. When Tate acquired the artwork, it was clear to the conservators that the original frame for the chair and its vibrating mechanism would not have a very long lifespan. They therefore consulted with Jungen about obtaining a spare. The artist said he would find a replacement frame and send it to the museum to be stored for the future. When the spare frame arrived however, it was a completely different frame to the original; it was made of wood instead of metal and it was an entirely different shape. Rolfe said that she and her colleagues were very surprised by this, so they double-checked with the artist that there had not been a mistake. But Jungen confirmed that the replacement frame that Tate received was indeed correct. Jungen told Tate Curator, Jessica Morgan during an interview that inspiration for this piece came from “affordable leather furniture.. that members of my family would buy as soon as they got some money. It was like a symbol of luxury. So I wanted to see if I could make these saddles out of the chairs and play around with the idea of the western”²¹. In other words, Jungen was looking for a particular kind of chair that he knew would have appealed to members of his family. The preservation of correct associations for the chair frame for him was more important than the exact look of the artwork. Again this demonstrates, that indeed it is an object which is preserved, but rather than its look or its physical matter, it was its significance in memory to the artist that was important and what this significance achieved.

Janine Antoni’s artwork *Gnaw* (1992) is in MoMA’s collection in New York. As I have described in previous chapters, the work is created out of cubes of lard and chocolate

²¹ www.tate.org.uk/modern/exhibitions/jungen/about.shtm

which were laboriously sculpted by Antoni using only her teeth²². What I have suggested about this work is that these ‘performative’ art objects may prompt images of the action of their making in the imaginations of viewers. I had always, however, assumed that the cubes were ephemeral objects, and that Antoni re-created the sculptures with her teeth each time they were exhibited; after all, the lard cube slowly disintegrates over the course of an exhibition (image 9.4). I was surprised to learn therefore from Buck & Greer’s *Owning Art* book that MoMA stores the very first chocolate cube Antoni made in “specially lined crates” and the “lard is re-cast for each show, using aluminium moulds which replicate the artist’s teeth marks. It is packed in dry ice until the exhibition opening and then slowly self-destructs on display.” (2006: 215²³). So long as the cubes are able to re-perform the action of their very first making in viewers’ imaginations, arguably, they continue to achieve what they are supposed to do (the cubes’ material care at the museum is not made explicit to exhibition viewers). On the other hand, for me, the ‘enchantment’ is forever lost since images of Antoni’s sculpting of fragile materials on her knees have been replaced with an image of an aluminium mould. I can only assume that MoMA carried out this practice further to Antoni’s agreement. Nonetheless, I question whether what is left, is a *relic* or a *monument* to an artwork, rather than an *artwork* which still ‘works’. That is to say whether it achieves the presence and immediacy of the artist’s body and the re-performance of its making.

Christian Scheidemann made the point when he lamented in an e-mail to me:

The problem at the moment still is that too many contemporary conservators exclusively treat the material as the 'original' object, not the context, or the attitude or even the concept of the work. So often, the 'originality' lies in the performative aspect of a work of art, in the act rather than the result. It is an old fashion idea that the artist produces a work of art and then it leaves the studio and has *to be frozen for eternity*.

(June 2010. My emphasis)

²² For *Gnaw*, see images 3.4 in chapter 3.

²³ After finding this information in Buck & Greer’s book, I made several attempts to reach MoMA’s conservation department to learn more about it from them directly but without luck. The matter raises some essential questions though, pertinent to the ways that I have considered this artwork with regard to several themes in this thesis.

The Preservation of Objects in Time

The issue of preserving objects in time is of consequence for Alexis Harding whose paintings I introduced in the last chapter²⁴. Harding's paintings slide and move across their canvases (mdf boards). Some reach a set stasis but others are temporary when the paint slides away altogether. The artist exerts some control over the paintings – the more linseed oil he mixes with the paint the more and the quicker it slides – but the paintings are 'made' by gravity and time too. Harding has had several conservators contact him with an interest in his 'intentions' for conservation and change. The artist is aware that his work represents a challenge to conservation but this is not because he is antagonistic about it and he is interested to explore solutions. The problem is that Harding does not really have an answer for restoring his paintings and his meetings with conservators have ended irresolutely. At what point in their movement would a painting be conserved or restored? Although grid paintings do dry and reached a 'finished' state, should they experience further change (or become damaged), it would be impossible to restore fallen paint skins or grids; they could hardly be stuck back or re-painted in. Once he has carried out his actions and control on the materials, it is Harding's intent that time, gravity and air 'do their thing' without his controlled intervention; to preserve them would be an intrusion on this.

As a national museum, Tate essentially houses Britain's art history. The museum conservation department's mission statement begins with, written in bold, "the central role of the Conservation Department is to care for Tate's collection to ensure that it is available for future generations to enjoy"²⁵. This rings similar to the Conservator's code which (to reiterate from my introduction to this chapter) calls for conservators to "act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future". Cultural heritage "constitutes a material and cultural patrimony to be passed on to coming generations" (page 1). Tate takes this responsibility seriously indeed. Further though, Jackie Heuman, Head of Sculpture Conservation at Tate, told me that a principal task of her department is "to preserve art objects in the material state *at the time* they are acquired by Tate"²⁶. The entrance into Tate's ownership and control of an artwork is asserted as a tremendously important moment in an

²⁴ For Alexis Harding's paintings see images 8.14 – 8.16 in chapter 8.

²⁵ <http://www.tate.org.uk/conservation/about/>

²⁶ In person, June 2010

artwork's life. Art objects are to be preserved *in* or *at* these specific moments; they are to be *stopped* and held in an art historical time.

For the museum then, preserving an artwork is about trying to preserve an object in time. In turn though, I raise the question of whether attempting to preserve an art object for art history might also be a matter of relevance? As per my thesis hypothesis, a work of art is more than an object; the experience of an object, what the object *does* is very important. Is it possible that the conservation of what an artwork does at one point in time might be best achieved by an alternative object at a later point in time? For example, in a case-study for the Variable Media Network (which I present more details about shortly), Andrea Rosen, discussed the 'preservation' of Felix Gonzalez-Torres' candy-piles (which I have introduced in previous chapters²⁷). *Untitled (Throat)* (1991) is displayed as a handkerchief with a few cough-drops placed on top. It references the artist's father's illness with throat cancer, and 'Luden's honey-lemon cough drops' was the specific brand that he liked the most and found effective for his symptoms. Unlike other candy-pile works by Gonzalez-Torres, these cough-drops are not meant to be taken by gallery visitors, but nonetheless faced with the question of conserving the artwork, the preservation of organic original sweets was not a sensible option. On the other hand, a few years after the piece was first created, the wrapping for Luden's honey-lemon cough drops changed from a "blue and yellow opaque wrapper" (2003: 96) to (as described by Rosen):

a clear cellophane wrapping with white lettering – a totally different look from the original. Yet in some ways, migration – choosing the up-to-date standard – seemed to connect to the reality of the work for Felix.... this was the only type of candy that helped [his father] feel any better. We posited some potential allegiance to the brand of Luden's honey lemons over the physical look of the piece. Was this right? I'm not sure. Beyond that, an even more radical possible strategy of reinterpretation would be to use inhalers, patches, Claritin or a new drug that didn't exist in Felix's time but is the functional equivalent of what cough drops were in 1991.

(Variable Media Network publication 2003: 97)

²⁷ See *Portrait of Ross* image 5.3 in chapter 5.

Conservation Documentation (& its Stoppages in Time)

The ICON and AIC codes of ethics require that ‘pictorial and written records are kept of all procedures carried out’ on art objects, ‘the rationale behind them’, and ‘copies of the reports must be accessible’. Further, conservator-restorers should aim to “develop programmes, projects and surveys” and “prepare technical reports on cultural heritage.” (ICON page 1). Crucially, these records of research should be available for dissemination; a point emphasised to me in conversations with conservators. Kiffy Stainer and Hugo Platt also explained to me that meticulous documentation is a fundamental rule for all conservation work. All treatments and processes must be recorded with photographs, descriptions, details of materials, and reports of the ways that decisions have been reached.

INCCA²⁸, the organisation that has been developed particularly to address the needs of contemporary art (introduced earlier in the chapter) has a mission statement which is to ‘collect, share and preserve knowledge needed for the conservation of contemporary art’²⁹ including of course any information learned about artists’ intentions. INCCA calls for the documentation compiled by conservators to be published and disseminated with its database. One of INCCA’s ‘governing values’ is for “active participation” and members are required to contribute a minimum of five records a year to the database³⁰. I met conservators who achieve this and more. In turn though, I did not learn of a single account in which a conservator actually *used* information that someone else had added to the database to make decisions over treatments. I question therefore, whether INCCA database’s primary outcome is in the general amassing of documentation towards the creation of a contemporary art historical record.

As I initially discussed in the chapter about Ownership, documentation can enable the definition and control of artworks – in their articulation and physical manifestation details may become *fixed*. Condition reports, installation files with images, and documented responses from artists about intent etcetera, have the potential to stop artworks in the moments in time that the details are recorded. Many artists are hesitant about having specifics about their works eternalised in this way. Paul McCarthy told the audience at the

²⁸ The International Network for the Conservation of Contemporary Art.

²⁹ INCCA letter of commitment for members, version 7 December 2007.

³⁰ INCCA letter of commitment for members, version 7 December 2007.

Object in Transition conference³¹ that *The Garden* (1991) has been re-installed seven times³². It has several books of installation instructions which have been changed and added to for every installation. These changes have been for adjustments to the space, the sourcing of new materials and just because McCarthy has wanted to play with new ideas. In this way, these installation ‘instructions’ are actually just records of the way that the artwork *has been*, and should not be taken as the way that it should *always be*.

The Variable Media Network, an initiative managed by the Guggenheim Museum and the David Langlois Foundation for Art, Science and Technology, is yet another database for the collation, sharing and comparing of information over the preservation of contemporary art. A central aim of this database though is to allow for flexible and divergent ideas of artists and everyone else involved with preservation. While the VMN too acknowledges that artists’ intentions are central³³, it also calls for the “multiple viewpoints” and “qualifications” of conservators, curators, private collectors, institutions and studio assistants and fabricators. John Ippolito, Guggenheim Associate Curator and VMN Coordinator, explains that these “qualifications make the variable media kernel less a set of commandments carved in stone than a matrix of preferences rendered in a fluid digital form” (2003: 52).

As well as the traditional method of preservation in the *storage* of original or replica materials, the VMN also encourages a consideration of whether artworks may be preserved by “*emulation*, which is making the work look the same by different means; *migration*, bringing the work up to date with new technology; or *reinterpretation*, taking a lot of liberty in recreating what the work could possibly mean” (paraphrased from Ippolito’s words in the questionnaire publication [2003: 97]).

Variable Media is defined as “non-traditional” or ephemeral media (2003: 5), but the network has grown out of and continues to be quite focussed on the needs for the preservation of electronic, digital or ‘new media’³⁴. A driving concern is how to deal with

³¹ Getty Institute, Los Angeles, January 2008.

³² For *The Garden* see image 8.3 in previous chapter.

³³ Jon Ippolito said during a presentation for the VMN questionnaire “the variable media approach asks creators to play the central role in deciding how their work should evolve over time” (transcribed in the publication 2003: 47)

³⁴ The website homepage lights up with a variety of words; video-tape, laser-disc, DVD, hard-drive, html, flash, CD, high-definition amongst other electronic phrases. The only non-electronic media it mentions is ‘polyester’ (which stands out as unusual therefore).

technological obsolescence, with reference to one of the VMN's suggestions for preservation (which to reiterate are storage, migration, reinterpretation or emulation). Jon Ippolito wrote to me in an email that he estimates that "around eighty percent of the works in the VMN so far have some electronic component."³⁵

Andrea Rosen, Gallerist and President of the Felix Gonzalez Torres Foundation, is much involved with the Variable Media Network so the artist's candy-piles seemed to act as the beacon non-digital example when the VMN was being developed. These works are obviously 'variable' in that they are depleted and replaced for each installation. When the artist was alive, he also made it explicitly clear that re-interpretations of his work should be expected and even encouraged³⁶.

I believe though that many more non-digital artworks, made with things that do not need to be so obviously and frequently replaced such as the candy-piles, could be defined as 'variable media'. As per previous discussions in this thesis, one could argue that *all* contemporary art objects are 'variable'. *All* matter 'naturally' degrades and changes – even oil paint and stone. But further, what contemporary art exemplifies and even relies on is that time, places, actions and persons' intentions and significances are imbued *within* matter; this kind of 'stuff' is very variable indeed. Amongst the masses of archives and institutional databases that are in existence for the preservation of contemporary art, the Variable Media Network's ethos of 'recording from multiple viewpoints without setting in stone' seems to most closely meet the needs for the preservation of contemporary art. In a nutshell, while the VMN does not insist on a definition of variable media, I suggest that more contemporary artworks should be thought of in this way.

³⁵ Email June 2010.

³⁶ That Gonzalez-Torres bequeathed the responsibility for ensuring his intentions would be met after he died to his dealer Andrea Rosen, is illustrative once more of the intimate and trusting bonds that can exist between dealers and artists.

The Challenges of Contemporary Art Conservation & Preservation

Contemporary art is meant to look bright, new and blingy.

Conservator Kiffy Stainer

What is important is to maintain a piece alive. In the process of conservation or restoration, with the good intention of preserving the piece sometimes, the point should be to keep a piece that has the meaning, and does what the materials are meant to convey, and does the artist's intentions. But in some cases we can see pieces that have been taken beyond that point. I understand that they have a value and that it is important, but there is a limit. We have to understand, that the pieces are not eternal, they are fragile. In a way we have to accept that. (Artist Doris Salcedo³⁷)

From my research that I have presented in this chapter, I learned how decisions are reached over conservation and preservation depending on and much negotiated between the several parties that make, own and maintain artworks. My proposition that artists' intentions are significant to what artworks *are* was revealed to be perhaps, not such a novel idea when I discussed it with conservators. It is well acknowledged that conservators of contemporary art must ask and record answers about artists' intentions over the preservation of their works. Nonetheless, while this is all very well in theory, in practice, artists can find it difficult to articulate 'their intentions'. Moreover, even if artists are able to share discussions with conservators about their ideas for their works, they might not want everything so thoroughly recorded. In the writing down, photography and archiving of all this information might 'intentions' become set? Artists such as Paul McCarthy and David Novros are concerned that artworks may become *fixed* in the definitions that are offered *in* the brief moments in time that they are recorded. Although intentionality is thus a term that is used a great deal in the practices of the artworld, I find it to be a problematic. The concept of artists' distributed personhoods is useful here. This is because, as I proposed in chapter 3, that what it is on an artist that may be distributed in their work, can be conceptual intentions, but other parts of them may be distributed in artworks too. These person parts are not necessarily possible to articulate and record in words and may include for example memories, emotions and relationships. And crucially, it is important to take into account

³⁷ Panel discussion at the Getty Institute, *The Object in Transition*, January 2008.

distributed personhood *over time*. Artists' works are as dynamic as the rest of artists' lives in that they will most likely change and develop.

As I described in my discussion about Ownership, artworks 'belong' to others than artists who may have their own intentions for the lifespans of artworks' materiality. The ethos at Tate is that works in the collection are owned outright by the museum. Tate's conservators go to great lengths to find out from artists about their 'intentions' and this information is extensively documented, formatted and archived. I propose that these details however, maybe essentially about how artists *made* their artworks – they are not about how they *are being made*. The reason that a national museum like Tate does this is because of their responsibilities to posterity and cultural heritage. The goal is to preserve art objects in specific art historical times, the date of acquisition by the museum being one of the most significant times. Of course, as Walter Benjamin pointed out “for the work of art in its traditional form... the presence of the *original* is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (my emphasis 1992: 214). In the art historical museum, objects get their authority further to a physically substantive duration of historical testimony (1992: 215).

In the light of art objects having such historical authority of their own, to aid conservators' navigation through, what can be quite complex negotiations between different parties over preservation, the professional stance is to focus on 'what is best' for art objects? This is more than about conserving raw, material matter. Conservators well know that *within matter* are their histories, artists' intentions (even in their potentially unarticulatable and changeable ways), owners and those who continue to 'make' them, all of these persons' relationships, places and more. In other words, despite attempts to simplify goals by asking what is best for the art object? – *the art object is not a simple thing*. What makes art objects unique and authentic are the complex ways they are assembled among persons, places, times and other things. Art objects are given life this way - these bonds enable art objects to do what they do as works of art.

In an article about him in New Yorker Magazine Rebecca Mead labeled conservator Christian Scheidemann 'the Art Doctor' (2009: 58). Mead's principal theme is to liken the conservator's work on artworks to medical doctors' treatments on living, human patients³⁸.

³⁸ For example, she mentions a Kippenberger that was placed in a protective frame like a “hospital bed” (2009: 58), Scheidemann's studio is ‘light and clean like the best modern hospitals’ (2009: 58), “he's like a surgeon” (2009: 59) one interviewee suggests, and Scheidemann is quoted saying “I

Scheidemann makes a poignant point to Mead with regard to a damaged Reinhardt *Black Painting*:

It is a good study for other paintings – like cutting open a body to look at the organs. But you would no more put it on your wall and say it was an Ad Reinhardt than you would unbury your grandfather's body and say it was your grandfather.

(2009: 64).

While it may be deemed important to preserve 'original' objects, they may be likened to the human body of a person. And just as a body carries a person it is not all there is to that living person, the art object carries the work of art but is not all there is to a living work of art. Many, such as Doris Salcedo quoted above, believe that the goal for conservators of contemporary art should be to "keep artworks alive" for only as long as their bodies can be alive rather than attempting to preserve, in Jon Ippolito's words, "the lifeless carcasses of forsaken mediums" (2003: 47).

So there is a balance to be struck to ensure that works of art are preserved and not what might be better described as historical artefacts. Authenticity for contemporary artworks may reside *in* art objects, but I also suggest that it may reside in what they *do*, the experience that they cause and ideas they generate. That artworks have *lifespans* draws attention to how it is not only what contemporary art objects *do* but *when* they do it that can be significant. I propose that it might be one thing to be representational of an art historical time, but another to be an active, functioning work of art in the present. This is not to contradict, such as with Nelson's *The Coral Reef*, that the histories of certain objects, and therefore their preservation, are important to an artwork. But I wonder whether objects ought to only be preserved to the extent that they enable artworks to happen as they ought to in the present. This question of objects in time, has become important to this thesis and I consider it with greater theoretical depth in my concluding discussion. I continue with the theme in the next chapter though which springs from Conservator Kiffy Stainer's comment that contemporary art must always be "bright and new". Instead of always preserving original objects, I consider how some contemporary artworks might be best able to do what

always say our work is like that of a urologist.. you never talk about it but everybody needs one" (2009: 59).

they do, and are thus perhaps actually kept *authentic*, when materials are repeated and/or replaced.

10. Repeats & Authenticity

In the last chapter, the question was raised as to where authenticity might reside in contemporary artworks. ‘Traditionally’, as per Walter Benjamin’s description (1936) authenticity resides within the *original* object further to ‘its unique existence in time and space’ and its very own history (1992: 214). Unlike ‘traditional’ art materials such as oil paint, marble and bronze, original contemporary art objects may not be unique objects or live long enough to be imbued by history. In his essay about the reproducibility of art, Benjamin’s main example is film, but as I have considered in this thesis, many more kinds of materials are utilised by artists in contemporary art which have short physical lives and/or may be easily copied. They may be utilised for what they achieve in the moment, rather than for their physical endurance over time. Yet, as I present in this chapter, authenticity inferred by objects’ historicities can remain important to some parties’ valuation of artworks. For others what are important are the experiences of artworks in present environments and times. Experience in the here and now may be so essential to contemporary artworks, that to do what they do successfully, some art objects might always have to be *bright and new* (as per Conservator Kiffy Stainer’s description). In this way, instead of preserving original art objects it may be necessary to renew and replace them.

In this chapter, I examine when art materials and objects are copied, replaced and recreated. I describe how in practice decisions are made and control is asserted. Art Historian Martha Buskirk has posed the question “when a copy is a replica, under what circumstances does it become an original?” (2005: 72) I consider how authenticity is assigned and re-assigned, negotiated and re-negotiated among key actors in the making of meaning and value in art. As per my presentations in this thesis so far, I find key actors to be artists, fabricators, institutions, private collectors, dealers, documents and crucially, art objects and materials themselves. The activities of contemporary art materials may cause the need for them to have to be replaced, and this is among the pushing, pulling and tension between human actors in their decisions and control of how, when and why it is done.

Benjamin describes how the Dadaists goal was to destroy the auras of original art objects. They called for an art viewer’s immersion in the sudden events that they set up; their art “hit the spectator like a bullet – (they) happened to him” (1992: 231). While the fact that many artists use of materials that must be replaced illustrates the lasting impact

of these notions on artistic practice, I present in this chapter some observations of contradictions. Over the pages that follow, I describe how the practices of the art market and museums seem to attempt to *reinstate* the auras of 'original' art objects and materials even when they are copies or replacements.

New Media Replacements and Film Copies

In the previous chapter I introduced the Variable Media Network. Although it is not by definition limited to digital, film or other forms of 'New Media', currently around eighty percent of the works included on the VMN do have electronic components. The reason for this is that artworks relying on technology are those most pertinently faced with broken or worn out equipment. There is also a persistent risk of technological obsolescence amongst rapidly developing and changing formats. While there is the matter of ensuring that an artwork has a long lifespan, the other side of the coin is to ensure that easily duplicated formats are only copied, distributed and used in a way that is authorised. For artworks that rely on technology to work and do what they are supposed to do with any longevity, upon their exchange (for exhibition or acquisition) discussions and decisions must take place between artists, collectors and borrowing institutions as to whether and how the media will be replaced and/or updated.

For example 16mm and 35mm film deteriorates quite rapidly with use. An average film lasts for approximately ten viewings. Original negatives and interpositives (which are taken from negatives) of films are rarely exchanged and are usually kept by artists or safeguarded in storage by their gallery representatives. If an artwork on film is acquired therefore, the most 'original *thing*' that collectors tend to receive is an internegative that is taken from an interpositive. The internegative which is provided to the collector as '*the artwork*' is basically a third generation descendent to *the original*. Obviously, most collectors want to view their artworks, but for this they should not use the internegative which *must be kept safe*. Rather, they should view an exhibition print, taken from the internegative (in other words, a fourth generation descendent). The exhibition print may also be loaned to institutions for exhibitions. Film is so limited in the number of times it can be used though, that even exhibition prints should only be watched under formal circumstances. Collectors therefore are also supplied with a copy of a film on DVD for casual *private* viewing on a television and thus without the need for a projector.

Artworks on video are dealt with in a similar way. The most 'original *thing*' – defined as *the* artwork - that a collector tends to receive is a digibeta (a high quality video-cassette) and/or (depending on with what the film was shot) a DVD master. Again though, digibetas and DVD masters should be kept safe and not viewed. For the purpose of private viewing and to enable loans of works to exhibitions, DVD exhibition copies are usually supplied at the outset of their purchase. In short, any film or video artwork viewed in a gallery or museum exhibition will almost certainly be an exhibition copy.

Except for the *label*, DVD exhibition copies are *materially identical* to DVD master copies (the first ones are likely to be placed on DVDs from the same shop-bought box). As an artwork though, an all-important certificate of authenticity accompanies the master. In theory, the master is only an artwork with the certificate. This is highlighted by the pragmatic rule for the shipping of artworks on DVD; do not ship the master and the certificate together. If one goes missing it can be replaced, but if they are lost together, in principle, 'the artwork' is lost¹. During my discussion about Ownership, I described how commercial galleries box film artworks to provide them with a glossy and substantial materiality deemed more suitable for the exchange of large sums of money. Master copies and exhibition copies are packed for collectors in sleek, custom-built boxes which also contain neatly presented installation manuals, artist biographies, artwork bibliographies and, crucially, certificates of authenticity signed by artists and embossed with gallery logos. In their purchase of films in easily copied formats, a collector then receives *something* of an artwork to keep and treasure. It appears to me that these *original* material vessels may also offer something for the auras of works of art to shine around.

Due to the nature of their raw materials, exhibition copies on film must be replaced after only a few viewings. Exhibition copy DVDs though are also easily scratched, made dirty or simply worn out. Exhibition copies of film can be made from internegatives, and (reasonable enough quality although not optimal) exhibition copies of DVDs can be made from other exhibition copies. The rules for making types of copies are something that must be negotiated between collectors, artists and dealers. The outcome will then be written in a contractual agreement. If it is a private collector, in each instance that I have encountered, the gallery has managed and written up the

¹ This really is just in principle. If a master and a certificate of authenticity were lost together, it would be unlikely that an insurance claim for the market value of the artwork would be successful.

contract. If the buyer is an institution, they are likely to have their own contract detailing the agreement according to their own format. Thus in these cases, there will be two contracts, one from the gallery and one from the museum that must be cross-referenced. There may be much to and fro of discussion and negotiation between the museum and the gallery/dealer/artist as agreements are reached. Usually it is agreed that collectors can make additional exhibition copies themselves, but artists and dealers may request a notification when it happens. Since many artists insist on being informed when their works are loaned to exhibitions anyway, this is one way for them to learn of exhibition copies being made. In loan agreements however, it is likely to be outlined that exhibition copies are promptly returned to artists after use. Even though they do not count as 'original artworks', artists and galleries still want and need to be able to control the numbers of copies of a film in circulation.

If a new DVD master is required, collectors can make them from the digibeta. This type of action is very likely to require that a collector notifies the artist and her gallery. If for some reason a new film internegative is required (which should not happen if they are kept safely) collectors will almost certainly have to contact artists and galleries since only they will have the interpositives and original negatives. In some circumstances, artists might actually refuse to make new internegatives. In turn though, if a museum with a reputable conservation department acquires a film, they might be allowed by the artist and dealer to receive the interpositive. In doing so, the artist effectively grants the museum full custodianship of the artwork and the ultimate responsibility for making decisions over its long-term life.

To summarise, the making of copies and updating of film requires several decisions to be made between artists, galleries and collectors about what kinds of copies can be made, with what, by whom, how many, where they are kept, where they may be sent and many more questions besides. Answers can be different in every case. As described in earlier chapters, the three key human participants in the decision making for copies are artists, collectors (private or institutional) and dealers. Control, custodianship and the matter of making copies of film (and other 'new media') is likely to be negotiated and defined as far as possible at the beginning of a relationship in contractual agreements². Because of developing technologies, short material lifespans and exhibition loan requests, the making of copies or migrations may also have to be addressed later in

² It is for this reason, that while I have read many contractual agreements for film artworks, that I am unable to cite specific examples in this chapter because they are confidential legal agreements.

an artwork's life. This creates the need therefore for *ongoing* connections, and *re-* negotiations to be made between artists, owners, dealers vis a vis art objects and the capabilities of materials.

A Very Large-scale Installation Copy

The 'copying' of Cia Guo-Qiang's installation *Inopportune: State One* (2004) is a very good example of a negotiated copy later in an artwork's life. This work is a colossal installation of nine Ford Mercury cars, fitted with long sticks of fibre-optic lights and suspended from the ceiling (image 10.1). *The* artwork is owned by Seattle Art Museum where it is installed in the entrance's atrium. When a loan request for the piece came from the Guggenheim museum for Cia Guo-Qiang's monographic exhibition there in 2008 it would have been an impossible task to remove the physical components from Seattle and relocate them to New York. SAM therefore, *authorised* the creation of an exhibition copy. Lauren Mellon, Chief Registrar at SAM, told me that the legal agreement was concisely between SAM and the Guggenheim³ - Cia Guo-Qiang was not involved. Once the agreement was finalised though, SAM effectively stepped aside from the project, and the creation and installation was planned and overseen between the artist and the Guggenheim. In a webcast film about the installation, curator Alexandra Munroe, says that Cia Guo-Qiang "laboured very carefully over the exact placement of the cars" in the Guggenheim's space and very precise drawings were made. Everything from the engineering to the aesthetics in the space was re-planned by the artist from the Seattle installation. It did not matter that the original materials for the work remained in Seattle. In New York, the artist just wanted the art objects to achieve the right effect – his intended experience of it – in the new space.

Although Seattle Art Museum was not at all involved in the fabrication of the exhibition copy or the physical installation, their ownership of the piece was made prominent at the Guggenheim. The wall label and exhibition publication credit line read:

Inopportune: Stage One, 2004. Nine cars and sequenced multichannel light tubes, Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Robert M. Arnold, in honour of the 75th Anniversary of the Seattle Art Museum, 2006. Exhibition copy installed at Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2008.

³ This was a confidential contract so I was unable to see it, but Lauren Mellon verified this specific point to me in an e-mail, January 2010.

It is important to stress that the installation at the Guggenheim was not an edition or re-creation but an ‘exhibition copy.’ At the end of the Guggenheim show, the copy travelled all the way to the Taipei Fine Arts Museum and the Biennial of Sydney. In these locations too, it was emphasised that this was an artwork on loan from SAM – not the artist and not the Guggenheim (even though the touring exhibition as a whole was organised by the latter). After Sydney, by rights SAM could have requested the return of the exhibition copy to Seattle. The museum decided, however, that this would not happen, because of the shipping costs from Sydney as well as the logistics and costs of storage and maintenance of the cars and everything else in Seattle⁴. Ultimately, the decision-making around the copy of this artwork was defined first and foremost by the colossal materiality of the artwork; the control of this was largely dictated by its owner Seattle Art Museum.

Re-creations

The work of Gustav Metzger, the architect of Auto-destructive art, has been much shown and ‘re-created’ this last decade in exhibitions and biennials all over the world. Aged 85 in 2011, Metzger’s political activism has been re-ignited by environmentalism and climate change. Always a staunch critic of the art market and commercial gallery system, the market boom of the last decades has also met with his great disdain. It is well acknowledged that the ‘limited edition’ is primarily a market strategy to enable multiple copies of an artwork to be sold while limiting and controlling numbers to keep artistic ‘auras’ of inimitability and rarity (see Buskirk 2005: 73). In part it seems to distinguish his works from editions, Metzger purposefully calls many of his works ‘recreations’ when they are installed in new spaces. In 2009, the Serpentine held an exhibition of Metzger’s work titled *Decades: 1959-2009* which, as the name suggests, showed the artists’ major works of those fifty years. Yet as per his recreations, it was purposefully not called a retrospective; it did not show the artist’s works from the past, it showed his works in the present.

New contexts are essential to Metzger’s recreations. Metzger explained his perspective on this to Andrew Wilson with reference to *Project Stockholm*. This piece was first created for a UN conference in Stockholm in 1972. In 2007 it was recreated for the Sharjah Biennial. Metzger explained:

⁴ This was implied but not confirmed in my correspondence with Nicholas Dorman & Lauren Mellon at Seattle Art Museum.

A work we made consisted of 100 cars within a tent; a plastic covered structure. During the last week of Sharjah, the cars were running into that structure. It is a re-make on a large scale of a model which was made for an exhibition at Galeria Holz, London in the spring of '72... The model was displayed with 120 cars and the project was outlined in that exhibition and the Documenta catalogue. To try to answer your question - It is a reconstruction of a model but on a large scale, on a one to one scale, decades later. And it is a *new* work and so the answer it is quite complex....

Wilson: Do you feel that the meaning of the work changes materially in its re-making? The context will demand that perhaps?

Metzger: Yes, it was originally meant for Stockholm Sweden, it was now made in a very hot climate under completely different political conditions than had it been made for in Sweden....

(29th March 2008, Tate Modern)

In Sharjah then, *Project Stockholm* was dated 2007 and not 1972 when it was first made. The place, time and experience of it were all new. Metzger's strategy of dating his recreations is quite unique. Obviously as per the nature of 'auto-destructive' art, the artworks' materials have to be replaced. But compare this with other artists' works, such as to Felix Gonzalez Torres 'candy spills' for example, that also requires the replacing of materials for each installation with a replenished stock of sweets. These works are always dated the year that Gonzalez-Torres first devised them (such as *Untitled [Portrait of Ross]* [1991] that I wrote about in previous chapters⁵). With Metzger's recreations though, they are not artworks made in the 1960s and shown again and again. When they are created, they are always created anew, and so it is always the dates of the year of a present exhibition which is stated.

In earlier chapters I introduced Metzger's *Liquid-Crystal Environment*⁶. This was created for the first time in 1965, and has been re-created since in Zurich, Oxford, Liverpool and London. The work is produced by liquid crystals placed between slides of glass. The slides are heated and mounted onto projectors. As the liquid crystals cool, they produce many colours that are projected onto a dark wall. What I find fascinating about *Liquid Crystal Environment* at the Serpentine exhibition is that while for most other

⁵ For *Portrait of Ross* see image 5.2 in chapter 5.

⁶ For *Liquid Crystal Environment* see image 5.2 in chapter 5.

recreations in the show, the wall-labels and accompanying exhibition catalogue were dated 2009, this work was dated 2005-2009. The reason for this is that Tate acquired the work in 2005 and at the Serpentine it was a loan from Tate. It was on the museum's insistence that this highly significant date for them became a part of what this artwork was. While Metzger's recreation was made in 2009, Tate has pushed its significance as owner of it to the forefront; the museum has made its ownership a part of the historicisation of the artwork. Despite the artist's wish that his recreations are not historical artworks but are experienced in the present moment, as its owner, Tate has enforced a history on it nonetheless.

Production Control

As introduced in my discussion about the fabrication of objects, the fabrication workshop MDM carries out a great deal of technical research to create art objects with a seemingly unlimited range of materials. Often the first task is to devise the right type of mould. Lynn Thompson at MDM told me that they need to know whether editions, copies or re-makes will be required for an artwork at the time of making the mould. This is so they can either make it out of materials durable enough for multiple uses and medium-term storage, or the mould can be made out of something that has to work only once. Editions and copies may only need to be made when being sold or required for an exhibition. The lapse between the fabrication of first and later versions therefore can be several years. In the meantime, moulds need to be stored and cared for; so entailing an ongoing connection between MDM's owner, Nigel Schofield, its workshop technicians, the artist, and the artwork. This provides further evidence that although these relationships are not in the artworld limelight, fabricators' tasks are not always the one-time 'alienated' jobs they might seem.

The moulds created at AB Foundry are made in a more limited range of plastics and silicones than those of MDM. If cared for properly, they are hardwearing enough for multiple use over several years. Even if sculptures are to be unique and not editioned, the foundry tends to keep moulds in case the objects need to be re-cast because of damage or degradation. Returning to the example of Marvin Oliver's sculpture *Sister Orca* (2008) (also introduced in my discussion about Fabrication) Blue Mountain Foundry had kept the twenty-six foot mould of the fin from *Spirit of Our Youth* (1996) for fifteen years even though it was not an edition. While there is good reason to keep moulds therefore, they do represent quite considerable storage and maintenance

facilities and costs. AB Foundry occupies a substantial building in East London yet their ever-growing collection of moulds and models are taking up more and more space; storage areas have overflowed into the corridors. During a conversation in one of the crowded yet orderly corridors I asked about who ‘owned’ the moulds and models and who therefore is responsible for their storage and care? Are they ‘owned’ by the artists whose work is physically borne of them, the foundry who makes them, or perhaps a gallery, if they have paid for the job? The Foundry worker could only reply that it was a “grey area”. I did though learn of a case in which an artist had not paid the foundry for the work that they had carried out, so they restricted his access to the works’ moulds and models.

As mentioned in earlier chapters when I introduced the work of neon-maker Kerry Ryan, neons have a finite material life-span. The average physical life-expectancy of a neon is about four years. If a neon artwork is lit perpetually for an exhibition over a few months, parts, if not the entire thing, will need to be replaced at the end of the exhibition. As well as the light mechanism having a finite lifespan, the glass is extremely fragile, so breakages are also often found after movement and storage.

A significant amount of Kerry’s work therefore is *replacing* neons. To be clear, it must be emphasised that Kerry replaces neon materials and not an artwork. *The* original artwork’s life continues uninterrupted since it maintains its title, date, certificate of authenticity and ownership. Kerry explained to me though that every replaced neon object is always a little different to the first or former ones. This is because each one is shaped separately by hand. Further, the raw materials of neons are made by different manufacturers, who like paint manufacturers, may over time change their colours or other supplies. Often colours become obsolete. When I met him in his workshop, Kerry had just returned from a trip to Murano, Italy where he had ‘bought-up’ some 2.5 metre length neon sticks of colours that had just ended. I asked whether it was necessary to buy and store colours ready for when neons need to be replaced. But Kerry shook his head; “not really” he said, if or when the time comes, he just does his best to find the next closest colour match.

What makes more difference to ensuring that replaced neons look as similar as possible to the first ones, is that Kerry replaces the neons that he made before. This is because different neon-makers, even working from template drawings supplied by artists, make them in slightly but visibly different ways. If a collector is keen to keep their collection in the formal, organised and strictly documented fashion that museums and

handbooks such as *Owning Art* (Buck & Greer 2006) recommend, they should liaise with the galleries from which they made the purchase to have the neon re-made. This helps to ensure that the neon-maker who made the first can be recruited to make the replacement. It also helps to ensure that the replacement is documented and formally *authorised*. In practice, I learned however, that the procedure may be less formal. Since Kerry Ryan is often in direct contact with collectors over maintenance and installation, he may decide not to ‘bother’ galleries and just go ahead with repairs and replacements by himself. Kerry also works very closely with several artists, particularly with Tracey Emin for example, and she is probably made aware of most replacements that he makes anyway, it is just that the message is passed along informally. Kerry knows very well what is important to her and he can easily consult with her if questions are raised, such as for example, tubing manufacturers’ adjustments of colours. As I have mentioned before, Kerry’s is not one for formal paperwork. He works directly with artists, and it seems that in the area of the artworld he occupies, work is carried out spontaneously and decisions are reached pragmatically, rather than formally and bureaucratically.

As is the conservation rule, I asked Kerry if, when approached to replace neons he did not make the first time such as those for Joseph Kosuth and Bruce Nauman, whether he tries to contact the artists. He replied “not always”; he does not feel it is always necessary to “hassle” them with it. Kerry also told me about a tremendously large Jason Rhoades neon installation that he had to materially replace after Rhoades’ death in 2006⁷. Kerry had not made the neon the first time, had never seen the work before and was contacted directly by the collector. The artwork had been purchased by the collector at auction, but upon opening the crate after a spell in storage, the many neon parts were in a dilapidated state. Because it was bought at a Sotheby’s auction sale, the dealer had no connection with the artist’s gallery Hauser & Wirth, who have managed Rhoades’ ‘estate’ since his death. The entire task of re-making the neon parts for this work therefore was planned between Kerry and the collector. Kerry replaced all the neon by studying photographs of previous installations, the hard-copy of the installation instructions packed in the crate and by making templates from the ‘original’ broken pieces. Yet, since the artwork had been bought by the collector at Sotheby’s, whereby he took ownership of its certificate of authenticity and installation instructions – there

⁷ For an example of a large Jason Rhoades’ neon installation see image 8.10 in chapter 8 (although this is not the actual work that Ryan contributed towards as I describe in this chapter).

was no question that, while Kerry carried out a material refabrication in 2009, this was an ‘original’ and authentic Jason Rhoades work of art *from* 2001.

Insurance and the Inherent Vices of Materiality

The remaking or replacing of art objects is genuinely very interesting from the perspective of art insurance. It sounds boring, but surprisingly I found it to be one of the most interesting areas of my research overall. This is because insurers and loss adjustors have to make judgements about the loss or maintenance of the monetary value of artworks with regard to material deterioration, loss or damage. Insurance professionals have a central perspective and play a crucial role in the decision-making about the maintenance of original objects versus their replacement or repair.

Natural processes of change or degradation that is inherent to materiality – entropy in other words – is termed ‘inherent vice’ in insurance. Inherent vice cannot be insured against. For example, at the Alvear gallery booth in the warm, indoor temperature at Frieze 2009 I noticed condensation forming at the top of the tank of Santiago Serra’s *200 Litres of Water From the Dead Sea* (2007) (introduced in earlier chapters). A gallery representative told me that they had a few bottles of spare Dead Sea water to keep it topped-up to 200 litres but obviously these would not last forever. I asked Loss Adjustor Mark Dalrymple whether an owner could claim on their insurance for the expenses of replacing the water once the spare bottles had been used. Mark said this was “a very good example of inherent vice”⁸ and that a claim would most likely be unsuccessful for the top-up water which would be better defined as a maintenance cost. He told me:

Insurance policies usually exclude loss from changes in atmospheric temperature, which would exclude the claim unless the work was kept at a suitable ambient temperature or humidity level. Bear in mind, that the main purpose of insurance is to indemnify against an 'accident' – a sudden event which may or not happen. In [the Serra example] [condensation] WILL happen by virtue of the environment it is in and the nature of the thing it is!

(E-mail October 2009)

If, however, someone punctured the tank causing the escape and loss of the water - the cost would probably be covered under insurance as it is a sudden event -

⁸ Paraphrased from an e-mail from Mark Dalrymple to me October 2009

malicious or accidental and it would not matter whether or not it was an 'all risks' policy. The issue then would be whether the insurance company would pay for the tank and the water to be replaced, or whether the entire artwork would be deemed lost, in which case the collector would receive a pay-out at the full monetary value of the artwork. The question would need to be taken up with the artist and the Alvear Gallery. The Loss Adjustor's job would be as negotiator between the collector, the insurance company, the gallery and the artist, and perhaps the fabricators of the tank.

If unique and utterly non-replaceable artworks are lost or damaged, insurance claims at an artwork's full-market value may be submitted. The matter can become quite complicated though for damaged or lost readymades, found objects, prints, manufactured and fabricated items, all of which, in theory at least, are replaceable.

Peter Milne, from the insurance company Arthur J. Gallaghers, told me about a case⁹ in which an empty cardboard box included in an installation had been thrown away by accident. The artist, who had originally found the box in a skip, declined to try to find another box to replace the lost one and he absolutely refused the suggestion of making a replica. His original finding of the first box in the skip was important to what the artwork achieved and this could not be replicated. Although the cardboard box was only one small element of a fairly large installation, in this instance, the artwork was deemed 'lost'. The collector received an insurance payout at the full market value of the artwork.

Loss Adjustors have a unique view over questions of replacing objects versus deeming artworks lost at the demise of objects, since the principal point of their job is to make impartial judgements. Loss adjustors are trained in insurance, but are independent advisors to all parties involved in an insurance claim. Mark Dalrymple, who coincidentally¹⁰ was also involved in the case I have just described over the damaged cardboard box, told me that first and foremost, his decision is based on the answer from the artist. Even if Mark personally feels that artists are being unreasonable and difficult, if they say that an item cannot be replaced, artists' words once given are rarely questioned again by him. If artists deem artworks lost, his recommendation is that collectors receive insurance claims at full-market value. There are, however, financial incentives for artists to cooperate with insurers and to agree to replace or restore materials. This, Mark explained, is to avoid increases in the premiums of artists' own insurance policies and for

⁹ All parties involved must remain anonymous.

¹⁰ I learned that Peter Milne and Mark Dalrymple are acquainted with each other in the insurance industry, but they work for different organisations and I met them separately.

those of the collectors of their work; the logic being that collectors might be deterred from purchasing an artist's works if they are very expensive to insure. In other words, artists too might be swayed in their decisions about repeats by market forces and financial considerations.

The Dynamics of Authenticity

Crucial actors that necessitate the replacing of contemporary art objects are contemporary art objects themselves. In contrast to 'traditional' art media, due to the natures of their raw materials many art objects *must* be replaced if a contemporary artwork is to do what it is meant to do and have any length of a lifespan. New Media may have to keep up with rapidly developing technological formats and hardware becoming obsolete. Neons burn so bright they burn out. With artworks moving around so much on the international exhibition circuit and sometimes in such monumental proportions as *Inopportune: State One* it may be logistically necessary for new objects to be sourced and assembled at new sites, instead of attempting to ship and install 'original' materials. This is not to say, that 'new' works of art are created with new materials; *one* artwork may exist irrespective of how many physical copies exist or how many times it is materially refabricated. The important thing for Cia Guo-Qiang was to make his work achieve what he wanted for it in a different space - the histories of the objects he used were irrelevant. All in all, the difference between art objects and artworks is again laid bare; an original work of art does not rely on original art objects, but can be applied to new and different objects over and again. This is not, however, to suggest that copies and replacements can be perpetually repeated – numbers and contexts are strictly controlled by key human actors who make and own them.

So authenticity is constructed and *negotiated*. This is not an especially novel anthropological insight. The findings of my research correspond with anthropologist Brian Spooner's famous ethnography about oriental rugs. He observed that while the criteria for authenticity *can* involve a thing's age and testament to history, style, geographic origin and physical condition amongst other details, authenticity is essentially something *vague* and *elusive* (2001: 220). My short answer to Martha Buskirk's question of "when does an replica become an original"? (2005: 72) is: when those who control an artwork say so. But further, just as with the making of much meaning in art, I find that authenticity is not created just once at the time of production, but is *re-made*, *re-assigned* and *re-negotiated throughout* artworks' lives.

Unsurprisingly, in theory artists play the ultimate role in the authorisation to make and later control repeated and copies of art objects; replacements are first and foremost authorised by authors (as the shared etymology would suggest). This is evidenced by the decision-making process of art loss adjusters who are duty-bound to approach matters concerning the replacement of materials or deeming artworks lost impartially. However, adherences to artists' intentions are all very well until they do not match those of other artwork stakeholders. Although their role is subtly 'behind the scenes' (this does not mean less important) I observed how fabricators continue to have roles over the decision-making of copied or replaced materials. And as Brian Spooner found with his ethnography, dealers, paying consumers and other establishment and market forces seem to be particularly concerned with rarity and a criteria for authenticity that involves the testament to history of objects (2001: 197).

Walter Benjamin expected that the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction would eliminate the phony *auras* of works of art (1992: 215). As per so many of the examples of artworks that I have presented in this thesis made with ephemeral and short-lived materials, this notion has been embraced by artists' practices and art theory. My research, in turn, for this chapter illuminated a contradiction with the ways that artworks may be dealt with in practice in market and museum systems. I observed evidence to suggest that market forces and institutions continue to value authenticity as inferred by the historicities of original objects. It seems attempts are made to reinstate auras by enforcing and revering histories of connections among people, places and institutions and other artworks. If this cannot be achieved with single long lasting art objects, it may be aided with other material things such as contracts, containers and most obviously, certificates of authenticity. The tension between art market and establishment fixations on auras and authentic objects on the one hand versus artists and art objects' goals for what we might call authentic experiences of the moment on the other, is highlighted further in the next chapter in which I examine material destruction.

11. Destruction & Afterlives

It is a great shame when a work of art is destroyed.

Miss Marple (Agatha Christie¹)

As Miss Marple suggests, the common assumption is that works of art are not meant to die. As I have described in earlier chapters, museum conservators go to great lengths to preserve and keep them. Art historian Dario Gamboni, who has written an excellent book on iconoclasm and the destruction of art, has stated (and lamented) that the topic has largely been ignored by art historians because of the discomfort it causes. He writes; “Louis Reau saw it as a kind of taboo.. and David Freedberg, considered that “the lack of interest is the same as repression” (2007: 37). Iconoclasm - the wilful act of damaging or destroying works of art, (Gamboni 2007: 17-20) – has many times borne testament to the powerful aversion that may be felt in response to the destruction of art. The militant Suffragette Mary Richardson’s slashing of the Velasquez Rokeby Venus caused “outrage” in 1914². More recently what seemed to be the first thing that brought the Taliban into disdained household consciousness was the demolition of the Buddhas of Bamyan in March 2001. In an earlier chapter, I wrote about how Anya Gallaccio’s columns of salt sculptures *Two Sisters* (1998) disintegrated in the bay in Hull much more quickly than, and not quite so prettily as, she and the ‘Art Trans-Pennine’ festival organisers had expected. While this did not cause Gallaccio much concern, local people in Hull and the press were critical of the quick to disappear sculpture. The Sunday Times headline read “Down the Pan: Tide flushes away £60,000 Hull 'toilet roll' sculpture³. The Hull Daily Mail wrote about “The Sinking Feeling of Floating Art⁴. For £60,000,

¹ *At Bertram’s Hotel*, BBC Production 1989.

² *National Gallery Outrage, Suffragist Prisoner in Court*. The Times, 11th March 1914 re-printed in the South London Gallery’s ‘newspaper pamphlet’ January-March 2010, Issue 26.

³ January 28th, 1998 by Jon Ungoes-Thomas.

⁴By Chris Sloane, May 23, 1998. And there were a host of other critical articles such as; *River takes an early toll on Hiscox Two Sisters*, Insurance Times, July 2, 1998, by Roger Scott: *The £60,000 loo roll* Daily Mail, May 25, 1998 by Alastair Taylor: *£60,000 lotto cash for chalk 'loo roll' dumped in the sea*, The Sun, May 25, 1998 by Sam Taylor: *Can you tell a masterpiece from a pile of old rubbish?*, Daily Mail, May 29, 1998: *Two sisters take to the water*, The Staff Newsletter, May/June 1998: Jon Ungoes-Thomas (really did not like it!), *Hull watches its £60,000 sculpture dissolve in tide*, The Sunday Times, June 28, 1998. *Controversy in the arts column*, Yorkshire Post, May 23, 1998 by Alexandra Wood: *River site for vanishing art*, Hull Daily Mail by Angus Young May 5, 1998.

allegedly people in Hull wanted a lasting, solid work of art, preferably pleasing to the eye, 'to show for it.'

I do not believe that it was Gallaccio's conscious intention to shock and cause a disturbance with her artwork, perhaps because she takes contemporary art cannons for granted. Contemporary art *is* iconoclastic. Duchamp's *Fountain* was the ultimate iconoclastic work; it was an attack on the art establishment and their dictates for the precious and autonomous art object as work of art. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Walter Benjamin wrote about how the goal of Duchamp's Dada counterparts was in the "relentless destruction of the aura of artists' creations" (1992: 231). Bruno Latour has said of the contemporary art which followed that it is:

Generations of iconoclasts smashing each other's faces and works. A Fabulous large-scale experiment in nihilism. A maniacal joy in self-destruction. A hilarious sacrilege. A sort of deleterious anionic inferno.

(2003: 21)

In this chapter, I present artworks that quite literally involve the destruction of art objects and materials. In these instances, the artists draw on the expectation that art objects – as works of art – ought not to be destroyed. Yet, once again with respect to my thesis hypothesis, there is a difference between the destruction of objects and the destruction of works of art. As the artworks I introduce demonstrate, *destruction* may give rise to *creation*. Works in one form come to an end, and are then transformed into something else. It is as if artworks' life forces are able to continue, they are still active, but are given new forms to carry out their tasks.

Destruction, death and afterlives are favoured topics for much ethnography and anthropological theory. In this chapter I consider how just as persons are given ceremonies for the social transformation from life to the afterlife, the deaths of art objects may also be met with ritual. As I have suggested in earlier chapters, art objects and materials can provide physical bodies for artworks. Susanne Kuechler (1987) and Hans Belting (2003) have written about how the dead are given bodies and presences with materiality with which the living are able to continue their active relationships. With this chapter, I describe how works of art may be given new material vessels to continue their 'social lives' after the demise of their 'original' bodies.

The destruction of material wealth has also been much discussed with reference to the power plays of the potlatch. Once again this chapter is about control in the

artworld, and I consider authority and decision-making for the destruction of art objects and what happens afterwards. I explore how Marcel Mauss (1925) and Georges Bataille's (1967) classic accounts of the potlatch and sacrifice may shed some interesting light on the motivations of artists to destroy.

Ceremonies for Destruction and Disposal

During a symposium at Cambridge archaeologist & anthropologist Chris Gosden explained how waste disposal sites are archaeologically fascinating because much may be learned from what and how things are thrown away⁵. Different kinds of things are disposed of in different ways. In the last chapter I wrote about how some contemporary art objects may have to be replaced so 'original', old, damaged or 'used-up' objects will be disposable. What I learned during the course of my research however, is that the simple throwing of materials that were once part of artworks into skips does not seem to be acceptable. Neon-maker Kerry Ryan, much of whose work is for the replacement of neons, never throws old neons away – his workshop is covered from top to bottom with used, mostly non-functioning neon parts.

It is expected that neons will be in need of replacement, but if an art object is *accidentally* damaged, and an agreement is reached among the crucial parties to re-make it, I learned that there are procedures and conventions to dispose of the original. I encountered a few instances in which decisions were reached to re-print damaged photographic prints. I observed then that the original prints were discarded – put to rest - with a level of ceremony. Daniel Miller has suggested, that the problem with death is that it is usually unexpected and unplanned. The reason for ritual and ceremony around death, is so that the unplanned biological death is replaced with a planned social death (2009: 146).

The common procedure for disposing of an original print is started by cutting it into pieces with scissors or sliced with a stanley-knife. Each slice may be photographed, which could be up to fifty times for the destruction of a single 1.5 metre square print. The pieces are then placed in a sealed rubbish bag which is photographed, and another photograph may be taken of its disposal in the skip. A declaration will be written (probably by the party who carried out the procedure such as a curator, gallery technician or art handler) stating when and where the print was destroyed. The declaration will be

⁵ *Art & Agency: Ten Years On* CRAASH, November 2008.

filed with the photographs of the procedure, and copies of this file are likely to be sent to the artist's studio, their dealer/gallery, and the owner of the artwork.

While this is a fairly standard course of action, I learned of a case from a gallery director which entailed even more formality. The situation also highlights the stake sets of parties involved in the decisions over the re-making and the destruction of originals⁶. A large framed photograph in a museum collection was being re-installed to a different wall in the museum. The building has a platform system for the movement of the collection between floors. The framed photograph was insecurely fastened on the platform, and when it was raised it came loose from its ties, falling forward off the platform and crashing to the ground several meters below. The frame shattered and the print was sliced and crumpled. An art handler, who was not involved with the incident but heard the crash and saw its aftermath, described the scene to me as "carnage" and said that it made him "feel physically sick".

An insurance claim was made for the purchase value of the piece, but, the sum would not be granted by the insurance company until a request was made to the artist to consider re-printing the work. The insurance company also carried out an extensive investigation into the incident to identify culpability.

Although the artist keeps negatives and digital files of her images, she is firm in her position that she *does not* reprint photographs. Once approved, titled, signed and framed her prints are unique, original and non-replaceable. Nonetheless, the artist, the museum director and the dealer were close acquaintances (friends) and the artist had recently joined the museum board of trustees. On this occasion only therefore, the artist agreed to allow a re-print. The insurance company paid the six-figure sum (still considerably less than the purchase value of the artwork) for the cost of the re-print, the re-framing and the transport.

It is worthwhile to note that the museum, the artist's studio, the dealer, and the insurance company each resided in different countries. As the artist and her studio staff began work on the re-print, the shattered remains of the first print and frame were transported to the insurance company's headquarters. Here, the gallery director that I spoke to was required to travel and attend its formal and complete destruction. This was also attended by a notary, a photographer and an art handler who carried out the procedure. The print was first sliced into small pieces with a knife and the few sections with evidence of the artist's signature were set to one side. The rest of the pieces were

⁶ All parties must remain anonymous.

then fed into a sophisticated shredding machine used by banks and governments to destroy official documentation.

The event was documented with photographs as well as a film. A written declaration that the print had been destroyed was signed by the witnesses and notarised. Copies of all of these were sent to the artist's studio along with some of the pieces of the print that bore evidence of the signature. It was only upon receipt of those that the new print was 'released' from the studio for framing. Then the 'new' yet 'original' and still unique artwork was transported 'back' to the museum store.

Bill Drummond: \$20,000

In 1996 Bill Drummond bought a Richard Long photograph via Anthony D'Offay gallery for \$20,000. It was titled *A Smell of Sulphur in the Wind (A Southward walk of 220 miles in 14 days across the middle of Iceland)* (1994) (illustration 11.1). The image was of a stone circle in a very remote part of Iceland that Long had walked to alone as the title suggests. In Drummond's own words, he 'fell in love with Richard Long's work because' "it was art by walking and doing things on his walks." (2002: ii)

After a few years though, Drummond felt that he 'wasn't looking at the print enough to get his money's worth' (2010: 27). He decided to sell the print for exactly the same sum that he had paid. He had the idea that upon receiving the \$20,000 for the print, that he would walk to the remote place in Iceland where Richard Long had made the photograph, bury the \$20,000 cash in a box beneath the stone circle, take his own photograph of the site, bring it home, frame it, hang it in the same place in his house as the Richard Long, and call the new work *The Smell of Money Underground*.

To sell the piece to obtain the cash, Drummond's first idea was to drive across Britain placing 'For Sale' plaques along the way, and meeting people in coffee shops and other places to give his sales pitch. He did not find a buyer this way. He thus decided to cut the Long print and its mounting card into 20,000 pieces and to sell each piece for \$1. It is important to note that both the print and mounting card were cut up, because, in Drummond's words in his book about the venture "according to the artist, Richard Long, the whole thing was a work of art". The label on the back stated "that the artwork measured 1.12 x .81metres" which included both the print and the mounting card (2009: 151). He cut the print and the mounting card up by making a grid, and then gave each piece a coordinate (see reverse of illustration 11.1).

At first, Drummond sold some pieces on a gallery tour where the system was as follows:

At the one end of the gallery space would always be the Richard Long lying in its oak box on the table. It was like an altarpiece. After the gallery visitor had read everything they were supposed to have read, they could come over and look at it. Touch it. Smell it. Marvel at the way it was falling apart. They could go through the process of buying a piece. They could then put their name, email address, the coordinates of the piece that they had bought and the date in the book that I had made for everyone to do this. As well as documenting something for me to look at and think 'Look at all these people who are into what I am doing', I can use the information there to email everyone of them once I've sold the lot and am off to Iceland to bury the money.

(Drummond 2010: 127)

Drummond was creating a painted sign the same size as the Long piece which read 'SOLD'. On this he drew a grid with 20,000 squares of the same coordinates as the Long print. Once each piece of the Long object was sold its corresponding square on the 'SOLD' sign would be filled in:

As a Smell of Sulphur in the Wind disappears this painting grows... one artwork appears as the other is disintegrating... At one of the talks someone asked what I was going to do with the painting when it had all been filled in by 20,000 artists who had been part of making it. I didn't know. As far as I was concerned, it only worked as a work of art as long as it was still in the process of being filled in.

(Drummond 2010: 127)

When Bill Drummond met Richard Long in person, the latter wanted to know why *he* had been chosen by Bill to have his "go at the artworld". Drummond had to hastily explain that the act was nothing against Richard Long personally. Yet again, this illustrates the problem with the notion of artists' intentions. Although an artist might want an artwork to do something, it might do something else. Drummond's intention with this destructive – iconoclastic - act was aimed at this expensive work of art as an autonomous object that had stopped doing what it was supposed to do for him. What Drummond wanted was to kick-start this work of art back into action – to make it do creative work again. As Bruno Latour has written of some of the artworks in an exhibition about iconoclasm - "there was no way to know.. whether they were

destructive or constructive” (2002: 14). For this art, there is no dichotomy between creation and destruction; destruction enabled another creative act to happen. This art for Drummond, its objects, materials and other participating persons had embarked on an *ongoing* activity of destruction, creation and change.

Michael Landy’s *Art Bin*

In January 2010, artist Michael Landy created *Art Bin* at the South London Gallery. For six weeks artists and other owners of artworks were invited to bring art objects to a 600³ m volume container made from reinforced see-through polycarbonate to dispose of them (image 11.2).

Landy has described the *Art Bin* as a ‘monument to collective failure’⁷ and ‘a testament to the difficulty of making good art’⁸. The production of ‘successful’ works of art is often - arguably inevitably - further to trial, error and failure. *Art Bin* offered a chance to publically and collectively confront this and the vulnerability that artists experience in the making and showing of art. Of course the press enjoyed themselves with headlines about contemporary art being ‘rubbish’⁹. Landy made clear, however, that *Art Bin* was not a rubbish bin but a ‘ruin’. Individual artworks lost their individuality in the bin and the event was about the collective experience of making art and forging personal connections with it. Michael told me, he hoped people would bring art objects that were meaningful to them to the bin, so that the loss would be sacrificial in some way. While some people did come for the fun of the throw, and brought insignificant art objects that could be discarded *because* of their lack of attachment, others did bring more meaningful things. I contacted one contributor, Artist Margaret Sharrow, who took the task quite seriously. She told me:

First I.. brought one work, on paper, mixed media, from a previous solo show. As I was travelling to London from a distance I didn't want to bring a large canvas etc. and was oddly concerned with keeping it pristine in a tube until I got there. When I realised that other people were throwing in multiple works I decided to visit *Art Bin* a second time with a rucksack full of work, mostly from my second year of my BA in fine art, in various media. (Email May 2010)

⁷ This became a slogan for the Art Bin and was quoted in most of the press. See for example

⁸ Panel discussion, *Destruction in Art*, Camberwell Art’s College, 8th March 2010.

⁹ For examples, The Observer, Sunday 17th January 2010, *Michael Landy: Modern Art is Rubbish* and The Times, *Art Bin: It’s official, modern art is rubbish* 27/12/09

While Landy's famous friends such as Damien Hirst, Gary Hume and Tracey Emin added art objects to the bin for the benefit of publicity, anyone could apply to contribute. Applications could be made on-line or people could bring things themselves where Landy himself, always in attendance during opening times, would give the okay according to legal and ethical criteria. To be clear, Landy's moral judgements were not based on the artistic *merits* of the artworks - it was not for him to decide whether works were failures or otherwise. The declaration that participants were required to complete closed with the crucial statement:

Art Bin exists to promote art and not denigrate it. It is in no way the intention of Michael Landy or the SLG to comment on the quality of any work placed and/or disposed of in Art Bin.

All contributors to the bin had to declare on the form that they were either the lawful owners or authors of the art objects¹⁰. Simon Parris, Programme Manager at the SLG, explained to me¹¹ that the creation of the form was further to some legal research and consultation. As per what I learned from my research about ownership, Landy, Parris and his colleagues learned that in Britain lawful owners of artworks with verifying documentation have outright legal rights over what physically happens to *their* art objects. On the other hand, and with reference to my discussion about artists' inalienability and the Droit de Suite law, authors' moral rights over their artworks may hold sway too, even in a legal situation¹².

Michael told me¹³ that a very small minority of people were turned away from adding to the bin because they were unable to prove that they were either lawful owners or moral authors. But, on the whole, Michael said that notably very few non-artists actually came to add to the bin. Even in the ceremonial way of *Art Bin*, the throwing away of artworks which are not of one's own creation, consciously or unconsciously, is seen to be ethically questionable.

It was very important that artworks were appropriately handled and treated with the 'respect of art' until the moment they were dropped in the bin. As per Georges

¹⁰ See Appendix 3 for copy of Art Bin declaration.

¹¹ In an e-mail May 2010.

¹² Dr. Charlotte Waelde, Professor of Intellectual Property Law, Edinburgh University, explained to me in an e-mail (May 2010) that in Britain, artists' moral rights vis a vis owner's lawful rights are less powerful than several other European countries, but they are significant nonetheless.

¹³ Telephone conversation, June 2010.

Bataille's discussion of Aztec sacrifice, it was essential to the ritual that before being gruesomely killed, those selected were lavishly treated and handled with the utmost respect and care (1988: 49-51). To reiterate, artist Margaret Sharrow "was oddly concerned with keeping [her's] pristine in its tube until it got there" too. Larger artworks and those from wealthier sources were delivered by fine art shippers. While some artists organised this for themselves, the art handling company Wright Gallery Services were on call for the SLG to make collections. Either artists or professional art handlers – white gloves and all – carried the artwork materials up the stairwell to the bin.

Upon entering the bin, art objects went through a fascinating transformation between regimes of value (to use Appadurai's term 1986). Objects ascending the stairs, in the hands of artists or art handlers, were artworks, but when they were thrown or dropped in, the objects transformed as they fell through the air (images 11.3). Upon impact with the pile, the objects ceased to be individual artworks and joined *Art Bin's* collectivity.

During a panel discussion that I attended before actually visiting *Art Bin*, SLG Director, Margot Heller said that her experience of the bin was emotionally jarring and violent. Admittedly, at the time, I suspected that her comment was exaggerated if not contrived. When I visited *Art Bin* in person however, I too found the scene to be brutal. It was a unique sight to view such a mass of art objects and materials so broken and chaotically tangled together. I witnessed an artist drop what appeared to be a painting set on a small metal holder in the bin. The impact caused a tremendously loud crash followed by thumps and cracks as the parts tumbled over other broken parts. Yet, *Art Bin* also seemed to generate the positivity and optimism that I understand Landy intended. The artist who contributed the painting on the metal holder laughed her way up to the platform. She and her friends who waited at the bottom all cheered when the piece hit the bin (which added to the echoing volume of the crash).

Margaret Sharrow too, felt that her experience of the bin was a positive one. She told me:

Art Bin made me think again that the destruction of work by an artist..far from being a great loss, was actually an editing process. I had a lot of practice editing words and video clips, but little of recognising that there is no value in hanging on to failed art works; indeed there is benefit in letting them go. So to my emotions standing on the platform of *Art Bin*, chucking away bad paintings from my second year. It was certainly euphoric. It was also alarming. I am a very bad shot, and the first piece I

launched into *Art Bin*, a large work on paper that I'd folded into a paper airplane, was not thrown hard enough, or folded properly, so plummeted straight down. I was overcompensating with the works on wood, and terrified at how far they went, bouncing off the Perspex walls. I worried about breaking lights, or hurting someone. But it was so euphoric it was hard not for me to fling them with force. On the other hand, I was aware that I had an audience, so there were other feelings, like a desire to amuse the children¹⁴.

Margaret also wrote to me:

Until *Art Bin* I hadn't really considered the possibility of throwing work away. Prior to starting my BA at art school, I had limited time to produce work, and so anything I made, I hoarded, displaying the best on my own walls. However, once I devoted myself to the full-time production of work I became so prolific that storage again became a problem (especially at the end of the year, when work spaces had to be cleared!)

When *Art Bin* ended, all of the objects within, in Simon Parris of the SLG's words, "were destroyed beyond recognition"¹⁵. Gloves were worn for this task but for safety only; the materials were *no longer* art. "The raw materials were then sorted to enable re-cycling. Canvases were removed from stretchers (after being shredded) and the anonymous stretchers were donated to students at Camberwell College and to local artists. The steel from the *Art Bin* structure was sold for scrap and the polycarbonate panels were also donated to students and local artists. No physical elements of the works or the installation were retained.

Michael Landy told me that it was personally very important that none of the artworks, or indeed *Art Bin* itself, had a material existence for him once the event ended. Michael also chose not to keep any documentation of *Art Bin*, not even photographs, because he did not want to remember it by those means. He said to me that it was a 'very intense six-week period of *Art Bin* during which time he thought of little else', yet the only 'storage' and 'documentation' of the event that he wanted would be within his memory.

¹⁴ In an e-mail, June 2010.

¹⁵ This quote and the rest of the details of this paragraph are paraphrased from an e-mail to me from Simon Parris, May 2010.

The South London Gallery, on the other hand, photographically documented all artworks upon their arrival to the gallery and their entry into *Art Bin*. Along with the declarations, these would be kept for the SLG's archive, but Simon Parris told me, "there were no plans for this documentation to be made publically available¹⁷". When I asked the SLG for some photographs for this thesis, I was advised that I needed to contact Michael Landy's gallery – Thomas Dane – for permission. In that the SLG and Thomas Dane Gallery had their own ideas - different to Michael Landy's – as to what should be kept of Art Bin and how it should be remembered, is illustrative that the control of the afterlives of artworks - and control of them in memory - is as multifariously negotiated as their 'lived-lives'.

Gustav Metzger's Sacrifices

As discussed in previous chapters, Gustav Metzger's 'Auto-destructive' artworks are *recreated* each time they are shown. In fact, when Metzger's speaks, he often indiscriminately swaps the term 'Auto-destructive' with 'Auto-creative' Art. For example, *Project Stockholm* was an enormous installation with one hundred cars blowing exhaust fumes into a tent for the 2007 Sharjah Biennial. If the piece had been allowed to continue, the gasses would eventually have 'blown apart' the tent and probably the cars! Metzger explained to Andrew Wilson in an interview, that the 'completion' or 'resolution' of the artwork – a new creative act - would be achieved with this total destruction¹⁸.

Sophie O'Brien, Curator of Metzger's 2009 exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery mentioned to me that Gustav has "deep attachments to objects." At first logic, this comment seems to be a contradiction with regard to all the material destruction that many of his artworks entail. In several interviews I have encountered with Metzger, he talks about his abhorrence for waste and he is notorious for his lifestyle that shuns what might be described as materialist consumption. I was advised by several people that he is best reached by letter since he does not have a computer or telephone¹⁹.

¹⁷ In an email May 2010.

¹⁸ March 2008, Tate

¹⁹ Simon Newby told me about a fellow MFA student at the Royal College of Art who was approached by Metzger at the graduation show about his large concrete sculpture. They discussed its size and the problematic issue of storage further to which Metzger very generously offered the use of his own storage. Since Metzger does not own a telephone, and certainly does not use e-mail, the student was advised by Metzger that he should reach him to make the arrangements by calling a public telephone box number at a certain time.

But Sophie O'Brien told me that Gustav carefully keeps much of the materials of his art and he is very particular about the keeping and caring of the documentation of auto-destructive events. Sophie also said to me that Gustav's early paintings are deeply precious to him, never sold and never exhibited in public.

Metzger's abhorrence for unthinking material waste is demonstrated by his treatment of daily newspapers (something that tends to be thought of as disposable). Hundreds that filled a room at the Serpentine during his 2009 exhibition were to be returned to the artist to keep after the tour. Metzger's work often involves the use of newspapers as documents. He said about Newspapers to Clive Phillipot during an interview:

They are documents; we must use them. We must extract information of course, from capitalist systems... at the centre of all my work with newspapers: to use them, to extract and to analyse and to contradict.... It is essentially a matter of information, whether it's print or photographs. I am saying: build up archives of your own and keep learning and understanding.... It seems that I am a rare personality...For (others), the newspaper is something which they will throw away at the end of the day, for all kinds of reasons – not just because they haven't got space to store them, but because they don't think they are worth bothering with.

(Printed in Metzger's Serpentine Gallery publication [2009: 27]²⁰)

In 2004, a bag containing rubbish as part of the installation for *Recreation of First Public Demonstration of Auto-Destructive Art* was accidentally partially destroyed by a cleaner at Tate Britain (image 11.4). During a conversation with Andrew Wilson and an audience at Tate at the time of the exhibition Metzger was asked about his feelings when he heard about the piece being destroyed in that way. He said:

It wasn't so much that I heard, I saw. The private view was in the evening as usual. and in the morning I had to go back to the Tate. And the first thing I saw there was an empty place and I was very shocked. Within an hour or two we understood and I was very very upset. Yes, very very upset. These bags were difficult to find. This sort of bag was handpicked and the replacement wasn't anything like as good.

²⁰ These are transcriptions from a recorded interview from an Artists' Lives Oral History interview C466/292 between Metzger and Phillipot, at the British Library.

Wilson: What was it?

It was a bag, a polythene bag.. stuffed with paper, random paper, it was amongst 10 other bags I saw one evening in the Euston area being thrown out by the cleaners. Just a commonplace bag, but in fact these bags are not easily found these days compared to in the 60s when I was finding them. So it was a problem replacing this bag.

Wilson: What was it about the bag that replaced it that wasn't as good?

It was fascinating, it was like collage, imagine an art collage, this was three-dimensional in a plastic bag.

(29th March 2008, Tate Modern)

For all the material destruction and discarded 'rubbish' in Metzger's art, he is exceptionally concerned with material things. His kind of 'anti-materialism' though does not suggest a belief in the shallowness and futility of objects, rather Metzger seems to pedestal the *powers* of materials. As Georges Bataille has written, sacrifice is not at all about waste, but on the contrary it actually demonstrates an extreme value placed on consumption (1988: 49-51). Sacrifice "restores to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded and rendered profane." (1988: 55). To deliberately *waste* material things acknowledges that they are not profane, *mere things* but rather may be locuses of 'passion and poetry' (to use Bataille's words [1988: 74]).

Material Leftovers & Ghosts

After about nine years, I realised that if I got hit by a bus, I didn't have a legacy. Initially it was really important for me to *not* have a legacy. Art-making seemed to be littering up the world with more stuff, building some monument to prove your existence. But, looking at art history, I realised I had written myself out, just like women artists did hundreds of years ago.

Anya Gallaccio²¹

Anya Gallaccio's use of materials such as salt, trees, flowers, chocolate and steam, means that much of her work has few material remains. While she was purposeful about

²¹ Scotsman Newspaper; 28th June 2005

this earlier in the practice of her career, more recently, she has become more concerned about what is left of her past works. One solution has been to make new works out of the materials of former works. She explained during an interview at Tate:

When I made the rose piece at the RCA.. at the end of it, the roses had dried out and they were really beautiful.. and I swept them up and ground them up and made them into this sort of cinnamon mush, and made these crayons from them. So I made another piece of work from that piece of work.

Similarly, Paul McCarthy has given ‘new life’ to used-up artwork materials. After the first installation of *The Garden* (1991) for instance, one of the kinetic men was very much worn out, or in McCarthy’s own words, had ‘injured’ himself from ‘humping the barrel’²². The figure’s body and clothes were ripped, his legs had fallen off and his skin had become discoloured. McCarthy however, liked what the figure had become and decided to turn him into a new piece titled *Alpine Man* (1992). But then (as described in an earlier chapter) a few years after *Alpine Man* was privately sold, Conservator Christian Scheidemann was called by the collector because the mannequin had become even *more* worn-out and injured than he began as *Alpine Man*. Scheidemann contacted McCarthy about what to do, who decided to replace the *Alpine Man* mannequin, and the ‘original’ (so who was once also an ‘original’ from *The Garden* [1991]) was turned into a new work yet again called *Worn Out Fuckers*. I was unable to find out whether *Alpine Man* would *always* be replaced by a worn out figure from *The Garden* but either way, it represents the start of an interesting²³ life-cycle of art materials.

In Alexis Harding’s studio, which is large, neat and well-organised, but full in every corner of things, he keeps *all* the remains of his paintings, including the fallen skins from his temporary paintings. He also carefully stores in neat rolls paint-sodden strips of masking tape that he used to cover the edges of his canvasses and mdf boards for his paintings. In 2009, Harding decided to use these ‘bi-products’ of his paintings to make new artworks. Further, instead of canvas or new boards, he made use of the covers of catalogues from 2003. 120 of these works were exhibited at Mummery & Schnelle in December 2009 along with three new paintings. It was very effective that the paintings showed the origins of the materials for what he called *Bi-product Depositaries* (2009).

²² At a Getty Institute Conference, The Object in Transition, January 2008.

²³ And grotesque and hilarious! It is impossible (and I dare say incorrect) to write about these works very earnestly. For *The Garden* see image 8.3 in chapter 8.

Each of these examples illustrates a reluctance to simply discard used art materials. It is as if conceptually and physically the former lives of these materials have become part of what they are. If, as Alfred Gell has described, an artists' oeuvre is "an observable process of artistic consciousness writ large and rendered public and accessible" (1998: 236) in these instances, the lineages and connections between the materials is made observable too. In other words, returning to my early thesis discussion when I introduced some very literal examples of distributed artists' bodies, these might be described as very literal examples of the distributed bodies of artworks.

The large, bright open spaces of the Duveen galleries at Tate Britain have allowed for several grand and monumental installations. Being one storey up in the museum the galleries have had, on occasion, required re-enforced flooring. This was done for Richard Serra's work *Weight & Measure* in 1992, and the scars of this engineering are still quite evident across the floor. When Anya Gallaccio won her commission to create an installation in the Duveen Galleries, she said during an interview that she had thought about the way the oak trees that she would use could sit amongst the scars. She thought Serra's installation had worked very well in the space, and that the evidence and the memory of it, had an effect on her new work. But then, Gallaccio's installation left its own marks on the gallery floors; large bleached patches bear evidence of the enormous, whole oak tree trunks that she utilised. So in the centre gallery these patches actually mingle with the filled in patches that remain of Serra's works. Similarly, in the turbine hall at Tate Modern, looking down from the first floor, one is very clearly able to see the ghost of Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth* (2007) (image 11.5). These artworks might be de-installed from so-called temporary galleries, but they have physical after-lives. Physical presences are left detectable – they are ghosts so-to-speak - and they interact with new works arriving in the spaces.

As discussed by many anthropologists, death does not necessarily spell the end of life. Sociologist Michael Mayerfeld Bell has written "ghosts of the living and dead alike, of both individual and collective spirits, of both other selves and our selves, haunt the places of our lives." (1997: 813) We continue to encounter and be affected in our lives by those whose lives are over. One of art historian Hans Belting's anthropological interests is in 'how the missing bodies of the dead are replaced with artificial bodies to occupy the vacant place of the deceased' (2003: 5). Dead persons and things can maintain a visibility and a presence in other persons and things. New vessels for the dead allow for the continuance of active social relationships.

Archives

Leigh Robb, Director at Thomas Dane gallery, explained to me²⁴ that as part of Anya Gallaccio's drive to try and *keep* something of her almost entirely ephemeral artworks, her archive has become very important to her, (Michael Landy, Gallaccio's friend mentioned this about her to me too)²⁵. Thomas Dane gallery, has always actually kept a detailed and organised archive of her work. In a way, Leigh said that the 'archive in itself gives a kind of material existence to her past work'. That documentation offers a physical presence for ephemeral artworks is something that I have suggested throughout this thesis. At the end of life, archived 'documents' provide materialities to past and 'passed' artworks and they take many varied forms. A book about Anya Gallaccio published by the Ikon gallery announces in the introduction, that the book is meant as a document of her works which no longer physically exist (2003).

But whether or not artists want or expect 'documents' or material things to be kept of their works, people do it anyway. The South London Gallery and Thomas Dane have kept much for their archives from *Art Bin*, despite Michael Landy's avoidance of memorabilia. As mentioned in earlier chapters, Tino Sehgal prohibits all documentation of his works, yet numerous recordings on Youtube bear testament to the ineffectiveness of his efforts. Anselm Kiefer finds it acceptable for his paintings which utilise mud, ash, straw etcetera to experience small losses. If a work is installed on a wall then fallen pieces can rest where they land beneath it. If the artwork is moved, however, what happens to the pieces then? It seems that the people who purchase Kiefer's works for, what can be, seven figure-sums, may not want to simply sweep up bits and throw them in the dustbin²⁶. Instead, Tom Hale at White Cube told me, that fallen mud tends to be carefully collected and kept in archival boxes. Similarly, I spoke with a Collections Manager during my research who had - not unaware of the audacity of it - boxed and stored in a refrigerator in an archive some chocolate left over from a Paul McCarthy performance²⁷. From what I have learned about McCarthy's attitudes to such things, I doubt he would encourage this sort of practice.

²⁴ Telephone conversation, August 2009.

²⁵ For the chocolate room *Stroke* for example see image 5.1 in chapter 5.

²⁶ www.findartinfo.com/search/listprices.asp?keyword=85855

²⁷ This person needs to remain anonymous.

But it is not only remains and documents of artworks which are kept. Tracey Emin's handwriting is so famous it seems that anything in her handwriting is collected. She often talks about her cat, Docket, whose 'image' has been used a lot in her work. When Docket went missing in 2003, Emin taped notices with a description and photograph of him to lampposts in her neighbourhood. Within a short time the signs were appearing for sale on e-bay²⁸. A Google Search in January 2010 reveals one of the posters allegedly found at Spitalfield's Market, still for sale for \$800 by a company called 'Eloquent Delinquents'²⁹. I believe we should not suspect from this that people think they are buying an artwork by Tracey Emin. It might suggest though that *particularly*, for artworks and artists that their traces and distributed selves are given existence in materiality. As per the whole distributed person theory, it is not that things are representations of deceased persons, but that they *are* persons and artworks, residing in additional bodies to their human bodies where they may live and we can interact with them.

White Cube's archive contains a great variety of material things related to the gallery, its artists and their artworks. It contains the formal things that one would expect in a gallery archive, such as certificates of authenticity, installation images and press cuttings. But it keeps all sorts of other things too, including leftovers from exhibition opening parties, model renderings of artfair booths, artists' personal correspondence and doodles on napkins made during meetings. Jon Lowe, White Cube Archivist, said to me that 'it would be brilliant to have Di Vinci's shopping lists'. In assembling these kinds of material traces and distributed selves of artists, others involved with the gallery, artworks, environments, events and times, images are constructed of them.

Anthropologist Susanne Kuechler has written how art objects cause and "are a product of mnemonic processes of retention and recall" (1987: 239). Archival material for artworks, including all of the masses of documentation created throughout artworks' lives which I have written about in this thesis, are objects that are a product of memory as well as serving to re-create it. Like the New Ireland Malangan art that Kuechler writes about, the objects also have their own way of "selecting, ordering and organising experiences" (1987: 245). In other words, the ways that artworks are remembered is ordered by the material things with which 'we remember them by' as we tend to say. Further, Kuechler describes how control of these objects asserts control over memories;

²⁸ Reported by for example, the BBC; *Emin's Cat Posters Taken by Collectors*; Thursday 28th March 2002, and the Guardian Newspaper; *The Great Escape* Saturday 12th October 2002.

²⁹ <http://eloquentdelinquents.com/4.html>

“the production and processing of memory is thus intimately connected with attainment and maintenance of power and authority” (1987: 248).

Rituals of Life & Death

Rituals and ceremonies are the stuff of classic anthropology. Arnold Van Gennep asserted that rituals enable persons to achieve social transitions from one group or state to another (1909). Victor Turner developed Van Gennep’s theories during the 1960s and described the importance of rituals in the marking of the transition from life to death to an afterlife (1969). My proposition that works of art have *lives* is supported by my research when I observed that they too seem to experience social *deaths*. The nausea inducing accidental ‘death’ of the print in the museum was met with a funeral-like ceremony to put its destroyed materials to rest. The witnessed transition by artworld participants of the materials was essential so that the artwork could be re-born in its new re-printed body. Turner also asserted that rituals serve the function of reminding members of society of group cohesion, authority, expectations, responsibilities and morals (see Eriksen 1995: 126). As per several of the examples that I have presented in this thesis, there are many shared expectations in the ‘artworld’ for the appropriate handling and exchange of works of art. I find that these responsibilities and morals may be called upon and even exemplified during the ritual destructions of artworks.

It would appear that the destruction of art objects is taken to be a moral issue. The established idea is that people do not like it when works of art die; “it is a great shame” as Miss Marple pondered. I have been asked why I find it necessary to have titled this thesis the material lives and deaths of artworks, when to have a life presumes that there is a death. My reason is because it seems that artworks are not expected to die; there is a belief among some that artworks are stable entities that go on forever. In my proposition that artworks have lives, that just as human next-of-kin are the ones with moral ‘rights to decide’ over life-support, organ donations and abortion, the right to decide life or death questions for artworks is also proscribed. The lack of non-artists contributing to *Art Bin* revealed that if it is unusual for artists to destroy their own art objects, it is certainly a moral issue for someone else to destroy another artist’s work. When Michael Landy destroyed all of his possessions for a work titled *Break Down* in

2003, it was generally met with positive critical acclaim³⁰. What he did receive reproach for was that among his possessions were several artworks by other artists that he had purchased or received as gifts³¹. For *Art Bin*, the South London Gallery knew that it was important to define acceptable terms in legal contracts for the relationships that *Art Bin* participants had with the objects that they contributed, but the consensus seemed to be anyway, that one cannot throw away another artist's work. As Marcel Mauss highlights too with reference to the potlatch, while one can lavishly destroy ones own wealth, gifts from others must be praised, cordially accepted and cared for (1990: 41). On a similar vein, although Metzger destroys materials all the time with his auto-destructive art, it was "very very upsetting" when someone *else* treated his bag of rubbish as part of an artwork as a bag of rubbish.

As Dario Gamboni has observed, the difference between vandalism and iconoclasm is that vandals attack unknowing of what they destroy, whereas iconoclasts' targets and acts are deliberate and performative (1997: 17-19). There would be no purpose in Margaret Sharrow throwing away her BA artwork in the bin outside her Brighton studio; instead she travelled with it to London to ceremoniously perform its destruction before an audience at *Art Bin*. What unites several of the examples I have presented in this chapter is that acts of art material *destruction* are carried out with much *deliberation* in the creative process of *making* art. The art for Drummond's *Smell of Money Underground* takes place in the action cutting up, presenting and selling the Richard Long, and eventually there will be the walk in Iceland. But the materiality of this work is being transformed into a new art object too – the print keeps changing shape as the squares are removed, there will be a new photograph which Drummond will print, and it will all eventually metamorphose into \$20,000 cash buried underground in a box.

To return to the first law of thermodynamics that I mentioned in earlier chapters, the energy of the art so-to-speak in these instances is neither created nor destroyed, it just changes shape. The energies – the life forces I suggest – of Alexis Harding's paintings and Paul McCarthy's *The Garden* did not end with the demise of original raw materials but were rechanneled into new works of art. In a nutshell, just as I have proposed throughout this thesis with regards to creation and 'making' - destruction and

³⁰ For example, it was nominated as one of the "most powerful" works of art of the decade in a review article, Guardian newspaper Monday 7th December 2009; *Artists and Curators' Artworks of the Noughties*.

³¹ Landy talks about this in a filmed interview for Illuminations Productions 2005.

‘un-making’ (to use a term from the AHRC’s Beyond Text programme) may not be a single, finished act, but an ongoing process of development and change.

This bears relevance to the much anthropologically considered Potlatch practices of the Northwest Pacific coast. In Marcel Mauss’ consideration of it in *The Gift* the destruction of wealth is not an ending, but is part of a cycle of wealth transformation (1990: 74). Material wealth is destroyed and given away to rivals who reciprocate with gifts of their own, and destroying even more of their own wealth, and so the cycle continues. In that rivals try to ‘outdo’ each other with their gifting and destruction, the system is a generator of power relationships and hierarchies.

While Michael Landy decided how he wished to remember *Art Bin* without documentation, his dealer and the South London Gallery decided to give their own forms to its afterlife. The images and other archival material they produced and kept for the artwork, are maintained and *controlled* by them. If Michael Landy made *Art Bin* what it was, the institutions with their archives now have control of what *Art Bin is* in present interactions. Gustav Metzger has always been very critical of the power wielded by the art market and art establishment (his Art Strike 1977-1980 is a case in point). Bill Drummond claims though that his treatment of the Richard Long print was not a consciously critical act against art or the art world³². Michael Landy is also mild-mannered and does not appear to be openly antagonistic to the art establishment. Nonetheless, almost all of the examples of artists’ acts of destruction that I have considered in this chapter do seem to pull on a tension between themselves and their work and expectations for long - never-ending even - material lives of art.

I mention the first law of thermodynamics, but perhaps the potlatch actually better resembles the second law of thermodynamics that I have also written about in an earlier chapter, which is known as the entropy law. The destruction of wealth in the potlatch does not see all of it recycled, but is the cause of some of its dissipation altogether. Georges Bataille argues that the principal point of the potlatch is to “withdraw wealth from consumption.” (1988: 76) With their destructive acts, the artists I have written about in this chapter, have withdrawn art objects from circuits of consumption too. Roger Sansi-Roca points out that Bataille’s reading of Mauss’ *The Gift*

³² In answer to a question posed by Apollo Magazine in 2010 (and to be published in a book in 2012) Drummond said “\$20,000 is not a critique of the modern art world. Neither the art world nor the music industry riles me in any huge way. On the whole I have just ignored them and got on with what I want to be doing. And at times I have used the art world and the music industry as part of the canvas. My sleepless nights have never been caused by my thoughts about the art world”.

suggests that the Potlatch may not be such an egalitarian social practice after all (2010: 4). While Lewis Hyde and other applications of Mauss' theory to art seem to suggest that artists' gifts in artwork form are 'pure' and for the purpose of forming positive relationships, an alternative reading finds the potlatch as "an agonistic and competitive ritual" (Sansi-Roca 2010: 4). I propose therefore, might some of the acts of artists that I have considered in this chapter, consciously or not, represent attempts to regain control over works of art? To reclaim works that have been taken over by others, consumed and used in ways unintended by artists, made into things that they were not meant, corrupted into being objects of luxury? Have these artists created potlatches of their own because, as Bataille writes:

luxury determines the rank of the one who displays it, and there is no exalted rank that does not require a display....But the petty calculations of those who enjoy luxury are surpassed in every way....these.. forms of wealth make a shambles and human mockery of those who think they own it... this truth of wealth has underhandedly slipped into extreme poverty.. The true luxury and real potlatch of our times falls to the poverty-stricken, that is, to the individual who lies down and scoffs. A genuine luxury requires the complete contempt for riches, the sombre indifference of the individual who refuses work and makes his life on the one hand an infinitely ruined splendour, and on the other, a silent insult to the laborious lie of the rich (1988: 66-67).

Discussion

The Activities of People & Things

I began this thesis with Alfred Gell's theories about agents who act through works of art. Obviously, artists are key agents; in the beginning artworks are created to do what they want to do; I have proposed that artworks are thus distributed parts of artists. Art objects provide artists with additional bodies which make them visible and may continue their work at a distance from their human bodies.

Owners and possessors are also, potentially, very significant agents acting through artworks. This happens because of owners' own creative acts in the making of meaning and sometimes even in the making of art objects. In these ways they can be distributed in artworks too. Museums and other public institutions 'own' artworks so that anyone who encounters them in the gallery has the possibility of 'possessing' them. As heritage, museums' art collections belong to entire nations. In the exchange of artworks, artists and owners (individuals or collective selves) are bound together; relationships are forged between them with works of art.

While artists and owners are prominent potential agents, there are many other people who may have connections with artworks and work through them. Dealers play active roles in the forging and maintenance of the bonds between artists and owners, as well as possibly contributing with their own creative acts over meanings and forms. The art object specifically can contain the skills and work of fabricators. Within art objects, trusting and long-term relationships between fabricators and artists may be bound together. And then, many more skilled and knowledgeable people may be distributed and active among works of art due to their skills and activities such as conservation, transport, storage, packing, insurance, etcetera. The principal point I wish to make is, that with so many human agents active through and distributed among them at the same time, works of art are assemblages or bundles¹ of them and their relationships with each other.

But then, there are the activities too – and I believe, as Bruno Latour puts it, we can call these goals (1999: 180) – of artworks' materials and objects. Alfred Gell denies that except in fiction, as with the case of Dorian Gray's² picture, that a material art index

¹ Nicolas Bourriaud describes artworks as "bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations" (2000: 20).

² Oscar Wilde 1891

can possess agency of its own. While we can *infer* or *abduct* that a thing has agency and an internal mind, the agency that Gell writes about is always actually that of humans. With my study however, I find that things may be active and cause activities by accord of their very own properties. This is not to argue, for example, that Anya Gallaccio's disintegrating columns of salt or the seawater that wore them away have 'internal minds'. The columns of salt and the sea have physical active *capabilities*, and it was for these capabilities that Gallaccio decided to work with them – for what they could *do* by themselves. Further, in addition to art objects that are sculptures, canvasses etcetera, there are crates, swathes of documentation, white gloves, kilns and other materials being utilised to make, install and keep art. I find that all of these things *make things happen* in their own ways. Roger Sansi-Roca has suggested that perhaps 'we do not need to talk about minds and intentional psychology to talk about agency':

In certain cases, the agency of things does not derive from the abduction of a mind, the attribution of thought, but it comes from the evidence of their physical presence and its dialectical relation with the human body. It is not because they have a mind, but because they have a body, and this body is radically different from the human body, that they are agents. (2005: 150)

In designating things with 'social lives', Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff too, essentially suggested that objects as they circulate are repositories for the representations and signs of humans; for these writers objects are not in themselves agents and social actors. But as Christopher Pinney has pointed out, if objects only 'represent' the acts of people, it renders objects powerless and mere "artifactual traces" (2005: 259). Appadurai and Kopytoff's theories suggest that objects have no capabilities of their own and are opposite entities to humans. What I find with my study on the other hand, is that works of art demonstrate that objects *do* have powers and capabilities of their own. Objects are thus active, they affect, are affected by, and are profoundly entangled with the activities of humans.

Daniel Miller argues that while the philosophy of doing away with the duality of persons and things is all very well, since anthropology is rooted in the practice of 'normal' life as observed in ethnography, "we may find ourselves conducting research among people for whom 'common sense' consists of a clear distinction between subjects and objects, defined by their opposition" (2005: 14). During my ethnographic research however, I was literally told by one artist, Jeremy Miller, that in art it was "taken for

granted” - common sense - that materials and objects were active participants with artists and viewers in art. I heard Gary Hume say that his paintings were “self-aware” and Alexis Harding told me that his paintings “had their own ideas”. I learned with my study that ‘common-sense’ when it comes to art objects might be different to ‘common-sense’ perceptions and dealings with other kinds of things. The lengths gone to for the care of objects in art’s regime of value attests to this. Spending thousands of pounds on the packing, shipping and storage of some used, rusting tools, or wearing white-gloves to throw an object into a giant bin, or an insurance company’s honouring of a six-figure pay-out for a damaged cardboard box that was initially found in a skip, bears testament to the fact that ‘common sense’ understandings of what objects in art *are*, are somewhat different. All in all I find that materials and objects must be counted as equally relevant and capable actors as all the humans in the activities and relationships that are assembled in works of art.

My plan however is not to plot all these actors into a ‘Gellian art nexus table’ (Gell 1998: 29) (aside from the fact that Gell would not approve of me including objects as agents in this table anyway). I could try to create graphs and equations pinpointing primary and secondary agents, and primary and secondary recipients of agency, but in many cases there might be more active actors than I could plot on a page. It would be difficult to precisely identify every agent for every artwork I consider, but even if I could, I am not sure to what purpose. While it has been my intention to illustrate some of the vast range of different forces working through works of art, there is more to this thesis than to merely point them out. I do not pause to identify and analyse each agent because *the agents do not pause themselves*; this is all very active activity. I have learned that there can be firm bonds and connections between actors, nonetheless, I do not find that very neat networks of perfectly cooperative relationships exist either. While I propose that a work of art is an assemblage of people, things, their relations and activities, it is a dynamic and imperfectly structured one.

And further, my goal for the thesis has not been only to prove certain theories about objects having agency and lives. I have also been interested in what *happens* during these lives. Ethnographic research methods have enabled me to describe what I observed with artworks and objects. One goal has been to offer something with regards to the practical implications of decision-making for what is broadly described in the

industry as ‘collections care and management.’³ A significant theme of this thesis follows my observations for the *control* of artworks and the ways that it is negotiated over artworks’ material production, exchange, maintenance, conservation and destruction. Who or what have the ‘rights’ to decide? Who or what are responsible? And to whom or what are responsibilities to: artists’ as authors, fabricators, collectors, public ownership, heritage, art history, archives, the market, art objects? When I described my study to people, I was several times asked about who had ‘first rights’ over artworks; what was my conclusion, exactly *who* has the ultimate right to decide? At risk of disappointing some, my conclusion is that there is no single answer; rights, responsibilities and control over artworks are shared and negotiated throughout artworks’ lives, the answer is different from case to case and is variable over time. At the beginning, artists’ *are* crucial. But once they are deemed ‘ready’ by artists, leave studios and/or are installed for the first time, it does not mean that artworks are ‘finished’ or even fully ‘made’. When artworks are sold or gifted, rights and responsibilities are not entirely transferred. Later in life when issues arise about the restoration or replacement of materials, decisions may be a result of negotiations among several parties; I find this to be especially well illuminated by the ways that authenticity is defined.

As per the title of this thesis, and as I have written throughout, I suggest that artworks live and die. Rather than being ‘symbolic social lives’ attributed by persons I propose that these are ‘real’ lives and deaths, personal to artworks, in not dissimilar ways to humans’ real and personal lives and deaths. Artists could be likened to parents; artworks cannot exist without them and in the beginning they are responsible for them. But children and artworks go off into the world and grow, meet new people who influence them, are in charge of them, and make them who they are. I heard artist Tom Hunter compare his lack of control and subsequent worries for his photographs with his lack of control and worries for his children: he said “you work so hard to bring them up to be the people you want them to be, and then they go and get jobs as bankers.”⁴ As with persons, artworks are not ‘made’ at a particular moment in time, they grow, develop and change, in spirit, intellect and body. As with persons, artworks’ different selves perform and reveal themselves in response to expectations in different roles.

³ I believe that this goal was one of the principal draws for the AHRC’s funding of my study.

⁴ Goldsmiths College February, 2011

Art's Materiality; A Body

Another of the principal goals of my study has been to examine the roles of objects and materials in works of art. I suggest that the art object is the body of the artwork. Once again, in person-like ways, bodies age and change, they may need maintenance, replacement parts or conservation work; we may liken the conservator to the medic who takes care of our physical health⁵. And as with persons, when the physical bodies of artworks die, there is a tendency to memorialise them, to give them alternative bodies for their afterlives so that we might continue our relationships with them.

A person *has* a body, or is *in* a body, or for simplicities sake when we point someone out we point *at* a body - but, there is more to a living person than a body. I have attempted an examination or a survey of varying roles and activities for artworks' objects. But to pose the question 'what *is the* role of *the* art object', and to argue 'for' or 'against' it would, in Christopher Pinney's words, 'reaffirm the subject versus object dichotomy (2005: 269). To put it another way, the question of 'what *is the* role of the body for a person' would not really make sense either.

This is why the notion that art can be dematerialised is problematic. It does not follow to single out the facets of an artwork and to say that it *is* one thing or another. An artwork is not entirely an object, but it can neither be entirely 'an idea' or 'an experience', or a distributed artist or any other single element that I have considered in this thesis; an artwork is an assemblage of all of these people, events and things. While this thesis is about the materiality of art it is not about the material in isolation; an art object is a part of an artwork along with artists, viewers, owners, certificates of authenticity, fabricators, storage crates etcetera. As Nicolas Bourriaud has described too "the contemporary artwork's form spreads out from its material form; (the material) is a linking principle of dynamic agglutination." He suggests that 'instead of talking about forms we should talk about formations.' (2000: 21)

The material – the body - is no-less an essential and inescapable part of the art assemblage. Even for an artist like Tino Sehgal who does all that he can to prohibit a material existence to his work, is unable to stop it entirely because others create it instead. His work is carried out in art institutions that have walls and by people wearing clothes. As Webb Keane has suggested, materiality plays a role in causality even if it is

⁵ See Rebecca Mead; *The Art Doctor* New Yorker magazine May 2009

unnoticed (2005: 182). During the course of my study, my attention was drawn to the ways that contemporary artworld systems *create* and *rely* upon the propagation of material things. I encountered much with my research which suggests that for many people and establishments an artwork *is* an object. This appears to be universally asserted by the transport, import and export systems of all countries. Moreover, almost all nations, except for the U.K and USA (but only in principle because in practice some instances are actually queried) even specify the *types* of materials that may be deemed works of art. An entire growth industry has evolved out of the needs for the transport, handling, maintenance and storage of artworks as material things. Although professional conservators have an awareness of the immaterial facets of artworks, since the complexities of these may be difficult to negotiate, their conservation codes of ethics directs them to focus on ‘what is best’ for objects.

Since the 1960s when conceptual artists and dealers began to create documents ‘in place’ of art materials to show that their work was dematerialised (see Alberro 2003) documentation seems to have *turned into* art’s materiality. Daniel Miller has pointed out that all ‘projects devoted to immateriality (such as religion and philosophy) seem to rest upon the same paradox: their immateriality is expressed through materiality’ (2005: 28).

I find that documentation is an integral and vital part of the contemporary artwork assemblage. Physical paperwork is essential to the formalities of buying, selling, exchange, acquisition and *ownership* of it. In lieu of art objects, documentation is exchanged and owned which, as demonstrated by the Guggenheim’s treatment of a Gonzalez-Torres certificate of authenticity, is treated and kept as if it is *an* authentic, original work of art. It appears that museums and public institutions are especially keen on the creation and archiving of documentation. Materiality seems to be essential for posterity, the historicisation of art, and its memorialisation. Bruno Latour has written “are not museums the temples in which sacrifices are made to apologise for so much destruction, as if we wanted suddenly to stop destroying and were beginning the indefinite cult of conserving, protecting, repairing?” (2002: 15)

Once materials and objects enter art’s ‘regime of value’ they do not appear to leave it very easily. Art’s materiality is precious and valuable and this is demonstrated by the lengths gone to and expense of keeping and caring for it. Just as with a human population boom, there is an art object boom because production is on the rise on the one hand, and everything is carefully stored, maintained and never nonchalantly thrown away on the other. The space required for art objects and all the materials that go along

with them (installation equipment, crates, miles of filing cabinets filled with documentation) has caused the need for art storage to quickly and steadily grow and the needs show no signs of stabilising, let alone decreasing. In that the matter of discarding and destroying art materials is taken to be a moral issue, I have found that the very safe keeping of art materials far exceeds the loss of it. In a nutshell, I find that material bodies are essential to contemporary art and it is created, expected and cared for in ever-increasing volumes; ask any fine art storage manager.

Time

A recurring theme to emerge throughout my study was about artworks and time. While it was not my original intention to explore it, it begged to be addressed. I end this thesis on the theme, not in conclusion as such but to round-up some observations and to suggest a path where my study could lead.

Art History as the academic study of art has caused in practice for artworld systems to rely on the dating of artworks. As I have described, when an artwork must be defined as such on official paperwork (sales invoices, museum records, customs and tax documents for examples) the procedure is always to name an artist, and often actually their date of birth, materials, a title (so that even *Untitled* is stated as a title) and always, always a *date*. The official placement of an artwork in art history is in part what defines it as an artwork; a date is taken to be an essential part of the art assemblage.

Although I carried out my research among several commercial and public institutions, it was not to present ethnographies of institutions. I did however perceive evidence as to the ethos of some institutions and how they appeared to translate into their systems and practices. My idea for further study to this thesis, would be to carry out ethnographic comparative studies to explore where, with whom and how art objects are *in time*.

From what I have observed of museums' systems, hinted at a tendency to *place* and contextualise artworks in history. The implied belief appeared to be that art objects are *representative* or *repositories* of times past. Hal Foster describes this as a neo-conservative strategy of preserving cultural memory in the form of historical representations (1996: 72) and in these ways, Hans Belting suggests that museums play a role in the *making* of art history (1987: 50). This also calls to mind Susanne Kuechler's argument that the "the production and processing of memory is intimately connected with attainment and maintenance of power and authority" (1987: 248). As Tate's conservators told me, their job is to keep artworks in the material state – in the stasis – of

the time that they were acquired by the museum. In taking ownership of them, the museum takes on the authority to control how artworks are perceived; that the museum is the owner of an artwork, and the time when it became part of the collection, is fundamental to the way that it is understood.

But preservation is not only about the past, it is also about the future. Tate's Conservation Department's mission statement is to "care for Tate's collection to ensure that it is available for *future generations* to enjoy."⁶ As Georges Bataille has written, things are only kept in reserve when there is a concern for 'what will be' and not for 'what is' (1988: 58).

I believe that what I observed to be masses of documentation created by museums for art objects' conservation and archiving, and crucially, the call for artists to articulate their 'intentions' for objects, is evidence of museums' *placement*, and thereby creation and control, of art objects in art history. In doing so they may be defined and isolated; 'purified' as objects, vessels *deposited* with meanings, 'signs' and times. But in these ways, I wonder if we might find the art objects are better understood as historical artefacts, documents of events that happened in the past, than works of art, which do what they do in the present.

This critical questioning, however, of the historicisation practices of art collections is not novel. As Christopher Pinney has pointed out, the crisis of 'history' in art history coincided with the critique by anthropologists of their 'objects' of study such as 'culture' or 'society' (2005: 256). Postmodernism's 'crisis of representation' affected art history in that questions were raised about their being a single, progressive linear history. In a performance in 1979, artist Herve Fischer announced "the end of the history of art". He said:

The history of modern art as a history of the avant-garde, in which one momentous technical and artistic innovation follows close upon another simply cannot be written further.

(in Belting 1987: 4)

Citing Fischer, Hans Belting considered in 1987 the 'loss of faith' in the rational, teleological process of artistic history (1987: ix-x).

⁶ <http://www.tate.org.uk/conservation/about/>

In turn, arguably in response to this, some contemporary art has become all about the absolute immediate present. This, I find, serves the art market well. The premier role of commercial galleries is to work for and with artists in the production of *new* art. This struck me quite early in my research when I overheard a technician describe to another at White Cube that “a frame for a photograph was *really old* - at least *five years old* - and in need of replacement”. I learned too from speaking with dealers that it is easier to sell new artworks than those from even immediately preceding years. This information was first, though, related to me in 2007 when the economy and art market were booming. As I have described, new art objects may be costly to fabricate and if unsold, very costly to store and materially maintain for galleries. I wondered therefore when the recession set in whether dealers might try to sell older ‘inventory’ instead of continuing to pay towards the creation of the new. I carried out an investigation into this at Frieze 2009 and my findings suggested the contrary. From a sample of booths on the last day of the fair⁷ I made notes of the dates on the labels for 178 works. Of these, 82 were from 2009 and 40 were from 2008 (thus 68 percent were dated as either new that year or the previous year)⁸. There was a Grayson Perry tapestry *The Walthamstow Tapestry* on display at the Victoria Miro booth that did not have a date on its label. When I asked the dealer “what is the date?” she responded as if the answer were obvious – “2009”. Another work that I found without a label was a Christopher Williams photograph *Untitled (Study in Brown)*. Again, when I asked about it, the answer of “2009” was said in a reassuring way, as if the assumption were that this is what I would want to hear. The immediate experience of art – participation with the new and now - is also demonstrated by the proliferation of art fair ‘projects’. Frieze said of its 2010 ‘Programme of Projects’ for example that they all:

include elements of performativity – either directly, with performances taking place in and around the fair, or more obliquely, commanding a level of involvement from visitors. Ranging from the spectacular to the intimate, the emphasis is on a direct engagement that will rest upon a series of personal encounters.

Of course the market encourages the creation - and with it *much excitement* - of new art so that collectors will return again and again for NEW HOT work NOW. Jonathan Dimbleby asked Damien Hirst in a BBC television programme whether he

⁷ Sunday October 18th 2009

⁸ See appendix 4 for full results.

expected his work to survive in history; “well, we’re here for a good time not a long time” Hirst replied⁹.

But the philosopher Paul Virilio much laments the ‘hyper-reality’ of the contemporary art experience and criticises ‘the proliferation of loud live art shows’ as if ‘silence is identified with death’ (2006: 41). He writes:

REAL TIME – this ‘present’ that imposes itself on everyone in the *speeding-up* of daily reality – is, in fact, only ever the repetition of the splendid academic isolation of bygone days. A mass media academicism that seeks to freeze all originality and all poetics in the inertia of immediacy (2006: 25).

And so we encounter two potential extremes for the placement of art objects in time. At one end, museums fix art objects in past historical times, and I suggest that this may result in their deadening; what one encounters are historical artefacts – corpses – physical remains of once-living artworks. At the other extreme, the market creates spectacular contemporary art experiences which are the *now* in hyperbole. According to Virilio this is a sure step on the path to the ‘destruction of the human form as we know it!’¹⁰ While I am not so mortally worried as Virilio, I find the tremendous immediacy of flash in the pan art is not without its philosophical problems. Again it seems that in the extremes of placing objects in the past versus their singular placement in the absolute present, something similar occurs. It bears a resemblance to the formalist versus dematerialist spectrum of the 1960s, in which both extremes demonstrate an obsession with objectivity. In their contextualisation and placement *in* any singular moment in time – past or present - objects’ objectivity is isolated.

In turn, what I have observed with my research are the lived and living lives of artworks *over* time. To encounter Janine Antoni’s cubes of chocolate and lard which she sculpted with *Gnam*, is to find them continuing their work. Instead of showing what *happened* to them in the past, the objects re-perform it for new people in new places. Active participation with Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ candy-piles is essential, and so that this could continue, the artist expressed to Andrea Rosen (his dealer, friend and representative since his death) that his work should always be materially reinterpreted to ensure that they are adjusted over time, to ensure that they remain viable and relevant.

⁹ The seventh episode of the *Seven Ages of Britain*, 2010.

¹⁰ Back-cover blurb to 2006 edition. More specifically, Virilio writes that human life will be transformed into a virtual cyberworld run by a ‘Media of Hate.’ (2006: 49)

Gustav Metzger's 'recreations' have already led long active lives; they were first made in the 1960s but they are not artworks *from* the 1960s, when they are created they are always created anew. For just one more example - because the point is relevant to so many of the artworks I have presented in this thesis - Alexis Harding's paintings are made and make themselves in interaction with time, air, the artist, other people and even their crates. None of these artworks are documents of past events but they are neither one-time spectacular occurrences; all of them involve active objects, for which the present experience is essential, but which also have continuity over time.

Christopher Pinney points out with reference to Roland Barthes' commentary on Bataille's novella *The Story of the Eye* (1982) that 'what are often presented as histories of objects are not histories of objects in which objects are passed from historical moment to historical moment but rather are narratives of objects passed from hand to hand' (2005: 267). This is actually made clear if we think of objects having lives in similar ways to those of persons; we would not suggest that a person is 'imbued' with historical events. To return to and expand on artist David Novros sentiments, *lives* – of people *and* artworks - are 'continuums and not series of moments'¹¹.

¹¹ At the *Object in Transition* conference at the Getty Institute in January 2008, David Novros said during a panel discussion that "artists lives are continuums and not series of moments".

Appendices

203. Appendix 1: Tate's template for purchase agreements for New Media works made available to the public.
207. Appendix 2: ICON (the Institute of Conservation in the UK) and ECCO's (the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers) shared code of ethics and professional guidelines.
213. Appendix 3: Certificate of Receipt for Artwork to be Disposed in Art Bin.
214. Appendix 4: Results of a survey of dated artworks shown in gallery booths at Frieze 2009.

Appendix 1: Tate's template for purchase agreements for New Media works made available to the public, along with 6 other templates, at <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tateresearch/majorprojects/mediamatters/acquisitions/downloadabletemplates.shtm>

PURCHASE AGREEMENT

THIS AGREEMENT (the 'Agreement') is made this ___ day of _____, by and between _____, the owner, or the authorised agent acting on behalf of the owner (the 'Seller'), of the work of art described below (the 'Work') and _____ (the 'Museum').

The work of art (the 'Work') is identified below:

Artist: [Artist's Name] ('Artist')
Title: [Title of Work],
Date: [Date of Work]
Medium: [Medium of Work]
Dimensions: [Dimensions of Work].
Edition: [x/y, APs].

If applicable, Work includes/consists of the following components:

The following components are included in the purchase:

The parties agree as follows:

1. Sale. The Seller agrees to sell the Work to the Museum, and the Museum agrees to buy the Work from the Seller, subject to the terms and conditions set forth in this Agreement.

2. Purchase Price and Manner of Payment. The purchase price of the Work (the 'Purchase Price') is _____. The Museum will pay the Purchase Price as follows:

[Describe terms of payment]

3. Sales Tax. [If applicable] The Museum represents that it is exempt from payment of sales tax.

4. Seller's Representations and Warranties.

A. The Seller represents and warrants that:

- (i) The Work is authentic and was created by _____ (the 'Artist').
- (ii) The Seller has full legal right and authority to enter into this Agreement, to make the representations and warranties contained in this Agreement and to complete the transaction contemplated by this Agreement.

(iii) The Work's exportation from any foreign country has been in conformity with the laws of that country and its importation into _____ has been, or will be, in conformity with the laws of _____.

(iv) The Seller is the sole and absolute owner of the Work and has good and marketable title to the Work, and the Work, at the time of transfer of title, will be free and clear of any and all rights, claims, liens, mortgages, security interests, or other encumbrances held by any person.

(v) [where Artist/Gallery is Seller:] The Work does not infringe the rights of any person or entity, including trademark, copyright, privacy and publicity rights. [Copyright Licence.]

B. The Seller will indemnify, defend, and hold the Museum harmless from any and all demands, claims, suits, judgments, obligations, damages, losses, or other liability including all attorneys fees and other costs, fees, and expenses, suffered or incurred by, or asserted or alleged against, the Museum arising by reason of or in connection with, the Seller's breach, falsity, or inaccuracy in any representation or warranty contained in this Agreement.

C. The benefits of the representations, warranties, covenants, and indemnities contained in this Agreement shall survive completion of the transaction contemplated by this Agreement.

5. Title. Title to the Work shall pass from the Seller to the Museum at _____ (the 'Place of Sale') immediately upon payment of the [first installment of the] Purchase Price pursuant to this Agreement.

[6. Expenses. _____ will pay all costs and expenses, including insurance, for the crating, packing, and shipping of the Work for delivery to the Place of Sale. _____ will insure the Work for at least the full Purchase Price [or if applicable the Replacement Cost] and to name the Museum and the Seller as insured parties as their interests may appear.]

7. Confidentiality. [If applicable] Neither the Museum nor the Seller will disclose the Purchase Price or other terms of this Agreement to any third party (except advisors or consultants with a need to know) without the other's written consent, except as necessary to carry out the terms of this Agreement or as may be required by law. The terms of this Paragraph shall survive the closing of title or termination of this Agreement for any reason. The parties further agree that the Museum must approve any press release about this acquisition prior to release.

[8] ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS [will vary depending on identity of seller / nature of work]

Certificate of Authenticity.

Seller agrees to transfer to the Museum an original certificate of authenticity for the Work in form reasonably satisfactory to the Museum, signed by the Artist.

Archival Master for Media Works.

In order to ensure the long-term preservation and integrity of the original material, Seller represents that the Museum is receiving an archival master made from the Artist's Master (supervised by the Artist or the Artist's representative) and is in the same format as the original Artist's master or in the following format(s): _____ . If Seller is not able to provide an Archival Master then Seller will provide access to the Artist's master upon reasonable notice.

Preservation Copies for Media Works.

In order to facilitate the long-term preservation of the Work, the Museum shall have the right to make copies and migrate the media to new formats for the purpose of preservation.

Exhibition Copies.

In addition, Seller agrees to transfer to the Museum at least one exhibition quality copy of the Work in an exhibition format (an 'Exhibition Copy'). To the extent the Museum determines necessary, each time the Work is to be exhibited by the Museum or a borrower of the Work, the Museum shall have the right to make Exhibition Copies for such exhibition.

Documentation Relating to the Work.

Seller agrees to transfer to the Museum all documentation, and share with the Museum all information, if any, relating to the Work including the prior ownership, display and restoration of the Work.

Installation Details

In order to preserve the integrity of the Work, Seller agrees to provide the Museum with written instructions signed by the Artist relating to current and future installations of the Work and/or copies of any supporting materials related to future installation that may be in the Seller’s possession (the ‘Installation Plan’ which plan shall incorporate the Museum’s reasonable requests. If no Installation Plan is provided, Seller agrees that Museum shall be authorised to use its good faith judgment to determine an appropriate installation plan.

9. Miscellaneous. This Agreement represents the entire understanding of the parties concerning the subject matter herein and supersedes any and all other and prior agreements concerning the subject matter between the parties. [The terms of this Agreement may not be modified or amended, except in a writing signed by the party to be charged. This Agreement and all matters relating to it shall be governed by the laws of the Country _____ and/or [if applicable] State of _____.] This Agreement shall inure to the benefit of, and shall be binding upon, the successors, heirs, executors and administrators of the parties hereto. [Any dispute arising hereunder shall be resolved in the courts of the Country _____ and/or State of _____], and the parties consent to the personal jurisdiction of those Courts, provided, however, that the parties hereto agree that they will make concerted efforts to settle any dispute between them in an amicable manner without the necessity of litigation. This Agreement may be executed in counterparts. Each individual executing the Agreement on behalf of a party has the full right and authority to bind the party to the representations, warranties and obligations contained in this Agreement.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have duly executed this Agreement as of the date first written above.

THE MUSEUM
By: _____
SELLER: _____

Professional Guidelines

PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, Brussels 1 March 2002

Please note that since Icon ceased to be a member of ECCO in September 2007, Icon and its members no longer conform to the part of Section III(ii) indicated by asterisks.

Preamble

The objects, buildings and environments to which society attributes particular aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual values are commonly designated "Cultural Heritage" and constitute a material and cultural patrimony to be passed on to coming generations.

Since it is entrusted to the care of the Conservator-Restorer by society, s/he has a responsibility not only to the cultural heritage itself, but also to the owner or legal guardian, the originator or creator, the public, and to posterity. The following conditions serve to safeguard all cultural heritage regardless of its owner, age, state of completeness or value.

I. Definition of the Conservator-Restorer

The Conservator-Restorer is a professional who has the training, knowledge, skills, experience and understanding to act with the aim of preserving cultural heritage for the future, and according to the considerations outlined below.

The fundamental role of the Conservator-Restorer is the preservation of cultural heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. The Conservator-Restorer contributes to the perception, appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage in respect of its environmental context and its significance and physical properties.

The Conservator-Restorer undertakes responsibility for, and carries out strategic planning; diagnostic examination; the drawing up of conservation plans and treatment proposals; preventive conservation; conservation-restoration treatments and documentation of observations and any interventions.

Diagnostic examination consists of the identification, the determination of the composition and the assessment of the condition of cultural heritage; the identification, nature and extent of alterations; the evaluation of the causes of deterioration and the determination of the type and extent of treatment needed. It includes the study of relevant existing information.

Preventive Conservation consists of indirect action to retard deterioration and prevent damage by creating conditions optimal for the preservation of cultural heritage as far as is compatible with its social use. Preventive conservation also encompasses correct handling, transport, use, storage and display. It may also involve issues of the production of facsimiles for the purpose of preserving the original.

Conservation consists mainly of direct action carried out on cultural heritage with the aim of stabilising condition and retarding further deterioration.

Restoration consists of direct action carried out on damaged or deteriorated cultural heritage with the aim of facilitating its perception, appreciation and understanding, while respecting as far as possible its aesthetic, historic and physical properties.

Documentation consists of the accurate pictorial and written record of all procedures carried out, and the rationale behind them. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. Any further requirements for the storage, maintenance, display or access to the cultural property should be

specified in this document.

The record remains the intellectual property of the Conservator-Restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Furthermore, it is within the Conservator-Restorer's competence to:

- develop programmes, projects and surveys in the field of conservation-restoration
- provide advice and technical assistance for the preservation of cultural heritage
- prepare technical reports on cultural heritage (excluding any judgement of its market value)
- conduct research
- develop educational programmes and teach
- disseminate information gained from examination, treatment or research
- promote a deeper understanding of the field of conservation-restoration

II. Education and Training

To maintain the standards of the profession, the Conservator-Restorer's professional education and training shall be at the level of a university Master's degree (or recognised equivalent) in conservation-restoration. The training is further detailed in "E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines III".

Conservation-Restoration is a complex and rapidly developing field. Therefore, the qualified Conservator-Restorer has a professional responsibility to keep up to date with new findings, and ensure that s/he practices her/his profession in line with current ethical thought. Continuing Professional Development is further detailed in "E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines II".

III. Distinction from other Related Fields

Conservation-Restoration is distinct from related fields (eg art and crafts) in that its primary aim is the preservation of cultural heritage, as opposed to the creation of new objects or maintaining or repairing objects in a functional sense.

The Conservator-Restorer is distinguished from other professionals by her/his specific education in conservation-restoration.

E.C.C.O. PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES (II): CODE OF ETHICS

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General

Assembly, Brussels 7 March 2003

I General Principles for the Application of the Code

Article 1: The Code of Ethics embodies the principles, obligations and behaviour which every Conservator-Restorer belonging to a member organisation of E.C.C.O. should strive for in the practice of the profession.

Article 2: The profession of Conservator-Restorer constitutes an activity of public interest and must be practised in observance of all pertinent national and European laws and agreements, particularly those concerning stolen property.

Article 3: The Conservator-Restorer works directly on cultural heritage and is personally responsible to the owner, to the heritage and to society. The Conservator-Restorer is entitled to practise without hindrance to her/his liberty and independence.

The Conservator-Restorer has the right in all circumstances to refuse any request which s/he believes is contrary to the terms or spirit of this Code.

The Conservator-Restorer has a right to expect that all relevant information regarding a conservation-restoration project (of any size) is given to her/him by the owner or custodian.

Article 4: Failure to observe the principles, obligations and prohibitions of the Code constitutes unprofessional practice and will bring the profession into disrepute. It is the responsibility of each national professional body to ensure that its members comply with the spirit and letter of the Code, and to take action in the case of proven non-compliance.

II Obligations towards Cultural Heritage

Article 5: The Conservator-Restorer shall respect the aesthetic, historic and spiritual significance and the physical integrity of the cultural heritage entrusted to her/his care.

Article 6: The Conservator-Restorer, in collaboration with other professional colleagues involved with cultural heritage, shall take into account the requirements of its social use while preserving the cultural heritage.

Article 7: The Conservator-Restorer must work to the highest standards regardless of any opinion of the market value of the cultural heritage. Although circumstances may limit the extent of a Conservator-Restorer's action, respect for the Code should not be compromised.

Article 8: The Conservator-Restorer should take into account all aspects of preventive conservation before carrying out physical work on the cultural heritage and should limit the treatment to only that which is necessary.

Article 9: The Conservator-Restorer shall strive to use only products, materials and procedures which, according to the current level of knowledge, will not harm the cultural heritage, the environment or people. The action itself and the materials used should not interfere, if at all possible, with any future examination, treatment or analysis. They should also be compatible with the materials of the cultural heritage and be as easily and completely reversible as possible.

Article 10: The conservation-restoration treatment of cultural heritage should be documented in written and pictorial records of the diagnostic examination, any conservation / restoration intervention and other relevant information. The report should also include the names of all those who have carried out the work. A copy of the report must be submitted to the owner or custodian of the cultural heritage and must remain accessible. The record remains the intellectual property of the Conservator-Restorer and shall be retained for future reference.

Article 11: The Conservator-Restorer must undertake only such work as s/he is competent to carry out. The Conservator-Restorer must neither begin nor continue a treatment which is not in the best interest of the cultural heritage.

Article 12: The Conservator-Restorer must strive to enrich her/his knowledge and skills with the constant aim of improving the quality of her/his professional work.

Article 13: Where necessary or appropriate, the Conservator-Restorer shall collaborate with other professionals and shall participate with them in a full exchange of information.

Article 14: In any emergency where cultural heritage is in immediate danger, the Conservator-Restorer - regardless of her/his field of specialisation - shall render all assistance possible.

Article 15: The Conservator-Restorer shall not remove material from cultural heritage unless this is indispensable for its preservation or it substantially interferes with the historic and aesthetic value of the cultural heritage. Materials which are removed should be conserved, if possible, and the procedure fully documented.

Article 16: When the social use of cultural heritage is incompatible with its preservation, the Conservator-Restorer shall discuss with the owner or legal custodian, whether making a reproduction of the object would be an appropriate intermediate solution. The Conservator-Restorer shall recommend proper reproduction procedures in order not to damage the original.

III Obligations to the Owner or Legal Custodian

Article 17: The Conservator-Restorer should inform the owner fully of any action required and specify the most appropriate means of continued care.

Article 18: The Conservator-Restorer is bound by professional confidentiality. In order to make a reference to an identifiable part of the cultural heritage s/he should obtain the consent of its owner or legal custodian.

Article 19: The Conservator-Restorer should never support the illicit trade in cultural heritage, and must work actively to oppose it. Where legal ownership is in doubt, the Conservator-Restorer must check all the available sources of information before any work is undertaken.

IV Obligations to Colleagues and the Profession

Article 20: The Conservator-Restorer must maintain a spirit of respect for the integrity and dignity of colleagues, the Conservation-Restoration profession, and related professions and professionals

Article 21: The Conservator-Restorer should, within the limits of her/his knowledge, competence, time and technical means, participate in the training of interns and assistants.

The Conservator-Restorer is responsible for supervising the work entrusted to her/his assistants and interns and has ultimate responsibility for the work undertaken under her/his supervision S/he must maintain a spirit of respect and integrity towards such colleagues.

Article 22: Where work is (in whole or in part) sub-contracted to another Conservator-Restorer, for whatever reason, the owner or custodian must be kept informed. The original Conservator-Restorer is ultimately responsible for the work, unless prior arrangements are made to the contrary.

Article 23: The Conservator-Restorer must contribute to the development of the profession by sharing experience and information.

Article 24 : The Conservator-Restorer shall strive to promote a deeper understanding of the profession and a greater awareness of conservation-restoration among other professions and the public.

Article 25: Records concerning conservation-restoration for which the Conservator-Restorer is responsible are her/his intellectual property (subject to the terms of her/his contract of employment). S/he has the right to be acknowledged as the author of the work.

Article 26: Involvement in the commerce of cultural property is not compatible with the activities of the Conservator-Restorer.

Article 27: When a professional Conservator-Restorer undertakes work that is outside the scope of Conservation-Restoration, s/he must ensure that it does not conflict with this Code.

Article 28: To maintain the dignity and credibility of the profession, the Conservator-Restorer should employ only appropriate and informative forms of publicity in relation to her/his work. Particular care should be exercised in relation to Information Technology (IT) in order to avoid the dissemination of inappropriate, misleading, illegal or unauthorised information.

Acknowledgements

The European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations (E.C.C.O.) prepared the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines based on the study of documents of national and international organisations for conservation-restoration and heritage. The "Conservator-Restorer: a definition of the profession" (ICOM-CC, Copenhagen 1984) was the first document adopted by E.C.C.O.

E.C.C.O. PROFESSIONAL GUIDELINES (III):

Promoted by the European Confederation of Conservator-Restorers' Organisations and adopted by its General Assembly, Brussels 2 April 2004

I. The Basic Aims of Education in Conservation-Restoration

Education is to be based on the highest ethical standards of the profession, aimed at respecting the uniqueness of cultural heritage and its aesthetic, artistic, documentary, environmental, historic, scientific, social, or spiritual significance. After a completed education, graduates should be capable of working responsibly in the field of conservation-restoration of cultural heritage, including the more specialised technical, scientific and artistic aspects. They should be able to collaborate with all other professions concerned with the preservation of cultural heritage. Graduates should also be capable of independent research in the field of conservation-restoration and historical technology and techniques. The education is also aimed at developing all other important abilities, as stated in the E.C.C.O. Professional Guidelines I .

II. Level of Education

** The minimum level for entry into the profession as a qualified Conservator- Restorer should be at Master's level (or recognised equivalent). This should be achieved by a period of full-time study in conservation-restoration of no less than 5 years at a university (or at a recognised equivalent level) and should include well-structured practical internships. It should be followed by the possibility of study to PhD level. **

Both theoretical education and practical training are of high importance, and should be organised in good balance. After successful completion of a final examination the candidate is awarded a degree or diploma. A reference to the specialisms studied should be given.

Depending on national situations, it may also be relevant to assess professional practice to confirm the conservator-restorer's ability to work, ethically and competently in his/her specialism.

III. Practical Training

Practical training must involve the treatment of original objects deemed particularly suitable for didactic purposes. The objects chosen should provide material for a well-documented case study including technical examination, diagnosis and related treatment. From the beginning of their education, such case studies make the students understand every object as a unique case in the most practically oriented way. Furthermore, case studies offer the best possibility to integrate all the theoretical, methodological and ethical aspects of conservation-restoration into the practical training. The study and practice of historical techniques, technology, and the manufacturing processes of related materials are encouraged, as they promote greater understanding of the physical, historical and artistic aspects of cultural heritage.

IV. Theoretical Instruction

A balance between science and the humanities is indispensable for theoretical instruction. The theoretical subjects should be determined by the specialisation in the field of conservation/restoration and should include:

- Ethical principles of conservation-restoration

- Science (eg chemistry, physics, biology, mineralogy, colour theory)

- Humanities (eg history, palaeography, history of art, archaeology, ethnology, philosophy)

- History of materials and techniques, technology and manufacturing processes

- Identification and study of deterioration processes

- Display and transport of cultural property

- Theory, methods and techniques of conservation, preventive conservation and restoration

- Processes involved in making reproductions of objects

- Methods of documentation

- Methods of scientific research

- History of Conservation-Restoration

- Legal issues (eg professional statutes, cultural heritage law, insurance, business and tax law)

- Management (collections, staff and resources)

- Health and Safety (including environmental issues)

- Communication skills (including Information Technology)

Certificate of Receipt for Artwork to be Disposed in Art Bin

Full Name of Applicant (uppercase)

Title of Work

Art Bin Reference Number _____

Declaration by Applicant and Michael Landy / SLG

Where moral rights apply to a work, I confirm either that:

1. I am the author of the work submitted and forego my moral rights, or that,
2. before submitting this form, I have obtained the express written permission of the artist in question, or in the case of an artist who died in the last 70 years, I have obtained the express written permission of that artist's estate.

In either case: to waive the artist's moral rights and for the work to be placed in *Art Bin* and disposed of after the exhibition closes. I understand that if I have not obtained any necessary permissions I will be held liable for any claims. In the event of a dispute over an artist's moral rights neither the SLG nor Michael Landy will be liable for any claims. The SLG reserves the right to require written permission from an artist or an artist's estate entirely at the SLG's discretion and to refuse entry to any works in the absence thereof.

I hereby fully indemnify Michael Landy and the SLG for all claims, proceedings, damages, awards, legal costs and any other expenses incurred by Michael Landy and/or the SLG howsoever arising whether directly or indirectly, if any part of this declaration is untrue.

Michael Landy and the SLG hereby confirm that all works put into *Art Bin* will be permanently disposed of after the show closes on 14 March 2010 and that under no circumstances will *Art Bin*, or the works within it, be kept or sold to a third party.

Art Bin exists to promote art and not to denigrate it. It is in no way the intention of Michael Landy or the SLG to comment on the quality of any work placed and/or disposed of in *Art Bin*.

Signature of Applicant _____

Do you permit the work detailed above to be photographed/reproduced in documentation of, or press for Art Bin? YES NO

Would you like your name to be listed in the gallery as a contributor? YES NO

Received Date

Received by

Signature of Receiver

Two copies to be signed for each work accepted for Art Bin, one copy to be retained by the South London Gallery and the second to be given to the applicant. A printed photograph of the work should be attached to each copy.

South London Gallery 65 Peckham Road London SE5 8UH

Appendix 4

Results of a survey of dated artworks shown in gallery booths at Frieze 2009.

Statistics presented in chapter 12, also included a count of artworks listed in the Frieze highlights catalogue (and are thus not shown here).

Plan B

Serban Sauv
Summer Kitchen
2009

Navid Nuur
Untitled 2009 Broken Concept 2005-2008 Somewhere at Night 2009

Adiran Ghenie
The End of Romanticism
2009

Ciprian Muresan
Dog Luv 2009 Expulsion from Paradise 2007

Dallas

Alex Pollard
Dandy outlaws.... 2009 Thieves and Dogs 2008

Clare Stephenson
Our-lady-of-the-conscious-optics 2009 Ornament & Boredom 2009 La-Belle-Toute-Savante 2009

Victoria Miro

Chris Ofili
Blue Night Rider One
2006

Grayson Perry
For faith in shopping 2008 The Walthamstow Tapestry 2009

Jacco Olivier
Stumble
2009

Peter Doig
City Entrance
1998-99

Yayoi Kusama
Infinity Dots
2008

Alex Hartley
Bregenzer Kunstverein
2009

Idris Khan

Mozart Requiem (Venice 2005)
2006

Isaac Julien
True South Series No2
2008

Aizpuru

Wolfgang Tillmans
Clouds II Clouds I
2008 2008

Albert Oehlen
Weiterl
2005

Cristina Garcia Rodero
La Nina Enferma edition 2/7
1995

Martin Kippenberger
Untitled
1994

Piere Gonnord
Incendio III Incendio II
2009 2009

Heimo Zobernig
H2 2004-46 H2 2003-21
2004 2003

Galeria Juana de Aizpuru

Roman Ondak
I'm just acting in it
2007

Joe Scanlon
Folding Chair
1997

Roman Signer
Tur Tisch Punkt Bruchenhaus
1994 2008 2006 2000

Jakob Kolding
Untitled
2009

Werner Feiersinger
Untitled
2009

Milena Dragicevic
Erections for transatlantic 8 Erections for transatlantic 7
2009 2009

Reynolds

Mark Wallinger

Self-portrait (elephant) Still Life (the black vase #2)
2008 2008

Asier Mendizabal

Untitled (Benta Handi) Figures & Prefigurations (Divers K Teige) Figures..(...V Palladini)
2009 2009 2009

Figures..(...N.Lekuona) Figures..(...B Nvuraari) Figures..(... A Rodchenko)
2009 2009 2009

Figures..(...L Moholy-Nagy) The Staff that Matters (SI) The (30,000)
2009 2009 2009

Paul Graham

California
2005-2006

Sturtevant

Haring Untitled
1986

Wilkinson

Thoralf Knoblach

Tankstelle
2009

Marcin Maciejowski

Two barmaids from Pielmy Pies....
2009

Fia Backstrom

Socially Organised Appearance
2009

Phoebe Unwin

Street
2009

Joan Jonas

Untitled 2008

Sun Hwan Kim

Untitled Untitled
2007 2007

Ged Quinn

On reaching the heart...
2009

Anna Parkina

Seen during the break The Honor in memory of the caravan
2009 2009

David Batchelor

Waldella VII Ronnie Kray A K Dolven if we could hear you now
2007 2009 2008

Tillman Kaiser
Miss weaving tree
2009

George Shaw
The Slippery Slope Thin Ice
2009 2009

Kilchmann

Teresa Margolles
Papeles dela Moigue (#3) Papeles dela Moigue (#4)
2003 2003

Raffi Kalenderian
Jess
2009

Michael Bauer
Speedlings HS Yetertown BB Lorna O.T
2009 2009 2009 2007

Duncan Marquiss
Unfinished Drawing
2009

Jorge Macchi
Plan Match 12 Short Songs 10:51
2003 2007 2009 2009

Francis Alys
Hercules Errata Railings
2007 2004

Fabian Marti
The horrible patient The power of three Standing firm
2008 2008 2008

Maja Bajevic
How do you want to be governed?
2009

Willie Doherty
Buried
2009

Adrian Paci
Per Speculum
2006

Javier Tellez
Calligari and the sleepwalker
2008

Andro Wekua
By the window
2008

Artur Zmijewski
Democracies
2009

Teresa Margolles
What else could we talk about embassy
2009

Alvear

Isaac Julien
True South Series #3
2008

DJ Simpson
Lateral inhibition
2009

Something is put in place..
2009

L'homme qui...
2009

Ima Knoebel
Position 7
2008

Prudencio Irazabal
Across salty water 18c
2009

Jane & Louise Wilson
Oddiments room #6
2009

Alicia Framis
Untitled Shanghai
2009

Santiago Serra
200 litres of water from the dead sea
2004

James Casabere
Flooded Street
2007

Gladstone

Andrew Lord
Waterfall, Healy Dell
2008-2009

Richard Prince
Untitled, I had a Dream
1993

Anish Kapoor
Untitled
2009

Lari Pittman
Untitled #8
2008

Cameron Jamie
Shivers Apache
2008

Jim Hodges
That Day (blue)
2009

Wangechi Mutu
Cactus Green Nips
2009

Mirosław Balka
60 x 50 x 35 190 x 85 x 47.2
2003 1994

Lisson

Jonathan Monk
Do not pay more than \$60,000
Date tbc

Allora + Calzadilla
How to appear invisible
2009

Dan Graham
Triangular Pavillion
1989-2008

Ceal Floyer
Untitled (Dotted Line) Duck-Rabbit
1993 2009

Richard Deacon
Beauty & the Beast
1995

Richard Wentwork
Spaziergang
1997

Ryan Gander
Associative Template #15 Aristotle's Illusion
2009 2009

Rodney Graham
Dead Flowers in my Studio
2009

Gerard Byrne
Four weeks and two days ago
2009

Santiago Serra
Banana Company....
2009

Tatsuo Miyajima
C.F Life Structurism
2008

John Latham
Untitled
1987

Fernando Ortega
Transcription
2004

David Zwirner

R. Crumb
Untitled
2009

Luc Tuymans
Wonderland
2007

John McCracken
Fire
2007

Adel Abdessend
Soccer ball
2009

Neo Rauch
Harmlos
2002

Christopher Williams
Untitled (Study in Brown)
2009

Alice Neel
Annie Sprinkle
1982

Diane Thater
Blitz Ruse Salatanmy
2008 2009

Marian Goodman

Tony Cragg
Figments
2003

Thomas Struth
Paradise 28, Peru
2005

Christian Poltanski
Monument
1987

Cristina Iglesias
Fuga a Seis Voces
2007

Paul McCarthy
Henry Moore bound to Fail
2004

Louise Bourgeois
The Couple
2003

Neha Choksi
A Child's Grove
2009

Vanessa Billy
Two Trees I Two Trees II
2009 2009

Tereas Margolles
Bandera (Flag)
2009

Erwin Wurm
Pumpkin
2009

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