

# Prova

Royal College of Art

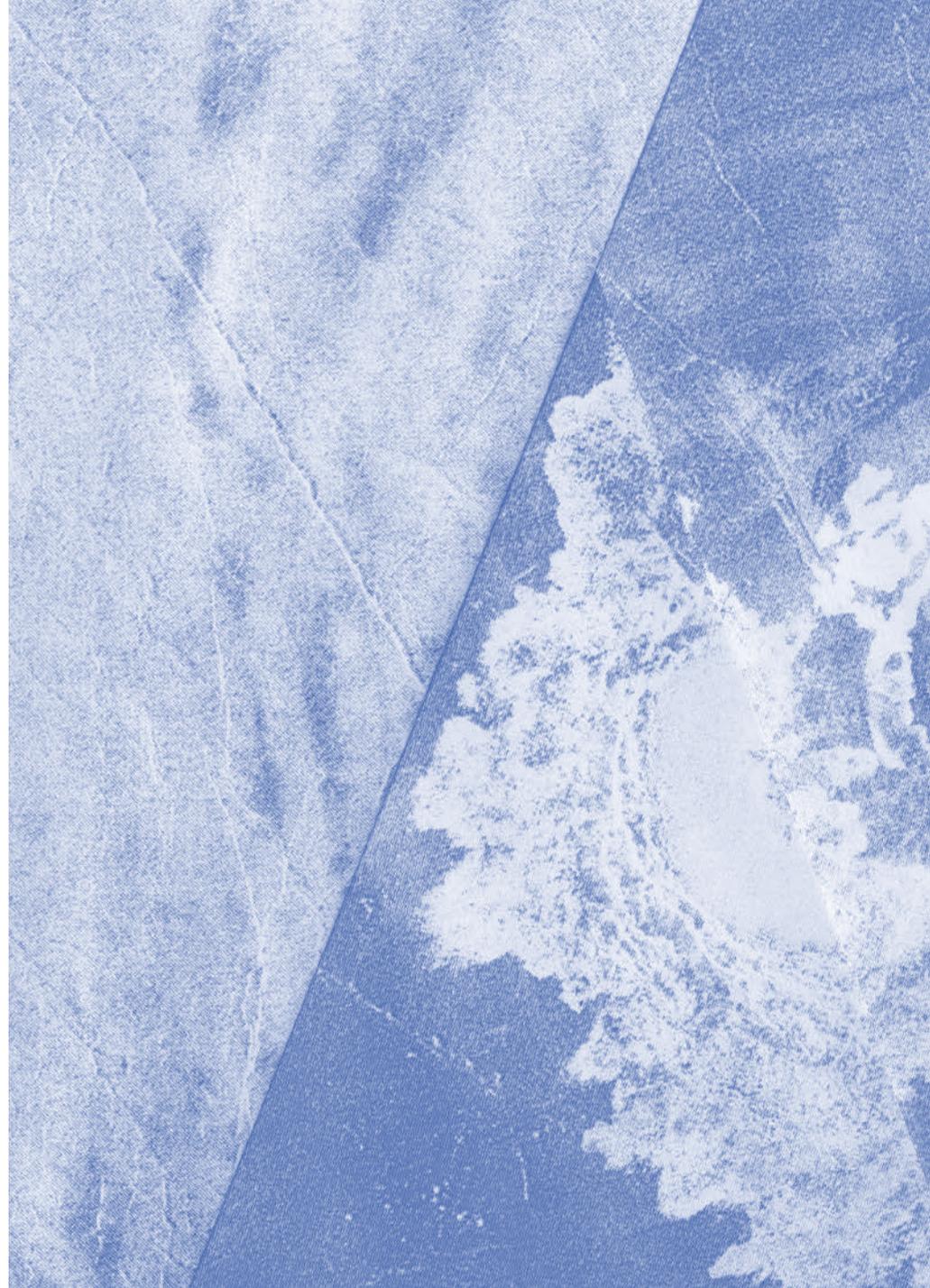
Humanities Research Forum Journal

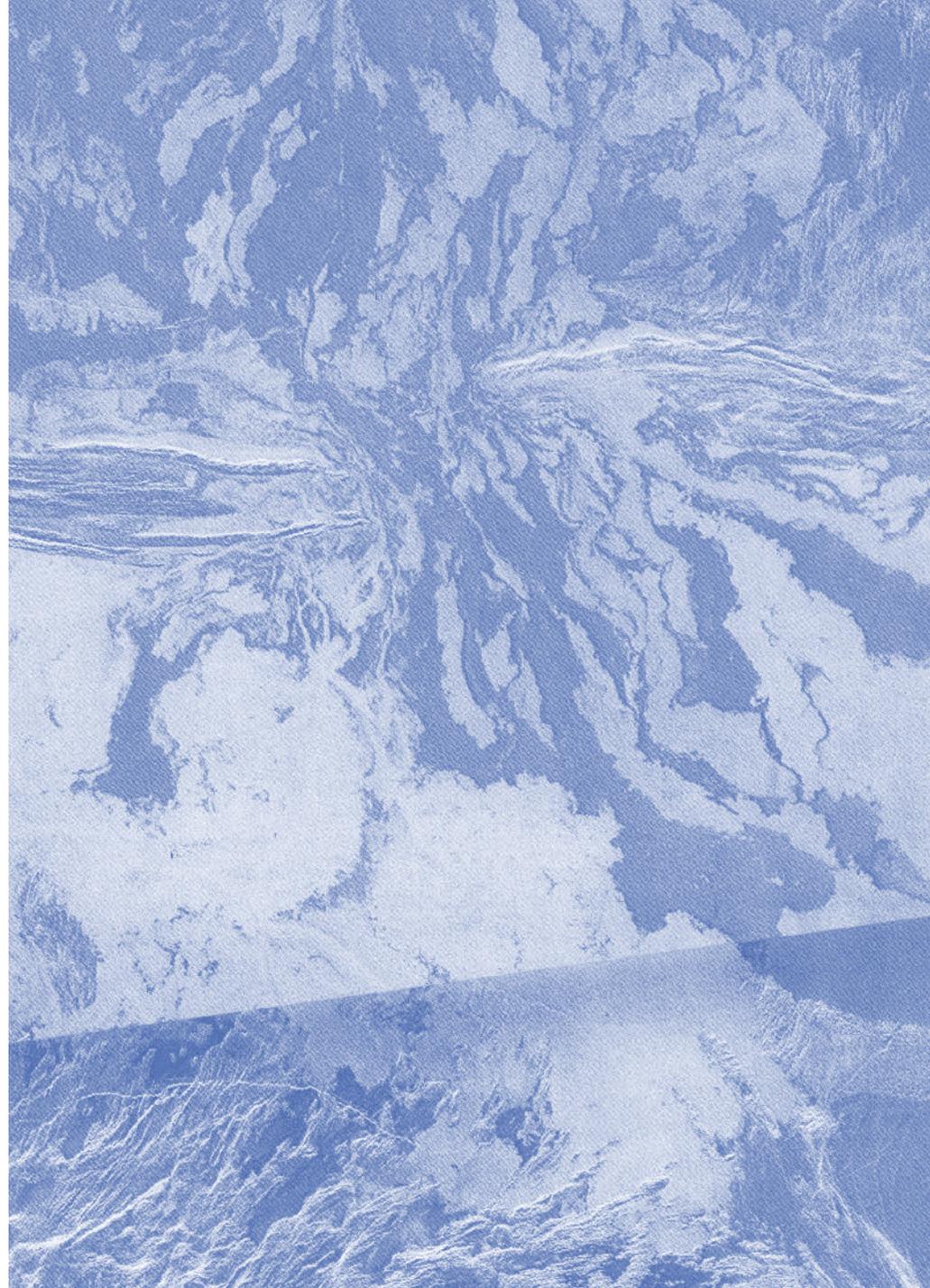
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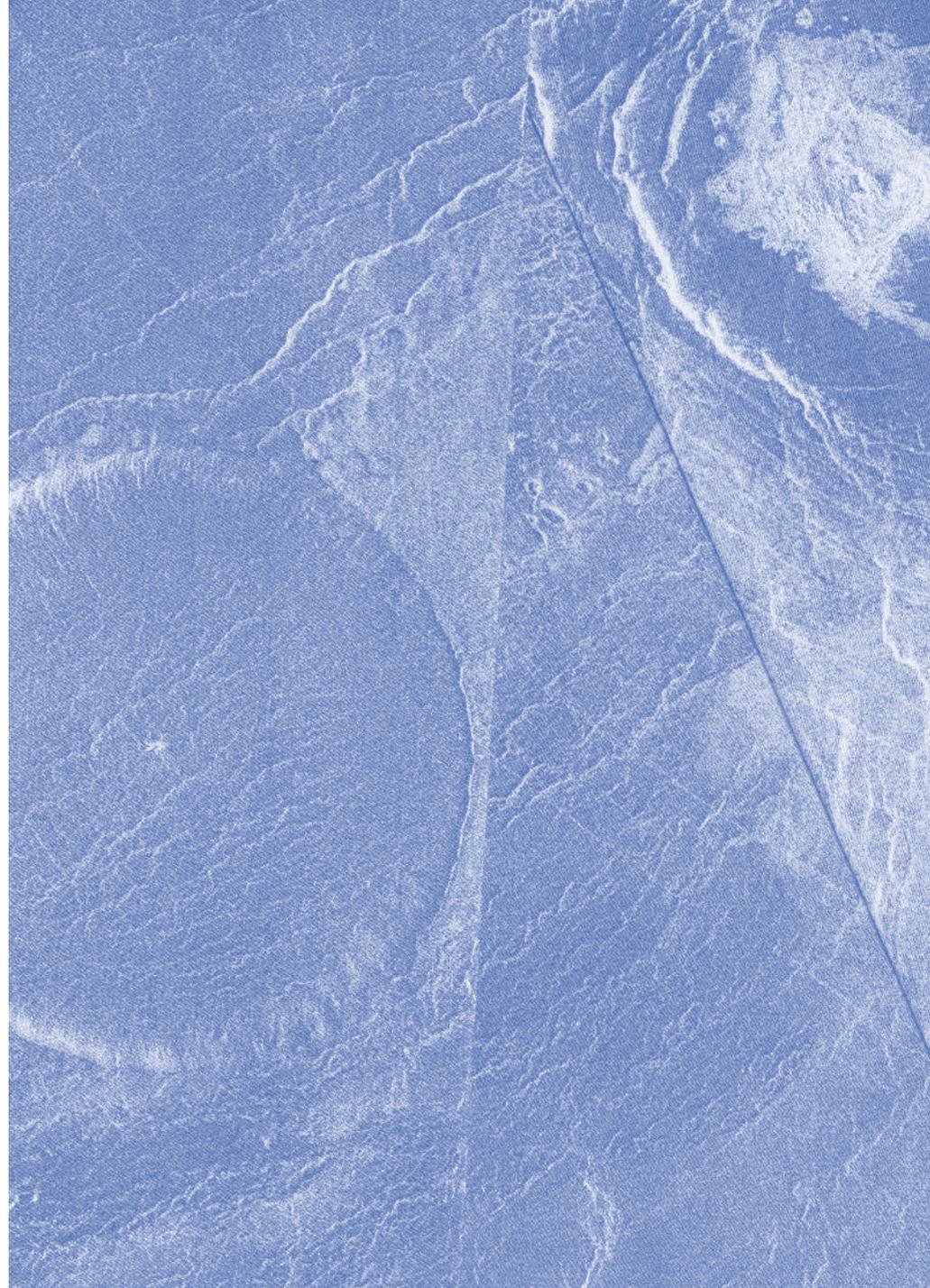
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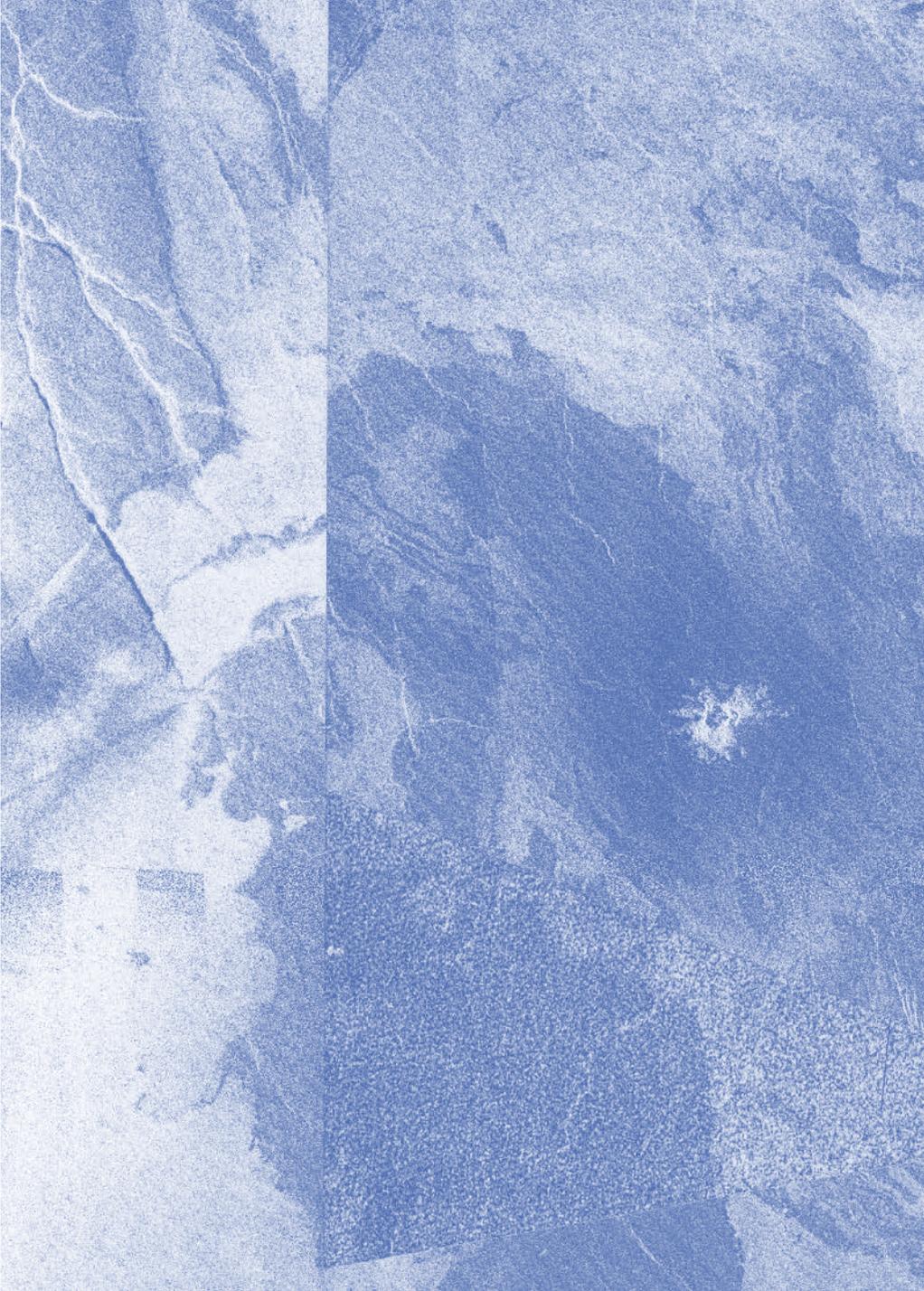
# Prova

**Venus, Displaced**  
Luci Eldridge









**Prova 2**  
Royal College of Art  
Humanities Research Forum Journal  
2014

**Journal editor**  
Chantal Faust

**Copyeditors**  
Emily LaBarge & Nina Trivedi

**Design**  
Trond Klevgaard

**Print**  
Hato Press

**Edition**  
200 copies

**ISBN**  
978-1-910642-03-0

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e. [humanities-research@rca.ac.uk](mailto:humanities-research@rca.ac.uk)

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## Prova 2

Chantal Faust

Welcome to the second issue of Prova: the annual RCA Humanities Research Forum Journal.

The words ‘trial’, ‘attempt’ and ‘rehearsal’ are all definitions of the Italian word *prova*. In the language of bespoke shoemaking, the *prova* is the primary model around which leather and heel are moulded to make the shoe. *Prova* is a first, it was the first, and now it is also the second. If the first issue of the Prova Journal was a *giro di prova* (a test or trial run), and *in prova* (on probation), this second issue represents another attempt, *fino a prova contraria* (until [it is] proven otherwise).

Once, and now again, Prova 2 brings together a selection of essays by Humanities research students and Humanities staff at the RCA, as well as invited guests. Each contributor to the journal was also a participant in the 2013–14 Humanities Research Forum. The HRF is a weekly event in the autumn and spring terms at the RCA: it is a designated space for all Humanities MPhil and PhD students to come together, to speculate, to share ideas and brew some more.

Also in its second year, this incarnation of the Humanities Research Forum saw us warmly welcoming Dr Marquard Smith as Humanities Research Leader and Head of Doctoral Studies, who played a major role in the sessions and helped to develop the idea of the morning Research Seminars as a regular event in the Forum calendar, represented here in the contributions from Kit Hammonds, Nils Jean, and Dr Livia Rezende. Marq also instigated the ‘RCA/Brighton Face-Off’ as an opportunity to begin an evolving questioning of the role of the arts and humanities PhD within the art school, and we are delighted to have Professor Guy Julier’s voice included in this issue.

Other new additions to the Forum involved a series of writing workshops, led by playwright Ben Ellis. The ‘floating pieces’ by Luci Eldridge and Dionea Rocha Watt included in Prova 2 embody an ongoing interest in pushing forms of writing within the context of

the research degree. The ‘Walk London’ tour, supremely led by Helen Kearney was an inspiring conclusion to the autumn term and is chronicled in her essay included here. The student-led ‘curated sessions’ continued as an important, exciting (and frequently jam-packed) staple of the HRF calendar, represented in this issue in an article by Andrew Hewish, a picture essay by Luci Eldridge and in the ‘focus’ sections on *Designing Identity*, *Reenactment* and *Speculative Thinking*, selected by Trond Klevgaard, Helena Bonett and Nina Trivedi respectively.

Thank you to Professor Jane Pavitt, Dean of Humanities for her ongoing support of the Forum and this journal. Thanks also to Emily LaBarge for being so generous in lending her excellent copy-editing skills once again to this issue, to Nina Trivedi for copyediting her section and a big thank you to Trond Klevgaard for his beautiful design work. Now it is time to *mettere alla prova* (put it to the test). We hope you enjoy Prova 2.

**Dr Chantal Faust** is the editor of Prova, convenor of the Humanities Research Forum and a tutor in Critical & Historical Studies at the RCA.

## Somewhere Between Curatorial and Artistic Practice

Kit Hammonds

The gap between artistic and curatorial practice is a narrow void filled with a grey and pulpy propolis. While it is easy to be divisive over the differences between these roles, and to generalise about the power inherent to the relationships between artist and curator, it is not so easy to portray the rather messier orgiastic, nepotistic, perversity of how they operate within and without each other's logics that frequently seem to be drawn out of the same stuff. Coughing and spitting, choking and gagging, I seem to be covered in the phlegm of the strange anthropomorphic couplings of grey matter. Am I devouring art as a curator, consuming it with all of the connotations that implied? Or does the mastication of one lead to another, transmogrified substance that, as yet, remains unnamed.

In parts of the world in which cannibalism has a real history, as well as in the lands of imagination, orality plays an important role. In Amazonian forest 'islands', where the outside world may still have first encounters with isolated tribes, we may find women chewing manioc root or maize to make Cauim or Chicha. The pulverized mash is spat into a collective pot and, in what must seem like a strange and magical alchemy, the enzymes in the spit break the starches down into sugars, which then naturally ferment from bacteria and yeast that has found its way into the mix. The resulting 'beer' is a thick gloop, not appetising but surprisingly strong.

The production of these ancient alcoholic brews continues in Andean cultures, and dates back to pre-historic times. The practice is common worldwide, finding its equivalents in African, Asian and Pacific island cultures. And, more frequently than not, it is women doing the spitting. In fact, it appears that it is only women doing the spitting. But I am only as expert in the field of 'saliva-cohols' as anyone else with a fervid teenage curiosity for the abject, and easily sated by popular science such as Wikipedia, the Discovery channel

or BBC Natural History Unit documentaries). How this practice developed is a mystery that will never be solved, but certainly worthy of pondering as to how such a thing might have been discovered. At what point did someone choose to eat already partly digested food waste and find it had a pleasurable effect, rather than gag on the putrid and mucus-rich mix? And was it out of desperation, or in search of transcendental experience and otherworldly knowledge?

*Spit and Chew: Art & Culture* is one of Latham's most notorious acts against books. It sits alongside his *Skoob Tower* bonfires, in which he set light to columns of complete editions of *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, as acts of anti-establishment provocation via the printed word. *Spit & Chew* is less politically aggressive or overtly confrontational, but provokes a more visceral reaction. During a seminar at Central Saint Martins, variously purported to have taken place in 1966 or 1967, Latham produced a copy of Greenberg's *Art & Culture*, taken from Central Saint Martin's college library, and tore leaves from it, passing them out to students who then collectively chewed the pages and spat them out into a fermentation bottle, performing a physical deconstruction of the book and employing disgust as a critical tool. We might even say that it is as much an attack on art and culture as on Greenberg's modernist point of view, with Latham's own relativist theories put forward in notions of time as well as political and aesthetic approach. One might ironically call it a totalising worldview, in that it consistently refuses such a singular perspective unerringly, perhaps protesting too much.

John Latham was born in Rhodesia, before de-colonisation. This much is often forgotten despite the constant politics of cultures and beliefs that appear within his work. And so, while it is not documented that the practice is taken from personal experience or observation, there is a biographical relationship to contact between 'primitive' cultures and the developed world (which at the time meant 'Western') that lends a different perspective on the work. Whether he experienced salivachols first-hand, or through a reference in an Encyclopaedia, isn't necessarily the issue. But that of conflicting cultures is. The themes are often abstracted – Bibles and Korans are representatives of totalised 'knowledge', alongside the *Encyclopaedia*

*Britannica*. But this is a gloss over the confrontational aspects of desecrating these incompatible belief systems, in which the Encyclopaedia is included – perhaps not with such visibly proselytising believers, but based equally on a totalising knowledge that is culturally specific in its worldview. We shouldn't ignore this transference any more than the material one of the passage of an abject practice from the mouths of women to mouths of men in *Spit and Chew*. Or the transference from the tribal festivities of Africa to the tribal bonfires of vanities of London's art world. A negative critique in so many ways, it's a particularly physical and self-abusive critique, as one tribal affiliation is turned into a masticated, masculated, urbane other of the other in Latham's act against *Art & Culture*.

This is to read much into *Spit & Chew*, perhaps more than was intended. I am perhaps mythologizing for my own purposes, and it is possible that Latham's act was more of a prank at first, though it has certainly been mythologised by Latham himself, by all accounts. In fact, Anthony Davies' rescue of abandoned archival papers of Central Saint Martins led to documentation that suggests Latham fabricated much of the story to garner publicity in the media. The mythology is, however, consistent with the act itself, and circulates more through word of mouth than the historical narratives of the museum object – a jar and book cased in velvet – which looks mute and obsolete, a curiosity rather than a radical event.

In a wholly different context, I tried *Spit & Chew* out on an audience in Taipei, where word of mouth turned to oral event as part of a panel discussion on artist publishing, convened by curator Esther Lu. The transferences are multi-fold, not just in time and location, nor in the fact that my edition of *Art & Culture* had been bought online and the nearest it had come to a college library was its delivery to my college address. More significantly, the event was spectacularised by its staging – turned into an unrehearsed theatre. One thing I learnt there was how disgusting paperbacks taste, invoking a gag reflex that only got me past a few sheets without nearly retching. To disguise this, I handed out sheets to the panel and audience; a few game people spat wads into the jar alongside my own. Mostly people politely, awkwardly, scrunched up their sheets and hid them in their

hands and pockets. Pouring a little extra water in, the jar was sealed, hopefully to ferment.

And so, I cannibalised John Latham's *Spit & Chew* and ingested it as a different curatorial, critical, performative act. This is a final stage of transference that moves the work of art into a curatorial event.

I can't entirely say I feel guilty. The act of ingesting another's ideas, or at least ruminating a little on the remains, is not unusual for a curator. And if we are honest, it is not the most original idea to ingest a book. I would be very surprised if a Dadaist didn't do it. So surprised I can't really be bothered to look. Precedence is not something that concerns me here. But a nagging sense of pride and guilt over simply adopting someone else's idea even under the tired labels of re-performance, the now seemingly ancient concept of homage, or the more current discourses of re-eventualisation – I had to spit this out again somehow and perform some further act to make this my own. In short, I needed to eat my own excrement (in the metaphorical sense). The jar remained, not fermenting, but developing like a terrarium, an atmosphere more humid than the August sub-tropical climate. On some of the wads, now more solid, like boulders, and millimetre-high black forests seemed to be growing on the miniature mountains. From outside, through curved glass and condensation, it wasn't possible to say if they were some form of fungus, or the ink leaching of the paper in the damp. Either could be true, a living organic mass, or a poisonous chemical process, but botulism seemed to be the most likely possibility. Without the correct airlock in the jar, it was unlikely to maintain the yeast and ferment anyway, intoxicating itself in a tropical jarred atmosphere.

It seemed to me like an interesting object to have around in a cultural laboratory such as the Taipei Contemporary Art Center, but the Director seemed to disagree. So I transferred it again, into the open studios, and placed it on display as a talking point with visitors. Among them was a master calligraphic artist accompanied by his partner, who was previously a curator at the Taipei Fine Art Museum. Of an older generation for whom artists were real outsiders in Taiwan's Martial Law state, they told me that a friend had eaten a book as a performance. Many other visitors – the general public –

seemed to want to try it too. I wish I had had a bucket for a spittoon, as it could have produced a different vintage. Even more theatrical, even further from the original.

Many people told me how local Hakka tribal culture made almost hallucinogenic drinks in that ancient fashion. Perhaps concerned I had been misled in my introduction to Taiwanese culture, many also told me about how good Taiwanese whiskies are – as good tasting as paper is bad.

Finally, I decided to bury the jar in the park by the river, secretly, at night, digging down into the dirt and pebbles. The process was harder than I imagined, the ground dense with stones not so dissimilar in size and shape from those inside the jar. Each had to be pulled out individually before reaching the next, and no tool would have been of use, even if I had one more suitable than a found cleaver and my bare hands. An hour's labour for a small hole, about the size of my head, into which the jar was placed and covered over. While primitive fermentation of spit beers is quite immediate, another fermentation process takes place underground in Korea, that of Kimchi. Made in the traditional way, cabbages are buried in earthenware pots until they have reached their fizzy, spicy acidic best. It's a rash misuse of place, Taiwan is as different from Korea as England is from Italy, but all the same it seemed an appropriate act.

Afterwards, I made a treasure map in three parts for three friends, including Esther, in case they wanted to find it – which I assume they won't. But a gesture at least that something possibly valuable was starting to fizz. Among them was Jo Ying Peng, who was the project manager from TCAC and who had previously worked in the residency programme for which I was scrabbling around in the mud. The third was artist and curator Fang Yen Hsien.

And here lies a link to a further cannibalistic repurposing, the scaling up of an artist's discreet act into an industrial process, at least in proposition, and in the process, a cannibalisation of artist and curator alike. Fang has invited me to produce a work for a group exhibition he is curating in March next year, my first as an artist in 15 years. The exhibition takes place in a private museum and the theme looks at a tropical form of cli-fi, that is climate fiction, a sub-

genre of speculative fiction based on environmental change. Here, the key transformative moment from Latham's work to a curatorial process is to be enacted by the mastication of an entire bibliography of the exhibition turned en masse into an alcoholic pulp, and then the mash distilled to a Baijiu for drinking, or more likely for fuel. Even boiled out of the saliva, I am not sure I could bring myself to drink whatever it produces.

Is this a curatorial or artistic process? Perhaps it is not so important, but it does mirror certain commercial transformations in which innovations are repurposed by other industries through mass-production. It is common for good ideas to be simple enough to be transformed by business thinking. If the transference into a curatorial object could be characterised simply, it might be just this: that the art is repurposed in some way – cannibalised in a near gluttonous feast, or perhaps even 'Frankensteinised', dismembered, and the parts that could not be swallowed raw, sutured back together into a new body. It is my belief that this is a different process to the artistic re-inhabiting of works through re-enactment, a different set of performative expectations. This might not be as visible from the outside though, as I am the digestive tract, and all you get are my excremented remains.

**Kit Hammonds** is senior tutor in Curating Contemporary Art and has an independent practice that bridges curatorial, artistic, publishing and pedagogic projects with a particular focus on self-organisation. He works in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

## Digital Debris in Internet Art, a Metaphorical Resistance to the Epistemology of Search

Nils Jean

Stemming from both a technical and a semantic process of generation, digital debris (i.e. dismissed, forgotten online data) represents an on-going hybridization of the metaphorical and data processing that I will argue has the potential to challenge the state of knowledge in contemporary culture. Contemporary knowledge, which is increasingly generated and disseminated online, has been astutely described by Art Historian David Joselit as an “Epistemology of Search”. Briefly, the Epistemology of Search refers to the act of recycling and connecting images instead of producing new ones and how the connectivity and circulation of those images glosses over their content. Here, the paper will focus on the metaphorical nature of digital debris as a potential resistance to the Epistemology of Search. More precisely, the paper will examine the recycling of discarded data and the generation of debris it implies in Internet Art. The paper will study a work entitled *Weightless* (1998), by British artists Thomson & Craighead. Once generated, the digital debris deploys a strategy that instigates a halt: a pause or a slowing down in the logic of networks. The essay will be an opportunity to introduce the concept of the Epistemology of Search, and then to continue the conversation ignited by Joselit by mapping out the ways in which the Epistemology of Search can be subverted by digital debris within the context of an art practice.

In his book, *After Art*, Joselit asserts that contemporary images hold power in their capacity to replicate, remediate and disseminate at “variable velocities” (2012: XIV). Joselit hopes “to link the vast image population explosion that occurred in the twentieth century to an epistemology of search” (2012: 89). For him the Epistemology of Search symbolises the “breakdown of the era of art” where ‘art’, “defined as a private creative pursuit leading to significant and

profitable discoveries of how images may carry new content, has given way to the formatting and reformatting of existing content.” (Joselit, 2012: 89). Thus the author shifts the critical focus from art production, to what images do once they enter circulation in discrete networks. The book is an attempt to identify the circulation of images and the configuration of links and connections they create within heterogeneous environments. The pattern of dissemination and the connections between these images primes over the content of what is actually connected, so that “in economies of image overproduction” the key is ‘connectivity’; this is the Epistemology of Search’ (Joselit, 2012: 55–56). Following the idea of connectivity that disregards the specificity of what is connected, Joselit also explains that what matters now “is not the production of new content but its retrieval in intelligible patterns through acts of reframing, capturing, reiterating, and documenting. What counts in other words, is how widely and easily images connect.” (Joselit, 2012: 55–56). At first sight, it seems that the re-appropriation of online waste echoes the acts of reiterating, retrieving and reframing that Joselit articulates. It could even be argued that digital debris would act as an agent that, by connecting bits of information from different contexts, facilitates an Epistemology of Search. However, on closer inspection, I would like to submit that the example of Internet Art examined here actually manifests signs of resistance to the Epistemology of Search.

*Weightless*, by British artist Thomson & Craighead, is a website that allows the user to navigate an archive of online data collected in 1998. The data comprises animated GIFs and chat-rooms transcripts, organised into 42 boxes. A program has scanned the web and reconstituted its findings in the form of a grid. By clicking on this grid, the viewer is led to sentences extracted from chat rooms and animated graphics collected at the time that *Weightless* was conceived. The content of the work is not made visible at first, and the viewer has to interact with the programme to access the data, rendering digital debris a hidden entity. The piece is not an open and endless work, but rather a self-contained piece that operates as a closed circuit. Consequently, the website always displays the same data if the viewer clicks selects a box that he or she has already clicked on. Additionally,

the dead ends of the website, mock the necessary connectivity of the network paradigm on which the Internet is based. Thus, the data displayed in *Weightless* is on a loop, and the viewer has no other choice but to witness the re-appearance of data he or she has already watched. Normally, by visiting and clicking through an ordinary website, the visitor becomes a human feedback loop that supplies the machine with data for the site to perfect itself and thereby to improve. The aim of the machine is not to improve the visitor's needs, but to strengthen the control and exploitation of the viewer's data by creating a 'bubble effect' for the user (Stallabrass, 2003). *Weightless* does not seem to offer this kind of feedback, but instead disrupts it by creating a reiterative piece, a maze that ridicules the instrumentalisation and commodification of the viewer's data that the Internet normally undertakes. I would argue here that the television metaphor in which *Weightless* nests itself participates in creating a closed-circuit system. With its use of a grid, its music and the appearance of chat transcripts at the bottom of the screen – like subtitles – it could be said that the metaphorical side of the work lies in its resemblance to a TV show. For instance, the action of selecting which data to see by clicking on a box, recalls the use of a television remote control. The television metaphor was explicitly intended by the artists. When presenting the work, Alison Craighead declared, “with *Weightless* we were really interested in making it look like television or something that was televised” (Quaintance, 2011). The paradoxical concept of television as a closed-circuit is also described by Art historian David Joselit in *Feedback, Television Against Democracy*, it reads:

Television is the paradigmatic closed circuit. Formally, it arises from two mechanisms: scanning, which characterizes television's reproductive technology, and feedback, which describes its broadcast structure. (Joselit, 2007: 28)

Thus, the disparaging take on the idea of feedback, visually translated here through the metaphor of television, is illustrated in the very paucity of the interaction. In 2003, British Art Historian Julian Stallabrass wrote a book of early Internet Art, focusing on its

relationships with online commerce and the art market. Stallabrass describes Thomson & Craighead as follows:

Much Internet art, far from providing meaningful interaction, plays on its very paucity. The bittersweet work of Thomson and Craighead subverts the illusion of interactivity. (2003: 64)

In that regard, Thomson & Craighead seem to share the same critical view of interactivity as that maintained by Russian net artist Alexei Shulgin, who explained his disbelief in the notion of Internet interactivity, in as much as it is too often wrongly described as a democratic approach. Shulgin stresses the fact that the apparent interactivity is often a manipulative tool, designed to push the viewer into clicking on certain buttons in the own name of the artist (Stallabrass, 2003: 27). Embedded within its very title, *Weightless* comments on the nature of online information as potentially trivial, and as such exhausts and parodies the capacity of the Epistemology of Search to be unconcerned with the content it produces and propagates. Thus, it could be argued even further that *Weightless* sheds a light on the danger of automated art.

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- Joselit, D., (2007), *Feedback, Television Against Democracy*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA  
Joselit, D., (2012), *After Art*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ  
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**Nils Jean** is a PhD candidate in Communication at the RCA, his writing constellates around expressions of the ephemeral and the use of information as a material.

**Beyond Natural Beauty, Bounty and National Boundaries:  
Actualising the Debate on the ‘Brazilian Contemporary’  
in Art, Architecture and Design**

Livia Rezende

What follows are anti-nationalistic thoughts provoked by the ‘Brazilian Contemporary – A Roundtable Discussion’ event organised by the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A), which I chaired earlier this year. These thoughts stem from my philosophical drive to study the phenomenon of nation (nationhood, nation-ness and others alike), in order to understand its cultural and material mechanisms for existence, and to destabilise its apparent naturalness. These anti-nationalistic thoughts also inform my current research project – one that is interested in destabilising the enduring myth of origin that sustains that design began in Latin America with the ‘arrival’ of modern design education and the institutionalisation of the design profession.

But for now, let’s turn our attention to the ‘Brazilian Contemporary’ event at the V&A.

Since at least 1862, Brazilians have been coming to South Kensington to exhibit and to participate in debates about art and design. For the International Exhibition, which took place at the Royal Horticultural Society (today, the location of the Natural History and the Science Museums) in that year, a Brazilian committee brought more than 600 items to London – from photographic portraits, botanical drawings and oil paintings to textiles, leather goods and tall hats. This show was the first of many. For many decades, and through different administrations, trade organizations and political regimes, ‘Brazil’ as a nation was frequently promoted abroad for its creativity, materials and processes of making. 152 years later, the V&A – an institution whose genesis is also indebted to the nineteenth-century craze for exhibitions – teamed up with the Embassy of Brazil in London to exhibit and engage in debate: once more, Brazilian art,

architecture and design came to South Kensington. But what makes this opportunity different from its precursors?

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, Brazil has become big news abroad. International commentators have hailed the country and its recent economic and political achievements as ‘Latin America’s big success story’.<sup>1</sup> With an economic boom come new challenges and demands for strategic positioning. Brazil’s international ascension has been endorsed by its successful bids to host two major global tournaments, the FIFA World Cup in 2014 and the Olympic Games in 2016. But in contrast to previous opportunities, when a projection of the nation was sent abroad for promotion, this time around, international eyes are turned towards Brazil, and its status as a democratic, modern, and progressive nation is being closely scrutinised. The ‘Brazilian Contemporary’ event was the V&A’s and the Embassy of Brazil’s response to the pressing question of actualising this conversation.

The first round of debate centred on contemporary Brazilian design and architecture. As the design historian in the room, I began the conversation by exposing how national myths are constructed, embodied in designed objects and disseminated to convey an idealised image of a place. In the 1860s, for example, while exhibition commissioners came to London to promote Brazil as a developing, modernising Empire, back home – in contrast – labels designed for consumer goods circulated images of a romantic ideal, in which Brazilian natives would have harmoniously integrated with the European conquerors, leading to a single, unified, and prosperous nation. Unsurprisingly, but quietly, these idealised images betrayed the brutal decimation of Brazilian natives suffered since the European arrival in 1500. Additionally, both the Brazilian exhibition in London in 1862 and those romantic labels obliterated, in their national myth-making strategies, the cruel enslavement of African people and their descendents, which persisted in Brazil until 1888.

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1. ‘Brazil Takes Off: A 14-Page Special Report on Latin America’s Big Success Story’, *The Economist*, 14-20 Nov 2009, (13 and 1-18 – special report), p.13..

Drawing parallels between that particular historical disjunction and our current times, I started the debate by asking ‘what are we talking about when we talk about Brazilian contemporary design?’ Or, most importantly, what are we ‘not’ talking about when we talk about Brazilian contemporary design? The aim of my talk was to complicate the current discourse. Going beyond a simplistic celebration of creativity and natural beauty and bounty, I questioned the very assumption that there is a design that is specifically Brazilian. What would a ‘Brazilian’ design be? Is it a design made in Brazil, a design from Brazil and/or a design for Brazil? By presenting and discussing a series of objects and design projects made in, from and for Brazil, I placed on the ‘roundtable’ issues of design deterritorialisation, social inequality and class divide, and pointed to the everyday experience of Brazilians dealing with dysfunctional services, products and infrastructural breakdowns.

Designer, media artist and independent curator, Gisela Domschke followed my provocations with a timely response to what a design for Brazil might be. Through her project Labmovel, which offers activities and workshops involving the use of digital media in public spaces, Domschke discussed design and media art as actors of social change – or exchange, to be more precise. According to Domschke, the formation of a ‘public’ beyond social and racial hierarchies and the actualisation of social innovation are key objectives of a design for Brazil. That is, a design that is less interested in moving products off the shelves than in developing methodologies and processes of creation, circulation, disposal, use and consumption tailored to the social, cultural and economic contexts of contemporary Brazil.

Architect, researcher, essayist and provocateur Carlos Teixeira picked up on issues of planning in a city (Belo Horizonte), in a place (Brazil) where planning is not always prioritised. Carlos is co-founder of Studio Vazio S/A and the author of *Under Construction: History of the Void in Belo Horizonte*, an essay about the potentialities of the unplanned city. Showing one typical Belo Horizonte dwelling, built on stilts and with an excess of structural elements, Teixeira discussed urban informality, lack of planning and the theatrical use of urban voids as a strategy to transform an idle space

into spectacle. By considering Belo Horizonte a city ‘under construction but extolling destruction’, Teixeira reminded us that ‘Brazil’ is an ideal also under construction. And in this process, some myths may come deconstructed.

‘Gambiarra’ is one of those myths construed anonymously to signal a Brazilian-specific way of making things. As a colloquial term, it is used in Brazil to describe informal and unplanned mending or making-do abilities, and is usually promoted as a creative impulsive innate to the Brazilian people. The problem is, ‘gambiarra’ translates into ‘jugaad’ in India or ‘kiwi ingenuity’ in New Zealand. It is not Brazilian-specific. However, as we unpacked the term during the debate at the V&A, we viewed gambiarra’s potential as a concept precisely because it points to a universal propensity for unplanned creativity under unexpected circumstances – a drive that stands in dialectical relation to orthodox definitions of design practices. ‘Gambiarra’ also features in common discourse as a resistance, voluntary or not, to conspicuous consumption and consumerism as it means to fix a failed product rather than buying it again. Participants, however, were wary of the over-congratulation of ‘gambiarra’ in Brazilian design discourse. Instead of representing the potential creative powers behind a culture of ‘fixing’, ‘gambiarra’ mainly points to the frequent ‘failure’ of designed products, and turns our attention to the endemic low quality of products, materials and services in Brazil. In turn, this points to questions of unsustainability (and generalised everyday frustration).

Brazilian art was the core theme of the event’s second round of debate. Introduced and chaired by Kiki Mazzucchelli, an independent curator and writer working between London and São Paulo, this round centred on art and exhibitions from the post-war period into the very contemporary. Mazzucchelli brought to the audience’s attention the longevity and rude health of Brazilian art, and of its global relevance. At least since the mid-1960s, Brazilian artists have worked and exhibited in places like the Signals Gallery in London, promoted by curators like Guy Brett and institutions like Tate Modern in ways that positioned them not so much as ‘Brazilian’, but primarily as artists who pushed the boundaries of art rather than those of a territory.

The argument of decentralisation was also principal to curator Jochen Volz's presentation of the Instituto Inhotim, Brazil's biggest privately owned art institute. Inhotim, although located in Brazil, does not promote an art that is overtly Brazilian, but continuously (and strategically) places it on par with art made anywhere else around the globe. Inhotim, however, does address local issues of social inequality and exclusion, via educational and exchange programmes with schools, or by employing members of staff from nearby impoverished villages. As Volz put it, this is not just a social programme. It is a core part of Inhotim's vision of active participation crafted in dialogue with Helio Oiticica's philosophy of art.

The third and last speaker of the day, Alexandre da Cunha, graduated from London art schools and has been working and exhibiting in the city for over ten years. Yet, some of da Cunha's interests reflect his cultural background, as seen in MIX (2012), for example, a permanent work devised for the public court of the Notting Dale Village in London. MIX is a reclaimed concrete mixer drum placed on a concrete plinth surrounded by concrete building developments. Concrete is also a material long associated with Brazil (see São Paulo's concrete jungle, or Brasília's modernism). Playing with material and form, Cunha's work displaces our familiarity with objects, surfaces and ideas.

Leaving the V&A, my thoughts towards remained anti-nationalistic. This is to say, not grounded on praising a place, its people, natural beauty or any allegedly innate national character. But what made this debate different from its precursors was the opportunity given by speakers to rethink the 'Brazilian Contemporary' in terms of the internationalisation rather than the territorialisation of Brazilian design, art and architecture.

**Dr Livia Rezende** is a tutor in History of Design and Critical & Historical Studies at the RCA.

## Splitting the Outline

Andrew Hewish

The drawing is in Protogenes' house, on a large tablet. The drawing is assumed to be that of a single *outline* 'Abrepto Pencillio Lineam duxit summae per tabulum' 'he traced... upon the panel an outline of a singularly minute fineness' (Pliny, xxxv, 10–12). But it is not clear, beyond this, what it is that the outline delineates; what it is that is represented.

This is Pliny's story of Apelles, from his Natural History. Apelles arrives at Protogenes' house whilst Protogenes is elsewhere. Apelles leaves a drawing using pencil (possibly brush, possibly stylus as we might understand it) to indicate, with the skill appropriate to his reputation, that it is he who has been there. Upon his return, seeing the drawing, but not Apelles, Protogenes adds to the design, in a different colour, attempting – as a response – to prove his superior skill with his own addition. Apelles returns, responds in the drawing in a third colour, is accounted by all as the superior talent, and the drawing tablet is shipped off to the emperor's palace in Rome to be 'wondered at by all' (Pliny, Vol.xxxvi, Chp. 10–12).

The fact that Pliny does not bother to tell us, or possibly did not even know, what was depicted, reinforces something of the particular quality of the drawing by Apelles in Pliny's telling – a particular quality beyond the outline's capacity to represent. Pliny's references to the indexical use of the outline, of the tracing of the human shadow (Pliny, Vol.xxxv, Chp.5/Chp.15) are to be found elsewhere. The absent centre, the lack of knowing with any clarity what is delivered, what is told, by this outline, is part of the enduring central tension of the episode.

So why is it that no depiction is named? It may have been a perfect circle, as Prion, after Perrault, suggests (Mason, 1811, p.191). A circle, though, would have been an easy figure to name if the figure was in fact geometric. Perhaps it was a more complex geometrical figuring

than a simple circle, which might account for why the figure is not given a name. Possibly Perrault had collapsed into his reckoning Vasari's account of Giotto responding to Pope Benedict's request for a demonstration of the artist's skill for a fresco commission by sending him a 'perfect' hand drawn circle (Vasari, 2008, p.23). These stories might easily be conflated, as they both involve a demonstration of skill. More importantly, however, both involve a relatively simple figure using only a single line, and the representational aspect of the figures is of lesser importance than the skilful execution of line.

Equally mysterious is Pliny's phrase '*tres lineas visum effugientes*' (Pliny, xxxv, 10–12): three lines, faint or disappearing. Mason argues this is a reference to foreshortening, given the skill required to do so, and links it to another phrase by the author, that is similarly heavy in its implication of foreshortening (Mason, 1811, p.191–2). Although if no likeness is noted, it is hard to see how any prominence of foreshortening could be brought to bear without discussion by Pliny (via hearsay) of the larger sense of the composition. Mason also advances Du Piles' conjecture, suggesting that Pliny's use of *Subtilitas* and *Tenuitas* might be conflated, and significantly that these words 'relate not so much to the lines themselves, as to the intelligence with which they were traced' (Mason, 1811, p.192). Implied in this analysis is an event that at once leads the viewer's attention from the drawing to the qualities of mind, while at the same time dismissing the representational aspect of the outline.

The meaning of this episode is further obscured by the meaning of Pliny's phrase *Tertio colore lineas secuit nullum relinquens subtilitati locum*, or 'the third colour cuts the others with ultimate refinement,' or conversely the third colour applied by Apelles *splits* the one by Protogenes, which had in turn split the previous line of Apelles. This can be seen as a tracing over, somehow with greater elegance, although Mason suggests, following his foreshortening argument, that it involves superposition of one design over another, easily achieved with three colours, cutting across the line, each time with greater refinement (Mason, 1811, p.192). This 'splitting', or 'cutting', much worried over by later commentators, may refer to an

incision within an incision, if the tablet had been made of wax. The material of the ground, however, is not mentioned explicitly. What it is possible to concede from the mysterious diction cut/split, is that it invokes the peculiar metaphysics of the line: that the applied line is accompanied by its invisible double, the geometric figure, which, in having no width, cannot be split down its length. Part of the binding, enduring quality of the Apelles story is the impossible presence of the line's metaphysical qualities.

Although the drawing of three superpositioned designs might account for the subtlety (*subtilitati* according to Pliny) of the vision/imaginings of the artist (though as before the exact figure of any outline is not named), there is more that supports an argument for the distinction of the quality of the application of the line. The passage is often interpreted in reference to the skill involved in the use of a hair-line brush, with regards to the faintness or thinness of its application. The use of the word *secuit* (split/cut), allows the possibility of each line being drawn within the former, hence the subtle control in the application of the line is the skill foregrounded in this interpretation (Greswell, 1843, p.10).

In his conclusion, Greswell draws on the German word *Ausführung* – 'the carrying out of an internal operation by means of form, tone, or the living word' (Greswell, 1843, p.8). Here, the execution of line is linked explicitly to internal process.

He continues: 'Why one line, or one combination of lines, is so much more beautiful than another, is a mystery' (Greswell, 1843, p.8); and 'how much meaning may be contained in a single line, is evident' (Greswell, 1843, p.9). Pliny's mysterious story conjures, for Greswell, the outline's capacity for gnomic aesthetic qualities, for the presence of line itself, rather than its service to depiction, or idea.

Griffiths, commenting on a lecture by Q. de Quincy for the Royal Academy, provides this translation from Pliny's account of the Apelles/Protogenes work installed in Caesar's Palace: 'the whole surface containing nothing but lines almost impalpable to sight, so as to resemble a vacant canvas placed among the finest productions of other artists: a circumstance which increased its attraction, and gave it a superiority to everything else' (Griffiths, 1824). Yet, as a

rebuff to the idea that an outline is bound to representational meaning, Griffiths concludes: 'we conceive that the concluding passage in Pliny evinces that mere lines were all that was depicted' (Griffiths, 1824). For Griffiths, the 'vacant canvas', or perceived lack, surrounding or distinguishing the line, forms part of the attraction.

What then is the nature of the outline evidenced in Pliny's tale? There is, for Greswell, a forcefulness in its lack of assertiveness – the power of its lack of completeness and descriptive capacity. For Mason, the material presence that approaches dematerialisation, the subtlety of the line's presence, is its force. Each artist in the story recognises the deferred presence of the other through the medium of the line. There is a recognition, in the particular skill (of which few were capable) of signature, of line as an imago – of *being in* the world, rather than *representing* the world.

This story endures for its resistance to the idea that the outline represents, while still maintaining a link to the indexical; that it delivers a form of clarity, of recognition, but not representation. Drawing/dragging and the material interruption of the surface, in an attempt to mark territory, are touched on in the focus on the subtlety of the application of the line. In the Apelles story, singular presence is asserted through the singular line, not with the force of the mark, but with its opposite: a reserve that asserts an identity. Perhaps this is part of its power as ur-story. It is this that has consequences for a conception of outline. Not an outline that requires the necessity of mimetic recognition of the figure, of meaning, but an outline of territory. It is not just the assertion of the presence of each that is completed in this story, but marking the outline of the territory of who is possesses a superior skill. What lies within, what it is that the outline encompasses, is not to be penetrated.

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**Andrew Hewish** is an artist living in London where he is Director of the Centre for Recent Drawing and lectures at the Cass School of Art Media and Design, and is completing his PhD at the RCA in Critical & Historical Studies and Painting.

## Walk London

Helen Kearney

Stop 5: The Thames Barrier. Alight from the DLR at Pontoon Dock station. Go down the stairs and into the park. Walk through the strange undulating landscape of the park, until you reach the river. The Thames Barrier is ahead.



Helen Kearney, *Students at the Thames Barrier*

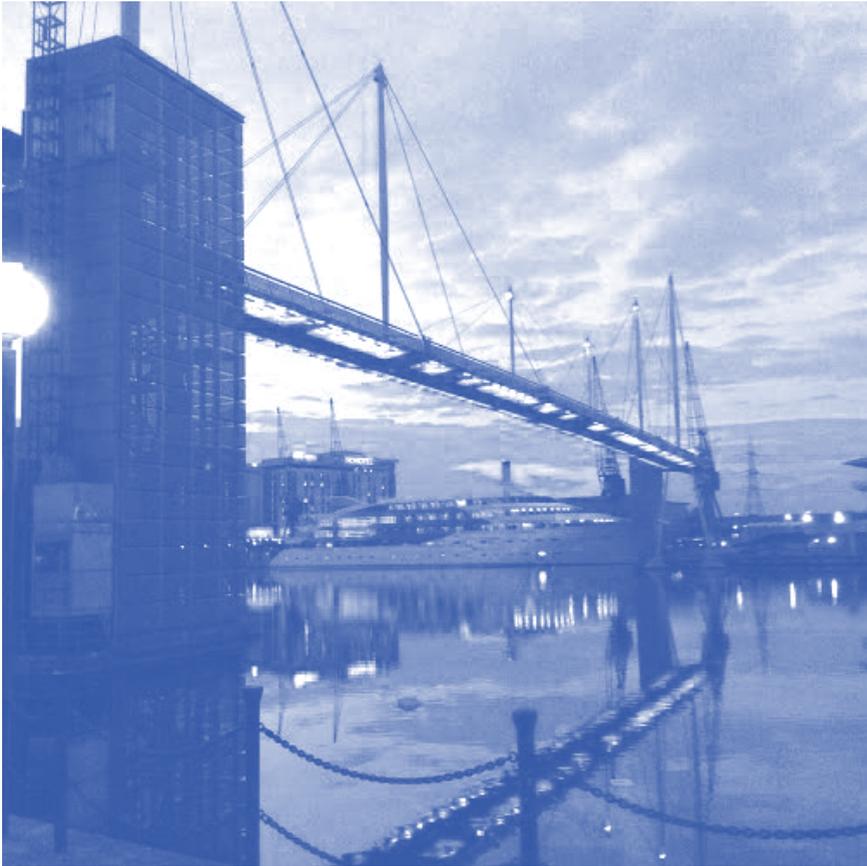
It's a clear December day, dusk, and an unlikely group of people are standing, gazing at the Thames Barrier. It's a fortress, defending London in shiny metallic plates, armour that protects the city. There is a map of London that shows which parts of the city would flood in the event of heavy rainfall, a high tide, or a surge, if the barrier were not there. The map is incredible – the whole of Poplar, Canary Wharf, the Southbank down all the way to Camberwell, Deptford, Battersea, Parsons Green – all of these and more, flooded. This barrier we're all staring at holds an immense power.

This part of London, the area of the old Docklands, is linked, throughout history, with London's survival. There was once a military base at Tilbury Fort– methods to preserve London by inserting infrastructure using the land out east, along the Thames, has a long history. The Thames Barrier is just the most recent manifestation of this instinct.

The reason we're here at the barrier is simple curiosity: we're on a walking tour. Tours are a boom industry in this over-historicised city. Knowledge about London is accumulated and passed on at incredible rates.

In all of this London itself is assumed, its millennia long history asserting the immutability of the city. But in reality, London is contingent. It is only here because of a series of historic events have led it to this point. Its growth has been dependent on so many historic events, decisions, impulses. And it has *survived*; the moment the barrier closes it protects London from a rainfall-caused surge – this is the survival of the city.

Stop 7: Royal Victoria Dock. Head back and walk alongside Woolwich Road, then turn right into Mill Road. At the end of this road is a roundabout, from which you can see the Millennium Mills on one side, and Canary Wharf in the opposite direction. Go a little further and you will reach the massive Royal Victoria Dock. Turn left and walk along the water's edge until you reach a footbridge, high above, that crosses the dock. Climb up the steps and walk across the bridge. On the bridge, you have views to the east of London City Airport, and to the west of Canary Wharf and further, the City of London. Planes come into land, flying low above.



Helen Kearney, *Footbridge over Royal Victoria Dock*

The one causal factor that has kept London growing for so many centuries was - and is - its role as a global trading centre. In certain parts of the docklands you can see the City of London in the distance whilst surrounded by the great expanse of the docks. It is the relationship between these two sites that dictated London's growth. The City of London, the square mile, is the historic city - it is here you can still see remnants of the Roman town. The City was where manufacturing in London first developed, where guilds regulating making were based, and where banking was developed. Here it was that the relationship between the making of goods (with their purchase, their trade, their movement, their storage), and the financial and credit systems that allowed for this movement of goods, first gained its incalculable sophistication.

The first docks that brought goods in and out of London were located next to the City itself, but as trade grew, so did the city, and everything outgrew the old dock sites. Infrastructure for moving goods got bigger and bigger, and moved east, out to the Isle of Dogs and Poplar at the beginning of the nineteenth century, then further east to the "Royals" by the end of the century. Gradually the different functions that made up London's trading system were split geographically; division of labour having its spatial manifestation. The City remained where the financial transactions took place - the paper-based, ephemeral side of trading; whilst the docks in the east end were where the actual goods themselves were brought, stored, stolen, passed on.

Standing on the footbridge, you can see the City at one side, the docks on the other. The financial transactions taking place over there, dictated the size of the dock you are standing above. And the goods here shipped in and out resulted in the growth of that place over there, too.

Stop 2: Canary Wharf. Change the DLR at Poplar, hop onto a Lewisham train. Get off at Heron Quays. Walk down to ground level, and head to the main square in front of the Canary Wharf underground station.

In the centre of Canary Wharf, there are still traces of the old docklands trades. Most of the warehouses have gone, but the bodies of water are still there, their massive scale managing to compete with the outsized nature of the skyscrapers above. The docks on the Isle of Dogs were built to provide for London's trade, now booming thanks to the effects of British colonialism that meant London was the centre of a colonial network of globally traded goods. The first, West India Dock - its name a palimpsest of colonial trade of the past - was opened in 1802. The 1800s, like today, was a period of rampant capitalism with a rhetoric of free trade and market power as liberating forces of society. In these docklands there were workers with very few rights, massive scales of inequality between the workers and owners of docks, and very poor neighbourhoods with substandard housing.

There's another reflection of the trading past here in the modern Canary Wharf. These docks of the 1800s were built with high walls, some six metres high. Free movement of the public and of dockworkers was not allowed; a constant fear of goods being stolen and of the presence of uncontrollable elements led to a massive security operation. The present Canary Wharf operates in the same way; no physical walls, but a lack of freedom of movement nonetheless. The spaces here are managed by private security firms, dressing in uniforms that imitate police - but not publicly accountable.

Stop 3: Robin Hood Gardens; Balfron. Alight from the DLR at Blackwall. From the platform, to the South you can see the towers of Canary Wharf. To the north you will see two monumental housing estates; Robin Hood Gardens on the left in grey concrete, and a little further away, on the right, Balfron Tower. Walk down the stairs to the street level, and head to Robin Hood Gardens. Go through the gardens in the middle of the two slab blocks, noting the lack of traffic sounds, despite the close proximity to the busy Blackwall Tunnel approach. After walking through the estate, cross East India Dock Road and head towards the Balfron Tower. This is a good place to stop for tea and cakes, to replenish energy for the walk ahead!



Helen Kearney, *Balfron Tower*

The gigantic Royal docks were always slightly too big for the trade they were expected to encourage. Supply started to exceed demand by the early 1900s. And then, in 1940, came the Blitz. This area was a primary target for the Luftwaffe determined to stop British supply channels. The buildings here for industry and for commerce were destroyed.

After the war, there was a determination to rebuild the docks and to keep trade in London despite the devastation experienced. Just like elsewhere in the country, there was an effort to, at last, take public responsibility for housing. The war against Nazism had been won; focus now shifted to winning the war against poverty, to mobilising the nation's resources against the blight of poor housing and social inequality. Two products of this utopian idealism stand before us, now: Robin Hood Gardens, and the Balfron Tower. Both were built by leading architectural practises of their day – Robin Hood by the Smithsons, Balfron by Goldfinger. Both were designed as council housing, both were unusual and experimental designs that were site-specific; Robin Hood Gardens really does do a good job of blocking out the traffic noise and fumes of its truly awful site. After this utopianism died, both buildings suffered decline as their concrete fabric, in need of upkeep like any other material would, fell into disrepair.

Their stories diverge now. Although both are decayed, crumbling, Robin Hood Gardens, after a failed campaign for listed status, has been earmarked for demolition. Due to replace it is a set of towers that ape the aesthetic of Canary Wharf. Balfron, however, has been sold to a developer, its council housing tenants evicted, the whole to be refurbished and the homes within it sold.

Both estates will have different futures, but both are products of our current political and economic impulses, just as their building was originally. From the top of the Balfron you can look across at Canary Wharf. The towers there house traders whose daily routine consists of selling financial products that are based on mortgage debt. The economy in Canary Wharf and in the City is utterly dependent on the housing market – it is the sale of sites like the Balfron that give this industry its material.

**Stop 4: East India.** From the Balfron, use the subway to get to the other side of the A12. Meander through the residential estate heading south back towards the towers of Canary Wharf. Cross the A13 at the lights, and head into the area of Docklands office buildings along Nutmeg Lane. Get back on the DLR at East India station, in the direction of Woolwich Arsenal.

The development of the Docklands in the 80s and early 90s was undertaken not within the remit of a local authority, but under the control of a separate body, the London Docklands Development Corporation. The docks declined and started to close from the 1960s, from which point the future of the sites were almost endlessly debated, financial crises were experienced, and the effects of changes in government philosophy became felt- and this is what we were left with- the site you experience here, standing in this strangely quiet hinterland between the real world of Poplar and the otherworldly Canary Wharf.

**Stop 6: Millennium Mills.** Walk back through the park, and cross over Woolwich Road. Ahead are some steps to a fence, walk up them. At the top of the steps, you can see the derelict Millennium Mills building, with the abandoned structures of the 'London Pleasure Gardens' in front.



Chantal Faust, *The London Pleasure Gardens*



Above: Helen Kearney, *The Millennium Mills*

Overleaf: Helen Kearney, 'Silo D' at the Millennium Mills



Years later, in 2012, the Olympics came to town. Here, at the London Pleasure Gardens, we have one of the more intriguing remnants of that time; a folly that appears to deny the usual narrative of Olympic success. The Gardens were a festival, an events venue that proved too ambitious and poorly organized, closing almost immediately at great financial loss. Regardless of the Pleasure Garden's lack of success, you couldn't want for a better site. The incredible abandoned Millennium Mills stands huge, stark, ahead of us. The remaining Mills building, dated to the 1930s, and its beautiful accompanying 'Silo D' are only small parts of the original mill complex here – but they are huge enough that the size of the whole original complex now seems unbelievable. The area is closed off, patrolled by the occasional ghostly security guard. It is London's urban exploration mecca and I still watch through the closed gates for movement, hoping to see someone sliding down the helter-skelter grain chutes. This used to feel long-abandoned, massive, empty, unlike anywhere else in London. But more recently planning permission notices have gone up onto closed gates - '*business district*', '*enterprise*', '*new luxury flats*'. This brings us to the present day.

**Stop 8: Emirates Skyline.** From the footbridge, head in the direction of the Excel conference centre ahead. Go down the steps back to ground level and turn left, walking along the dock and past the old cranes. At the end of the dock is the station for the Emirates Skyline; hop on board to end the walk in style, high above the city!



Helen Kearney, *The 'Emirates Skyline'*

The concept of the walk as practice is well-worn, via Poe, Dickens, Benjamin, the dérivés of the Situationists, up to present day protagonists in the walking story- Ian Sinclair and so on. But what of the walking tour? The practice of leading a group in practical terms almost prevents the dérive; it's a different act, with different purposes. It has a link to communication about London, and to those other forms of communicating the space of London: the map and the guidebook. Everything in London has been mapped; there's no building, street, ephemera in this city that has not appeared in a history of the city some way or other. There are whole sections in bookshops of London histories, London narratives, London fictions. Hundreds and hundreds of guidebooks to London have been produced. One of the more common tropes used is that of "unusual" London – books describing the "hidden", the "unseen", "underground" London, "secret London". Guides to the city's cemeteries, closed tube stations, hidden rivers, lost churches, tiny gardens.

But what of the walking tour that does the *opposite* of revealing some hidden secret? What about the tour as a method for showing the everyday, the normal- the clear physical implications of the forces of history that have shaped our city? Walking the docklands isn't an exercise in seeing the quirky or secret in London, it is simply demonstrating before our eyes the immensity of those powers that shaped, and today continue to shape, the everyday lives of all Londoners. And repeating the walk again, and again, you spot the changes that happen over time in these places – the new planning applications, the fading businesses, the encroachment of capital into residential spaces, the covered up graffiti. This, is London.

Stop 1: St. Katherine's Dock. Meet at the steps to the Dickens Inn, perhaps after a good pub lunch. Head north to East Smithfield, negotiating the building works. Head to the Tower Gateway DLR station, taking a look at the Tower of London and the City's skyscrapers en route. Take the DLR heading to Beckton...

**Helen Kearney** is a PhD candidate in the Critical & Historical Studies programme, holding an AHRC-funded Collaborative Doctoral Award.

Prova Focus

What is it to do an Arts and  
Humanities PhD in an Art School?

Based on the session organised  
by Dr Chantal Faust, Professor  
Guy Julier and Dr Marquard Smith

## Practising the Humanities in the Art School Environment

Guy Julier

While marginality is a source of celebration for art schools, the placing of them within, let's call them, "Humanities Departments" is doubly peculiar. An oddity within oddness, the study of the Humanities in the art school is a precarious, almost oppositional affair.

Essay v. exhibition. Library v. workshop. Seminar room v. crit room. Lecture hall v. studio. Desk v. workstation. Chair v. stool. The material culture of the Humanities stands in stark opposition to the art school, as do many of their social practices: lecture v. talk; seminar discussion v. studio critique; looking to the past v. thinking about the future; and so on.

Historically, it is the art school that has been presented as that which deviates from teaching norms. It is in the art school that emphasis is laid on exploring shadowy knowledge, personality and performance are more important, and the qualifications to be there seem just a bit more obscure.<sup>1</sup>

And if that feeling of the art school as marginal to mainstream educational processes isn't apparent enough to you, then just tour their sites across the UK. Many of them occupy their original, creaky nineteenth century buildings, sometimes still attached to city museums. Others are to be found in wooded glades on the outskirts of town. Many, of late, have been corralled into office-blocks, as if they needed disciplining and bringing into line with the prevailing currents of education and industry.

The Humanities within the art school has gone by other names: complementary studies, art history, history and theory of art and design, cultural history, critical and contextual studies. Each of these monikers indicate attempts, or not, to make itself relevant and

popular to a more studio-based ethos. The history of the Humanities in the art school is also a history of groups and individuals who have clung to a belief in the worth of their contribution to this other environment. They are often hybrids, with backgrounds in studio practice and library research. As the odd-ones-out, the Humanities departments of many art schools have frequently had to fight for their right to exist. In reconstituting art and design education, the 1960 Coldstream Report had established that "about 15% of the total course should be devoted to the history of art and complementary studies".<sup>2</sup> And so, the proverbial Thursday-afternoon-art-history-lecture was born, given by whomever was willing and available, and accompanied by black-and-white slides, often loaned from the V&A.

The result of this was a rapid garnering of odd-balls and misfits as lecturers. If this meant a certain amount of improvisation was involved, then this also created an element of invention not generally found within the halls of traditional universities. Remembering her time teaching 'art history' at the Brighton School of Art in the 1960s, Gillian Naylor wrote of how 'I managed to borrow a British Rail Design Manual to use in teaching graphic design students. Another member of staff who saw me with this was astounded that I should use such a thing. During the student revolution in 1968, students boycotted some lectures but asked still to go to mine'.<sup>3</sup>

There is something of a romance to being the renegade in the art school setting. But from the outside, these Humanities departments can be viewed as usefully conservative. As universities have been increasingly subject to funding cuts, so departments have progressively been determined as 'cost units'. This means that they have had to show that they can pay their way. With their lower fixed costs in terms of space and equipment, humanities departments sometimes come out rather better in this calculation than their art school colleagues. As a result, while this hasn't necessarily meant halcyon

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2. 'First Report of the National Advisory Council on Art Education', London: HMSO, 1960: 3.

3. Naylor, Gillian (n.d.) 'Complementary studies: a history of design teachers' reminiscence' available via <http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/>

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1. Frith, Simon and Horne, Howard (1987) *Art into Pop*. London: Routledge.

days, they have been looked upon more benignly by some Higher Education institutional managers. This has bought them some breathing space.

It is customary to think of the Humanities in the art school from a service perspective: what do they add to the art school experience; how are they relevant; how do they adapt and survive? But we might also think in terms of what the art school affords the Humanities that other university settings don't.

Within the current research requirements for 'impact' and 'relevance', the Humanities in art schools might be well placed. They may open up approaches that are not considered elsewhere. The verve for encouraging scholars to lean out of their ivory towers and to communicate with the wider world can produce new academic practices. This not only emboldens lecturers to blog and tweet, but to seek different publics and to create alternative research artefacts.

Impact is often confused with footfall – getting as many people to visit your website, to go to your exhibition, attend your symposium or read your magazine article as possible, regardless of what they take away from it. In a way, the Humanities department is already connected to another public that is the wider art school. It is used to a different kind of interaction than in the more traditional Humanities, and has a headstart in this process of connecting outwards.

If the art school ethos is driven by notions experimentation, discovery and novelty, so this can extend back into how the Humanities – and indeed the Social Sciences – might be practised. Its setting provides a prism through which Humanities may be refracted, thereby altering its operational methods in interesting ways. Sitting down to write books or articles is always a compelling activity for the academic, but we can do other things too.

Here are two examples of such activities. For several years, Nina Wakeford, of Goldsmiths University London, rented an artist's studio in which to work as a social scientist. Among her interests lay the question of how the studio could afford her other ways of working with her material. Partly funded by Intel, her Studio INCITE

(Incubator for Critical Inquiry into Technology and Ethnography) produced websites, videos, performances, installations as well as the standard academic papers.<sup>4</sup> Cat Rossi, working out of Kingston University, curated an installation and created a supporting website for the 2014 Venice Biennale that explored Florence's Space Electronic discotheque, which was opened in 1969 in Florence by Gruppo 9999. The work documents and interprets an example of cultural production in ways that more traditional formats can't access. But the curation itself also includes productive collaborations with filmmakers, fabricators, designers and, indeed, individuals who were involved in the original discotheque.<sup>5</sup> It is not coincidental that Wakeford and Rossi are closely connected to art schools. At the same time as running Studio INCITE, Nina Wakeford was also putting herself through Foundation Studies at Leeds College of Art and Design, followed by a Fine Art degree at Goldsmiths. Cat Rossi did a Design History PhD at the Royal College of Art.

The art school background provides a different materiality and sense of practice for scholars. In this, it is free of the deadhand of the traditional university set up, of the breathless struggle for recognition through a high-rated, peer-reviewed journal or other such measures. Furthermore, it is in the art school that some significant Humanities disciplines have been established. For example, the emergence of design history is invariably assumed to have come from the New Art History in the late-1970s and early-1980s as a rejection of 'traditional' art history's objects.<sup>6</sup> This misses its consolidation, by people like Gillian Naylor, in art and design schools from the 1960s onwards. Equally, Nicholas Mirzoeff argues that the establishment of Visual Culture studies is very much the product of UK art schools observing that it is 'something different from simply art history with a little bit of theory admixed'. Rather it represents the 'interface between all the disciplines dealing with the visibility of contemporary culture'.<sup>7</sup>

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4. See [www.studioincite.com](http://www.studioincite.com)

5. See <http://spaceelectronic.wordpress.com/>

6. e.g. Harris, Jonathan (2001) *The New Art History: a Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge.

I see my own work in Design Culture studies – a discipline that has very much come from the art school environment – as a messy and hybrid creative practice, rather than a pure form of the Humanities or Social Sciences. I have been known to write the odd book or two. But I see this as just one element of a wider constellation of activities. These include the curation of events such as the on-going V&A Design Culture Salons, or the 2009 Leeds Festival of Design Activism, or working with governmental bodies in the UK and elsewhere.<sup>8</sup> Equally, I encourage the PhD students who make up the Design Culture Research Group at the University of Brighton to see their research as part of a wider set of activities that go beyond just producing the dreaded thesis.

As universities increasingly find themselves in the sticky situation of trying to keep the cash flowing in, they sometimes enter into unholy alliances. The Humanities in the art school has invariably taken on the position of the conscience of the institution. Their adherents are often the ones who say, ‘yes, but...’ to questionable practices. However, they can say more than ‘yes, but...’ by pointing towards alternative possibilities for creative practitioners. By thinking of the Humanities as a creative field, we might even be able to generate some of these alternatives.

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7. Mirzoeff, Nicholas quoted in Dikovitskaya, Margaret (2006) *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p.58 and p.225.

8. See <http://designculturesalon.org>, <http://socialdesigntalks.org>, <http://mappingsocialdesign.org>, <http://designculturekolding.org>, [www.designculture.info](http://www.designculture.info)

**Guy Julier** is the University of Brighton/Victoria & Albert Museum Professor of Design Culture. He is author of *The Culture of Design, 3rd Edition* (2013) and is currently working on a book about design and economics.

## Too Many Doctors?

Chantal Faust

What will be the long-term effect of the current push for universities to recruit increasing numbers of research students? The logic behind this drive to enlist more and more MPhil and PhD candidates is fairly simple to deduce: it's a good investment – cheap and with high yield. The students take up little if any physical space at the institution, and their basic requirements can be met with a handful of supervision meetings. In spite of this, the swelling fees for research degrees in the UK match those of their non-research based counterparts, who receive fully taught programmes and are often given a designated space in which to undertake their work.

With such meagre provisions, and such great expense, why is it that so many artists are choosing to undertake a practice-led PhD? The prestige of attaching the three-letter prefix to one's name surely does not outweigh the strain of coping with the terrifying level of debt accumulated over those three years, or more, of study. For many artists, the writing process can be daunting, and thereby consumes a great portion of their study. As such, it remains questionable as to whether time spent as a researcher-in-training actually has any benefit on the development of an artistic *practice*. The refinement of writing skills is no doubt personally rewarding, and yet if this was to be assessed against the work of a writer who has undertaken a similar degree, it would be likely to appear lacking due to its status as a part or a supplement, rather than as a whole.

It is not a matter of an inability to write, but that what an artist *does* is seen as deficient within this context. There are growing examples of artists who choose to do a PhD by Thesis, some pushing the form of writing in ways that are gradually becoming recognised as valuable and distinct contributions that advance understanding. For the practice-led PhD candidate, however, this writing is a mandatory adjunct to the art submitted for examination. Art alone is not

perceived as offering a significant enough contribution to knowledge, but requires translation into a text that explicates its purpose and justifies results. Only with the two together can the project be conceived of as a whole. The writer, historian or curator PhD candidate is certainly not required to produce a work or works of art to sit alongside his or her text. It is not necessary for his or her chosen method of expression to be converted and appended to another.

Perhaps it is a matter of assessment. How do we evaluate whether or not a work of art is PhD-worthy? If we can understand the difference between a BA and MA dissertation and a PhD thesis, can we not extend the same distinctions to address the works of art produced by undergraduates and postgraduates? Of course this is not always the case, and it is often the MA cohorts that produce the most exciting work in graduate exhibitions, compared to their more highly trained research siblings. Could it be a result of an MA's freedom to push and play with ideas, to understand that they are in control of the whole of their projects and there are fewer rules for what it must constitute? Looking pinched and away from the flock, the research exhibition can easily appear diagrammatic, flat and obsessed with some strange idea of philosophy in comparison.

Once transferrable skills have been mastered, what happens in the studio is a question of art, something which is arguably unteachable via traditional academic methods. Time, looking, testing, thinking, and feedback are all beneficial, but there can be no formula that produces a great work of art. The criterion for ticking boxes on exam forms is bewildered by artistic process. Grading is absurd, but the opinion of a small committee is enough to declare that one work should merit five points more than another. And yet, if a student produces what is conceived of as a successful work of art, it is often a result of process and experiment – it might be pleasurable to look at or touch, or painful to hear; it could make you smile or gasp or think. Categories such as these are not easily distilled into the criteria on examination forms and, consequently, the crucial judgement when awarding the research degree to an artist tends to hinge on the writing and not the work.

And what of the effect on the art? Why be a Dr. Artist? For many, the research degree is embarked upon with the realisation that it is now a requirement for academic employment. A degree in Fine Art has never guaranteed any kind of vocational security, and informing the work of others becomes the next best thing when contemplating how to sustain oneself in the undeterminable gaps between exhibitions. At this moment, there are seemingly so many aspiring artist-teachers that these learning institutions could be said to be less about fostering artists than they are functioning as art college teacher training centres.

If successful, the work of the artist as teacher will now be conceived of as output to be measured against frameworks that are converted into levels of institutional funding. Survival here is reliant on the ability to check the required boxes – a pursuit that is blinding. Within this parasitic network, artistic research is a self-fulfilling machine. When the growing army becomes a dominant voice, the sound of it singing its own praises may soon be all that can be heard. Mediocrity will triumph if it is only thing allowed to exist against benchmarks set by the pedagogical frameworks of traditional humanities and sciences that have been siphoned into the art college.

Now seems to be a good time to think once again about *reassessing* current systems of assessment. How can we cultivate a more rigorous framework for the supervision and examination of a practice-led PhD so that artists are afforded more flexibility and greater challenges? How can we improve and create parity in the standard of work being produced in Fine Art PhDs across the board? Until the crutch that is the mandatory written component is reconfigured, and the question of the thesis properly readdressed, the message that art requires an explanatory textual justification will continue to undermine and distract from what should be the central focus: the creative potential of art, both within the art college and beyond.

I am not suggesting that the Fine Art practice-led PhD student should be made exempt from the requirements that are expected

of their fellow researchers. Rather, that perhaps we could open the doors to allow artists the opportunity to compose a response to the questions required from the text in a manner that corresponds to their practice. The current model of writing may be easy to file and generally much simpler to assess. But what is at stake? We should make a move soon, one that strives for brilliance and innovation, or else we could get stuck on a research treadmill that is going nowhere fast.

**Dr Chantal Faust** is a tutor in Critical & Historical Studies and convenor of the Humanities Research Forum at the RCA. She completed a practice-led PhD in the School of Art at the VCA, University of Melbourne in 2008.

## Designing Identity

Based on the session curated by  
Chiara Barbieri, Trond Klevgaard,  
Tania Messell and David Preston

## Designing Identity: Historical Perspectives

Chiara Barbieri, Trond Klevgaard, Tania Messell and David Preston

As four History of Design research students focused on graphic design we are interested in sharing our findings with each other, and in creating collective outputs that draw on each of our projects. Following a few initial meetings, we decided to plan an event that looked at corporate identity, as the topic holds relevance for each of us. The Humanities Research Forum, as an informal space for discussing and presenting developing research, was thought a good venue for an afternoon of work-in-progress type presentations. David Preston delivered a paper on the developing language of design identity in Britain. Examining the rhetoric used by practitioners and critics, he attempted to underline important changes in the way that design identity was practiced and understood in the latter half of the twentieth century. Chiara Barbieri explored the Italian approach to identity design by looking at the companies Olivetti, Pirelli and Cordigliano-Italsider. She examined Italian 'industrial style' and in-house graphic departments in relation to her research on the professionalization of graphic design in Italy. Tania Messell presented a section from her research on corporate identity programmes in France (1950–1975), and used the opportunity to question issues of methodology in the historical study of the practice. Finally, Trond Klevgaard connected the pre-history of corporate identity manuals to his research on functionalist typography in Scandinavia, by discussing a Norwegian propaganda handbook from the 1930s.

The event was opened by David, who presented his research on 'Rhetorical milestones in the development of identity design in Britain'. Tracing the transition from 'house style', through 'corporate identity', to 'branding', he sought to establish a distinction between pre-war identity schemes focussed on logos, and those all-encompassing programmes of the post-war era that ushered in a new

culture of design practice in Britain. David considered the issues around using language as a research tool in and of itself, drawing on Adrian Forty's text *Words and Buildings* (Thames & Hudson, 2004) to underline the importance of the words we choose to use in our own research. He explored the different functions of the keywords we attach to research, and how these words can reveal of our own agendas and ideals, knowingly or not. His study revealed a commonality of language emerging between practitioners and critics, with themes around consistency and standardisation overwhelming any concern for design diversity. Amongst the audience questions were raised about the wider political connotations of such authoritarian design values, which led to a lively but inconclusive debate amongst the participants.

Chiara further expanded the vocabulary of design identity by talking about Italian 'industrial style'.<sup>1</sup> Looking at works by Giovanni Pintori (1912–1999), Erberto Carboni (1899–1984), Ezio Bonini (1923–1988), Eugenio Carmi (b.1920) and the Studio Boggeri for the typewriter manufacturer Olivetti, the tyre manufacturer Pirelli and the steel factory Cornigliano-Italsider, she illustrated the Italian approach to design identity from the post-war period to the mid-1960s. Eloquently defined by the Argentinian designer and design theorist, Tomás Maldonado, as "unity through diversity",<sup>2</sup> Italian 'industrial style' is a recognisable image and a coherent aesthetic, based on a method rather than on a rigid systematization of the visual programme. The talk raised questions about the difference between the use of in-house graphic departments versus external consultant agencies, and explored the prerequisites, causes and consequences of internal management of the corporate image. Chiara ended with three questions to open the discussion that followed the talk: Is there a relation between the professionalization

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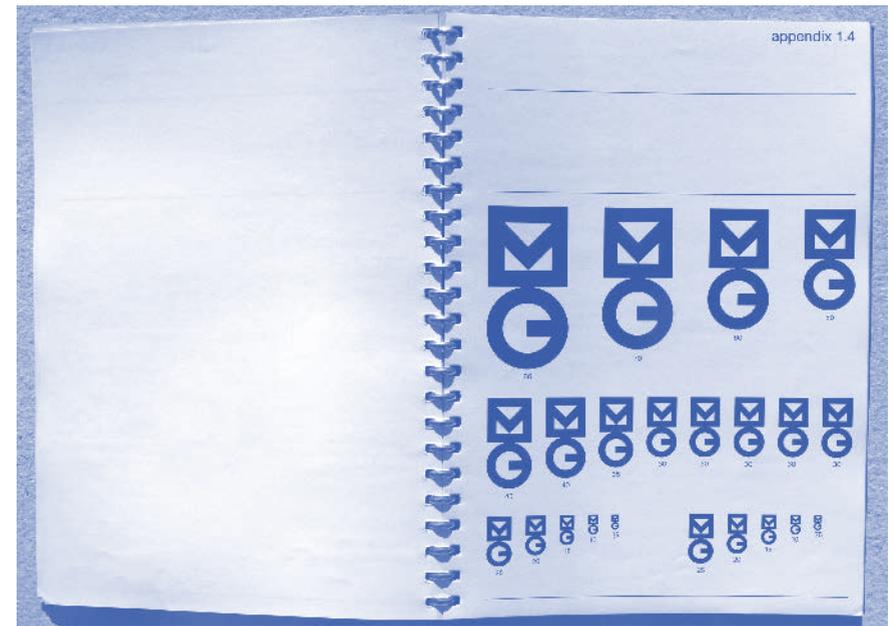
1. The term 'industrial style' is borrowed from Carlo Vinti. *Gli Anni dello Stile Industriale 1948-1965. Immagine e Politica Culturale nella Grande Impresa Italiana* Venice: Marsilio, 2007.

2. Tomás Maldonado. *Disegno Industriale: un Riesame Milan*: Feltrinelli, 2008: p.68.

of graphic design in Italy and the development of a more standardised approach to corporate image from the mid-1960s onwards? Is the appearance of the identity manual in the 1960s connected to the delegation of the corporate image management to external consultant agencies? Could Italian 'industrial style' be a model for contemporary identity design based on ideas of flexible and generative identities?

Consequently, Tania shared some of her findings about French post-war corporate identity programmes which have previously been neglected in the country's design historiography. In order to fully appraise the introduction of the practice, her work compares the programmes developed by corporations active in different sectors between 1950 and 1975. For the Humanities Research Forum she presented a comparative analysis of the five and dime store Prisunic and the electrical equipment producer Merlin Gerin, whose different requirements affected the design and application of each programme. While Prisunic faced the challenge of creating total environments for its 350 branches, the electrical equipment producer Merlin Gerin indeed relied primarily on clear graphics for its promotional documents, due to the complexity of its products. Beyond the commissioners' different profiles, the multidisciplinary character of corporate identity programmes (which involves graphics, objects and space to varying degrees) further complexifies their study, as the variables taken into account triple. The talk thus questioned the need for methodological tools to assist design historians to map the introduction of cohesive corporate identity programmes.

Trond then talked about the *Håndbok i agitasjon og propaganda* (*Handbook for Agitation and Propaganda*), issued to local elected representatives in 1934, by the Norwegian Labour Party (Det Norske Arbeiderparti). This item is interesting because although the practice of corporate identity is considered by many to begin with Peter Behrens's work for the AEG (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft) from 1907 onwards, the first corporate identity manuals are not considered to have appeared before the late 1950s. Some efforts have been made to single out precursors to the manual. One well-known example of this is the prolific American graphic design writer Steven



Design manual by Gérard Guerre for Merlin Gerin, 1967. Courtesy of Gérard Guerre.

Heller's work on what he terms the "Nazi graphics standards manual" – the *Organisationsbuch der NSDAP (Organisational Handbook of the NSDAP, 1936)*.<sup>3</sup> However, as Heller freely admits, this book does not contain many of the traditional trappings of a modern manual – such as how to construct the logo, its measurements, and guidance on correct and incorrect usage across a number of applications – all of which are included in the labour party handbook. Its creation was spurred on by the 1933 publication of *Trepil mod Hagekors (Three Arrows Against the Swastika)*, by the Russian émigré Sergei Tschachotin (1883–1973, later known as Serge Chakotin), on Danish–Norwegian socialist publishing house Frem Forlag (Forward Publishing House).<sup>4</sup> Before fleeing to Denmark in 1933, Tschachotin had been working as head of propaganda for the Reichsbanner, the militant wing of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD). In his book, he argued that social democrats should learn from the Nazis' propaganda success and emulate their methods, focusing on emotional rather than rational appeal. Though influential, *Trepil mod Hagekors* does not explain why the agitprop handbook looked the way it did. Trond argued that the visual similarity it shares with a modern manual may have a practical explanation. The Norwegian Labour Party expected local members, many of them with little visual training, to produce their own materials. At the same time it wanted these materials to have a consistent appearance across constituencies, so some guidelines were needed. In this sense the agitprop handbook served a similar purpose to a modern manual, and that it therefore was devised along the same lines should not be so surprising.

As a continuation of this thought-provoking event, the group is currently planning a one-day symposium on the subject of graphic design and design coordination, scheduled for June 2015. Given the

prevailing gap on the topic in the field of history of design, it will seek to approach the subject through a number of enquiries ranging from methodology and terminology, to design management and design professionalization.

**Chiara Barbieri** is an MPhil/PhD candidate in the RCA/V&A History of Design programme, her research explores the professionalization of Italian graphic design by looking at vocational institutes, design studios and mediating channels, from the early-1930s to the late-1950s.

**Trond Klevgaard** is an independent graphic designer and an MPhil/PhD candidate in History of Design at the RCA/V&A for which he is researching functionalist typography in Scandinavia.

**Tania Messell** holds an MA from the RCA/V&A History of Design programme during which she investigated early French corporate identities, and currently pursues a PhD on the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (ICSID) at the University of Brighton.

**David Preston** is an independent graphic designer and Senior Lecturer at Central Saint Martins, his PhD research in History of Design at the RCA/V&A explores the influence of emergent programmatic approaches to visual identity in post-war Britain.

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3. Heller, Steven. "The Master Race's Graphic Masterpiece." Design Observer, August 2, 2011. <http://observatory.designobserver.com/entry.html?entry=24358>.

4. A German language version was also published: Tschachotin, Sergei. *Dreipfeil gegen Hakenkreuz*. Copenhagen: Verlag Aktiver Sozialismus, 1933.

## Touching the Wound

Dionea Rocha Watt

**For those who are racked by melancholia, writing about it would have meaning only if writing sprang out of that very melancholia.<sup>1</sup>**

Julia Kristeva

Is it possible to write about loss if the writing does not emerge from loss itself, from sensing loss? In the encounter with resonant works of art, texts and images, a sense of loss emerges, rising like foam from the waves of memory. I sense loss and tremble, aware that to speak of the loss I sense in this encounter requires me to suffer the pain of loss, its wounding. Giving voice to loss demands that I re-experience the pain of the losses of the past as much as encountering the other's loss in the present; it demands that I relive and live their impact in the present of living, in the present continuous of writing. Thus to be affected by a loss that is not my own, but which I nevertheless share, is to sense loss anew, as if it were a present. This gift is the present of being affected, sensing and scenting loss, following its trail. Tracing loss is a tracing of traces. To trace and retrace loss, to search and re-search its traces, is to attend to what passes and leaves in its passing a trace, a trail. Perhaps the trail leads me back to the first loss, the original loss – the one I have already forgotten, the one I remember every time I encounter loss.<sup>2</sup> What I recall is not the event (I cannot narrate it), but its affect.<sup>3</sup> I remember being wounded by it.

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1. Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, translated by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. 3.

2. In her examination of depression and melancholia, Julia Kristeva refers to how present disenchantments seem to “awaken echoes of old traumas”, “I can thus discover antecedents to my current breakdown in a loss, death, or grief over someone or something that I once loved.” Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun*, pp. 4-5.

**Once the wound closes up we speak of it no longer,  
but we never forget it.<sup>4</sup>**

Hélène Cixous

Where one wound closes another one opens. I am wounded again, only this time by the works of art and texts I encounter; they reopen the old wound that perhaps has never fully closed and inflict a new one, whose outline I trace as I write. Writing is not an attempt to close the wound, but to keep tracing its contours as one might trace a silhouette – a dark, solid mass without details, recognizable nevertheless. Recognizable as the sense of loss that surfaces in writing; recognizable as the sense of loss that emerges from the artworks, although I am not able at first to name or identify what in them affects me. I am surprised, touched, disturbed, wounded by something in them I cannot pinpoint. Roland Barthes referred to the inability to name as “a good symptom of disturbance”. “What I can name cannot really prick me”, he wrote, making reference to what he termed the *punctum* of photography (something in the photograph that holds and affects the viewer, often a detail, whose impact does not stem from its obvious meaning but, rather, from a private one). I realise that what pricks me is akin to the Barthesian *punctum*, and thus trying to immediately locate and name the impact of art is perhaps an attempt to pin it down, a fruitless endeavour. The failure to name shows the moment in which the writer cannot master the language that categorizes and bestows names, the moment when she is wounded by objects and by words.

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3. The affect evoked by a present encounter in turn evokes the affect of an ‘unknown’ experience (not remembered, not narratable). It is worth noting that the notion of affect, commonly understood as feeling or emotion, when understood as emotional response beyond knowing, one that carries the trace of the ‘forgotten’ event, echoes Kristeva’s idea of an ‘awakening’ (see note above).

4. Hélène Cixous, ‘What is it o’clock? Or the door (we never enter)’, translated by Catherine A.F. MacGillivray, in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), PDF e-book p. 54.

I encounter artworks that wound, and want, or need, to write about them; for something in them touches and pricks, something hurts; and yet the pain is welcome, as it makes me feel alive, a body pulsating with pain and life. I welcome the pain, even though I know it comes from the inside as much, or more, than from the outside; even though I am pierced by arrows that heighten my sense of vulnerability. To be vulnerable is to be exposed, susceptible to harm, open to the possibility of injury. Vulnerable comes from Latin *vulnus*, a wound, indicating that a boundary can be broken. To be vulnerable is to be exposed and wounded, open to that which, in touching, can hurt. To be open to a touch that can wound, the touch of a pointed object and the touch of the other; and to be opened up by this touch, going outside of myself to a place where I can encounter the other. Opening up myself to be wounded again, I write.

**Dionea Rocha Watt** is an artist, writer and PhD candidate in Critical and Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art, London. Born in Brazil, she has lived in England for the past 20 years.

Speculative Thinking:  
On Object Oriented Philosophies  
and Science Fiction

Based on the session curated by  
Nina Trivedi

Arguments in cultural anthropology seem to be amongst the most effective and engaging when thinking about how politics and the ontological turn fit together?<sup>5</sup>

The ontological turn is often imbricated in a Deleuzian framework, as ‘an immanent politics of permanent differentiation’.<sup>6</sup>

Povinelli’s otherwise, considered as a performative stance, is ‘the anthropological concept of ontology as the multiplicity of forms of existence enacted in concrete practices, where politics becomes the non-skeptical elicitation of this manifold of potentials for how things could be’.<sup>7</sup>

To offer assertions about what “is” or mandates about what “should be” is, in itself a political act- unabashedly granting the “otherwise” full ontological stability and forming it into a feasible and workable solution. The argument about the political in a way also seems to bring into light the question about the politics of that argument.

The “other” of the otherwise can refer to politics and the possibility of there being things other than identity politics. As Matei Candea states in his position piece, *The Ontology of the Political Turn*, to ask about this ‘is to ask in other words, how “other” the otherwise can be’.<sup>8</sup>

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5. Taking into consideration, an anthropological notion of power differences (politics) and the powers of difference (ontology) can pave the way for an analysis of the relationship between how ontology and politics are correlated in the social sciences and cognate disciplines

6. Holbraad, Martin, Pedersen, Morten Axel and Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions." *Fieldsights - Theorizing the Contemporary*, Cultural Anthropology Online, January 13, 2014, <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/462-the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions>

7. Holbraad, Martin, Pedersen, Morten Axel and Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. "The Politics of Ontology: Anthropological Positions." *Fieldsights - Theorizing the Contemporary*, Cultural Anthropology Online, January 13, 2014, <http://culanth.org/fieldsights/462-the-politics-of-ontology-anthropological-positions>

8. Candea, Matei. "The Ontology of the Political Turn." *Fieldsights - Theorizing the Contemporary*, Cultural Anthropology Online, January 13, 2014, <http://www.culanth.org/fieldsights/469-the-ontology-of-the-political-turn>

**Nina Trivedi** is a PhD candidate in Critical & Historical Studies at the Royal College of Art. She has a BFA from Parsons School of Design and MFA from Goldsmiths College. She is the book reviews editor for the *Journal of Visual Culture* and is working on a forthcoming article about the exhibition *Helter Skelter LA Art in the 1990s and Object oriented politics*.



## Joe Camel

Barnaby Lambert

Joe had seen this camel before. It was lighter than the others. Part of a group of five or six camels that stood, every day, outside the hotel in which he was staying. Presumably you could ride them on some kind of tour. But since he hadn't seen anyone doing so Joe could not confirm this. Instead, he began to wonder if the creatures might just be a part of the hotel's facade. It was, after all, an upmarket hotel. And they really looked the part standing outside of it.

He had not previously taken any special interest in camels. But Joe reckoned that this one, the lighter one, was the best of the group. It stood a little straighter than the others, with paler fur lending contrast to the animals long and black eyelashes. Joe understood that this feature kept sand out of the camel's eyes. In the deserts where he imagined such a creature would naturally live they made perfect sense. Here on the pavement however, Joe found them excessive and oddly flirtatious. A thought he stifled as he walked up to ask the man apparently in charge of them if he might take a picture.

Most of Joe's pictures so far were probably too serious. Unpeopled landmarks and open expanses of sand. They were good photographs, he thought, but they lacked any sense of holiday fun. Which is why, before unpacking his camera, Joe removed his sunglasses. He had an idea: he was going to take the glasses and, with permission, get the camel to wear them for a portrait. The man in charge of the camels consented. And Joe approached the animal he had previously admired.

Before lending it his shades, Joe stroked the top of the camel's head. Now acquainted, he gently tried to rest the glasses on its face. The camel was placid enough. But despite having known that the fit would be imperfect, Joe had not taken into account just how

massive this face was. Or the way in which no part of it suggested where a pair of glasses might go. Nor yielded any shape for them to cling to.

It was a kind of puzzle. A jigsaw of two in which neither piece could make sense of the other. The space between the camel's eyes was nearly twice the width of the glasses. With the snout, leading down to the nose, extending horizontally away from the eyes and much too far above them. The nose itself was a stubby gnarl of folded skin and was of no use to Joe at all.

The glasses *could* be firmly wrapped around the camel's snout. Yet because this sat at near ninety degrees in relation to the eyes, the lenses would face directly upward. This gave the impression of a snout wearing sunglasses, not a camel. Following this, Joe tried folding the glasses to prop them up against the snout. But without anything to wrap around they kept falling off.

Not yet discouraged, Joe aimed a little higher. Finding a part of the head that met the top of the snout on which the arms of his glasses could rest. Admittedly, this was well above the eyes from any angle. But it did align nicely with the ears. And as the task had already dragged on (with a few people already gathering to watch) Joe decided that this was as good as it got.

Carefully, Joe began to step backwards. He drew out his camera and uncapped the lens. The animal was taller than he was. To get the whole face in frame, Joe would have to go on tiptoes. At the right elevation, he angled himself to the left of his subject. Adjusting his focus as the camel shook its head and yawned.

**Barnaby Lambert** is an artist and designer working across text, image and performance. Joe Camel is a short story of anthropocentric failure in which three objects (a camel, a person and a pair of sunglasses) struggle to make sense of each other.

## Practising 'Flat Ecology' in Everyday Life. Proposal and Questions

Mirko Nikolić

In my artwork and research, I aim to put to practice an ontological framework I call 'flat ecology'. It is an ontology based on a conjunction of several new materialist and object-oriented philosophies that share a 'flat ontological' stance (DeLanda, 2002: 46). The aim of this framework is to act as a method for creating aesthetic situations which can be thought to operate "in and for a more-than-human world" (Whatmore, 2006). 'Flat ecology' thus endeavours to provide ground for the making of aesthetic situations in which humans and nonhumans engage in *flat relations*, thus in which no entity holds an ontological (and, by extension, epistemological, or any other) privilege over any entity involved. However, working with this ontology and trying to deploy it in real-life contexts opens up a number of questions and problems.

1. Proposal. Outline of a 'flat ecology' A 'flat ecological' approach begins by assuming that humans hold no special position in the universe. Therefore, it accepts one of the theses of 'flat ontology', as formulated by Levi Bryant:

All entities are on equal ontological footing and ... no entity, whether artificial or natural, symbolic or physical, possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects. (Bryant, 2011a: 246)

However, entities are not disposed on a flat homogeneous plane; "to be is to make or produce difference" (Bryant, 2011b: 263) which means that flat ontology is populated by "unique, singular individual[s]" (DeLanda, 2002: 46). "Nothing is, by itself, either reducible or irreducible to something else" (Latour, 1988: 158). Since each entity is unique and mutually irreducible, therefore "the world or the universe does not exist" (Bryant, 2011a: 246). Flat ecology

implies a “pluriverse” (Latour, 2004: 246) – individual entities engage with the world in different ways, they are not unified a priori under any umbrella term such as ‘nature’ or ‘society’ or ‘world’. Each entity “makes a whole world for itself” (Latour, 1988: 166), which also means that it is a “strange stranger” to any other (Morton, 2010: 46–7). There is no pre-given mesh that brings everything together- bridges need to be laboriously constructed.

The first characteristic of the ecological subject is that it is able to *make* a difference; it *performs* actions. Therefore, at the beginning, I will call the ecological subject an *actor* (Latour, 2005: 46). Actors never act in a vacuum, they are always “in the middle” of other agencies, thus they ‘intra-act’ (Barad, 2007: 139-40). In other words, they establish, maintain or unmake connections, conjunctions or disjunctions with other entities.

In order to ‘intra-act’, two entities, since they are mutually irreducible, always need a third one which performs ‘mediation’ or ‘translation’ (Latour, 1988: 162). This ‘third person’ can be called either ‘intermediary’ or ‘mediator’, depending on how it ‘transports’ the message (Latour, 2005: 39). Because of the mediators, ‘irreducible’ entities are able to connect, but, because of the uniqueness of each of the three entities involved, every ‘translation’ involves “misunderstanding” (Latour, 1988: 168) – a surplus or deficit, a difference in meaning, or a certain degree of unknowability. Instead of imagining this inevitable misunderstanding as leading into the darkneses of chaos, this is the soil from which stems and flourishes the becoming of entities. Were they to be fully transparent or deployed, the world would come to a standstill, there would not be any becoming nor time and space.

An actor is never fully actualised, it is “split” between its “local manifestation” (actual) and its “virtual proper being” (Bryant, 2011a: 114). The virtual dimension of an actor is shaped by its affects, which indicate “unactualised capacities to affect and be affected” (DeLanda, 2002: 62), in other words, its relational capacities or openings. Virtual dimension can be imagined as a “phase space”, defined by attractors or structural gravities, virtual trajectories that an actor can potentially actualise or perform (Bryant, 2011a: 89). Importantly, the actual and

virtual are not two disjointed levels of being – “[t]he virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual” (Deleuze, in DeLanda, 2002: 37), it is a withdrawn thus not present but nonetheless equally real dimension. The virtual conceals all the responses to the question Spinoza posed: “what can a body do?” (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 256). In an ecology, we can’t ever fully know what one can do, not even about ourselves. Entities emerge only through ‘trials’ (Latour, 1988: 158) or ‘intra-actions’.

When taken together, the virtual and actual dimensions come to identify the ecological subject as a singular ‘actor-network’. ‘Actor’ is the lieu of momentary action (topographical timespace, ‘here’ and ‘now’ of the actor), and ‘network’ is a configuration of its affects (topological timespace of its capacities to ‘intra-act’). Between the two dimensions, affects are trajectories of intensity that actualise and virtualise action. The notion of phase space moves away from the division interior/exterior; ‘actor-network’ is a multiplicity of trajectories that shoot both centripetally and centrifugally from the ‘actor’.

*Actors are situated among other actor-networks, actually and virtually.* An actor’s topographical, thus physical, location is determined by and with others, and an actor’s topological timespace is equally configured by the constellation of topologies of other actors. Bodies co-exist in proximity or at distance from each other, and they can perform certain actions within the current state of things *and* the respective networks of capacities of other adjacent actors. Through intensification of particular affects, topologies of different actors can criss-cross and hence get entangled. This ‘meeting’ or ‘gathering’ of two entities originates in the virtual as it is mediated by affects of actors involved. Counter to the system/environment approach which posits a ‘selective openness’ and ‘operational closure’ of organisms, in a totally ‘flat ecology’, *any entity can potentially be affected by any one else*. It only depends on the number of mediators necessary between them, and times and spaces of mediation. This does not mean that “everything is connected to everything else”, but it can be. There are no definite firewalls or tax-free havens, everything is exposed to influence.

Based on this brief exposition, one starts seeing the difficulties and possibilities for thinking and making meetings among ‘strange strangers’. There are very different types of meeting or relations that can be forged. The practice of ‘flat ecology’ is interested in a special case of ‘meeting’ which induces two actors into coexistence on equal terms – *flat relation* among equal but irreducible subjects (or objects). In this type of conjunction, none of the actors has its virtual capacities or actual manifestation cut down or restrained, their respective capacities are either maintained or increased. The question that ‘flat ecology’ tries to address is whether it is possible to create such associations among irreducible entities. “What would a truly democratic encounter between truly equal beings look like, what would it be – can we even imagine it?” (Morton, 2010: 15). How to make and enact assemblages “where each singularity can live out its own strangeness to the extent of its possibilities” (Raunig, 2013)?

2. Questions.  
Frictions and  
‘surprises of action’

As I am trying to make artwork dealing with a number of humans and nonhumans through the prism of these ideas, this gives rise to a number of problems that I deem to be of relevance beyond the realm of artistic practice. According to the thesis of ontological equality, all actors are equally real, they have equal claim on reality. However, through cultural, economic and political operations, human societies hierarchise reality, humans do not regard all entities and relations they entertain as equally real to the human ones. The relation between a leaf of grass and a sheep is, with difficulty, put on the same level as one between a mayor and his/her electorate. Therefore, the realness of actors and relations is not given, *it must be made*. If it is to be put in action, ‘flat ontology’ will inevitably come upon frictions and resistances.

When working with actual entities, the very idea of total flatness probably cannot ever be fully achieved owing to the fact that the initiator of action is a human. However, this is not to say outright that ‘flat ontology’ is some impossible ideal and that it belongs only to ‘speculative metaphysics’. This inherent difficulty calls for a different positioning of the practitioner in comparison to the theory. Concepts such as ‘flat’, ‘actor’ and ‘coexistence’ should then act more

as attractors than as normative predicates. In this sense, ontology does not search to postulate truth about reality, but to outline “lines of flight” for the practice. As Timothy Morton says about the ‘ecological thought’:

*Environment is theory – theory not as answer to a question, ... , but as question, and question mark, as in question, questioning-ness.*  
(Morton, 2007: 175)

The practice of flat ontology tries to think and place humans outside of human boxes, but it is not about stepping out of the human body into a vacuum. It is an embodied work which operates with the real *and* the virtual, and gives special attention to the second. The actual and the virtual are equally real dimensions of an actor, thus, importantly, actual relations should not be given privilege over the virtual ones. Virtual is more evasive and more pliable, hence it requires special type of sensitivity or “sensibility” (Berardi, 2012: 121). It is the realm of weak causalities and fragile voices, beneath the thresholds of audibility but not out of existence.

Humans are all the time engaged in virtual relations – for example, through the rare metals we use today that will impact lives far in the future. Because of this, it is one of the territories for the practice of ‘flat ecology’ – production of sites of virtual relations or virtual assemblages, of present-futures and ‘future future[s]’ (Morton, 2013: 91-2). This is by necessity a work involving high degrees of epistemic uncertainty - how can we ever know the virtual? Following its definition, the virtual should not be understood as something preconstituted, but as an affective field within which the practice becomes. An art practice here pushes against the possible of a given situation, the effective disposition of entities and their affects, and tries to remain radically open to the relations and positions that seem to be incredibly remote, spatially and/or temporally. The trees that fall in Amazon far from sight are real, as much as a little blue penguin in Antarctica, as much as a data packet in this smartphone. Their individual realnesses matter, and they can conjoin with humans in collective processes of ‘mattering’.

Flat ontology recognises the realities of a multitude of irreducible and heterogeneous others. At the same time, it breaks the news that we cannot ever reach them on their own terms. Therefore, this framework may seem either discouraging or as incredibly demanding, perhaps a task for ultra-funded science and tech projects, or most labyrinthine metaphysics. But, in the spirit of ‘flatness’, I believe that operating in a flat ontological realm can also be a “practice of everyday life” (de Certeau, 1984).

A flat ontology should aim to radically displace us from where we are sitting, right where *we are sitting*. It need not only talk about quanta or asteroids. It can equally be a practice of “defamiliarisation”, “a form of estrangement and a radical repositioning on the part of the subject” (Braidotti, 2013: 85) in quotidian contexts. It may take form of a re-enchantment of the world, for example, anti-modern panpsychist or animistic ‘ritual’ performances, or it can involve tinkering with microprocessors and data protocols. From my position as a human, urban dweller in times of communication and trading worldwide networks, actual and virtual paths lead toward a myriad of places and entities. Even before that, I am neck deep inside that ‘hyperobject’ which goes under the name of ‘global warming’ (Morton, 2013). How much weirder can it get?

Since I am standing amidst all these messy networks and contributing to them daily, I cannot fully embrace ‘speculative metaphysics’ and its aesthetics, its “alien, all too alien” scenarios. Because it is us humans who write, extract oil, and drive fossil burning cars, and we still subject vast numbers of nonhumans to our unilateral intents and purposes. This ontological turn should therefore be furthered with ethics and politics of discourse, creative and alternative ways of thinking *and* doing. Through a closer entanglement with matter, a post-anthropocentric metaphysics can truly “come to matter” (Barad, 2007: 140), a matter for nonhumans and humans alike.

What is at stake, in my view, transpires in Lyotard’s formulation of ecology as “the discourse of the secluded, of the thing that has not become public, that has not become communicational, that has not become systemic, and that can never become any of these things” (Lyotard, 1990: 105). New materialisms have managed to turn our



Mirko Nikolić, #city293 (all that is air melts into city)

sight toward these ‘secluded’ ones, now it is about thinking how to *coexist* and *discourse* with these unknown unknowns, how to ‘intra-act’ with entities with “speech impedimenta” (Latour, 2004: 87, 249-50), and accepting that speech impedimenta belong to us and everyone, in equally different shares. This discourse aims at forging “nonhuman friendships” (Bingham, 2006) with the strangest of strange strangers, revelling in unexpected and uncanny closenesses as well as wondering at “surprises of action” (Latour, 1999: 281) produced by others we barely knew were there.

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**Mirko Nikolić** is a visual artist, and practice-based PhD candidate in Arts, Media and Design at University of Westminster. He adopts a variety of media – photography, installation, drawing, digital media – with emphasis on performance. Most recent solo show/performance *all that is air melts into city* (May 2014, London) traced the circulation of carbon-dioxide through human and nonhuman ecologies.

## Reclaiming Utopia: the Eco-City and the Revenge of the Real

Robert Cowley

I first became interested in ‘eco-cities’ partly because of the seemingly anachronistic utopianism that pervades their envisionment. I use the term ‘eco-city’ here as a broad umbrella label covering a wide variety of urban-scale sustainability-related initiatives which, particularly over the last decade, have been increasingly mainstreamed into policy-making internationally (Joss, Cowley, and Tomozeiu, 2013). Their promise often lies in a rhetorical construction of harmonious, socially and politically ‘flat’ new modes of living, where nature and culture are seamlessly interwoven, where the economy works in the service of the good life, providing abundantly for all but without undermining the basis of life on our planet. On closer inspection, however, far from offering the possibility of radical transformation, many eco-cities appear to offer little more than ‘business as usual’, and may even work to reproduce the structural conditions of unsustainability.

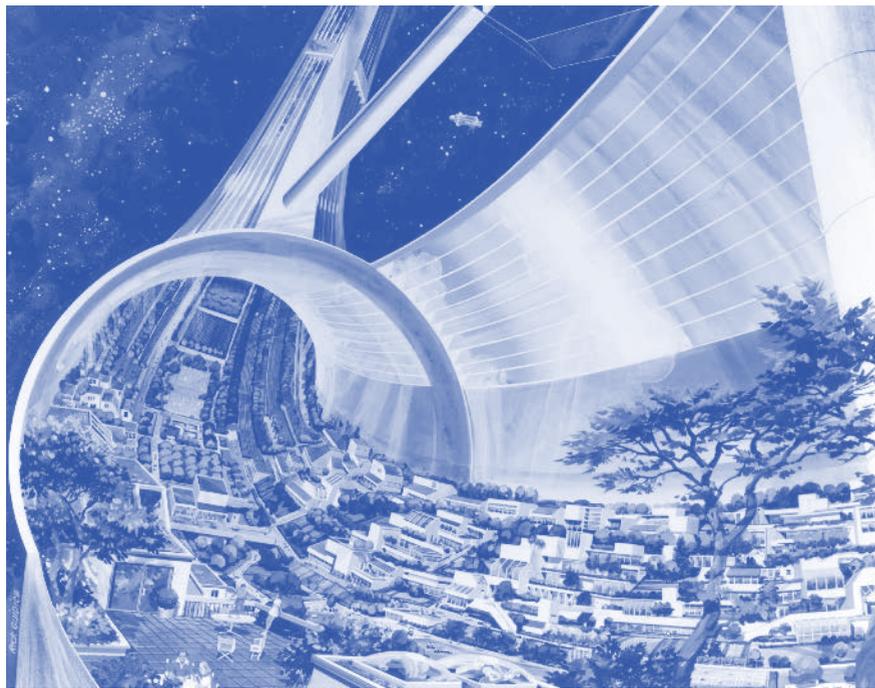
It may seem unsurprising that these plans for the future tend towards utopianism. Since antiquity, utopian visions of the ‘good society’ have been spatialised as “the quest for the good city” (Cugurullo, 2013). ‘Eco-villages’, as experiments in applied ‘green utopianism’ (Sargisson, 2000) which follow in the long historical tradition of the intentional community, have an ongoing discursive influence on the eco-city (Rapoport, 2010). Paolo Soleri’s *Arcosanti* is the earliest direct forerunner of the contemporary phenomenon; its founders turned their backs on mainstream society, attempting to build a new type of life, in a new type of city, in the Arizonian desert.

Sargisson (2000) characterises the broader category of the intentional community as ‘transgressive utopianism’. The spaces thus created might be interpreted negatively: as exclusionary; as irresponsible; not so much posing a constructive challenge to the establishment as typically ignored by it (Goodwin & Taylor, 1982). They may

be delegitimised by their idealistic tendencies, as ‘escapist day-dreams’ (Pepper, 2005). Alternatively, however, perhaps any dominant ideology might be reinterpreted as a utopia in disguise; by constructing alternative utopias which are “incongruous with the state of reality” (Mannheim, 1960:173), we challenge ideological norms. As a “useful source of socio-political truths and inspiration” (Goodwin & Taylor, 1982:221), utopian thinking therefore helps us to “relativize the present” (ibid: 28). But what then might it mean if institutional policy-makers, rather than peripheral, countercultural actors, are applying utopian thinking to urban development around the globe? More puzzlingly still, why now?

Somehow, the eco-city must be telling us a story that we want to hear. Attractive plans rely on successful rhetorical storytelling (Throgmorton, 2003; van Hulst, 2012); to be implemented they need to display discursive coherence while resonating widely enough for a consensus to be built. And perhaps their currency is necessarily that of the static utopian vision; as representations forming the basis of action, plans necessarily enact ideological closure (Allmendinger, 2002). Yet the practice and theory of city planning has otherwise moved away from the ‘grand visions’ of the twentieth century: truths that matter for the purposes of action are now assumed to be locally embedded; modernist dreams of objective description and scientific prescription have given way to pragmatic learning from contextually embedded constructions of reality. If utopian storytelling is thus viewed with suspicion elsewhere, why are we so keen to fall under its spell in the case of the eco-city?

I found one clue in a lecture by John Beck (2014) earlier this year. He posed the question of how contemporary western society can plan for the future more generally – or even think about the future. If modernity long ago undermined the older certainties of religion, but we no longer believe in modernity either, then what is left? Maybe, he suggested, it is *fiction* that remains, allowing us to imagine the future in terms of different ‘scenarios’ – and that science fiction, given its “radical disdain for plausibility” (*ibid*), is ideally suited to this task. And when we were shown the image below, taken from a large library collected by NASA in the 1970s, I was struck by its aesthetic similarity to many images I have seen accompanying contemporary visions of the eco-city.



Rick Guidice, *Cutaway View of a Toroidal Colony*. Photo credit: NASA Ames Research Center

It is in architects’ renderings of eco-cities that this aesthetic is most obviously adopted; some would sit comfortably on the cover of a science fiction novel. The design for the new environmentally friendly town centre currently under construction in Gwanggyo, near Seoul, is one of my favourite examples (see the gallery at MVDRV, undated). While science fiction is readily associated with the colonisation of space, its long parallel history of exploring the idea of subterranean dwelling (Beck & Dorrian, 2014) finds an echo in the plans for an underground eco-city in the Siberian city of Mirny, on the site of a disused diamond mine (AB ELISE, undated). Imagery such as this seems to be a source of fascination; it is often eagerly circulated, along with accompanying text, on sustainability-related news websites and blogs around the world.

There are good reasons why eco-cities might have a strong science-fictional flavour more generally. Technological innovation and science fiction have a dynamic historical relationship (Bassett *et al.*, 2013), and eco-cities often have strong technological framings. Detailed plans made in the 1970s to colonise space are just one example of science following fiction (see e.g. O’Neill, 1974). And if, as Beck observed in his lecture, the theme of the ‘exodus’ is recurrent in science fiction, this too has a clear resonance with the eco-city. The threat of catastrophe fuels the imagination; the lucky few make plans to escape from the earth’s ravaged surface (Beck & Dorrian, 2014). Not by coincidence, Hodson and Marvin (2010) seek to deflate the rhetoric of urban sustainability by describing a degraded future planet, dotted with ‘premium eco-enclaves’ reserved for the rich and fortunate.

The revival of utopianism may partly therefore be, a side effect of a turn towards fictional accounts of the future, and especially those, which speculate in the face of catastrophe. But I think there is something more, something peculiar to the nature of the imagined catastrophe, which allows us to excuse the ‘unreal’ utopianism of the eco-city, rather than dismiss it as impractical or irresponsibly escapist. The catastrophe in question relates to the implications of ‘climate change’ – and yet climate change remains more of an immanent threat than a well-defined or tangible phenomenon.

On the one hand, ‘uncertain’ problems of this type call for pragmatic, incremental, reflexive, decentralised experimental responses – what Michel Callon calls ‘research in the wild’ (Callon *et al.*, 2009). The process of solving such problems is really one of their definitions; and contemporary planning practices may seem well suited to this endeavour. But, on the other, the “looming ecological catastrophe” (Bryant *et al.*, 2011:3) poses a fundamental challenge to contemporary planning’s staunchly ‘anti-realist’ (Harrison, 2014) underpinnings. Climate change, in other words, heralds the *revenge of the real*.

New bodies of theory across academic disciplines – including actor-network theory, new materialism, assemblage theory, non-representational theory, and speculative realism – all in their own ways nudge the materiality of the world back towards the centre of the stage. Inspired by object-oriented ontology, Morton (2013) has developed the idea of the ‘hyperobject’ to explain our relationship with phenomena such as climate change – phenomena which cast dark shadows and ‘stick’ to us variously; though aware of their reality, we cannot directly perceive them since they are so ‘massively distributed’ in time and space. All such work perhaps attempts to articulate a more general spreading sensibility that, as Morton puts it “we are no longer in the centre of the universe, but we are not in the VIP box beyond the edge, either” (*ibid*: 13).

This theoretical decentring of the human is reflected outside the academy in a growing awareness of the world’s unpredictability. We may still desire certainty, but more than ever recognise that it will elude us. And yet postmodernity turns out not to be marked by entrapment within discourse; instead, the real urges us to accept that the world is “incomplete” and “contains a plurality of latent potentialities from which choices must be made” (Gunder & Hillier, 2007). This shift in sensibility, I think, opens a door through which utopianism can make its grand re-entry – not in the form of the totalitarian blueprint so much as an underlying driving force of imaginative hope.

Instead of dismissing the eco-city’s utopianism as dangerously apolitical, I am therefore happy to embrace it as a *prepolitical* force (Gunder & Hillier, 2007): a force which precedes rather than conflicts

with the real, which withers precisely at the point that it becomes institutionalised (Ganjavie, 2013). The expression it finds in plans for the eco-city, in Bloch’s (1986) terms, is more ‘concrete’ than ‘abstract’: a subjunctive, or science-fictional, extension of real-world conditions rather than a compensatory type of daydreaming. And even while we may contest the practices that this utopianism generates, its traces still glisten on the smooth representational surface of plans and architects’ renderings, captured just at the ambiguous moment where speculative hope begins to dissolve into the practical business of contingent socio-material reality.

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**Robert Cowley** is a doctoral researcher, visiting lecturer and research associate in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster. His PhD project examines the socio-political dimensions of urban sustainability, with a special focus on the place of the ‘public’ in planned and implemented eco-city initiatives.

## On dOCUMENTA (13)

Valentina Ravaglia

Ambitious both in scale and in intellectual scope, the 2012 edition of documenta has left its mark as a momentous cultural event, one that can hardly be described as a contemporary art exhibition: among other things, Artistic Director Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev conceived of it as a multidisciplinary platform, a collective thought experiment casting sideways glances to the very notions of culture and history, looking at their material conditions from the myriad viewpoints enabled by the fluid eclecticism of today’s artistic practices. Held between 9 June and 16 September 2012 in Kassel, Germany (as well as in Kabul, Afghanistan, in Banff, Canada and in Alexandria and Cairo, Egypt), dOCUMENTA (13) addressed the status of objects and non-human agents as “makers of the world”, and happened at the perfect moment in time for this to be interpreted as a manifestation of the recent “speculative turn” in post-continental philosophy.

Just like the premise of dOCUMENTA (13), this strand of thought repositions human agency with respect to a universe seen as an ever-changing network of contingent events and relationships between entities which are utterly alien and generally indifferent to us and to each other.<sup>1</sup> However, Christov-Bakargiev has stated on

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1. This supposed philosophical link was picked up for example by Daniel Birnbaum in his review of dOCUMENTA (13) for the October 2012 issue of magazine *Artforum*, where its curatorial premise is linked to “[...] a new, object-oriented philosophy that wants to liberate us once and for all from anthropocentrism and consider instead what the catalogue calls the “inanimate makers of the world.” In fact, [Artistic Director] Christov-Bakargiev’s project is in many ways perfectly in tune with the approaches today discussed as “speculative realism,” with its ambition to rid our thinking of the obsession with that historically overemphasized relationship between a perceiving subject and a known object.” See Daniel Birnbaum, “Documenta 13”, *Artforum*, October 2012, vol. 51, no. 2, pp. 254–5.

multiple occasions that she developed her thinking around dOCUMENTA (13) independently of what has come to be widely known as Speculative Realism and Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO), citing instead the writings of Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and Isabelle Stengers on eco-feminism and the philosophy of science among her main sources of inspiration.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it is precisely this incidence of convergent philosophical evolution that makes dOCUMENTA (13) stand out as a timely and revealing phenomenon, broadening the scope of the debates on non-anthropocentric philosophies which in the past five years or so have spilled into artistic and curatorial practices with an arbitrary bias towards Speculative Realism – a label which is as catchy as it is misused.<sup>3</sup>

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2. At a talk at the Whitechapel Gallery in May 2014, Christov-Bakargiev (in conversation with Griselda Pollock and Iwona Blazwick) declared to “have no relation whatsoever to Speculative Realism”, and that at that time she was only aware of Graham Harman’s writings; Harman was then proposed for a notebook (No.085, *The Third Table*, reprinted in *The Book of Books*, pp. 540–42) and as a speaker for an associated d(13) event (“Keynote Double Lecture – Anton Zeilinger with Graham Harman”, Kassel, 17 August 2012). Christov-Bakargiev went on to say that she only properly read Latour’s writings on Actor-Network Theory after she worked on d(13), and that she sees Speculative Realism’s version of anti-correlationism as a return to pre-Kantian realism to which she does not subscribe.

3. The binomial label of Speculative Realism (SR) was coined *ad hoc* for a conference held at Goldsmiths, University of London in April 2007 which brought together four of the foremost participants in this debate: Ray Brassier (then at Middlesex University), Iain Hamilton Grant (University of the West of England), Graham Harman (American University in Cairo) and Quentin Meillassoux (École Normale Supérieure in Paris), convened by Goldsmiths’ own Alberto Toscano (Senior Lecturer in the Sociology Department). The Speculative Realism title – allegedly coined, and later rejected, by Brassier – was intended for a one-off use rather than as an official definition; indeed, not even the core group who spoke at the 2007 Goldsmiths event was ever compact in subscribing to it. Brassier and Meillassoux, for example, cannot be fully considered realist philosophers; the latter has referred to his own ideas as ‘speculative materialism’, a label which predates (and possibly inspired) the SR moniker. See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude. An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (London: Continuum, 2008; orig. 2006), p. 121 and Ray Brassier, *Nihil Unbound. Enlightenment and Extinction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. Xii, 31.

dOCUMENTA (13) has also become a model for exhibitions that try and avoid simply (re)presenting a given set of ideas, and instead aim to generate methods for autonomously thinking through the issues it raises, and to reach beyond the sphere of art per se. In an early press release Christov-Bakargiev declared that “dOCUMENTA (13) does not follow a single, overall concept but engages in conducting, and choreographing manifold materials, methods, and knowledges”.<sup>4</sup> In her texts Christov-Bakargiev often invoked skepticisms as true philosophy, in its etymological sense as “love of knowledge”, a permanent mode of enquiry (from the Greek word *skepsis*, meaning “search”) where truth cannot, and should not, be ultimately resolved. It is “an optimistic position that doubts the validity of induction as a means to arrive at knowledge”, and at the same time it rejects relativism as a sophistic and falsely critical mode of thought in which every opinion is considered equally valid and can be resolved in its own self-contained truth.<sup>5</sup>

dOCUMENTA (13) tried to shift the attention of its public to the ways in which knowledge can be produced, or exchanged, in an expanded definition of epistemology which opens questions to forms of apprehending and understanding that are simply precluded to humans:

The attempt is to not put human thought hierarchically above the ability of other species and things to think or produce knowledge. This [...] gives a special perspective onto our own thinking. It makes us more humble, able to see the partiality of human agency, encouraging a point of view that is less anthropocentric.<sup>6</sup>

The methodological premise behind this idea is that the contemporary art exhibition format not only allows, but actively

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4. Christov-Bakargiev in “dOCUMENTA (13) announces curatorial team and process”, press release, 29 October 2010 (see n. 9).

5. Christov-Bakargiev, “*The dance was very frenetic, lively, rattling, clanging, rolling, contorted, and lasted for a long time*”, in *The Book of Books*, 30–45, p. 36.

6. Christov-Bakargiev, “*The dance was very frenetic...*”, p. 31.

encourages such oblique ways to produce knowledge, functioning as a temporary arrangement of networks of objects and ideas whose relationships are to be understood not linguistically but spatially, or infrastructurally. This mechanism is not new; indeed, it is not even limited to recent art history, but rather as old as the history of the organised display of art and artifacts, particularly at times when the instruments of a scientific and technological observation of the world could be found in close proximity with art objects: think of the cabinet of curiosities of the Renaissance, the encyclopaedic drive behind the birth of the modern museum, the world fairs of the industrial age, or the influence of non-euclidean geometry and quantum physics on modern avant-garde movements.

dOCUMENTA (13) exemplified this tendency to organise knowledge around arrangements of objects, and at the same time it turned it on its head by drawing attention to the ontology of all non-human entities at large, as well as to their relationships with humans. With its “holistic and non-logocentric” premise, dOCUMENTA (13) effectively expanded the remit of the curatorial to potentially all disciplines and fields of knowledge, brought together in the format of an art exhibition in order to be experienced as different but complementary modes of understanding the world. And without naming any explicit “concept” to serve as an excuse or end for thought, the relationship between the object – the *exhibit* – and our understanding took centre stage: the experience of art itself was presented as a way of being in a purely contingent world where knowledge, devoid of an external purpose, manifests itself as a relationship, a space between, a dialogue.

These dynamics between animate and inanimate things and their relative position in the world and in its history were at the core of the whole exhibition, both figuratively and literally. In the Rotunda of the Fridericianum, Christov-Bakargiev devised an exhibition-within-the-exhibition, “The Brain”, in her own words “an associative space of research where a number of artworks, objects, and

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7. Christov-Bakargiev, *The Guidebook*, p. 24.

documents are brought together in lieu of a concept”.<sup>7</sup> Structured to be experienced at a different pace from the rest of the exhibition, in order to function effectively like an introductory essay without words, The Brain presented a wide range of small-scale items in the manner of a cultural history museum or of an archival display (though Christov-Bakargiev prefers to think of it as a “compost heap”).<sup>8</sup> These included contemporary artworks shown side by side with things that are not contemporary, or are not art, or used to be artworks but have become something else, and all sorts of hybrids and spaces in between.

Among these objects, geological and petrological motifs were particularly evident, hinting to their instrumental role across the rest of the exhibition: in Giuseppe Penone's *Essere Fiume 6* (1998) a river stone is flanked by an exact copy carved in Carrara marble; this material is also the subject of Sam Durant's *Calcium Carbonate (ideas spring from deeds and not the other way around)*, a 2011 marble sculpture representing a bag of powdered stone, inscribed with the titular quote from the *Political Testament* of Italian revolutionary anarchist Carlo Pisacane. Two bricks with roughly painted marks revealed themselves as tools of creative resistance, used as pretend-radios by Czechoslovak people when the Soviet military banned them in 1968, and remade by Tamás St. Turba to keep their militant spirit alive (*Czechoslovak Radio 1968, 1969-2008*). Elsewhere in The Brain one could find tiny stone figurines known as Bactrian Princesses, made in western Central Asia in the late third and early second millennia BC, their minute components simply slotted together without any joint or adhesive; only around eighty have survived to the present day, which – together with their troubled geographic origins – served as a reminder of the fragility and precariousness “of all bodies, including bodies of culture”.<sup>9</sup>

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8. On the Brain as compost, see Christov-Bakargiev's second Leverhulme Lecture at the University of Leeds, “Worlding: From the Archive to the Compost”, 3 March 2014. Video on YouTube: <<http://youtu.be/F8Jl8xvdHKM>> (retrieved 31 October 2014).

9. Christov-Bakargiev, *The Guidebook*, p. 40.

Notions of “conflict, trauma and destruction, collapse and recovery” were indeed also crucial to *The Brain*: poignant in this sense were the amorphous lumps which only a label allowed to identify as a group of objects from the National Museum of Beirut, fused together by shell fire during the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90); nearby an early drawing by Gustav Metzger from ca.1954, damaged by decades of humidity and reduced to an illegible smudge of colour, was wryly presented as an involuntary application of the Manifesto of Auto-destructive Art the artist wrote in 1959. And all of this is but a fraction of the dense and unpredictable selection of objects gathered in this show-within-the-show following a criterion left intentionally vague and open to interpretation.

The format of the exhibition itself – spread not only all over the city of Kassel but extended to inaccessible or remote locations over four continents – defied finitude, and with it any attempt to formulate even the most summary of overviews. *DOCUMENTA* (13)’s boundless ambitions could never truly be fulfilled, precisely because the exhibition was not intended as a container, but rather as a permeable interface, like the Klein bottle – a continuous surface with no boundaries between “inside” and “outside”.<sup>10</sup> In fact, one could interpret its “no-concept concept” as an attempt to measure the complexity of real knowledge against the Cartesian limitations of human cognition: a meta-epistemological endeavour which manages to escape self-referentiality to function as a truly generative device, propelling thought into a potentially infinite number of escape orbits.

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10. Christov-Bakargiev, “Worldly Worlding: the Imaginal Fields Of Science/Art and Making Patterns Together”, in *Mousse*, n.43, April-May 2014, pp. 76-81.

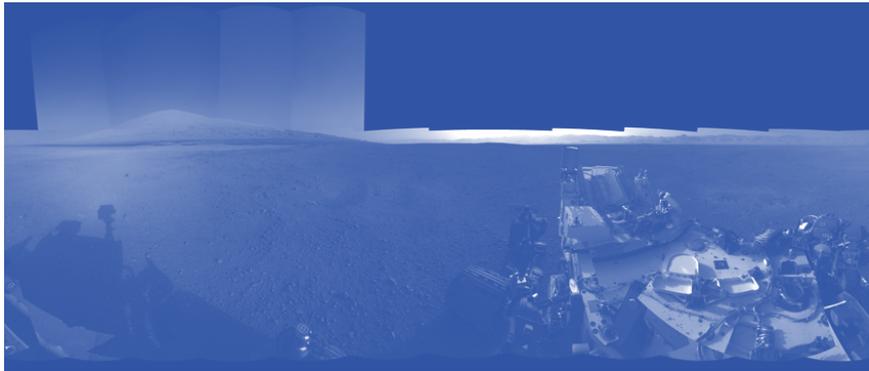
**Valentina Ravaglia** is Assistant Curator at Tate Modern and a researcher at Birkbeck, University of London.

## A Glimpse of Mars through Fractured Illusion

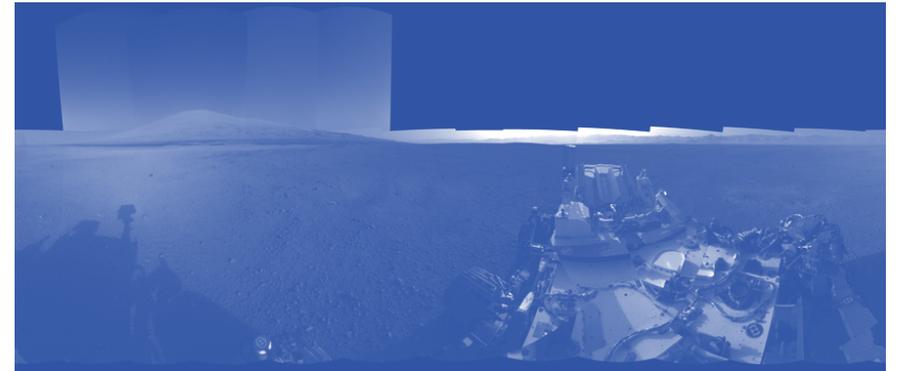
Luci Eldridge

A reconstruction of Mars, glimpsed through fractured illusion. The stereoscope at London's Regional Planetary Imaging Facility is kept for the purpose of examining 3D photographs. Inserting the double image into the viewer and peering through the mask-like device, peripheral vision is curtailed off, and one's gaze is directed towards the bright image space, anticipating an emergence of three-dimensions.

3-D View from Bradbury Landing Site, Curiosity. Credit: NASA/JPL-Caltech



Left eye view of PIA16140



Right eye view of PIA16140

The first stereoscopic pair of images I placed under the lens was taken by NASA's rover *Curiosity* and showed a 360 degree panorama of the Bradbury Landing Site, captured in the first few days of the mission. Due to the limited extent of the stereoscope's lens, I was forced to shift the images around on the base of the device, in order to experience the whole scene in fragmented three-dimensions. I began first by examining the body of *Curiosity*, which, distorted and made larger than life due to panoramic visualisation, was on the closest plane of this three-dimensional image world. Looking past *Curiosity*, my eyes were drawn to the illuminated sky beyond, hazy with dust, and emanating the milky glow of over-exposure. It was as if an attempt had been made to grasp the sky and land simultaneously, a compromise of exposure levels that resulted in a blanched horizon rushing forth out of blackness. This luminous fragment of the image commanded my attention and held a peculiar, contradictory position within my visual field. It was the most distant point of the scene, yet it seemed to hover above and in front, closer to my eyes than the body of the rover, oscillating between flatness and three-dimensionality. Perhaps this was due in part to the jutting nature of its upmost edge, and the sudden shift from black to white, but I assumed it also had something to do with how the two-dimensional pictures had been put together: joins in image data held greater resonance in three-dimensions, giving the incongruous sensation that the landscape had been assembled behind a hovering screen of pale translucent greys. The perception of this reconstructed space differed from my perception of it as a two-dimensional picture; instead of the individual image fragments entering my perception as constituent parts of the same landscape, in three-dimensions, the composite nature gained its *own kind* of three-dimensionality. The terrain remained as one level of three-dimensional space, and above it there seemed to float, shimmering in the Martian haze, veils of grey at different opacities, a patchwork of translucency pressing up against my eyes, obscuring the landscape beyond. This effect was all the more pervasive as I shifted the photographic pair to the right, bringing Mount Sharp into view. Here, the mountain appeared trapped, stifled beneath panels of

thick shrouds, concealed in shadow. A reconstructed landscape, obscured and segmented. A virtual space of illusion trapped beneath a veil.

*Curiosity* stood out in sharp relief, but when I attempted to focus on a specific feature of its body, I struggled to construct a solid form. Its structure flickered before my eyes, alternating between what felt like tangible object and intangible projection. When looking past to the background, I could sense the body of the rover, the visioning machine that had made this experience possible. I was examining the scene through its eyes, and not my own. I experienced this image space through the body of the rover as subject, but I was also very aware of its presence as an object, to be looked upon as part of the scene itself. *Curiosity* here became Merleau-Ponty's 'chiasm', a body as both object and subject, connecting me to the Martian world. Yet reflective of the 'chiasm', I could not experience the rover as both subject and object simultaneously. *Curiosity* became my eyes but I also observed the indeterminate solidity of its body as entity.

**Luci Eldridge** is a research student in Critical & Historical Studies at the RCA and her research is currently exploring the notion of stepping into the image of Mars.

Reenactment

Based on the session curated by  
Helena Bonett

## Reasons for Returning

Helena Bonett

I keep returning. Others return, too; but, unlike them, I now have the legitimacy of being a researcher, meant to return, to revisit, in order to reappraise. But what am I searching for? What is my justification?

Returning to the Barbara Hepworth Museum, in St Ives, Cornwall, the place looks almost the same. The display of sculpture in the museum has stayed largely unchanged since it opened in 1976, on the site of Hepworth's studio, less than a year after her death in a fire there. A static display. And, yet, a desire to return – to retrace one's steps, go back over it all again.

In Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), the protagonist Scottie (James Stewart) attempts to recreate, to re-enact, his doomed love affair with Madeleine with her double Judy (both played by Kim Novak). Not knowing that the Madeleine he knew was a construction – she was never, in a sense, real – Scottie tries to play Pygmalion, taking the raw materials of Judy and sculpting her into the object of his desire. Judy is aware, though, of this doubling; she is, after all, the consummate actor, the historical re-enactor if you will, who played the role of Madeleine so well, even too well.

A troubling sequence takes place in which Scottie brings Judy to his apartment. He casually throws a cushion in front of the fire and gestures for Judy to sit on it. All the time he watches her closely, intensely. We watch, too, knowing this is a re-enactment of the time Madeleine was in his apartment, after her near drowning, and she warmed herself by the fire. And Judy knows, too. What is Scottie hoping to achieve? Why does he go on with this?



*Vertigo*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1958

This is not what the Society for the Avocation of Critical Studies has described as 'critical re-enactment'. There is no critical distance; there is no desire for change. When Judy finally relinquishes her personhood and dresses fully as Madeleine, Scottie experiences what historical re-enactors describe as the 'timewarp'. As the camera rotates around the embracing couple, Scottie is both there, in that moment, and also pulled back to the final embrace he had with Madeleine before her (supposed) death. This is the ecstatic moment, the experience of the sublime: taken back, lifted out of the present into a desired past.



*Vertigo*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, 1958

But the moment does not last for long. Soon after, Judy puts on a necklace, which Scottie instantly recognises from the portrait that Madeleine used to visit, and revisit. With no doubt in his mind, Scottie takes Judy for one final re-enactment: to the place where the real Madeleine died, to confront Judy with this crime, and his vertigo, a fear generated out of a traumatic memory from the past. The re-enactment, ultimately, is too authentic. Judy falls to her death.

At the Hepworth Museum there are two preserved studios. These have remained supposedly 'untouched' since the sculptor's sudden death. An unchanging calendar bears testament. Conservators have recently been involved in restoring these decaying spaces. But for what purpose?



*Inside the preserved carving studio at the Barbara Hepworth Museum pre-conservation, 2013 © Bowness, Hepworth Estate. Photo © Helena Bonett*

Looking into the studios, visitors sometimes say that it feels as though Hepworth might just walk back in, pick up her tools and carry on carving. If all the parts fall into place, might we experience it really, how it was, how it used to be; might we be taken back, be there, then, our desires ecstatically fulfilled?

Pygmalion constructed an ideal – a simulacrum of a woman – and desired it so much it came alive. Is this the hope, the dream of the museum? Or might there be other reasons for returning that are not just a deathly looking backwards to a fictional, a constructed past? The narrative of the museum – the myth of the artist – is dominant, but it is not everything. There are changes, differences, experiences people bring to the place, alternative frameworks for looking, for searching, for researching. There is an engagement, an embodied relation with sculpture, with objects, with the place, in the here and now, that is elusive, hard to pin down, but might be a reason to return, to reappraise, to think again.

**Helena Bonett** is a curator, writer and lecturer undertaking a collaborative doctorate on the legacy of Barbara Hepworth with Tate and the Royal College of Art in the Curating programme.

## Practical Exercises in Historical Research

Society for the Avocation of Critical Histories  
New Haven, CT: McDonough & Williams, 1963

### How to make a critical re-enactment: a hand guide

Are you interested in history? Do you know a lot about an event or historical context but are still left with questions? Perhaps you have been researching a particular protagonist from history, and you would like to think about that story differently. Or maybe you have traced an object or artwork to a particular moment in time and want to challenge how we learn about it and understand it.

Well, we have developed a step-by-step exercise for you to follow that will help: we call it "critical re-enactment". We have had great feedback from experts across a variety of fields including historians, political scientists and even journalists! So if you are a student looking to impress your professor, or you are already a seasoned professional, try our technique!

### What is a critical re-enactment?

What is a critical re-enactment? Well, let us start with the basics. To re-enact something is to consciously investigate a historical event or scenario using available resources for a contemporary audience. Contexts for re-enactment are wide ranging and include criminal investigations, science experiments, live performance, and of course, historical study. This results in two separate but essentially linked events. On the one hand is the perceived reality of the original event, which is strengthened in turn by the reflexive and subjective representation of it as a re-enactment on the other.

Re-enactments are re-visitations and are therefore marked by essential differences that distinguish them from the original event: the ways in which a re-enactment can approach and form transactions between a present investigation and a past phenomenon are very important. This is where critical re-enactment comes in!

A critical re-enactment takes a well-informed and intentional departure from the historical object in question to better understand it and to ask different questions about it. It also performs this approach by making an outcome that adds to the layers of documents that constitute a history. We emphasise the potential here for critical analysis not only in considering and discussing this difference but in expanding upon it and designing it as an original project.

What we have developed is an exploratory and productive research practice. It embraces fiction and alternative narratives of accepted histories and brings them into being.

The imaginative potential of curiosity, experience and knowledge take priority in a critical re-enactment. We do not advocate the wanton embrace of incorrect or fictionalised interpretations as history! In fact we instruct the opposite. We encourage critically informed fictions to compliment historical research practice in order to reveal the nature of what a historical moment does



MAYA  
OPPENHEIMER.  
OCTOBER 2014.



## Practical Exercises in Historical Research !!

Society for the Avocation of Critical Histories  
New Haven, CT: McDonough & Williams, 1963

communicate - how and why an event narrative persists via the objects and experiences involved or produced alongside it.

Let's try it out!

### Here's what you will need:

- an event or context of interest ✓
- a specific curiosity, fixation, obsession, traumatic association with this event ✓
- an object or set of objects/details closely associated with this event (can be a person or place too!) ✓ Milgram?
- some images of the object/details associated with the event ✓
- images and texts related to but not containing your chosen objects/details ✓
- writing implements: a note book, pen or pencil, scissors, glue ✓

### Method

Use these questions as a structure plan to help you get started. Answer in the space provided or use additional notepaper.

### 1) Getting Started

What is your event? Write a brief description below.

- Stanley Milgram's Obedience to Authority experiments conducted at Yale University, 1961-1963. Volunteer subjects thought they were shocking another volunteer as part of a learning & memory study, but their willingness to deliver ~~increasing~~ increasingly intense shocks as part of the procedure was what Milgram studied and recorded. Milgram used a simulated device to give an impression of shock delivery, and each toggle switch recorded the extent of subject obedience.

Who are the protagonists involved and what is their role?

Stanley Milgram, an experimental psychologist; research assistants and hired actors to play roles in the procedure (complicit victim, experimenter); hundreds of subjects from the New Haven and Bridgeport area in CT

Make a list of objects or details associated with your chosen event.

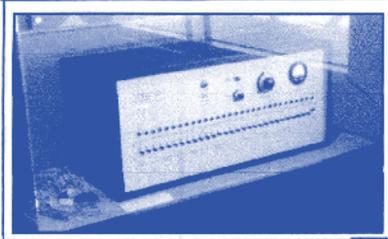
Laboratory setting, electric shocks, instruments, simulated shock generator, obedient behaviour, toggle switches, flashing lights, naive subjects, experimenter actor (Williams), complicit subject (McDonough), deception, lab coat, props, rehearsal scripts, electrode cuffs, Yale University, experimental science, Milgram's book: *Obedience to Authority an Experimental View* 1974, Hannah Arendt, theorising evil, generalising behaviour, data, recording devices



## Practical Exercises in Historical Research

Society for the Avocation of Critical Histories  
New Haven, CT: McDonough & Williams, 1963

Isolate one object or detail from the list above and write an explanation of why it is important. Provide an image or drawing.



This is the simulated shock generator, on display at the Archive of the History of American Psychology in Akron, OH. Beside it lies the original electrode cuffs worn by James McDonough, the complicit volunteer.

I choose this object because the device was designed and tested

by Milgram specifically for this experiment. It is closely associated with his research process and also with the behaviour he set out to study: every subject used this machine, and it was present across all the variations Milgram conducted.

### 2) Motive

Write your reasons for conducting your critical re-enactment in the space below. What do you hope to clarify?

How important is the design of the simulated ~~seek~~ shock generator in Milgram's experiment; did its bespoke design influence subject behaviour?

### 3) Proposition

Guided by the decisions identified in Step 1) and Step 2), read around and brainstorm ideas and contexts associated with but not directly involving your object. Approach this like an automatic exercise where you write whatever comes to mind: indulge your curious imagination! This will shape the foundation of your critical re-enactment outcome.

Where would Milgram have found ideas/resources for machine interface? Shock generators were available commercially and often held in department labs. Look into instrument catalogues and compare this design to manufactured models. Was this issue of availability or control over ~~experiment~~ experiment? There is also something about the features M. selected. He tested two models, and this prototype was final version. In publications M. is ~~very~~ very confident about his ~~design~~ design but was also secretive. The control panel resembles pushbutton technologies familiar to the time: radio consoles, dashboards and so on. This makes me think the device surely had to be accessible and believable to hold up the artifice of the whole experiment, and to function - even ENCOURAGE the behaviour. Control panel affordance. Other deception instruments.

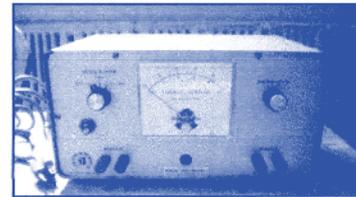
## Practical Exercises in Historical Research

Society for the Avocation of Critical Histories  
New Haven, CT: McDonough & Williams, 1963

### 4) My Materials Resource Page

Make a space to gather together the resources you have collected so far, particularly those emerging from ideas in Stage 3). This will help you plan your critical re-enactment by providing a structure for you to improvise with. Materials should include images, quotations and keywords related to your chosen object or detail.

Lie detectors, IQ tests, learning technologies were widely distributed and used by Americans during this period and were developed in laboratories using methods drawn from psychological research. EXPOSURE to devices that use deception/faith in science to persuade the subject they are effective. Psychologisation of everyday life. Visual culture of testing in magazine images, films, comics. Links between consumer catalogues for electronics, stereo equipment and lab equipment.



LAFAYETTE SHOCK UNIT



Lab generators are more complex: interfaces with less dials and control options: so this could easily be a design for domestic market. Look at Hotpoint Washer:



Hotpoint washer advert with pushbutton panel.

Growing niche for instruments for the home as toys, hobby and special interest, as well as sophisticated selling point.



The instruments of science do not, by themselves, tell the story of their place within science, important though their actual examination may be. To find their place within science, one must turn to written sources that justify them, describe them, and instruct their users' <sup>①</sup>



-JA Popplestone and RD Tweney, 'The Great Catalog of the CH Stoelting Co'. Use instrument as pivot to consider context.

HEATHKIT CATALOG, 1963 • TEST EQUIPMENT

5) Write your 'What If?'

Look back on your material from Step 3) and Step 4). Given your chosen object, select supporting material from your brainstorming exercise to isolate a fictional alternative for that object. Write this down. This is your critical re-enactment.

What if, instead of an experiment on subject behaviour, Milgram was administering a prototype trial for the sim. generator for commercial sale.

6) Select your format

A critical re-enactment outcome should reflect your chosen context in its material communication and the information therein. Imagine your concept inserted into the historical record: technologies and methods used should engage with your topic, at least aesthetically.

Fictional instrument catalogue. Graphic and text description were important factors in communicating ethos and value of the device to consumer market.

Using existing catalogues and Composed(text, collage images.

7) Review

What does your critical re-enactment achieve via fictional history?

M.'s simulated generator was never released for sale as a lab or commercial product. By inserting the device into a catalogue layout, I create a new context in which to consider the instrument. Questions related to science vs quotidian objects emerge as does uncertainty around objectivity of M.'s procedure: he designed the device to support a behaviour he then generalised as obedience, making the experiment theory-laden.

How does your critical re-enactment perform this narrative?

When designing the simulated shock generator, M. invented a fake brand to authenticate his device. Everything on the control panel was designed to convey the appearance and operations of a real generator: flashing lights, internal buzzing, a volt meter, and the name plate - **DYSON INSTRUMENT COMPANY, WALTHAM, MA**, which was engraved in NY. I followed M.'s lead and invented **DRAMACO**, a branch of the **DYSON** company that domesticates laboratory instruments for the domestic market: since generators for behavioural conditioning already existed, I could be imaginative with M.'s intentions beyond his lab studies. This device could be used at home/office to test obedience to rules, orders, norms.

Is the outcome plausible? Why or why not? ✓

Yes. The idea of a commercial simulated shock generator resonates with lie detectors, learning technologies and other laboratory-informed devices that were popular in 50s and 60s. An instrument's influence was not reliant only on technical functionality but on perceived integrity and application.

8) COMPOSE!

GET READY FOR THE SPACE AGE SCIENCE ERA!

# AMAZING SCIENCE BUYS

FOR FUN, STUDY OR PROFIT

## \*\* ALL-STAR DRAMACO PRODUCT! \*\*

### THE DRAMACO SHOCK BOX!

If you are interested in current developments in psychology, chances are you might have heard of Stanley Milgram. The New York Times ran an article this year announcing his stunning experiment that measured the obedience of a group of volunteer subjects from New Haven, CT. He determined that the majority of individuals will obey authority even if the instructions involve harming another person! Imagine that. Would you obey too?

What was so clever about Milgram's experiment was an instrument that he designed himself. The simulated shock generator persuaded his subjects that the increasing shocks they administered as part of a learning and memory test were fake! We had a sneaky peak at this little box of tricks and we were fooled too! It's a great machine, and we know it had a special place in the DRAMACO DRAMATICAL DEVICE RANGE. In fact, not only was we right, but it's our ALL-STAR PRODUCT! We set our engineers to work developing something as cunning as Milgram's simulated device for you to use at home.

The DRAMACO SHOCK BOX is an essential component in testing dependability. It is part of a subtle testing system that will see your test subject through a thorough, interactive test and measure their responses every step of the way. The device pays close attention to timing, duration of administration, cheating between switches and even stress recorded in the voice. You'll never err in judging someone's character again.

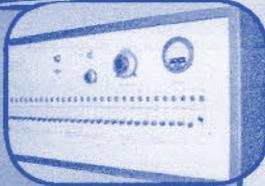
Here's how it works (You will need an assistant to help with this experiment): Your subject will sit in front of the DRAMACO SHOCK BOX under the impression that he or she is about to help with a memory test. Have your assistant sit nearby in a chair that you have equipped as per provided instructions with DRAMACO ESSENTIAL ELECTRODE BANDS. Read the provided script, and help your test subject understand what the memory test involves and how to use the SHOCK BOX control panel. You can administer a gentle test shock by activating the 'Test' switch if you want, just like Milgram did in New Haven!

Your subject will then read sets of words aloud and administer an increasing shock with each mistake from your assistant. But there's a catch! The Shock Box is a great trickster and while it lights up, sputters and vibrates like a real generator, it doesn't administer a thing aside from a good performance. Your assistant won't feel the slightest tingle, but with a cheat sheet of cries and complaints, they can play along with the charade! After the test is complete, the SHOCK BOX will print out the test results and plot your test subject's performance on the DRAMACO DIAGRAM OF CHARACTERISTIC RELATIONS - a unique DRAMACO heuristic for visualizing your data instantly.

Say for example you are vetting a new employee: sit him down in front of the control panel of the SHOCK BOX and have your secretary sit nearby and place the electrode band around her wrist. Instruct your employee that you need his help testing your secretary's memory - her dictation abilities are faltering. With each mistake the secretary makes, your employee must apply a shock from the panel board, one toggle higher each time. See how far he goes and you'll know how much he trusts you! Now you get it!

Don't worry, the shocks aren't real, so this is a fun and safe way to see how far someone will trust you, so you know that you can depend on them when it counts!! Order today and receive a free copy of **SHOCKING BEHAVIOUR: A GUIDE TO USING YOUR SHOCK BOX**. Just another amazing device developed in the laboratory and made available for you, straight from the experiment bench. The advanced design and simplified controls mean no mistakes, only answers!

Refined control panel design • 30 volt switches • simulated meters • brushed steel facing with leather chest • 2 year warranty • auxiliary KI printer cable  
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Practical Exercises in Historical Research

Society for the Avocation of Critical Histories  
New Haven, CT: McDonough & Williams, 1963

\*\*\* CONGRATULATIONS YOU ARE A CRITICAL RE-ENACTOR \*\*\*

9) Keys Facts to Remember

- ✓ Critical re-enactments combine fiction and history to unravel new and meaningful perspectives on well-worn events.
- ✓ Critical re-enactments explore evidence and historical narrative by producing counterfactual scenarios.
- ✓ Critical re-enactments are a research practice as opposed to entertainment, demonstration, observation or truth mongering, which are common in classic re-enactments.

\*\*\*

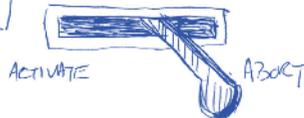


Alphouse Chapanis; control  
Features. 'Man Machine  
Engineering', 1965  
↳ bank of switches with  
+ settings should be in form  
of dial. Milgram's interface  
is REDUNDANT.

How would I design  
Milgram's generator

ABORT SWITCH?

↳ would facilitate  
defiance.



PUT persuasive

DYSON

DRAMA Devices  
Co.  
DRAMACO.

- Include decoder book for commercial model.
- 'How to understand your 'DRAMACO TEST RESULTS.'



Maya Oppenheimer holds a PhD in Humanities and Cultural Studies (London Consortium), teaches at the Cass School of Design (London Metropolitan University) and is a visiting tutor in Critical and Historical Studies at the RCA.

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2013–2014

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Dr Chantal Faust and Dr Marquard Smith

**Research as Practice**

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**Writing Workshop I: The Fictional Turn**

Ben Ellis

**Writing Workshop II: Observations**

Ben Ellis

**Walk London**

Helen Kearney

**Thoughts About Experience and their Possible Employment in Research**

Jonathan Miles

**Reenactment**

Session curated by Helena Bonett, with Luci Eldrige, Simon Fleury,  
Kwan Kiu Leung and Maya Oppenheimer

**Digital Debris**

Nils Jean

**On Object Oriented Ontology, Object Oriented Feminism,  
Science Fiction and Speculative Realism**

Session curated by Nina Trivedi, with Svenja Bromberg, Ami Clark,  
Rob Cowley, Mirko Nikolic and Valentina Ravaglia

**Line / Technics**

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