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ETHICS OF DWELLING: EARLY CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES OF THE CITY LIFE AND URBAN TRANSFORMATION

A B S T R A C T

The work (paper) focuses on a particular issue regarding ethics developing in early Christian time and its influence on the process of transformation of Roman urban life, habits, functions, and architectural practice in the late fifth century and after.
Complexity of this issue derives from the fact that the early Christian monastic ideals, which had been rapidly developed in the first centuries of the new era, substantially influenced the formation of everyday living ethical principles.
Consequently, these new principles changed existing dwelling habits, particularly in the field of public life, demanding a new form of behavior from the Christian citizens. This process also influenced the idealistic view on what the concept of a Christian city can be, and how the new form of ethical life reflects on new urban and architectural structures.

Vladimir Mako
University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture

KEY WORDS

ETHICS
AESTHETICS
CITY LIFE
URBAN TRANSFORMATION

In the first few centuries of the Christian era, an idea concerning particular ethical model developed, by which Christians were asked to behave within everyday private and public life. This idea has been developing parallel with the general establishment of Christian theology, and particularly with the notion by which every Christian should follow the archetypal model of virtue, the life of Christ and the saints.

The particular interest of our topic is the actual belief that habits and life in cities should be modeled by this notion of virtue, by which the Christian citizens would differentiate from their pagan neighbors. In that context the early Christian writers have been identifying particular Roman public buildings and their function with the sinful pagan behavior and life. Cities become a battlefield between new rising religion and the pagan practice of public events, through which, as Christians believed, pagans were exposing blasphemous enjoinments. However, in their critic Christians also focused on the practice of luxurious dwelling, as a source of many sinful behaviors.

At the beginning of the third century Tertullian condemned through his writings not only the pagan idolatry hosted by temples and shrines, but also, and that very strongly, all other public and private urban functions such as rich residences and houses, baths and tenements, circuses and theaters. In his treatise *De spectaculis*, Tertullian defines the model of virtue and behavior of a Christian citizen: *Ye servants of God, about to draw near to God, that you may make solemn consecration of yourselves to Him, seek well to understand the condition of faith, the reason of the Truth, the laws of Christian discipline, which forbid among other sins of the world, the pleasures of the public shows*.[1] In his opinion all Roman public shows are by their origin founded in pagan religion, celebrating idols and provoking passionate excitements hostile to Christian spirituality. Tertullian emphasizes that even *our very dwelling places are not altogether free from idols* which are tracing their way to the human hearts trough luxury and immodesty in decoration, food, and adornment of the body.[2]

We should emphasize that such an early Christian standpoint has its counterpart in some idealistic positions developed in antiquity, regarding the relationship of the city and society, or architecture and the character of its inhabitants. For instance, in Plato's and later stoic writings, ethical values concerning life habits are identified with the material structure of a city or a house, establishing a new form of fundamental ethic values. These examples are pointing out a long philosophic tradition which gives architecture the power to manifest important ethical issues.

Plato's visions are founded on the idea of equality between the level of moral and ethical values of the citizens and correctness of the functional, firm, and regular building structure. Social values are reflecting on the building values, and vice versa. Plato even explains the fall of cities as the consequence of the corruptness of their citizens, as well as extreme social inequality.[3]

On the other hand, Plato's attitude towards materialization and the shape of his ideal visions of urban structure points out a few important issues for our topic.

In the *Laws*, Plato emphasizes that the shape of an ideal city should be the one of a circle. Moreover, he goes into a detailed description of a desirable arrangement of cities: *The private houses ought to be so arranged from the first that the whole city may be one wall, having all the houses capable of defence by reason of their uniformity and equality towards the streets. The form of the city being that of a single dwelling will have an agreeable aspect, and being easily guarded will be infinitely better for security*.[4]

Careful reading of this section identifies two main reasons for this Platonic ideal request for arranging the city. The first refers to the easier establishment of defence and security, which is one of the main components of beauty. The second relates to the amenity provided by equality of buildings in the eye of the beholder, which obviously stems from Plato's view that the equality of the houses actually underlines the equality of citizens, representing therefore a desirable classic ideal of democracy.

On the other hand, the visual equality of houses and the subsequent pleasantness to the eye are a manifestation of higher order of harmony and reflect, to a greater extent, spiritual harmony, as opposed to the diversity of natural forms, which could be interpreted as a manifestation of a lower degree of harmony.

Actually, Plato's reflection on ideal city comes from his general position by which *the State* [city] *is to be so fashioned that the influence of its organisation may create in the souls of its individual citizens that habit and proportion which is profitable for eternity*.[5] It marks his essential statement that all political, social, and cultural values should be subordinated to ethics.

Later, in Roman Stoic writings one can find similar reflections equalizing ethical with the spiritual quality of dwelling, and the aesthetic properties of architecture. That way, for example, Seneca builds a complex vision unifying moral qualities and character of the inhabitant with spiritual quality of life and the tranquil atmosphere of a modest house architecture.[6]

Similar to these ideas underlining the importance of Christian ethical categories when judging the value of a city, the fourth century church father St. John Chrysostom teaches that *the dignity of the city* lies in *the virtue and piety of its inhabitants; this is a city's dignity, and ornament, and defence*.[7] The beauty of spiritual values and chastity is now the foundation of the quality of dwelling within the Christian community. However, by its eternal virtue, Christian religion has a power to transform a corrupted and devastated city into the marvellous settlement, as emphasized by Sulpitius Severus in his comment on the building activities undertaken by the Empress Helena in Jerusalem.[8] Such activities have been in the first place events of spiritual lifting, rather than the exhibition of material wealth and superficial glorification of human vanity.

Turning our discussion back to St. Chrysostom, we should emphasize that in his writings there is an equal standpoint concerning the practice of Christian ethical norms on the level of public behaviour in the city, as well as in the habits of individual dwelling. For instance, in his comments on the Biblical story of Abraham's hospitality, the ethical behaviour and host's virtuous character, are overcoming the modesty of his house.[9] This way Abraham was building *tabernacles in heaven* that would never get corrupted.

Nevertheless, St. Chrysostom was also entirely in Tertullian's position when it comes to condemnation of pagan urban habits. Commenting the decree of Emperor Theodosius I, closing down orchestra, hippodrome, baths, and many other public buildings in the city of Antioch, St. Chrysostom was proclaiming them useless and opposite to the real essential values of ethical habits that each Christian citizen should have. His notion that by this Emperor's proclamation *our city has become all at once a monastery* has a particular importance for our research.[10]

By identifying the purified city of Antioch with a monastery, St. Chrysostom actually brought up a Christian ethical ideal integrating the contemplative spirit and the community life. It seems that this idealistic position was from a particular value for the early Church fathers. In his *Panegyric on St. Basil*, Gregory of Nazianzen glorifies exactly that achievement of the one of the first promoters of monastic life. Talking about St. Basil's Christian virtues and achievements, Gregory emphasises the saint's regulations by which he *won the real practice of virginity, turning inward the view of beauty, from the visible into invisible... Moreover he reconciled most excellently and united the solitary and the community life... he brought them together and united them, in order that the contemplative spirit might not be cut off from society, nor the active*

life be uninfluenced by the contemplative, but that, like sea and land, by an interchange of their several gifts, they might unite in promoting the one object, the glory of God.[11]

The city actually becomes the place where the ideal of ethical dwelling has been promoted, as in its archetypal image, the monastery, where all virtue has been inhabited. By this, the monastery and the monastic life can be interpreted as ethical core of a city and of the life within it. In that context Gregory named the new monastery and hospital established by St. Basil *the new city, the storehouse of piety, the common treasury of wealthy, in which the superfluities of their wealth, aye, and even their necessaries, are stored, in consequence of his exhortations, freed from the power of moth, no longer gladdening the eyes of the thief, and escaping both the emulation of envy, and the corruption of time*...[12] In fact, Gregory interpreted the monastery as eternal place of Christian dwelling, an ethical city founded on the example of Christ's life and deeds.

It seems that in these early centuries of Christianity, example of St. Basil's ideal was not the only one. In his writings, Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis describes a monastic settlement at the mountain of Nitria in Ethiopia, where a harmonious community has been living, composed from monks and commons gathering and working according to the Christian ethical principles: *In this mountain is a great church... Adjoining the church is a house in which the strangers who arrive there may lodge, and if any man wished to work there one year, or two, or until he departed of his own accord he may do so... All these people worked at the weaving of linen with their hands, and there was no needy man there. Now when the evening cometh thou must rise up to hear the praises, and the Psalms, and the prayers which are sent up to Christ by the people from the monasteries which are there, and a man might imagine, his mind being exalted, that he was in the Paradise of Eden*.[13]

However, it seems that the analyzed examples are emphasizing a particular ideal by which the perfect Christian society, dwelling in the cities and monasteries, should actually incline to mirror a vision of a new heavenly settlement. The essential ideal of ethical dwelling is not related to the earthly world, although the Christians are using it to achieve the spiritual transformation into the eternal life.

In that sense, after instructing his Christian brothers and sisters to avoid the pagan spectacles and way of living, Tertullian was emphasizing the reality of the forthcoming kingdom of Christ and the rise of the New Jerusalem. Although not clear about the possibility of achieving the ideal vision of Christian society

in this world, Tertullian was using the notion of the New Jerusalem as the model of ethical life within the spiritually perfectly shaped society.[14]

A similar notion can be seen in St. Chrysostom's statement that after Emperor Theodosius cleaned the city of Antioch from all pagan sinful habits it became *metropolis, not in the earth, but in heaven*, particularly emphasising that Christians should seek the heavenly city build by God.[15] However, if the Saint equalized the ethically purified city with monastery, as we have seen in the previous analysis, is it possible that by this notion a monastery is a form of heavenly city on earth, or at least its materialized vision?

At this point maybe we should recall the very definition of what Heavenly City is, by the words of early fathers of the Church. In the writings of Gregory of Nazianzen the *Jerusalem above* was *the object not of sight but of contemplation, wherein is our commonwealth, and whereto we are pressing on; whose citizen Christ is, and whose fellow – citizens are the assembly and church of the first born* [innocents] *who are written in heaven, and feast around its great Founder in contemplation of His glory, and take part in the endless festival; her mobility consisted in the preservation of the Image, and the perfect likeness to the Archetype, which is produced by reason and virtue and pure desire, ever more and more conforming, in things pertaining to God, to those truly initiated into the heavenly mysteries; and in knowing whence, and of what character, and to what end we came into being*.[16]

Thus presented, the idea of the Heavenly City summarises all essential aspects of Christian beliefs and life goals. It also points out recognisable matrix of the monastic life through spiritual purification, and the unification of the earthly and heavenly liturgy as two manifestations of Gods eternal glory. In its very essence this is the core of Christian ethics, and dwelling within the City of Heavens is an ideal guiding all earthly activities.

However, there is always an open question regarding the ways of material manifestation of these spiritually elevated visions. In that context we should keep in mind that the Christian fathers do interpret physical structures of architecture in levels of meanings, and that they easily shift from earthly into spiritual categories. In one of the Early Christian Fathers, John Cassian, we can identify one of the early concepts of developing levels of meanings in an interpretation of architecture. He says that *Jerusalem can be taken in four senses: historically, as the city of the Jews; allegorically, as the Church of Christ; anagogically, as the heavenly city of God which is the mother of as all; tropologically, as the soul of man, which is frequently subject to prise or blame from the Lord under this title*.[17]

In that context, there is equivalence between ideas of earthly sacral buildings and the visions of spiritual buildings. Moreover, in the mediaeval texts there is a constant shift between metaphorical values of the Church as a community and the church as a building, being representing the body of Christ which can reflect in the ark of Noah as the image of salvation, which is again the heavenly Jerusalem, in other words the idea of monastery as a communion of Christians and the City of God.

By all this, it seems that the formation and spatial structure of mediaeval monasteries is deeply rooted in the allegoric interpretation of the Christian ideas concerning the idealistic vision of the heavenly or New Jerusalem. In some examples named as the City of God, versus the city of evil, the heavenly building has been constructed on the foundations of Christian virtues and spiritual illumination provided by the power of faith. Its citizens are physiologically united under the roof of the devotion to God, and hierarchically equalized by the strength of their unshakable love for Christ. Their bodies are the stones of the walls of the City of God. The strength of their faith provides the firmness of the divine structure.[18]

Again in one text of St John Chrysostom we can read that *the Church is nothing else than a house built of the souls of us men*. Besides the idea that this building is arranged in a hierarchical order of souls, each contributing according to its spiritual strength, the spatial morphology of it has been also given: *we may see a multitude, forming generally the wide space and the whole extend of the circumference; for the body of large occupies the place of those stones of which the outer walls are built*.[19]

Spiritual stones are materialized and presented as made of gold, silver and precious stones, as in the Biblical vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, and they are a metaphorical expression of the Christian virtue and faith. The indication of a circular shape of the city and the existence of the outer wall, a space arrangement similar to the Plato's ideal circular city, is from a particular interest in this vision.

Another early Christian text from the fourth century, the apocryphal *Vision of Paul*, shows that the previous description of the spiritual building of Christian faith was not an exemption, but a rule. Paul describes: *...and I entered and saw the City of Christ, and it was all of Gold, and twelve walls encircled it, and twelve interior towers, and each wall had between them single stadia in the circuit... And there were twelve gates in the circuit of the city, of great beauty, and four rivers which encircled it. ...And I saw in the midst of this city a great altar, very high...*[20]

The importance of this description rises from the fact that it has been depicted in later manuscripts of the middle age. However, the spatial arrangement shown in the passage is very similar to a later eight century vision, where the throne of God is surrounded by seven crystal walls, depicting the cosmic structure of spheres.[21]

The important metaphor regarding the translation of *the stones of the church from their earthly places to the heavenly building* through the death of the flesh of monks and clerics comes out as a common place in mediaeval texts.[22] It proves that the churches and monasteries have been regarded in their materiality and structure as an energetic matrix gathering the souls of Christians, on which essentially they relay, and therefore equal to the heavenly buildings. The named transition between the earthly and heavenly existence was, therefore, essentially very easy, however always related to the state of moral and ethical values of souls. Nevertheless, there is a feeling when reading the latest passage of Beda, that the souls (read Stones) are taking the same position in heavenly buildings, as they had in their earthly life.

It seems that the most developed ideas regarding our topic can be found in the work of Hugo of St. Victor. In his treatises *De arca Noe mystica* and *De claustro animae* Hugo interprets the material structure of the edifices as the formation of essential Christian value.[23] In this context, the metaphorical comments on the square shape as the basic geometric form of the ark and the monastic courtyard is essential, because it links the physical structure with the moral and spiritual requirements of the Christian theology of salvation. Hugo's ideas prove that the medieval language of anagogical interpretation and reading is essential for our understanding of the link between the material structures of sacral buildings and their meanings. Reflecting on John Cassian's concept of meanings of a material structure, Hugo in a scholastic interpretation develops his system.[24] It shows that there is actually a sign of equality between a physical structure and theological interpretation of Christian salvation.

However, in the mediaeval Christian literal tradition we can find examples of an explicit link between the material structure of a monastic complex and church within it, and the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. In a few Serbian medieval texts regarding building of monasteries, there is a constant equivalence between terms *monastery* and *city*. More than that, these *cities* are interpreted as containing a path leading towards the heavenly Jerusalem to which they are similar.[25] Actually, the path is the church building in the middle of the monastery which is usually in a circular shape. Interesting that

the buildings containing monastic cells are usually named as palaces and they structure in a broader context of the orthodox monastic tradition do expose a city as architectural structures. (Not clear what you wanted to say in the last sentence of this paragraph)

All descriptions indicate that the vision of the New Jerusalem mainly manifests itself through pure geometric shapes. Through different visions, one can indicate the square/cube and the circle as the geometric shapes used for depicting the structure of the New Jerusalem. The proportion of the cube, being 1:1:1, and the circular shape by itself, is the geometric expressions of perfectness. Beside this, the building material being of precious stones and crystals reflects the idea of incorruptibility and everlasting spiritual powers governing the city. In such a way perfected form corresponds to the spiritual and ethical values which it embodies.

It seems that this principle reflects on the shape of monasteries, mirroring the divine scheme and the ideal vision of ethical purity by which one dwells in Heaven. They are not only metaphorically equalized with the spiritual perfectness of the Heavenly City, but also by ideas forming them as squares or circles. In that sense, in the monasteries placing the church building in the center of the complex, one can recognize the general disposition described particularly in visions of circularly shaped heavenly city. In these examples, the church building is equalized with the body of Christ, the sacrificial lamb, or the high altar, always represented as the central point in these descriptions. The choice of the shape for the general structure of the monastery, either square or circular, is probably reflection on the preferable ideal vision used as the precedence.

As shown in this short analysis, the link between the materialized structure of medieval monasteries, heavenly visions and descriptions of cities as ethical ideals is recognizable and established as a metaphorical interpretation of particular Christian virtues. In that process the equivalence between the building structure, particularly for dwelling, and the Christian virtue of humility, as one of the most important in this context, defines the perceptual quality of architecture and its spiritual content. Architectural frame becomes a stronghold for ethical norms which it mirrors. This way a dwelling structure can be equalized with the ethical structure of its inhabitants.

However, if we turn back to the beginning of our discussion, one can indicate a particular issue concerning the real influence of early Christian ethics on the process of transformation of existing ancient urban structures. It is very hard to imagine in which way the architectural mega structures, after their primary

functions where abandoned, continued to exist in the urban matrix. We have texts informing us about the practice of transforming temples into Christian churches. However, what exactly happened with circuses, amphitheaters, baths and other monumental buildings, particularly after the proclamation of Theodosius, we cannot confidently say. Also, it is hardly to know was the proclamation, or was it not, implemented generally, in the entire empire, or only on the demands of a particular city and its inhabitants.

Archeological remains are informing us about the particular practice by which the new mediaeval buildings have been built into, or on the top of ancient structures. However, when this practice started, whether under theological influence or not, and was there a difference in the approach according to that in which part of the empire it took place, is a particular issue.

However, it seems that the razing of ancient urban structures had started before the barbarians began to demolish them entirely. It is uncertain what would have happened with the Roman cities if the process of raising their structures under the influence of the Christian new ways of life had continued uninterruptedly. Maybe the answer to this dilemma could be found through a more careful research of Byzantine cities and their continuous development and life.

Nevertheless, it appears that the ethical ideals discussed in this work had developed mainly through theological ideas regarding new forms of sacral buildings and of the life in particular communities. Its reflection on living in cities existing at the time is an issue of a high importance, enabling us to understand the beginning of one of the most intensive transformations in the process of development of urban and architectural structures, as well as the changes of their functions and of the notion of being a citizen and an inhabitant.

NOTES

1 Tertulian, “De spectaculis,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol.3 (Buffalo: 1885), 79.

2 Ibid., 83.

3 Plato, “Critias,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol.3 (London: 1875), 115c, 115d, 116b.

4 Plato, “Laws,” in *The Dialogues of Plato*, Vol.5 (London: 1931), 779b; Vladimir Mako, *Aesthetic Thoughts on Architecture-Middle Ages* (Belgrade: 2011), 65.

5 Temple W., *Plato and Christianity: Three Lectures* (London: 1916), 32.

6 Seneca, *Ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, Vol.2 (London: 1962), 86; Vladimir Mako, *Aesthetic Thoughts,* 134-135.

7 John Chrysostom, “The Homilies on the Statues: to the People of Antioch,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.9 (New York: 1889), 456.

8 Sulpitius Severus, “The Secret History,” in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church*, Vol.11 (New York: 1894), 113.

9 Chrysostom, “The Homilies on the Statues: to the People of Antioch,”, 349.

10 Ibid., 455.

11 Gregory Nazianzen, “Select Orations,” in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church*, Vol.7 (New York: 1894), 415 - 416.

12 Ibid., 416.

13 Palladius, “The History of Holy Man,” in *The Book of Paradise*, Vol.1 (London: 1904), 144 - 145.

14 Tertulian, “De spectaculis,”, 91.

15 Chrysostom, “The Homilies on the Statues: to the People of Antioch,”, 156.

16 Gregory, “Select Orations,”, 239- 240.

17 John Cassian, “The Twel Book on the Institutes of the Coenobia and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Faults,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.11 (New York: 1894), 438.

18 Cyril, “*The Catechetical Lectures*,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church,* Vol.7 (New York: 1894), 11.

19 John Chrysostom, “Homilies on Ephesians: Homily X,” in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol.3, (Grand Kapids: 1956), 101.

20 “*The Vision of Paul*,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: the writings of the fathers down to AD 325*, Vol.9 (New York: 1906), 157- 158.

21 *An Irish Precursor of Dante: a Study on the Vision of Heaven and Hell Ascribed to the Eight-Century Irish Saint Adamnan* (London: 1908), 31.

22 Beda Venerabilis, *Ecclesiastical History of England* (London: 1894), 175.

23 Hugonis de S.Victore, *Opera omnia*, Tom 2 (Parisiis: 1880),629, 631, 681, 1087.

24 Ibid., 1131.

25 Константин Филозоф, „Житије деспота Стефана Лазаревића,“ in *Стара српска књижевност, књ.11* (Београд: 1989), 59.

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ART, MODERNITY, AND SCEPTICISM

A B S T R A C T

The Paper deals with the problem of relation between art and modernity – our main thesis is that the artist in an age of modernity deals with the problem of privacy. The notion of privacy is used in Wittgenstein's sense, as analogy to his theorization of fantasy of private language. His concept of private language is a description of withdrawal of ordinary language from the process of inter-social relations and its everyday use; in that way, private language fantasy is a kind of scepticism. Regarding the fact that the notion of epistemological scepticism is connected to the idea of modernity (Descartes', Hume's, Lock's modern sceptical subject), the main problem for modern artist is how to transcend the condition of radical scepticism, i.e. the condition that Stanley Cavell, in Wittgenstein's sense calls "metaphysical isolation".

Nikola Dedić
University of Arts in Belgrade

KEY WORDS

ART
MODERNITY
SCEPTICISM
PRIVATE LANGUAGE
ORDINARY LANGUAGE
LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN
STANLEY CAVELL

The Incredulity of St. Thomas is a canvas painted by Caravaggio in 1601–2; it shows a popular religious scene from the Gospel of St. John: St. Thomas was one of the apostles who missed Christ's arrival after the Resurrection. Expressing his doubt regarding the Resurrection of Christ, according to the Bible, St. Thomas stated: "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.' (John 20:25) A week later, Christ appeared again and Thomas, having examined his wounds, lost all doubt; the story ends with the following words by Christ: "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed' (John 20:21). The scene is relatively frequent in Western art history, but what a number of interpreters have noted is that Caravaggio's depiction differs in many respects from the usual treatment of this Biblical story: standing out is Caravaggio's typicall dramatic approach, light and shadow, as well as pronounced "corporeality' of the scene, with the rough fingers of the saint "penetrating' Christ's wound, as well as the absence of the usual haloes above Christ's head and those of the apostles. The painting's theme is obviously the scepticism of St. Thomas; of course, interpreters have understood this as religious scepticism and transcending it by finding "proof' for a return to faith. Nevertheless, it seems to me that what essentially separates Caravaggio's canvas from other treatments of this scene in the history of art is an entirely different form of scepticism that is no longer necessarily related to religious meta-narratives. My reading of scepticism in Caravaggio's painting stems from problematizations of modern sceptical doubt, which was most thoroughly treated by Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*: in his interpretation of Wittgenstein's text, Stanley Cavell asserts that the main problem of this book is what he calls "other-minds scepticism'.

Other-minds scepticism is a form of scepticism about another person, the doubt regarding the feasibility of cognising another person. Hiding behind this problematic is a specific social constellation outlined by the modern age: in the classical, Christian-feudal historical constellation, social relations were mediated by "external' criteria (God, religion, tradition, the ruler's absolutist authority, and the like), which supported the social structure as an "organic' whole and rendered the social relations fixed, stable, and determined *a priori*. Wittgenstein and Cavell's argument is that the modern age brought forth a crisis of these *a priori* criteria, on the basis of which individuals, through language, construct inter-social relations. As Cavell asserts, these criteria are not mere conventions that an individual or a collective directive might change; but equally, they are not timeless and reflect no truths that have been given once and for all. Quite to the contrary, these criteria are subject to change,

determined by what Wittgenstein calls "forms of life', and as such, participate in that life's "flexible inflexibilities': they are as resistant and open to change as are the broader patterns of human behaviour that surround them.[1] Accordingly, there is no external instance that might guarantee our mutual agreement or consensus in language – at all times we must be prepared for the possibility that any claim regarding mutuality in language may be refuted.[2] In its modern form, scepticism is thus always a fantasy of privacy and a private language; my claim is that Caravaggio, as the first truly modern author, treated not religious scepticism, but the modern fantasy of closing off into a language of one's own, that is, "other-minds scepticism'. As Wittgenstein put it himself: "One human being can be a complete enigma to another'; the "other' as an enigma and the "self' as an enigma for the other, and not the relationship between the "I' and God, is the problem that drove Caravaggio's art, for the first time in the history of Western art.

In their book *Caravaggio's Secrets*, Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit analyse Caravaggio's (self-)portraits (e.g. *Bacchino Malato*, 1593 and *Boy with a Basket of Fruit*, 1593–94) and assert that beneath their ostensible exhibitionism, these portraits in fact exhibit opacity, resting on the tension between erotic address, seduction, and self-hiding, withdrawal, retreat from the gaze of the other, i.e. the observer. In Caravaggio's paintings, the body thereby becomes an enigma, a closed entity that suspends the mutuality of inter-social relations; Caravaggio's portraits of young men gaze at us but at the same time also retreat from our gaze. On Caravaggio's canvases we thus encounter bodies that fail (or do not want) to be "bodies that matter':

> "What seems to interest Caravaggio more is a body at once presenting and withdrawing itself – a somewhere *enigmatic* body. The distinction between nonerotic and erotic address might be, not that the latter solicits greater intimacy or fewer barriers between persons, but rather that it solicits intimacy in order to block it with a secret. Erotic address is a self-reflexive move in which the subject addresses another so that it may enjoy narcissistically a secret to which the subject itself may have no other access. The subject performs a secret, which is not at all to say that he or she has any knowledge of it."[3]

In a relatively similar manner, Michael Fried offers a detailed analysis of the formal procedures Caravaggio used in his paintings: from using mirrors to painting live models; he also notes that due to posing for long periods of time, his models often "exhibit' boredom, that is, Fried argues that in his art Caravaggio pursued a sort of annihilation of expression. For instance, *The*

Crowning with Thorns from 1604 or 1607: note the expression on Christ's face, which is quite close to that from the painting with St. Thomas – is this an expression of pain and physical suffering? Or, rather, one of complete spiritual absence, spiritual void, as if there were no "internal life' in Christ at all that might manifest itself on his face? Similarly interesting is the gaze of the male figure in the top left corner: we might expect his gaze to be fixed on the back of Christ's head, the place where he is hammering in the crown of thorns with a bamboo stick; however, his gaze is lost in the undefined space between Christ's right shoulder and neck. This gaze thus becomes "empty', suggesting a similar kind of spiritual annihilation as Christ's gaze does. The faces of the remaining men are completely hidden – we may therefore hardly establish any sort of emotional relationship between the depicted characters. The protagonists of the scene are reduced to mutually isolated bodies; those bodies are not expressive bodies, but bodies closed off in privacy:

> "[...] the figures in those canvases, mere representations, manifestly 'have' no interiority of the sort actual persons do. It is as if the zero for 'Expression' that de Piles brilliantly awarded Caravaggio simultaneously suggests doubts about whether expressions ever actually do reveal anything about the feelings or states of mind they are supposedly expressing and also suggests something about the inevitability of our taking even the lack of expression as revelatory.
>
> Another, only slightly different way of framing the problem would be to say that the invention of absorption in Caravaggio's religious paintings of the late 1590s and early 1600s can be seen as in dialogue with the sceptical doubt that we can ever know with certainty the contents of another person's mind."[4]

Figure 1. Caravaggio: The Crowning with Thorns (1602- 04 or 1607), Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna

It is hardly surprising that a motive that appears time and again in Caravaggio's art is that of decapitation: a beheaded body is a radical annihilation of meaning, a definitive end of the criteria by which we think of the mind of another person; it exemplifies a body that does not matter anymore. A paradigmatic place is his *Medusa* of 1596–97: beheading becomes a radical form of scepticism. Equally important, the image was painted on a piece of canvas that was subsequently stretched over a round shield; there is no spatial depth whatsoever, no three-dimensionality; from mimesis, the painting turns into an object, item, a flat surface, plane, or, as Fried calls it, a *tableau*. In other words, the painting becomes a 'special mental membrane' (to borrow the term from Slovenian art historian Tomaž Brejc, who used it in his interpretation of the modernist model of painting as a two-dimensional surface).

Caravaggio's treatment of the body is thus quite close to the way Wittgenstein problematized the body; namely, Wittgenstein wrote:

> "I can perhaps even imagine (though it is not easy) that each of the people whom I see in the street is in frightful pain, but is artfully concealing it. And it is important that I have to imagine an artful concealment here. That I do not simply say to myself: 'Well, his soul is in pain: but what has that do to with his body?' or 'After all it need not show in his body!'"[5]

Wittgenstein views the issue of pain as key for the problematic of philosophical scepticism. Scepticism about other minds concerns the problem of the (im) possibility of knowing the pain of another and thus also of knowing another person. The quoted passage points to the following question: what is the limit of our comprehension, knowing of the *other* and thus also of establishing a relation with that *other*? The Wittgensteinian answer is – the body. The body is the screen, barrier, limit, *membrane* that prevents us from reaching the other's 'interiority', their *soul*; the body is that membrane due to which we are always in danger of failing in terms of what Wittgenstein called the criterion of knowing another person. Or, as Cavell would say,

> "To withhold, or hedge, our concepts of psychological states from a given creature, on the ground that our criteria cannot reach to the inner life of the creature, is specifically to withhold the source of my idea that living beings are things that feel; it is to withhold myself, to reject my response to anything as a living being; to blank so much as my idea of anything as *having a body.* To describe *this* condition as one in which I do not know (am not certain) of the existence of other minds, is empty. There is now nothing there, of the right kind, to be known. There is

> nothing to read from that body, nothing the body is *of;* it does not go beyond itself, it expresses nothing; it does not so much as behave. There is no body left to manifest consciousness (or unconsciousness). It is not dead, but inanimate; it hides nothing, but is absolutely at my disposal; if it were empty it would be quite hollow, but in fact it is quite dense, though less uniform than stone. It was already at best an automaton."[6]

Caravaggio's art thus problematizes the crisis of the criteria that predicate language as an inter-social category; his art is the earliest example of what might be marked as 'art in the state of modernity'. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that, chronologically speaking, Caravaggio's art emerged in parallel with another form that reflected the collapse of *a priori* criteria – Shakespeare's drama. As Cavell shows, Shakespeare's tragedy is fundamentally linked with modern manifestations of sceptical doubt: his plots rest not on a force from 'beyond' that leaves the tragic subject powerless to govern his own fate, but precisely on the hero's isolation in a (Wittgensteinian) private language. Two typical examples are *King Lear* and *Othello*: in both plays, the plot emerges within dialectic of shame, that is, Lear and Othello's withdrawal before the gaze of the other and their need, in relating to another person, to demand an absolute, empirical proof of faithfulness. In Othello's own words, when he demands from Iago a material proof of Desdemona's infidelity:

> Villain, be sure thou prove my love a whore,
> Be sure of it. Give me the ocular proof
> Or by the worth of mine eternal soul
> Thou hadst been better have been born a dog
> Than answer my waked wrath!

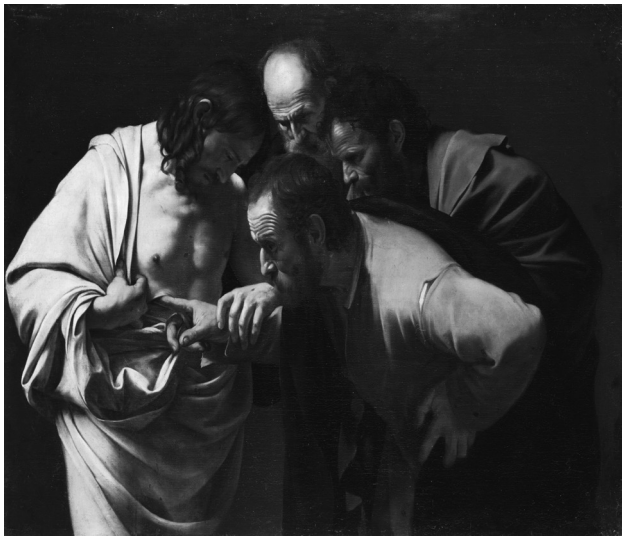

Figure 2. Caravaggio: The Incredulity of St. Thomas (1601-2), Schloss Sanssouci, Potsdam

Their tragedy rests on their need to command perfect, ideal knowledge of the other person; since such knowledge is impossible, they both end up in radical scepticism, i.e. 'bad faith' that knowing the other as such is impossible. Shakespeare's tragedy thus precedes a new cultural, we might even say ideological paradigm that was also outlined by the philosophy of René Descartes, John Locke, and David Hume: knowledge rests on empirical evidence; if there is no such evidence, knowledge is impossible. That is precisely the reason why empiricism is inseparable from modern scepticism.

However, in *Investigations*, the body has a paradoxical status: the body is the cause of scepticism about the other, but at the same time, it is also the place where criteria are reconstituted, through that which Cavell labels as the 'capacity for exposure' to the gaze of the other. That means that the subject comes into being by mastering language and entering the space of inter-social communication, through a process that might be labelled the 'presentness' of the body. Moreover, the concept of presentness in Cavell's and Fried's theory bears a rather specific meaning – Cavell uses it to stress our capacity for establishing, faced with the gaze of the other, an inter-social relation with that same other; in that sense, presentness might mean visibility, presence, before other members of the *polis*; for instance, at the beginning of his first book on film, Cavell refers to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and uses his metaphor of the 'good city', that is, 'good spectacle'; the good city is a metaphor for a social relation in which I stand before others 'without shame'.[7] Cavell thus uses the concept of presentness in opposition to that of shame: shame is a possible form of retreating before the gaze of the other, a sort of fantasy about a private language; shame is but my retreat into privacy, inside the boundaries of my body as a 'membrane', my attempt to annihilate meaning and suspend external criteria, my unconscious desire that my body not be a 'body that matters'. By contrast, presentness is a re-constitution of language's external criteria through the body, that is, a re-establishment of my relationship with other members of an inter-social community. In other words, presentness is my ability to recognise, by way of the body and language, another person made of flesh and blood, similar to myself, and let myself be recognised by that same other person; through presentness, we acknowledge "[...] our humanity – the fact that I and that you are human beings, and that we are fated to live with one another or reject one another."[8]

This re-constitution of the criteria of language as an inter-social category, and realization of the presentness of work of art is the basic problem of art in the modern era. To describe this problem of artistic presentness, Cavell in

his analysis of films uses the notions of 'dramatisation', i.e. 'transfiguration' of reality. Dramatisation points to the ability of films to transform the world and, even more so, to transform the human subject on the cinema screen; his argument is that the everyday world that surrounds us is so ordinary, mundane, banal, alienated from us, that we do not even notice it. Modern concept of art, but also of philosophy as given in Wittgenstein's, Austin's, Marx's or Heidegger's writings emerge as modern subject's reaction to the state of boredom, of losing interest for the world, alienation from the world, i.e. to the state of scepticism. This answer to the state of modern boredom or alienation is, according to Cavell,

> "perhaps the most fruitful point of intersection of Anglo-American and Continental philosophizing. I mean the point concerning the issue of what is worth saying, the discovery that much of what is said, especially by philosophers, i.e., by the human being philosophizing is empty, say bankrupt, the result of speaking not meaninglessly, as the positivists used to like to say, as if words themselves had insufficient sense, but rather speaking pointlessly, as if we had nothing in mind, or nothing at heart to say."[9]

The art of cinema emerges from our need to recreate the world in its image; as argued by Rothman and Keane, the world in its everyday existence, independently of the media of art, cannot satisfy this need we have. To satisfy our desire for the world, the medium of art must differ from the existing world, that is, film must transform (dramatise) the existing world into a world capable of satisfying our desire for the world.[10] In other words, film must find a way to make the world it presents to us, as well as other people, persons shown on the screen, *present*; our response to the presentess of film is acceptance, recognition of that 'specifically human' in film, our empathy with the human subject on film, our acknowledgement of that subject, i.e. another person. In other words, film, art in the state of modernity and modern philosophy takes us back to the ordinary, everyday, to the language itself that due to the decomposition of *a priori* criteria that were characteristic for traditional societies became unknowable, invisible to us. Modern forms of art as cinema take us back, in words of Cavell, to our natural relation to existence which is "what Thoreau means by our being *next* to the laws of nature, by our *neighbouring* the world, by our being *beside* ourselves."[11]

It is therefore hardly surprising that modern film has established a specific link with Caravaggio's art; as Martin Scorsese put it,

> "I was instantly taken by the power of the pictures, the power of the compositions, the action in the frames… there was no doubt that it could be taken into cinema because of the use of light and shadow, the chiaroscuro effect [...] Initially I related to the paintings because of the moment that he chose to illuminate in the story [...] he was choosing a moment that was not the absolute moment of the beginning of the action, it's during the action, in a way. You sort of come upon the scene midway and you're immersed in it. It was very different from the composition of the paintings that precede it, the Renaissance paintings. It was like modern staging in film."[12]

In other words, Caravaggio's art, just like film today, *dramatised* reality; this is exactly the way Michael Fried reads Caravaggio's art as a far away predecessor of modernism. According to Fried, presentness of the work of art means elimination of narrativity, teatricality, its *instantaneousness* during the act of seeing. While older forms of art (renaissance for example, or classical staging of landscape in case of Claude Lorrain's painting, for example) needed complex ways to narrate the depicted scene - symmetrical arrangements of personages, or elaborate costumes, for example, Caravaggio depicts figures so engrossed or "*absorbed* in what they were doing, thinking, and feeling that they appeared oblivious of everything else, including, crucially, the beholder standing before the painting." Only in that way, through ignoring or denying of the beholder, painting accomplishes its ultimate purpose – it brings actual viewers to a halt "in front of the painting and holding them there in a virtual trance of imaginative involvement." In other words, Caravaggio needed new forms of visual representations, forms beyond mere visual storytelling of renaissance painting, he needed dark and light contrasts, extreme chiaroscuro, absorbtion, enlargements, corporality to make his painting convincing. With Caravaggio, very similar to later French painting from late 18th century, but also to modernism, at every moment the work itself is wholly manifest:

> "It is this continuous and entire *presentness*, amounting, as it were, to the perpetual creation of itself, that one experiences as a kind of *instantaneousness,* as though if only one were infinitely more acute, a single infinitely brief instant would be long enough to see everything, to experience the work in all its depth and fullness, to be forever convinced by it."[13]

This need of ours, as subjects, to dramatise our own existence is, in Cavell's and Fried's view, historically contingent: it emerged after the collapse of the meta-narratives of the religious view of the world and coincided with the

birth of reason and modern rationality. This condition of modernity was later highlighted by the romantics and then also by Karl Marx, for instance: Marx's philosophy points to the fact that our place in society, in community, has become essentially unknown to us, that this place we occupy is marked by scepticism (Fried would say – by teatricality, Marx would say – by ideology). In modern society, human individuality emerges in isolation from other members of the polis. Self-cognition thus becomes primary to modern philosophy and art alike: it is possible only through the subject's relationship with the other, i.e. with the community, which is established by making our existence present in front of others. Caravaggio's paintings, Shakespeare's tragedies, romantic art, Marx's concept of revolution, and finally also the emergence of photography and film are only various manifestations of this need to dramatise, transfigure reality and realize presentness of the self. So what would be the art in the state of modernity? Well, nothing else but our attempt to give a *voice* to our scepticism – with regard to the world and other members of our community.

NOTES

1 Stephen Mulhall, "Stanley Cavell (1926–)", in *Art: Key Contemporary Thinkers,* eds. Diarmuid Costello and Jonathan Vickery (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2007), 110–113.

2 *Ibid.*

3 Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Caravaggio's Secrets* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: The MIT Press, 1998), 9.

4 Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 103.

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1999), 119e.

6 Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Scepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 88

7 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. xxii. See also Nikola Dedić, 'Film i skepticizam: Kavelova "korekcija" poststrukturalističke filozofije umetnosti' (Film and Scepticism: Cavell's 'Correction' of Post-structuralist Philosophy of Art), *Filozofija i društvo*, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (2015): 205–225.

8 Ludger H. Viefhues-Baily, *Beyond the Philosopher's Fear: A Cavellian Reading of Gender, Origin and Religion in Modern Skepticism* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 73.

9 Stanley Cavell, 'The Ordinary as the Uneventful', in *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 184–194.

10 William Rothman and Marian Keane, *Reading Cavell's* The World Viewed*: A Philosophical Perspective on Film* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 90.

11 Stanley Cavell, 'The Ordinary as the Uneventful'.

12 Andrew Graham-Dixon, *Caravaggio: A Life Sacred and Profane* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 41–42.

13 Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood", *Art and Objecthood. Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 167.

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FROM TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM TO TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM AND BEYOND: KANT, DELEUZE AND FLAT ONTOLOGY OF THE ART

A B S T R A C T

In this paper I will show that the movement from Kant's transcendental idealism to Gilles Deleuze's transcendental empiricism and then to new materialisms and speculative realisms is what enables us to talk about the direct and non-mediated access to the thing in itself (or its dissolution). In other words, it's the change from the conditions of *possible* experience to the conditions of *real* experience that made possible current philosophical and theoretical discourses of materialisms and realisms. What is of particular interest for the purposes of this paper is how the change from conditions of possible to real experience relates to the current conceptualizations of art practices. More precisely, I will show how the ontology of art changed, or at least that there perhaps appears paradigm-shifting possibility of different aesthetics and ontologies of art, flat ontology being one of them, with the appearance of new materialisms and speculative realisms that were made possible by the change to the conditions of real experience.

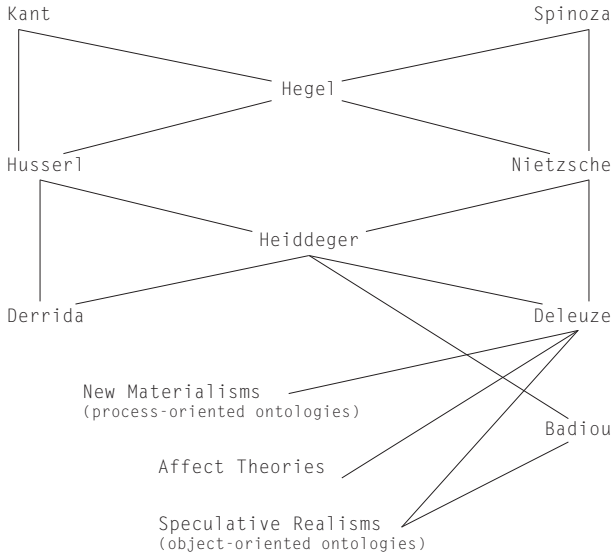
Andrija Filipović
Singidunum University, Faculty of Media and Communication

KEY WORDS

TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALISM
TRANSCENDENTAL EMPIRICISM
FLAT ONTOLOGY
ART
KANT
DELEUZE

INTRODUCTION

The following diagram shows various philosophical influences across the landscape of correlationist and non-correlationist thought.[1] We can see that the most influential thinker is Gilles Deleuze when it comes to the fields of new materialisms, affect theories and speculative realisms, and I would argue that is for a reason although many speculative realists, most notably among them Quentin Meillassoux, are critical of Deleuze's philosophy (according to Meillassoux Deleuze is undeniably one of the correlationists).[2] As with every diagram, this diagram offers rather impoverished picture of all the influences. For example, I have not connected Heidegger and speculative realisms even although there is clear influence in at least one case.[3] Moreover, I have clearly separated new materialisms and speculative realisms which warrants some justification since some contemporary philosophers do not make such a difference.[4]



One of the main reasons can be found in the argument offered by Tristan Garcia in his book *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*. In a series of illuminating diagrams Garcia shows the differences between three models – substantial, vectorial, and thingly ontology of being. The first model is the model of classical philosophy, of the thing in itself to which predicates, accidents and qualities are ascribed without the thing in itself changing. The second model is the model according to which the thing is constructed at the intersection of various lines consisting of predicates, accidents and qualities. That is the model of becoming or process-oriented ontologies. The third model is the

model of Garcia's tingly ontology, but which can be generalized to encompass the whole of contemporary object-oriented field of thought. Namely, this aim is to develop an ontology or "to conceive of a model that is neither too strong nor too weak, and to represent things that are really in the world without being in themselves".[5] The first model, which is substantialist, "tends to compact being in the final stage of its process, overdetermining self-saturated things or things in themselves", while the second model of process-oriented ontologies "tends to dissolve and disseminate being, and transforms things into effects, illusions, or secondary realities".[6] We can now see how process-oriented ontologies and object-oriented ontologies differ. The first ones are philosophies of becoming, which accentuate the change and the flux of qualities, and which are most clearly influenced by Deleuze but also Whitehead, Bergson and Spinoza. The latter ones are philosophies which try to preserve some stability without falling into the trap of positing the thing in itself, the model critiqued by both process-oriented and object-oriented ontologies.

KANT AND THE CONDITIONS OF *POSSIBLE* EXPERIENCE

Kant's project of transcendental idealism is based on division between the noumenal and the phenomenal, that is, on division between the transcendental and the empirical. Transcendental idealism is a philosophy that deals with the critique of pure reason, or more precisely with the pure theoretical reason (which is directed towards the nature) and pure practical reason (which is directed towards the morality). On the other hand, pure theoretical reason appears as pure understanding (the condition for knowledge of nature), and pure reason in strict sense (the dialectical reason which produces paralogisms and antinomies when disconnected from the empirical). The critique of this pure reason in strict sense is based on transcendental logic (comprised of transcendental dialectic and transcendental analytic) and transcendental aesthetic. Transcendental aesthetic together with transcendental analytic gives us the conditions of all possible experience since the conditions are *a priori* and transcendental and thus unconnected to the contingency of the empirical. Transcendental aesthetic deals with the space and time as pure forms of sensibility since neither concept can originate from the empirical but serve as necessary *a priori* forms for the possibility of all external and internal phenomena. Transcendental analytics deals with the pure concepts of pure understanding (quantity, quality, relation and modality), and between the pure concepts of pure understanding and the empirical data that appear under the forms of space and time there are the schemes of imagination that connect them. Pure concepts are always connected to the empirical through the imagination, but if they are applied "purely" they produce transcendental ideas

such as absolute unity of the thinking subject, absolute unity of the conditions of the phenomena and the absolute unity of all the objects of thinking. *Critique of Pure Reason* as its purpose had to limit the over-reaching of the pure reason and to try to tie its workings to the empirical. By doing that, however, Kant introduced the notion of the thing in itself (*Ding an sich*) since all of our knowledge depends on the application of pure concepts of pure understanding to the empirical. While we know that there is something beyond those pure concepts we will never know what that is.[7] All we can know are phenomena, while the noumena is beyond our reach. Moreover, all of the phenomena are conditioned by the *a priori*, transcendental laws governing our experience. While we can never know the noumena, what we can know are conditions of all possible experience and thus recognize ourselves as sovereign subjects.

The road to recognizing ourselves as sovereign subjects that are free to give the laws to ourselves is torturous one and proceeds via art. Namely, there is a gap between the pure understanding directed toward the nature and the practical reason directed toward the morality. That gap has to be bridged and it is the judgment that acts as a connection. It is the power of judgment that connects the representations of how the world is objectively constituted and how it should be. The power of judgment enables us to see the nature like it is governed by certain empirical laws, to create aesthetic judgments, to think that organisms are objectively purposive and that the nature as a whole possesses a purpose. The art plays particular role within this system because it enables the production of aesthetic judgment, which possesses four moments. The first moment is the moment of disinterestedness, which means that judgments regarding any artwork are devoid of any practical interest, where interest is defined as a connection to the real desire and acting upon it. The second moment is the universality of aesthetic judgments, which means that the beauty is the real characteristic of the artwork and that the others necessary agree upon that characteristic. The third moment of the aesthetic judgment introduces the purpose of the artwork and it claims that the artwork has none, whether the purpose is understood as a set of external purposes (what the work should do) or internal purposes (what the work should be). The fourth moment is the moment of the necessity of the aesthetic judgment according to which the necessity is based on the common sense which is the *a priori* principle of taste.[8]

DELEUZE AND THE CONDITIONS OF *REAL* EXPERIENCE

Starting point for developing the concept of the conditions of real experience in *Difference and Repetition* for Deleuze is the critique of Kant's notion of the common sense based on the model Deleuze calls recognition. Namely,

"recognition may be defined by the harmonious exercise of all the faculties upon a supposed same object: the same object may be seen, touched, remembered, imagined or conceived... Recognition thus relies upon a subjective principle of collaboration of the faculties for 'everybody' – in other words, a common sense as a *Concordia facultatum*; while simultaneously, for the philosopher, the form of identity in objects relies upon a ground in the unity of a thinking subject, of which all the other faculties must be modalities".[9] Common sense is, according to Deleuze, the unity from the point of pure subject, while good sense is the unity and norm from the point of view of empirical self. While "good sense determines the contribution of the faculties in each case, common sense contributes the form of the Same",[10] and they both constitute two complementary sides of a single image of thought, that is, *doxa*. Deleuze explodes the *doxa* of active syntheses (apprehension in intuition, reproduction in imagination and recognition in concepts) by introducing the concept of passive syntheses, which give us the conditions of real experience.

Passive syntheses are based on different conception of intuition and the sensible. Namely, elements of the intuition are found in the intensities not in the qualities of the recognized object, intensity is the limit of intuition which lays beyond both the recognition and common sense, and the intuition is constituted by the differential relations of intensities (forces, according to Deleuze's Nietzsche), while those differential relations constitute the conditions of real experience because the conditions never supersede the conditioned (the cause is in the consequence, according to Deleuze's Spinoza). The common sense and the good sense together with active syntheses break down once the primordial nature of passive syntheses is revealed. The apperception, or the unity of "I think", turns out to be just a reflection of what already exists, which means that it only recognizes the life formed according to the reactive forces of habit and memory. Introducing the passive syntheses as the conditions of the real experience means that the exercise of the faculties becomes disharmonious and they stretch beyond their limits in the forcible encounter with the sensible. These passive syntheses also produce multiplicity of contemplating egos constituting larval subjects of passive self. The first passive synthesis is crucial in the constitution of other aspects of time and, thus, for the constitution of both passive self and active subjectivity. It constitutes the present as "living present" but "it necessarily forms a present which may be exhausted and which passes, a present of a certain duration which varies according to the species, the individuals, the organism and the parts of organisms under consideration".[11] Key insight in this quote is that there are various durations not only for different species and individuals, but that there are different durations depending on the

"parts of organisms", that is each and every larval subject or contemplating ego possesses its own duration. This insight also entails certain conception of what organism is, of what the body is and what it can do. Body turns out to be multiplicity of different and differentiating durations that are united only at the level of active syntheses of representational subjectivity.

According to Daniel W. Smith, these conditions of real experience or the principles of sensation (intuition) "would at the same time constitute the principles of composition of the work of art, and conversely it would be the structure of the work of art that reveals these conditions".[12] The artwork ceases to be the object of harmonious converging of various faculties as well as the object which enables the recognition of the sovereign and free subject. Considering that the intuition is not mere representation of the object, but a violent encounter of disharmonious faculties of multiple bodies with that which is "beyond", the artwork becomes the being of sensation which reveals passive syntheses and, most importantly, the disjunctive synthesis that affirms the divergent series. The artwork, furthermore, reveals the passive self, larval egos and the cracked I, that are hidden below the subject of representation. Art thusly plays a special role in Deleuze's critique of Kant's transcendental idealism. Art as the being of sensation disrupts the *doxa* of common and good sense, and points toward the real conditions of experience on the plane of immanence.

FLAT ONTOLOGY OF THE ART

The speculative realist and new materialist philosophies takes up the idea of real conditions of experience as that which allows if not epistemological access to things then at least offers the possibility of ontological access to them. It, furthermore, insists in all its philosophical and theoretical forms on the immanence, that is, on a single plane on which all things exist and become. I offer the following comparison between Kant, Deleuze (and most process oriented ontologies inspired by him), and speculative realist or object-oriented philosophies in the following table:

KANT	DELEUZE	FLAT ONTOLOGY
Being	Becoming	Beings
Transcendence	Immanence	Immanence
Transcendental	Virtuality	Realism

The comparison encompasses three key features of each approach – the question of being, the question of the way the being is, and the question of conditions of access to the being. The being (*l'être*) is transcendent in Kant, and the only way we can access it is via the transcendental, that is, through our *a priori* and pure concepts. In Deleuze, being becomes becoming (*devenir*) on the plane of immanence while the virtual conditions the real experience. In most object-oriented philosophies (OOO), being is replaced with beings (*l'étant*) while keeping the concept of immanence (the flatness from the title of this paper), and the access is strictly realist by which I mean that the question of epistemology is put in the brackets, at least temporarily, which allows development of ontology.

For Levi R. Bryant "a realist and materialist theory of art would begin with the suspension of the signifying potentials of art and would start with the recognition that works of art are real material beings in their own right".[13] And furthermore "realism in machine-oriented aesthetics is thus not a thesis about the *content* of a work of art, but about the *being* of artwork. To be a work of art is to be *something*: an entity, substance, individual, thing, object, or machine. There is no work of art that isn't materially embodied in some way or another".[14] Bryant's materialistic conception of being of the artwork differs, as much of object-oriented philosophy, from process-oriented philosophies in its insistence on the independence of the object from relations it may have at any given moment with any other object.[15] On the one hand, the object is irreducible to its relations, and on the other it carries the potential for rupture with its actual relations. The reason for non-relational conception of the being of the object is to be found in the attempt to salvage the object's potential for movement. According to Bryant, if the being of the object is exhausted in its relations then there would be no movement since movement presupposes a break from the relations. Consequently, the object retains its independence, "some minimal being over and above whatever relations they happen to entertain".[16] However, this minimal being that is independent from relations does not mean the difference in quality, but it is based on the differences between a virtual and actual dimension, which Bryant calls virtual proper being and local manifestation of object. The proper virtual being does not change, while the local manifestation or object's qualities are subject to change and, moreover, "virtual proper being consists not in qualities or properties, or in local manifestations, but rather in *powers*, *capacities*, or *affects*. The being of an object lies not in whatever qualities it happens to manifest or actualize, but rather in what an object is capable of *doing*; its affects. Moreover, a quality or property of an object is not something an object *has*, but something that an object *does* as a function of the relations into which it enters".[17]

Since artwork is some*thing* then this ontology of things or objects also implies consequences to the ontology of art and aesthetics. Most importantly, the being of artwork will possess certain independence from all possible and actual relations it may make with any other object. It follows logically then that the artwork is independent of its context and, hence, that the problem of meaning of artwork becomes if not obsolete then secondary. While the meaning comes from the context, given that the work of art is (minimally) independent from the relations it may make, then we can no longer speak of meaning as being intrinsic to the object we call work of art. Instead, Bryant develops *machinic aesthetics* of art following Deleuze and Guattari.[18] Artworks as machines, instead of being constituted as and by signs and meaning, operate and produce something. Two main characteristics come to the fore once the art becomes machinic: *trans-corporeality* and *pluripotency*. The term trans-corporeality names the fact that an art-machine is always already composed of other machines and that all machines act upon each other and influence each other: "A machine is an entity that *affects* other entities, but that is also affected by those other entities it affects and interacts with".[19] Pluripotency refers to the non-teological nature of trans-corporeal machinic actualization of an artwork: "The claim that a machine is pluripotent is the claim that is has no fixed function or purpose that defines its being. Functions of machines often become rigid or typified, yet there is always an indeterminacy of functions haunting any machine holding open the possibility of the machine taking on different functions".[20]

This machinic aesthetics of art leads toward the flat ontology in general and art in particular. Flat ontology is ontology of immanence in which there is no the world or the universe, denying at once that there is something that is the origin of everything else, or in other words, denying that there exists something encompassing everything that is in a unity. Furthermore, "flat ontology refuses to privilege the subject-object, human-world relation as either a) a form of metaphysical relation different in *kind* from other relations between objects, and that b) refuses to treat the subject-object relation as implicitly included in every form of object-object relation".[21] And, finally, according to flat ontology "no entity, whether artificial or natural, symbolic or physical, possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects".[22] Art, and especially contemporary art, needs to be rethought within the ontological frame of object-object relations, and this is the great potential that object-oriented philosophies offer to us for critical approach to the age of contemporaneity.

NOTES

1 As an inspiration for this diagram served the diagram in the following book: Miško Šuvaković, *Umetnost i politika: Savremena estetika, filozofija, teorija i umetnost u vremenu globalne tranzicije* (Beograd: Službeni glasnik, 2012), 106–107.

2 See Quentin Meillassoux, *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, trans. by Ray Brassier (London/New York: Continuum, 2011), 37. However, some authors do not agree with that assessment, for example Steven Shaviro according to who Deleuze's *non-correlational* philosophy is based on non-intentional and non-cognitive processes which are immanent to being. See Steven Shaviro, *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (London/Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 131–132.

3 See Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (Winchester/Washington: Zero Books, 2011).

4 For example Peter Gratton, who writes about Quentin Meillasoux, Graham Harman, Ian Hamilton Grant, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Bennett, Ray Brassier, Adrian Johnston, Catherine Malabou and other process and object oriented philosophers and theoreticians under the "speculative realist" label. See Peter Gratton, *Speculative Realism: Problem and Prospects* (London/New York: Bloomsbery Academic, 2014).

5 Tristan Garcia, *Form and Object: A Treatise on Things*, trans. by Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 11.

6 Ibid.

7 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing, 1996), 318–319.

8 See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. by James Creed Meredith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

9 Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. by Paul Patton (London/New York: Continuum, 2001), 133.

10 Ibid., 134.

11 Ibid., 77.

12 Daniel W. Smith, "Deleuze's Theory of Sensation: Overcoming the Kantian Duality," in *Essays on Deleuze*, Daniel W. Smith (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 89.

13 Levi R. Bryant, "Towards a Machine-Oriented Aesthetics: On the Power of Art," *Art+Media: Journal of Art and Media Studies* (2014): 24.

14 Ibid.

15 For Bryant's own conception of relations independent object ontology see Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011).

16 Levi R. Bryant, "Towards a Machine-Oriented Aesthetics," 25.

17 Ibid., 26.

18 As well as ontology of machines and media in another book. See Levi R. Bryant, *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

19 Levi R. Bryant, "Towards a Machine-Oriented Aesthetics," 29.

20 Ibid.

21 Levi R. Bryant, *Onto-Cartography*, 246.

22 Ibid.

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IMPLICATIONS OF VATTIMO'S *VERWINDUNG* OF MODERNISM IN ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

A B S T R A C T

In the postmodern era, besides new approaches to architectural practice, substantial changes happen in architectural textual production owed to the inflow of the postmodern transdisciplinary theory in architectural discourse.Theorists, critics and historians of architecture gladly use the contribution from philosophy, political sciences, sociology, art theory and literary criticism to categorize and explain postmodern architectural styles or tendencies, no longer unifying them exclusively by means of formalistic aspects dating from the same period. Now, topics and paradigms from various postmodern theories are being implemented and thus created the phenomenon of the translation of a theory into an instrument of architectural purpose. In most cases, theoretical outlooks serve as a cover which the theorists of architecture use to formulate the poetics of architects, proclaim desirable models of reception, and develop the stance on the disciplinary and socio-historical contexts. However, it becomes interesting when the same architectural works of a single or several architects are differently interpreted by different theorists of architecture. The paper examines these premises on a specific example, which is: 1) demonstrated in practice by Catalan architecture of the 1980s; 2) the point of convergence between de Solà-Morales, Rossi and Frampton; 3) underlain by Vattimo's philosophical concept of *Verwindung* of modernism.

Vladimir Stevanović
Singidunum University, Faculty of Media and Communications

KEY WORDS

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MODERNISM
POSTMODERNISM
FUNDAMENTALISM
CRITICAL REGIONALISM
FRAGMENTARINESS

INTRODUCTION: WEAK THOUGHT, *VERWINDUNG* AND DECORATIVE

In order to explain more closely the meaning of the term *Verwindung*, it is first necessary to briefly sketch out the primary elements of Vattimo's philosophy, better known as the weak thought (*il pensiero debole*).[1] The weak thought is one of the postmodern proposals of how to practice philosophy, which starts from the critique of the monolithic and authoritative Western Modernity and univeralist pretensions founded of the reign of reason. Througout the modern age different approaches interchange, but what unifies them is the metaphysical monism and absolutism, irrespective of whether they are scientific evidence in positivism, correct ideology in marxism, the thing itself in phenomenology or fixed and enclosed system of meaning in structuralism. Because of these solid properties Vattimo identifies modernity with metaphysics, making the postmodern thinking postmetaphysical at the same time. Following the conclusion that the stable reference point typical of the metaphysical modernity has been lost for good, the mission of the weak thought becomes to try to establish a theoretical categorization of the world without ultimatively and normatively founding the thought as such. In the wake of Neitzsche, Heidegger and Gadamer, Vattimo defines the end of the modernity/metaphysics as the peak of the nihilistic process in which the absolutization of ontological and gnoseological categories (before anything else of Being and truth) dissolves and weakens towards their understannding as hermeneutical, *i.e.*, interpretive and rethorical events in the domain of the socio-historical horizon. As opposed to the strong metaphysical thought, self-elevated to the level of the only possible thinking, the weak thought conscientiously recognizes, accepts and admits that it is nothing more than a product of the individual, fragmentary and heterogeneous time.

One of the central points of the weak thought is *Verwindung* – a specific way of relating, taking a stance toward what still is or what may be modern in the newly created postmodern conditions. *Verwindung* is a term Vattimo takes from Heidegger and uses as a backbone of his critique of the modern concept of linear history reigned by the ideals of progressive development and critical overcoming of previous states only to move on to the next phase which would once again be founded on a monistic principle. According to Vattimo, modernism is permeated by the idea of the history of thought as a progressive knowlegde, developed on the basis of an every time fuller foundation – the origin, which makes theoretical and practical revolutions in Western history appear and be identified as recoveries, rebirths and returns.[2] In this kind of

a constellation, the new identifies with the value of reappropriating the primordial or the authentic origin. For this reason postmodernity cannot be defined as a new, more true alternative to modernity, for then it would remain the prisoner of that modern system of critical overcoming and progressive interchanging of paradigms directed towards a new foundation. Postmodernity cannot be produced as a novelty, nor is it possible to return to a new start by appropriating some desirable origin. On the contrary, Vattimo refers to Heidegger's way of overcoming metaphysics which is underlined by the nuances between two German words signifying overcoming and surpassing: 1) *Überwindung* – overcoming which supposes *Aufhebung*, abandonment, leaving something behind in the spirit of Hegelian-Marxist dialectic tradition; 2) *Verwindung* – impertinent, twisted, distorted way of overcoming which contains elements of recognizing belonging to something, acceptance and deepening of that.[3] In the translation into Italian, to *Verwindung*Vattimo adds meanings aggregated in the verb *rimettersi*: rely on someone, get something back (*e.g.*, get a message back) and recover (as from an illness). The main instrument of *Verwindung* is *An-denken* – a reminding thought or remembrance, which allows connecting with the tradition, re-memorizing and re-appropriating possibilities and values that belong to spiritual forms of the past. For Heidegger metaphysics is a predestination and historical destination from where messages are being transmitted; messages that we keep and keep reusing. As Vattimo puts it in the spirit of hermeneutical tradition of handing down: this kind of a predestined world we are thrown in is constructed by a series of echoes, linguistic responses and messages coming from the past and from others (others alongside us as well as other cultures).[4] *Verwindung* of metaphysics indicates accepting the necessity to think in metaphysical categories tradition had passed on to us, but without those most metaphysical aspects concerning monism, foundation, universalism, critical overcoming and so on. If one cannot step out of the metaphysical tradition, they can act in a *verwindened* relation to it, going for reconciliation and ironic acceptance. Postmetaphysical thinking keeps metaphysical concepts, passing them on as heirlooms. This, however, is not a static action; rather, weak thought interprets them within the contemporary context, which supposes twisting and distortion of their original meaning. In terms of modernity and postmodernity, this means that postmodern thinking brings with itself rewriting, testing, re-thinking from a different perspective, twisting and redefining the traces of modernity. For Vattimo, that main question of the postmodernity is not where to move on, but from where to move on.

In the weak thought art has a special place, because it represents a suitable model for postmodern aesthetic experience. After dissolving and eliminating strong universal values in the postmodernity, arts are left in a circumstance that was formerly, in metaphysical terms, understood as peripheral. Given the inexistence of a strong center towards which essential artistic criteria would gravitate, it becomes impossible to distinguish what essential is. What remains is the possiblity to accept all in a work of art as inessential or – peripheral. In accordance with these premises, already in part set by Gadamer, Vattimo accepts the peripheral meaning of art and develops it in terms of ornament, *i.e*., decoration.[5] Once freed from its essence or foundation, ornament becomes like an accessory – a sort of superfluous expression that does not require an attentive reading and is not the subject of major attention, because it emerges from the periphery. In this constellation, for Vattimo *aisthesis* does not only suppose a sensory experience, a subjective emotion or feeling, but the best type of experience in which the truth cannot be reduced to the reason or to a scientific fact. Art is the place where the truth is expressed weakly, by being dispersed across interpretive horizons, becoming eventual and contingent.

CATALAN POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURE (1986)

Not long after Vattimo had come forward with his weak thought, *Vervindung* of modernism, indeed implicitly, appeared in the theory of architecture, in Catalan theorist Ignasi de Solà-Morales. In his book *Architettura minimale a Barcelona: construire sulla città construita* (hereinafter *Architettura minimale*)[6] he summarizes the work of several postmodern Catalan architects and teams (Josep Lluís Mateo, Jordi Garcés & Enric Sòria, Martinez Lapena & Elias Torres, Albert Viaplana & Helio Piñon, Jaime Bach & Gabriel Mora and Josep-Antoni Llinàs) from the first half of the 1980s. These projects, which nurture an ambivalent relationship with modernism, emerged as a part of a city reconstruction headed by Oriol Bohigas, at the time of enthusiasm fora new democracy, shortly after Franco's dictatorship in Spain had ended and immediately before the Olympic fever in Barcelona.[7] Even though here de Solà-Morales does not yet make reference to Vattimo's weak thought, there is evidence to theorization of decorativeness as a mode in which to carry out the reception of the architecture he speaks of, while a hint of *Verwindung* can be felt in a relationship between modernism and postmodernism in the sense of accepting certain formal, poetic, but also cultural and technological aspects.

According to de Solà-Morales, the morphology of Barcelonian architecture is founded on an electic concept, which in itself combines: 1) traces of loyalty to the local modern tradition of the 1950s and 1960s (Josep Antoni Coderch, Josep M. Sostres, Bohigas); 2) assimilations into typo-morphological analyses of the Italian neo-rationalist Aldo Rossi which is here, specific for showing scanty enthusiasm for classical and metaphysical austerity of Rossi's poetics.[8] On one hand, this is an inclusive, equivocal and eclectic architecture, completely in the spirit of postmodern time, because it is created through combinations, juxtapositions, superpositions, collaging and quoting of different fragments. Nevertheless, as opposed to the postmodern figurative-narrative eclecticism which he discredits, de Solà-Morales speaks of an eclectic taste for the modernity. De Solà-Morales here does not use the term *Verwindung*, but it is clear that he talks about fragments of modernism which are *verwindened*. On the other hand, even though admitting of his affinity towards the modernity, de Solà-Morales stresses that Catalan architecture does not yearn for modern high technology. Intellectualism, utopian speculation, improved technology – are all those stable and progressive modernist points concerning which de Solà-Morales claims had never existed as a part of Catalan modernist architectural culture. Between postmodern representation and modern technology, Catalan architecture opts for a hedonistic attitude towards form, which de Solà-Morales supports using the term *decorum*, pointing to the problems previously discussed by Vattimo. Decoration is not synonymous with kitsch and adornation; rather, it is a readiness to accentuate secondary-minor, complemetary gestures, ordinary elements and details which allow for a sensual pleasure. This is a conception of the use and perception of the building that does not arise intellectually, as a rational gratification of our perception, but as a stirring of the senses that finds the principal source of its satisfaction in the development of the perceptual experience.[9] It is from this point that de Solà-Morales derives his model of reception, which, according to his opinion, is suitable for Catalan architecture, away from the rational constructs of conceptual and intellectual thought and set into the realm of visceral understanding, which is a response to previously shown Vattimo's concern for the peripheral status of arts and aesthetic experience, which conforms to it as such.

WEAK ARCHITECTURE (1987)

The book *Architettura minimale* will remain in the shadow of de Solà-Morales's far better known text titled *Arquitectura débil*, in which he will continue to use the concepts of *Verwindung* of modernism and the decorative, although this time he will make reference to Vattimo's weak thought. In fact,

the very title "weak architecture" pretends to be the official translation of the weak thought from philosophy into the theory of architecture. In this text de Solà-Morales places Vattimo's end of modernity into the architectural context immediately following the crisis of high modernism during the 1960s. Having concluded that this crisis was the result of the breakdown of the enclosed, rational system which in vane preteneded to absolute applicability, he moves on to analyze postmodern architectural possiblities. Clearly oriented against the vulgar postmodernism as the populist architecture of superfluous rethoric, which he does not even consider a serious option, he in turn examines the adequacy of other architectural ways that have led from modernity to postmodernity: European neo-rationalism, American neo-avantgarde (group of architects called *NY5*) and critical regionalism, which he then evaluates, in some places, exactly through the prism of *Verwindung* of modernism. These are the tendencies, which according to their interpreters lay both outside the functionalist-technologized and bureaucratic-commercialized modernism and outside the main currents of the stylistic postmodernism.

In the poetic stances taken by the protagonists of neo-rationalism and neo-avantgarde de Solà-Morales recognizes fundamentalism – relapse of a desire for orthodox and correct guidelines, which would lead towards a return to the roots of modernism and as such allow them to stand in front of postmodern heterogeneous time. Given that this kind of fundamentalism is the *corpus delicti* of the thinking, which by revealing its monistic position, remains confined by the boundaries of modern-metaphysical global system logic, for someone who thinks in terms of the weak thought rejection is expected. Postmodern fundamentalism is: 1) founded on a structuralist theoretical model as an autonomous, exclusive and authentic way of architectural practice, in which the application of the enclosed typological analysis is expected to provide confirmation of universal and everlasting architectural rules, without leaving the possibilities for any other approach; 2) oriented towards a new reappropriation of origin, in this case, primordial and lost ideas of modern tradition, which are concentrated in the enlightened architecture of the XVIII century and in the purism of the modern movement of the 1920s. According to de Solà-Morales, these attempts are nothing more than a nostalgy for an alleged truth of modernism and that is why they stay in the domain of apologetic formalism and superfluous historicism.

Another postmodern tendency de Solà-Morales rejects is Frampton's critical regionalism. Frampton also elaborates the critical concept of architectural autonomy, but unlike Rossi and the *NY5*, he does not take on the structuralist

model, but a syncretic combination of Theodor Adorno's neo-marxism and Clement Greenberg's aesthetics of high modernism. For Frampton tectonics is that autonomous, essential element inherent to architecture, just like typology is for Rossi's successors. Tectonics is the mode in which the poetics of construction is manifested in gravitational properties of joint, frame and mass, where an act of making comes into presence in ontological terms. In that sense, tectonics distinguishes critical regionalism from the technological solutions of high modernism and scenographic facades of stylistic postmodernism. Althought critical of modernism, the position of critical regionalism in terms of form still stays faithful to the progressive aspects of modern puristic legacy. Architects who, according to Frampton, achieve tectonic qualities in their architectural work, do so by using an abstract modernist vocabulary of form. As is known, critical regionalism appropriates most of European neo-rationalists (mostly those coming from the Swiss canton of Ticino), followed by the well known architects such as Tadao Ando and Álvaro Siza, but also a number of Catalan architects such as Sostres, Bohigas and Coderch. However, for de Solà-Morales tectonics is just another relapse of the classic conception of architecture insinuating Vitruvius's *firmitas*, *i.e.*, firmness. As opposed to this, he affirms the loss of tectonics, giving several examples from the fields of art and architecture (Richard Serra, Josep Maria Jujol, Konstantin Melnikov, Josef Hoffman, Marcel Duchamp and Walter Pichler), which express the weak, fragile and temporal side. The sculpture *Equal* by the American post-minimalist Serra in de Solà-Morales's words represents a trodimensional language that reflects a conception of the artwork parallel to what he has labeled weak architecture. This is the instance of the surfaces which are in juxtaposition and are superimposed, which almost touch one another without melding.[10]

The next aspect of critical regionalism stands up against universalist pretensions of high modernism for the sake of regional concern for place and topography and for poetic dwelling. Frampton here relies on the *strong* reading of Heidegger from his late phenomenological phase.[11] In addition to poetic and contextual aspects taken from Heidegger's phenomenology of place, Frampton advocates haptic, corporal and tactile experience of architecture relatable to the phenomenology of body in Merleau-Ponty. By referring to Massimo Cacciari,[12] de Solà-Morales questions Frampton's naive faith in a past order in which building, dwelling, and thinking were considered a unity, which as such allows poetic dwelling. He saw Frampton's putting to work these Heidegger's categories as merely attempts at restoring an old historical and rural order that has little or no sense in the context of contemporary urban and metropolitan crisis. After all, it has become sort of a mainstream to have Heidegger's

successors *a priori* discredited for their traditionalist, fervent concern for place and vernacular values at the expense of other architectural concerns, as well as for the *blood and soil* consequences of Heidegger's philosophy.[13]

On the basis of the tendencies he rejected, it is clear that de Solà-Morales wishes to conceive the weak architecture as *the fourth* way (not as stylistic postmodernism, not as fundamentalism, not as critical regionalism) by which architecture could pass from modernism to postmodernism. In his opinion, weak architecture is the arhitecture of small gestures which creates a great impact precisely owing to its weaknesses – fragile, ephemeral, non-aggressive, non-violent and tangential nature. In addition, this is a fragmentary architecture created in a free play of different parts, clippings gathered from modernism, and through their collecting, overlapping, convergence, divergence in the processes of juxtaposition and superposition.

These are all recognizable theses, even identical imperative models of *Verwindung* of modernism by means of which de Solà-Morales a year earlier had already discribed and explained Catalan postmodern architecture. On top of that, in *Arquitectura débil*de Solà-Morales will once again put to work and elaborate in more detail the model of reception he previously elaborated in *Architettura minimale* in terms of *decorum.* In de Solà-Morales's words, by accepting a certain level of weakness, weak architecture is conscientiously pulling back to the background. In this way, weak architecture is always *decorative*, for it elegantly and without a wish to dominate accentuates and enriches the existing reality by means of superficial and peripheral – decorative properties.[14] These are the exact reasons why the aesthetic experience is a suitable model for a weak construction of the truth and reality. Given than the aesthetic experience in postmodernity no longer has a foundation, does not set standards and is far removed from any pretensions to the totality of the ontological system, it is, as such, compatible with the peripheral status of weak architecture. In this kind of a setting, *Architettura minimale* shows itself as a palimpsest for *Arquitectura débil*: both Catalan and weak architecture consist of arbitrary, eclectic fragments of modernism, and they are intended for a direct, syneasthetic and visceral, and not exclusively rational experience.

WHO ARE ACTUALLY WEAK ARCHITECTS?

The problem with *Arquitectura débil* pointed out by Michael Hays is that de Solà-Morales does not specify the architecture that qualifies as weak.[15] Jugding from this claim, it is most likely that Hays did not have in his possession

Architettura minimale while reading *Arquitectura débil*, for otherwise he would have found himself able to recognize the initial context of weak architecture, conceived in the example of Catalan architecture. It also seems that Hays had not read the original version of the article *Arquitectura débil* published in *Quaderns*, which contains several pages that have been left out of the numerous reprints,[16] and in which de Solà-Morales refers to the already mentioned Jujol, Melnikov, Hoffman, and Pichler as examples of weak architecture in practice. However, Hays is trying to shed light on and explain the concept of weak architecture by putting specific examples to work. He notices that even before 1980, there existed an architecture that was capable of producing a concept of weak thought, though we could not have called it that then. In some fragmentary architectural work of smaller scale, such as Frank Gehhry's home in Santa Monica, Rafeal Moneo's town hall in Logroño, Siza's bank buildings and apartment houses in Baselby Diener & Die*e*ner, Hays has sensed that weak attitude towards modernism. Analyzing these projects throught *Verwindun*g of modernism, Hays recognized a keeping-in-mind of the modernist tradition, a willingness to traverse it once again, but not to return uncritically to its heroism. Instead of heroism as the fundament of modernism, he sees the use of modernist compositional principles with acceptance of the aleatory relation that architecture has with the physical and social context of the city, whose disjunctions and contradictions are inscribed materially in all of this examples. As Hays concludes, weak architecture dispels, distorts and dissolves modernism's confidence and facilitates a sort of convalescence in the fragmentary.

De Solà-Morales would of course agree with Hays' classification of potential weak architects, since the *verwindened* presence of modernism in their formal and poetical choices does not deviate from the priciples set out in *Arquitectura débil* and *Architettura minimale.*What is more, he has already agreed with Hays by assigning weakness as typical of Siza's, Gehry's and even Ando's work.[17] Given that there is no space to detail Hays' lapses, this selection of weak architects leads us to the point. A comparative analysis has shown that (1) in *Architettura minimale* and *Arquitectura débil* de Solà-Morales uses the same theory, *i.e*., the same interpretive models of weak thought (especially *Verwindung* and *decorum*) over which he establishes a relation with the other postmodern architectural tendencies, but (2) the difference in the examples of architectural practices pre- or post-positioned to this theory is particularly interesting, because (3) *Architettura minimale* had represented a limited domain of Catalan architecture, while in *Arquitectura débil* weakness becomes the description of an international architectural panorama.

CRITICAL REGIONALISM *VS* CRITICAL INTERNATIONALISM

The main question is: Does the reason for de Solà-Morales's rejection of postmodern fundamentalism and critical regionalism lie exclusively in their theoretical incompatibility with the *Verwindung* of modernism and with the postulates of weak thought in general? What if the very desire for defining the position of Catalan architecture of the 1980s compared to the leading architectural tendencies of that time was actually the central place in de S*olà-Mora*les' appropriation of weak thought? In order to be theoretically constituted, promoted and maintained, an architectural tendency needs to be provided with a recognizable identity, which is an imperative de Solà-Morales was aware of. This is a place where the benefits of the postmodern theory enter the scene. Underlining theoretical differences from the *others* is used as defence against assimilation of Catalan architecture into the discourses of the other postmodern tendencies.

As is known, together with Ticino's architecture, throughout the 1980s Catalan architecture was often understood as a sattelite of the Italian neo-rationalism, which comes as no surprise given the fact that the formalistic aspects of Catalan architecture have some of Rossi's touches. This is something that not even de Solà-Morales denied, but also he never forgot to reject mental and speculative foundation of Rossi's reconsideration of ideal models and emblematic memories[18] from the context of Catalan architecture.The form can pass, but poetics no. Still, these are not all of the unwanted similarities de Solà-Morales carefully maneuvers with. One could ask why is it that he criticizes postmodern fundamentalism, which is oriented exactly towards the lessons of modernism and the past in general. The answer lies in the manner of turning to modernism. Rethinking modernism from a different point of view cannot be achieved by strictly returning to modernist fundaments. While *Verwindung* suggests reviving the mistakes of the modernity with a different attitude, proponents of postmodern fundamentalism repeat the identical metaphysical positions in their desire to appropriate the modernist origin. Instead of a weakened relation with the modern tradition, in which modernism is passed on as a message from generation to generation, fundamentalists look at modernism as a solid suppost in which they find stability and confirm authenticity before the challenges of the plural postmodern age. In this sense, de Solà-Morales reminds that modernity cannot be critically overcome, but that it is also impossible to return to its true origins. However, the rejection of fundamentalism can be made harder by the fact that Rossi's had also represented fragmentariness in his well known typology of urban fragments. Here important is the difference between Rossi's exclusive fragmentariness and de Solà-Morales' advocating inclusive and equivocal fragmentariness.

As concerns Rossi's explicit fundamentalism, de S*olà-Mora*les to some extent got it right with *Verwindung* of modernism. But, when it comes to Frampton's critical regionalism similarities with weak/Catalan architecture are even more problematic and prominent. De Solà-Morales' and Frampton's dispute about Catalan architecture is not a mistery in architectural discourse, even though as a topic, it is marginally covered.[19] In a series of interviews[20] and texts[21], and precisely in Barcelonian *Quaderns,* so to speak on de Solà-Morales' turf, Frampton kept persistently appropriating postmodern Catalan architecture (Pinon, Viaplana, Lilnas, Lapena, Torres) as one of the significant branches of crtitical regionalism. A theorist such as Frampton, who does not concern himself with fragmentariness and weakness, will in certain architecture find what interests him. Besides, the very formalistic aspects of Catalan architecture cannot prohibit their interpretation in terms of tectonic aspects, vernacular brick tradition or regionalism. On the other hand, by including the greatest stars of critical regionalism (Ando and Siza) in the concept of weak architecture, de Solà-Morales performed an appropriation that is identical to the one Frampton implemented over his Catalan architects.

In addition to the same form, *i.e*., same architects they favorize, the friction between weak/Catalan architecture and critical regionalism is significant even on a theoretical plane. Afterde S*olà-Mora*les' premature death, Frampton amicably described their disagreements in terms of affiliation to different schools of theory (neo-marxism and weak thought) and pointed out the shared interest in phenomenology.[22] Phenomenological bond of the two theorists cannot be neglected. De Solà-Morales's *decorum* in terms of aesthetic experience as a model for reception of weak/Catalan architecture is not far from Frampton's concern for direct, haptic and corporal experience in critical regionalism which is based on ideas of phenomenology of the body. This is an interesting aspect de Solà-Morales may have had intentionally overlooked, aware that in this regard he would have nothing on Frampton.The attitude towards the phenomenology of place stood out as the main difference. Even though de Solà-Morales appriciates Heidegger's thought, he is not – like Frampton – inclined towards the phenomenology of place; rather, he rejects all that is related to regional and vernacular values as something overly sentimental and romantic. Beyond these seemingly benign theoretical discrepancies, there is, as Neitzsche would call it – will to power, manifested in the two theorists competing for authority over Catalan architecture, *i.e*.,for their own theoretical construct. In this battle de Solà-Morales emphasizes the said main theoretical difference concerning regionalism and the phenomenology of place:

> By describing our experience as critical regionalism, Kenneth Frampton unwittingly did us the most backhanded favour possible. The challenge lies in going beyond regionalism, whether this be critical or not, and to find oneself confronted with the metropolitan culture of the advanced Western world.[23]

This distinction has not gone unnoticed by the French theorist Jean-Louis Cohen, who concerning Catalan architecture states the following:

> Barcelona reveals the contours of a stance which is contemporary and, as a whole, new. It is not the 'critical regionalism' alluded to by Kenneth Frampton. Ignasi de Solà Morales had already done justice to that hasty reading of the specific history of Catalan architecture. Barcelona is more one of the places where what I have called 'critical internationalism' and described as the emergent condition of the end of the 20th century appeared. Rather than a tension over certain picturesque components of regional identity used to produce identity, that stance is based on a great permeability to the outside world.[24]

Perhaps it is exactly critical internationalism that is the term best fitting de Solà-Morales' profiling of Catalan architects, who keep up-to-date by travelling and reading reviews of current developments, and are familiar in their own way with the architecture of the past, whether that of their own tradition, or someone else's, and can make appropriate use of it when necessary.[25] Or, in Vattimo's words, this is listening to messages coming from the past and from others (others alongside us as well as other cultures).[26]

CONCLUSION: SPREADING WEAKNESS FROM CATALONIA TO THE WORLD

In spite of de Solà-Morales' rejection of the said postmodern tendencies, it cannot be denied that there is a series of similiarities they have with the weak (among other Catalan) architecture. These are the tendencies unified by critical maneuvering in the space between high modernism and stylistic postmodernism, which mostly represent some kind of working with modernism, *i.e.*, revisioning modernism.In this sense, for de Solà-Morales *Verwindung* played a useful role in separating his theoretical construct from the other, competing (either fundamental, typological, tectonic, vernacular or regional) neo-modernisms. Weak/Catalan architecture is represented as a fregmentary and distorted modernism standing opposite the quest for the most authentic modernism and every essentialistically oriented architecture in general. The weak thought is

instrumentalized the way it is in order to underline the difference, *i.e*., distance between the identity of Catalan architecture from fundamentalism and critical regionalism. In this sense, hidden national ideological implications are hiding behind de Solà-Morales' enthusiasm for Vattimo's philosophy. Consequently, the weak thought is reduced to the by-product of a wish to conquer, preserve and defend authenticity of Catalan architecture.

Paradoxically, identity and authenticity are exactly those metaphysical properties de Solà-Morales allegedly fought against, as someone who thinks in terms of weak thought. His descriptions of Catalan architecture are always carefully balanced in order not to fall into the metaphysical trap. When he says that Catalan architecture has grown into a language with its own character, de Solà-Morales modestly adds that the reasons for this were merely the modernism without overstatement or wise mixture of different components. No matter how much he insisted on representing Barcelona as a city which conscientiously accepts peripheral position of architectural culture compared to the centers, which in those days were New York or Venice, or no matter how he claimed that Catalan architecture is free of universalist prejudice suggesting their solutions are applicable everywhere, de Solà-Morales will in *Arquitectura débil* refute himself. If the initial context of weak thought in *Architettura minimale* was Catalan architecture, in *Arquitectura débil* de Solà-Morales expands this initial context, citing examples from the rest of the world. In terms of the same interpretive models he used to explain architecture locally in Catalonia, he later on colonizes the entire world-wide architectural scene, which is not a negligible transgression for someone who considers himself an advocate of weak thought.

NOTES

1 See: Gianni Vattimo, ”Dialettica, differenza, pensiero debole,“ in *Il pensiero debole,* eds. Gianni Vattimo, and Pier Aldo Rovatti (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1983), 12-28.

2 Gianni Vattimo,”Introduzione,“ in *La fine della modernità* (Milano: Garzanti, 1985), 9.

3 Gianni Vattimo,”Verwindung: Nihilism and the Postmodern in Philosophy,“ *SubStance* 16/2 (1987): 12.

4 Gianni Vattimo,”Dialectics, difference and weak thought,“ *Graduate Faculty Philosphy Journal* 10 (1984): 157.

5 See: Gianni Vattimo,”Ornamento monumento,“ in *La fine della modernità* (Milano: Garzanti, 1985), 87-97.; Hans-Georg Gadamer, ”The Ontological Foundation of the Ocassional and the Decorative, “in *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 1975), 138-152.

6 For how this book resonated in the discourse of minimalism in architecure, see: Vladimir Stevanović, ”Ignasi de Solà-Morales and Minimalism“ in *European Theories in Former Yugoslavia*, eds. Miško Šuvaković et al. (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 160-166.

7 See: Oriol Bohigas, Peter Buchanan and Vittorio M. Lampugnani, *Barcelona: City and Architecture 1980-1992* (New York: Rizolli, 1991); Joan Busquets, ”Barcelona’s recovery in the eighties,“ in *Barcelona: the urban revolution of the compact city* (Cambridge: Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2005), 343-409.

8 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *Architettura minimale a Barcelona: construire sulla città construita* (Milano: Electa/ Quaderni di Lotus 5, 1986), 16.

9 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *Architettura minimale*, 19.

10 Ignasi de Solà-Morales,”Arquitectura débil,“ *Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme* 175 (1987): 76.

11 See: Martin Heidegger, ”Building Dwelling Thinking“ and ”Poetically Man Dwells,“ in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1975), 143-159; 211-227.

12 See: Massimo Cacciari, ”Eupalinos or Architecture,“ *Oppositions* 21 (1980): 106-116.

13 See: Jean-François Lyotard, ”Domus and Megalopolis,“ in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 191-204.; Neal Leach, ”The Dark Side of the Domus,“ *The Journal of Architecture* 3/1 (1998): 31-42.

14 Ignasi de Solà-Morales,”Arquitectura débil,“ 84.

15 Michael K. Hays, ”Ignasi de Solà-Morales: Weak Architecture [1987]“ in *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge & London: The MIT Press, 1998), 614.

16 See: Ignasi de Solà-Morales, ”Arquitectura débil,“ in *Diferencias: Topografía de la arquitectura contemporánea* (Barcelona: Editora Gustavo Gili,1995), 61-78.; Ignasi de Solà-Morales, ”Weak Architecture,“ in *Differences: Topographies of Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1997), 57-71.

17 Siza’s sketch from 1988, showing the building of the Faculty of Architecture in Oporto, is included as an illustration at the beginnig of the text *Weak Architecture*, in the English edition of de Solà-Morales’s collected essaystitled *Differences*. In one of the texts of this bookde Solà-Morales speaks of Siza, Gehry and Ando as of the authors who create weak architecture. See: Ignasi de Solà-Morales,”From Authonomy to Untimeliness[1991],“ in *Differences: Topografies of Contemporary Architecture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996), 88.

18 Ignasi de Solà-Morales, ”Arquitectura Catalana 1990,“*Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme*187 (1990):43.

19 See: Javier Castanon, ”Barcelona: City and Architecture 1980-1992; Quaderns d’Arquitectura i Urbanisme nos. 186, 187 and 188/189,“*AA Files* 23 (1992): 110-111.

20 Pere J. Ravetlatt, ”Europa y la continuidad del Proyecto Moderno: Entrevisa a Kenneth Frampton,“*Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme* 168 (1986): 143.; Wilfred Wang, ”America-Europa: Entrevista a Kenneth Frampton, *Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme* 175 (1987): 130.

21 See: Kenneth Frampton, ”Barcelona 1990: En busca de una linea laconica,“ *Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme* 187 (1990): 52-63.; Kenneth Frampton, ”Sobre la tradició tectónica a la forma Catalana Contemporania,“*Quaderns d’ Arquitectura I Urbanisme* 207-209 (1995): 18-27.

22 Kenneth Frampton, ”In Memoriam Ignasi de Solà-Morales: Una reflexión sobre las diferencias,“in *Teorías de la arquitectura*: *memorial Ignasi de Solà-Morales*, eds. Josep Maria Montaner and Fabián Gabriel Pérez (Barcelona: Edicions de la Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2003),19.
Ignasi de Solà-Morales, ”Arquitectura Catalana 1990,“ 45.

23 Jean-Louis Cohen,”L’enseignement de Barcelone: vingt ans de projets urbains et leur réception,“

24 *Projet urbain* 14 (1998): 26.
Ignasi de Solà-Morales, *Architettura minimale a Barcelona: construire sulla cit*à *construita*, 16.

25 Gianni Vattimo,”Dialectics, difference and weak thought,“ 157.

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REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY ISSUE BETWEEN GLOBALISM AND LOCALISM: THE CASE OF HONG KONG PAVILION AT THE VENICE BIENNALE

A B S T R A C T

In this presentation Lee Kit's art installation at the Venice Biennale in 2013 is used as a case study of the ways in which artworks represent and help to construct representations of Hong Kong's challenge to and subversion of an aggressive and powerful rising China. In contrast with the explicit social critique and grandeur of artworks exhibited in the China Pavilion, Lee Kit's art installation – "an impressionistic house" – in the Hong Kong Pavilion appears not only abstract but mundane and even trivial. As the artist was handpicked by the organizer, without any prior public consultation, there has been heated public debate on the extent to which it is representative of Hongkongness. I argue that the apparently trivial and ordinary elements of Lee's work constitute rather than reflect the new generation of Hong Kong art. These elements may also be part of a strategy for negotiating the political identity inescapably imposed on Hong Kong by China. Hong Kong art now has the potential to distance itself from or express skepticism toward the grand narratives presented by China, to paraphrase the writing of art historian David Clarke (1997). I believe part of the aims of the international conference on "Hong Kong as Method" held at the University of Hong Kong in December 2014 is to use the ordinary to destabilize and challenge Hong Kong's taken-for-granted political identity and thereby promote diversity and inter-Asian cultural dynamics.

Eva Kit Wah Man
Hong Hong Baptist University

KEY WORDS

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HONG KONG'S PARTICIPATION IN THE VENICE BIENNALE: A BRIEF HISTORY

Hong Kong (HK) has participated in the Venice Biennale (VB) seven times since 2001. Its objectives are repeatedly stated as follows: to establish HK's image as an artistic and culturally engaged city; to promote creativity and develop international awareness among local artists through cultural exchange; and to create an environment conducive to the long-term development of the visual arts in HK. Patrick Ho, Chairperson of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) from 1999 to 2005, also suggested that Hong Kong first entered the exhibition to compete with neighboring cities such as Taiwan, which has participated in the VB consistently since 1995, and Singapore, which has taken part irregularly over the years. According to Ho, if HK had missed the opportunity to exhibit at the VB, it would have been "left lagging behind for another 2.5 years, with adverse consequences for our international image."[1] Competition among Asian regions is certainly a powerful motivation to participate, as the VB is regarded as the world's largest international cultural exchange event.

The aims and objectives of HK's participation in the VB were well articulated by the curator of its first exhibition, Johnson Chang. Chang explained that the exhibition had to suit the intellectual climate of the art field, with representatives who were at that time based mainly in Europe and America. It had to convey the essence of HK's creativity, which would surprise viewers accustomed to mainland Chinese and Taiwanese contemporary art. According to Chang, HK artists are much more individualistic than their mainland Chinese and Taiwanese counterparts, and place a greater emphasis on personal experience in their approach to art. The challenge facing Chang was to turn this experience into an artistic statement.[2] From 2003 to 2011, the HKADC openly invited groups and individuals in the art world to submit proposals for exhibitions; however, the rules changed when the council began to collaborate with M+ (a museum of visual culture due to open in the West Kowloon Cultural District) in 2013.

In 2001, the year of the 49th VB, the HKADC and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department formed a work group to nominate 35 curators, of whom 16 were invited to submit exhibition proposals. Next, an assessment panel was set up to select one individual or team to curate the HK Pavilion at the VB.

In 2003 and 2005, the HKADC issued an open invitation for exhibition proposals for the 50th and 51st VBs. Assessment panels were again set up to select curators/curatorial teams to participate in the VBs in collaboration with the HKADC.

A similar process was used to select curators/curatorial teams for the 52nd VB in 2007, the 53rd VB in 2009 and the 54th VB in 2011. However, each of the final announcements met with widespread protest. Most of the objections concerned the selection process, and some turned into legal disputes.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN M+ AND THE HKADC

On June 22, 2012, the HKADC announced that it would collaborate with M+ in preparation for the VB 2013. As the curators employed by the M+ had considerable experience in running international exhibitions, and numerous networking connections at the VB, the HKADC expected this arrangement to prevent complaints about the selection process. However, the council again received criticism from the visual-arts community, albeit no more severe than previous objections. In a statement made for the media, one representative of the art world observed that "the policy change was made in a black box. Its communication and articulation made the public confused about the roles of the HKADC and M+."

On July 3, 2012, members of the local art community announced two major concerns in a petition entitled "We Want the Truth."[3] First, they were troubled that the HKADC was no longer openly seeking proposals from the art community; second, they were concerned by the sum of HK$10 million required to fund the project. The members of the art community responsible for the petition held a forum at the HK Fringe Club on October 3, 2012, which was attended by Wilfred Wong, Chairperson of the HKADC, and Lars Nittve, Executive Director of M+. However, "things became sour." During the forum, I observed that the audience's strong negative reaction to the HKADC's collaboration with M+ was due to the insufficient support and attention provided for local visual artists over the years, and their limited opportunity to gain international exposure. They were skeptical about Nittve's understanding of HK art, and expressed concern that his decisions as a curator would adversely affect the development of the region's art. Nittve even announced a plan to present solo exhibitions in the HK Pavilion for five consecutive VBs in the subsequent 10 years. The HKADC and M+ made this decision without public consultation.

Finally, the HKADC and M+ chose Lee Kit to represent HK at the 55th VB in 2013, with an installation named "You (you)." The HKADC and M+ each contributed HK$ 5 million to fund the project. In late June 2014, the HKADC released a document entitled "Summary of the Evaluation Report on the Venice Art Biennale 2013," confirming its plan for curating the HK Pavilion at the VB in 2015. In this document, the HKADC stated that in collaborating with M+, it aimed "to provide the best environment for our artists to showcase

their creativity and talent and to achieve the best marketing outcomes for HK's exhibition in Venice."[4] The increased funding was intended to improve the quality of the HK Pavilion. For example, lavish efforts were made to renovate Hong Kong's small rented building at the entrance to the Arsenale, partly to help it compete with the huge pavilion space in the same area granted to the People's Republic of China in 2011.

The HKADC stated in the report that in its "past experience of organizing exhibitions, curating quality had varied considerably due to the limited number of experienced and capable local curators. Due to a shortage of manpower and administrative problems, it was difficult for both independent curators and curatorial teams to cope with the sheer amount of preparation work, such as the formation of curatorial strategies, financial management, administration, publicity and marketing. The curators involved in each Biennale were unable to pass their experience and insights on to their successors, resulting in discontinuity."[5]

In all of its press releases and reports, the HKADC praised M+ for its professionalism and internationalism, in contrast with local curators, who were described as inexperienced and incapable of handling the work required to prepare a successful exhibition. However, members of the local art community did not believe that the collaboration of the two bodies would truly help local art development. They felt that the rhetoric of professionalism and internationalism was part of M+'s strategy to monopolize the market and squeeze out local artists.[6]

SELECTION OF LEE KIT BY M+

M+ developed the following criteria for the selection of an artist to represent HK at the VB:

1. The artist must be a Hong Kong resident.
2. The artist must have experience of producing large-scale visual arts exhibitions.
3. The artist must be capable of producing an art exhibition with an international outlook.
4. The artist's artistic achievements must be both locally and internationally recognized.

Nittve made the following remarks after naming Lee Kit as HK's representative in a press conference. "Lee Kit is to me one of the leading artists in HK's thriving contemporary art scene. I have during my years here been repeatedly touched by how Lee Kit so seemingly effortlessly manages to mix a deep

understanding of contemporary art with something very personal and intimate. His work is at the same time uncompromising and extraordinarily open for participation, intimate and at the same time public. It truly embodies the fundamental and wonderful uncertainty at the heart of all good art – while bringing together Western and ancient Asian cultural traditions. I am totally confident that Lee Kit has the capacity to make the best out of the perfectly located but far from easy exhibition venue that HK has in Venice!"[7]

Who is Lee Kit? Lee Kit was born in HK in 1978. While studying at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in the early 2000s, he was selected to hold a solo exhibition in Fo Tan, entitled "Painting Furniture." Although he creates art in numerous media – from painting, video and sculpture to installations and performance – his works are highly recognizable, with a characteristic color palette of subtle pastels and a shared concern with aspects of daily life. The following examples are representative of Lee Kit's recent style and choice of materials: "Something in my Hand" (2010-2012, Layers of used towel, lacquer); "How to Set Up a Room for Johnny" (Jan. 14 - Feb. 12, 2012, Location: Osage Kwun Tong); "Henry (Have You Ever Been This Low?)" (Nov. 18, 2011 - Jan. 14, 2012, Western Front Society, Vancouver).

One month before the HKADC announced its collaboration with M+, Lee won the Art Futures Award at the 2012 Hong Kong International Art Fair.

Lee Kit has participated in group exhibitions in leading museums across the world, such as the "No Soul for Sale" exhibition at the Tate Modern. Lee was represented in the Lombard Freid Projects in New York, and participated in the New Museum Triennial and the Liverpool Biennial in 2012. His contributions to recent exhibitions at museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, the Tate Modern and the Hong Kong Museum of Art seem to confirm Nittve's perceptions of the international expectations of HK art. At the 55th VB in June 2013, The solo he held in the HK Pavilion, was in a small building located at the water entrance to the Arsenale, which is rented by HKADC for the duration of the VB. The exhibition received international critical acclaim, and Lee Kit was selected as one of the "five artists to watch" at the VB.

Some of the responses made by international critics to Lee's exhibition in the HK Pavilion, along with an official assessment of HK's contribution, are provided below:

1. "'You (you)' reflects the expansion of the artist's ambition. Outside the pavilion, Mr. Lee has set up a pair of standard guard booths, ubiquitous in Hong Kong; inside, he has built a domestic mise- en- scene through

which people can walk, guided by certain clues. However, the stories behind these new works are as lonely as ever. One untitled pair of works includes a painting bearing the scrawled words, 'He stepped on his fingernail.' Underneath the canvas, a row of speakers broadcast the first measures of various ballads. Mr. Lee said that the aim of this combination is to conjure the gut-twisting pain felt when certain songs about lost love are played; the act of listening only wounds the listener, like the act of treading on one's own toes."[8]

2. "In the exhibition entitled 'You (you),' Lee Kit is once again exploring the ambiguous territory between private and public spaces, and the power of installations to evoke emotions connected to real and imagined memories. The exhibition conveys the essence of Lee Kit's art."[9]
3. "Lee Kit has gone to the opposite extreme in an exhibition so restrained and denuded that visitors can be forgiven for thinking, at least initially, that there is nothing there—just a shirt on a hanger, a plastic glass on a shelf, a faint painting inadvertently left on a wall, a table, some flickering video monitors, someone vacuuming up dust. (Image) Lee, who now divides his time between HK and Taiwan, speaks of his work as evoking memories, ephemeral feelings, questions about identity and subtle domestic dramas. This interpretation is echoed in press materials released by the pavilion's big-gun organizers at HK's forthcoming Museum for Visual Culture: Lars Nittve, the museum's Executive Director, and Yung Ma, its Assistant Curator. However humble Lee's objects and materials, there is no denying the intellectual appeal of his aesthetic."[10]
4. "Visiting [Lee Kit's] exhibition was one of my greatest surprises and most enjoyable experiences at the Bienniale. Everything was perfect: from the kindness of the people who received us to the press-release dossier. My encounters with the space, the installation and Lee Kit's work were very moving. The simplicity of the installation contained all of the artist's aesthetic concerns. The tensions between light and color, structure and form, rhythm and harmony were constructed by a complex grammar full of signs and symbols that the spectator has to decipher."
5. "Lee Kit's work offers an experience in which art is not taught, but transmitted; in which the path to follow is not determined by the ideas that might stage successive works, but by their glints, echoes, shadows and reflections, which reduce the distance between art and life. His installations direct our attention to the things we find in life, subjected to tiny variations, which circulate between the sensorial and the intuitive, between the association of ideas and the games of words, and between essences, subtleties, the intuitive and the inexplicable."[11]

According to the assessors' report, the success of the exhibition was chiefly due to the increased budget created by the combined resources of the HKADC and M+, and the decision made by the curatorial team to sensitively transform the space through renovation. The assessor noted that this investment will benefit all future exhibitions in this space. In addition, the assessor praised the selection of the artist, the curatorial team's lightness of touch with regard to the artist's practice, and the decision to avoid any agenda of "national representation." Lars Nittve's involvement in the project was also commended, and Nittve was described as a leading museum professional in the field of contemporary art. The report also suggested that the exhibition may have benefited from the worldwide interest in M+ and the West Kowloon Cultural District project.[12]

The critics' responses and the assessment report were cited in the HKADC's reply to the local art community. The HKADC stated that its decision to collaborate with M+ in preparation for future VBs was based on these positive appraisals.

M+ clearly intended to make HK's participation in the VB eye-catching and extravagant. Two hundred prominent individuals from the art world attended the exhibition's dinner reception, for which a fish market in Venice was transformed into a surreal and artistically designed setting colored throughout in Lee Kit's trademark blue. With such careful preparation, the event could not fail to recreate and rejuvenate public perceptions of HK art. One might ask whether Lee Kit and his work have been able to withstand this intensive process of remaking.

KEY CONCEPTS IN LEE KIT'S WORKS

The M+ team allowed Lee Kit free rein in creating the exhibition for the VB. His strategy was not simply to provide a retrospective of art already well known in the HK art community, but to produce new works. He was clearly aware of the distinctiveness of HK's artistic identity, but preferred not to emphasize it. He believed that even without such an emphasis, his works would reflect his perceptions of HK's situation and his own perspective as a HK citizen. He appeared very relaxed, but shied away from public participation: "I don't want too much pressure. I just want to do what I like." Yung Ma, the assistant curator who worked with Nittve, indicated that although the everyday objects in Lee Kit's works reflect personal memories and experience, they also evoke collective memories and shared experiences.[13] The curatorial statement made by the M+ team is provided below:

> In the exhibition 'You (you)' at the 55th VB, Lee Kit continued his exploration of the quotidian realm of everyday life by recollecting personal and collective moments associated with emotions from the not-

> so-distant past. He also formulated a series of spatial reconfigurations that coordinate and alternate between 'concealment' and 'revelation'. These reconfigurations departed from the title of the exhibition, which alludes to something universal yet non-existent, to reflect on the construction of places, memories and time through the notion of absence. The exhibition juxtaposed artworks in diverse media, such as moving images, performance, ready-made objects, found images and lighting. Although none of these artworks were representational or pictorial, they were all deeply related to Lee Kit's personal surroundings and experiences. His method of painting is personal and emotive, documenting the passage of time with networks of repeated lines and squares on fabric. These hand-painted pieces of fabric, documents of private experience, were used in the exhibition as ordinary functional items, such as tablecloths, curtains and picnic blankets. They may once have been part of Lee Kit's daily life, but have now been made public in this exhibition.[14]

Lee Kit's 'sparse yet intimate' installations are part of his ongoing attempt to form and suggest traces of immaterial dialogues and relationships. He meticulously arranges various elements within these installations to reveal the process of painterly composition. His use of repeating patterns, mundane objects and other ephemeral materials in the VB exhibition represents his artistic approach in progress. Critics regarded these materials function as triggers for emotions and sensations, evoking the texture of viewers' memories, both real and imagined.

In *ArtReview*'s questionnaire, Lee Kit responded as follows: "The exhibition is about 'how absence is reflected in the construction of places, memories and time.' […] Creating an exhibition that I am happy with is more important than representing Hong Kong.'"[15]

Some additional responses made by critics outside HKADC's invited assessement should be noted.

1. "Lee Kit's [exhibition], located outside the main entrance of the Arsenale, creates a sense of dislocation and othering, and it is consistently sparse. It is compelling, charged with paradoxical sensations of intimacy and alienation, boredom and tenderness. […] Lee's strength is his unobtrusive ability to simply set a tone, create a mood, trigger a memory or convey a sensation. […] We are left to fill in the gaps with our own personal recollections. Indeed, the exhibition isn't all about Lee, it's all about '(you)'."[16]

2. "Mr. Lee began his career as a painter. Household fabrics—sheets, towels, tablecloths and curtains—provide a canvas for his abstract works. After painting these fabrics, he often incorporates them into his daily life, using them for their original functions and making them part of a continuous performance."[17]
3. "Traversing private domestic settings and public exhibition spaces, Lee's hand-painted fabrics are part of a wide range of signifying practices. However, Lee continues to emphasize the minimalism of his works, insisting that they have no extrinsic meaning. […] [They] serve more as passive observers witnessing ordinary moments in the artist's life."[18]
4. "As a result of the artist and curators' reconfiguration of the physical site [of the VB exhibition], this [later] exhibition juxtaposes new commissions with installations from the exhibition in the Biennale, such as daily objects, moving images, sound, found images and paintings, which cross personal, social and political boundaries. […] One significant aspect of this exhibition is its mood of melancholy and anger. […] And the M+ assistant curator Yung Ma said that 'the emotions were more transitional [in Venice] and this time they are more extreme.' […] The feeling of anger is a response to recent social events."[19]
5. Another commentator (Tsui 2014) emphasized the minimalism of Lee Kit's exhibition and compared it with the art tradition heralded by Duchamp (especially Fountain, 1917). The exhibition was also compared with Eastern minimalist movements in art, such as HK's New Ink Painting Movement. Martin Creed described an "ascetic positivity" in Lee Kit's works. However, the critic also commented that the clear-cut visual imagery and metaphysical inclinations of Lee Kit's installation may "lead to serious withdrawal consequences from audiences due to a lack of connectivity." The writer ended his essay by expressing the hope that Lee Kit will "tell us more of himself through his works."[20]

Lee Kit explained his work as follows. "I minimized the message to the point that I only needed to place the object. […] [The message] then became my attitude." He described the art scene in HK as a place of retreat from the highly political and competitive atmosphere of the neighboring mainland China. Despite acknowledging that HK is an inescapable premise of his work, Lee maintains a distance from the heated debate on the city's identity: "without HK, I would not have done this kind of work, but I don't really like to focus on the HK context." Within a culture consumed by cycles of productivity and efficiency, Lee finds solitude as well as creative freedom in the liminal spaces of the city.[21]

THE MAKING OF HONG KONG ART

What are the implications of participating in international art events such as the VB? Whereas contemporary art is often regarded as abstruse, when national boundaries and cultural identities remain very real for most people. Artistic creativity that reflects regional identity offers insights into the complex issue of globalization and its effects on various disciplines. What role should an artist such as Lee Kit, who has been selected to represent HK in the VB, play in the international arena?

HK's artistic identity is a work of cultural production in progress. David Clarke offers a detailed account of the contribution of local artists to the cultural hybridity of HK, with particular attention to the complex ways in which HK artists relate to the cultural narratives of Western modernism and Chinese traditionalism.[22] Artists such as Lui Shou-kwan (who pioneered the New Ink Movement in the 1970s) and Van Lau take Chinese culture as their primary framework. However, their projects of modernization are less clear. According to David Clarke, such artists are unwilling to criticize pre-existing images of Chinese culture; instead, they merely juxtapose signifiers of modernity and the West with signifiers of "Chineseness." Wucius Wong, who belongs to the so-called "middle" generation of HK artists, consciously accentuates rather than blurs distinctions between East and West in his paintings. His strategy is to counterbalance Chinese references with signs of modernity.

In contrast, Luis Chan's later paintings and the sculptures produced by Antonio Mak in the 1980s diverge from this binary representation of China and the West, creating space for the artistic expression of "Hong Kongness." Compared with the missionary spirit of Lui Shou-kwan's efforts to fuse Chineseness with Western modernist art, Chan's approach is considerably more playful and tolerant of heterogeneity. He adapts Western modernism with great originality, ease and candor. He draws on both Chinese art and abstract expressionism, and thoroughly integrates Chinese text into Western media, expressing his own style freely. Mak's references to both Western and Chinese culture offer an ironic and distanced perspective on HK. He also elaborates on the theme of opposition, providing powerful political insights and critical parody. Clarke argues that Wong's hybrid style emerged from modernism's first interaction with HK visual culture, whereas Chan's paintings and Mak's sculptures belong to the period of transition from modernism to postmodernism. Clarke thus conceives of this era as a series of "moments of broader cultural change."[23]

Critics have also noted that the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Future of Hong Kong and the 1989 Tienanmen incident strengthened the urge to represent HK's cultural identity in art, in parallel with more vociferous calls

for democracy in local political contexts. In Clarke's words, "Hong Kongness has its distance from or scepticism about grand narratives – it is a species of rootless, non-essentializing, or postmodern identity which might be usefully considered by those concerned with cultural identity politics."[24] Scholars have argued that certain kinds of hybrid art are likely to be officially endorsed and promoted against a political backdrop of "one country, two systems." Clarke mentions at least two historically distinct varieties of hybrid art. He predicts that a similar semiotic struggle will follow in local art. However, Lee Kit's work is free of any tendency to represent China and the West in binary form. Does his work perfectly fit the description of HK art by M+? Why should his art be promoted an exemplary form of visual culture of HK?

LEE KIT'S WORK AND HK ART

Recently, critics have made additional observations on the development of HK art, especially artists' responses to HK's return to China. Some examples are provided below.[25]

1. HK art constitutes a fractured field of competing cultural paradigms, which reflect oblique strategies for invoking a sense of local autonomy in cultural terms.
2. Due to the lack of a national framework for discourse about HK identity, techniques such as fabrication, appropriation and mimicry have been foregrounded, accompanied by a superficial retreat to the private and an emphasis on the personal and the somatic.
3. Due to the lack of a "high art" tradition in HK, HK art has a local language, and is part of popular and material culture.

Critics regard these strategies as effective ways of fashioning a competitive social identity in a world of externally created and imposed social facts and meanings.

What insights, if any, do these observations offer into Lee Kit's art and artistic strategies? Before attempting to answer this question, it is crucial to note that Lee's preferred medium, installation art, is also the art form most frequently used by visual artists in HK. The popularity of this medium among HK artists has several implications, as follows.[26]

1. Local artists fashion their own languages by recombining, rearranging, exchanging and incorporating materials from everyday life to articulate new interpretations of personal, cultural and historical events.
2. Installation art offers a means of negotiating with the establishment through the artistic construction of situations and conceptual frameworks.

3. Installation art is a dynamic and interactive art form that allows an audience to physically participate in the artistic setting and help to formulate the meanings of the works.
4. Finally, we may infer that an alternative HK "reality" has been constructed by the creators of these installations, whose use of local sentiments and local materials prevents their work from merely imitating Western art.

It is generally assumed that the response of most local artists to the everyday experience of post-colonial HK is individualistic, and expressed in multiple art forms. The creative strategy of HK artists is to formulate their own artistic propositions in response to external changes. Their artistic endeavors are organized around personal experiences and exploration, although not to the exclusion of social and political themes.[27] The preferred subjects of HK artists are the search for personal identity by tracing personal history, experiments with the integration of technology and expressive media, the relationship between private (experience) and public (exhibitions), and personal responses to social and political events. They suggest that the lack of both a past and a historical vision helps to make life real and immediate. The scenes depicted seem always to be foregrounded with clarity and lucidity, hiding nothing. Johnson Chang's claim that HK's cultural condition is characterized by a sense of naked transparency may accurately describes Lee Kit's work, although his art, at the same time, also explores disappearance, individualism, personal, private and secret experience, and self-contentment.[28]

Johnson Chang, the curator of HK's first exhibition at the VB, notes that events held at the HK Pavillion"[i]t is a show about Hong Kong, but it is also a show about a strategy for modern urban living, which most people from most metropolises can understand."[17] What else can such people read in HK art? In parallel with the economic reforms implemented by Deng Xaoping, mainland Chinese art took a new direction in the 1980s. It has been observed that Western interest in recent Chinese art was piqued by the emergence of China as a player in the global political arena. As a result, the art of HK received less attention, despite the modernizing influence of the New Ink movement in the late 1960s, and the rejection of the master narratives of both China and the West by postmodern HK artists.[30] For instance, in honor of its first exhibition at the VB in 2011, China was given a vast area of unused factory space in which to construct the China Pavilion. China's and HK's pavilions are at opposite ends of the Arsenale exhibition hall, and the former has monopolized viewers' attention, due to China's rapid rise and opening up. The opening of the China Pavilion at the VB had a huge audience, and its first and second exhibitions were curated to display every detail of China's artistic production with grandeur and on a large scale, in proportion with the nation's population.

Clarke's claim that HK art works to affirm HK identity or subjecthood, and to some extent helped to create it, seems valid. However, one must ask whether HK art truly tends to express local cultural identity obliquely and negatively rather than directly and positively; and if so, why. Explanations were given as follow, agreeable or not, using HK as method[31]:

1. HK artists' oblique and negative representations of HK identity disaffirm the incorporation of HK into China's national identity, opening up an alternative space for Hong Kongness.
2. Mainland Chinese artists tend to conceive of Chinese culture as a homogeneous national framework, whereas HK artists are more concerned with the distinctions – both physical and psychological – between the ex-colony and China.
3. HK artists prefer to use items from popular and material culture and pre-existing objects as resources in their art.
4. HK artists seek to maintain pre-existing patterns of HK life, and fear that such patterns may be lost or "disappear."

Critics in the fields of art and culture regard the latter phenomenon as a form of nostalgia, and conclude that "much of the best Hong Kong art is concerned with offering an alternative sense of subjecthood that is not framed in national terms."[32] Identity is thus constructed by both the artistic subjects and their interpreters. These tendencies help to explain HK artists' choice of medium, as an emphasis on the local leads quite naturally to engagement with installation art and photography.

Are these the reasons for Lee Kit's selection by a foreign curator? How does Lee Kit's work relate to HK's identity issues and image when he himself has claimed retreat from the subject? Gordon Mathews suggests that two broad constructions of HK cultural identity exist: "Hong Kong as *a part of* China" and "Hong Kong as *apart from* China".[33]

According to Mathews, the cultural identity of "Hongkongese" that emerged in the 1960s had three main dimensions: 1) "*Chineseness plus affluence/ cosmopolitanism/capitalism,*" 2) "*Chineseness plus English/colonial education/colonialism,*" and 3) "*Chineseness plus democracy/human rights/ the rule of law.*"[34] One may argue that Lee Kit's generation of artists, especially those born in HK after the 1970s, possesses the newly emergent HK identity of affluent cosmopolitan choice; in other words, they have an autonomous, critical, independent Chinese identity that cannot be controlled. This identity certainly seems to be reflected in Lee Kit's installations. The exhibition entitled "You (you)" in the HK pavilion at the VB, which is free and private, represents

a strategy for protecting one's personal integrity. Lee's installation is a self-defense mechanism rather than a means of reaching out. It expresses personal values and an attachment to private, natural experiences, suggesting that the process of making art is always one of intense personal need; it is intentionally obscure and full of closed, self-reflexive references. One might say that Lee's work is basically anti-political; as Johnson Chang suggests, it resembles a private, incommunicable diary.[35] Indeed, this is the predominant perception and conception of HK art today.

THE HK PAVILION AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSING HK IDENTITY

Describing Lee Kit's work as a form of disappearance, Carolyn Cartier (2012) suggests that accounts of HK culture tend to portray the city in terms of the vanishing present and the transitional moment. Therefore, disappearance is regarded as more a cultural strategy than a condition of cultural production. International critics stress the political dimensions of HK art, arguing that contemporary alternative art that addresses disappearance occupies liminal territory and locates its "precariousness" in its lack of definitive status and uncertain future. Accordingly, as Cartier elaborates, "contemporary cultural projects anticipate instabilities of the present, identify hegemonic political economic logics and seek modes of resistance."[36] More recently, international critics have emphasized the multiplicity of representations in HK art of postcolonial life, territoriality, political authority and cultural difference; in short, the dilemma of "Hong Kong in China." As Cartier observes, scholars wonder whether HK artists will be capable of further engaging with and challenging the local and national political economy, enabling their art to transcend "the local." If so, the precariousness of HK art and its logic of cultural production will become entrained within the world's art system.

Does Lee Kit's work produced according to a deliberate strategy or objective? Does it reflect the conditions of cultural production? The emphasis on disappearance in Lee Kit's art connects us to Abbas's (1997) influential work in *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*. Here, Abbas argues for "[an artistic] subjectivity in a space of disappearance," referring to the end of the colonial era, and claims that "postcoloniality is a tactic and a practice" that addresses an imaginary future.[37] The privacy of Lee Kit's style and attitudes is read as a form of "localness" that deviates from the canonical tradition of "Chinese art" and other essentialist positions. However, an essentializing position is also a manifestation of identity politics, whether created by the artist or interpreted as such by local and international critics. Cartier reminds us of Frank Vigneron's statement that "Hong Kong art" does not exist alone; it must be understood in context.[38]

According to Cartier, art that reframes itself outside national contexts represents a politico-aesthetic effort to make inventive and innovative modes of cultural production visible and sensible.[39] More specifically, HK art integrates art with daily urban life, as exemplified in Lee Kit's work.

Having read Lee Kit's interview with the *ArtReview*, I concede the point that Lee's works urge us to consider the political significance of all of the facets of daily HK life, and to build an identity for the city from these seemingly quotidian details. In the interview, the artist explained that his exhibition at the VB shows "how absence is reflected in the construction of places, memories and time."[40] However, Lee continues to emphasize the minimalism of his works, insisting that they have no extrinsic meaning, and that they "serve more as passive observers witnessing ordinary moments in the artist's life."[41] He does describe the art scene in HK as a place of retreat from the highly political and competitive atmosphere of the neighboring mainland China.

This relationship is reflected in the real locations of the HK Pavilion and the China Pavilion at the VB. In the case of Lee Kit, the "HK Method" involves the use of the ordinary to destabilize and challenge the taken-for-granted nature of HK's identity. Lee's work uses the apparently trivial details of ordinary life to construct rather than to reflect the new generation of HK art. This may also be a means of subverting the political identity imposed on HK by China's omnipresent governance. To paraphrase David Clarke, HK art offers the opportunity for HK to distance itself from or express skepticism towards the grand narratives presented by China, and to open up a space for HK identity through irony.[42]

I would like to end the discussion by quoting Richard Vine's observation stated in *Art in America* regarding Lee Kit's work at the VB:

> "What are the consequences of a passive attachment to the mundane in a city like Hong Kong, which is at once a consumerist cauldron and a city under threat of human rights curtailment now that it has been returned to mainland Chinese control? Is there a point at which artistic modesty, pushed too far, becomes its own contrary – a form of overly tasteful ostentation?"[43]

I argue that the act of simultaneously producing and affirming HK art is a strategy intrinsic to HK identity, adopted in the HK Pavilion at the VB not only in Lee Kit's art, but in future solo exhibitions curated by M+ to represent HK on the international stage.

NOTES

1 Hilary Blinks, "A Larger Identity," *Asian Art News* Vol. 11, No. 5(2001): 72.

2 Ibid., 73.

3 Facebook on the protest event, "We Want the Truth", and related materials. https://www.facebook.com/events/413614548705386/, retrieved on November 22, 2014.

4 "Lee Kit to Represent Hong Kong at the 2013 Venice Biennale", http://www.hkadc.org.hk/en/content/web.do?page=pressrelease20120622, posted in June 2012.

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6 Facebook on the protest event, "We Want the Truth", and related materials. https://www.facebook.com/events/413614548705386/, retrieved on November 22, 2014.

7 Hilary Blinks, "A Larger Identity,", 73.

8 Vivienne Chow, "Artist Lee Kit mulls how to put Hong Kong's best foot forward, " *South China Morning Post*, April 22, 2013.

9 JJ Acuna, "Meanwhile in Venice, Lee Kit Makes A Home." The Wanderlister+(Weblog). Accessed Nov 10, 2014. http://www.wanderlister.com/post/51733581659/meanwhile-in-venice-lee-kit-makes-a-home-m#.VQFByI6Ufg8.

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23 Ibid., 396.

24 Ibid., 414.

25 Ibid.

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27 Oscar Ho, *In the point of searching, Chinese faces. New Voices from the Two Coasts, Contemporary Painting Languages* (Taipei: Museum of National Taiwan Art Education, 1998).

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30 David Clarke, "The Culture of a Border Within: Hong Kong Art and China," *Art Journal* Vol. 59, No. 2(2000): 89-90.

31 Ibid., 91-98.

32 Ibid., 100.

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34 Ibid.,72.

35 Johnson Chang, *The Secret Artist: Is Hong Kong Art the True Underground? Private Content: Public View* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Fringe Festival, 1996), 84-86.

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37 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 10.

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CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART: MAO'S LEGACY AND DANTO'S DEFINITION

A B S T R A C T

In this paper I am going to do three things: First, identify several themes in contemporary Chinese art that show its essentially *social* nature and its robust *materialism*. Second, suggest a way that contemporary art in China is *post-modern* in the way that Western art is and claim, moreover, that as different as the themes and recent history of this art are from contemporary Western art, the works satisfy a *definition of art* constructed by Arthur Danto. Finally, in a coda, I present the work of a woman artist that is unlike most recent Chinese and Western art. It positions itself at the far reaches of what art in China is and what Danto's definition allows at the same time that it suggests both the interiority of the *practice* of art and one way of being a woman.

Mary Bittner Wiseman
City University of New York

KEY WORDS

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE ART
WEST
ARTHUR DANTO
END OF ART

MAO'S LEGACY

In Mao's talks at the *Yenan Forum on Art and Literature* in 1942, he said: "The purpose of our meeting today is precisely to ensure that literature and art [...] operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people [...] Our stand is that of the proletariat and the masses." And, further, art must "fit well into the revolutionary machine." One might think that when Deng Xiaoping opened China to Western commerce and culture in 1978 and capitalism began to take root in China, Mao's words would no longer hold sway. However, the views of two recognized Chinese critics, Pauline Yao and Wang Chunchen – the first two winners of the Contemporary Chinese Art Awards for Criticism – show how embedded the ethos of the Mao years still is. Pauline Yao, in *Production Mode: Contemporary Art in China* (2008), said: "My specific task here is to offer a means by which to understand art in China through the social politics of production, rather than through the common interpretive rubric of iconography and representation [...] The ongoing treatment of authorship is intended not to settle questions of attribution and credit, but [to call into question] the cult of individualism that surrounds the capitalist system. Whose labor is encoded in the art object? Whose labor is valued, who does the valuing, and why?"

In a similar vein, in *Art Intervenes in Society – A New Artistic Relationship* (2010), Wang Chunchen said: "Today, if we do not resort to art's social engagement and merely discuss its ontological form, we will [...] fail to touch its real essence [...and] to grasp the historical and social value of artistic beings, leaving only commercial and superficial aesthetic values [...] We shall not look on art as art. We shall rather esteem art as an expression and interpretation of life." These comments highlight not only the legacy of Mao but also the deep down connectedness of things present in the Chinese worldview and for the most part absent from the Western one.

What now about the art that is the subject of their criticism of Yao and Wang? The art they write about and endorse does what Mao said art should do, serve the people, but in ways that would not have been possible prior to 1978, which is to say among other things that the art is historically situated. Here are four exhibitions that exemplify this: two are protests, *Warming Winter* (2009) and *The Ninth Wave* (2014). Two are pleas, *Hope Tunnel* (2010) and *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* (2004). The protests are against things the government did or allowed to happen. The pleas are to viewers not to allow a headlong rush into a capitalist future undermine Chinese traditional virtues and values. These works are, in the words of Wang and Yao, intervening in society and reminding their readers of the various kinds of labor that go into producing a work of art – from those who made the materials used in the work, to those who, for example, made the boat and the animals in *The Ninth Wave* and transported and repaired

the train in *Hope Tunnel.* An artist never creates *ex nihilo*. She could not do what she does without the work of others. The production of an artwork is social insofar as it involves myriad workers, including those in the galleries and museums that sell and exhibit the work once it is finished. This is to construe the object itself as product of all the labor that went into its creation, its circulation, and its conservation.

One protest exhibition was staged in response to artists' studios in the Chaoyang district in Beijing being razed to make way for urban development. The artists from the Zhengyang Art Zone protested in a series of performance pieces called *Warming Winter.* In one, they lay down in the ruins on December 29, 2009, and in another, the artist Wu Yiqiang performed nude at the site on January 10, 2010. The other exhibition, made to protest the pollution in the Huangpu River in Shanghai, was also site-specific. In *The Ninth Wave* (2014), Cai Guo-Qiang sent a boat filled with 99 fabricated animals down the Huangpu. The title is from a painting made in Russia in 1850 by Ivan Aivazovsk that shows people clinging for their lives to a boat in the midst of a storm and refers to the belief that waves increase in strength until the ninth one, after which the series begins again. About the exhibition, I quote from a review posted online in August 2014: "In Shanghai, famed Chinese star artist Cai Guo-Qiang has struck a chord with his latest work, *The Ninth Wave*, a spectacular installation commenting on the country's disastrous environmental policies. The work, at the city's Power Station of Art, has smashed attendance records for the institution, which is China's first state-run contemporary art center, attracting some 20,000 visitors since it opened in July. For Shanghai residents, the sick animals resonate with recent history: last year, the carcasses of 16,000 pigs floated down the [Huangpu] river, a very visible reminder of the terrible state of China's environment, a side effect of its breakneck economic development."[1] These two exhibitions are cases of artists' intervening in society as Wang Chunchen says that artists should.

In a different register, here are two exhibitions that refer to disasters--the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan and the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York on 9/11/01 – but they are not primarily protests. One is a plea that we forego the idea that we can control nature (*Hope Tunnel*) and the other, an uncanny plea that we forego the idea that we can control the course of events (*Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?).* They are, we might say, protests against the presumption that we have more control than we actually do. What is distinctive about each is that what they exhibit are *relics*: in the first it is a train damaged in a landslide caused by the earthquake, in the second, dust from the buildings that fell on 9/11. These objects bear witness to the two disasters. This is art as history. It is engagement with material of the world that is particular and historical.

In *Hope Tunnel* (2010) Zhang Huan exhibited a train damaged in the earthquake in Sichuan Provence on May 12, 2008. When he learned about the railroad disaster in which "the earth, in a sudden outpouring of fury, buried both a loaded freight train and *the arrogant idea that human beings can somehow conquer the forces of nature,*" he was able to buy freight train number 21043 that was carrying twelve tanks of aviation fuel through a tunnel when it collided with a boulder dislodged by the quake, was derailed, and burst into flames. His technical director, a photographer, and a documentary team drove from Shanghai to Xi'an and brought two train cars to Shanghai where they were cleaned up and exhibited in Beijing. The presence of a photographer and documentary makers implies that the genesis of an artwork and the labor of the many involved in its creation are more than a contingent part of it, where the artist whose name the work bears is like the conductor of an orchestra or the director of a film or a play. This is precisely Pauline Yao's point. Freight train number 21043 was exhibited in the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing with this statement: "As a monumentally important 'witness to history,' the train is worth preserving. At a time when the whole world is looking toward the future, preserving the past seems more important than ever. Reflecting on the disaster, investigating the causes, mitigating future dangers and finding ways to live in harmony with our environment rather than trying to conquer it – that's where the real future is, the tunnel of hope that leads to tomorrow."[2]

In *Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?* (2004), Xu Bing wrote these lines in dust that he collected at the site of the Twin Towers on 9/11 and spread across a gallery floor in Cardiff, Wales: "As there is nothing from the first, where does the dust itself collect?" They are the last lines of a poem written by Hui-neng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism in China:

> Bodhi (True Wisdom) is not like the tree;
> The mirror bright is nowhere shining;
> As there is nothing from the first,
> Where does the dust itself collect?

This poses the question that if material existence is an illusion – true wisdom is not like the tree and there is no shining mirror – then to what can the dust attach itself? For dust there is, and since there is nothing from the first, we cannot find a cause for the dust, or for what happened on 9/11. Build such cases as we will to try to understand 9/11, we finally cannot understand and, therefore, cannot predict or prevent such events.

This is in the spirit of the message of Zhang Huan in *Hope Tunnel*, namely, that one should forego the desire to control nature. For we cannot. There is in both Zhang Huan and Xu Bing a turn to traditional spiritual beliefs, beliefs that

were among the Four Olds that Mao sought to destroy through the Cultural Revolution: Old Customs, Old Culture, Old Habits, and Old Ideas. What ties the two exhibitions together, however, is the utter particularity of the objects used, the train damaged in the earthquake on May 12, 2008 and the dust resulting from two hijacked airplanes crashing into the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001. This emphasis on the history of the material used in the artwork is of a piece with the negotiation with the past that is rife in contemporary Chinese art. Distinctive about such works is that the past is remembered through *material* that has been used in objects from the past. One among many is Ai Weiwei's *Fragments* (2005), a massive open structure comprised of furniture from the Qing Dynasty and over 170 wooden blocks salvaged from temples destroyed to make way for development and built by his artisans using ancient techniques. Zhang Huan made large statues of Buddha parts like *Large Buddha Head* (2010-2011) from shards of bronze Buddha statues destroyed in Tibet during the Cultural Revolution. The use of these materials remembers not only the past but also what destroyed the works of which they were a part: urbanization and attacks on Buddhism.

DANTO'S DEFINITION

I Chinese Post-Modern

When post-modernism was beginning to reject the values that constituted modernism in the West in the 1960s, the Cultural Revolution in China was beginning to upend the culture and ideas of the tradition it had replaced. This revolution ended in 1976 with the death of Mao and was followed by his successor's opening the country to the West and to capitalism in 1978, 77 years after the defeat of China in the Boxer Rebellion in which China sought to end the growing foreign influence and 29 years after Mao had proclaimed the People's Republic of China and decried bourgeois capitalism. The values of the classical tradition were put into shadow, but not eradicated, during Mao's reign so that when China opened itself to the West, the values of each of the Chinese classical tradition, the socialist republic, and Westerm capitalism were put into play. Where is the post-modern here? This depends on what the Chinese modern is. One can map changes in the West and in China from the late 19th through the 20th centuries as World Wars I and II, including the 2nd Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945) that interrupted the Chinese Civil War (1927-1937) between the Communists and the Nationalists, wrought havoc and brought significant changes to both parts of the world.

Not able to articulate what constitutes modern art in China, I will look at post-Mao art as I look at post-modern art in the West. Arthur Danto claimed that art

history ended with the death of modernism: he said he realized that modernism was over when he saw Andy Warhol's *Brillo Box* in the Stabler Gallery in New York in 1964. That year also saw the United States escalate its involvement in the Vietnam War with the Gulf of Tonkin incident, pass a momentous Civil Rights Act, and had the Beatles, the English rock band that came to exemplify the 1960s in the West, make their initial visit. There was anti-establishment unrest in Western Europe as well with the Paris riots of 1968 and fervent anti-tradition unrest in the Peoples Republic of China with the Cultural Revolution of 1966. At the risk of oversimplifying, I will take the modern to name what was brought about by the changes in society, and therefore in its art, in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century and the post-modern to name the turn away from what the changes had brought. The West, never subject to the radical effort to break with the past experienced in China in the 1960s and 1970s, became post-modern in the 1960s, as China did in the 1980s.

What Danto found remarkable in the *Brillo Box* was the realization that *there was no perceptible difference* between it and the Brillo boxes in the supermarket, just as there was no perceptible difference between Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) and urinals in men's rooms. What this means is that there is no way to tell by looking whether something is a work of art or a real thing. Since the difference is not perceptual, it must be conceptual. Previously, one could tell by looking not only whether something was an artwork, but also to what period or style it belonged. One could not mistake a Vermeer for a Kandinsky, for example. Now, however, one needs something like a definition of art to apply to a work to tell whether or not it is art. What is over is art history understood as a succession of styles, one developing out of the other with artworks related to each other as different stages of one developing story, rather as the acts and scenes of a play are. What is over is a modernist theory whose goal was to reduce the various genres of art to their essence and to discover what that essence was. Modern art ran afoul of the Aristotelian question of how much a thing or a kind can change and still stay the same: how radically modern art could reject each of the values of pre-modern art and still be art. Finally, it could say only "I am" or "this is what I am." The rest was silence. Andy Warhol and others could then deal their deathblows, for art history was ready for them as it had not been for Duchamp.

Why no other master narrative has come to take its place is in part because capitalism threatens to turn art into a commodity, throwing art's specialness into doubt, and in part because globalism, whose reach is greater by far than capitalism's, has flooded the art world with myriad kinds of individual works that resist being captured in one narrative. Not only is there no shared goal that artists seem now to be trying to realize, there is no longer any way that art has to look. An artwork now can look like anything whatsoever. This does not mean

that there might not in the future be local or national narratives that do not go all the way down to the art-ness of art but do tell the story of art in China after the years of Mao, say, connecting those years with the tradition Mao had sought to cast aside. Danto is vested in his definition's not being able to be undercut by the imperatives of a new art history narrative, as, for example, the definition of art as an imitation of nature was undercut by the appearance of abstract works that were accepted as art. It is for the future to weigh in on this issue; my task is to turn to the definition.

II Danto and the Chinese Art

Danto's definition has five parts: for something to be a work of art it must, first, be *about* something. It must represent something. Second, it must take a point of view or express an attitude toward what it is about. Third, this must be done by way of a rhetorical figure, usually a metaphor. Fourth, the viewer must grasp what the figure says about the subject, that is, how the work presents its subject, which in the best case shows her the subject as she had not seen or thought of it before. This is to *interpret* the work. Fifth, it must be part of a historically situated theory. Works of art are not natural kinds as water and elephants are. They exist as such only in a framework or a system or a theory, hence the need for them to be part of some such construction. Does this definition apply to the Chinese works that were discussed above? It is clear what each is *about:* the razing of the Zhengyang Art Zone, the pollution of the Huangpu River, the Sichuan earthquake, and the bombing of the Twin Towers.

The attitude expressed in *Warming Winter* is that it is as though the artists too were ruins, having lost their artist lives (those lying in the ruins) or lost their social identity (the nude). In *The Ninth Wave* it is that the danger posed by the environment is at its worst (the legend of the ninth wave) and the lives of everyone are at risk (reference to the Russian painting of people clinging to a life raft). The attitude expressed in *Hope Tunnel* is elegiac. The sheer presence of the train announces "I was there," at the same times that it urges its viewers to "Remember me," by way of remembering all the devastation and the thousands of children who died when their schools collapsed. "Where Does the Dust Itself Collect?" expresses incomprehension: the words rise unbidden out of the dust to which much of the towers were reduced to say "[as] there was nothing there from the start" and yet out of nowhere there were two airplanes crashing into two commercial towers. To say how and what are the points of view toward their subjects that these works take is the viewer's job, one that engages her. Through her interpretations she completes the artist's act of making the work. I submit that Danto's definition applies to these works, as it does, he claims, to all works of art, no matter where or when they were made. *These works* could not

have been made at any time or in any place. Every work is indexed to history and to its culture, as the definition itself is not.

Its application to a given work is not always self-evident, and there are cases where it is not clear that it does apply, even when one's intuition is that what one is trying to subsume under it *is* art. Works that are at the margins of the concept that the definition constructs put pressure on the definition and the claim that the work makes to be art. One such is Song Dong's *Waste Not* (2005-2012), a display of over 10,000 domestic items his mother saved as she lived in poverty through the turmoil in China from the 1950s through the 1970s: thousands of metal bottle caps, Styrofoam containers, tubes of toothpaste, pieces of fabric as well as clothing and furniture. What is it *about?* It is about those real things, and it is crucial to the identity of the work that it be exactly those things. It amounts to a work of art just in case the work casts these things in a light, puts them in a perspective, that is a visual figure of speech, usually a metaphor, that a viewer can read. It says something about its subject, as "Juliet is the sun" says something about Juliet. The difference between the things Song Dong's mother hoarded and the artwork made out of them is like the difference between urinals and *Fountain* (1917): they have become visual metaphors for what they are about.

Like the works discussed above, *Waste Not* is context-dependent. Not in the weak sense that its possibility is a function of its time and place, but in the strong sense that it would not be the work it is without the story of its genesis, as the wall plagues in the museums where it was shown attest. However, it does, as the others do not, include as part of its identity a reference to the artist: he is the son of the woman the contents of whose home have been laid bare. *Waste Not* is an act of filial piety, which hardly comports with the insistence of Mao that individuals report even their parents to the local commune for suspected counter-revolutionary activity. But this is just another way that artworks can honor the imperative announced in Yuan in 1942 that art and literature "operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people" at the same time that they are making art to *work through* the changes occurring in China and in the world. Although *Waste Not* includes as part of itself more than *Brillo Box* does, it not only satisfies the definition, but also proves the breadth of the concept defined.

CODA

I want to end with a work that seems as disengaged from the world as the works above are engaged, and I want to end with the work of a woman, Lu Qing. About the Chinese art scene, the art critic Holland Cotter said in *The New York Times* in 2008: "Contemporary art in China is a man's world. While the art market, all but nonexistent in 1989, has become a powerhouse industry and

produced a pantheon of multimillionaire artist-celebrities, there are no women in that pantheon. The new museums created to display contemporary art rarely give women solo shows. Among the hundreds of commercial galleries [...] art by women is hard to find. Yet the art is there, and it is some of the most innovative work around, even as visibility remains a problem."

He went on to introduce Lu Qing: "Since 2000, she has made a single new work annually. At the beginning of each year she buys a bolt of fine silk 82 feet long. Over the next 12 months, using a brush and acrylic paint, she marks its surface with tight grid patterns. The results look like a cross between Agnes Martin's grid drawings and traditional Chinese scroll painting, historically a man's medium. Some years she fills the cloth. Other years, when she can bring herself to work only sporadically, she leaves it half empty. At least one year, she painted nothing. But completion in any ordinary sense is not the goal. Whatever state the roll is in at year's end, that is its finished state. She packs it away and buys a new bolt. This is private, at-home work. 'I don't think what I'm doing is art', Ms. Lu said. 'In fact, it makes me forget what art is about' [...] this is art as performance and meditation."[3]

The sheer activity of marking a surface, the silk scroll, is where the art lies. We are here at the farthest reaches of Danto's definition. To grasp and appreciate what she does as art, we have to see what the activity *represents,* and this I say is the pulsing of the universe, the beating of her heart, the movements of a dance. We have to see what the performance of the activity expresses, what attitude it takes toward making visible the pulsing of the universe, the beating of her heart, or the movements of a dance. Even if no one were to see them and to see them as art, she does. And this is enough.

Lu Qing has placed herself in the long tradition of painters of silk scrolls, her brush, hand, wrist, and arm dancing over the silk as theirs did. The activity calls us back to the past and to the stillness that Hsieth Ho, the sixth century critic who laid down the six principles of Chinese painting, said that artists must achieve before they can begin to paint. The influential Chinese writer Lin Yutang (1895-1976) called the first principle, "The Spirit Resonance (or Vibration of Vitality) and Life Movement," the one undisputed goal of art in China. A case can be made that this is still the goal of art in China, and the art of Lu Qing is a paradigm example of one that captures the Spirit Resonance that, transcending time, captures the pulse of the heart of the world, which in Danto's terms is what her art is about. She follows the movement of the earth around the sun, spending one year only on each bolt of silk and beginning another when the year begins again. Making art becomes as natural as the movement of the earth, repetitive and quiet, and her work a metaphor for Spirit Resonance and Life Movement. Danto would appreciate and celebrate her meditation.

NOTES

1 Online review by Ben Davis posted on *Artnet News* on Monday, August 25, 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 www.nytimes.com/2008/07/30/arts/design/30arti.html. Accessed April14, 2015.

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"LEARNING FROM DETROIT?" FROM MATERIALISED DREAMS TO BITTER AWAKENING

Aesthetics around decayed shopping malls

A B S T R A C T

Shopping malls were and are still particularly popular since the first ones were built in the 1950s. Curiously, both their frequent visitors and their most avid critics see them as the materialisation of the consumer society's dream. They are thus often considered as almost being "temples" of consumerism, where the activity of "shopping" substitutes other, more traditional forms of socio-cultural engagement. In the recent years we can experience an increasing interest in the documentation of decayed malls from a melancholic-nostalgic viewpoint in dreamy visions that in certain cases makes the images similar to the classical representation of Antique ruins. Is it only by coincidence, or is there a parallel between the appreciation of ruins of the temples of Antiquity and the ruins of the temples of consumerism? In case yes, then what can we learn from the attempts of aestheticisation of this decay? What can these series of artworks reveal on our present condition and approach to space, entertainment, consuming and life? I am bringing in my examination some considerations on Detroit, not (only) on the city itself, that has become a reference point, and sometimes even a "playground" for the analyses of contemporary decay, but on Detroit as a phenomenon or symbol, as well as some considerations based on the re-reading of Venturi, Brown and Izenour's milestone-book.

Zoltán Somhegyi
College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah

KEY WORDS

RUINATION AND ITS REPRESENTATION
CLASSICAL AND "CONTEMPORARY" RUINS
AESTHETICS OF DECAY
SHOPPING MALLS
BUILT HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION

THE LURE OF MALLS

"There's a lot of dough in shopping malls." – as it was noticed by the well-middle aged architect, played by Alec Baldwin in a recent movie of Woody Allen titled: *"To Rome with Love"*. The partly cynical, partly self-critical observation came from the figure in the film who made a significant professional and financial career by constructing malls, and who serves as a semi-imaginary advisor and living conscience of one of the protagonists in his emotional turbulences.

The observation seems right – at the beginning. Malls pay well for their investors and for their designers, shopkeepers and naturally for the tax-collecting state too. And not only: if they "pay well", it means that you as customer spend well. Both your money and your time. The mall with its fancy and glittery appearance somehow provides you with the illusion of elevating you high above the normal level of your everyday life. In fact, most likely, this illusion is what made and still makes shopping malls so popular since the first modern ones were built in the late 1950s. When you enter, for a couple of hours you can have everything.

Historically speaking, malls were also designed with the implicit intention of creating new centres outside the traditional downtowns. The lure and thus development of the modern suburban lifestyle from the 1940s onwards provided the comfort of having a piece of garden and avoiding the crowd of the city centre. Just a few years later early forms of malls started to appear in these peripheries, due to various reasons: unlike the dense downtowns land was more available that also signified new tax base for the state. The outskirt malls were not only closer to the new homes of the people, but also easier to reach by car. Besides this, the fact of having a new centre with a wide variety of retails and with opportunity of entertainment and leisure – even if artificially constructed, not in its gradual and "organic" development as in the case of traditional city centres – might have seemed like a reasonable urbanism concept. Curiously however, malls became so popular and prolific, that not much later, from the 1970s on they started to appear in the old centres and more inner parts of the cities too, either as a step of the gentrification of the less reputable areas, or as a means of revitalising the downtown that had started to lose customers since they were all pulled out to the outskirts. An early example of this is Horton Plaza in San Diego.

Curiously both the frequent visitors of malls and the most avid critics see these centres as par excellence materialisations of the consumer society's

dream. The invitation is to buy everything and thus to realise your dream. Or, perhaps we can say they promise that you have the chance to become part of your dream, or even become your dream: You are what you buy, but what's more, you are what you dream (of buying), you are your dream. This lure results in the peculiar phenomenon that malls attract a massive crowd to spend enormous amount of time inside them – even without the aim of buying a concrete product.[1]

They are thus often considered as almost being "temples" of consumerism, where the activity of "shopping" substitutes other, more traditional forms of socio-cultural engagement and interaction, as anticipated already in1970 by Jean Baudrillard when writing about the fact that *"We have reached the point where consumption has grasped the whole of life"*.[2] This is why already in the 1980s they were started to be considered as new "town squares", though many people were heavily criticising this tendency, and some countries were trying all their best in "postponing" their introduction.[3]

What we saw in the case of Antique temples with their courtyards, Christian churches with the Sunday market around them or mosques with bazaars built in their vicinity has changed in the case of modern malls: they provided the opportunity of shopping and passing time without the spiritual background behind them – background physically and metaphorically. The *shopping experience* or *shopping as a form of entertainment*, as this originally practical and straightforward activity is now referred to, tends to replace any other types of social or spiritual experience, in order to practically provide the "temple of consumerism" the same qualities as a classical one has. What's more, malls are often globally uniform, characterless typical *"non-spaces"*, just to quote Marc Augé's famous category, adding to that Claudine Isé's observation that these are *"spaces in which a number of dialectically held oppositions – between the diurnal and nocturnal, consciousness and unconscious, real and artificial, body and environment – suddenly become untenable."*[4]

However, here I am neither examining the moral consequences of this and the state of consumerism, nor judging people whose main entertainment is to spend time in malls. I am rather interested in the potential aesthetic qualities connected to run-down malls and in what questions on our contemporary condition these may lead us to. Therefore, my current (aesthetic) examination starts when the malls' fancy days are over and signs of decay appear on both their formerly glamorous exterior and interior.

MALLS AND DECAY

I find it particularly curious how these malls can "survive", perhaps not physically, but at least on an aesthetic level. Even after their active life is over, malls can actively influence our life in an indirect form. In recent years we can experience an increasing interest in the documentation of decayed malls. Several art projects and art itineraries, exhibitions, blogs, publications and conferences examine the questions connected to these edifices and also enquire how our attention and attitude towards them modifies and influences our current state of mind and the interpretation of our present condition and our future. Among these, the analysis of some photo series can be of special interest as these compositions often show an unexpected viewpoint, and successfully try to highlight the potential aesthetic values in the run-down state of these sites.

There are definitely many reasons for this increased interest, among which we can mention the general curiosity in ruination that fascinate many people, even without having a deep or specialised aesthetic education. Another reason can be derived from a rather nostalgic and/or melancholic approach of those who like to "mourn" over the passing and not-everlasting state of anything and everything that, in the case of malls might also get a bit of an extra "twist" of anti-capitalism and social critique. However, certainly one of the most curious features and reason of interest in the decayed malls is the fact that their ruination was definitely not planned. Of course, none of our buildings are neither planned nor desired to get ruined, nevertheless from the history of modern architecture we can occasionally find architects who took in consideration even the potential ruination – both "natural" and forceful or aggressive: as two famous examples we can quote Albert Speer and his ideas on *"Ruinwert"* or ruin value, or Sir Basil Spence, who, when designing the Trawsfynydd Power Station in Wales in the late 1960s and that is now getting partly demolished, asked himself: *"Will it make a beautiful ruin?"*.[5]

Thus even if as notable exceptions we find Speer and Spence who were visionary enough to consider such factors in their constructions, malls are typically buildings that try to position themselves as far from ruination as possible. Continuing our metaphor, as their being temples of consumerism, malls must be pretty optimistic about eternity, including not only theirs, but continuously providing the (illusion of) eternal joy for their customers too – as a kind of extended present and presence or everlasting moment, where happiness never ends.

But let's concentrate on the decay, with a special attention to its representation. As mentioned above, decayed malls invite the observers to visit and document them. Even if the photo works are in most cases merely contemporary allegories of the transiency manifested in the ruined buildings – and, in fact, in less successful representations they come too close to a superficial and kitschy representation of decadence – sometimes they manage to treat the malls from a melancholic-nostalgic viewpoint in dreamy visions, that in certain cases make the images at first sight similar to the classical representations of Antique ruins. Let's briefly list a couple of these primary similarities between ruins of classical buildings and decayed malls – similarities both in their physical state and in their appearance when represented.

As it is well known, during any kind of ruination process, Nature starts to re-conquer the building. It is a natural phenomenon, since each and all building is unnatural in a way, as we always build against Nature, not lastly to defend us and our valuables from being exposed to various natural elements. Thus not only the buildings' shapes, volumes, decorations and colours, but the very being of any of our constructions is unnatural. However, once their good old days have passed, their status starts to change, and as Nature surpasses the constructions, they become less and less unnatural.

One of the most spectacular and at the same time picturesque consequences of this being re-conquered by Nature – and that we can count as another common features between classical ruins and modern constructions in decay – is that the due to the gradual crumbling and due to the overcoming of natural elements the general tonality of the view is getting more and more homogeneous. During their active functioning, buildings – both classical and modern ones – normally stand out of their environment. After they cease to be used and maintained – for example, regularly repainted – edifices start to get dissolved in their context as it was sensibly described by, among others, Georg Simmel more than a century ago.[6]

Regarding the representation of decay of old and contemporary buildings, we can again find similar features: images (both painted and photo) highlight the signs of gradual decomposition of the construction. However, this gradual decomposition does not automatically mean even and parallel decrease, on the contrary: one of the most appealing specialties of ruination as well as one of the most often documented and represented features is the randomness of decay – we enjoy observing the unconscious *"Artist Nature"* in sculpting the building, sometimes leaving a whole wall almost intact, while other parts of the building are already erased completely. In many cases, both in depiction of classical

ruins and in photos of contemporary constructions in their ruination we can observe a particular focus on the random forms, the accidentally survived parts amidst the decayed elements and the concentration on the signs of survival and resistance within the general ruination. Connected to this, we can also often notice how professional artists and documentation-driven ruin-fans focus on anomalies in the appearance of the ruin: for example putting a strong visual accent on the reversion of the traditional relationship of inside-outside: the fact that we can enter the building not only through its usual openings, but also through the former walls, or that we can directly observe the sky from the once covered interior.

In a similar way, particular emphasis is given on the showing of "foreign" or "alien" elements inside the building, e.g. vegetation growing out of the former tiled pavement or small plants sprouting on the walls of the building – just remember how much the English botanist Richard Deakin was impressed by this phenomenon, such as he published a book in 1855 titled *"Flora of the Colosseum"*to list the not less than 420 species that he had found inside the monument.[7]

Further similarities between the representation of classical and contemporary buildings in ruination can be found in the silence and peace that these sites emanate – a kind of silence that is quite alien to the original function of the buildings, both temples and malls, as they are supposed to be filled with life and lively users… although here we find a significant difference: without repeating my earlier examinations on this subject in detail, I wanted to mention that while Antique ruins can be considered (and "felt") as calming, contemporary decay is more *"incongruous"*, just to use Oliver Broggini's expression.[8]

OLD AND NEW "TEMPLES"

Now after listing some of these similarities, our question should be if it is only by coincidence, or is there a – perhaps only unconscious – parallel between our appreciation of ruins of the temples of Antiquity and the ruins of the temples of consumerism, and if yes, what do they reveal for us?

Obviously, some of these features of the buildings are natural consequences due to physical reasons, i.e. the crumbling, deformation and erosion are common challenges to any building exposed to Nature. But the way these sites are presented in paintings or photos is a deliberate and conscious choice – for example the composition, the viewpoint, the special focuses and emphases. Why are these places described in such way, and what can be behind these attempts of aestheticisation of decay?

If we agree that classical ruins have in most cases a kind of nostalgic and melancholic ambiance or radiance then it is understandable that contemporary buildings at the start of their ruination process are depicted in a similar way in order to try to make them look like their noble forerunners. Hence, the similarities in the way of representing classical temples in ruins and decayed malls can be interpreted as an attempt – perhaps even unconscious or instinctive attempt – to *de-dramatise* the modern constructions' decay by providing the illusion of being able to place them on the same aesthetic level as the Antique ones. We try through all our possible means to avoid having to face the failure of our belief that the glamorous dreams materialised in the form of the mall will last forever.

In this way, nevertheless they were trying to be convincingly similar to classical heritage, when observing the often eye-catching images of run-down shopping malls, they clearly show the end of the dream. From the *bittersweet* melancholia and nostalgia traditionally connected to the classical ruins what remains here is only the *bitter* awakening from the *sweet* dreams. If the building and the values and all the happiness – fake and temporary happiness – connected to the functioning of the malls were the materialised dream, then the malls' defeat and decay may be the bitter awakening that our eternity that seemed to be guaranteed through the active consumerism can also be over one day, actually, pretty soon. And this makes the realisation of all this even more worrisome and tragic, i.e. not only the understanding of the fact that believing in the dream was a dead end, but also that already in our life we can get awareness of the Potemkin-like scenery of this failed dreams.

The long-before canonisation of Antique values had secured the survival of the aesthetically appealing character of the classical buildings, even in the form of ruins. But our current run-down buildings' future is more ambiguous. During the Neo-Classicism and Romanticism, at the turn of the 18-19th century optimistic architects and designers just couldn't wait that their buildings become noble, pleasing and sublime ruins – that could obviously not happen during their lifetime, as it is a longer process – so they imagined them as ruins, as well-known examples we can quote Joseph Michael Gandy's two images from 1798: the one showing the interior of the Rotunda of the Bank of England intact, while the other one in ruins, or Hubert Robert's pair of images depicting the suggested reconstruction of the Louvre and its ruins. Now it is just the contrary: when we see our very recent dreams – contexts of our desires from yesterday – in a ruined form, then instead of pleasing and sublime aesthetic objects, they rather look like worrisome and intriguing signs, and like question marks about our (near) future, question marks growing out from the decay,

just like the vegetation that starts to grow inside the former building. Perhaps exactly this feature explains the recent interest in the future that goes hand in hand with the rather retrospective interest of ruination. Actually in the last few years various large-scale art events started explicitly to examine this future perspective, including the 2015 edition of Venice Biennial (titled: *All the World's Futures*), the same 2015 Sharjah Biennial (*The Past, the Present, the Possible*) or the 2014 Istanbul Design Biennial (*The Future is not what it used to be*), just to mention a few examples, where many exhibited artworks directly analysed the aesthetic potentialities of ruination and rubble.

LEARNING FROM THE DETROITIFICATION?

Of course I do not intend to say that the representations of ruined malls should directly lead us to the Rilkeian aestheto-existential imperative to change our life or our lifestyle. But I contend that they might help us asking what we have learned or what we can learn from the "detroitification" of our modern and postmodern culture and its symbolic and iconic elements, including the malls that we all use on a daily basis, even if we had started to face their decay. What's more, we face it in a way that is not even pleasing aesthetically, despite all our efforts of de-dramatising this very decay. Obviously, the expression of "detroitification" stands not only for the concrete US city itself, but it can in general describe how even an entire city can get devastated due to economic decline, depopulation, speculation, large-scale bankruptcy and all this, basically because of the exaggeratedly optimistic belief of continuous and constant economic development and prosperity. What's more, for art lovers it is certainly a quite tragic and symbolic sign that currently more and more often the idea comes up of paying part of the city's debt by starting to sell works from the Detroit Institute of Arts' collection.[9] Hopefully this will not be an example to be followed by other bankrupt cities.

The detroitified shopping malls, i.e. those that start to get ruined because of the lack of visitors and consumers who should provide life and drive (or economic fuel) to the malls are thus worrisome not only because they show the end of a dream, and not even because they are still too close to our time to get the classical noble patina – as I have suggested in the aforementioned article of mine as one of the reasons of the "worrisome" character of recent building's decay – but also because we feel a bit impotent, helpless and even powerless when observing these sites. We just somehow cannot stop thinking of the large number of new ones that are being built at an ever growing pace, for example in the Middle and Far East, even though we see the dead-ends of the first ones as warning signs – in this way, feeling ourselves entering deeper and deeper in a downwards spiral.

Hence we don't really seem to be learning from all this, even if we could and should. In my title, besides Detroit, I embedded another reference as well, to Venturi, Brown and Izenour's book from 1972 titled *"Learning from Las Vegas"*, where the authors urged to study the tastes and values of the common and everyday architectural landscape – as they formulated: the *"commercial vernacular"* as well as the *"vulgar and Vitruvian"*, what they had found just as important as the examination of our classical heritage – in order to define and understand the present.[10] Actually, they examined classical and contemporary (their contemporary) together, a bit like what I suggest here, i.e. that analysing the representation of these decayed temples of modern-age commercialism and consumerism also in comparison with the iconology of Antique ruins might help us in better seeing our present conditions and possibilities – possibilities or perhaps only ever weakening chances…

As a curious parallel, the authors described Las Vegas and drew their consequences when the phenomenon of mass-consumerism and the architectural forms and genres serving it were still relatively at their beginning – while now we can analyse the beginnings of their end. Obviously, what these malls manifest and materialise now is not exactly the future that we would like to face or imagine. Unlike Antique temples, malls do not look nice as potential ruin-candidates. Though perhaps difficult to describe, but the essence is missing from these malls, that kind of coherent symbiosis between the elements of architecture and decoration what makes Antique ruins pleasing even in the form of ruins. Just think of the precise examination of Venturi, Brown and Izenour about how commercial signs and symbols are dominating the Las Vegas landscape in such a degree that at the end architecture becomes *"symbol in space rather than form in space"*, and where *"the sign at the front is a vulgar extravaganza, the building at the back, a modest necessity. The architecture is what is cheap. (...) If you take the signs away, there is no place."*[11] This rapid process of becoming sign at the cost of dematerialising the architecture was illustrated by the regular changes of the *"fake"* facade of the Golden Nugget Casino.[12] As a matter of fact, we start to see the consequences of a similarly failed attempt also in the case of decaying malls: the commercial glamour will not provide essential and lasting architectural unity for the construction. As Robert Ginsberg observed it in his 2004 book titled *"The Aesthetics of Ruins"*: *"In making the original invisible, the ruin makes visible what is not meant to be seen. The hidden becomes evident, while what ordinarily is present is absent."*[13] Hence, though malls tried to hide their vulnerability behind the commercial signs (both physically and metaphorically) as much as possible – when starting to get ruined, they cannot cheat anymore. This

is another symptom that even if they pretended to be eternal, they turned to be ephemeral. Just to illustrate this: often the malls – just like casinos in the exact analyses of Venturi, Brownand Izenour – disorient the visitors through the constant lighting day and night, a bit similar to what Baudrillard described as the *„complete homogenization"* of the ambiance in the *"sublimation of real life"*, where even the seasons disappear through the *"climate-controlled domestication"* of this artificial environment.[14] Malls are thus denying the existence of time during their lifetime for the sake of pretending eternity, until the point when Time truly shows its existence and power through the ruination.

The images of decayed malls show how their masks – the advertising signs, the eternity-providing commercial symbols and consumer-incentivising messages addressing our basic instincts through refined psychological tricks – start to fall down, just like the non-existing facades of the Las Vegas casinos would unless their owners changed the neons every other decade. Actually, we can agree with Venturi, Brown and Izenour when they wrote that *"There is a perversity in the learning process: We look backward at history and tradition to go forward; we can also look downward to go upward"*, although today we need to be more careful and conscious than ever when learning from Las Vegas having the phenomenon of detroitification in mind.[15] Therefore we need to complete the affirmation of the architect in the Woody Allen's film when he noticed that there was a lot of dough in shopping malls. Malls truly pay well, but most probably we too are going to get ruined when we will have to pay it back with devastatingly huge interests.

NOTES

1 See for example: N. R. Kleinfeld, "Why everyone goes to the mall," *The New York Times*, December 21, 1986, and an answer for this as a letter addressed to the editor by John Sumser, then Instructor at the Department of Sociology of the State University of New York, published in the same newspaper of 18 January, 1987.

2 Jean Baudrillard, "Consumer Society," in *Jean Baudrillard – Selected writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988). trans.: Jacques Mourrain, 33.

3 Cees Gorter, Peter Nijkamp and Pim Klamer, "The attraction force of out-of-town shopping malls: A case study on run-fun shopping in the Netherlands," *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 94/2 (2003): 219-229., as well as Tony Hernandez and Ken Jones, "Downtowns in transition. Emerging business improvement area strategies," *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 33/11 (2005): 789-805. See also the detailed analyses of Philipp Dorstewitz, from the perspective of John Dewey's philosophy, of an attempt of converting an abandoned freight depot into a shopping and entertainment centre in Duisburg, Germany: Philipp Dorstewitz, "Reconstructing Rationality. Agency and Inquiry in John Dewey's Project as a Foundation for Social and Urban Planning" (PhD diss., Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method, London School of Economics, 2008), especially chapter 9: Mines and Malls – A Tale of Two Cities.

4 Marc Augé, Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity. trans. John Howe (New York: Verso, 1995); Claudine Isé, *Vanishing Point* (Columbus: Wexner Center for the Arts, The Ohio State University, 2005), 15.

5 Quoted in Clayton Hirst, "Pulling down Snowdonia's power station would be a nuclear waste," *The Guardian*, December 21, 2009, accessed May 21, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2009/dec/21/snowdonia-nuclear-power-station-wales-architecture

6 Georg Simmel, "The Ruin," in *Georg Simmel 1858-1918. A Collection of Essays with Translations and Bibliography*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1959). trans: David Kettler, 263-264.

7 Christopher Woodward, *Tra le rovine. Un viaggio attraverso la storia, l'arte e la letteratura* (Parma: Ugo Guanda Editore, 2008), 29.

8 Zoltán Somhegyi, "Ruines contemporaines. Réflexion sur une contradiction dans les termes," *Nouvelle Revue d'Esthétique* 13 (2014): 117. See also: Oliver Broggini, *Le rovine del Novecento. Rifiuti, rottami, ruderi e altre eredità* (Reggio Emilia: Diabasis, 2009), 9.

9 See details of the debate at: Laura Berman, "Van Gogh for sale? DIA tiptoes into art auction market," *The Detroit News*, May 15, 2015, accessed May 29, 2015 http://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/detroit-city/2015/05/13/van-gogh-sale-dia-tiptoes-art-auction-market/27280699/

10 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, (Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, n.d.), see especially: XI, 18, 83, 161.

11 Venturi, Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 13 and 18.

12 Venturi, Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 106.

13 Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi, 2004), 51.

14 Venturi, Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 49. and Baudrillard, *Consumer Society*, 34.

15 Venturi, Brown and Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, 3.

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TOWARDS POST-DIGITAL AESTHETICS

A B S T R A C T

Over the past decades, digital technology and media had firmly integrated into almost all areas of contemporary culture and society. In this context, the Internet, computers or mobile phones are no longer considered products of new media, but instead are taken for granted. With this background in mind, this paper suggests taking a post-digital perspective on today's media society. The concept of post-digital refers to an aesthetics that no longer regards digital technology as a revolutionary phenomenon, but instead as a normal aspect of people's daily life. More precisely, post-digital aesthetics deals with an environment where digital technology became such a commonplace that its existence is frequently no longer acknowledged. Based on the analysis of contemporary artworks and practices inspired by their surroundings, this paper aims to bring those phenomena into consciousness that became unnoticeable in the contemporary digital environment. For this purpose, this investigation goes beyond the formal-aesthetic analysis, but instead focuses on the investigation of the receptive act. Concretely, post-digital aesthetics seeks to describe and analyze the changing modes of perception affected by the increased digitization of one's surroundings. In the context of this analysis, aesthetics is thus understood not as the goal per se, but rather as the means to enhance the understanding of contemporary digital culture.

Anna Daudrich
Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg

KEY WORDS

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CHANGED PERCEPTION

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, digital technology and media had firmly integrated into almost all areas of contemporary culture and society. In this context, they became a fully inseparable part of everyday life so that today it is almost impossible to imagine social, work, business and political life without them. For this reason, the Internet, computers, mobile phones, GPS or social media, once regarded as products of new media, are no longer considered innovations, but instead are taken for granted. Due to this growing dissemination and popularization, digital technology and media have radically changed contemporary environment, aesthetic values and sensory perceptions.

Following these developments, recent studies on aesthetics have shifted their focus from discovering of a beauty to the investigation of issues concerning appreciation of one's surroundings. In this context, several media theories have emerged with the aim to examine the impact of digital technologies on contemporary culture.[1]

On a related note, this paper suggests taking a post-digital perspective to critically reflect upon the consequences of dealing with digital technology. The concept of post-digital refers to an aesthetics that no longer regards digital technology as a revolutionary phenomenon, but instead as a normal aspect of people's daily life. More precisely, post-digital aesthetics deals with an environment where digital technology became such a commonplace that its existence is frequently no longer acknowledged. For this reason, this paper aims to bring into consciousness these phenomena that often remain unnoticeable in contemporary digital culture.

In doing so, post-digital aesthetics aims to investigate the receptive act instead of concentrating on formal-aesthetic analysis. In other words, post-digital aesthetics concerns not with the examination of formal qualities with the aim to discover whether something is beautiful and aesthetic pleasant. Rather, it addresses the question of how one would experience a given phenomenon. Concretely, post-digital aesthetics seeks to describe and analyze the changing modes of perception affected by the increasing digitization of one's surroundings. In this context, aesthetics is not understood as the goal per se, but rather as the means to obtain knowledge, namely that of contemporary digital culture. Hence, post-digital aesthetics addresses questions such as: How one perceives his surroundings in the context of contemporary digital technology? How one experiences virtual reality in a physical world? Is one's self-awareness and self-consciousness equal within both online and offline social lives?

It is important to notice that post-digital aesthetics does not consider itself as a purely theoretical model. Instead, it relies on the observations taken from the analysis of contemporary artworks and practices that make use of digital technology and its effects. For this reason, post-digital aesthetics should be regarded as a sort of applied aesthetics as it observes concrete cases. Moreover, this concept examines artistic projects not as isolated objects but rather in contextual relationship to their environment and society. Therefore, post-digital aesthetics must not be limited on analysis of a concrete artistic medium but can also be extended into the investigation of one's surroundings.

EXPLORING THE METAPHOR OF POST-DIGITAL

The prefix *post* usually refers to events happened after a certain period of time or a sequence of activities. Following this definition, it could be argued that the concept of post-digital describes phenomena after the digital age. However, the digital age is still going on. Moreover, digital technologies are more widespread in current days than never before. At the same time, digital technologies became "invisible", and even seem to be disappearing, since we are frequently no longer aware of them. Such circumstances belong to the central theme of post-digital aesthetics. Therefore, post-digital rather means the age after the digital revolution.

The notion of Post-Digital is borrowed from American Composer Kim Cascone. In his essay *The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music*, Cascone refers to computer scientist Nicholas Negroponte, who in 1998 heralded the end of digital revolution. In this context, Cascone coins the term "post-digital" in order to describe the development of electronic music in a world where digital technologies are taken for granted. On a related note, he points to contemporary electronic musicians such as the German band *Oval* or the Finnish duo *Pan Sonic* that make use of glitch sound effects in their musical compositions. According to Cascone, this "failure" of technique, once considered a technical error or disruptive patterns, is interpreted today as aesthetically pleasant. These developments described by Cascone are meanwhile also being implemented in visuals.[2]

LOW RESOLUTION AESTHETIC

Usually, a strong pixelated digital image is considered low quality and unpleasant, as the appearance of the pixelation disturbs the perception of the display. Since recently, such effects of pixelation have been, however, deliberately used by many visual artists, designers and architects to create their works. This is what James Bridle – the writer and the founder of *The New Aesthetic* research project[3] – calls "low resolution aesthetic" or "aesthetic of pixelization".[4]

The Ysios winery (Fig. 1) in Spain designed by the Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava in 2000 appears at first glance as a pixelated image. However, this is neither a computer graphic nor any other computer-generated effect. This is a real building in real life. The winery was built without using any computer animations. Indeed, the curved structure of the roof which provides the optical illusion of the pixelation is constructed by means of laminated wooden beams.[5] Nevertheless, looking at the building, one certainly sees pixels.

According to James Bridle, this illusion results from the changed mode of human sense perception due to the increased use of digital technology. More precisely, Bridle argues that the way to interpret non-pixelated structures as pixelated ones, reflects the way of how the world is perceived through the "eyes" of machines. In fact, computers "see" images as an arrangement of individual pixels while human eye does not differentiate such details. On a related note, Bridle states that technology influences the way people experience the world in terms of computation. This development provides one with the possibility to discover new expressions of beautifulness. That is, the effect of strong pixelation such as seen, for example, on the building of the Ysios winery, once regarded as a technical error, is perceived as beautiful today.[6]

Wooden sculptures of American artist Shawn Smith also appear as low-resolution images (Fig. 2).[7] In his works, Smith investigates how nature is perceived through technology. In this context, the artist points to the processes in contemporary digital environment, observing that today television and computer screen are capable of generating very realistic representation of the real world so that one indeed believes he is seeing tangible images. In the 1970s, media theorist Jean Baudrillard already developed a theory according to which industrial society endeavors to "simulate" reality through media technology such as television or computer.[8] Similarly, Smith critically reflects upon these developments through his art.

In doing so, Shawn Smith creates sculptures of animals that appear as pixelated forms. However, these workpieces are wooden figures. The artist produces a pixelated effect cutting plywood sculptures into small pixel-like cubes and square dowels, and painting each of them in different colors with ink or acrylic. When looking at these sculptures, one believes to see pixelated images. On the other hand, digital images composed of individual pixels are perceived as real, tangible objects. In this context, Smiths manifests the lack of distinction between the real and the virtual in contemporary culture.

Similarly to the above discussed artists, Zaha Hadid – one of the most prominent contemporary architects – also involves effects previously considered technical

Figure 1. Santiago Calatrava, *The Ysios Winery*, Laguardia, Spain, 1998-2001 (source: http://buildipedia.com/aec-pros/featured-architecture/santiago-calatravas-ysios-bodegas (accessed: 10. 04. 2015)).

Figure 2. Shawn Smith, *Spurious Skulk*, balsa wood, bass wood, ink, acryl paint, 2012 (source: http://www.shawnsmithart.com/ (accessed: 08.04.2015)).

Figure 4. Zaha Hadid, proposal for an "exhibition and conference city" for Cairo, 2009 (source: http://www.archicentral.com/tag/cairo/ (accessed: 10. 04. 2015)).

Figure 3. Soehne & Partners, project *the Code Unique Hotel in Dubai*, 2008 (source: http://www.soehnepartner.com (accessed: 02. 04. 2015)).

Figure 5. Terada Design Architects, *N Building*, Tokyo, 2009 (source: www.teradadesign.com (accessed:03. 04. 2015)).

errors in her architectural works.[9] In this context, her buildings evoke at first glance an impression of Photoshop distortion or crooked camera views. Hadid's architectural project for Cairo Expo City (Fig. 3) is an example of how the architect uses the effect of distortion as a creative method. This building complex contains several blocks connected with each other. The construction can be observed from multiple viewpoints simultaneously. Due to this multiple perspective projection, the whole building structure appears as transformed into titled and distorted forms. Hadid developes her architecture based on the visual language of digital design tools, reflecting thus machine's visual language.

INTERDIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The virtual reality and physical world are usually considered two different universes. Nonetheless, the digital humanist Steven E. Jones points out that in recent years, the "digitization" of environment has provided the possibility of interdimensional experience. More specifically, according to Jones, contemporary networked environment has enabled one to experience reality as linking physical and digital dimensions.[10]

A QR Code (Quick Response Code) is an example of how virtual and physical dimensions can be experienced simultaneously. This is a kind of one-dimensional barcode that exists in the form of an arrangement of black pixel-like small squares unevenly distributed within a grid on a white background. Additionally, three distinctive squares are placed in the corners of the QR code. QR codes are usually printed on some surface such as paper or glass. This means that a QR code is a part of its material bearer, and as such it is tangible. At the same time, QR codes provide the possibility of an immediate connection with the Internet, i.e. with the virtual space. On a related note, QR codes can be considered a bridge that link the physical and the digital world. In other words, this electronic code represents physical and virtual dimensions simultaneously.

QR codes have inspired designers, artists and architects to make use of this medium. On a related note, Austrian architects Soehne & Partners involved visual and digital media qualities of QR codes to bring their architectural ideas to life. In this context, architects developed in 2008 an project designed for a hotel complex the Code Unique Hotel in Dubai (Fig. 4). The objective of this project is to create an architectural work with a futuristic QR code design. If constructed, the exterior surface of the hotel building would be completely covered in QR codes. Additionally, the overall rectangular form of the building intended to be designed by taking into account the block-like shape of this medium. This project is planned for the film production industry Dubai Studio City, which can be considered an equivalent of Hollywood. On a related note,

Dubai Studio City can be regarded as a place for creation of fictional stories and illusions. Accordingly, the architects of the Code Unique Hotel seek to create an atmosphere of the total illusion. In this context, the aim is to create a building that will provide an impression of being a gateway towards other realities, like QR codes.[11]

The architectural project *N Building* designed by Terada Design architects (Terada Naoki, Hirate Kenichi) in 2009 also shows QR codes attached to its facade (Fig. 5). This is a commercial building. Scanning QR codes of the facade, it is possible to obtain any shop information, make online orders or download discount coupons. Nevertheless, the QR code here goes beyond the pure functional use, having also symbolical significance. The idea to use symbols on building facades suggests associations with Gothic cathedrals such as Reims or Chartres, the portals of which are considered symbolical representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In other words, Gothic cathedrals represent physical appearance and the transcendent and intangible reality simultaneously. Similarly, *N Building* enables one to experience the virtual space accessible through mobile device and the physical world in the form of commercial building at the same time.[12]

CHANGING SELF-PERCEPTION AND SELF-OBSERVATION

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram as well as video games evoke new forms of self-perception. When creating a video game avatar or a social media profile, one creates his second "identity" that can be performed exclusively within an online space. This fact transforms existing perception of identity since one can exist as online and real-life persona at the same time.

The project *LaTurbo Avedon* makes explicit reference to this phenomenon. *LaTurbo Avedon* is a contemporary female web-based artist who is a real and virtual person simultaneously.[13] Within this project, the real identity of the artist remains however unknown. The audience knows her exclusively as a female avatar named *LaTurbo Avedon*. It remains hidden whether there is any reference between artist's online and real lives. Using this female avatar as a new identity, *LaTurbo Avedon* promotes her digital works in virtual space. In this context, she creates three-dimensional virtual environments or other 3D sculptural appearances which are accessible only through the web. This means that the artist's existence as well as her creative outputs depends solely on the virtual world: neither *LaTurbo Avedon* nor her work could ever exist outside of computers.

The growing use of social networks arise another question, namely that of privacy. Is it possible today to escape intensive cyber-control? In this context Hito Steyerl's work *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational .Mov File* provides a parodical instruction on how to remain invisible in an age of digital surveillance, of the total visibility. In 2013, this video installation was exhibited at the Venice Biennale. In this work, the artist suggests that one can disappear for example by going offline. Other strategies to avoid being seen proposed in this video are ironic: one can choose, for example, to paint, to camouflage oneself or to become smaller than a pixel. A background computerized voice reads out: "Today the most important things want to remain invisible. Love is invisible. War is invisible. Capital is invisible." Several faceless figures appear on camera to demonstrate these suggested strategies. The video ends with the disappearance of the film crew. At their place, digital ghosts suddenly appear. On a related note, Steyerl argues that those who desire to disappear in the digital age appear as technological ghosts in the internet world.[14]

Nonetheless, in Hito Speyerl's video film, it is most probably not a question of how not to be seen, it is rather a question of how one can be able to clearly see and to critically reflect upon the contemporary digital transformations.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In contemporary culture, the way in which one perceives his surroundings is primarily shaped by media and digital technologies. In this context, aesthetics plays a crucial role. However, this does not imply such aesthetics that is interested in the questions of beautifulness. Rather, it refers to aesthetics that focuses on the perceptive act, since such perspective can contribute to the understanding of perception process within increased digitization of contemporary environment.

With this background in mind, post-digital aesthetics suggested in this paper should provide sources and observations for critical reflection upon the consequences of dealing with digital technology. In this context, the proposed conception should describe implications in relation to an environment where digital technology and media are such a commonplace that their existence is frequently no longer acknowledged – development that in contemporary culture seems to be fully taken for granted. On a related note, post-digital aesthetics should make invisible visible. Concretely, it should develop an awareness of changing perceptions of reality within a world where the real and the virtual dimension flow in each other, where one frequently does not know whether something is analogue or digital. Within this paper, the concept of post-digital aesthetics was examined relying on examples from artistic projects that critically reflect upon digitization of contemporary culture. For this reason, observation obtained from this analysis can also be applied to the appreciation of contemporary culture in general.

NOTES

1 See, for example, Lev Manovich, *Software Takes Command* (New York: Bloomsbury Academics, 2013); Lev Manovich, *Software Culture*, trans. Matteo Tarantino (Milan: Edizioni Olivares, 2010).

2 Kim Cascone, "Composition and Performance - The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music," *Computer Music Journal* 24 (2000):12-18.

3 The New Aesthetic is an ongoing research project by James Bridle that circulates around the *Tumbrl* blog (http://new-aesthetic.tumblr.com/) documenting examples of products and artworks that reflect on the increasing use of technology.

4 James Bridle, "Waving at the Machines," the Australian Web Industry Conference, October 11-14, 2011, accessed May 4, 2015, http://www.webdirections.org/resources/james-bridle-waving-at-the-machines/.

5 Official website of the architect Santiago Calatrava, accessed April 28, 2015, http://www.calatrava.com/projects/bodegas-ysios-winery-guardia.html.

6 James Bridle, "Waving at the Machines," the Australian Web Industry Conference, October 11-14, 2011, accessed May 4, 2015, http://www.webdirections.org/resources/james-bridle-waving-at-the-machines/.

7 Shawn Smith's official website, accessed May 15, 2015, http://shawnsmithart.com/images.htm.

8 Jean Baudrillard, "Requiem für die Medien," in *Kool Killer oder Aufstand der Zeichen*, ed. Jean Baudrillard (Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1970), 83-118.

9 See, Zaha Hadid's official website, accessed May 15, 2015, http://www.zaha-hadid.com/; Zaha Hadid, *Zaha Hadid: Complete Works 1979-2013* (Cologne: Taschen, 2013); Sonia Ricon Baldessarini, *Wie Frauen bauen: Architektinnen von Julia Morgan bis Zaha Hadid* (Berlin et al.: Aviva, 2001), 161-178.

10 Steven E. Jones, *The Emergence of Digital Humanities*, (New York et al.: Routlege, 2014), 39-48.

11 See, official website of architects Soehne & Partners, accessed May 14, 2015, http://www.soehnepartner.com/projekte/studio-city-hotel.

12 See, Vimeo Video, accessed May 15, 2015, https://vimeo.com/8468513.

13 See, LaTurbo Avedon's blog on Tumbrl, accessed May 20, 2015, http://laturbo.tumblr.com/.

14 See, YouTube video, accessed April 30, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WbOmXEnluzg.

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THE CONJUNCTION OF ART AND LIFE: ONTOLOGY OF THE SITE

A B S T R A C T

Art becoming life and its relative convergence to the ideality of autarky (αὐτάρκεια), implies a maxim which coincides with the emancipatory promise of Art. Neo-Marxist authors have prescribed this maxim to Marx's early works, particularly to the thesis from his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,* and elaborated it further on these grounds. This maxim has been applied by many avant-garde movements up to the contemporary moment: Bertold Brecht's political theatre, Guy Debord's situationism, site-specific art, fluxus, Joseph Beuys's social sculpture, etc. The common denominator of all these avant-garde practices is the imperative of an affirmation of their use-value – their realisation at the site of their own production, as opposed to the abstractness of their placement in the world. The site of this production is the site of the very production of sociability. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to examine the maxim *art becoming life* in the wake of Badiou's ontology of the site by using the example of the modality of site-specific works in the conditions of contemporaneity.

Bojana Matejić
University of Arts in Belgrade

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ART
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KARL MARX
ALAIN BADIOU

LIFE, BEAUTY AND LABOUR ACCORDING TO EARLY MARX

In his early works, Marx advocated a thesis on the generic foundation of the non-alienated human that reveals itself in the very genericity of his/her being. According to Marx and his texts on estranged labour, the process of human emancipation should lead to the very process of objective production as a realisation of the genericity of a human's being that unfolds as an active species-life (*Gattungsleben*). Marx maintained that this specific objective labour implies an objectification of a human's species-life as a free expression of universal human life.

The concept of *Gattungsleben/wesen*[1] designates a crucial notion for understanding the presuppositions of human emancipation within Marx's early conceptual framework. In some of the texts, such as *On the Jewish Question*, Marx elucidates the concept of *Gattungsleben/wesen* in term of essence, positioning the very notion of human as a totality to which a man must "be returned". However, later in the texts regarding communism, Marx highlights the argument that civil society presupposes the principle of individualism: a particular existence is shown to be the ultimate goal in which activity, labour etc. are only the means of such production. In other word, Marx insisted on the axiom of universality that he finds in society, and Marx bounds up this universality of the social (*Gattungswesen/leben*) with the truth that should be "deduced from the actual forms of existing reality".[2] For instance, the thesis on social truth that is immanent to a given society/history is present in his early writings, particularly in *Letter to Arnold Ruge in Dresden* (September 1843), such as when he claims, at the end of the letter, that the social critique must "deduce a true reality from the actual forms of existing reality". Likewise, in *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx criticises Feuerbach's conception of human essence as genus.[3] Taking into account the thesis on truth, which should be "deduced from the actual forms of existing reality", it may become possible to distinguish that Marx does not presuppose any underlying principle of the true society or any human natural essence (genus) to human emancipation: it is neither need (i.e. morality, which masks the fact that nature does not exist), nor natural moment, nor politics. At this point, Badiou's and Marx's theoretical perspectives may be brought to the same plane.[4]

Political vs. Human Emancipation

Human emancipation presupposes the category of a "species-life" (*Gattungsleben*) / "species-being" (*Gattungswesen*). The synthesis between "species-life" (*Gattungsleben*) and "species-being" (*Gattungswesen*) (human totality / a real, social human being – axiom of community) "should" be realised as a presupposition of human emancipation. However, human emancipation does not correspond to political or formal juridical emancipation. It is important

to note that Marx provided a detailed account on the discrepancy between *political* and *human* emancipation in the text *On the Jewish Question*: the *political* emancipation considers a legal, normative dimension of emancipation, while *human* emancipation entails emancipation beyond political emancipation. In other words, the legal, juridical conception of emancipation, which affirms the "essence of difference",[5] and human emancipation, which is always supernumerary to the conceptual pairing legal/illegal that Marx finds in the "essence of community", should not be confused.

Political emancipation cannot resolve the problem of alienation, since communism (axiom of community) is not a synonym for the state. According to Marx, political emancipation acknowledges the division of the human animal into a public and private human being.[6] The realisation of the axiom of community is possible only through the revolutionary temporality by which the social division may be temporarily abolished (equality). From Badiou's standpoint, Marx's conception of political emancipation may be thought of in term of *didactic shema*[7], by which artistic practise is reduced to the public regime of appearances that forms rules (truths) in accordance with the ideal goals of the existing society as a normative standpoint from and by which a particular art comes to be judged as "good" or "bad". From such a standpoint, art is incapable of truth, and, therefore, truth is imposed on art from the outside. As Marx remarked, political emancipation implies the concept of the completion of emancipation. However, human emancipation presupposes a much more complex concept: the realisation of its twofold dimension – a human animal should exist as a *particular universal* and the particular or individual dimension of the human animal and universal "species-life" should not be understood as being in a conflictual relationship. The universal and the particular are conjoined and their differences erased. As opposed to the individual that appears to be an abstract monad in modern civil society, the concept of "species-being" is not atomised, since it is anchored in the very relation between I and the other.

The Aesthetic Interpretation of "Species-being"

The aesthetic interpretation of Marx's concept of "species-being" is found in his text on *Estranged Labour*: "Man therefore also forms objects in accordance with the laws of beauty".[8] The meaning of Marx's statement is still quite vague to this day. According to Marx, beauty is a property of human although it seems to be a property of things (something beautiful in nature). However, it does not imply that the aesthetic and beauty are (only) subjective. In Marx's philosophical perspective, beauty is that which is simultaneously both objective and the subjective. Beauty is at once a form, when we judge it, and also life, when we feel it: "It is at once our state of being and our creation."[9] Marx, however, tried to free the concepts of beauty and aesthetics

from their humanist theological attire, and to subordinate them to the socio-economic realm of examination. The classical moral theological connotations of a "species-being" have now been replaced with the notion of collectivity as the real locus of "species-being".

Therefore, "producing in accordance with the laws of beauty" presupposes nothing other than the free expression of universal (human) life. The object of such labour is the objectification of the species-life of man, states Marx. The task of the process of de-alienation lies therefore in making a human "species-life" into a means of his/her own physical existence, which, in the final analysis, means that labour must be thought of as an end in itself. This conception asserts the use-value of artistic production, or, in other words, the autonomy of the ways of doing and making within the sensory realm. The autonomy of aesthetic experience has nothing to do with the formal aesthetic qualities of an abstract artistic object.

Therefore, the concept of beauty must be thought of as a synthesis between human generic being (*Gattungswesen*) and her/his real life (*Gattungsleben*). Beauty, accordingly, implies the living form of a human social life in Marx's conceptual approach. That is to say, the human animal should exist both as a generic being and a generic life – he/she should exist as a *particular universal* and as a theoretical reflection of the living form of human social life.[10]

ALAIN BADIOU: BEAUTY, SITE AND ARTISTIC TRUTH

The autonomy of the appearance of truth in art presupposes the appearance of a human (generic humanum) as related to him/herself in the aesthetic object. Therefore, Badiou's conceptualisation of the appearance of truth or the unfolding the generic truth procedure may be bound up with early Marx's explanation of the "objectification of the species-life of a man".[11] In Badiou's inaesthetics, the promise of human emancipation through art/senses would imply the possibility of incorporating oneself in the temporality of revealing the inhuman subjective generic life.

According to Badiou, the body-of-truth[12] is the materiality that bears the subjective formalisation. An active body-of-truth, as Badiou maintains, is formalised by the subject of art. The conception of incorporating oneself into a subject of art may be explained through Badiou's theory of two bodies that he developed in the wake of Lacan's theory. The process of human incorporation into a subject of art implies:

1. an incorporation of the human animal and its own organic body (self – pathological incentives and drives) in the symptomal body, or body-place-of-the-Other. This symptomal body is, according to Badiou, a

work of art that bears the universal subject of art in its locality. The universal subject of art is set out by erasure of that "familiar body" (myself) in favour of the body of emancipatory Art (the local instance of the differential point of a truth).

2. an incorporation of this local instance into the generic artistic sequence and, finally, into artistic configuration, which, as Badiou states, is the universal subject of art that is non-empirical, non-organic and brings about the transhistorical and transwordly.[13]

The unfolding the truth(s) through a body of art can take place on the condition that an event is localizable (the site is knowable). Badiou's theory of site is complex, and this complexity derives from Badiou's hypothesis that the site signifies a transition point, or a passage, bridging the being of a situation (void) to the positioning of its post-event truth(s). The site is a paradoxical multiplicity, which is consistent with its situational structure in such a way that it exposes its situation to fundamental inconsistencies.[14] According to Badiou, in (some) world(s) objects appear, inasmuch as they are atomically structured, and as between these objects there exist relations (or not). Human animals are always in a world, and they exist as its objects as well. Since any object may become a site of appearance of artistic truth and the artistic constitution of the body, a human animal itself may become a site of a universal artistic address. In this process of transforming an object into a site, the object "vanishes without delay", says Badiou. This process is a signal that an event is localised, and at the same time, that a body of art is constituted. This renders Badiou's position anti-humanist as opposed to Marx's early stance. A body is a singular object of and in the world that makes up the appearance of truth in art and as the time/praxis of configuring to the existing reality.

A body is a specific multiple-being that bears subjective formalism; the notion of formalism does not signify form in the classical philosophical (phenomenological) sense of the term, but rather the process of human emancipation in art itself, inasmuch as it designates an axiomatic of an universal artistic act.[15] The formalisation of artistic truth always demonstrates its own coherence inasmuch as it is an end in itself, to put it in Marx's words. For instance, the happening (fluxus) as art introduced a new perception of an (artistic) object. The aesthetic newness of this perception comprised of the new ways of doing and making and comprised of the process of removing a singular object (singular inasmuch as it became a site) from ordinary experiences. Any object of a world could become a site for the appearance of the truth, of a free disinterested artistic expression, as that which addresses all (for the body of artistic truth does not presuppose any particular audience). Kantor Tadeusz, a Polish visual artist, for instance, once said, "an object ought to be won over and possessed rather than depicted or shown (...)".[16] Similarly, Allan Kaprow, an

American visual artist, developed formal procedures of (non-) art that should render the (aesthetic) experience of "pure immediacy". The Authors of the Fluxus maintained that the "disclosure of self-alienation means to reveal our own scission".[17] In 2008 Pedro Reyes, a Mexican contemporary artist, collected 1,527 weapons from residents of Culiacán, a city in western Mexico with a high rate of gun deaths, which were exchanged for electronics. The artist then melted the weapons down into shovels, which were used to plant 1,527 trees.

CONCLUSION: "ARTISTIC LIFE"

What Marx named the objectification of the species-life of man as a free expression of the universal human life in his (still) humanist endeavour, for Badiou signifies the (self-) organisation of the body on the condition of the localisation of an event*:* "It is only by working out an organisation for the subjectivizable body that one can hope to 'live', and not merely try to."[18] Therefore, the artistic emancipatory change is possible on account of recognising the process of object-becoming-site. The body of art vanishes as soon as an object-site is marked.

According to Badiou, the self-belonging multiplicity of a site (pure self-coincidence) concerns nothing other than Beauty itself, inasmuch as "Beauty is in that which is not".[19] As a result, human emancipation in art presupposes this "Inhumane Beauty", that which exists with a minimal degree of its existence.

On the basis of the above, Badiou's anti-humanist premises – anti-humanist inasmuch as the body of art is constituted on condition of an event – to live artistically, would imply to take as a point of departure the inhuman truths "which oblige us to formalise without anthropologizing".[20] Therefore, to live artistically involves a radical dehumanization of art, which, in Badiou's terms, signifies the very process of formalising in-human artistic truths. The incorporation of oneself into an artistic sequence, finally, implies a transhuman body and "that a subject takes hold of the divisible body of the human animal".[21] This is due to the fact that the body provides the material support for the decision making, which, in the final analysis, means to filter the infinite through the two.

Accordingly, to live artistically would mean neither the experience of the pleasure in imaginary relation ("first death" / pathological incentives and drives, pleasure principle or self-preservation) nor its prohibition, that is to say, a sacrifice of enjoyment (bare subordination to the law of the Other, "second death", artistic self-approval in accordance with the law of the Other), but rather reaching the edge of a void, the site that always stands "between two deaths". The site is the only "place without place" at which the praxis in accordance with and for the sake of the law of Inhuman Beauty – that is to say, an universalizing emancipatory act – and the production of society may become possible.

NOTES

1 Luca Basso, „Gattungswesen and Politics: From the Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State to The Holy Family," in *Marx and Singularity. From the Early Writings to the 'Grundrisse'* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2012), 26.

2 Karl Marx, "Marx to Ruge," in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels*, *Early Writings*, (trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton) (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 208.

3 Ibid., 423.

4 Cf. Patric McGee, *Theory and the Common from Marx to Badiou* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

5 Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Early Writings*, 221.

6 Ibid., 222.

7 Alain Badiou, *Handbook of Inaesthetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 3.

8 Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Early Writings*, 329.

9 Mikhail Lifshitz, *The Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx* (New York: Pluto Press, 1976), 96.

10 Leonard P. Wessell, „The Aesthetics of Living Form in Schiller and Marx", 196.

11 Karl Marx, "Estranged Labour," in *Early Writings*, 329.

12 Alain Badiou, „Book VII: What is a Body," in *Logics of Worlds, Being and Event II* (London –New Delhi–New York–Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2013), 453.

13 Alain Badiou, „Lacan," in *Logics of Worlds, Being and Event II*, 479.

14 A. J. Barlett, "Site," in *Badiou and Plato. An Education by Truths* (Edunburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 71.

15 Alain Badiou, „The Infinite," in *The Century* (MA, Cambridge: Polity Press), 162.

16 Alain Badiou, Bernard Blistene, Yann Chateigne (eds.) „Theater Happening 1967," in *A Theater without Theater* (Barcelona: Museu D'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), 2008), 120.

17 Gino di Maggio, „Fluxus – Kunst als individuelle Revolution Oder Utopie als Gewerbe?," *Flash Art and Heute Kunst*, No. 16 (1976): 14–15.

18 For more regarding the (five) conditions required for the effective existence of a body, see Alain Badiou, „Bodies and Organs of the Matheme," in *Logics of Worlds, Being and Event II*, 474.

19 Alain Badiou, „Ontology of the Site," *Logics of Worlds, Being and Event II,* 466.

20 Alain Badiou, „The Joint Disappearances of man and God," *The Century,* 178.

21 Alain Badiou, „Lacan," in *Logics of Worlds, Being and Event II,* 481.

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"AN ENEMY OF OUR TIMES": GODARD'S AESTHETICS OF CONTEMPORANEITY AS OPPOSITION TO SYNCHRONIZATION

A B S T R A C T

Towards the end of his film essay *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Jean-Luc Godard calls himself an "enemy of our times", of "the totalitarianism of the present as applied mechanically every day more oppressive on a planetary scale." The article regards *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998) as "a thinking form" that tries to resist the synchronizing, standardizing time of global capital, the pervasive uniformity of the global super-present, brought about by today's televisual and digital communications, which threatens to trivialise the different processes of memory and history, and art and culture in general. According to philosopher Bernard Stiegler, the final stage of capitalism is the control and synchronization of what former CEO of TF1 Patrick le Lay called "available brain time". The paper argues that Godard's work opposes this control and synchronization of our minds through *an aesthetics of contemporaneity*. The argument is based on the development of a theoretical framework that combines recent theories of contemporaneity with theories of image-politics. Focusing on the interrelation of the individual, the social and the media environments, the paper deals with Godard's image-political creation of temporal contemporaneity through a montage of clips of old films and newsreels, photographs, stills, images of paintings, new footage, advertisements, music, sound and voice recordings, textual citation, narration and commentary.

Jacob Lund
Aarhus University

KEY WORDS

CONTEMPORANEITY
IMAGE-POLITICS
TELEVISION
TIME EXPERIENCE
GODARD

Towards the end of the film essay *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Jean-Luc Godard calls himself an "enemy of our times", of "the totalitarianism of the present as applied mechanically every day more oppressive on a planetary scale. This faceless tyranny that effaces all faces for the systematic organization of the unified time of the moment. This global, abstract tyranny, which I try to oppose from my fleeting point of view."[1] The aim of this paper is to argue that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* can be seen as "a thinking form" that tries to resist the synchronizing, standardizing time of global capital, the pervasive uniformity of the global super-present, brought about by today's televisual and digital communications, which threatens to trivialise the different processes of memory and history, and art and culture in general – instead of allowing for a contemporaneity of difference.[2] According to philosopher Bernard Stiegler, the final stage of capitalism is the control and synchronization of what former CEO of the major French TV channel TF1, Patrick le Lay called "available brain time":

> "Our era is characterised by synchronization. The programme industries attempt to synchronize the activities of everyone's consciousness; a control over the life of souls through marketing and television, which establishes the psycho-power characteristic of our time. [...] From now on wherever you go, you have the same modes of production and distribution. This globalization comes at the price of a synchronization of modes of life and thought. Today, this becoming is extended to all aspects of our lives and destroys the singularity of existence through consumerism, which liquidates life skills [*les savoir-vivre*]."[3]

I will try to argue that Godard's work opposes this control and synchronization of our minds through an *aesthetics of contemporaneity*.

CONTEMPORARY IMAGE-POLITICS

Therefore what interests me here is also related to the question of the image and our relation to images, which has gained ever more importance since Guy Debord's classic analysis of the 'becoming-image' of capital that gave us the name of the society of the spectacle, where our very communicative nature, our language and images are separated in an autonomous sphere, and in which the entire social production has been falsified.[4] It seems, however, that our relation to images is even more complex than what it appeared in 1967. The spectacle is not merely separated and external to us, it is part of who we are, part of our consciousness, and it strongly influences the ways in which we experience the world, each other, and ourselves. "We are not," as philosopher Jacques Rancière remarks," in front of the images; we are in the middle of them, just as they are in the middle of us. The question is to know how to circulate among them, and how to get them to circulate as well."[5]

Thus, the new forms of image production and image circulation in contemporary media culture, not least on the Internet, bring the issue of circulation, or what filmmaker and theorist Hito Steyerl terms "circulationism" to the fore. Circulationism has not to do with the art of making images, but with the postproduction, launching, and acceleration of images – and with the public relations of images across social networks that both establish and tear apart "communities loosely linked by shared attention deficit".[6] How is it possible for contemporary artistic practice to critically react to this circulationism, the uniformed time of the global super-present, and its concomitant attention deficit?

CONTEMPORANEITY

My interest is the quality of this present, the quality of *our* present, as I would claim that the present present differs from past presents, the contemporary contemporary differs from earlier contemporaries. As among others philosopher Peter Osborne and art historian Terry Smith observe, the idea of contemporaneity as a *condition* is new, and Osborne stresses that:

> "what seems distinctive and important about the changing temporal quality of the historical present over the last few decades is best expressed through the distinctive conceptual grammar of con-temporaneity, a coming together not simply 'in' time, but *of* times: we do not just live or exist together 'in time' with our contemporaries – as if time itself is indifferent to this existing together – but rather the present is increasingly characterised by a coming together of *different but equally 'present'* temporalities or 'times', a temporal unity in disjunction, or a *disjunctive unity of present times*."[7]

Time is not an empty duration unaffected by the events that fill it, and time itself has a history. Time is constructed, multiply, and asymmetrical, neither homogeneous nor blank, and there are many different co-existing ways of being in time and belonging to it. As Osborne observes, the term "contemporaneity" should not be seen as a simple periodizing category, but rather as designator of the changing temporal quality of the historical present. "The contemporary" points to an awareness of what it is to be in the present whilst being attentive to the presence of other kinds of time. It designates a multi-chronicity and a thickening of the present in contemporary experience, an extension of the present beyond the immediate instant back and forward in time and across the globe. "Contemporaneity," Terry Smith claims, "consists precisely in the constant experience of radical disjunctures of perception, mismatching ways of seeing and valuing the same world, in the actual coincidence of asynchronous temporalities, in the jostling contingency of various cultural and

social multiplicities."[8] The idea of contemporaneity as an intensified global interconnectedness of different times is inseparable from image circulation and the role of images in the global spectacle. The world is becoming "uniformed" or "common" not least because of the global circulation of images.

On the background of this general diagnosis of the historical present as being defined by a coming together of different times, which at the same are subjected to synchronization and standardization, I will now finally return to Jean-Luc Godard.

GODARD'S HISTORY WRITING THROUGH MONTAGE

Histoire(s) du cinéma is a 264-minute video essay on the history or histories of cinema and its relation to the 20th century, which was completed in 1998 (so it is still somewhat contemporary; Godard may be said to have had an intuition of the changes in our current experience of time). It consists of four chapters, each one divided into two parts, making for a total of eight episodes, and originates from an experimental series of improvised talks and lectures Godard gave at the Montreal Film School in the late 70s. Rather than delivering traditional lectures, Godard proposed a form of historical cinematic montage where he showed one of his own films along with clips from a range of other films as a basis for reflections on cinema history and his own place within it.[9] The opening two long episodes were eventually broadcast on French television in 1988 and 1989, and the subsequent six episodes were screened at festivals and museums in 1997 and 1998. In 1998 the work was released as a complete and re-edited whole on VHS, and in 2008 it became available on DVD. Made for TV and later VHS and DVD the work is meant to be seen in the everyday environment of the viewer; on her TV or computer where she encounters or is bombarded with a dizzying number of images every day – where her brain is made available by the programme industries, according to Stiegler.

The video essay weaves together clips of old films and newsreels, photographs, stills, images of paintings, new footage, advertisements, music, sound and voice recordings, textual citation, narration and commentary, primarily by Godard himself, but also by the actors Juliette Binoche and Julie Delpy, and writers like André Malraux, Ezra Pound and Paul Celan. Every now and then we also see Godard at his desk with his books and his typewriter orchestrating it all. In an experimental form, which breaks with the linear development of narrative cinema in favour of a kind of contemporaneity, as I will argue in the following, the work layers, superimposes, and juxtaposes all the filmic, musical, textual, voice-over, and art historical citations on top of each other, dealing with a number of different subjects ranging from film and politics to globalization, memory, genocide, art and God.[10]

Godard's history writing is based on a plural concept of history that also reflects the condition of contemporaneity. The unified big history is unachievable but all the innumerable potential histories contained in it are not. They are all possible histories that do not pretend to be the only possible one, but merely possible.[11] The parenthetical "s" in the title *Histoire(s) du cinéma* indicates in itself the contemporaneity of a number of different histories; there is no *one* history. Furthermore, the title of Chapter 1A, "Toutes les histoires" (All the Stories), not only suggests that history, like public memory, is constituted by multiple histories from a variety of competing perspectives, but also that history must include all perspectives and voices, including the voices of Hitler, Himmler, and a number of other perpetrators.[12] I therefore understand Rancière to a certain extent when he criticizes Godard for linking heterogeneous elements into a homogeneous layer of mystery, "where all yesterday's conflicts become expressions of intense co-presence," and for "constructing the world of 'images' as a world of general co-belonging and inter-expression."[13] I would argue, however, that this co-presence is not to be deplored, but to be appreciated as a possible actualisation of different temporalities and pasts.

By juxtaposing documentary footage, photographic evidence next to fiction film, popular songs, propaganda, recorded voices and testimony, and by mixing texts, soundtracks, music and double exposures, by not hesitating to mount the historical archive with the artistic repertory of global cinema, the assemblages of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* invites us to reflect upon how to distinguish 'a just image' (*une image juste*) from 'just an image' (*juste une image*) of different pasts, not least of the Holocaust.

One of the most discussed sequences in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* occurs in the last minutes of chapter 1A, when Godard declares: "and if George Stevens hadn't used the first 16 millimetre colour film at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, Elizabeth Taylor would never have found a place in the sun." The fragment involves the superimposition within a single frame of Stevens's images of Holocaust victims, a stop-started sequence from Stevens's film *A Place in the Sun* (1951) with a swimsuit-clad Elizabeth Taylor, and Mary Magdalene from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1304-6). Giotto's painting is tilted ninety degrees so it looks as if Mary Magdalene is descending like an angel to draw Elisabeth Taylor up towards the heavens. Godard's voice accompanies two images from Goya's *Disasters of war* series of etchings (1810-20) and pauses before the line about Elizabeth Taylor's happiness. During the pause the screen fades to black, and a colour image of bodies of Holocaust victims piled in railway wagons at Dachau appears out of the darkness, while gradually the black and white image of Taylor caressing the head of Montgomery Clift in *A Place in the Sun*

is superimposed over the colour image of the Holocaust victims. The head of one of the victims seems to rest on her arm close to her chest along with that of Clift's. The colours bleed into the image of Taylor as Clift's image disappears. Rather than suggesting a replacement of the figure of the victim for Clift or vice versa, this fading in and out offers a brutal contrast to this same image.[14]

In this way Godard uses montage – what he calls "mon beau souci", my beautiful care – as a technique for articulating the past. According to Godard only montage can produce historical connections because history is always a matter of juxtaposing one thing with another. Time-based audio-visual media like film and video thus produce specific modes of historical articulations through techniques of movement decomposition and superimposition of images.[15] Incorporating both moving and still images Godard creates a complex assemblage of perspectives from different temporal strata. Painting and photography in particular are often perceived as a slice of time, or suspended time, while film, as a time-image, is linked to a temporality that endures, to a time that reproduces the flow of "real time". By basing his video essay on both photographs, paintings and film Godard blurs these apparently opposite time economies for the benefit of a contemporaneity of multiple, heterogeneous temporalities that compete with and overlap each other, suggesting a notion of a fractured, layered, multiple temporality.[16]

THE AESTHETICS OF CONTEMPORANEITY

As in other works and texts Godard draws upon Walter Benjamin's critique of the historicist conception of time only in the abstract form of an "empty, homogeneous continuum" that the historian only needs to fill with a succession of facts, thereby producing a "history of events". The problem with this abstract notion of time and the historicist notion of history as a linear development is that once time is divided into a chronological series of instants, any moment in the past becomes unreachable as it is irremediably severed from the present by an infinite number of instants.[17] It becomes a dead object of knowledge, something that can be accumulated without end, but which will never form what Benjamin calls the "true picture of the past". "The true picture of the past flits by," Benjamin writes in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History":

> "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. [...] For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably. To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."[18]

Godard's artistic practice in *Histoire(s)* is defined by montage as the bringing together for the first time of elements that are not predisposed to be linked. It creates singular images by connecting well known but previously unconnected elements and images. Godard uses montage as an experimental method for the production of historical intelligibility and to construct what Benjamin called "the image in the now of its recognizability". As Benjamin writes in one of the notes for his *Arcades Project*:

> "Every present day is determined by the images that are synchronic with it: each 'now' is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time. [...] It is not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather image is that wherein *what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation*. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: not temporal in nature but figural <*bildlich*>. Only dialectical images are genuinely historical [...]. The image that is read [is] the image in the now of its recognizability."[19]

Historical knowledge only comes about through the 'now', that is, through a state of our present experience from which emerges, from amongst the immense archive of texts, images and testimonies of the past, a moment of memory and readability.[20] This critical moment appears according to Benjamin as an *image*: a dialectical image in which 'what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation,' or a coming together of times, a contemporaneity of past and present.

By speaking of the image that is read and recognized Benjamin not only points to *the formal aspects* of the image but also to the time of its reading and recognition, that is, to *the recognizing spectator*. This understanding of the image as something that develops out of the spectator's relation with the image is also explicit in Godard's own comments on his artistic practice of montage: "But an image doesn't exist. This is not an image, it's a picture. The image is the relation with me looking at it dreaming up a relation at [*sic*] someone else. An image is an association."[21] The spectator so to speak animates the image. The montage and interruptions that allow the true picture of the past to flash up for an instant before it disappears irretrievably is a *spacing* of time and an opening in which memory can emerge. The image exists only in the plural according to Godard's conception of it. Without reducing their differences or provoking a fusion of them, it appears in the intermediate space between two

images, which can either be located in the many instances of black screens, or in the intervals of the superimpositions where two images are co-present on the screen (in the difference between them). Godard comments: "The basis is usually two, always to present from the start two images rather than one, that is what I call image, the one made of two."[22] In this way the montage appears as a spatializing narrative into which the spectator can "enter" – a spatialization of time in which the time-connections are *felt*. With reference to the recurring sentence "une forme qui pense", "a form that thinks", the montage can thus be regarded as an epistemological and dramaturgical space in which various kinds of temporality may be produced or shown to coexist.[23]

It is thus not only about the time of the images. Godard *shows* us these images and movie clips. They are addressed to us as viewers, which means that *our* time, our present, is being involved – our historical present of the year 2015 as well as our "phenomenological present" for the duration of our watching and listening to the film. This adds another dimension to the time structure of the work. The temporality of the viewer, who – to use the vocabulary of reception aesthetics – concretizes the artefact of the video essay and gives it an individual form, take part in the constellation of the dialectical image.

The montage is a production of historical knowledge. It is not, however, in the case of Godard a knowledge production that controls the work of the spectator. The potential readings and recognitions of his complex montage images are almost infinite and the product of their combination cannot be predicted as it only appears in the here and now of each particular vision, that is, in each concretization of the visual artefact, which each time gives it an individual form. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* demonstrates that memory is something that has to be made, not just received. It testifies to the fact that it is an activity, praxis, involving the spectator in the actualisation of different temporalities.

Godard's fleeting point of view and a-chronological movements through time and space bring together things and times "that have not been brought together before, and do not seem liable to be brought together at all." He exhibits the images of our everyday while establishing a relation to these images and making the co-existence of their different temporalities, their contemporaneity in the historical present, *felt*– it is an *aesthetics of contemporaneity* in opposition to "the systematic organization of the unified time of the moment. This global, abstract tyranny."

NOTES

1 Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* [1998], DVD Gaumont, 2008, Chapter 4B.

2 Cf. James S. Williams, "Histoire(s) du cinéma," in *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 61, No. 3 (Spring 2008): 16.

3 Bernard Stiegler, "Dans la vacance, on cherche à retrouver la consistance dans son existence," *philosophie magazine* no. 21 (2008), accessed May, 25, 2015, http://www.philomag.com/les-idees/bernard-stiegler-dans-la-vacance-on-cherche-a-retrouver-la-consistance-dans-son-existence.

4 Cf. Giorgio Agamben, "Marginal Notes on *Commentaries on the Society of the Spectacle,*" in *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 76.

5 Jacques Rancière, "Die Arbeit des Bildes/The Work of the Image," in Esther Shalev-Gerz: *MenschenDinge/The Human Aspect of Objects,* Weimar: Stiftung Gedenkstätten (Buchenwald und Mittelbau-Dora, 2006), 10.

6 Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?," in *e-flux journal* no.49 (November 2013), 07/10, accessed May 25, 2015,http://www.e-flux.com/journal/too-much-world-is-the-internet-dead/

7 Peter Osborne, *Anywhere or not at all. Philosophy of Contemporary Art* (London: Verso, 2013), 17.

8 Terry Smith, "Contemporary Art and Contemporaneity," in *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Summer 2006): 703.

9 Cf. Michael Witt, introduction to *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988-1998) by Jean-Luc Godard, in *Screen* 40:3 (Autumn 1999): 304-305.

10 Cf. Dimitrios S. Latsis, "Genealogy of the Image in *Histoire(s) du Cinéma*: Godard, Warburg and the Iconology of the Interstice," *Third Text*, 27:6 (2013): 778.

11 Cf. Monica Dall'asta, "The (Im)possible History," in *For Ever Godard, eds.* Michael Temple et al. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004), 352.

12 Cf. Kriss Ravetto-Biagioli, "*Noli me tangere*. Jean-Luc Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" in *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, Malden, eds. Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline (MA & Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 461.

13 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London & New York: Verso, 2007), 62-63.

14 My description of this fragment draws heavily upon Ravetto-Biagioli, 472, and Williams, 14.

15 Cf. Trond Lundemo, "Godard as Historiographer," in *A Companion to Jean-Luc Godard*, eds. Tom Conley and T. Jefferson Kline, 496.

16 I here draw upon the description of photofilmic time economies in the program for the conference *Photofilmic Images in Contemporary Art and Visual Culture*, accessed May, 25, 2015,http://photofilmic.com/photofilmic-images-in-contemporary-art-and-visual-culture-conference/

17 Cf. Monica Dall'asta, "The (Im)possible History,"

18 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 255.

19 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland & Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA & London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 462f. (my italics)

20 Georges Didi-Huberman, "Opening the Camps, Closing the Eyes: Image, History, Readability," in *Concentrationary Cinema. Aesthetics as Political Resistance in Alain Resnais's* Night and Fog (1955), eds. Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2011), 87.

21 *Filmcomment*, interview: Jean-Luc Godard, accessed May, 25, 2015, http://www.filmcomment.com/article/jean-luc-godard-interview-nouvelle-vague-histoires-du-cinema-helas-pour-moi.

22 Jean-Luc Godard & Youssef Ishaghpour, *Archéologie du cinéma et mémoire du siècle* (Tours: Farrago, 2000), 27.

23 Cf. Terry Smith's description of contemporary exhibition curating, in *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 29-31.

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ARCHITECTURAL HYBRIDS IN KALEIDOSCOPIC PHOTOGRAPHY

A B S T R A C T

This paper focuses on the topic that is somehow a crossroad between two fields: photography and architectural morphogenesis. The particular interest of the article is contemporary photographic tendency to explore the kaleidoscopic technique and aesthetics in relation to the architectural objects and urban environment. Paradoxically these are the photographers who investigate this special type of morphogenesis of architectural form. However some of them are architects originally. Giving attention to the historical and evolutional aspects of the kaleidoscopic image in 19th century and kaleidoscopic photographic practices of American artist Alvin Langdon Coburn and his followers in 20th and 21th centuries the paper aims to analyze the potential of photography in developing the architectural form by examples of projects of Mattia Mognetti, Borbála Sütő-Nagy, Cory Stevens, Stéphane Laniray, Panos Papanagiotou, Andrey Chegin, Mohammad Domiri and those photographers who were inspired by camera work from the movie "Inception" – Ben Thomas, Kazuhiko Kawahara, Simon Gardiner, Nickolas Kennedy Sitton.

Maria Romakina
Lomonosov Moscow State University,
Strelka Institute for Media, Architecture and Design

KEY WORDS

KALEIDOSCOPE
ARCHITECTURE
ABSTRACTION
HYBRID STRUCTURE
PHOTOGRAPHY
VORTOGRAPH
ALVIN LANGDON COBURN
MAURITS CORNELIS ESCHER
THE MOVIE "INCEPTION"

"Make picture of kaleidoscope".
William H.Fox Talbot
(ms. Note dated February 18, 1839)

"In symmetry there is a balance;
in balance there is harmony;
in harmony, equilibrium".
David Kalish, Kaleidoscope artist

Kaleidoscope is an optical plaything: it's body slides, giving birth for spontaneous multi-colored patterns. Kaleidoscope discovered new horizons of human vision – fragmented, fractioned. Discovered the opportunity to observe the images that constantly mutate, sprouting one into the other, while being ordered and chaotic at the same time. Invented in 1816 by Sir David Brewster, it immediately got a lot of fans. With the course of time it's construction developed and gave birth to several "relatives" of kaleidoscope – teleidoscope, wheel scope, marble scope, cell scope, projection scope and so on. All of them are magic toys promising to surprise the viewer and inspire him with a sense of wonder.

Ordered chaos seems to be the main character of the kaleidoscopic image. The order we find in the symmetric structure of the figure: a basic pattern within it always repeats constant times (three, six – depends on the structure of the prism) and always equally. Chaotic is all the rest: colorful elements within the fragment are mated with each other freely, guided by chance, creating unpredictable and undirected motif.

Being a handmade and human invented device, kaleidoscope has kind of prototypes in nature. Some living organisms (Botryllus marionis, Aurelia insulinda, some Radiolarias, etc) in the process of transferring them to the planar views in certain projections exhibit the ability to form analogues of kaleidoscopic images. That resemblance we might observe in visual searches of the German biologist Ernst Haeckel. In his drawings he was focused so much on ocean creatures[1]. Besides the iris of animal's and human's eye (although being not so fragmented, but more homogeneous), some crystals demonstrate kaleidoscope-like structures.

KALEIDOSCOPE: FROM A MAGIC TOY TO THE PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUE AND THE ART FORM

Overcoming its plaything status kaleidoscope became a serious instrument in the hands of artists, filmakers, later – new media artists, sculptors. It provides huge opportunities in experimenting with form, structure, volume. Photographers began to simulate the effect of this intricate instrument in the early 20th century although as far back as 1839 one of the pioneers of photography William H.Fox Talbot has noticed: "Make picture of kaleidoscope"[2]. In 1917 American artist Alvin Langdon Coburn practiced with close up subjects shooting them through the prism of three mirror surfaces. He got black and white abstractions with spectacular play of light and shadow as if they have been composed of fragments of mirrors. Applying the same method to the portrait photography (so he portrayed, for example, the poet Ezra Pound) Coburn created less abstract and more substantive pictures, something like collages assembled from multiple repetition of elements in different positions – vertical, horizontal, with a deviation of the diagonal. This type of photography he called Vortograph.

The name Vortograph refers to the name of the art movement originated in the environment of British artists and then became international, Vorticism. Inspired by Cubism, participants of this movement depicted objects and human figures as compositions of abstract angular figures's conglomerations. Alvin Langdon Coburn's Vortograph experiments visually are very similar to Vorticist's pictures. By the way Vortograph consideres to be the first abstract type of photographic image[3]. That means that besides being the inventor of kaleidoscopic photography Coburn is one of the photo abstraction's pioneers: his spectacular works follow the avant-garde artistic spirit of the early 20th century. By the way nonrandomly he chose Ezra Pound as a model for his kaleidoscopic portraits as Pound was the godfather of Vorticism. The Vorticists were actually named by Pound – after the image of a vortex, that "point in the cyclone where energy cuts into space and imparts form to it..."[4]. Pound's service to Vorticism was "as appreciable as his theoretical and literary merit as such"[5].

Later kaleidoscopic technique has been developed by initiatives of famous and not so much photographers. 20th century is marked by positioning as the kaleidoscopic subjects nature elements (for example, Horst P. Horst made a step out of fashion line and in 1946 published "Patterns of nature" researching the visual structure of plants, shells, butterfly wings) or human body ("Wegee's Creative Camera", 1959, and others).

ARCHITECTURE AND KALEIDOSCOPIC VISION IN 21ST CENTURY

In 2000-2010s, driven by the development of digital photographic techniques and software for image processing, several photographic projects focused on kaleidoscoping architecture originated independently of each other marking the new emerging tendency. Consider some of them.

Mattia Mognetti. "Istigkeit"

Italian photographer Mattia Mognetti with his black and white project "Istigkeit" (started 2011) grows something like architectural crystals placing them into the space of weightlessness, nowhere. By deformating the original shape of the buildings the author violences the basic principles of gravity: new born architectural objects are floating in the vacuum, visually reinforcing by totally black background. They are ready to move and rotate in any direction and are not tied to the Earth, space has lost its predominance. No basis, no foothold – objects are hovering, self-sufficient. Mognetti partly creates the perfect likeness of kaleidoscopic images, but more often uses the principle of the kaleidoscope and improvises on its basis. He calls his project "(de) construction experiment" and it is in fact: experiment with form, volume, texture. "I focused on emptiness and fullness interacting with space and time" – Mognetti brings a philosophical note to his concept[6]. As one of the epigraphs he takes words of the artist Maurits Cornelis Escher who is famous by his graphic impossible worlds: "I can not keep from fooling around with our irrefutable certainties. It is, for example, a pleasure knowingly to mix up two and three dimensionalities, flat and spatial, and to make fun of gravity". Making fun of gravity is essential for Mognetti as well as endeavors to "grow" architecture capable of volume coupling and spatial discontinuities, previously

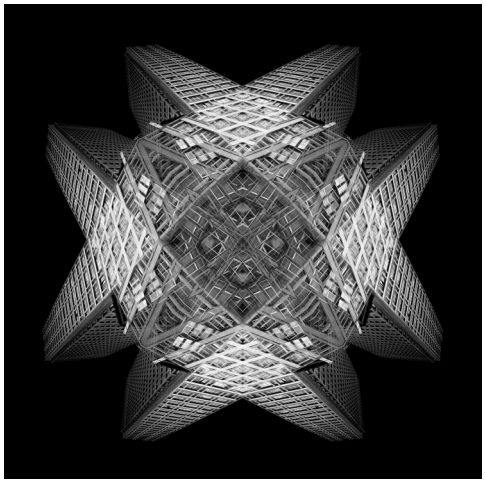

Figure 1. Mattia Mognetti. Istigkeit #47
© Mattia Mognetti www.mattiamognetti.com

impossible. Besides Escher he refers to “Star Wars” and Rorschach’s test as well[7]. “I also felt this project related to my academic studies in psychology and neuroscience, which gave me some skills useful to reach my purposes, speaking about perception and visual communication. I was deeply intrigued by the surreal touch of the final images, suspended in space and time in somekind of tension between reality and utopia. Meaning is not given, it is in the observer, whose eyes could recognize something idiosincratic”[8].

Borbála Süto-Nagy. “Kaleidoscope”.

Hungarian photographer Borbála Sütő-Nagy offers her own variant of experiments with form – brutal minimalistic constructions, “built” from simple massive basic elements by rhyming and matching them[9]. The texture of these basic elements is mostly neutral, unobtrusive, allowing the view to focus on the form by it self. New hybrids are geographically unlinked as they are too abstract to be recognized as some parts of a real object which is BMW Welt building. “The kaleidoscope project is a kind of continuous project for me. Maybe it started with drawing mandalas when I was 15 years old[10]. Maybe my first impress was that as a child I had a kaleidoscope toy, and I was so amazed how the little things in it made a new picture by turning it. And after many years I remembered this optical effect when I edited my photographs by mirroring and duplicating them. Firstly it was only a “playing around” with only one photo what it could be. I am interested in possibility to create something new vision from an already existing object, and sometimes using only a little slice of that”[11].

Figure 2. Cory Stevens. Deconstructed II: Altstadt #9

Cory Stevens.“Deconstructed. Reimagined”, “Deconstructed II. Altstadt”, “Abstracted. Manipulated”.

One more author as well as Mattia Mognetti announced his activity as deconstruction – Canadian photographer Cory Stevens named one of his project “Deconstructed. Reimagined” and another one “Deconstructed II. Altstadt”. And it is quite a radical experience: the majority of deconstructed by him buildings in all his series, and there are three of them[12], have no common with their origins whether it is Academy of Music in Munich located in a building built by the Nazis in the early 1930s, Music Academy in Stuttgart or Munich Bavarian State Chancellery. It is Munich where Stevens has found most of his objects. Deconstruction for him is a kind of architectural game that allows to refresh one’s vision: “I liked the idea of being able to take a subject very typical or normal – something that maybe we do not look twice at – and re-imagine it into something that you can not help but look at [13]...” He is one of the most accurate adepts of the kaleidoscopic technique who succeeded in creating both planar images and images that seems to be volumetric (by means of distortions). It must have been an exact imitation of kaleidoscopic picture that allowed the author to create compositions similar to the ceiling ornaments in religious cathedrals even in such cases when he worked with the exterior of the buildings of non religious function. “These projects were inspired by the works of other contemporary photographers, artists, and designers. In specific, I was impressed by the work of Mattia Mognetti (Italy), Florian Mueller (Germany), and Benjamin Monn (Germany). The idea started as a curiosity. But because these projects have become so popular, I’ve been motivated to continue exploring architecture through this approach. The most intriguing part of this type of project is that you never know exactly how a piece will turn out. You may start the process with an interesting element, but how it transforms during the process is always a surprise. I am experiencing the form, not the function, exploring the geometry of the design outside of the intended context[14].”

Mohammad Domiri .“Architecture Gallery”.

Iranian artist Mohammad Domiri traces “native”, taken from architectural reality kaleidoscopic patterns, geometric ornaments of religious architecture (Ali Qapu Palace, Nasir Al-Mulk Moscque, Seyyed Moscque and others). By using the fish eye lenses Domiri broadens the frame view and composes each subject as a universe which discovers the visual shift from it’s spatial context. Due to the optical strain some objects become less important while others dominant[15]. Volume transforms into planar view, sacral space transforms into ornamental pattern.

Stéphane Laniray. "Tokyo Architecture".

Stéphane Laniray from Paris in his series "Tokyo Architecture" shies away from leaving in the shot details of urban space – poles with electrical wires, trees. Nude architectural objects are not enough for him: Laniray is transforming and reinterpreting the city's texture and city space. Taking an elegant motif he mirrors it vertically and horizontally. He creates something fantasmogoric, impossible image of the city – "une poésie urban"[16]. And yes, "Tokyo Architecture" might be seen as a visual urban poetry, which has its own rhythms and rhymes.

Panos Papanagiotou."The MIRRORS iPhoneography Project of Hellopanos".

Greek visual artist Panos Papanagiotou (nickname – Hellopanos) offers his own vision on "flying" architecture and reinterpretation of urban space. He frees objects from their urban context (facades of buildings, electrical wires, lights, antennas, satellite dishes, trees, cranes), processes them with iPhone applications and turns into objects floating in the sky or in the mist – somewhere. Often they remind the Rorschach inkblots[17].

Virginio Favale. "KaleidoScape", "Space", "Buildings".

In his series "KaleidoScape" Rome based photographer Virginio Favale invites the viewer to the negative world while images from "Space" are cosmic allusions and images from "Buildings" are colorful tapestries[18]. The umbrella for those three series is the kaleidoscopic technique. White line on black, another one, block of lines – condensed and rarefied patterns of power transmission poles figures unique type of scape, KaleidoScape. "Space" allusion is obtained with a lot of glossy blue, green and yellow surfaces: this combination of colours flavored with radiance gives a feeling of cosmic architecture. For "Buildings" Favale has chosen rich textural surfaces (walls with advertisement billboards, objects with interesting geometric ornaments, colorful interiors), which have a potential to turn into ornamental-like compositions after kaleidoscope transformation.

Andrey Chegin. "City-cross", "Escher's Space".

In sepia series "Escher's Space" and "City-cross" Russian master of photography Andrey Chegin uses hand-made technique of kaleidoscoping the images. He provides the lens filter with the mask which carved in a sector: one quarter, one third or fifth – on request. Then, depending on which

part is cut off, so many shots are done: cut a quarter – do four shots. The smaller the sector the more kaleidoscopic picture becomes. “City-cross” is a series of several patchwork photographic gobelins which develope the form variations of a cross in architecture (traditionally it’s an element with reach symbolic meaning). Crosses are constructed from massive domes, slender towers, columns, walls and many other architectural details and types of the buildings[19]. The second project, “Escher’s Space” exposures photos by ones[20], not in groups. Columns of Athenian Acropolis are turned into a swastika, the St. Petersburg Winter Palace, replicated four times, forms a black square and collage from Berlin TV Tower body resembles a bizarre flower. “Escher’s Space” was conceived in the 1980s, after I saw the album of the artist Escher who anticipated the modern computer graphics,” – Andrey Chegin explains the origin of the idea for that project. – “Escher drew on the plane architectural objects, which could not exist in reality, in volume. One example: a person climbs the ladder and as a result moves down. Even impossible to imagine how it happens. Looking through Escher’s album I thought about creating things like that in photography. And in 1996 figured out how to do it”[21].

“INCEPTION” INSPIRED

In a random way the author of this paper has discovered several projects with kaleidoscopic aesthetics that follow the same prototype as their originators or art critics in analysis announce which is not a kaleidoscope at all, but a movie: “Inception” (camera work – Wally Pfister). These are those projects: “Accession” by Ben Thomas, “Creatures of the City” by Kawahara Kazuhiko, “Upside Town I” and “Upside Town II” by Simon Gardiner and “Twisted” by Nicholas Kennedy Sitton. Their creators all as one were inspired by the “Inception”’s camera work and that particular episode where the transition from the real physical space to the dreaming space is shown as crashing of the city streets into scattered fragments of a curved mirror. However the methods of kaleidoscoping the image, the optical shift from a “normal” picture as well as the author’s interpretation of the manipulation are different.

In *“Accession” (since 2012) Ben Thomas from Australia* mirrows the city vertically, stretching it, depriving it the sky and the horizon. Kaleidoscope effect is achieved in post processing. Almost all images are bird eye views: “they were shot from high vantage points being either rooftops of buildings or from a doorless helicopter”[22]. That gives the viewer a sense of detachment, generalized view of the city, the view that is devoid of personal affection to a particular park, courtyard, street corner. The city as an endless maze where you

can get lost and lose yourself, then find and be found. In some cases he calls to labirints of Maurits Cornelis Escher as in "Everyone's Advice" depicting Museum d'Orsay's Hall. But his main inspirations come from Jeffrey Smart and Andreas Gursky. "Both for different reasons, Smart in relation to his use of perspective and colour and Gursky, his use of scale. The kaleidoscopic effect is a tool to deconstruct the large and complex cities we live in. This visual representation can help people think differently about architecture and space, show familiar structures in a new way that help in the appreciation of the architecture and design that we can sometimes take for granted".[23]

The following projects visually are very similar: *Kazuhiko Kawahara's "Creatures of the City" (since 2003)* and *Simon Gardiner's "Upside Town I" (2011) , "Upside Town II" (2014)*. Both authors focus on fragments of the buildings, not specific ones, but ordinary, then multiply the chosen fragment 2, 3, 4 times digitally using such effects as repetition for axis, rotation for center and others. They are desiring to overcome three-dimentional structure of the space. New hybrids are far from the original structures, they are absolutely independent architectural objects with their own biography. Kozuhiko Kawahara from Japan (pseudonym – Palla) argues that through such manipulation he would do unremarkable architecture more lively and interesting for citizens: "They're places that no one cares about, that are almost just quietly fading away. But I'm trying to reveal the structures and systems of a city that you can't actually see"[24]. Kawahara's interest is converting from 3D to 2D images, which is the way of perception of the world. "Only when the 3D space is converted to the 2D image the kaleidoscopic images are appearing – I'm interested in that. I started the project from 2003. At that time I have encountered some scenes in a real world as if that were mirroring images"[25]. Simon Gardiner from Great Britain explains he has been inspired by experiments of postmodern architects from the late 1980s which were based on the idea of the fragmentary nature of the world, interest in the manipulation of the shell and the skin of architectural structures, their distortions resulting to a rather aggressive invasion of buildings in the urban space. His work Gardiner presents in a from of a manifesto as the deconstructivists did[26].

San-Francisco based photographer *Nickolas Kennedy Sitton in "Twisted"* examines the "Inception"'s crumbling effect like it is. The author has invested sensations from a new for him urban space: he had just recently moved to San Francisco, being lost, disorienting and impressed by this city at the same time. Through his series "Twisted" he studied the process of distortion and warping. "These photos are a result of how intriguing the concept of distortion translates

to architecture. It creates a sense of falling into itself, like capturing a moment of demolition. I can destroy titanous steel structures with the click of a mouse and create new twisted versions of reality"[27].

DECONSTRUCTION AS THE KALEIDOSCOPE METHOD

All analyzed photo projects apply the deconstruction method in one way or another. Disassembly the architecture object into components, fragments and then assembly and renovate it by means of the manipulation and the montage in kaleidoscopic aesthetics. The new objects often tend to have nothing common with the originals. And deconstruction is more that a technical procedure in this case: "[...] Deconstruction itself never appears as a purely technical analysis tool, but always a kind of deconstructive-negative cognitive imperative postmodern sensibility"[28]. Photographers desire to deal with the city as a mechanism with no coherent structure, open for visual transformations. As a result the city or separate architectural objects become unrealistic, surreal, even mysterious.

FINDINGS. CONCLUSION REMARKS

Finalizing the paper I would like to posit a number of conclusions.

1. Kaleidoscope which was originally a toy, an entertainment, has been "adopted" by artists and photographers in the 20th century as a serious tool to conduct experiments with form, structure, volume. The majority of experiments with the architecture as the subject date back to the early 21st century that can be associated with the development of digital photographic techniques and software for image processing.
2. Balanced and at the same time unpredictable and uncontrolled chaos as the main principle of the organization of the kaleidoscopic image provides a special form of abstraction. The abstraction that is retreated into itself, that is built from the pieces of glass in case of a classical kaleidoscope and of the incidental elements of human environment in case of teleidoscope. Through multiple repetition and mirroring these elements loose their essence of concrete objects and become fragments of the kaleidoscopic hole.
3. The anticipation of kaleidoscopic image structure might be found in nature. Architectural morphogenesis demonstrates similarity with genetic traits of morphogenesis in biology and crystallography. Thereby human-made symmetrical centered kaleidoscopic structures are not bio generated but artificially generated by means of a technical device. And at the same time they have analogues in nature. A bit paradoxical, but it is so.

4. What is particularly interesting is the fact that almost all projects have a kind of prototype except the kaleidoscope by itself. We might observe several allusions to Maurits Cornelis Escher who created impossible architectural and non-architectural visual labirints in his graphics. Some of the authors such as Mattia Mognetti, Andrey Chezin were inspired by Escher's drawings. The second visual allusion is Rorschach's spot strategy which is touched upon mirrored images (some of them are kaleidoscope like as well). Individual photographers refer to other photographers. The special case is "Inception" imitation. Thereby the kaleidoscope is much more an instrument but not a source of visual inspiration.
5. Technically there is a variety of modes of achieving the kaleidoscope effect: digital manipulations (majority of projects), mask filters (Andrey Chegin), fish-eye lenses (Mohammad Domiri). The first and the second techniques in one way or another implement the deconstruction process.
6. Architectural hybrids created by kaleidoscopic photography eradicate their Earth gravity – they are presented as objects flying in the sky or beeing in some nowhere, in vacuum. For now it seems to be a total, all-out of utopia if we are talking about Earth-based architecture.
7. Today's urban space is quite a stable structure. It demonstrates the ability to change and for rapid transformation at the level of urban software, but not at the level of urban hardware. Perhaps the future cities will be arranged a little bit differently and will be more mobile, agile, fluid at the level of urban hardware as well. As far as these claims are utopian, future might surprise us.

NOTES

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5 Mark Antliff, Scott W. Klein, *Vorticism: New Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 16.

6 Mattia Mognetti, Istigkeit. Personal website of Mattia Mognetti, accessed may 18, 2015, http://www.mattiamognetti.com/97244/718297/portfolio/istigkeit.

7 Francesca Esposito, " Architecture of the unconscious: Mattia Mognetti," Domus (2015), published 26 March 2013, accessed may 18, 2015, http://www.domusweb.it/en/photo-essays/2013/03/26/architecture-of-the-unconscious.html.

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9 Sütő-Nagy, Borbála. Kaleidoscope. Bēhance, published may 30, 2012, accessed 30 may, 2015, https://www.behance.net/gallery/4072191/Kaleidoscope.

10 Mandala has kaleidoscopic like structure and by many kaleidoscopic artists is perceived as the source of inspiration. Janice Chesnik: “It represents continuity, beauty, and serenity, but holding the possibility of something new and exciting with every change.” – Cozy Baker, Kaleidoscopes: *Wonders of Wonder* (C&T Publishing, 1999), 37.

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THE CINEMATIC ASPECT OF ARCHITECTURE: THE ROLE OF TIME IN DISCUSSING ALTERNATIVE ARCHITECTURAL STRATEGIES

A B S T R A C T

In the search for ways to overcome the negative connotations of applying characteristically traditional practice methods in the current regulation of spatio-visual parameters of the urban environment, we are moving towards discussing alternative 'architecture of relations'. The paper elucidates how film may offer an alternative position in architecture, where urban spaces are thought and designed in closer relation to the potentials of film to manipulate reality, change the mode of perception, provide vision and reconstruct unconscious impulses of the metropolis. The experimental designs show how resonating records of space, time and movement through space may simulate the mapping impulse that inspires an alternative approach to designing spaces. My approach relies upon various knowledge production platforms to detect temporal filiation between cinematic and real space. They are indicated here in the context of postmodern discussions to uncover a new interaction point between cinema and architecture, in order to support time-based modes of reception of architectural and urban ideas.

Katarina Andjelković
University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture

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INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing the paradigmatic change in the perception of urban space which is raising new advanced ways of seeing and shaping the future of urban space through a methodologically, epistemologically and theoretically limited design tradition. As recognized in the experimental architectural research of the last decade, the design process tradition, which comprises a standard series of procedural exercices aided by new technology, turned out as unable to support time-based modes of reception of architectural and urban ideas. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the articulation of *time* in testing 'architecture of relations' in an attempt to methodologically and theoretically extend the existing architectural practice methods in the design of future urban spaces. The 'architecture of relations' is seen as deepening what little research so far has stressed as the importance of thinking about the particularity of the relationships between objects, moving subjects and spaces positioned. Previous research has verified that the temporal aspect of contemporary architectural practices was significantly conditioned by moving along two major trajectories that marked the shift from modernism to postmodernism[1]: first, change in the *perception* of urban space; and second, the temporal filiations between cinematic and real space.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

The academic experiment was carried out as part of studio design work within a taught Master's degree course[2], through an exercise in the creative reconstruction of what is seen on a map and recorded *in situ*, as the relationship between reality and fiction developed through the *fragmentary* technique. I took studio practice results to theoretically investigate new conceptual possibilities that can be rendered through the collage of reconstructed material on the map, as it effectively grafts a filmic itinerary. Following the issue of operationality, montage and editing processes served here to revive the concept of assembling fragments which is not realistic but rather conceptual. Results of the experiment have revealed that invitation to a multiple juxtaposing of intervals as autonomous structures represented a true review of their conceptual status. The experiment has opened three areas of research: type of relations that are being established between fragments, elements and principles of connecting fragments. Dealing with the film techniques and operating in the film editing software have met difficulties as running through the process. Temporal transitions were indicated as a possibility but haven't revealed much about their practical application, and particularly concerning their adjustment to the map to provide the continuity of the action. Consequently, the research

progresses to detect new components in the selected mode of operation (montage, editing) to make visible the relationships of *time*.

The potential of the cinematic aspect of architecture regarding the role of time in discussing alternative strategies is an area of debate and research through what we call the 'architecture of relations'. The 'architecture of relations' refers to the methodological model that operates critically within a multiplicity of conceptual possibilities generated between cinema, architecture and urban practice. It operates through the recomposition of original spatial and temporal conditions by creating new ones, which still show difficulties to be translated into architecture. The problem is identified from our inability to follow this continuously variable relationship between disciplines, and is traced along the gap between theory and practice exposed to the critique of the last decades (Biggs, Büchler, Lima, Franz).[3] Envisaging the interviews performed with several filmmakers from different European background, have revealed several common organizational principles between architecture and filmmaking processes – fragmentation, organization of a trajectory, etc. – which are designed to unfold the existing spatial relationships and to tactically reconnect them.[4] Experimenting with 'walking' in the form of the filmmaker's narrative progression, has led me to consider mobilizing the mapping practice in filmic language.[5] The potential was recognized in its fractured sequential architectonics and its narrative of 'locomotive' geography. Taking map to cinematically reinvent the sphere of urban life and the review of temporal clues in the light of its kinesthetic fragments provided us with the theoretical issues to analyze the fragment in terms of its given duration of time.

BREAKING THE PRINCIPLE OF LINEARITY: METHODOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL VALUE OF THE 'ARCHITECTURE OF RELATIONS'

Referring to what Svetlana Alpers' calls "map does not prescribe a single position" towards architectural strategies of thinking within images and maps, an important question has been opened: "how does *the mode of observation* change the idea of time, precisely, does not prescribe a single position but instead invites inscription of a trajectory?"[6] The role of maps to take together into same account cinematic strategies in architectural thinking and the camera movement, which breaks the static point of view, seems to be prescribed as well. The result of the academic experiment has shown a multiple juxtaposition of images, which is compared to a multitude of narratives that elude unique narrative logic, the principle of linearity and a singular cinematic flow. Deleuze

explained this procedure as the liberation of movement from the organizing viewpoint, which resulted in that we no longer think of movement as the synthesis of points within a single line of time. This way, by use of a spatial progression, producing actual worlds as continuous, ordered world of one single point of view, has been replaced by differing durations and therefore multiple points of views. Deleuze claims it is the 'movement-image' of cinema that takes us back from this homogeneous and ordered world of one single point of view to differing durations[7]. The use of the camera and our choice to edit the recorded material allows us to see time no longer as the line in which movement takes place, but as a *divergent* pulsation or *difference* of incommensurable durations[8]. This tendency is reflected in other artistic practices of the period as well, and technically supported by film. By deploying multiple screens in their installation *Glimpses of the USA*[9], the Eameses brothers presented the reality in not just a series of images, but designed a new kind of space. The huge array of suspended screens defined a space with no privileged point of view, in which the multiplicity of images are not taken individually but into relationships that re-enact the operation of the technologies, i.e. film. Breaking with the linear narrative provided by technical innovations presented in the Eameses' project, benefit this research by allowing us to examine new temporal progression of selected fragments as the piecing together of different but conflicting sites of movement projected on screens. When applied in architecture to the question of developing space through a movement-based trajectory, this originally military strategy aligns the spatial progression with the mobility of the gaze. As shown in the Eameses' film, "by explicitly placing one point of view or flow of time alongside another cinematic montage shows us the divergence of time, or the different rhythms that make up the whole of time"[10].

When Deleuze inscribed the history of *becoming* to meet static representation imposed on being by the human mind, the story on cinema becomes a story of redemption. The 'movement-image' of classical cinema begins the unraveling of traditional Western representation, which denied movement in favor of static poses[11]. By providing a discourse to form a link in recognition of the productive use of theory on an interdisciplinary terrain[12], such as passing reference on 'temporal relay', architecture strives to overcome the limitations of human perception that induced the distinction between *stillness* and *flow*. In recognition of the possibility to allocate the cultural formations of modern perception by emphasizing mobility and fluid subjectivity, Benjamin's concept the 'status of distraction' was initially considered in terms of its contribution to the study of *time*. The 'status of distraction' was found as a relay to monitoring development of the relationship between the model of modern perception and

the postmodern model of *spectatorship* of arrayed prearranged "sights" in the cinematic narrative sequence. Unlike the 19th century *arcades* where one could stroll and gaze into shops, *cinema spectatorship* of postmodernism relies on the distanced gaze on the screen. Seen in this context, the modern transgression of one's static, stable or fixed location, assigned to the modes of distracted observation of the *flâneur*, was replaced by the immobile spectator as the gaze became more "virtually mobile" on the screen. When consumption itself became a visual spectacle either developed through real or illusionary screen space, we can recognize what is common to these two modes of observation. The observer protests over an excess of images: alternating visual data, a multitude of directions and contexts, countless consumerist and fragmented information[13]. This was also reflected in what we call a new form of attention enclosed by the Eameses' multimedia architecture[14] previously mentioned film projected on several TV screens[15]. Rather than wandering cinematically through the city, we now look in one direction and see many juxtaposed moving images on Eameses' TV screens, more than we can possibly synthesize or reduce to a single impression[16]. Accordingly, contextualized in urban space, the inability of human perception to support the culmination of extreme intensification of visual stimuli in urban space might be characterized methodologically as an attempt to capture the "what" of the experience before the "how". What this epistemological dilemma acknowledges, however, is the technological aspect of the context: it gives rise to employing new means in order to articulate the perceived.

NEW ILLUSIONS OF TEMPORAL MOBILITY

How is it possible for contemporary architectural practice to critically react to the break of the linearity principle, and a singular cinematic flow, in respect of its temporal progression? Notice the projection of movement in two directions reflected on the elevator's exterior glass surface. It is comparable to the horizontal and vertical segregation of activities in the building in terms of demands implied on continuity of unfolding space. Although based on different conceptual roots, we can learn about unfolding the spatial flow by measuring the temporal progression of the images flowing through a series of successive frames sequentially on the elevator's glass surface. Observers are faced with the juxtaposed movement: first has emerged from the function of elevator to provide vertical transportation, and second acts as a multi-screen projection. We see from the start, there is a sense in which what we call a screen is less an illusionist window than a frame that allows movement and time to be rendered in new ways. This said, vertical movement is part of a daily activity sharing

real *space* and *time,* and we discuss the concept of *time* in architecture, while horizontal movement is found in the screen projection and we discuss the concept of *time* in the image. Related to the idea of making visible new zones of space and time, the postmodern discussion provided new uses to which we might put our problem of interest: 'showing time' through images. Although Deleuze suggested the problem of thinking and practicing in and with the arts is found in cinema traditions that tried to use filmic techniques in ways closer to the practices of the visual arts, he neither focused on these traditions, or offered any particular explanation. Namely, in order to complete the cinematic terms in remapping the discursive field of visual arts, culture, architecture and film theory[17], the previous Deleuzian 'relay' need to be referred to as the cinematographically conceptualized flow of images exposed to the eye of the observer interacting in front of the screens[18].

The mapping impulse aspired to establish new ways of composing architecture by means of a map that grafts various 'ways of seeing' sites, whereby the language of film has come to embody the practice of viewing sites and rendering it in a multiplicity of perspectives, viewpoints and rhythms, changes in size, angle, scale of the view, and the speed of the transport. The principles emerged in the Situationist mapping practice, nevertheless, are seen only as possibility through a detection of the relational elements, but are not engaged with the 'how' of the 'relational method', neither engaged the time component[19] into analysis. Taking Bourriaud's claim that relational artwork becomes a set of elements revived through a dialogue with the viewer, we are moving back to the previous Eameses' project and the elevator case to extricate their 'virtual filmic action' and declare them the contemporary relational works, in the visual and temporal sense. We do this guided by the idea that it spontaneously appeared as a set of film elements resurrected in the eyes of the observer, in temporal displacements rendered through the previous memories of the observer. What Bourriaud identified as the change reflected in the hyperinflation of images (whereby the eye can never fully catch up with all of them), was once foreshadowed by *Glimpses* of 1959 in simply intensifying an existing mode of perception. This project appears to be conditioning the techniques of sampling images and information in contemporary arts, acting as an "open" principle of free connecting contents. It respectively highlights that the art itself is oriented towards the exploration of *relations*, defined as arrays of cinematic images collected and constantly changed by users. We can talk no longer about space but rather about 'structure' or, more precisely, about 'time', as structure is organization in time.

CONCLUSION

The fragmented encounters between cinema, visual arts and architecture as reviewed in the course of this paper, have been brought about by new technology and film particularly and encompassed significant changes in the way we see and produce space. It appears that the re-articulation of the broken cinematic narrative has just been found in two important components: first, by defining the cinematic architecture in terms of mobilized and virtual gaze which use the interval of observation to announce the 'architecture of relations', and second, by providing a 'temporal relay' of constructing the 'version of reality' that would otherwise remain hidden beyond the collage of images[20]. As apprehended that human duration is not just a mechanical or causal sequence of perceptions, through art and concepts we can think other durations and disengage perception from the sensory-motor apparatus of prompted action. It seems reasonable, therefore, to suggest that a movement and time-based medium such as film is pertinent in future research on architectural strategies. Practical implications of this research for further investigation of architectural production are only beginning to become discernible and useful. Earlier tendencies of architectural practice demonstrated that the design process relies directly on the technical potentials of the media. Ensuring one 'temporal relay' between their individual theoretical and practical stands, as shown in this paper, resulted in understanding the epistemological foundations of the 'relational' alternative architectural strategy.

NOTES

1 The research is addressed to the turn from modernism to postmodernism, which I designate as the period in which contemporary architectural practices have approached the question of cinematic architecture by showing attachment to the shift marked by the postmodern debates. I have particularly drawn from these debates as they have already formed an interdisciplinary domain, labeled everything from visual cultural studies to combinations of philosophy, art and architecture.

2 Academic experiments were carried out as part of studio design work within a taught Master's degree course (University of Belgrade), both 1st and 2nd year Modules and Graduation Thesis, each group of 15-25 students.

3 Published and presented at the Research into Practice Conferences (2000-2008), take a detailed look in the following papers: Daniela Büchler and Ana Gabriela Godinho Lima, "Drawing about images: textual and non-textual interpretation," *Working Papers in Art and Design,* VOL 5 (2008), n. p., http://www.herts.ac.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/12419/WPIAAD_vol5_buchler_godinho.pdf (accessed 1 April 2013).

4 The results of the interview enclosed in the doctoral thesis of the author.

5 Guy Debord, "Selected Situationist Texts," in *Guy Debord and The Situationist International, Texts and Documents,* ed. T. McDonough (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002): 21-68.

6 Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983): 138, 139.

7 Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

8 Ibid.

9 Charles and Ray Eameses, *Glimpses of the USA*, Moscow World's Art Fair auditorium, 1959.

10 Claire Colebrook, *Gilles Deleuze* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

11 Sven Lütticken, "Transforming Time," Grey Room (2010): 28.

12 In *The Point of Theory,* art historian Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer argue that theory is a way of 'thinking through the relations between areas', in Mieke Bal and Inge E. Boer (eds.) *The Point of Theory: Practices of Cultural Analysis* (New York: Continuum, 1994): 8-9.

13 Carmella Jacoby Volk and Anat Messing Marcus, "Haptic Diagrams: From Cinematography to Architectural Performance," Journal of Architectural Education 62 (2009): 71–76

14 Beatriz Colomina, "Enclosed by images: The Eameses' multimedia architecture," in *Art and the moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: TATE Publishing, 2008), 75-91.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 As argued in Deleuze's studies that cinema is itself filled with such interferences and overlaps with many disciplines and practices.

18 As we replaced human perception with the cinematographically conceptualised flow of images and exposed again to the eye of the observer.

19 Charged with time and movement, and preconditioned by Deleuze's and Godard's transcendentals of montage: *repetition* (restores the possibility of what was) *and stoppage* (the power to interrupt).

20 Searching beyond the collage of images, principles were defined conceptually and poetically through the technical properties of the medium.

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