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### Re-evaluating the Devalued:

What we can gain from Direct Experience in New Media Art.

In June 2008 at the University of Brighton I exhibited a work which can be described as “competing elements operated by distributing attention, requiring viewers.....to enact a choice making process through which they can synthesise a meaning from the interplay of sounds and images” (Wood 138). In other words an installation, a genre which transcends cinema, sculpture and performance and offers the viewer a platform for direct experience.

To introduce my paper I would like to begin by describing my piece in some detail to uncover and illustrate the issues that I intend to further discuss.

#### A DIRECT ENCOUNTER

*Things you cannot do* comprised a darkened room with a spot-lit black wooden cube measuring 1.2m<sup>3</sup> raised 30 cm from the floor, 2 video monitors (1 inside the box and visible only through a window (a small hole cut in one face of the box), the other in

the opposite face, facing outwards into the room), a recorded soundtrack of 4 voices describing their experiences when faced with fear (only audible from the window), a spotlight inside the box, which remains off unless a viewer puts his or her face to the window, and in that case turns on the light which illuminates the viewer's face, a video camera inside the box facing the window, which monitors whatever appears there, an abstract looping animation which plays on the screen inside the box.

“...the space and the ensemble of the elements within [the installation] are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity” (Bishop, Installation Art 6) and these were ‘assembled’ by around 100 people who visited the space: this means looked at, listened to, touched, contemplated, interacted with, discussed, ignored, negotiated, passed over. Those who came were pensioners, students, work colleagues, school friends, strangers, teachers, academics and children.

The only way to look inside the box is by kneeling down and putting your face to the window. As you do this the light is triggered and your illuminated face appears on the internal screen enmeshed in the animation: thus you see yourself looking at yourself through the lines and shapes of the animation and nobody else can see this. Simultaneously the same image of the viewer's face (without the animation) appears on the other screen, visible to anyone else in the space: others see the live image of the solitary viewer looking at him/herself.

A retired couple walked around the box, briefly peered in the window, together triggering the light, remained for a matter of seconds then left the room, one saying to the other: “Well, we've worked that one out. What's next?” A group of friends, young adults, entered and explored the space: one put his face to the window and the light came on, the

others shrieked in surprise as they saw his face on the second screen. Goaded by their laughter he began to pull faces. One by one they all took turns at the window, each playing to their complicit audience. A father and teenage son came in. The father spent over 5 minutes looking in and his son sat on the floor close to the screen meditatively admiring his face. Others jumped back when the light lit up their face, choosing to watch the animation on the screen without the incorporation of their own face. Strangers watched strangers watching themselves. Some visitors stood back and watched the whole spectacle from afar - watchers watching watchers watching themselves. A pair of 5-year-old girls quickly understood the mechanics of the installation and gleefully ran around the space puppeteering their teddy bears at the window and calling out to each other: "I can see you!" "I want to see you!" "Show me Fluffy!" continually interchanging and performing to each other. One visitor told me afterwards of his feelings, having seen the work on his own. He described the physical presence of the box as intimidating, and the experience of immersing himself in it, by peering through the window as slightly frightening, yet also sensing reassurance and comfort from the recorded voices and also the way in which he chose to interpret the words he heard. Over a course of 7 days I observed an enormous range of participants, each having a separate direct temporal-spatial experience: this being mediated by the parameters I had set down and effected by the technology I had employed.

In this text I shall explore what happens when a person has a corporeal encounter with an artwork that involves new media (television, telecommunications, computer interfaces, video streaming), the defining forces in society. I am curious as to what makes each direct experience so diverse and what kind of engagement it provokes. I would like

to investigate what the viewer gains from such experience, and to examine the artist himself, the thinking behind how these situations are set up and what conclusions can be drawn about our relationship with the technology involved and where we are in a culture heading towards virtual dependency. First I would like to examine what in fact is our current state of 'reality.'

#### THE DEVALUATION OF THE DIRECT EXPERIENCE

The wired society of today has embraced new media to such an extent that all communications and transactions depend upon high speed virtual data transfer mediated by interfaces and computer technology. We are thus living in a society where 'real' experience has been substituted by the representations and simulations afforded us by digital media, which has had a decisive impact on our awareness and perception of other people, ourselves, and the mechanisms of society itself.

Mass media, which is propagated by the instruments of mechanical reproduction, is, in essence, a vehicle for distributing information as widely as possible to as many people as have access to an appropriate interface. Its reception may be one of passivity where images, numbers and words wash over us and everything is accepted at face value as is the case with internet and television. It may be received with empathy and desire as we identify with a situation or character on the screen before us. The viewer can be said to be controlled as he or she may not be able to exercise free will or subjective evaluation. If exploited cynically the media may be used as a channel for mis-information and propaganda, thus as a tool to subjugate and assert conformity. How the media is

received depends on the author and the activity of the viewer. More often than not he or she likes to sit back, turn himself off, tune in and be entertained. Consequently, depending on one's viewpoint the current batch of so-called reality programmes such as *Big Brother* can be regarded as benign fun for the masses or criticized as sinister systemic sedation wrought by the media companies.

Claire Bishop claims that it is a Bourgeois notion to observe real life from a distance (Installation Art 82) and this seems to be how many of us tend to function. This view of the world is mediated by images on television: we 'understand' the horrors of war from images published in newspapers, we 'see' the natural world via HD video images on David Attenborough documentaries. Millions around the world feel more comfortable absorbing like a sponge from the comforts of their own homes rather than stepping out into the cold to experience whatever might slap them in the face. Donald Kuspit contends that there is no frisson, no excitement, and nothing that truly thrills us or jolts us from the everyday when we look at the reproduced rather than the real (9). Baudrillard affronts what we see from our armchairs with the assertion that there is no real rather a self referential chain of signifiers (Kraynak 239). Walter Benjamin laments that anything which can be reproduced ad infinitum has no authenticity and little value. It lacks a unique presence, the so called "aura."

Reproduction seems more real and more acceptable, that is more familiar and comprehensible: the viewer seems in charge, not the artist. The reproduced Cezanne is reassuring and appealing because it seems everyday – confirms that everyday consciousness is the only legitimate consciousness- where the real Cezanne is intimidating and discomforting

because it disrupts everyday consciousness. We become sentimental about normalizing reproductions but not the de-normalizing of real things, which grates on our nerves and unsettles our consciousness (Kuspit 9).

This re-expresses the ideas of Debord, who wrote in his first thesis of The Society of the Spectacle: "All that was once directly lived has become mere representation" (12). Here he talks about the decline of living and being into a state of just appearing. Our society has become one of passive consumption where soul-less, empty, disembodied info/enter-tainment is favoured above our being confronted with and dealing with authentic objects and first-hand experiences. Pity the consumers who buy catalogues of the Tate Modern Rothko retrospective. What can anyone actually 'see' in a 1/20<sup>th</sup> photographic reproduction of *Red on Maroon* in a coffee table book in their living room with the tv on in the background?

It is almost as if people do not even want to know, and prefer to accept at face value and believe rather than investigate for themselves. They turn to the internet, places such as *Wikipedia* in search of facts, of knowledge. Indeed the internet can be described as democratic, in that it is available to all and content can be written by all, but who polices, checks, scrutinizes and verifies the masses of information that are so readily taken for 'truth'?

Perhaps so many of us are scared of the real just as Vashti is "seized with the terror of direct experience" in E.M. Forster's The Machine Stops when she opens the door of her room and looks up the tunnel which gives access to the seldom visited outside world. This visionary book tells of a dystopian society whose inhabitants dwell in identical cells physically remote from others where everything is automated and physical

contact is rare and uncomfortable. Vashti is horrified by the rebellious desire of her son who wants to venture out onto the forbidden surface of the planet. She cannot bear even to consider being away from her cell and not being wired into the machine which allows her to work, play and socialise remotely via a form of video-conferencing (122).

There is something wanting about technologically mediated communication, something vital, something real. New media artworks and installation art often address this absence, as they can offer an experience that demands direct presence in the form of corporeality. Interestingly, Claire Bishop reflects that “without having the experience of being in [an installation piece], analysis of a particular installation art-work is difficult.” (Installation Art 6). The same is true with all aspects of life: how can you fully know anything without directly encountering it? Sherry Turkle concedes that “direct experience is messy: its meaning is never exactly clear,” and that is because life is so rich, complete and multi-layered. Virtual experiences offer something simplistic and ‘pure’ without the need to filter out extraneous details, thus they can be seen as dangerous as users often believe they have achieved more than they actually have (238). Direct experience may well be inconclusive and does not allow us to gather as much evidence, as we cannot be armed with countless statistics, reviews and pictures, but we have moved to a situation where such an experience no longer is valued, trusted or indeed enough. Would you forget where you have been and who you were with if you did not take a photograph of it? And does showing these photos actually add confirmation and authenticity to an experience? Kuno learns when he steps onto the hitherto out of bounds surface of the Earth that “Man is the measure” (Forster,134). It is important to open our own eyes and make our own evaluations, assessments and, equally valid, (mis)judgments and

(mis)interpretations. First-hand ideas are not dangerous, but are the essence of life. Perish the thought that we live in fear of these. All is valid. All is authentic. All is real. Knowledge is founded on the physical, that means first-hand experience.

#### LOSS OF THE SELF AND A NEW SOCIETY

To assert our physical presence in the world a trace or gesture is needed to prove that an experience was lived. A mark made, a physical action that has provoked a change in the materiality of a situation. Technologically mediated presence such as gaming, chatting and virtual worlds does not offer this and in fact cocoons us from the physical consequences of our actions. You can be who you like and escape from everyday life into pure fantasy. “Who would not be a spaceship commander than pouring lattes at Starbucks?” (Castranova). Massively multiplayer online role-playing games or MMORPGs have become a massively popular activity among young South Koreans as an antidote to stress and the mundanity and tedium of everyday life with the network providing a virtual place for socialization, chatting, hanging out and communal activities. As a consequence, 24 hour PC bangs (internet cafes with high speed connections, aimed at gamers) have sprung up all over the major towns and cities and are constantly busy with thousands of gamers from as young as 10 immersed in fantasy and sci-fi worlds for, not uncommonly, 10 hour stretches at any one time. Games cannot provoke extreme sensations such as pain and ecstasy, which need a physical presence for them to be experienced, gamers cannot take risks which may endanger their wellbeing, and their

simulated actions have no real world consequences. Paradoxically, or maybe understandably, this is what makes virtual experiences so attractive and liberating.

Argyle and Shields argue that a bodily system is always implied in any interaction including virtual (64): for example laughter may be provoked by the receipt of a text message, your heart may race with excitement as you steal a car in *Grand Theft Auto*. There is therefore always a physiological response to a simulation. However, touch, smell, the sensing of others, an awareness of others' physical states and emotions cannot be evoked. Technology is not able (yet) to transmit pheromones which cause us to react and interact. This may be reflected in the kind of relationships many of us develop on-line and in virtual spaces such as *Second Life*: they are bounded by the factors that have facilitated their creation, i.e. the physical remoteness and the limits of the tools of communication. Virtual activity indeed empowers us to escape from the real and replace it with a heightened sense of reality, but it is, in fact, dumbed down and denies us so much. No matter what contact you have with others via technology there is an unrealistic sense of safety, impunity or immortality. "The computer network simply brackets the physical presence of the participants either by omitting or simulating corporeal immediacy" (Heim 100).

The consequences may be ones of a limited commitment to an other, yet a surprising frankness, open-ness and intensity which can render a user vulnerable or exposed and make insecurities even more tightly strung. This may result in a deepening sense of loneliness and isolation from the outside world. Argyle and Shields investigate sexual relationships formed on-line and discover the grip these can have over users: "When it is over, my sense of aloneness is heightened. To break the connection seems

more painful than fulfilling” says, an anonymous interviewee (64): there is an obsessive and possibly destructive element to virtual relationships.

On the one hand, on-line relationships are easily accessible as we can meet whoever we like by simply plugging in from the comfort of our bedrooms. They are also endlessly abundant in scope as the whole world can be visited just by jumping through that monitor window. However, the almost limitless potential we have for creating and nurturing these contacts means there is a tendency to spend less time concentrating on and developing deeper and genuine relations with others away from the net. Sometimes we do not have (or allow ourselves to have) enough time for them and we would rather update our superficial virtual personae than talk or meet face to face. Relationships lose their worth, tending towards superficiality and disposability and can be readily replaced. Perkowski warns us “..the quality of personal connection depends on the quality – often inversely.” He goes on to claim that too many connections devalue each other in a kind of emotional inflation.

There exists a complacency which Amelia Jones refers to as “the never enough” claiming that a signifier or a representation, such as a photograph or any kind of recording or mediation of a person, is inadequate in conveying the self (Prologue XIV). Michael Heim states that “our bodily existence stands at the forefront of personal identity and individuality” (100) and so there is always an uneasiness and mistrust in non-physical relationships. There is a longing desire to meet the real person to check the facts. It seems clear that in human nature physical presence is the determining factor of reality. The absence of physicality makes how we see the other an inconclusive and wanting experience. Without this there seems to be a reluctance or inability to consider the other

as a fully shaped person, rather he is a raw material that we can shape and mould for ourselves according to our own personal needs. We may thus inadvertently project our desires upon this other, and consequently through idealization, idolization and exaggeration create a 'love object.' There are no rules of engagement in virtual worlds, and everything is as fixed as you choose to perceive it. Such intangibility and unclarity raises a number of questions: is an erotic conversation with a simulated other an act of infidelity? Does it indeed matter if how you describe yourself to the other is fact? As Turkle asks: what kind of society have we become where everyone is acting a role? It seems unless there is a radical change in economic, viz media structure, then we are likely to continue to evolve ever further into a denatured society that promotes manipulation and is characterized by an over-riding greyness of 'knowledge'.

McLuhan puts it to us that "...it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action" (McLuhan 9) and we can see that more and more of us are wrapping ourselves in cotton wool and burying our heads in the sand choosing to be "somewhere which does not require physical presence and doing something which does not result in any changes in the physical world."(Springer qtd. in Lajoie: 160). There must be more than this.

The accustomisation of behaviours mediated by electronic media and virtual activity gives firm credence to the theory that the fixed 'self' is an aphorism. The Jungian model of the self is that it is a receptacle which is inhabited by archetypes, and indeed the internet is a place in which we cycle through many selves often simultaneously. Here we can live out fantasy roles, change our sex, change our age, exaggerate our physical attributes, lie, deceive, make-believe and distort the physical reality. Lacan argues that

there is no centralised self, that ego is an illusion (qt. in Turkle: 178) therefore there is no such thing as a core self. On-line there are no reference points. We can present ourselves as who we like, free from the boundaries of physical confirmation. The bottom line is that it is simple to change the way people perceive you, because the basis of their perception of you is what you choose to disclose of yourself. The “I” collapses and your identity becomes multiplied. Perhaps this is an example of the post-modernist crisis of identity where we are fragmenting rather than unifying, or it may be vital territory, which cannot exist in the corporeal world, for us to develop, learn, explore and express ourselves.

Whatever the arguments surrounding what it provides and what it may reveal about psychological conditions, the fall-out from virtual presence and the way in which on-line charades manifest themselves is of great interest in the question of ‘real’ experience. Turkle describes one consequence as “slippage,” whereby the assumed on-line persona invades and takes over the physically embodied ‘real’ self (204-5). For many years arguments have raged both attempting to prove and disprove the effects of engrossment in violent ‘shoot ‘em up’ games and the potential transference of aggressive impulses from the virtual persona to a user’s off-line self. A less discussed area is the impact of immersion. By this it is meant the total concentration demanded by, in this case, a video game, and how this causes the user to shut himself off from the world around him. This can be perilous, as an avatar does not sleep, eat, drink, go to the toilet or have a 9-5 job. A famous case in South Korea involves a 28 year old gamer whose addiction cost him his job as he was spending longer and longer playing games. His compulsive behaviour led to his death in a PC bang after 50 hours of non-stop gaming, in

which he failed to eat, take on liquids or rest.<sup>1</sup>Such games require complete immersion and cannot be played for 20 minute bursts. In order to play them your avatar must take over your entire being. Turkle also talks about a schismatic, “distinction”, where the virtual and actual personae are radically different and do not reconcile with each other, which provokes a kind of schizophrenic state and often leads to a dissatisfaction with one’s real life persona and a belief that the on-line ‘me’ is cooler, stronger and better looking. The third is one of “convergence,” whereby the virtual and actual meet and become something new. A kind of hybrid, which can be for the good, if the experimentation and self-exploration on-line have been positive self-development. However if an intense personal virtual experience, such as breaking-up from an on-line romance, has resulted in disappointment, it may affect the person in a profound and damaging way away from the screen.

To sum up, it seems that we may be losing sight and control of who we really are. Many users feel nervous and uncomfortable away from their *Facebook* account, or twitch about updating their *Twitter* status, or only feel relaxed when immersed in *WOW (World of Warcraft)*. Their virtual world is calling them.....The less time we spend off-line the less we are in control of who we really are, and this is harmful to our ability to relate to others. Turkle cites Erik Erikson on this matter: his research into the development of adolescent identity led him to conclude that intimacy is difficult without concrete knowledge of yourself. Thus knowledge of oneself is paramount in order to be able to function as a social creature (203-4).

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<sup>1</sup> “S Korean dies after games session.” 10 August 2005. 20 February 2009  
<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/4137782.stm>>

In 2007 in a piece of work called *Who the hell is Andrew Wood?* I explored the idea of ‘fluid identity’ in a piece of web-based process work. The work took the form of a reflective questionnaire which I sent as an HTML link to my entire on-line contact list: people I have known for a short or long time: colleagues, classmates, old school friends, acquaintances, web-friends, dates, sexual partners - people who all have a different experience of me. The questions were either multiple choice or required a typed answer about me. These questions were about my personality, interests, preferences, tastes, appearance, and experiences. In my mail-out I emphasised that this was not a test or a search for a truth and that respondees should answer to the best of their existing knowledge of me. I was interested in collating their replies, i.e. their perceptions of me (which I received anonymously), and seeing if there were aspects of my identity which were constants among the multitude of responses. What I received were quite diverse comments, views and elections, some surprising, some perhaps unconsidered, but all, of course, were absolutely valid. It was not about me, or about the participants, but about the relationship between these two elements (myself and the others). I used the gathered data to create a kind of mask which obscured and revealed a photographic image of my body. Each question was assigned a percentage according to the popularity of that particular answer, and became a band of text on top of the image. The percentage gave a corresponding value to the opacity of that band. Hence the assembled work appeared as a full-length portrait of me, broken into around 100 strips which were either (partially) disclosing or (partially) hiding the image behind, depending on how opaque each was. In effect the perceptions of my contacts determined how visible I was, thus how ‘concrete’ I am, or certain aspects of me are.

Although reluctant to draw conclusions, it may well be that those who have had a physical encounter with me might have chosen answers close to the ones I would have selected myself, in my attempt to describe who I believe I am. Equally those who have had intimate conversations with me, but seen no more of me than a photograph would perhaps have a rather different insight and more distorted or exaggerated conception of my persona. This imposed decentralisation of my self made me none the wiser as to 'who the hell I am,' and confirmed that there is no absolute me. My open-ness, my furtiveness, my on-line flirting, my eagerness to attract and entertain others have led me to tailor my identity to such an extent that I have hundreds of personae, and I cannot say which is me and which is not. The truth of the matter is that they all are me, and it is unsettling that I have allowed myself to be split even further apart through the use of electronic media.

#### QUESTIONS OF PERCEPTION

It is not only our experiencing of others and our self which has been altered by virtual interaction, but also the way in which we deal with time and space: the basic factors which contribute to the idea of experience. As McLuhan points out, our traditional perception of time as a linear continuum had already been ruptured by cinema through temporal compression, editing, flashbacks and so on, and with data now being transmitted at close to the speed of light via fibre-optic cables, we live in a world where everything is perceived as, and expected to be, instant. An internet user can simultaneously be in many places with many people and is able to access information from all over the world at the blink of an eye, or better the click of a mouse. Time zones,

geographical and political borders merge into a timeless instantaneous matrix of connections and information. Space and time no longer have a relevancy. Heim relates the hyperspace of science fiction with the hypertext of computing, describing the loss of “discernible movements:”

As the environment for sensory hypertext, cyberspace feels like transportation through a frictionless, timeless medium. There is no jump because everything exists, implicitly, if not actually, all at once (96).

Stephen Jones reflects on how this affects our physical reality, asserting that real time no longer compels us and that we “have lost sense of time flow...” (12). Real space has become more distant as we engage more closely with the screen. We lose sight of all that is at hand and discover that distance is without meaning. Yet when we disconnect we discover the distance is infinite.

Technology has made possible that which previously was beyond human grasp. We now perceive and receive our information in technology mediated format which surpasses our own human capacity, we receive input from machines and demand knowledge created by them: action replays on video screens at football matches; high speed photography revealing how humming-birds hover. Heim refers to this as Godly knowledge, a knowledge that fills in all the gaps and fulfils desire, as all reality becomes data, devoid of physical barrier, voice, expression or any semantic or semiotic obstruction (96).

Today that world relies primarily on instantly transmitted visual information and media-constructed images as the basis for knowledge, forcing the reformulation of perception in such a way that the distinctions

between lived and virtual experience, between temporal and spatial paradigms are collapsed (100).

Perhaps this is empowering and allows us to live out our fantasies, but at the cost of temporal and spatial connection, which means we may be losing something more central. In The Machine Stops Kono underlines this fact and the impact of ‘The Machine’ with the words: “You know we have lost the sense of space, we say ‘space is annihilated’, but we have annihilated not space, but the sense thereof. We have lost part of ourselves” (134). In severe cases gamers lose touch with themselves completely and as a consequence lose everything around them. A Korean couple lost track of time playing *WOW* with fatal consequences. Having popped into a PC bang for a gaming session they immersed themselves unintentionally for 5 hours, in which time their 4 month old daughter, who they had left at home, rolled over and died.<sup>2</sup>

The price can thus be very high. Heim emphasises something which is central in my investigation: “The ideal of simultaneous all-at-once-ness of computerized information access undermines any world that is worth knowing. The fleshly world is worth knowing for its distances and its hidden horizons” (107).

In my next section I would like to examine how artworks use new media to allow us to appreciate, understand and act in this so-called fleshly world: that is, experience directly.

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<sup>2</sup> Andersen, John. “Spot On: Korea reacts to increase in game addiction.” Posted Sep 12, 2005. 20 February 2009 <<http://uk.gamespot.com/news/6132357.html>>

## CONSTRUCTS

In 1981 Dan Graham proposed (but never built) a model *Cinema*. This piece of work is a powerful investigation into immersion and a subversion of the conventions of passive reception of mass-media art-forms.

This cinema is a glass cube positioned at the intersection of 2 streets, which inside contains a screen positioned diagonally across the street-side corner of the auditorium. Two of the walls of the cinema are constructed from two-way mirror glass, and the screen is made of a special two-way material. The resultant experience being from 2 positions: outside and inside. When the lights are off and the film is projected it can be seen by both those inside and outside. From the outside the film is reversed, and in addition the audience are visible through the dark areas on the screen. When the lights are on inside the cinema the walls and screen become a mirror and the audience see themselves reflected sitting in an illusionary amphitheatre together with the other viewers. The audience is also fully visible from outside through the outside walls.

Conventional cinema provides the viewer with immersion, engrossment and escapism; a disembodied solitary experience in darkness stimulated by an enormous technicolour image and surround sound system which whisk you away for a thrilling adventure for two hours. Jean-Louis Baudry claims that the illusion of film is more due to the apparatus and institutions involved in its showing, with the viewer being addressed as immobilized, and free of distraction. "Projection and reflection take place in a closed space and those who remain there, whether they know it or not (but they do not), find

themselves chained, captured and captivated” (309). Leighton describes this as a regression into a condition where the individual merges into his environment and loses the possibility to perceive (30). In Dan Graham’s *Cinema* the audience is being watched. The audience no longer have a sense of isolation and are able to see one another and also themselves, thus gaining an awareness of their own physical relationship to the space, others, and the media. Rather than being seduced by the filmic temporal-spatial illusion and involved in the narrative representations of the projections, we become aware of the reality of our situation and the content of whatever film is being shown is reduced to a competing element.

The traditional position to experience a cinematic performance is from within a black box, yet Graham offers this beyond these confines: from the street, and equally strangely without sound. Furthermore he calls into question our interaction with architecture: walls which would guard us, provide us with privacy and act as our shields become something which contain us and allow unseen strangers to observe us; the comfort zone and familiarity of what we consider the norm are disturbed. The audience within this cinema is offered something open-ended and needs to experience and react via a choice-making process in order to synthesise a meaning from the interplay of sounds and images (Wood 134). It is very much as Barthes proposes to us: “an artwork is to be disentangled, rather than deciphered as there is nothing beneath” (147). An artwork contains no mysterious meaning – it is an illusion. All sense is given by the beholder and to be able to do this he must make choices about how to act.

## FREEDOM, POSITION AND OWNERSHIP

The level of empowerment and the scope of decision-making involved in engaging with a work correlates with the amount of autonomy granted to the viewer by the artist, and this is a position which has radically been re-evaluated in recent decades. Barthes argues that the concept of author is spawn from capitalism, and as such did not exist prior to the middle ages. At that time most work was mediated by a narrator or a commissioned craftsman, and contained pedagogical or allegorical meaning. With the Renaissance and the calling into being of the author figure, the focus of the art work radically altered, as did its function. From the Renaissance until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the artist figure was the focus of any creative act and “the explanation of a work [was] always sought in the man or woman who produced it as if it were always in the end.....the author ‘confiding’ in us” (Barthes 147). The reader, viewer or critic believed that a work was offering us something of the artist and that our role as consumer was to understand the artist, his beliefs, and his socio-political context. Conclusions being that Van Gogh’s *Starry Night* reveals his madness, Michaelangelo’s *David* gives clues about his homosexuality, Dickens’ *Oliver Twist* critiques an England of inequality and abuse, and so on. In contrast true experientiality opens up when the author surrenders responsibility to the beholder and disappears from view making way for unprejudiced reception.

The position of the viewer in regarding a piece of work is one that is governed by the degree of freedom granted by the author to the viewer and the techniques and media employed. Renaissance painting began the tradition of Cartesian perspective that lasted until blown apart by the Cubists in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With this mechanism the viewer was directed and could only investigate an image as if he possessed the eyes and position of the artist, a fixed viewpoint, thus buying into the illusion offered by that work, which meant that “the viewer [is] a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance,” and is thus kept at arm’s length and never able to directly engage. (Bishop, Installation Art 11). Bishop notes how, in contrast, this has been changed by installation art, which presupposes an embodied viewer who becomes fully engaged, able to make choices, explore and become part of the work. Installation artist Tony Oursler vociferously challenges a prescriptive relationship between artist and viewer and attacks the passive attitude of a public who have “a confrontational attitude towards artwork as if it’s some kind of test and they’re trying to figure out how to get the answer from the artwork” (qtd. in Lodi: 24). Some viewers expect to be offered answers on a plate and have a reluctance, or perhaps fear, to step closer and experience a work. Mexican media artist Raphael Lozano-Hemmer encourages activity and autonomy by criticising the “pedagogic or didactic way” that art is shown in and calling for art to offer other solutions.<sup>3</sup>

The post-structuralist notion, which is fundamental to installation work, is that there is no ‘correct’ way of looking at a work, and that there is an inter-dependency between object and viewer. A viewer is never able to see the whole and thus is never able

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<sup>3</sup> Rafael Lozano-Hemmer speaking at a lecture at the ICA, London, 15-11-08

to put himself in a privileged position. This notion of decentralisation is key in psychological debate surrounding existence and awareness of self. Each viewpoint and each gaze is different and is only possible without prescriptive direction, hence a piece of work derives its meaning not from a determinate premeditated intention of the author, which is an unhelpful and often unwise premise, rather from its multiple receptions. Danish installation artist Olafur Eliasson is explicit in the implied 'ownership' of his work by granting his pieces titles such as *Your intuitive surroundings versus your surrounded intuition* (2000).

Removing the author frees a work and passes it from a temporal, i.e. past, state. The circumstances in which the work was created are immaterial. The identity and background of the author are not pertinent. This means the reception of such a work is a living experience and unrepeatable, moreover it becomes performative. As Barthes observes: "there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now" (145). The removal of the author means essentially that the work is focussed on the viewer who has no history contained in the work. Through him the work is given life at the moment of that encounter, and therefore form, meaning, duration and presence. As Barthes explains: "a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination" (145).

Although the author may appear to be absent and the work becomes participatory, absolute freedom, however, can never be afforded, as the factors surrounding the experience have of course been consciously prescribed by the artist. Behind the dynamic that exists between the participating viewer and the work lies an intention (it could be that the intention is not to have an intention) and implicit in this is the notion of trust:

what is the viewer permitted to do? what does he feel he can do? Bruce Nauman does not trust the viewer and opposes the idea of viewers having an open-ended experience, which he sees as playing: “I don’t like to leave things open so that people feel they are in a situation that they can play games with....” (qtd. in Butterfield: 55). He is interested in controlling the viewer and anticipates their interaction by means of meticulous planning based on game theory, which factors deviations, risks and uncertainties into predicting all possible scenarios. *Going Round the Corner Piece* (1970) features 4 walls arranged as a cube within a room. At the corner of each wall on the floor is a tv monitor. On each opposite corner is a video camera which relays a feed to a monitor (but contrary to the viewer’s expectations to the one immediately around the next corner). The viewer circumnavigates the cube but is unable to fully see himself in the monitors. In fact the only moment when he appears visible to himself is when he turns a corner and sees his own back fleetingly turning that very same corner. He is thus caught up in a cycle of going around and around trying to catch a longer lasting view of himself, like a dog chasing his tail, however this is unachievable. Nauman sets carefully constructed limits beyond which the viewer cannot step. He is interested in seeing what will develop within the environment and ‘theatre’ that he has designed. This work elicits a mapped-out performance of a well rehearsed script, thus the experience is one that Nauman has to a great extent pre-ordained, and it may be argued that the viewer is simply re-enacting what he or she has been programmed to do. Nauman has strong views on participation and remarks when discussing *Live-Taped Video Corridor* (1970) that “it has more to do with not allowing people to make their own performance out of my art” (qtd. in Kraynak: 230). He is very conscious of the fact that all works have limits and with these two works

he explores the viewers' frustrations with what he or she may and may not do and their inability to take full possession of the experience.

Dan Graham's perceptual experiments may be considered in the same light as Nauman's except that the latter leaves no gaps whilst Graham offers space to explore. With *Time Delay Rooms* (1974) there is an interdependency between two sets of viewers in different rooms and a performer who watches both these sets remotely via live video. Each set of viewers is given a commentary by the performer on what is happening in the other room whilst what they see of that other room on their monitor is delayed by eight seconds. Thus what is described is the way in which they are looking at each other's past: the viewers see the others' described behaviour only after a time delay. Each reaction influences the other viewers' behaviour. Although the mechanics of this piece are fixed and resemble the structures of experimentation through empirical observation, and there is an inter-dependent dynamic between the participants, the actual performance is to all intents and purposes free and improvised. Each viewer is free to enter and leave and the narrative is influenced purely by his or her actions.

Lozano-Hemmer's thoughts on control and freedom are even more liberal: his work often has a preconceived interaction pattern, hence he attempts to direct the viewer, yet as his work frequently entails 'discovery,' and because it is often in public outdoor spaces where there are far more variables, including a more diverse audience and often an unsuspecting one, there can be no formalised rules of engagement. What then tends to ensue are unexpected and expressive interactions. When describing the different installings of *Body Movies*, Lozano-Hemmer remarks with surprise on the contrast between audience behaviour in Lisbon with that in Liverpool. In their participation the

Latin viewers tended to be less physically involved with one another whereas the traditionally more conservative and colder British were much more exhibitionist and playful, acting out intimate behaviour and simulating sexual acts.<sup>4</sup>

A feature of this artist's work seems to be the providing of a platform for individual expression and creativity as opposed to the clinical imposed re-iterative behaviour from Nauman. This freedom to act takes on a democratic and political dimension which is born out in a literal way with Lozano-Hemmer's *Voz Alta* (2008), a site specific piece commissioned by Mexico City University to mark the 40th anniversary of the student massacre in Tlatelolco. Participants were offered a megaphone situated on the actual site of this event and were thus given a stage to speak freely. Their voice was linked to powerful searchlight which pulsed with the participant's words and got brighter according to the volume of the voice. The beam of this searchlight symbolically hit the top of the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Three other searchlights were linked into this system and their beams could be seen in the sky over the city. Anyone around the city could also tune into a radio station to 'listen' to what the lights were saying. At his lecture at the ICA the artist spoke of the moving and unexpected speeches made by participants: a policeman denouncing the government and asking forgiveness for his involvement in the massacre, students calling for changes, a young man proposing to his girlfriend.

Eco discusses a freedom explored predominantly by experimental composers of the twentieth century. He describes a number of 'compositions' which feature almost total autonomy in the way in which they are performed. The application of these

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid

principles to installation art is apparent. Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1961) is presented to the performer as a series of groups of unordered notes, which he may assemble freely creating his own performance and narrative structure. "As he reacts to the play of stimuli and his own response to their patterning, the individual addressee is bound to supply his own existential credentials, the sense of taste which is his own, a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices" (20-22). Eco goes on to describe how each reception of a work is both an interpretation and a performance and it is the multitude of these performances and perspectives that gives a work aesthetic validity. In Eco's reasoning the complete freedom of the viewer confirms the endlessness of a work and that it will always be received in a different manner. This freedom of expression is something that the work itself depends on to give it sense.

The infinite points of views of the performers and the infinite aspects of the work interact with each other, come into juxtaposition and clarify each other by a reciprocal process, in such a way that a given point of view is capable of revealing the whole work only if it grasps it in the relevant, highly personalized aspect. (Pareyson 194).

Such a freedom invites a playfulness and self-expression which would be constrained within a directed oppressive structure. Olafur Eliasson's work is geared towards prompting us to address "the way we see and locate ourselves in relation to that external materia" (qtd. in Bishop, *Installation Art*: 80) and his works are often received in a personal and free way. *The Weather Project* (2003-4) shown in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall comprised a giant semi-circular glowing disc of light suspended high up against the far wall of the space, a mirrored ceiling and piped-in artificial mist. The

illusion was reminiscent of a setting sun, slowly changing colour whilst the ceiling reflected the minute ant-like viewers on the floor of the hall. The atmosphere was one of sociability and calm; thousands of people bathed in the light and played games with their reflections high above. The work is accompanied by neither instructions nor directions nor rules of interaction, its presence merely contrives to produce an almost background-like set of circumstances, leaving the viewers' an open-ended task of engaging.

It seems any participation in any field of life can only be expressive if it is through choice, not if it is mandatory and dictated by socio-economic forces. In art, just as he opposes giving the viewer unrestricted freedom Nauman resents "user-friendly" work with directed engagement. He condemns the way many museums promote "participation as a resolutely democratic enterprise, capable of rendering often inaccessible contemporary art less mysterious and more pleasurable for a general audience" (qtd. in Kraynak: 234). He believes that art should not provide entertainment or pleasures without there being some reciprocity. Active participation will provoke individual responses, engagement and awareness. Compliance and obedience such as regarding an artwork from a distant fixed vantage point, or not discussing a film until the final credits roll are passive and not actions of self expression.

Within a computer-generated gaming environment, or a virtual world such as *Second Life*, there are rigid parameters and consequently limited freedom and options for expression. Certainly here you may explore the terrain with impunity and without corporeal ramifications, however "the computer God's-eye view robs you of your freedom to be fully human" (Bishop 105). It seems that the basic human desire to be free to explore, discover, experience and penetrate the elusive can only truly be realised by

direct experience (105) rather than technology and its accompanying simulation and simulacrae.

It is a common mis-conception that participating on-line is totally democratic and empowering. Although we can freely publish ourselves in blogs and exhibit our photos on *Flickr*, thereby expressing ourselves without fear of censure on the internet, and it is true that we have immeasurable and unknowable quantities of consumer choice, actually if we choose not to participate we exclude ourselves from this society. Anyone who loses their mobile immediately feels insecure, unable to know if their mates are trying to contact them to involve them in their activities. If you do not have a *Facebook* account you may be considered obstinate or anti-social and are not privy to the goings-on of all your friends and other 'friends.' It may be said that there is an unspoken pressure to participate in order to feel included in society. Alain Touraine, a French socio-economic theorist argues that we are now a technocratic society, where all members are 'programmed' in terms of work, consumption, education, in fact all areas of life. He refers to this as cultural manipulation and sees it as oppressive. For him participation is a submissive act, not a deterministic one (Kraynak 237-8).

Blast Theory, a Portslade based art group, produce work which operates within the field of mixed reality, where the viewer participates simultaneously as a player of a game, both in a real space (in the streets of London in the case of *Rider Spoke* (2008)), and also in a virtual environment via the employment of mobile computers, telephones and GPS tracking systems. Their work investigates the way in which we function as individuals and choose to collaborate with others, examining the convergence and divergence of our embodied and disembodied behaviours and relationships, and thus the

relationship between technology and identity. *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003) took place in London around the ICA, and was a game whose aim was to find the physical location of the fictional Uncle Roy. Instructions and clues (or red herrings) were relayed from Roy (i.e. the artists) and players participating on-line in a parallel virtual space. The player on the ground had to navigate his or her way around the physical space, i.e. the streets within the neighbourhood, using a hand-held device. On finding Uncle Roy's office (which is empty save signs of recent occupancy) the virtual contact ceases and all subsequent interaction and communication is corporeal. The player is asked to reply to a question by writing on a postcard: "When can you begin to trust a stranger?" The player is directed to a telephone box where he receives a call telling him to get into a limousine parked nearby. If he does this he meets an actor who subsequently gets in. This actor asks further questions about how the player feels about trust. If the player responds positively to the questions he can commit himself to a pairing with another player by completing a postcard and mailing him his address, thereby creating the possibility of real life communication and potential relationship. Trust and freedom to act are key themes in this work. Although the clues from Uncle Roy are pre-programmed, those from the on-line players are not and are a response to what is happening on the ground: not just to the actions of the players, but also to passers-by who have no awareness of the game going on around them, and other environmental factors such as traffic or weather. Indeed the on-line players are free to create hints and clues, which could be genuine or deliberately mis-leading, the choice is theirs. It being a game means of course that there is liminality in terms of structure, decision and experience, however the content is beyond the artists' control as the game takes place on the city streets where it is impossible to predict or

control all the variables. As in a computer game there is a distinct narrative and a prescribed outcome (which may or may not be reached), which is unfolded rather than created and developed by the player. Yet when the game crosses over from virtual to lived-in, after the player has found the office, the situation becomes freer. Not every player decides to get in the car, not every player decides to surrender his details to a stranger. Not every player who contacts another chooses to meet them and develop a relationship. Mixed reality games create an interesting area where players' decision making is essentially controlled and limited by the structure of the game and the nature of the media (simulation and simulcrae), whilst simultaneously confronting the individual's desires and freedom to act in a corporeal sense.

#### SITUATION/PRESENCE/DEPENDENCE

In installation art sense cannot be derived principally from an object. In fact often there are so many elements that the viewer's attention is divided, diverted, distracted, focussed and refocused as a work is experienced. Oursler purposefully favours this approach, which will explore the limitless relationships and permutations between work and viewer leading to randomised interaction, which means his work is constantly re-constructing itself. He claims:

I like the idea of someone expecting to 'get' an artwork entering an environment where they can't possibly absorb anything in these few seconds or minutes.....they must make the decision of where they stand in

relation to the artwork, how they want to read it, how much do they want to invest in the process? (qtd. in Lodi: 25).

On encountering Oursler's *Getaway* (1984) the viewer enters a space which features a projector, a crudely-made doll with a balloon-shaped head, a mattress, a projected image of a talking face, an audio track of a female voice shouting obscenities, four walls, the door (an entrance and exit), the viewer himself and possibly other viewers as well. Somehow the viewer will choose, decide, act and in doing so give a personalised sense to that moment.

A similar approach may be applied to understanding modern sculpture, in particular minimalist and literalist. Here the experience can be defined as an object in a situation which out of necessity includes the beholder. Richard Morris describes the endless situations viz possible experiences of his sculptures as being dependent on the correlation of the dynamic of viewing position, light and field of vision (Fried 152). It can be seen that the experience and derived meaning of an artwork is governed by a direct experience, which is the relationship between all the elements including the self found in the space at that given moment. As Richard Onorato suggests: the aesthetic of such work is "an ability to become, rather than merely represent, the continuum of real experience by responding to specific situations" (41).

Lozano-Hemmer makes the interesting observation that in all documentation of new media work images tend to contain viewers actually in situ encountering the work, eluding to the fact that the presence of that person gives completion to a work. He describes his art thus: "It's the artwork that's looking at and listening to the public and sensing him or her. The artwork wants to be inspired. The artwork wants to receive

input.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly Fried states “something [an artwork, here a sculpture] has presence when it demands that the beholder takes it into account, that he take it seriously” (155). In other words if a viewer is aware of a work and responds in whatever way he chooses then a presence is established which means a relationship is created. The relationship between object(s) and viewer is the experience, which can be described as the meaning of the work. This choice is grounded in corporeal experience of space and time and these are basic factors concerning the confirmation of a ‘real’ situation (qtd. in Lodi: 25).

#### THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND SPATIAL AWARENESS

Before turning to video Tony Oursler was a painter, and seems to have derived some dissatisfaction from the relationship between the viewer and that medium. He emphasises temporal duration as a key factor in exploring a work. Oursler explains his choice of new media thus: “I felt that to break the passive quality that a painting or sculpture might allow the viewer, installations and video-tapes, which allow a certain amount of time to be absorbed, would challenge the viewers’ preconceptions of art itself” (qtd. in Lodi: 25).

Wood writes at length about temporal structures within art and particularly how these are often imposed upon the viewer by employment of moving image, i.e. technology. She describes a piece by Michael Landy (*Scrapheap Services*, 1995) which comprises a video screen and a number of figures and objects. Although there is no pre-ordained path mapped out for the viewer to follow, Wood maintains that the moving

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<sup>5</sup> Rafael Lozano-Hemmer speaking at the ICA, London, 15-11-08.

image is the feature of this work which attracts a viewer, more so than the objects (134-5). By definition, a moving image, has duration, it is not a static moment, and so our experience of this work, indeed any work which contains video as an element, is mapped out against the passing time of that element. In fact if it has a discrete starting and finishing point, then this actually often fixes our personal duration of a work. Even if the video is simply one of many elements it is understood that the entire video piece must be experienced in order to grasp the whole work.

When encountering a work which is simply a one channel projection we fall back into the realms of suspended disbelief and immersion, and experience something didactic, imposed and limited. This involves no greater choices than remaining in or leaving the space. Work such as Oursler's which incorporates many projections, playing as loops, requires physical action and a period of unfolding time to decide how to negotiate it. Bruce Nauman and Dan Graham include the viewer within their work as an image mediated by CCTV cameras and television monitors. The viewer becomes the content, with temporality becoming subjective and contingent on personal choices and individual influence on the form of the work.

Temporal and spatial awareness cannot be logically separated and are both brought to our immediate attention by artists such as Nauman and the Minimalists in their literal use of materials and their focus on situation rather than content. A seminal minimalist work which clearly illustrates this is *4'33"* (first performed 1952) by John Cage, often referred to as his silent piece. The performance of this work in a theatre involves the musicians sitting holding their instruments before an expectant audience. The experience of the work prompts the audience into active rather than passive listening,

which is commonly the accepted form of reception of music. Although no 'music' is played the experience cannot be appropriately described as silent as

you soon become aware of a huge amount of sound, ranging from the mundane to the profound, from the expected to the surprising, from the intimate to the cosmic shifting in seats, riffling programs to see what in the world is going on, breathing, the air conditioning, a creaking door, passing traffic, an airplane, ringing in your ears, a recaptured memory (Gutman).

Humans are able to filter and tune into sounds and noises. Depending on our emotional state or social circumstances certain sounds appear to be amplified or unusually loud. A nervous sleeper may hear more acutely the creaking timbers in his house, an anxious parent may hear his teenage son turning his key in the lock as he comes home late from a party: both sounds that normally blur into the constant mish-mash of ambient noise constantly around us. This work calls the attention of the listener to what is otherwise shut out by us.

This kind of activation of our senses has been described by Susan Croft and Claire Macdonald as a foregrounding of time and context. To this, as well as the complexity of the viewer's (here listener's) experience, they attribute a heightening of our senses and a greater awareness of ourselves and our environment (9-12).

Dan Graham's installation work with video sets out to explore our perceptions of time and space and how these are shaped by visual sensation. In his piece *Present Continuous Past(s)* (1974) he sets up a space in which the viewer is the centre. The space contains a mirrored wall and a video camera which is monitoring the viewer. The camera is recording in real time, yet by means of video delay in the monitor the viewer sees the

space as it was 8 seconds prior to that moment together with his present reflection in the mirror. Thus the viewer is able to see a spatialised present and past simultaneously and is locked in a temporal loop suspended in a gap between active and passive viewing.

Another interesting attempt at spatialising time is the work by Takahiro Iimura, a Japanese avant-garde film maker. Malcolm LeGrice describes his films as “empty and through them we confront absence. We are thrown back onto ourselves and our own experience of the empty time and space” (80). His films create experiences into which we posit meaning, which comes from us not the medium. In the installation *Loop seen as a line* (1972) the film on show is a continuous looping 16mm film of empty content. The apparatus of presentation are in situ: the screen, the projector; the viewer is aware of the chattering of film transport mechanisms. The film which is looping, however is stretched across the ceiling of the space on a series of wheels. Thus the viewer is able to see the passage of the celluloid which is responsible for the moving light projected beyond him. On the one hand there is the ‘image’ on the screen, on the other hand there is a demystification of the entire experience. What is to be the next pulse of light is experienced as an object, a celluloid frame, passing overhead, abutted either side by the preceding thousands and following thousands, as it is wound toward the bulb and the lens of the projector. “Not only did we have the experience, we also saw how we were having it, and most importantly, we saw how the experience became transformed during the period of looking” (190).

With his own work LeGrice was also concerned with “focussing the spectator into an extreme awareness of the constituents of their current reality” (190). He saw the conventions of traditional cinema as restrictive, with their emphasis on illusion and

narrative, which call up other times and other places. “In a distant galaxy, a long time ago.....”<sup>6</sup> He believes that the experience of present time and place is subverted and discarded by cinema’s “manipulated retrospective ‘reality’” (190). LeGrice became aware that in order to instill experientiality of the present, emphasis and content should be rooted in the physicality and materiality of the experience. His films such as *White Field Duration* (1972) contain blank film just bearing the marks of dust on the film and in the projector, scratches, hairs, chemical splashes and stains. He installs his films in a space where audience and projector are not separated, the rationale being that the film experience becomes a phenomenon. The shift of focus from content to situation leads the viewer to reflect on the processes and structures involved in production and perception.

Bill Viola links the concept of moving image closely to consciousness and memory. He points out that you cannot witness all of a video piece at once, it requires duration, only one frame can be experienced at any one time, thus video exists only in the mind and each frame is a function of memory. Consciousness likewise does not remain frozen or in stasis and is constantly progressing and referring back to memories for awareness. “Duration is to consciousness as light is to the eye.” Ergo temporal awareness is akin to awareness of the self, which in turn is implicit in direct experience (73).

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<sup>6</sup> I refer to the publicity poster for George Lucas’ *Star Wars* (1977).

## EMBODIED PARTICIPATION

Belgian artist Carsten Höller's philosophy about his own artwork is that it is "intended to synchronize with the visitors in order to produce something together with them. They are not objects that can be given meaning on their own" (qtd. in Bishop, Installation Art 48). Experiencing the type of works I have described likewise demands corporeality, meaning inserting the self in a space and, in this way, embodied participation. This may take on many forms and has many outcomes, as I observed at the showing of *Things You Cannot Do*.

The beholder's role is no longer one of passive witness. Instead the viewer is directly physically engaged - 'performing' rather than 'viewing' the object - and indeed the completion of the object is contingent upon such interactions (Kraynak 228).

The work of Lozano-Hemmer is entirely dependent upon participation with the physical actions of the viewers bringing shape, form, content and narrative to his works. His work explores the ideas of relational architecture, which, in brief, investigates interaction of human presence and physical structures, how one influences the other and how the dynamic between the two brings about a synthesis and a sharpened perception of one's environment. Many of his pieces appear 'empty' until the intervention, or interaction of a participant. Interactivity with his work is fully corporeal and leaves a clear trace. *Body Movies* (2002), like much of his recent work, is vast in scale and was commissioned by a public body to be shown in a public space, firstly in Lisbon and later in Liverpool. At first appearances there is nothing remarkable about a brightly lit screen

filling the facade of a town hall in a busy city centre square, however when a passer-by, on his or her way to the office, the shops, school, or off to meet some friends breaks one of the powerful projector beams creating that light the artwork comes alive. There are a large number of projectors focussed on the wall which is also flood-lit by means of powerful lighting. Any person passing in front of the building casts his or her shadow on the wall, and so ensues a life-size and larger shadow play with the potential for a cast of dozens. Each shadow, however, is not a dark space. Within each one appears a scaled projected photo portrait of another individual. As the performer moves across the stage so does his shadow. Moving closer to the screen reduces the size of the shadow and the image decreases in size proportionately too. The resultant interaction lent itself to improvised 'dramas' with groups of people spontaneously enacting surreal scenes of shadow puppet intimacy, eroticism, barbarism, gymnastics and clowning.

In *Frequency/Volume*, shown at the Barbican Centre, London in winter 2008, Lozano-Hemmer once again employed shadows on a projection screen interface. In this work he explored the invisible presence of radio waves and the multitude of radio stations broadcasting across them around the capital. A performer (viewer) effectively became the needle on the dial of a radio tuner. By moving either nearer or closer to the projection source, by a system of tracking devices monitoring the size of his shadow, his physical presence determined the radio station broadcast on that particular receiving device. In the space there were 48 devices and each could be interacted with individually or simultaneously depending on the number of participants in the space.

Lozano-Hemmer's work is interesting as it employs human action not as a causal force but as an essential element. Moving across the light beams does not actually cause

something to happen, rather it provides a surface or container onto which a hitherto invisible element becomes visible or posited. The embodiment facilitates and enables a synthesis.

Tony Conrad's *The Flicker* (1965-6) and Olafur Eliasson's work *Your Double Light-House Projection* (2002) actually demand the viewer's body to function as the interface of the piece. Conrad's work was described as "cinema without camera, and also without film stock" (Deleuze 215). The flickering blank projected film causes the eyes to focus and refocus and the mind begins to see and imagine images not carried on the screen but created behind the pupils. In a not dissimilar manner Eliasson plays with bright light and optical perception. Two circular rooms stand side by side: in the first there are white walls but the lighting is cycling through the colours of the spectrum, thus the brain begins to get confused and to see in an exaggerated and confused way, pre-cognition interfering with the immediate senses. The second room that you enter is more or less identical except for the fact that it is lit by a steady white source. However the retina is still carrying the colour information from the first room and is unable to send accurate information to the brain.

Many artists' work requires physical movement as participation and it is this which allows the viewer to make sense of his situation. Sometimes it is an incongruous act such as lying on the floor or bending down to witness a stimulus as with Antonia Hirsch's *String Theory* (2003). In the case of *Things You Cannot Do* the viewer knelt down, an action suggestive of subservience, deference, humility, respect, with quasi-religious undertones, and put his head inside a box, thereby compromising his position and making him vulnerable to any other visitors to the space. At the Tony Oursler show

at Belém, Lisbon (2000) the viewer is prompted to walk around the space, attempting to hear all the words ‘spoken’ by the dolls and create some kind of structure: he may suddenly recoil, caught off guard on hearing an arresting phrase, or spin around on catching an outrage from behind; he may move closer in an attempt to focus on one voice and catch the exact words, he may feel the urge to revisit and return to some elements still unsure of the meaning, still attempting to make sense of the situation. Bruce Nauman also deploys conflicting and distracting images and voices which make it impossible for a viewer to absorb all the words from a passive unengaged viewpoint. *Clown Torture* (1987) finds you physically torn between two beseeching clowns demanding attention, yet you dare not look away from one to the other for fear of missing something crucial. *Raw Materials* (2004) also by Nauman, made for the Turbine Hall in Tate Modern, is a sound piece which revisits 22 audio recordings used in Nauman’s video pieces which challenges the physical position of the viewer and necessitates embodiment.

....visitors encounter 'bands of sound' that run in strips across its width. No other physical changes have been made to the space. Sound becomes a sculptural material in itself, one that orchestrates and measures its surroundings. The Turbine Hall is filled with voices, some clearly audible, others indistinct, which merge with new, 'found' sound from the voices of visitors (Dexter).

Nauman’s work often examines the partiality of perception and knowledge which inevitably encourages subjectivisation, prompting active engagement with the object: “Installations that surround the viewer inscribe that partiality on the body of the viewer through their capacity to literally turn bodies in space and time” (Wood 152).

## SOCIABILITY

Mass media and virtual environments can be said to be anti-social. They tend to be focussed on an individualistic reception and because of their portability and reproducibility are often received within the confines of our home. Society these days is more geared toward repeatable and isolatory experience as opposed to shared and collective experiences which may bring about discussion, interaction and a greater awareness of how others have an influence on our existence. It is interesting to contrast Dan Graham's *Cinema* which promotes ideas of awareness and sociability with *The Invisible Cinema* (1970) designed by Peter Kubelka as a reactionary 'ideal cinema', where the theatre space is completely black and the viewers sit in solitary blinkered booths with high headrests and flaps to each side guaranteeing isolation and invisibility to any other members of the audience. There is absolutely no possibility of interacting with any other, and all peripheral noise is shut out: there are no distractions and the only thing visible is the screen, by default the experience is total solitary immersion.

Heim points out that "technology increasingly eliminates human interdependence" (99). Perhaps it is true that technology and internet by its ubiquity allow us to foster new relationships, to explore and exploit a greater range of contacts, and facilitate the easy maintenance of these communications, yet these are mere simulations and we actually have a lot less to do with one another. Heim points out that "association becomes a conscious act of will" and that "voluntary associations operate with less spontaneity than do those having sprouted serendipitously" (100). When there

are no others actually present in a virtual space together with you then connecting with other people is an optional act rather than a condition of existing. On-line we make choices about who to chat to, when to do it, who to be and how visible we want to be; in a real situation we are always visible and if there are others in the same space we have to somehow socialise and negotiate a relationship.

For some artists, such as Gabriel Orozco and Jens Haaning, the aesthetic of their work is not an assertion by the artist or a posited content, rather it is bound up in human interactions and the context thereof, i.e. the relations occurring within a space. In Relational Aesthetics (1998) French curator Nicolas Bourriaud describes art as being “a state of encounter’ and “a place that produces a specific sociability” (161) which creates free spaces and a free time span. Bourriaud emphasises the importance of the social aspect of art and acknowledges that the type of interstice explored by an artwork is radically different from the type of situations that exist in contemporary life. He sees relational art as providing a concrete model for a better form of living: modern-day living increasingly creates spaces and situations where our sociability is restricted: when we buy groceries we can check-out automatically, using a debit card rather than cash which would have been touched and handled and contained a trace of others. Our university dissertation might be discussed via telephone, e-mail and blogs, we download our music from the internet rather than visit a cd shop, and chat with the guy working there about what is new. Bourriaud believes that sociability breaks down the aristocratic model of art existing simply to be gazed at, and in doing so passes its (that is the situation’s) ownership from a sole proprietor to whoever is present. He asserts that work should be “a period of time to be lived through, like an opening to a discussion” (160). When we visit

the cinema we obey the convention of sitting in silence and watching from absolute beginning to absolute end, and only once the film is over do we allow ourselves to enter into any discussion about how we feel, how the film made us feel, what meaning we grasped from it, in fact anything at all. Relational art allows the viewer to live a situation which may become a space for conversation with the people you arrived with, strangers, or maybe the artist himself. “A work can function as a relational device in which there is a degree of randomness. It can be a machine for provoking and managing individual or collective encounters” (163). Bourriaud feels that contemporary art is becoming more political by exploring relations and turning this into an issue, and indeed it is one that should be explored and reflected on with the seismic shift from real-life to technologically mediated relations.

Many works which are termed relational do not employ computers or technology but are of interest here as they show the connections between the main threads of my discussion: the principles of object/presence, embodiment, space, time and interaction. Liam Gillick produces works which are large structures resembling public spaces, such as bus shelters or offices. The sense of the work does not come from any interaction with the object, rather what unfolds in the space contrived and the open-ended-ness of the encounters between visitors (Gillick 84). His works tend to function as a space where viewers meet: a conversation ensues between friends about modern architecture in London, a chance meeting between acquaintances results in a lengthy discussion whereby they discover a mutual passion for karate. “It doesn’t necessarily function best as an object for consideration alone. It is sometimes a backdrop or décor rather than a pure content provider” (84). Philosopher Louis Althusser underlines the fundamentality of

human encounter and is echoed by Bourriaud thus: “the essence of humankind is purely trans-individual, made up of bonds that link individuals together in social forms which are invariably historical” (160-1). This approach is valid to all areas of life, and follows materialist philosophic thought by thinkers such as Epicurus about relational structures. All entities are dependent on lasting encounters, this is what shapes the universe. At the most base level atoms randomly strike and bond with other atoms creating new structures. Janet Jones from Swindon strikes up a conversation with Heeseong Lee from Seoul at an exhibition in Berlin and they meet for dinner the next day. Often it may be fleeting, but in that time and space a new relation is established.

Claire Bishop attempts to put into perspective the type of and validity of the relationships garnered from an encounter with an artwork. She is critical of Grant H. Kester’s view that all work which socially engages an audience is equally worthy. She compares this with Blair’s Britain of social inclusiveness which prioritised political correctness yet neglected quality, a criticism which may be levelled at public arts funding throughout the last decade. Bishop believes that an effective piece of social art must find a balance between an aesthetic and the autonomy of the beholder (The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents). Social interaction that brings about a relationship of value, rather than a nurtured one, can only happen when there is some kind of friction, that is difference and disharmony, between the two parties. Gallery-goers by and large belong to a similar geographical-socio-economic demograph. An audience attending *Pad Thai*, a performance by Rirkrit Tiravanija, in which the artist fries noodles for those present would attend fully expecting to comply and participate. Many of these people would probably assemble together elsewhere at some time in any case, so there seems to

be little of the jolt or shock which is needed to give a work impact and offer us fresh perspectives. Bishop evaluates and compares the work of Oda Projesi from Turkey with that of Thomas Hirschhorn, both of whom reach out to and involve people of diverse ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds. The Turkish group take their work out into the community to engage with and create work together with the public, whilst Hirschhorn often involves a cross section of society in multi-layered and multi-media works such as *Bataille Monument* (2002), but whom he pays to realise his pre-conceived projects. Maria Lind considers the work of Oda Projesi more significant as the collaborators have equal status to the artist (ibid). As previously discussed, in order to fulfil this and promote a profound engaged and individual experience the author must relinquish as much control as possible.

Lozano-Hemmer's piece *Underscan*, which was shown in Trafalgar Square, London in November 2008, addresses some of these issues in making his work more randomised, democratic and universal in its accessibility. As with previous works shadows were at its focus. Often unsuspecting participants suddenly found their shadow on the ground in front of them filled to scale with a video projection of a stranger. Being in a very public space inhabited by all ages and all nationalities the potential for diverse chance encounters was vast. Often when a shadow became filled with image, the owner of the shadow would stop and gaze, and quickly would be joined by others engrossed in the dynamic, and keen to find an image to fill their own shadow. The space became full of people gathered in groups, mingling, discussing and moving around. Perhaps this contact was no more significant than being at a party and meeting briefly many strangers.

Yet strangers sometimes become associates, friends, lovers or partners: the situation offered the potential for open discussion to an open conclusion.

In contrast, Paul Sermon investigates relationships whereby physical actions by one party provoke a response by another party in a distant location via mediated imagery and networked communications (video-link and internet). His field of interest is termed 'telematics' and blurs the lines between virtual and corporeal and generates relationships which quickly become intimate and tactile. *Telematic Dreaming* (1992) is an installation which features two locations (A and B) remote from each other. In each location there is a bed on which the participant may sit or lie, or skirt around as he or she wishes. Each bed is monitored by a video camera which feeds an image to a projector which beams that image onto the bed in the opposite location. The effect being if someone is lying in bed A then his or her image appears lying on bed B. What occurred was an interplay between viewer A and projection B, and between viewer B with projection A. In effect, two strangers, although remotely located and unlikely to physically ever meet, were lying down together, looking at each other, getting close and sharing intimacies. Despite depending on the illusionary device of a video image, the work makes an interesting comment on how a very real physical response can be generated through simulation and how willing the mind is to accept such an artificial situation. The paradox is fascinating: the distancing of the technology acts as a device for embodiment and intimacy even with others who are strangers. "The images of another person in close proximity have such a strong effect that the visual impression stimulates a suggestion of tactility" (Grau 275).

Interestingly when technology becomes part of the equation and is mediating some form of relationship we tend to become much more trusting and compliant. Heim

describes the body as a fence, as a barrier that we put between ourselves and others (100). The absence of a body opens us up, we drop our inhibitions and we project our fantasies to feed our desires. We commune. This can be observed with Graham's video feedback work, when often the experience depends upon one group or one viewer performing an action which is observed remotely through mediation and shapes the others' perceptions. I witnessed this too with *Things You Cannot Do* where strangers were keen to watch other strangers on the screen pulling faces, but then barely acknowledging each other when meeting physically. With my work *Who the Hell is Andrew Wood* I asked participants questions which I would not have asked face to face, and which I do not believe they would have expressed their views on so candidly in a real situation. It seems then that technology can inform and nurture our relationships. *Uncle Roy All Around You* provided further evidence that commitment and trust are more easily forged in a virtual space than in a physical sense. This work depends on players trusting the information fed to them, that is trust in Blast Theory and trust in the on-line players. For most participants this was something that presented no problems, however, when faced with a real situation, such as whether to get into a car with a stranger and whether to hand over a real – not an electronic – address, and beyond that, contact and meet a real stranger (another player) many participants were extremely reluctant and even afraid. Perhaps our increasingly suspicious and untrusting society is a result of mediation by media sources: that strangers are terrorists, drug dealers, muggers, rapists or paedophiles, as these are the characters that the newspapers tell us populate our world. What Blast Theory are doing is putting “the consequences back after the action has been taken and thus reclaim some of

the excitement that has been denied the real” (Adams). They are trying to make us respond and evaluate our notions of relationships in the real world.

#### THE MACHINE, AWARENESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

The majority of the works discussed here involve some kind of new media or computer mediated technology which is used not simply as a tool for delivery of an illusory content or as a device for control, rather it is appropriated and put into an ‘art’ context in which it can be reflected on and criticised. True to the words of McLuhan our society is shaped by the technology that delivers us our information: television, telephones, internet, cameras to name some of the most prevalent. Being an implicit part of our lives we take much of this for granted and rarely have the opportunity to reflect on it.

Wood states that “...installations are human-technology interfaces whose aspects point as much towards the technology as they do towards the aesthetics of the artwork” (157). For Lozano-Hemmer this is fundamental in what he produces. With his most recent work he deploys and subverts a technology which is all around us: surveillance systems. *Underscan* was shown in a part of London where almost every square metre is monitored by CCTV. The work uses the type of tracking devices used in high-tech police surveillance equipment which is able to zoom in on a designated moving object, plot its path and predict where it will move to, thus enabling the camera to follow a suspect. Lozano-Hemmer remarks that he wanted to use the same kind of technology but in a benign way. Rather than the system covertly stealing a person’s image, he decided to use

it to insert an image into a scene, using projection rather than camera as the tool. For Lozano-Hemmer it is important for a participant to be aware of the architecture involved, thus to understand how the technology is informing their behaviour and what they are responding to. Each of his works contain what he terms “a Brechtian moment”. He refers to the theatre of Berthold Brecht which dispenses of the devices of illusion and the suggestions of identification. Actors step out of character and directly address the audience, scenery is minimal, and often no more than some chalk marks on the stage. Lozano-Hemmer’s approach with *Underscan* is for the projections and floodlights to turn off every ten minutes revealing a complex grid of infra red light beams, moving around and homing in on an individual’s shadows. Thus the ‘secret’ is revealed and the viewer becomes more aware of the existence of and the sinister nature of the machines around him.

The proponents of expanded cinema were equally keen for a viewer not to be seduced by content and experience, and to be more aware of the moment and the factors governing their behaviour. Anthony McCall’s and Conrad’s work is shown with the projector a part of the encounter: “their practice focussed in part on the ‘scene of projection’ – the particularities attending the screening of the work itself” (Leighton 14). Before them Paik and Vostell emphasised the physicality and presence of the television as a piece of furniture, the content on the screens being just one of many elements of the pieces. Tony Oursler’s works “analyze how the image of the world is spread through the media” (qtd. in Lodi: 25) and concentrate on the relationship between human, social, technological and mass media elements. His installations in the 1990’s, often contain a mixture of theatrical stage set, roughly made props and crude dolls with heads filled with

video projections of talking faces directly addressing the viewer, telling stories, shouting abuse. His work always includes the apparatus of media dissemination: ugly projectors and clumsy trailing cables, thereby emphasising the source of the narrative and breaking down, as if there could be one, an illusion of imposed reality, and in doing so passing comment on our sources of information and the origin of many of our emotions. His treatment of the video is often very rough leaving colours garish. He refuses to refine the raw information, which would render it into the beautiful seductive forms broadcast by mass media. Furthermore, Oursler also feels it important to remove his images from the confines of the box, the television set, thus taking them into real time and real space, rather than leaving them in an enclosed dimension of suspended time. Janus describes Oursler's complex techniques as a laying bare of "the means by which we become lost or taken in .... so that [Oursler] can emphasise the media's relationship to Man, to memory, the unconscious, and the very human wish to lose oneself in fantasy" (42).

*Day of the Figurines* (2007) by Blast Theory ran for a month in Brighton, and featured over 100 participants, who assumed an avatar which inhabited a virtual town, modelled on Portslade. By means of SMS text messages sent out by the artists, players were given advice, warnings and directions about their and other players' avatars' circumstances. The game lasted for 30 days and each player was free of commitment and could enter and leave the game whenever they liked, choosing when to participate and to what degree. The game lacked the competitive elements of a typical game, and there were no specified goals or prizes, which for many participants was a weakness of the work. The experience was devoid of physical content and sensual aesthetics, yet the feeling of being able to choose, and being unsure what those choices meant and what they would

lead to became an obsession with many participants. This kind of pervasive work examines how we allow technology and virtual interaction to puncture our everyday states. For some participants the SMS messages were intrusive and a source of irritation. I decided to no longer participate in the game after a trip to the V&A museum to see an exhibition on surrealism. My visit was interrupted on 6 occasions with messages from the game telling me how my avatar was cold and needed a blanket. It seems for others these messages were a welcome distraction, and, in fact, many people live a life where they seek constant interruption. This manifests itself in many ways, such as a regular checking of their mobile for missed calls or messages, leaving *MSN* running in the background while they are working and receiving email updates on watched items on *Ebay*. Perhaps involvement in this game provided simply one more diversion and diversity from the humdrum reality of everyday life. What is more, it also offered the chance to feel included in a special, complicit and anonymous community, but at the cost of engaging more fully with, in my case, an exhibition, and for others their work, friends or family.

#### IN CONCLUSION

We need to be wary of our love for the new, and our desire to escape. Dealing with and experiencing directly any real situation demands and offers much more than the stupor of mass media consumption and virtual behaviours. It should be observed that technology is an intrinsic part of the mechanics of society, interaction with a computer interface has become automatic; mediated actions as well as simulated behaviour and dialogues have become accepted as ‘natural’, and unquestioned as either virtual or real.

The repetition undertaken to fulfil instinctual actions of simulation such as texting, editing digital images and so on is a process which has (re)programmed our brains and bodies. It has become an extension of ourselves. All technology is called into being by man to serve man, and, through our participation with it, elicit a physiological and/or psychological improvement in our human condition. It is part of us and we are part of it.

A ‘pure’ existence, one without simulation, may indeed be possible, and can only exist in an environment free from the inputs and seductions of technology. However, our reflections upon so many situations are inevitably enmeshed in a context of ‘unlived’ states, representations and distractions. One horror-stricken witness to the terror attack on the World Trade Centre in 2001 reacted to camera with the observation “It was just like a movie.....” How we perceive things is often distilled through the vocabulary and focussing of mass media. Events are ‘experienced’ by fussing over and framing a visual reference point in the tiny screen of a camera, deciding how best to preserve the simulacra as a record of how technology killed that moment. This, rather than using our eyes, and taking our time to reflect and devote our senses to living that moment. Reflection on these digital encounters only occurs much later within the sanitised confines of our own home and via virtual spaces such as *Facebook*. Memories of moments not fully lived are created instantly. Situations are experienced and even missed via the limitations of the technology we have at hand. Consider this scenario:

“That’s gotta be a penalty. Clear handball!”

“Was it? I didn’t see it, I was texting my mate.”

“You’ll see - the replay will be on in a sec...”

On a trip to Thailand I went fully armed with camera, yet very quickly realised the futility of trying to record memories in such a rich and diverse environment so full of new sounds, smells, tastes as well as visions. There was an enormous amount of stimuli to respond to and information to absorb that positioning a camera between me and that world only succeeded in excluding so much of what made it special. In Cambodia in the most exotic, magical and haunting settings of Angkor Thom I observed a procession of tourists ritualistically taking turns to stand on a platform in front of a 200 foot strangler fig wrapped around and squeezing, like a boa constrictor, the life out of the 500 year old temple as nature reclaimed its territory; and there their picture was snapped. Each picture identical to the previous save for the figure obstructing the view. Not one stood back and contemplated in silence the scale and drama of the location. They traipsed en masse camcorders welded to eyes off to the next designated photo opportunity. In some places this was even sign posted! Had they not had cameras would their experience been more like mine, or would boredom have set in? what does one do as a tourist without a camera? It seems we have become a society where experiencing has become synonymous with recording and consuming.

When the machine, that is, the technology, functions seamlessly and the body and mind become part of the matrix then our physical awareness recedes. We become the possessed getaway driver in *Grand Theft Auto*, we are on the *Nintendo Wii* golf course, we are super-human and immortal. But, what happens when the network goes down, or the batteries run out? Stelarc remarked that “awareness of the body resurfaces when you malfunction.” (qtd. in Palmer: 9). This idea can be turned upside down and so it should be observed that we are often only fully aware of the technology around us and how it

informs our behaviour, relationships and perceptions when it fails to deliver, offers new functionality or behaves in an unexpected way.

These anomalies, aberrations, glitches, hiccups and the exposing of technology's mechanisms precipitate the dissolution of both the illusion and the structures in which we are unconsciously part. This and the subversive human desire to 'beat the machine' contribute significantly to making the experience of new media artwork 'real.' It is only when the machine finally breaks down and Vashti is reunited with her son Kuno in the panic stricken crowd that she finally becomes aware of humanity and the futility of the machine based society. She searches for hope, but for her it is too late. Such a belief would have been impossible had the technology not failed and thrown the world into chaos.

We are captured by technology and also captivated by it, to paraphrase Aylish Wood, however resisting it is to deny it and impose a contrary stance that is anachronistic and a hindrance to developing an awareness of society and how it operates. Conversely it is equally dangerous to surrender ourselves completely to the pleasures or otherwise of virtual experientiality, as technology poses a grave threat to the unconscious (Kuspit 15), in much the same way as Proust suggested that the photograph had killed the imagination (Sontag 164). There have even been cases where total immersion and engrossment have led to the neglect of the real to such an extent that the body can no longer sustain itself – death. If we do not manage to position ourselves freely where we can step confidently between these two spheres, we will not only lose our perspective on reality and our awareness of our relationships with others and technology, but we will also condemn our consciousness and our physical well-being to a demise through neglect and ignorance.

We should consider and appreciate the benefits one field may bring to the other. An attitude held by early proponents of technological art was “art [possessed] special and redemptive powers that, when combined with technology, could counteract what was perceived as the latter’s deleterious effects”<sup>7</sup> and this still should be held true. A direct experience should prompt an awareness of these powers and dangers, as we can see how both inform each other.

Perhaps artists working with new media need to offer us, as participants, an arena in which we can freely reconcile ourselves between the two: mediated reality and real. It is then the choice of the user how far to engage with a piece. Blast Theory create a space where a participant can reflect on his experiences. With *Uncle Roy* it is up to the participant to choose how far the repercussions of his actions extend into his life afterwards. Oursler’s mixed media nightmarish environments affront and jar us and, in doing so, prompt us to question ourselves and our relationships with others and the media involved. In all these cases physical presence is key. As Rhainnon Armstrong points out, that notwithstanding the gradual obsolescence of the human body, “it [the body] remains an effective conduit of meaning, a leveller, a common point of reference with which to address the recurring theme of the nature and construction of identity.” Through the body we gain experience, which is a result of interaction and implies personal contact with the constituent parts of our actual reality: our self, others, space and the media that shapes our relations. The outcome for us is a heightened awareness of where and who we are right now and with this comes knowledge. I would like to finally underline this with some words by Félix Guattari, who states: “the only acceptable goal of human activities

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<sup>7</sup> Tanya Leighton, Introduction to: [Art and the moving image : a critical reader / edited by Tanya Leighton](#) (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 15 referring to art historian Jack Burnham’s exhibition ‘Software, Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art,’ New York, 1970.

is the production of a subjectivity that constantly self-enriches its relationship with the world” (qtd. in Bourriaud: 169). In sum, we need to grant ourselves direct experiences as a means to this end.

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