CHEWING CHEWING CHEWING SOCIAL SPACE

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Emily Rosamond
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APPROVAL

Name: Emily Rosamond
Degree: Master of Fine Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies
Title of Project: Chewing Chewing Chewing Social Space

Examining Committee:
Chair: Judy Radul
Associate Professor, School for the Contemporary Arts

Laura U Marks
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor and Dena Wosk University
Professor in Art and Culture Studies, School for the Contemporary Arts

Denise Oleksijczuk
Supervisor
Assistant Professor, School for the Contemporary Arts

Germaine Koh
External Examiner
Independent Artist and Sessional Instructor at ECIAD

Date Defended/Approved: October 19, 2007
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ABSTRACT

For the shy is a multimedia installation based on a partially built, partially dismantled re-creation of the artist’s kitchen. It examines the desire to understand care and decay in social space, and to reckon with shared agency: given that sociality always occurs between agents, how can one locate an individual ethic of care? The paper begins by examining theories of sociality and interconnectivity based on eating. It examines sculptural action as “chewing” social space – as separating desire-as-lack (Lacan) from desiring-production (Deleuze and Guattari), and separating the “thing-ness” from the “sign-ness” of objects (Peirce). It considers the work within the contexts of architectural ornamentation and immersive installation art, and finally explores the problematic of communicating about the non-communicative state of shyness. The work locates care as an intermediary force between creation and destruction of subjectivities and social structures, both breaking and maintaining the bonds of socialization.

Keywords: relational aesthetics, object-relations, digestion, smooth and striated space, intersubjectivity, caring

Subject Terms: visual arts, sculpture, installation art, social space
for the shy
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INTRODUCTION

This is a stomach.

(a sublime stomach. A stomach that eats a landscape.)

A stomach that swallows a kitchen, wall by wall.

A stomach that is chewing.

A busy bee that fabricates and a stomach that chews

On the replica of a space that couldn't be understood before, that was glimpsed, that glimmered in its glimpsing. That was left to rot, inhibited through shyness.

I rebuild it. Dissect it. Rip it apart. Re-destroy it. Almost-build it. I am going to find it, defend it, pick it up and cradle the pieces back together. Drifted apart and dispersed, strange vegetation growing out of its gashes.

***
The installation *for the shy*, exhibited at SFU in May of 2007, was built in contemplation of some observations I made about the growth and decay of social spaces in my own life and the lives of others close to me. It stems from my perceptions of the social climate of my kitchen, as I experienced it from when I moved into my current basement apartment in October 2005 until roughly a year later. As roommates and friends, friendship and love came and went, my kitchen, once quiet, became a vibrant space in which conversation, goofiness, stories, philosophical discussions and laughter flourished. Later, it lost this vibrancy bit by bit; its intensity decayed, and I was filled with a sense of inhibition. A total elation, and then quiet sadness, filled me, at having found this site of intense sociality, which later eluded me. Around that time, I became friends with some shy people, and I observed the way they moved through social space, their reserved and polite way of being providing stability to the social group around them,
though it was often frustrating to them to be inhibited in disagreeing with people or asking things of others. I also felt a quiet but pervasive grief about my mother, whose life, it struck me quite suddenly (and perhaps melodramatically), is a site of silent tragedy, lived for others, within the confines of a relationship that is neither particularly nourishing nor particularly supportive. It occurred to me that the ability to create, and sustain, generative social space was of the utmost importance for personal, social and ethical well-being and the best direction toward which I could direct the development of my wisdom. It also occurred to me that the experiences I had observed were characterized by a subtle change in which the playful production of sociality decays into the bland, habitual or inhibited reproduction of “conventional norms” of social configuration. I wanted to understand this change, to experiment with it in order to reckon with my agency as a producer of sociality, to learn to protect social spaces from this sort of decay.

Being a sculptor, I experimented with these tensions by interacting with, and reshaping, material and space. *For the shy* began as a construction of a room based on the proportions of my kitchen at 80% scale. It became a complex configuration of “islands” of sociality configured in objects, sculptural/architectural activity floating in a stream of strewn floor tiles and the remnants of consumable items. Here, I will introduce these islands of activity as they might be encountered on a walk around the space, moving from the largest central feature, the “kitchen,” clockwise outwards toward the smallest, peripheral
features.

Figure 2. for the shy kitchen

* A fabricated room, almost life-sized, that is based on the proportions of my kitchen. It is without ceiling, with floor floating atop stringers, and missing a couple of walls. The walls it has are unfinished or with holes added, most of them a light turquoise, with some sections left open, or rendered in opalescent plastic. The floor is partially tiled in vinyl – off-white with little pink flowers. One may step seven inches upward onto its raised floor, and into the theatrical. The light is quite bright, and a little daunting. There is a table with tablecloth in a bright red floral pattern, a cake on top, stools, and convoluted sculpture. Plastic dinosaurs march out of cracks in the wall, and Lilliputian sculptures – in eggshell, grapevine, licorice, cherry pit, toothpick, fishing line, fake pearl and clear plastic –
encrust the edges of the walls and partially tiled floor.

![Image](image_url)

**Figure 3. for the shy racket and continental drift**

* The stray wall corner that has made its way away from the central room.

On one side, there is a half-finished wall with a tennis racket sticking out, followed by an unfinished, grotesque stretch of wall – painted, rough and open – in front of which are a collection of slabs of wood, yarn, plasticine, foamcore, sawdust and fake tall grasses, all in acidic, clashing shades of green, and inhabited by a couple of creatures, red fake flowers, and nearly invisible chunks of clear vinyl tubing. It is an unnatural thicket of grotesque growth that is revoltingly clashy and ill-wrought up close but pleasingly colourful and absurd.
from a distance. On the other side of the wall, blue: a fuzzy blanket, buttons and clear plastic in a mess on the floor. Wallpaper blobs on the plain white wall, framed with glue-gunned buttons. Yarn in pop bottles, and a half-done armature with fishing line and yarn lines activating its tangled volumes. Floating miniature “houses” made of milk cartons bobbing on the blanket. A “faux wall” attached to this side, made of piled-up pieces of clear plastic. An architectural area that gives birth to landscape and object worlds rendered completely differently on each side, to the point of incoherence.

Figure 4. for the shy stray corner, side view

1 Philip Thomson describes the grotesque as involving the uncomfortable mixture of the comic and the monstrous, the “co-presence of the laughable and something which is incompatible with the laughable” (Philip Thomson, The Grotesque [London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1972], 3. I suggest that the duplicity of the grotesque experience happens (perhaps among other means) by virtue of distance in this section of the work; what appears monstrous, abject, clashy and full of disorder and decay close-up seems delightfully texture-rich and colourful from a distance, and the incompatibility of these states renders the area funny.
*The set.* An area in the corner with a table, tablecloth, stools, striped lamp and hotdog clock—artefacts from my kitchen at home. On the table there are strawberries to eat and plastic dinosaurs, and on the floor, growths of wood chips and toothpick tetrahedrons in the corner.

![Image](image1.jpg)

**Figure 5. for the shy set**

*The complicity question.* The set houses a small monitor perched on the table, playing my video *Semiotics of the Kitchen*. In this piece, I speak in dialogue with Martha Rosler’s brilliant 1975 video of the same name, in which she angrily—and humourously—demonstrates the functions of several kitchen utensils, using them improperly in order to interrupt their association with the instrumentalized domestic labour of women. In my version, I introduce to the
camera every object that was on my kitchen table at the time of taping, caressing it or giving it a hug, thanking it for playing a role in domestic space. My piece, echoing Rosler’s but from a different angle, asks: how can one be in a kitchen without re-enacting the supposed role of women as subordinates, as labourers? How can one negotiate between anger at the inequities one sometimes cannot seem to help but re-enact, and the genuine, generative desire to care for others? How can caring possibly remain unsnared? In this piece, I pour my care out, uselessly, into the objects around me, and explore an abject underbelly of feminist discourse: that I want to be a caregiver.

Figure 6. for the shy video stills - *Semiotics of the Kitchen*
* The blob shelf. A fluorescent orange-rimmed construction made from sheets of cheap plywood, drywall, masonite, chipboard, wallpaper, paint, used carpet, and plastic wall covering. Its myriad pattern-covered planes don’t seem to know how to act. They “add up” to something – a lumpy, rock, cloud or mound-shaped volume – but barely; they are a compact mess of patterns and textures in which no “rule” of composition is followed to its fullest extent, no surface is rendered to perfection, and no viewpoint provides a coherent perspective of “the object” as a whole. In this piece, I create an object that is in an incoherent state of being, communicating awkwardly, inconsistently, loudly and quietly in uneven patches. This is a piece that defies any attempt, from any perspective, to generalize its qualities – that interacts with its viewer rather in the manner of a shy or awkward person.

Figure 7. for the shy blob shelf
The plinth that whispers landscape. An overturned plinth houses three separate sculptural motions extending in three different directions. On top is a teapot with a plasticine tempest in it, and a plate of macaroons and brightly-coloured gummi worms. On its side is projected a video in which I perform as various elements of landscape. The exposed inside of the plinth has been used as a garbage can during the installation process, and my extra coffee cup peels, used paint rollers, and tile backing paper reside there. I have ripped up these pieces, "digesting" them, and I have let them spew out the side of the overturned plinth. They comprise an unsophisticated sculptural gesture. They act like vomit,
or weak knees, or slobber; like Bataille's formlessness,² they have no rights; they upset the "politeness" of the sculptural gesture and place it in the realm of the grotesque.

* The landscape-mimesis performance. Beside the plinth is an area with pillows, where one can sit and watch the landscape video projected on the plinth, called *Windshield Wiper*, in which I do synchronized swimming in my driveway, I pretend to be a windshield wiper on my friend's car, and a friend and I mimic tall grass. The video is an exercise in both personifying the objects and spaces around me and playfully becoming an object, a part of the landscape. The video inhabits the discursive space between two conceptions of mimicry: one detailed in the essay "On the Mimetic Faculty" by Walter Benjamin and the other explained in "Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia" by Roger Caillois. For Caillois, mimicry stems from an instinct of renunciation, a tendency for the individual to move toward a reduced existence, to become generalized into its surroundings. For Benjamin, the mimetic faculty is at the heart of play, constructing language and cultural activity. Between these two conceptions of mimicry – one as deathly and extinctive, the other as playful and generative – I perform. Using my body to "draw" the planes of my street, and to imitate windshield wipers and tall grasses, I extinguish myself a little, renouncing myself

² In *Encyclopaedia Acephalica*, Bataille defines formlessness as follows: "A dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus *formless* is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the world, generally requiring that each thing have its form. What it designates has no rights in any sense and gets itself squashed everywhere, like a spider or an earthworm. In fact, for academic men to be happy, the universe would have to take shape. All of philosophy has no other goal: it is a matter of giving a frock coat to what is, a mathematical frock coat. On the other hand, affirming that the universe resembles nothing and is only *formless* amounts to saying that the universe is something like a spider or spit" (in Georges Bataille, Ed., *Encyclopaedia Acephalica* [London: Atlas Press, 1995]).
to enter into my object-surroundings and object-being. Yet I also enter a new communicative state with my surroundings, activating the space between two houses, caring for the windshield, entering into synchronous motion with my friend by mimetically representing how communication flows between the roots of the tall grasses. I temporarily reconfigure myself within this destructive/creative space of mimesis, making myself object-like in order to find the generative force within this self-extinction, to reconfigure my experience of communication.

Figure 9. for the shy video still - Windshield Wiper
*At the southeast corner, floating away:* A whole bunch of small incoherent sculptures crowded together on the “seabus,” as I have nicknamed a low plinth painted very, very light turquoise, floating in a stream of vinyl tiles, peeled coffee cups and other refuse. On the plinth, the small sculptures are crammed in whatever order they’ll fit, with only minimal organization. They are drifting away on the plinth, leaving the space, going away somewhere. They are in a cramped social setting – small, insignificant gestures packed onto a plinth crowded with more significance than will communicate. This is an attempt to find a meeting point between significance and texture, sculpture and garbage, and to examine a less-than-coherent contingent social organization that is a fact of the everyday city.
*On the Periphery:* the installation fades out around the borders, with pieces that bridge the gap between intentionality and accident. Beer cans and extra wallpaper rolls wait in the wings, pillows convene here and there, fluorescent orange wooden slats and strings of safety pins decorate the ceiling.

![Figure 11](image)

**Figure 11. for the shy "seabus"**

This piece journeys into awkwardness, placing forms just outside comfortable, communicable relations, letting them build up, or bleed out, into incoherence, and thus examining the puzzling coexistence of the desire to create resonant social spaces and their decay. The supporting document offers a series of chapters that examine some disparate theoretical frameworks that carve out a series of discursive tensions within which I work materially and conceptually, striving to find an ethic. **Chapter 1** explores social space and interconnectivity.
within the material framework of eating and its metaphors, examining the tensions between subject-centred and affect-based conceptions of digestion. While viewing digestion as incorporation implies that eating is a gain or loss of power for a subject, viewing digestion as transmission of affect emphasizes that eating is an aspect of the motion of energy through subjects and non-subjects alike; I argue that it is holding both these viewpoints in mind that can best support care-full sociality. Chapter 2 applies digestion to for the shy, examining the installation as a kitchen-in-digestion, or "chewed" social space. Using Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of smooth and striated space and desire-as-lack and desiring-production, I argue that for the shy is between smoothness and striation, lack and production. As a sculptor, I "digest," or "smooth," the striated space of the kitchen in order to separate lack from production, breaking established social and spatial organizations in order to make room for new forms of organization. Chapter 3 further elaborates on this digestive conception of my action as a sculptor, using Peircean semiotics to examine my treatment of mass-produced objects as adding an enzyme to separate their thing-ness from their sign-ness, opening up object-forms in order to allow them to produce significance differently. Chapter 4 discusses the accumulation of marks in my work as ornamental mediation that mediates between architectural space and subject, and models care between subjects. Chapter 5 examines some works and concepts that elucidate the tension between maintaining and transcending selfhood that is an underpinning of my ethical project. Examining intersubjective psychoanalytic conceptions of domination and submission and works of film and immersive
installation, I argue for an ethic that supports both the individual and the social space within which she or he works. Finally, Chapter 6 deals with conceiving of withheld sociality, or shyness, as both a form of abjection, or non-production in social space, and also as a form of production that actively contributes to sociality. I use Winnicott's conceptions of dreaming, living and fantasying to reckon with the elements of non-communication and non-production in my piece, arguing for a notion of care that seeks to acknowledge shyness as both lack and production in order to both maintain and open up new ways of being in social space.

Within and between these tensions – between the subject-centeredness of incorporation and subject-transcending transmission of affect, smoothness and striation, lack and production, thing-ness and sign-ness, architecture and subject, self-maintenance and self-loss, withheld and productive sociality – I locate care as a mediating force, a force that transcends the difference between incompatible perspectives, both bringing together and separating out, creating and destroying, the material and intersubjective configurations of sociality. To do this, I experiment with many theoretical constructions, experiencing the pull between Freudian/Lacanian views of incorporation and desire-as-lack that are founded on the subject, Deleuze-Guattarian perspectives that posit the subjectless subjectivity of desiring-production, and the middle ground of object-relations psychoanalysis and phenomenological views which neither found themselves on subjecthood nor cast it completely aside. As I explore these theoretical differentiations, I realize that, while my recent work and thought tends
in Deleuze-Guattarian direction, I also do not wish to dispense with subjecthood and lacking-desire. Rather, I am interested in what happens when a person’s way of being in social space shifts from one based on desiring-production to one based on lack. My conception of care is as a force that reckons with these experiences of lack, working to both accept them and transform them into desiring-production.

With objects and materials – which are tantamount to my exploration because they have a double relationship to social space, as both social in themselves and also as mediators of human sociality – I work to transform these lacking-conceptions into productive conceptions. I strive toward a conscious sociality – one that involves enacting processes of building, taking apart, dismantling, decaying, digesting, and chewing chewing chewing social space, transforming mis-communication, non-communication and decay. I work at the borders between abject and productive sociality, acting as an agent of care, with laughter and sorrow, struggle, success, failure, and great hopefulness.
CHAPTER 1: POWER, LACK AND TRANSMISSION — WITHIN AND BEYOND AN INCORPORATIVE MODEL OF EATING

I examine my sculptural practice and theoretical underpinnings in part to set out aspects of an ethic of my production. Part of that ethical position involves a practice of inhabiting, rather than adopting a theory; I use disparate, sometimes incompatible frameworks to sketch out a space between various limits in the structures of my thinking, assuming that theory has agency, and that to remain in between theoretical constructions, much like remaining in between architectural constructions, is to remain in the world with a degree of openness and flexibility. Here, I explore this agency of theory by examining my interest in digestion as it relates to two incompatible theoretical frameworks: incorporation and the transmission of affect.

At the heart of my sculptural practice before I began work on this installation was food. Food was my material of choice for sculpting — asparagus houses, puddles and ponds of painted-on jello, with stalks of licorice grasses. Miniature pretzel sculptures that loosely mimic Tatlin structures. Sugar sprinkles. In for the shy, there are remnants of my food-sculpting: food on the floor of the fake kitchen, crawling across it. Mass-produced food, licorice sticks wrought into small geometric shapes with a glue gun. Glue gunned pretzels wrapped around the raw ending of a wall. These elements of my piece are at once the pseudo-edible (corn syrup, gashes of thick artificial colouring, potassium sorbate) and the
once-edible: the discarded scraps of stuff that have made their way to the floor. They are at once outside of me (on the floor) and already within me. By virtue of their virtual trajectories of motion through space, the fact that they could (or could have) enter(ed) the gates to my stomach, they are already within; they speak the motions of the inside and disobey the polite borders of individual subjectivity.

Together, these coexistent aspects of food in my sculptures – the inside-ness and outside-ness, the pseudo-edible and the once-edible that brush up against the state of edibility – these aspects both formed the basis for my use of food in installation and shaped the beginnings of the theoretical enquiries that led into this project.

In this chapter, I would like to outline some theories that I will describe together, loosely, as contributing to an incorporative model of consumption, and to examine their uses and limitations in relation to an affective model of digestion. The incorporative view, rooted in psychoanalysis, is founded on the formation of the subject, but also points toward the permeability of subjectivity. The affective model, as I am calling it, presupposes no subject; in it, eating is both illustrative of, and also an instance of, the transmission of affect. (Here, I am interested in the philosophical, rather than psychological, definition of the term affect, as used by Deleuze, Guattari and Brian Massumi, in which affect is not attached to a particular subject, but rather describes the world in terms of the emergence, accumulation, motion, and the resonance of intensities.) Food reminds us that our bodies' "self-contained" energies belong to no one. Examining the incorporative model, we see from the perspective of a gain or loss of autonomy
and power for a subject. When examining eating as transmission of affect, we see this gain or loss in power as not a property of the subject's constitution, but a "capture." The affective model provides a way to bypass the problems of abjection which eating calls up in the incorporative model; however, by not letting go of the subject entirely, we might have a better language to talk about care, since care must in part deal with our experience as subjects. Thus, we might most fruitfully consider the subject to be an "architecture of affect," a structure the preservation of which contributes to the uninhibited flow of affect.

Incorporative conceptions of food, developed from psychoanalytic notions of subjectivity, speak in terms of a subject's loss or gain of power in incorporation. Psychoanalytic theories of the abject, political notions that theorize power as a type of consumption, and the object-relations approach detailing introjection by the subject speak of eating as incorporation enacted by, upon, or between subjects and as either helpful or detrimental to a subject's constitution.

Artists call into question the ways in which incorporation might reinforce or upset subjecthood using food and referring to digestion. Works such as Brazilian painter Adriana Varejao's *Meat à la Taunay* (1997) represent fleshiness out of its normal context, as what is underneath the skin of landscape. In this work, a reproduction of a seventeenth-century painting by Nicholas Antoine Taunay (a member of the French artistic mission whose paintings played a role in the
colonial (mis)representation of Brazil) is cut up, with guts spilling out from underneath its surface, and its slices served up on plates that surround the painting on the wall. The plates’ designs reference the wares of the West India Company, a Dutch company that engaged in economic warfare with Spain and Portugal in South American Territories. Varejao gives these colonial artifacts a living body, and implicates them in contributing to the lived colonial violence in Brazil. Jana Sterbak’s *Vanitas: Flesh Dress for an Albino Anorectic* (1987), exhibited at the National Gallery of Canada in 1991, thwarts our expectations of dressiness and confronts us with fifty pounds of smelly, decomposing flank steak, lightly salted. Instead of dressing up the body, Sterbak dresses it down, exposing in a new layer its internal fleshiness, but fleshiness cast off, divorced from the functionality of living tissue. Both Varejao and Sterbak violently impose the bodily onto inanimate objects, making these objects both far from what we would expect, and uncomfortably near, identified with our own bodies.

This distance, yet separateness, is a confusion at the borders between subject and not-subject, and is thus a means for experiencing abjection. Abjection, in Hal Foster’s description of Bulgarian-French feminist psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva’s conception, is “what I must get rid of in order to be an I.” Near-bodily materials such as spoiled food, vomit and shit revolt because they threaten

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3 I use the brackets in (mis)representation to highlight the ambiguity of the term. All representation, in a sense, is misrepresentation, as the assumption that there is a “reality” behind representation is problematic. Thus, the prefix “mis” might seem redundant. However, in this case I felt it necessary to highlight the “mis” of representation, as it is particularly important when considering how one group represents another, how colonizer represents colonized.


the borderlines of the body and must be cast out; they enact a motion of pushing
the outside world away in order for the subject to strengthen itself. These motions
of exclusion foster solidarity in both individual subjects and social groups. On the
social level, as Foster points out, one can *abject* or *be abject*;

> to abject is to expel, to separate; to be abject, on the other hand, is to be
repulsive, stuck, subject enough only to feel this subjecthood at risk. For
Kristeva the operation *to abject* is fundamental to the maintenance of
subject and society alike, while the condition *to be abject* is corrosive to
both formations.⁶

Abjection is conceived in a dialectic of power-enforcing or power-corroding,
depending on whether one is casting out or cast out.

Kristeva describes food as an especially complex purveyor of these
motions of interiorization and ousting of material from the subject as they relate
to the structure of the family. She writes,

> Food loathing is perhaps the most elementary and most archaic form of
abjection. When the eyes see or the lips touch that skin on the surface of
milk . . . Along with sight-clouding dizziness, *nausea* makes me balk at
that milk cream, separates me from the mother and father who proffer it.
"I" want none of that element, sign of their desire; "I" do not want to listen,
"I" do not assimilate it, "I" expel it. But since the food is not an "other" for
"me," . . . I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same
motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself.*⁷

Food is material that connects one most viscerally with the caring mechanisms of
family, and thus our experience of it is also the experience of the splitting in self-
perception (ego and superego) that is structured in socialization within the family
(the site in which patriarchal subjectivity is produced). Food is an offering of care
within the family, and because of this, also articulates our own splitting. The

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⁶ Ibid., 156.
subject’s identity flows into food; thus, an abjector is also abjected, experiencing
the motions of exclusion as both agent and victim, as if on behalf of all social
perspectives, but always in relation to the pulsating and convoluted exchange
between identifying with power and identifying with powerlessness.

This pulsation of power and powerlessness builds into the socio-political
level. Consumptive references articulate a struggle for power between individual,
state and colonial layers of governance. In her study of colonial power
relationships as enacted in art appropriation, Canadian writer Deborah Root
argues that all power is cannibalistic; it must consume bodies in order to survive.\textsuperscript{8}
Root describes this consuming force as the deceptive heart of political power,
using the image of the Aztec god Tezcatlipoca, “the smoking mirror, the black
god of the north, of night, and of magicians and robbers,” to illustrate this.\textsuperscript{9} She
writes,

I chose (or perhaps appropriated) the example . . . to illustrate something
that can be overlooked in Western culture: Power is never benign. When
the mask of the good king is stripped away, the face underneath is always
that of Tezcatlipoca, whether he is called Good Queen Bess or John F.
Kennedy. Tezcatlipoca – or at least his manifestations in the human world – is a cannibal, an entity that needs neverending streams of blood and
human bodies to consume and whose desires are organized around
death.\textsuperscript{10}

Root extends the notion of consumptive power outwards from the individual body
to the body politic, and finally to the colonial level of international relations. Thus

\begin{footnotes}
\item[8] We might say that this conception of a motion toward power through consumption is the
opposite motion to that of abjecting, so that the construction of power through subjectivity
consists in both casting off and consuming.
\item[9] Deborah Root, \textit{Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference}
\item[10] Ibid., 6.
\end{footnotes}
as a carrier and replicator of this power. She states, “this hunger for flesh is
generalized into society as a whole when consumption is treated as a virtue and
seen as a source of pleasure and excitement in itself. Consumption is power, and
the ability to consume excessively and wilfully becomes the most desirable
aspect of power.” Thus, as we must seek power in order to maintain our
subjectivity, we consume in order to enforce ourselves. This consumptive
construction of subjectivity is epidemic in late capitalist culture; Root borrows
terms such as wasi’chu, the Lakota term meaning “greedy one who takes the
fat,” and wetiko, the Cree term for “possession by evil cannibal monster spirits” to
describe the Western consumerist mentality as over-driven by consumption.

She states,

Both wasi’chu and wetiko emphasize consumption, which exists at the
heart of Western culture, and both traditions characterize consumption in
very literal and concrete terms. By consumption I am not necessarily
taking about visits to the mall (although this may well be a site of
consumption) but rather more generally about an ontological condition
involving an approach to reality and state of mind that have as their central
obsession ‘the fat.’

The terms wasi’chu and wetiko render the consumptive mentality as a “hunger,”
a compulsive grabbing, at power, which stems from a conception of neverending
lack.

This motion of hungrily grabbing inevitably creates counter-motions of
“biting back” in a dialectical power struggle. Oswald de Andrade’s 1928
“Anthropophagite Manifesto” is a text that articulates the will from a colonized
people to counter colonial “biting.” De Andrade states, “Only anthropophagy

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11 Ibid., 9.
12 Ibid., 10.
13 Ibid., 11.
unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically."\(^{14}\) A Brazilian writer of strong Marxist tendencies, he sought to address the ambivalence with which Brazilians viewed European culture, as either an admirable force to be emulated, or a corrupting force to be avoided; ultimately, he reverses the logic of colonial consumption, “chewing up” European culture and subsuming it to the logic of Brazilian culture.\(^{15}\) De Andrade’s manifesto was influential to the contemporary Ultrabaroque movement in Post-Latin American art, of which Varejao is a part; it helped to “explain the dynamics of hybridity and difference” that constitute the Brazilian postcolonial identity.\(^{16}\) Varejao’s works such as *Meat à la Taunay* use digestive references to examine the formulation of this identity. She writes,

I am interested in verifying in my work dialectical processes of power and persuasion. I subvert those processes and try to gain control over them in order to become an agent of history rather than remaining an anonymous, passive spectator. I not only appropriate historic images – I also attempt to bring back to life processes which created them and use them to construct new versions.\(^{17}\)

Varejao conceives of her painterly negotiation of Brazilian history as a struggle to move into a position of agency in a complex field of consumptive motions between cultures. Between the writings of Root and De Andrade, and articulated in works by Varejao and others, we see that artists and writers have explored the struggle for power within a dialectic of eater and eaten, controller and controlled; a struggle to enable and maintain the agency of the consumer (while not


\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) Armstrong, 4.

\(^{17}\) Quoted in Armstrong, 105-106.
contributing to an over-consumptive mentality) that is also the enabling and maintenance of subjectivity.

Canadian literary theorist Maggie Kilgour’s discussion of cannibalism speaks more directly to the personal experience of this motion. She posits that cannibalism and communion are the poles of meaning around which eating revolves. She writes,

One of the most important characteristics of eating is its ambivalence: it is the most material need yet is invested with a great deal of significance, an act that involves both desire and aggression, as it creates a total identity between eater and eaten while insisting on total control – the literal consumption – of the latter by the former.¹⁸

While cannibalism speaks to the uneven power relations between eater and eaten, communion articulates the more pleasurable, stable, non-totalizing and desirous identifications between separate subjects symbolically brought together by a mediating third element: food. In Felix Gonzalez-Torres’ Untitled (Placebo) from 1991, we are asked to participate in the piece by taking a candy; this built-in participatory element speaks to the desire for communion, for experiencing a connection with one who is not present. Robert Storr refers to the endlessly supplied candies that make up Gonzalez-Torres’ candy pieces as “atomized body surrogates,”¹⁹ referring to their use by the artist to refer to the death of his partner. Storr writes,

Cyclically appearing and disappearing ad infinitum, [the candy spills’] essence is substituted for that of their maker and his late lover, even as the artist, by means of a wholly secular but patently esthetic transubstantiation, reminds us of the evanescence of all that is human.²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., 76.
Gonzalez-Torres' candies become stand-ins for the person he loved, and we are invited to participate in an enactment of desire. Gonzalez-Torres' piece brings together two entities (the eater and the eaten) to evoke connection with a third body whose presence is desired. Eating plays at the borders of presence and absence, each incorporated food carrying with it the nuances of other, desirous connections. Speaking of communion, Kilgour describes it as "a ritual to restore a primal unity, in which man and God are returned to an original identity, ideally not through absolute identification but through the obfuscation of identity and rigid role-playing." In communion, we see a consumptive model predicated not on violence, but on desire; but this desire is always based on the dialectic of lack/absence and its transcendence. In communion, to an extent we become co-identified with another through food as mediation; this desire for connection is based on the overcoming of a lack.

The desire for our experience to be continuous with others is an all-important foundation for subjectivity in the object-relations psychoanalytic view. Kilgour's exploration of the desire for connection also explores the "mental absorption of others" as explicated by the psychoanalytic concept of introjection as it has affected both Freudian and object relations psychoanalysis. Introjection, in Kilgour's view, is part of a long history of ideas surrounding the same phenomenon of mental absorption. Introduced to psychoanalytic discourse by Sandor Ferenczi in 1909, the term denotes "a mechanism that permits the

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21 Kilgour, 15.
22 This includes, within literature in Kilgour's example, the Renaissance poetic notion of imitatio, and the contemporary notion of transumption of poetic influences (Ibid., 10).
absorption into the ego of those parts of the outside world that can be used as sources of pleasure." For Freud, introjection can be "a form of regression to the oral stage in which the child literally seeks to devour the objects that afford it pleasure." For object-relations psychoanalysts such as Melanie Klein, this introjective relationship is all the more significant – a force that structures the topography of the mind. A child introjects the voices of its parents, and this act of introjection makes possible guilt, the super-ego, and the Oedipus complex. Klein also implicates introjection in the formation of compulsive, greedy impulses to take in the stuff of the world, a compulsion that might well be compared with Root's description of *wetiko* psychosis. Klein writes, "Obsessional taking-in of this sort often goes with a feeling of emptiness in the body, of impoverishment." She writes,

I think that the child's compulsive, almost greedy, collection and accumulation of things (including knowledge as a substance) is based, among other factors ... upon its ever-renewed attempt (a) to get hold of 'good' substances and objects ... and with their help to paralyse the action of the 'bad' objects and substances inside its body; and (b) to amass sufficient reserves inside itself to be able to resist attacks made upon it by its external objects, and if necessary to restore to its mother's body, or rather, to its objects, what it has stolen from them.

The over-developed compulsion to take in the world, at the heart of Root's analysis, is a movement in response to weakness, on feelings of impoverishment – introjection seems to assuage this weakness. Yet introjection is also part of the

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24 Ibid.
26 Ibid., 264.
27 Ibid., 265.
normal socialization of the subject. As feminist sociologist and psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow writes,

If a person is to develop at all, the self must come to include what were originally aspects of the other and the relation to the other . . . People inevitably incorporate one another; our sociality is built into our psychic structure and there is no easy separation of individual and society or possibility of the individual apart from society.28

While introjection might be instrumental in forming guilt and compensating for feelings of weakness, it might be more interestingly conceived as creating a double motion in relation to the individual subject, both constructing and breaking down the notions of individuality, both stemming from lack and production. Thus, these eating-based metaphors are implicated in both the conception of the subject both as fundamentally lacking in connections with others and the world, and also as productive of sociality, of actively creating the conditions that make it possible.

Between the object and the subject is a mutual identification that will eventually result in a shifting, a re-definition of the boundaries between the two. Vivian Sobchack, an American media theorist whose work is strongly influenced by phenomenology, writes about the blurring of distinctions between subjects and objects, positing that the material nature of our bodies makes us both objects and subjects. She writes, “it is in being constituted and treated as an object, whether by nonintentional worldly phenomena or by an intentional body-subject, that the body-subject ‘suffers’ a diminution of subjectivity and, in this diminution, comes to

experience—within subjectivity—an increased awareness of *what it is to be a material object.*”\(^{29}\) Thus, categorical existence is complicated, as one is capable of being “an *objective subject* always immanently and substantially ‘here’ and open to being externally acted on regardless of one’s volition—but . . . also . . . a *subjective object*: a material being that is nonetheless capable of *feeling* what it is to be treated *only* as an object.”\(^{30}\) Through our bodies, we are ontologically linked to the state of objects, and this fact forms the basis of our profound identifications with the materials around us. Sobchack continues:

> It is our own *reversibility* as subjects and objects that provides us the material, corporeal, foundation for the possibility of recognizing—and caring for—material objects external to ourselves, be they other animate beings or inanimate worldly things. The passion of suffering thus intimately engages us with our primordial, prereflective, and passive material *response-ability*—the general sense of which becomes reflectively and actively re-cognized in consciousness as that particular *ethical* concept we call *responsibility.*”\(^{31}\)

Our empathy for objects originates in the materiality of our bodies, and this material identification and need extends and becomes the ethical basis for our social being. It is in part for this reason that contemporary sculptors use food in their art, or put digestive references in unexpected places. These works that not only reference incorporation and digestion but *are* those things—that, for instance, literally digest food, as in Wim Delvoye’s *Cloaca* (2000, in which the artist, in a three-year collaboration with scientists at the University of Antwerp, makes a machine that replicates the human digestive process), that are made of what can be eaten (as in Gonzalez-Torres), what might have been eaten


\(^{30}\) Ibid., 288.

\(^{31}\) Ibid.
(Sterbak), or the remains of what has been eaten – these works garner an empathy from the body that would not be possible without the "real-life," body-to-object empathy that the materials create. Food’s material nature, its capability of being incorporated into the body, facilitates its ability to complicate the boundaries between subjects and objects, showing us that our subjectivity and even our ethics are constituted in our relationships to these materials.

All the ideas I have outlined so far – food as abjection, as dialectic of power and powerlessness, as desire for togetherness, as introjective – are based on the existence of a subject, and outline ways in which the subject is strengthened or diminished. Some of the ideas I have outlined stem from the Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective – as in Kristeva’s writing, and also Root’s (whose work is based in deconstruction, which, in turn, has roots in Lacanian psychoanalysis). Others are more closely associated with the object-relations psychoanalytic view – as in the work of Chodorow, Klein and Kilgour. Though these viewpoints differ in their level of subject-centeredness (the object-relations-based approaches more greatly emphasizing the continuity between subject and the outside world of objects and other subjects, and the Freudian- and Lacanian-based views more exclusively focused on the intrapsychic realm), both approaches are concerned with the motions at the borderlines of subjectivity, which either maintain or destabilize it. In order to see the limits of these perspectives more clearly, I step outside them for a moment, and consider eating as the transmission of affect.
In “Like a Thought” and “The Autonomy of Affect,” Brian Massumi (following Deleuze and Guattari, whose book *A Thousand Plateaus* he translated in the late eighties) describes the affective domain as an “impersonal expressive agency” that moves through space, time and material independently of, and through, subjects, objects or language; "Affect is the whole world: from the precise angle of its differential emergence." Affect is the force that pulls actuality out of the virtual (always an act of subtraction from many possibilities, and, thus, always involving choice – if rarely consciously so), and it is motion that moves through space and time in vectors of influence. Within this view, eating is a concrete example of the motions of change that are always happening between, beyond and through “subjects” (which are, perhaps, simply “architectures” of affect, structures that regulate and modify, and enfold affect). Quoting from Nietzsche, Massumi uses the example of a bolt of lightning to describe affect; whereas the popular mind would tend to think of the flash that occurs as an action performed by the “subject” lightning, in fact lightning is an event that is “non-local, belonging directly to the dynamic relation between a myriad of charged particles. The flash of lightning expresses this non-local relation. Expression is always fundamentally of relation, not a subject.” The notion of a subject is a fiction in this view, something that gets invented in order to explain the origins of events that are always impersonal, affective, relational. We might further distance ourselves from the affective nature of this occurrence.

34 Massumi, “Introduction: Like a Thought,” xxiv.
by attributing the lightning to an angry god such as Zeus; this is a fallacy that
Massumi describes as the *capture* of affect: the attribution of an affective motion
to a subject, when it is a singular occurrence that belongs to no one.\(^{35}\) Even acts
that appear to be far less problematically ascribed to a subject, such as the
decision to move one's finger, are also motions *through*, not *by* subjects.
Massumi cites studies that show that there is a 0.3 second period *before* a
person decides to complete an action (for instance, choosing to bend a finger) in
which brain activity begins to heighten; hence, what we would normally ascribe to
the agency of the individual is actually the *continuation* in consciousness of an
accumulation of affect, a gathering of force around a plane of immanence, which
will lead to the subtractive actualization of one of many virtualities of that
accumulated affective force.\(^{36}\) In this view, consciousness is not a separate
phenomenon from non-consciousness; it is a complexity-building motion of affect
through the multilayered chambers of the sensory nerves, cells, stomach and
colon, body and brain (and all these things which I have just named are not
distinct things, but regions within the body). The motions of affect build in depth
as their immanence moves through the living systems; but the force that moves
through these vessels are neither of them nor bound to them. Bodies are
expressions of the autonomy of affect.

In this Deleuze-Guattarian view, we see the very category of the subject –
upon which the incorporative models of eating I outlined above are based –
radically debunked. A subject is either the capture of affect by the popular mind

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\(^{35}\) Ibid., xxv.

to explain causation, or an "architecture of affect," a location which houses the event of the continuation of affect in consciousness. For Guattari in particular, whose background is in psychotherapy, the production of subjectivity is still a central concern – yet it is without a subject; "the movement of expression is itself subjective, in the sense that it is self-moving and has determinate effects. It is an agency, only without an agent: a subjectless subjectivity." To shift one’s conception of being caught in the dialectical power struggles surrounding notions of abjection – motions of power-gain casting material out of a subject or a social group, or power-loss in being cast out – and consumption – motions of power-gain by taking in the world, or power-loss by being "eaten up" – one might take away the central assumption of the subject that these ideas share. If we are not so caught up in imagining these difficult motions as contestations at the borderlines of a subject, then we can begin to replace this focus with the process of transmission, which is at once subjective, impersonal and relational. In this view, might the artists I have mentioned in this chapter be displacing logics of food and eating in order to experiment with affective motion, to show that what we experience as subjectivity, or affect, is a property not of a subject, but of the whole world?

Yet how far can we go in this direction away from subject-oriented models of the self before not being able to see very real differences in power between members of various groups, and the ethical responsibility that goes along with assuming individual subjecthood? Deleuze and Guattari’s ethics are not primarily

those of personal responsibility; for them, the problem of ethics is "a basically pragmatic question of how one *performatively* contributes to the stretch of expression in the world – or conversely prolongs its capture." But how can this ethical paradigm of contribution to expression remain "uncaptured" in fictions of individual subjectivity, when so much of our social being (via our status socially and legally as individuals via social insurance numbers, jobs, etc.) is constructed in relation to the individual?

In this chapter, I have outlined various components of these incorporative models of eating, which presuppose the subject as their basis. Theories of abjection, consumptive power, cannibalism/communion and introjection, to varying degrees, speak of eating as it relates to the motions that form or deform, create or diminish, a subject. In order to see the limits of these conceptions more clearly, I have also briefly stepped outside of them, going a small distance toward describing how an affective view of eating describes the porosity between beings as some of these incorporative ideas of eating also do, but replacing individual subjects with the impersonal, expressive agency of affect as the basis for its existence. An affective model is extremely useful in that it allows one to leave the dialectics of power and powerlessness. However, it is not possible to act in relation to an impersonal subjectivity all, or even much of the time, given the deep-rooted constructions of individuality with which we must reckon on a day-to-day basis. Hence, dispensing with the subject entirely is a utopian, impossible move. I argue for a view of digestion that encompasses both poles, in which we

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38 Ibid., xxii.
hold both the constitution of the subject and its status as capture in mind as if they are two oscillating poles, two differing perspectives, between which the ethical motions of care are generated. Perhaps we must not fully believe in the existence of subjects, but playfully enter the game of “capture,” of behaving consciously toward subjects, in order to care. If we are “architectures of affect” contributing to expression, then our architectures are based on our subjecthood, and thus the category of the subject must be preserved in order to have care. Behaving between these two poles, my artwork enacts a subjectless subjectivity, an impersonal agency that flows freely between and through objects. But it also enacts abjection, experimenting ambivalently with the motion of abjecting oneself in order to uphold other subjects a little, wading into the subject-based motions of expulsion and upsetting their balances shakily, trying to balance them, to use them, to reconfigure them into caring-motions.
CHAPTER 2: SMOOTHNESS, STRIATION AND THE FAMILY

If food articulates the borders that extend within and between bodies, then to consider the constant negotiation of these borders in consumption, as does for the shy, is an ethical project, a project that seeks to discover, to struggle for, harmonious, resonant sociality between subjects, objects, spaces, proximities. It is a project that studies communication and sociality in the Peircean sense, in which communication is always already happening by virtue of spatial proximity, and requires no special circumstance of subjectivity in order to occur. Yet it also relates to sociality based on lack and the quest for power within a system of patriarchal subjectivity – the family. In this chapter, I trace the underpinnings and struggles of my installation as they take place between, on the one hand, conceptions of patriarchal subjectivity, lacking desire and its correspondent striated space and, on the other hand, the affect-based, productive desire associated with smooth space.

39 See "The Law of Mind," in which Peirce suggests that a gob of protoplasm feels, and that when a place upon it becomes irritated, this state spreads to the other parts. "Since space is continuous, it follows that there must be an immediate community of feeling between parts of mind infinitesimally near together" (Justus Buchler, ed., The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1978], 345). Though I have chosen the word communication to highlight transmission here, it might be better to use the term expression – the term Deleuze and Guattari use to replace the problematic concept of communication, which assumes the communication of something (Massumi, "Introduction: Like a Thought," xv).
In the past, I focused on using food as a material, displacing it into the realm of art object by means of activities such as drawing on crackers and creating pools of jell-o that sprawl across the floor, housing licorice grasses. My use of food was akin to the food logic Wolfgang Laib uses in *Milkstone*, in which the milk, like offerings placed in front of temples, is taken out of the system of human digestion (digestion, here, viewed as a circulatory system, but one that extends beyond the individual body), and placed in such a way as to suggest the existence of other, invisible circulations: consumption by gods, or in other metaphysical realms, or by the masses of micro-organisms in decay. In this way, my work spoke of sacrifice and offering, and acted as an index of the subjectivity in the "object-world," crawling joyously with the communication of storybook characters and single-celled organisms.

While there are still remnants of this use of food-as-sacrifice in *for the shy*, I moved away from the literal use of food as a material in this installation, and toward an inquiry into the construction of social spaces. Food remained an important part of the work, but its use had shifted. For the first time, I used food that visitors could eat in my piece: a bowl of strawberries on the corner table, a cake contributed by my friend Cindy Mochizuki in the central table, gummi worms and macaroons on the plinth the side of which was used as a "screen" for my landscape video. This use of food implies no sacrifice (at least from the perspective of my visitors) — it is an offering pointed directly into the human social realm. Its logic is more akin to the use of food by Rirkrit Tiravanija as concrete, material basis for social space than to Laib's offering to things invisible. Further,
the main material impetus of my work in *for the shy* had turned toward the materials of housing – both as in the human-scale housing materials such as wood, drywall, paint, vinyl tile and peel-and-stick wallpaper, and as in product-scale housing materials such as plastic pop bottles, juice containers, and even tea pots and frying pans – these temporary shelters for water, sugar, fizz, processed fruits and the like. I was no longer invoking consumption per se but its surrounding shells of social and mass-productive space. Yet the core of my impetus remains very much in digestion; I merely shifted into a practice of “digesting” these housing structures, implying the metaphysical from a different perspective, imagining (myself the sculptor as a stand-in for) a being with a large stomach and mouth, ripping apart containers as if enacting a dance of enzymes, digesting a kitchen.

I must therefore ask the basic question: why enact a digestion of a kitchen? Why present it as ripped apart, on an unknowable temporal trajectory somewhere (simultaneously) between not yet formed and already destroyed, taken apart, decaying? But decaying at the will of some peculiar digestion, the addition of an enzyme that removes one wall corner from a room and starts it spinning off in some contingent gastric continental drift on a bed of floating floor tiles released of their habitual formations; the lock-and-key removal of areas of the drywall inside of which float strange latticeworks of blobby, cell-like material. This shift in my work indicates a drive to break apart the striations of domestic space, and, by extension, the striations of familial relations that they contain. It is an exercise in releasing the energy contained within the “chemical bonds” of
these striations and setting the pieces of kitchen-ness into smooth space (something akin to effecting a transition of interior space from the spatial logic of architecture to the spatial logic of geography, if we consider entropic forces in geography as akin to the digestive in anatomy).

This action of digesting/chewing social space is performed in order to attempt a separation of various aspects of the construction of these spaces in desire – to separate aspects of the space constructed in keeping with the conception of desire-as-lack and those in keeping with the conception of desire as production. To examine this, I first look for relationships between my installation and Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of smoothness and striation, positing that my installation enacts the motion of a kitchen (and its resultant social spaces) from striation into smoothness. Next, I examine the work’s relationship with Kaja Silverman’s writing on family and the construction of the subject, arguing that the Oedipal structure she details is a type of “striation” of social space, and that my piece represents an act of dismantling these striations. Finally, I examine some differences between the conception of desire as lack that is at the foundation of Silverman’s writing (based as it is in Freud and Lacan) and the Deleuzian conception of desire, positing that my piece is an enactment of taking apart desires based on lack, and toward putting together a more positive conception of desire for generative social space. This is not a simple motion toward a utopian sociality free from the limitations of the family, but rather a motion toward consciousness of the habitual construction of social spaces along
the fault lines of the family, and of examining the principles by which striations change, by which new striations might arise from undoing old ones.

*for the shy* is a displacement of the spatial logic of my kitchen, a movement between the two opposing but always coexistent spatial paradigms outlined by Deleuze and Guattari: striation and smoothness, or, roughly, regular, organized, sedentary space and irregular, haptic, nomadic space. Since Deleuze and Guattari include many different descriptions by which to come to an understanding of the distinction between the smooth and the striated without wishing to multiply them into a totality, I thought it best to provide a diagram compiling the general distinctions between these two spatial categories (the irony being, of course, that all of these take place within the table, which is itself a striated space):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Properties of Smooth and Striated Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Smooth Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomadic; space in which the war machine develops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;the continuous variation, continuous development of form&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;that which intertwines fixed and variable elements, produces an order and succession of distinct forms&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The technological model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt (an anti-fabric); an entanglement of fibres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabric; regular, grid-like technological organization of fibres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The maritime model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points tend to be subordinated to the trajectory; lines are vectors, space is directional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lines or trajectories tend to be subordinated to points; space is dimensional or metric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The physical model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free action; a physics of packs, turbulences, catastrophes and epidemics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work; a physics of the regular application of forces; a measured physics of homogenization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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41 Ibid.
The articulation of these ever-changing categories helps one conceive of the intricate connections between our modes of social and spatial being. These categories inform the logic of my installation, in which I “smooth” the space of a kitchen. When I place vinyl peel-and-stick floor tiles, I am conscious of taking them out of a striated spatiality. The one square-foot floor tile belongs to the striated mode of spatiality. It is a unit of metric dimension, an emblem of regularity. Its borders prescribe the location of its neighbours, and in turn are prescribed by the coordinates of the space in which it stays. Within the room I have made, I play at striation, arranging the tiles in a regular fashion across the floor. This regularity starts to deviate as I let holes of raw construction-grade plywood to show through, finally abandoning the tiles altogether. Outside the kitchen, I fling the tiles across the floor, allowing them to settle in haphazard patterns as if they were stones, not tiles, strewing them about so the vector created by their accumulation connects the various “islands” of sculptural activity, and they enact the vector, becoming a unified iteration of both space itself and an entity that inhabits it.

I have spoken of this process as digestive; as I imagine my act as a sculptor (and sculpt to make actual the imaginary axes of my action), I imagine the addition of an enzyme to the spaces in between each one-foot square, atomizing the habitual bonds that we expect to hold a floor together, tile by tile. Perhaps one provisional definition of digestion is the motion (made

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42 Deleuze and Guattari state that they leave room for the addition of many other models to describe the distinction between smooth and striated; I posit (without developing it fully here) that, to speak broadly and roughly, striation is to smoothness what architectural space is to geographic space.
unconsciously by a living, conscious being) of a tissue from striation into smoothness, in order that matter and energy from that tissue can enter a new system of striation. Imagining the kitchen as a sort of tissue, the tiling as a sort of tissue, I enact the vector of its undoing, the un-becoming of its spatial logic. In fact, the very terms smoothness and striation are derived from muscular structure; and skeletal muscle, distinguished by its striated fibres, is that which is chewed as meat. What more concrete image could there be than the addition of chewing to liberate the muscular tissue from its striations? Digestion is a coming-into-smoothness, and, appropriately, is effected by smooth muscle, that which "contracts without conscious control, having the form of thin layers or sheets made up of spindle-shaped, unstriated cells with single nuclei and found in the walls of the internal organs, such as the stomach, intestine, bladder, and blood vessels, excluding the heart." The digestive tract is a vector enacting smoothing, a temporary, nomadic "home" for once-living tissue; the motions of the mouth, esophagus and stomach release it from its former spatial logic only in order that the energy contained in these chemical bonds can enter into another system of striation: that of the eating body. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "Perhaps we must say that all progress is made by and in striated space, but all becoming occurs in smooth space." The stomach is a place of becoming within the body, a space of transition between the spatial logics of two bodies. Matter transitions into temporary smoothness by chewing; I chew apart my kitchen,

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44 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 486.
adding enzyme and mechanical motion, and present the slowed-down transition into the space of becoming.

This becoming is an attempt rendered in the material conditions of domestic space to find sociality that moves beyond the striations of the family. The space of the kitchen in my installation is a dismembered centre of domestic space. It is interiority opened up, put on stage, broken into many coexistent structures that house a non-family, a motley crew of whoever enters the space, with whatever clusters of family, friendship and acquaintance they bring with them.

Both house and family have a special relationship to striated/sedentary space (and certainly Deleuze and Guattari are deeply critical of the striating effect of familial relations). The house is, of course, at the heart of sedentary existence, but its mode of being in space is intricately intertwined with a striated way of being. Deleuze and Guattari occasionally reference houses in their explanations of striation, as in the following description of the spatiality of fabric:

For among sedentaries, clothes-fabric and tapestry-fabric tend to annex the body and exterior space, respectively, to the immobile house: fabric integrates the body and the outside into a closed space. On the other hand, the weaving of the nomad indexes clothing and the house itself to the space of the outside, to the open smooth space in which the body moves. 45

Like the house, fabric contains the body, and contains it within a logic of immobility, of locking into a grid of knowable distinctions. (Indeed, in my practice I spend a great deal of time opening up containers.) The house is a strategy of

45 Ibid., 476. It has been noted that Delauze and Guattari are quite romantic about nomads, and although they speak of them as exemplars of smooth space, they are privy to their own striations.
locking. This locking should be seen as a locking of social as well as physical space – the house as a form that both articulates and regulates the structuring of family. Deleuze and Guattari articulate a clear connection, a fluidity of influence, between the organization of space and the social space it contains, perceiving the relation between the physical and the social as fluid. Striations in space are agents affecting the form of sociality. Thus, the spatial organization of the house has profound ramifications for the family, and an act toward smoothing the architecture of domestic space is an experiment toward smoothing familial space.

The family may also be seen as a striated type of social space by virtue of its relationship to the state. As we have seen, Deleuze and Guattari associate striated space with the State apparatus. American film theorist and historian Kaja Silverman, in turn, associates the state apparatus with the family, pointing out (citing Wilhelm Reich) that the family is "the factory within which patriarchal culture reproduces itself." In these terms, structures of the family imprint the individual with the topography of subjecthood that, in turn, causes the individual to replicate that patriarchal structure, which is both a structure of the individual family and of the State apparatus. Silverman's careful analysis of the Freudian (and, later, Lacanian) topographical models of the subject is based on a

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46 This becomes clear in several parts of their essay, such as when they describe the relationship between the conception of gravity as a consistent, all-pervasive force and the apparatus of empire; "Geometry lies at the crossroads of a physics problem and an affair of the State" (489). Similarly, in describing the relationship between general conceptions of work in physics and in the labour force, they write, "There was a profound link between physics and sociology; society furnished an economic standard of measure for work, and physics a "mechanical currency" for it. The wage regime had as its correlate a mechanics of force" (490).

formalistic practice of seeing, of seeing these seemingly normalizing and prescriptive theories in sufficient detail to perceive their constructedness, their contingency on particular social, and even spatial, modes of organization. She writes,

If we attend closely to those features of Freud's mature argument which are most defensive, those areas in which he seems most at pains to justify or naturalize the technology whereby subjects are currently produced, we can learn a great deal about the mechanisms that prevent cultural change. We can discover, for instance, that Oedipalization creates sexual difference, that it is culturally induced, that it prevents subjects from determining their own desires, and that it sustains the symbolic field in its present phallocentricity.

The structures that create subjectivity also replicate the current social order, and thus replicate the striations of the family and of the State apparatus. Thus, I undertake a practice of smoothing spaces as a means to understanding, by "chewing," by taking apart the striations of domestic space that contain striations of the family and State. This imaginary addition of enzymes into domestic, interior space is an act of opening up, observing and partaking in a material process that is (and models) its unfolding, its possibility for taking on new striations.

I want to further discuss why I feel the need to partake in this process of smoothing by chewing, "digesting" the domestic space of the kitchen by speaking about its implications for desire. As the above quotation from Silverman suggests, Oedipalization (the process of becoming a patriarchal subject)

48 I am reminded here of Barthes' famous quotation: "To parody a well-known saying, I shall say that a little formalism turns one away from History, but that a lot brings one back to it." (Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers [New York: Hill and Wang, 1972], 112). Silverman's practice is, I believe, one of taking understandings of Freud and Lacan out of the "little bit of formalism" that allows them to appear prescriptive, and bringing them toward the "lot of formalism" that allows them to be seen as contingent upon social structures.

49 Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics, 149.
prevents subjects from determining their own desires. It certainly does not prevent them from relating at all to desire – but whose? What is the difference between these un-self-determined desires and desires of one's own? I argue that these are the desires of the State apparatus, the very apparatus associated with Deleuze and Guattari's striated space. The action of un-making a kitchen is an act of “chewing” in order to attempt to separate these “desires of the State” from desires that are self-determined and productive. With my action in material, I wonder if there could be, and I imagine into being, an enzyme that splits this desire based on lack (conceived by Lacan and analyzed in detail by Kaja Silverman) from the productive desire envisioned by Deleuze and Guattari.

Silverman speaks of the Lacanian conception of desire, and the Lacanian subject in general, as created by absence, as “predicated almost entirely on lack.” Silverman traces this conception in Lacan back to Aristophanes in Plato's Symposium, and traces several of several of Lacan’s assumptions about subjectivity and desire back to Plato’s Aristophanes:

One of these assumptions is that the human subject derives from an original whole which was divided in half, and that its existence is dominated by the desire to recover its missing complement. Another of these assumptions is that the division suffered by the subject was sexual in nature – that when it was “sliced” in half, it lost the sexual androgyyny it once had and was reduced to the biological dimension either of a man or a woman. This biological dimension is seen by Lacan, if not by Plato, as absolutely determining the subject's social identity. Finally, Lacan shares with Aristophanes the belief that the only resolution to the loss suffered by the subject as the consequence of sexual division is heterosexual union and procreation.

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50 Ibid., 151.
51 Ibid., 152.
Desire, in this conception, is based on the lack of some imagined wholeness, a wholeness that belongs to another place and time but with which we must always reckon in the present. It is this lack that sends us into the striated space of heterosexual union, the family, and its protective, striated containers, the house and state. Further, the subject replicates these striations due to a profound sense of alienation from the material world; "Desire has its origins not only in the alienation of the subject from its being, but in the subject's perception of its distinctness from the objects with which it earlier identified. It is thus the product of the divisions by means of which the subject is constituted, divisions which inspire in the subject a profound sense of lack."52 The sense of being divorced from the material world that is tantamount to becoming subject creates the permanence of this sense of lack, the need for always bridging. Further, for Lacan, the entrance into language and the Oedipal complex of events work in tandem to enforce this sense of lack; discussing a close reading of Althusser, Silverman writes, “Through the first words which the child learns, which generally include "want," "no," "mother," and "father," he or she enters the realm of negation, desire, and the family.”53 Negation, desire and family are experienced as part of the same nexus, through language and Oedipalization, and drive the subject to replicate the conditions of familial space without agency.

Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of desire is antithetical to Lacan’s; for them, desire neither stems from, nor implies, lack of wholeness, separation from the material world or the present, or negation at the heart of the experience of

52 Ibid., 176.
53 Ibid., 30.
entrance into language and patriarchal order. For them, desire is production. They envision a world in which desiring-machines are everywhere, and "the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever."\

I will quote at some length from their writings on desire in *Anti-Oedipus*, which radically bring the theorization of desire into the present, the positive, the productive, and the open:

If desire produces, its product is real. If desire is productive, it can be productive only in the real world and can produce only reality. Desire is the set of *passive syntheses* that engineer partial objects, flows, and bodies, and that function as units of production. The real is the end product, the result of the passive syntheses of desire as autoproduction of the unconscious. Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the *subject* that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; *there is no fixed subject unless there is repression* [my emphasis].

Desire and its object are one and the same thing: the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is a machine, and the object of desire is another machine connected to it. The objective being of desire is the Real in and of itself. There is no particular form of existence that can be labelled "psychic reality." As Marx notes, what exists in fact is not lack, but passion, as a "natural and sensuous object." Desire is not bolstered by needs, but rather the contrary; needs are derived from desire: they are counterproducts within the real that desire produces... Desire always remains in close touch with the conditions of objective existence; it embraces them and follows them, shifts when they shift, and does not outlive them. 

Desire, in the Deleuze-Guattarian conception, is a positive force that leads the subject on trajectories within the world, through the in-betweens of desiring-machines that form the web of possible motions in space that are the stuff of sociality, as if a huge three-dimensional cobweb filled the air, made of the motions from person to place to person to thing to person; the movement of

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55 Ibid., 26-7.
individual or object beings in space. Desiring-machines weaving from incident to incident, organizing the relations between one “desiring-machine” and another in an ecosystem of intersubjectivity. Interestingly, it seems that the space envisioned by this conception of desire is smooth; one which implies not the entrance of the individual into the apparatus of the State, ideology, and control, but rather one in which vectors of desiring-motions intertwine to create the social. This is a desiring-space of becoming, in which the motion through space and its subject are closely identified, in which the desiring-machine makes its way through the ecosystem of desiring-production. Desire, in this conception, literally is landscape, is space. This conception keeps desire grounded in the material world; my interventions into the material world negotiate desire as material in this way also.

Deleuze and Guattari (citing Clement Rosset) question the assumptions of lack that construct the Lacanian conception of desire:

when a theoretician reduces desiring-production to a production of fantasy, he is content to exploit to the fullest the idealist principle that defines desire as lack, rather than a process of production, of “industrial” production. Clement Rosset puts it very well: every time the emphasis is put on a lack that desire supposedly suffers from as a way of defining its object, “the world acquires as its double some other sort of world, in accordance with the following line of argument: there is an object that desire feels the lack of; hence the world does not contain each and every object that exists; there is at least one object missing, the one that desire feels the lack of; hence there exists some other place that contains the key to desire (missing in this world).”

Lack necessitates the replication of the world, which reduces the import of the material and space around one, displaces the subject from the real, and places

56 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus; 26.
him/her in comparison to an ideal space. The abstraction of space that results can be likened to the abstraction of forces in striated conceptions of physicality and spatiality. This removal from the particularities of the Real is a powerful ideological instrument, taking the individual out of a (smooth) space of becoming in which agency and social change can occur. Deleuze and Guattari associate this coming-out of Real space as a falsification;

Such is the nature of Oedipus – the sham image. Repression does not operate through Oedipus, nor is it directed at Oedipus. It is not a question of the return of the repressed. Oedipus is a factitious product of psychic repression. It is only the represented, insofar as it is induced by repression. Repression cannot act without displacing desire, without giving rise to a consequent desire, all ready, all warm for punishment... no, Oedipus is not a state of desire and the drives, it is an idea, nothing but an idea that repression inspires in us concerning desire; not even a compromise, but an idea in the service of repression, its propaganda, or its propagation.57

Desire in the Lacanian sense, is predicated on lack, is repressive, propagandistic and propagative; it is associated with the paradigm of controlling the individual, of making sure he/she comes into alignment with the conventions of others in the community. If this is a repressive motion that is at the core of this interpellation into subjecthood, the communicative logic of the state apparatus stands in the way of, literally represses, the individual's very sense of agency, the ability to make for herself a material and social space that she desires.

The question must arise, then: what of the coexistence of the Lacanian and Deleuzian conceptions of desire? Is one of them false, and the other true? Despite Deleuze and Guattari's conception of lacking-desire as a sham, I take

57 Ibid., 115.
this question first to my own, embodied experience, and I argue that both of these theories are “true” as much as any theory can be true, in the sense that theories act in the transitional play-space between a reader and a world, mimetically representing the conditions of that world, both reflecting the world and actively creating the conditions within which that it can continue to be seen in the future. I argue that the Lacanian and Deleuzian desires are coexistent; *the former is the desire that belongs to the striated space of the State apparatus, and the latter is the desire of the smooth space of becoming.* There is a sense in which desire is manipulated, in which following it does not lead to an increased sense of well-being, in which one can desire things simply because one sees oneself as not x or y, in which desire is based in a lack of presentness that is fundamentally repressive and coercive (and even if I “know,” following Deleuze and Guattari, that this desire is a sham, I still experience it as desire); there is also a sense in which desire is productive, in which desire leads us into the real world, into presentness, toward our very best interests as desiring-machines among desiring-machines. But these two desires always exist in tension in day-to-day experience, in which we must move in relation to the striated desire. Even if we conceive of this lacking-desire as a reified desire, a desire of leaving the root of one’s desire, a desire which has an interest in preserving the current striations of the socio-economic structure,⁵⁸ we must enter into spaces where we must align ourselves with this reification daily. So: how to tell these desires apart

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⁵⁸ Or, better, I can render these terms in terms of Winnicott’s play: the former is a desire that diminishes playfulness, and the latter is a desire that nourishes playfulness (see Chapter 6).
when they intertwine with our places and times? How do we reckon with their co-existence?

I make this enquiry in order to face a practical question that I have sometimes struggled with in great sorrow: how can finding love and some kind of family happen in such a way as to withstand the dangers of falling into a diminished agency, into a mere replication of ideologies of the family? How can we build a *structure of loving* in a way that can keep with itself the vector of a productive desire, the productive desire of becoming, that is about an ecosystem of desiring-machines and not a State apparatus, a top-down subordination of power? When we fall in love, when we fall into family, this family is the site of potential peril, a site in which we fall into the danger of unbecoming, of feeling like ideological replicators rather than agents of desiring-production. While I certainly do not know the answers to the questions I raise, I envision this project as involving a lifelong process of learning to practice presentness in material and space, and of coming into praxis, the slow evolution of practising desire in a conscious way, in becoming more conscious of the types of production that desires can bring. By taking apart a kitchen, I enact a ritual of smoothing a kitchen, smoothing the family, and smoothing desire – consciously polishing my desiring-production, contemplating it playfully in order to allow it the environment in which to create itself (the space of play as a fecund space) – slowly, slowly, more and more – creating community in the positive sense of the term produced by the fully present, fully conscious agent of desire.
To conclude, I begin by citing the last sentence of Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus*: “Never assume that a smooth space will suffice to save us.”\(^{59}\) My installation is an act of digesting a kitchen, by which process I release the “chemical bonds” of the striations of both social space and family. I give my “kitchen” the spatial characteristics of smoothness, unfurling within its materials the motion-force of vectors, of coming away from the grids upon which domestic architectures depend. I explore this as a material means of coming to terms with, and undoing, the striations of the family, in light of the Deleuzian conception in which space and sociality are concurrent iterations of the same impulses of organization. I insert an enzyme to separate out the desire of smoothness and becoming from the desire of striation and state. But it is imperative that this not be seen as a simple liberatory motion, an act of freeing one from the constraints of society; rather it is enacting praxis, coming into understanding of these motions in between notions of space, sociality and desire, effecting an understanding of the means by which striation is smoothed and then again striates by enacting these motions of change in material and space. It is an act of coming into understanding through separation, which is ultimately (ironically) enacting a desire for building; of consciously building the means of producing sociality.

\(^{59}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 500.
CHAPTER 3: THE ENZYMES THAT SEPARATE THINGNESS FROM SIGN-NESS

With my fingers, I peel the skin off a coffee cup. Being careful with the fingers, I can remove the label in one single motion, leaving a ghost of a disposable everyday object, the inside layer of plain, rough, bleached white paper bearing the visible signs of tearing. Inside the cup: the index of its use, remnants of use in the one-use-only vessel. This is an act of compulsively destroying the mass-produced nature of the mass-produced object, making it unreadable in the terms of regularity to which it most often belongs. My practice consists in large part of changing the shape of mass-produced objects with my fingers: pushpins, pop bottles, floor tiles, wallpaper, drywall. Here, I continue the discussion of my sculptural work as digestive by bringing it down from the scale of the architectural to the scale of the mass-produced object, reckoning with my practice of undoing containers and reconfiguring humble objects as a process of breaking down form in order to produce new signifying properties.
As Ann Kaplan writes, “In the post-industrial, high-tech age, subjects are constructed through all-invasive commodity relations; they are, that is, constructed pre-eminently as consumers.” The existence of consumer products structures striated desire – desire that is, paradoxically, both consumptive and divorced from the materiality of its consumption – and this striated desire is also configured in the regularity of the mass-produced object. In order to understand how the mass-produced object might be “smoothed” and to what effects, it is useful to examine how these objects occupy space within American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce’s economy of signs. Here, I will use his discussion of

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signs in “Logic as Semeiotic” to talk about the position that mass-produced objects carve out for themselves in Peirce’s “semiotic space,” and to see how this might influence the ways in which objects might configure desire. Peirce’s semiosis allows us to conceive of things outside of convention-based relationships between signifiers and signifieds, as signs. For Peirce, these conventional relations, such as that between the word “tree” and a tree, which for Saussure constituted the basis for semiology, constitute the realm of Thirdness, or signification based on law, thought, conventions, and the ability to make predictions about the future. There are also the realms of quality and fact (Firstness and Secondness) in which semiosis occurs that is not based on convention.

Material objects embody qualities and are physical facts; they are Secondness and house Firstness. Under what conditions does a material constitute Thirdness? In what circumstances does a material abide to a general law that governs the form it takes? We might think of this in terms of the chemical properties of the material. Due to its chemical composition, in general milk looks white, has low viscosity and tastes milky; in general water is wet, and clear, provides a living space for fish, and pours easily. Yet we know that these qualities are susceptible to surrounding conditions (if we leave milk out, it goes sour and becomes chunky; if we put water in an ice cube tray in sub-freezing temperatures, it becomes solid. Yet if we put fast-running water into sub-zero temperatures, it may not freeze.) These general properties of materials are
susceptible to general "laws" of "nature" which govern their changes; their law is not quite "in" their material. How else might we think of the legisign, the realm of conventional signification, happening within the material realm? We might think of this in terms of genetic similarity; humans, in general, have two legs, a couple of arms, a nose perhaps, et cetera. Yet we know that within these general, genetic similarities there is a wealth of difference. Genetic similarities form general types to which these lumps of electro-chem called humans submit, but they are (thankfully) not exact. I argue that it is the mass-produced, manufactured object, produced by mold and machinery, that nearly totalizes legisignificance within the form of the physical object. Mass-produced objects allow physical materials to occupy a normative space by virtue of their physicality; they make materiality itself a site of law and regularity. They allow for a mode of normative materiality, for convention-based signification spreading into the realm of the material. Thus, when I peel apart a coffee cup, for instance, or modify a hair-brush to give it hair, or create a structure out of glue-gunned toothpicks, it is an act of undoing this regularity, imagining that I am "inserting an enzyme" that separates thing-ness from sign-ness.

Peirce describes the category of the Legisign in his three trichotomies of signs. The word "the" might be written twenty times on the same page. Each individual word "the" is a different instance, but of the same word. Each individual

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61 I must here counteract my reluctant use of the term "law" (a social reality projected onto the physical I say) with a quote: "The universe does not have laws. It has habits. And habits can be broken." (Tom Robbins, *Jitterbug Perfume* [Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1984], p. 251). Or, as Peirce put it, "mechanical laws are nothing but acquired habits" (Justus Buchler, ed., *The Philosophy of Peirce: Selected Writings* [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1978], p. 353.)
word is a Replica of the Legisign. “The” is a Legisign by virtue of the quality of each “the” being the same word. “The” is a definite article; it is the same word playing the same role in different sentences.

Let us take an example of a mass-produced object that I’m quite fond of: the clear plastic pushpin, which pops up here and there, subtly, in for the shy. The general type “clear plastic pushpin” is a Legisign; each instance of this general type is a Replica. In everyday perception, its material specificity is effaced by its generality, by its fitting into a law of types, a peculiar (somewhat bone-shaped) lump of clear plastic; an insertion of a metal point. Ad infinitum.

The pushpin plays the same role in different “material sentences” (the “material sentence” being, for instance, the bulletin board with all the stuff that’s on it in whatever arrangement in which it occurs, in whatever “sentence structure” all the stuff is in). The push pin is the “insignificant” stuff on the board – the stuff that sticks significance down, the thing that is not meant to signify, but makes significance possible within the syntax of the bulletin board. Taking the pushpin out of this syntax, as I did in the pushpin and cut-up pop bottle structures on the kitchen floor in my installation, moves out of this syntax of significance.

The pushpin, this material object, is used like an element in a language: Replicas of the Legisign “clear plastic pushpin” are used to connect objects to a board, to connect meaningful objects (pieces of paper with important writing on them) into a syntax, into a sentence.

Within the three phenomenological categories set out in Peirce’s “Principles of Phenomenology” (his phenomenology which is completely
semiotic, in which everything is a sign), he maps out a component grid of possible characteristics of a sign, based on a "double striation" of his phenomenological categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness:

My diagram outlines two "cross-multiplied" phenomenological trichotomies which form the basis for Peirce's semiotic. He considers the quality of the sign itself, the nature of its relationship to its object, and the nature of its relationship to its Interpretant (the resultant sign in the mind of the beholder), and, within these, delineates categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness (roughly, quality, fact and thought).

How do mass-produced objects fit into this schema? Here is an incomplete list of ways in which a pushpin might generate a field of signifying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of the sign (firstness)</th>
<th>Fact (Secondness)</th>
<th>Thought (Thirdness)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualisign (a quality which is a sign)</td>
<td>Sinsign (an actual existent thing or event which is a sign)</td>
<td>Legisign (a law that is a sign)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of its relationship to the Object (secondness)</td>
<td>Icon (a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of shared characteristics)</td>
<td>Index (a sign which refers to its Object by virtue of being really affected by it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of its relationship to the Interpretant (thirdness)</td>
<td>Rheme (a sign which, for its interpretant, is a sign of qualitative possibility)</td>
<td>Dicent Sign (a sign which, for its Interpretant, is a sign of actual existence)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
properties within Peirce’s nine classifications. It must be noted that the pushpin itself is not all these signs (for instance, it is not the quality associated with it, but houses that quality), so this list is best described as a field of significations surrounding the pushpin:

Table 3. The Pushpin in Peirce’s Semiotic System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualisign: clarity, sharpness, smoothness, shininess, tastelessness, the ability to hold things together</th>
<th>Sinsign: the pushpin itself, the thing made of clear plastic and metal</th>
<th>Legisign: the law of manufacture that makes for the sameness of all pushpins, that makes each particular instance of the pushpin a Replica of the general form that is a pushpin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icon: each individual pushpin as a representation of the ideal pushpin</td>
<td>Index: the pushpin’s form as pointing to the existence of the mold and machinery that made it - the pushpin as pointing to the paper it usually holds up, the bulletin board on which it usually holds paper</td>
<td>Symbol: of holding, of utility, of cheapness, mild danger…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rheme: - if one pricks oneself: sharpness - if one puts it in one’s mouth: tastelessness - if one pushes it into a board: smoothness, ability to penetrate a surface</td>
<td>Dicisign: the pushpin seen as a push pin, as a small plastic object with a metal tip</td>
<td>Argument: the pushpin seen as an exemplar of mass production, or the importance of utility…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What, in this list of signifying properties and possibilities, is particular to the pushpin as mass-produced object? Mass-production causes a shifting in weight towards the right side of the diagram. Within the realm of quality of the sign, the mass-produced-ness of the object results in a subtle shifting toward the state of Legisign. There is an expected type of quality, or rather, an expected conjunction of types of qualities embodied in the pushpin. There is an expected type of
conjunction and form of material. There is the law of the form that a pushpin
takes.

Within the realm of relationship of sign to object, there is a shifting towards
the signifying of mass production. The pushpin is an icon of itself only, of other
instances of itself. It is not really an icon of much of anything else, other than its
other interchangeable selves, its interchangeable selves that are mediated
through exchange value and use value. In the realm of the icon, it can be a very
quiet sign, just a thing. A thing that is a type of thing made in mass quantities,
seen everywhere in office space, school space, domestic space, city space. As
an index, the pushpin refers both to the paper that it normally holds, and perhaps
the bulletin board and wall, but also to the molds and machinery with which it was
made. The mold used to set the clear plastic functions as a negative (much like a
photo negative) of the pushpin’s space; the mold’s shape negatively determines
the shape of the object. The pushpins’ surfaces were made from a hugging, a
touching of the mold. As symbol, the pushpin is partially symbol of conformity, of
of producer from consumer. Of the anthropomorphism that rushes in to
compensate for this alienation.

In the realm of the relationship of sign to interpretant, the pushpin’s mass-
production shifts it into the rhythm of regularity. There is an expected vocabulary
of types of our actions that relate to the pushpin. There is an expected “non-
thought” that goes into our use of the pushpin. By not being “significant” in the
same way as the papers they hold up are significant, pushpins are subtle. They
slip under the radar of our conscious gaze. By virtue of both the pushpin’s regularity and its vital, though non-symbolic role within the syntax of the bulletin board, it is an experience that we are able to tune out of our consciousness most of the time.

Hence mass production alters the flavour of signification: it turns the material object, in all the facets of its signifying properties, toward the language-like regularity normally expected from words. At the same time, it turns us, ever so subtly, towards a contemplation of the machinery of productive power, toward the mechanical reproduction that grounds our social relationships, our relationships to space and place, and, by virtue of a complex mirroring that governs our anthropomorphizing of these humble objects, our use of objects in order to mediate our relationships to ourselves. Mass production allows the object to take on the aspect of a collision between symbol and thing, between general type and material. By virtue of its regularity, its normalcy and its adherence to general types, and much like I have described lacking-desire in Chapter 2, it makes the material more immaterial.
My practice of interfering with the commodity status of materials must therefore be considered as a separation: a separation of thing from sign, a counter-motion that both partially destroys or eradicates the usefulness of the object and effects a shift in Peirce’s diagram back toward the realm of quality. Just as on the macro level of domestic space I enact a separation of lacking-desire from desiring-production, so on the micro level of the mass-produced object I shift perception toward materiality and desiring-production. In this small material action, I negotiate the placement of consciousness in the material world that is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s placement of desire in the material. I imagine cups as if they were statues. I contemplate the debased status of
materials in a disposable culture, and I insert my digestion-agency into
smoothing these objects, displacing them from commodity culture, interacting
with them for a short time in order to negotiate, one semiotic flow at a time, the
fabric of social space.
CHAPTER 4: ARCHITECTURE OF CARING

So far I have considered my work as a breaking down, my actions as they enact the work of enzymes, splitting lack from production, thingness from signness. My work is also accumulative: a vast web of objects-as marks. Here, I examine the significance of the work as accumulation by addressing its relationship to decoration. The installation I have made is a partial representation of my kitchen, opened up and dismantled, cross-pollinated with the Bartlett space, and then decorated with sculptural flotsam and jetsam. It is a conglomerate architecture, an inter-architectural space. My work models social interaction by being with the particularities of the architectural space that houses it. It keeps the existing architecture company. The “friendship” between installation and architecture brings out pockets of agreement and disagreement, tension and accord, separateness and melting. Here I examine my installation as it makes use of the decorative and ornamental elements that bring installation and architecture together. I briefly examine the association of ornament with mediation, its use to bridge between the states of living and not-living, and its association with the feminine and the erotic. I argue that the use of ornamentation performs caring in my piece: an embrace between architecture, artwork and viewer.
Oleg Grabar describes ornament as mediation; he argues that ornament "exhibits most forcefully an intermediate order between viewers and users of art, perhaps even creators of art, and works of art." He models this idea on Socrates' description of love in Plato's symposium, as a daimon that mediates between the gods and men. Since the eternal pure form of love is outside of time, "In practice there is a being, love, that 'interprets and conveys messages to the gods from men and to men from gods,' which hovers somewhere 'between wisdom and ignorance.' Love is neither the lover nor the beloved, neither the possessor nor the object possessed, neither man nor god. 'He is a great spirit;
everything that is of the nature of a spirit is half-god and half-man.” Just as Grabar associates the mediation of ornament in terms of a binding in love, Gianni Vattimo describes decoration as an embrace of architecture; “Heidegger assigns to architecture a sort of ‘foundational’ function in regard to all other arts, at least in the sense that it makes place for them and thus also embraces them.” All arts relate to these embracing structures, and thus are decorative of that space; thus Heidegger “seeks to acknowledge the decorative nature of all art.”

Installation art, which extends through and in relation to architectural space, is certainly an art form that especially capitalizes on the arts’ architectural dependency. Claire Bishop argues that the history of installation art is underpinned by two ideas: those of ‘activating’ and ‘decentering’ the viewing subject. She writes, “Because viewers are addressed directly by every work of installation art – by sheer virtue of the fact that these pieces are large enough for us to enter them – our experience is markedly different from that of traditional painting and sculpture. Instead of representing texture, space, light and so on, installation art presents these elements directly for us to experience.” Thus we might say installation is mimetic more than representational. While Bishop conceives of installation as a means by which to circumvent the indirect experience of space (its representation), ironically, this puts us in a position to experience another type of mediation: of ornament and decoration, which

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63 Ibid.
65 Ibid., 158.
mediate directly between the architecture and viewer (sometimes via installation), enacting caring between subject and space.

Figure 15. for the shy gallery floor

This is also mediation between the living and the not-living, the structural and the ephemeral. Using installation, I insert ephemerality into architecture, covering floors with pathetically delicate sprawls of snipped up plastic bags, crushed egg shell bits, and sprinkles of fake pearls and sawdust that are held together only by gravity and will disappear almost as quickly as they arrived. Ephemerality shakes up the architectural scale of time, positing a micro-architecture with its attendant micro-time signatures. The differentiation of a floor by means of adding materials to it in inconsistent pattern is a playful, mimetic addition to the structures and time signatures of architectural space, and thus it
inhabits the space between architecture and subjectivity through the augmentation of architectural time into ephemeral space-time: the time signature framed by subjectivity, the time of a number of encounters.

How could I imagine, or enact, this insertion of the microcosm into architectural spaces (so broad in their skeletal geometry) without first imagining cell structure, imagining the organized vistas of cell wall, mitochondria, semi-permeable membrane, each with its currents of differentiated motions, inclusions and exclusions? My installation brings to mind the differentiation of the organic; yet it is, of course, not living. It occupies the space between the organic and the inorganic. To place a constellation of egg shells and sawdust on a dusty floor is an exercise in differentiation, in separating a plane from a plane, and a motion towards specialization of function that is the principle of development of organic life, the cell structure, organ structure, bodily structures and finally social structures all being consecutive layers of architectures built on top of the inorganic, molecular architectures. The organic and inorganic meet as layers in a continuous stacking.

If reference to the organic bridges the differentiation between architecture and subject, it does so in a complex way that accounts for the living yet not living quality of the organic in composition. The decorative line transcends the distinctions between the organic and the inorganic:

If everything is alive, it is not because everything is organic or organized but, on the contrary, because the organism is a diversion of life. In short, the life in question is inorganic, germinal, and intensive, a powerful life without organs, a Body that is all the more alive for having no organs, everything that passes between organisms.⁶⁷

The quality of organic line enacts the in between; it is not alive, but reaches into the gap between the living and non-living. It enacts the pure relation of the affective realm, which transcends the categories of aliveness and deadness, consciousness and non-consciousness. Thus, the materials with which I “draw” in space act so as to experiment with the principles of life-force in space, and thus present architectural support, material and subjectivity swirling together. The space begins to breathe, and also not to breathe, by the addition of a river of becoming/unbecoming kitchen.

Although for Heidegger, all art was decorative, this has been a particularly hated term in modernism, and within modernist architecture in particular for its feminine, erotic meaning. In Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media, Beatriz Colomina writes of architect Adolf Loos’ typically modernist hatred of the decorative. She identifies a whole slew of negative connotations that Loos associates with ornament and decoration, which I will summarize into three categories. Firstly, for Loos ornament is associated with femininity and homosexuality. He writes: “Ornament, at the service of woman, will last forever… The ornament of women answers, at bottom, that of the savage; it has an erotic meaning.”68 Loos’ attitude toward decoration reveals not only sexist but homophobic attitudes; Colomina states that, “The main target of Loos’s attack becomes the effeminate architect, ‘the decorator’.”69 For Loos, decoration was inseparable from the erotic, the savage, the homosexual, the feminine – all that

69 Ibid., 38.
must be cast out of the modernist subject. Secondly, Loos identifies ornament with the fetishism of consumer objects: “ornament, by absorbing architecture into the universe of merchandise, by fetishizing it, destroys its possibility of transcendence.”\textsuperscript{70} Thirdly, Loos identifies ornament with confusion of meaning; Colomina writes that for Loos, “Ornament can only be read as metaphor. It is all that tries to confuse limits…”\textsuperscript{71} and “For Loos,” to make use of ornament was “to see continuities where there are differences.”\textsuperscript{72} Interestingly, all these caveats take place in what we might define as transitional spaces, playful arenas in which all cultural activity grows. We find in Loos’ description of the “feminine” traits within space an apt description of the playful, erotic force that binds subject to subject, and subject to architecture within my installation. In Loos’ description of the fetishism of ornament, we find a means by which to practice placing desire into the present, into contingent configurations located in the embodied experience of space. In Loos’ description of ornament used to confuse limits, we find a way to negotiate the fluid distinctions between self and other that are at the foundation of the social. Ironically, Loos’ caveats can lead us to a positive understanding of decoration as enacting care upon a space by opening up within it a transitional space between architecture and subjectivity.

The decoration of theatrical kitchen-set stringers with little mounds of sawdust and plastic pearls, with flows of garbage, toothpicks, clear encrustations and implied motions enacts a caring-motion that mediates between architecture and inhabitant. This is the embracing motion of the in-between, coming-together

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 67.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 70.
enacted within the piece itself that is the decorative nature of all art. If in the last chapter we discussed my use of material as a form of splitting, as an enzyme which breaks apart thing-ness from sign-ness, in this chapter we have seen the opposite motion that occurs in digestion: the caring-motion in which one tissue starts to become generalized into another tissue, and they move toward becoming each other. This is enacted by an addition of forms, an encrustation that is also a breaking-up of planes into tinier ones, villi that enact this embodied in-between.
CHAPTER 5: PARADOXICAL PILLARS IN THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOCIAL SPACE

And stand together, yet not too near together.
For the pillars of the temple stand apart.
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

- Kahlil Gibran

My ethic involves caring that benefits and supports both the individual subject and the community at large, that upholds both the separateness and interconnectivity of people that can lead to sustainable community. In this chapter, I examine installations, film and intersubjective psychoanalytic theory that, together, sketch out a trajectory of limit cases, extreme examples of various types of more and less sustainable configurations in social space, to frame the struggle my installation enacts to encompass and support experience both within and beyond subjecthood.

The maintenance of social space – of the matrix of intersubjective ligaments and tendons and pillars and bridges that are the body/architecture of social space – is an ethical act, an ecological act, one in which artists might partake, and one in which we might partake by considering the work of artists. Ethics is the maintenance of interconnectivity – caring for the ecosystem within social space. Ecological art is one name given to work with the goal of reintegration between human and environment. As Terrence Heath says, “The ecological artist focuses on the reintegration of the human species and the

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environment and, as such, sees art making as therapeutic and healing." While Heath is partially referring to work that entertains environmentalist concerns, his concern also encompasses the sustainable maintenance and care of social space. We consciously or unconsciously contribute to the maintenance or destruction of particular coordinates in social space. We know the ugly feeling of not contributing well to a social space, and also the joy of being able to contribute to the liveliness and laughter of another. Ethics pertains to our contributions to this social ecosystem – and, as Vivian Sobchack shows us, the development of an ethic or an ethical art must involve moving through the "difficult knowledge" – our grappling with our knowledge of our debased states, our material, bodily empathy for being thrown around, for experiencing pain, for experiencing when caring breaks down.

I would like to examine how a variety of artworks engage with the sustainability of social space, and the ability for those spaces to be caring. These factors exist on the subjective, intersubjective and broadly social levels, and rely on different conceptions of self as they are inherited from many traditions. I propose that these notions be used together as contradictory "scraps" that inform, and reflect upon, bits and pieces of our experiences of selfhood, which are themselves fraught with contradiction. In the Buddhist conception, the self is

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a non-existent, illusory entity that quivers over top of our experience\textsuperscript{75} - yet in a
late capitalist society we all understand experience in relation to a self: self-confidence, self-preservation, self-worth, self-sabotage. The self, were we to
grant that it exists, might be described as one that is based on loss right from the
start, as in the Lacanian view, or as one produced through its interactions with
objects and people, as in the object relations and intersubjective views.
Depending on our perspective, we might view the self as a vantage point from
which to view social space and transcend the personal, or as an internal
structure, the topographies of which can be strengthened or weakened.

In the delicate tendrils between self & not self, how can we create a vector
of motion that goes from cannibalism toward communion? How does an ethical
art allow us to reflect upon the incorporation of self into social space? To
examine these questions, I'll explore some disharmonious motions in social
spaces and some artworks that explore them: the breakdown of mutual
recognition to a master/slave relationship as discussed in intersubjective
psychoanalysis and represented in Lars von Trier's film \textit{Dogville}; the
desirous/fascistic submission of the will to a hypnotic leader, as parodied by
Sigmar Polke; the substitution of the intrapsychic for the intersubjective realm, as
exemplified in Lucas Samaras' installations; and self-obliteration and the
closeness of the life and death forces, as engaged by Yayoi Kusama. Exploring

\textsuperscript{75} According to Edward Conze's historical account of Buddhist teaching, there are five "heaps" of
experience: the body, feelings, perceptions, impulses and emotions, and acts of
consciousness; further "the belief in individuality is said to arise from the invention of a ‘self’
over and above those five heaps." The extinction of this individual is the goal of Buddhism.
Edward Conze, \textit{Buddhism: Its Essence and Development} (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal,
1994), 14.
these “difficult knowledges,” I’ll posit that an ethical motion toward the maintenance of social space involves simultaneously keeping the self and losing the self – stretching this elastic notion to sustain both the self as internal, personal entity and as vector of agency that acts on behalf of an ecosystem of social space. It also involves becoming aware of one’s agency in both active and passive elements of our social experience.

**Ethics-in-tension**

In incorporation into social space that occurs when a “me” enters a “we,” it is possible for an individual to experience mutual recognition or either the domination of, or submission to, the other. These states correspond to intersubjective psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin’s writings on recognition in intersubjective psychoanalysis. These notions show that contributing to the maintenance of social space involves the movement toward mutual recognition both for the self and within the social space that goes beyond the self, and thus they demonstrate the need for a dual ethical register that accounts for both an ethics of the personal and an ethics of the extra-personal.

Jessica Benjamin’s writings describe mutual recognition as a state that leaves the subject both separate and connected with others. Recognition is an essential aspect of intersubjective bonds, a force between two (or more) selves that affirms both the separateness and connectedness of each; it is “that response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intentions, and actions of the self. It allows the self to realize its agency and authorship in a tangible way. But such recognition can only come from an other whom we, in
turn, recognize as a person in his or her own right." Mutual recognition situates those who experience it as both similar to, and distinct from, the other(s) – and this paradoxical mixture is joyous.

It is when the bonds of mutual recognition are weakened that neither full separation nor full union is possible between two subjects, and mutual recognition is rife for decay into domination and submission. Benjamin describes a potentially difficult point in the early attachment between mother and child to illustrate this breakdown. As a baby develops, she needs to develop a balance of assertion of self and recognition of others, which involves developing an awareness of her development of a self an agent distinct from others. Turning away from the mother is part of this process. Ideally, this process is recognized as such; less than ideally, the mother can only see this as a blow to her worthiness as a mother, and a frustration to her own need to be recognized. Thus, she proceeds to “chase” the baby down, trying to get a response. The line between assertion and aggression is crossed, and the child loses the ability to either fully engage or fully disengage in this frustrating interaction, in which “neither separateness nor union is possible.” There is a rift between the baby’s need to turn away and the mother’s need to be recognized that simultaneously creates a lack of recognition and a struggle to find it. This breakdown of mutual recognition into domination and submission “result[s] from a breakdown of the necessary tension between self-assertion and mutual recognition that allows self

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77 Ibid., 12.
and other to meet as sovereign equals. Further, the adoption of a dominating or submissive stance can become an ingrained habit. This habit can begin in childhood, as the child's developing awareness of separate minds and the desire for attunement raises the possibility for conflict between the wish to fulfill his own desire and the wish to accord with the parents' will. The habitual adoption of a submissive stance does not move toward joyous co-identification between sovereign selves. And yet, tragically, it is founded on the very desire for the harmonious coexistence of self and other; facing toward and desiring union, the habitually submissive stance can never reach it, because it always exists within a cannibalistic system in which one person's whims might devour another's. It is the false movement toward communion that can never leave a cannibalistic order, or, were we to describe it in Deleuzian terms, it is a "striated desire" that assumes that the communication one wishes for is lacking, and therefore unknowingly makes that communication impossible.

Lars von Trier's film *Dogville* strikingly portrays the failure of mutual recognition. It depicts a state of extreme imbalance in which one person's will is continually replaced by the will of others, and this portrayal shockingly debunks the myth that the submissive person, by desiring to help others, is contributing to the maintenance of sustainable social space. This, it must be noted, is typical of

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76 Benjamin., 12.
79 As Diane Ackerman, in her poetic exploration of neurochemistry, puts it: "As the developing brain blooms and prunes connections, it has to decide which ones to fix permanently in place and which to dissolve. Preserving what's useful and killing the rest, it chooses. How does it know what's useful? Whatever we use most. Hence the popularity of bad habits. Breaking them feels like splitting welded steel, and in a sense it is. The *Use it or lose it* axiom has a dark side. Behave in a certain way often enough — whether it's using chopsticks, bickering, being afraid of heights, or avoiding intimacy — and the brain gets really good at it." (Diane Ackerman, *An Alchemy of Mind* [New York: Scribner, 2004] 45.)
80 Ibid., 31.
Von Trier’s misogynistic representation of woman as sufferer – but is it also, as tragedy, a force that acts in favour of balancing social space? When Grace enters the town of Dogville seeking refuge, Thomas Edison devises a plan to help the people of Dogville to accept her, in which she will help all the townspeople with their chores in a daily rotation. The townspeople’s response follows a horrific bell curve from not needing or wanting Grace’s help to accepting it, to coming to depend on it, to brutally exploiting both it and her. Though Grace’s labour schedule was apparently designed to transform her from a dangerous outsider in the social body to one functioning within the confines of its ecosystem, and though her integration into the town appears very promising at many points as people begin to like her, all her labour never gives her the acceptance she desires. She lays herself at the feet of the town, and little by little, the townspeople wield power over her more and more brutally.

By day Grace is nomadic, but not exactly in the way Deleuze and Guattari use the term. Grace makes her rounds, assimilated into a strange unsustainable position of the outsider confined within, the nomad within the town, an outsider position trapped within the smallest of circles and the most intimate of domestic spaces. Her status as nomad-in-a-small-town, as that which is neither inside nor outside, never gives way to a position of integration. She is held in the sticky spot where neither unity with nor separateness from the social structure of the town is possible. She is, and must remain, outside the striations of the town's social space: the exteriority of the "angel," the personification of goodness, of work ethic; she is without anchorage in ownership of property, and the offer of position
in a family (Edison’s offer of marriage) is endlessly deferred. Grace’s inhabitation of a sort of “smooth” space within the town, outside of the normal confines of spatiality and family, is horrifically presented as a lack of striation, as her non-access into the familial structure of the town. Her relation to the community was finally not one of communion but of cannibalism: her near total consumption by the community as labour force, as sexual offering, as outlet.

Von Trier presents us with an ethical paradox. Throughout the film’s development, Grace is the embodiment of a perfect ethic: she is always perfectly hard working, kind, self-sacrificing, forgiving, understanding. Yet her extreme kindness allows for her horrific abuse and her eventual horrific retaliation. Her kindness draws out the sludge in the social structures of the town, and her complete forgiveness of her abusers allows for more and more unbearable abuses to be brought onto her. Her extremely ethical behaviour is actually profoundly destructive for the town; it creates a dangerous imbalance in the distribution of agency within the town’s social structures that lead to its demise. As Grace’s father points out at the end of the film, Grace’s perfect ethic amounts to extreme arrogance, since she sets higher standards for her own behaviour than for anyone else’s, and thus she will inevitably create an imbalance between herself and her community. Because Grace “plays the angel” for too long and is not able to/refuses to disagree with her oppressors, the townspeople become stranded in the social space that surrounds her, and, similarly to the spoiled
children in Jessica Benjamin’s account of mutual recognition, are left to search for the line between her separate subjectivity and their own internalization of her as an object. Because she does not assert this line (until she asserts it with terrible finality in the end), these people pass over her completely; she becomes their subjective object. Von Trier’s film shows the breakdown of mutual recognition into domination and submission, and his film demonstrates that an ethical position cannot be defined solely from a perspective of interiority (the summation of an individual’s actions) since this might still lead to the complete consumption of one by another. Rather, an ethical position must be defined from a position of relation – from the perspective of the creation and nourishment of a sustainable ecosystem of interrelation that involves acting ethically from the vantage point of both the self-as-individual and the self-as-vector of agency within social space.

**Higher Powers Command**

The desire to abandon one’s will to others, which can have far-reaching implications for the political realm, has complex correlations with the intersubjective realms, in which, as Benjamin writes, the binding of individuals is effected through erotic means; “obedience to the laws of civilization is first inspired, not by fear or prudence, Freud tells us, but by love, love for those early

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81 Jessica Benjamin writes: “The self-obliteration of the permissive parent who cannot face this blow [the blow to the parent’s narcissism in not being able to make a perfect world for the child, experienced during the child’s rapprochement phase] does not bring happiness to the child who gets everything he demands. The parent has ceased to function as an other who sets a boundary to the child’s will, and the child experiences this as abandonment; the parent co-opts all the child’s intentions by agreement, pushing him back into an illusory oneness where he has no agency of his own” (35).
powerful figures who first demand obedience." The most dramatic political display of this love for domination is in fascism; "The historic problem that shaped the inquiry into domination most powerfully was, of course, the appearance of fascist mass movements with their ecstatic submission to the hypnotic leader." Sigmar Polke's 1969 lacquer on canvas painting Higher Powers Command: Paint the Upper Right Corner Black! deals with the implications of ecstatic submission, and functions at the meeting point between desire and aggression, domination and submission, and submission to worthy or corrupt forces. In a hilariously ambivalent gesture, Polke inscribes the canvas with the command for its own production, thereby both invoking and parodying the mystical aspirations of the modernist artist.

The submission of one's agency to a higher power can be an ecstatic feeling, a feeling of attunement, of supporting a glorious purpose greater than oneself. And yet Polke's work leaves ambiguous the identity of these "higher powers;" who/what are they? The unconscious? Mystical, spiritual powers assumed to be central to both Germanic art history and modernist art? Fascist political powers that do not allow the artist to decide for himself what marks to place in his canvas? This ambiguity is the source of the painting's ambivalence. As Donald Kuspit says, "The split between mystical perfection and human ugliness – between the sublime and the morbid – is a constant of Polke's art." The desire to submit oneself to higher powers places one at the crux of this split.

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82 Benjamin, 5.
83 Ibid., 6.
Be those powers benign and good, then submission to these powers, the loss of our egological selves (as Vivian Sobchack would put it), is a desired movement. Yet putting one's defenses down, giving up the barriers to our egological selves, puts us in the dangerous position of being ripe for co-option to less-than-benign forces. Further, as Deleuze and Guattari explain, there is a tendency for submission to the State to be complicated by an identification of the self with power: "Always obey. The more you obey, the more you will be master, for you will only be obeying pure reason, in other words yourself..." The desire to submit to State forces can be placed in terms that are oddly synonymous with the desire to align oneself with ubiquitous power. Yet any such alignment ultimately leads to the conference of power outside of the subject: "Common sense, the unity of all the faculties at the center constituted by the Cogito, is the State consensus raised to the absolute."

The assimilating logic of this absolute is not one within which one can configure oneself without being consumed by its logic; it is ultimately a position of cannibalism rather than that of communion. One can resist this all-encompassing position by counteracting the need to submit oneself to higher powers. Hence

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85 We might define this "goodness" as a capability for becoming part of the interior realm; Maggie Kilgour explains that for Freud, the split between the interior and the exterior world becomes a value-based one; we desire to take into ourselves what is wholesome and good, and to keep outside of ourselves what is not (Kilgour, 4).

86 Sobchack speaks of losing sight "of our egological selves enough to be passionately devoted to and transcendently moved by the sublimity of a sunset or landscape" (Sobchack, 295).

87 Here, we might find an instructive parallel in the physical body: the immune system. Diane Ackerman writes of the immune system as the physical barrier between self and other; "Long before any threat appears, the immune system erects a wall between self and other, safe and not safe, inner kingdom and outer. Because we must allow entry into the castle of our body, the immune system patrols the borders" (Ackerman 128). The immune system provides a model for the porous, yet present, border that must be maintained between self and other.

88 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 376.

89 Ibid.
Foucault's writing, in his preface to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, of fascism as adversary, "not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini – which was able to mobilize and use the desire of the masses so effectively – but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us."90 Foucault's statement shows the link between oppression, fascism, and the desire to be oppressed,91 and this aptly links the discoveries of psychoanalysis with the political realm (via Lacanian desire). Polke's painting, which sarcastically declares the position of the desirous oppressee, is, through its explosive humour, also outside of this position. Occupying the fields of desire and sarcasm simultaneously, it refers to, yet is outside of, the system of domination and submission between a higher power and a subject, and thus supports exteriority from the dynamic of domination and submission, while instructively pointing toward it. The love of power involves a complicated mixture of self-love and self-annihilation that is ultimately destructive of the subject, and must thereby be foregone in order to maintain the self enough to allow for a properly complex, and sustainable, attunement with others.

Installation as Incorporation

Of course, as subjects, we must in some way incorporate notions of state power and common sense, with which we are surrounded. There is an extent to which our consent to "agree" with our surroundings – the ability to experience

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91 This is also Jessica Benjamin's aim in *The Bonds of Love*; "Above all, this book seeks to understand how domination is anchored in the hearts of the dominated" (5).
synchrony with our environment without feeling annihilated by it – is a function of our acceptance or resistance of this – and installation art can bring us powerfully close to experiencing our own acceptance or resistance of our incorporation. Whereas Polke’s painting allows its viewers to experience the ambivalence of the erasure of one’s agency, visitors response to installations by Lucas Samaras and Yayoi Kusama is more bi-modal than ambivalent; some people experience their installations as the joyous abandon of self, and others as its terrifying loss. Lucas Samaras’ Mirrored Room (1966), in the collection of the Albright Knox Gallery, consists of a room, a table and chair – all of which are covered with mirrors. As one enters the space, there is an inability to ascertain surface, and one’s image is dispersed throughout creating an infinitely receding and self-referential space. Both viewer and space are fragmented into shards – but is this a terrible ripping apart or a beautiful sublimation? Kim Levin has written of the experience of Samaras’ installation as yielding “the disorienting precarious feeling of seeing yourself endlessly receding, a feeling of vertigo, a dropping in the pit of your stomach as from a dream of falling.”92 Yet the director of the Albright Knox Gallery described it in much more euphoric terms: “When you’re inside of it you feel you’re floating on a cloud. Infinity stretches out in all directions. You see yourself reflected thousands of times.”93 What is the difference between these two responses? Installation art that provides the gallery-goer with a space to enter, by taking us within itself, is literally incorporative. This incorporative aspect erases to some extent the critical

93 Quoted in Ibid, 92.
distance that viewers might otherwise have when considering a work, giving them a temporarily totalizing experience that might reveal something about their willingness to become aspects of a space for a time. Viewers experience their habitual perception of space as something threatening or promising.

Samaras’ work partakes in the sublime – the split between the perception of extreme beauty and of terror. The experience of the sublime consists of two movements: the first in which the viewer is almost overwhelmed or shattered by an incredible sight or sound, and a second in which he/she comprehends the experience and thus regains control over the experience, thus feeling a rush of power for having done so.\(^{94}\) If it is possible for an artist to favour one movement over the other, perhaps Samaras favours the first; he got the idea to make a mirror-covered cube from writing a related short story called *Kiffman*, and for Samaras mirrors had the creepy association of the Greek custom of covering up the mirrors of a house when a corpse was in it.\(^{95}\) Samaras places us in a world but takes that world away, providing us only with our own dispersed image.

The dispersion of image creates a space with which we are temporarily similar – an intrapsychic space that substitutes for the intersubjective. The room, table and chair lose their surface identities; the “otherness” of space, normally the markers by which we find the boundaries of our selves, is erased. Why does this have such resonant significance? The construction of self, as recent self- and intersubjective psychoanalysts tell us, takes place in its growth in interactions with others. Psychoanalysts such as Winnicott have asked, “What

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\(^{95}\) Bishop, 92.
kind of relationship ‘enables the infant to begin to exist, to build a personal ego, to ride instincts, and to meet with all the difficulties inherent in life?.’ The answer, increasingly, has been found within the sociability of the individual; the sense of self is constructed through its need to “find cohesion and mirroring in the other.” Thus, when a subject turns to another for affirmation or acceptance, his/her sense of agency and self-esteem might be confirmed or thwarted by that other’s fulfillment or denial of that wish. Yet one person can never merely mirror another, and under the pressures of difficult intersubjective relations, the sense of self can slip away, leaving the subject unable to feel secure in transcending the boundaries between the inside and outside, the intrapsychic and intersubjective realms of experience, thus feeling an extreme, crushing aloneness. The failure of mutuality, creating this feeling, perpetuates it by the creation of defensive borders by this process:

While failure of early mutuality seems to promote premature formation of defensive boundary between inside and outside, the positive experience of attunement allows individuals to maintain a more permeable boundary and enter more readily into states in which there is a momentary suspension of felt boundaries between inside and outside.

By placing us in a room full of mirrors, Samaras’ installation both erases the outside world and collapses our sense of boundary with it, triggering each subject’s reaction differently in relation to the absence or presence of this built-up defensive reaction, and thus might be experienced either as joyous temporary abandon, or as the terrifying inability to locate either the other or ourselves. The

96 Benjamin, 19.
97 Ibid., 17.
98 Ibid., 19.
99 Ibid., 28.
space of mirrors is the strange, collapsed space of space-as-other and space-as-self, and the piece mirrors not only our images but also our propensities for dealing with this confusion. Installation-as-diagnosis.

Are the two ways of seeing a Samaras installation indicative of a cannibalistic or communal relationship to space itself – the former as a self- and self-perpetuating propensity to believe that a space will either completely cast one out or completely consume one, the latter as a propensity to believe that one may co-exist comfortably with one’s space? In 1935, French intellectual Roger Caillois wrote of the mimicry of butterflies and other insects of their spaces, purportedly for their protection but more often to their detriment, as a “temptation by space:”100 the temptation to enter into agreement with one’s space too much, at the detriment of oneself; the temptation to enter a relationship with one’s space in which one’s space consumes one. Caillois also writes of a consumptive view of space shared by schizophrenics. When asked the question: where are you? The schizophrenic’s typical response, according to Caillois, is to say “I know where I am, but I do not feel as though I’m at the spot where I find myself.”101 To these people, space seems to be a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses. He tries to look at himself from any point whatever in space. He feels himself becoming space, dark space where things cannot be put. He is similar, not similar to something, but just similar.102

101 Ibid., 30.
102 Ibid.
For schizophrenics (amongst others) space itself is cannibalistic; in relation to this loss of agency in perceiving space, I reverse the direction of agency and digest a kitchen. Caillois' description of the loss of self to space is strikingly similar to the conditions for spatial perception set up by Samaras' installation; Samaras' space is disorienting, seeming to divide up one's image indefinitely, perhaps consuming one. And yet these very same conditions can be experienced as a communal relationship to space, as the Albright Knox director's response to the Mirrored Room attests. Samaras sets up a situation in which heightens the propensity for space to be experienced as either communal or cannibalistic, and this realm of ambivalent possibility is completed by the viewing subject.

Installations by Yayoi Kusama, such as Peep Show or Endless Love Show from 1966, a hexagonal mirror covered room, lights, a pop music soundtrack, and holes for the viewer's eyes to enter the space, and Fireflies on the Water from 2000, a room with mirrored walls, a watery "floor," and hundreds of small hovering lights, also engulf viewers in an infinitely receding space, and often have a similar propensity for bi-modal reading. As Claire Bishop writes,

It is noticeable in discussions of the work of both Kusama and Samaras that viewers' accounts of this work fall into one of two categories: oceanic bliss or claustrophobic horror. This is not something that the artist can predict, and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to experience such a work. Because the pieces use mirror reflections to dislocate our sense of self-presence and play with our orientation, they solicit an individual response that reflects the dual role of the ego as understood by Lacanian psychoanalysis: as a comforting defense against fragmentation, or as an all too fragile mirage.\(^{103}\)

\(^{103}\) Bishop, 92.
By immersing gallery-goers in a beautiful, infinite, dreamy space, Kusama (like Samaras) gives her audience a taste of the sublime. This sublime experience operates at the threshold of the ego for taking the world in: the point at which it may either feel itself weakened or strengthened by its ability to master the almost-shattering experience. To incorporate or to be incorporated; in the continuous and delicate strands of exchange between subject and its surrounding space, the stability of the ego to remain unbroken by space, for it to remain a site of agency where ideas and reflections about that space are gathered, is put to the test. While Samaras' work seems to deal more directly with the destructive potential of this state, Kusama's practice engages more deliberately with the desirous aspect of this experience, the will to be obliterated. Even in her installations that do not allow viewers to literally enter, such as the *Endless Love Show*, Kusama often has herself photographed in her installations, wearing specially designed outfits to help her blend into her surroundings. Caillois refers to such mimicry in negative terms as "the generalization of space at the expense of the individual," an act of self-renunciation that indicates the presence of something like a death instinct: "alongside the instinct of self-preservation, which in some way orients the creature toward life, there is generally speaking a sort of instinct of renunciation that orients it toward a mode of reduced existence, which in the end would no longer know either consciousness or feeling."  

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104 Caillois, 31.
105 Ibid., 32.
The generalization into space involves dissolving the self-as-agent, erasing the conscious will, and this is an instinct toward death. Yet Kusama has also oriented her practice toward the desirous aspects of erotic fusion, the force that, for Claire Bishop, is at the root of "a 1960s psychedelic sensibility in appealing to the fantasy of a shared social body whose intersubjective immanence would obliterate individual difference: 'all you need is love' to fight individualistic capitalism." Eros, or the life force, is the "immortal adversary" of aggression, according to Jessica Benjamin – though it was never given a place in the psychic structure by Freud. This life instinct is what allows for communal, cooperative, symbiotic relationships to others and to space, while aggression is the basis for cannibalistic, competitive, parasitic relationships. These opposing forces are closely interrelated: "Eros, in general, and sexuality, in particular, neutralize or bind aggression. Freud writes that the life and death instincts almost never appear in isolation, but 'are alloyed with each other... and so become unrecognizable.' The closeness of life and death instincts, the mastery or shattering of self, and desire and aggression, comes into play in both Samaras' and Kusama's installations; demanding our passive immersion into illusory space, these pieces allow us to feel either that we have mastered or been annihilated by the experience, that we can keep ourselves or that we must be obliterated completely. We can feel our own willingness to "agree" with the space, to submit and experience ourselves for a time on its terms, an experience that is either titillating or too threatening.

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106 Bishop, 91.
107 Benjamin, 66.
108 Ibid.
Conclusion

Having considered in this chapter the relationships between desire and aggression, mutual recognition and domination/submission, between the desire for submission and fascism, between the willingness and resistance to lose oneself, between the life-force and the death force, between the irreconcilable differences of two opposing parties, I arrived at the conclusion that an ethical position is one in which one’s sense of a self, as a site of agency, is preserved. In order to become incorporated into one’s social space in the most helpful, mutually beneficial way involved simultaneously keeping oneself and losing oneself, stretching selfhood to the limits of its ungraspable, illusory, contradictory nature. The artworks I looked at, I felt, dealt with both space and the self considered as social phenomena, and became, for me, part of a dynamic dialogue concerning the various difficulties that are inevitably (and hopefully fruitfully) found in social space. Yet, after all this, I still have the sense that these explorations must be grounded in an examination of what is felt. Once the writing is done, and the reasoning has been reasoned, one must leave the reasoning and feel – one must re-enter (if indeed one has left it) the ethical registers of the lived body. There is a sense in which to remain within the discussion of ethical problems, to go there without the carefully defined and well-honoured intention of leaving, is to perpetuate these very problems. But to have done the reasoning with the intention of leaving is to believe in the possibility of what might appear to be a miraculous transubstantiation – the transformation of thinking into feeling! It is from a position of hope and belief in this possibility, that reasoning can affect feeling, or, better, that reasoning can be brought alongside feeling in order to
care for it and protect it as it provides the fundament for art making and living, that I write and make.
CHAPTER 6: PLAYFULNESS AND SHYNESS

Your joy is your sorrow unmasked.
And the selfsame well from which your laughter rises
Was oftentimes filled with your tears.
And how else can it be?
The deeper that sorrow carves into your being, the more joy you can contain.
Is not the cup that holds your wine the very cup that was burned in the potter’s oven?
And is not the lute that soothes your spirit, the very wood that was hollowed with knives?
When you are joyous, look deep into your heart and you shall find it is only that which has given you sorrow that is giving you joy.
When you are sorrowful look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight.

- Kahlil Gibran, On Joy and Sorrow

Undoubtedly, this installation desires to transform sorrow into joy. Through acts of accumulating and breaking, it reckons with the sorrow of feeling responsible for the decay of social space by becoming trapped in states of non-communication. By moving within and between notions of individual agency, and working between lack and production, abject and beautiful areas, the installation attempts to open up an area in which to communicate about abject states of non-communication – and, in order to do so, must ride a fine line between not communicating and communicating about non-communication.

109 Gibran, 16.
One way out of ethical dilemmas is in playfulness. Difficult ethical problems carve out the bowl, which can be refilled with the resonance of play. Through playfully mediating between subjects, we find a middle ground in an object, a motion between smoothness and striation, lack and production – a space for caring. In this chapter, I would like to examine my installation in relation to object relations British psychoanalyst Donald Woods Winnicott’s conceptions of transitional phenomena and play, dreaming/living versus fantasying, and being and doing. After examining how these ideas are at play in my work, I examine how we might think of shyness as a sort of fantasying within social space. I argue that my work attempts to transform abject modes of subjectivity – fantasying and shyness – into productive forces in both aesthetic and social space.

Winnicott’s object-relations psychoanalytic theory is based on the notion of the transitional object and transitional phenomena, which refer to “The intermediate area of experience, between the thumb and the teddy bear, between the oral eroticism and the true object-relationship, between primary creative activity and projection of what has already been introjected...” that encompass “the use made of objects that are not part of the infant’s body yet are not fully recognized as belonging to external reality.”110 Each child develops a special relationship with a certain blanket or toy, and it is agreed that the child will not be asked to determine whether this object comes from him or the external world. The function of the transitional phenomena is to aid in dissilusонment; as the mother must first provide the child with the illusion that the world corresponds

to her needs, and then carefully introduce disillusionment, the transitional object gives shape to the area of illusion, “start[ing] each human being off with what will always be important for them, i.e. a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged.”\(^{111}\) As mediators between illusion and disillusion, the object-realm provides a neutral area for the child – an area in which play can negotiate between the states of being a subject and being continuous with the world – between striated and smooth spaces of being. Part of the reason I work with objects is to not work too directly with social space, but rather with its material mediation which, by providing a neutral zone, can generate far more possible ways for visitors to occupy the space than the often exclusionary relational practices that more directly manipulate social interaction.\(^{112}\)

Negotiating sociality through objects rather than directly creates a space of uncontested terrain, in which a person might playfully create his/her existence. For Winnicott, playing negotiates between the inside and outside world; it is “not inner psychic reality. It is outside the individual, but it is not the external world… into this play area the child gathers objects or phenomena from external reality and uses these in the service of some sample derived from inner or personal reality. Without hallucinating the child puts out a sample of dream potential and lives with this sample in a chosen setting of fragments from external reality.”\(^{113}\)

This play area is at the root of all cultural activity: “There is a direct development

\(^{111}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{112}\) See Claire Bishop, “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” (October no. 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79), in which she argues that relational works by Rirkrit Tiravanija and others purport to create bubbles of “free” social space, but often end up replicating the very categorical inclusions and exclusions they are so often assumed to evade.

\(^{113}\) Winnicott, 69.
from transitional phenomena to playing, and from playing to shared playing, and from this to cultural experiences." It is the space of play that is the basis for my experiment with the form of social space, and with smoothness and striation. By negotiating objects, which are both social in themselves and also the mediators of human sociality, I create an uncontested space in which to discover the implications of spatial organization.

While my installation overall is a space founded on playing, all parts of it are not, in Winnicott's terms, playful to the same degree. Winnicott makes a distinction between two categories of experience: dreaming/living and fantasying. He explains that dreaming and living are the same sort of experience, but fantasying is a separate phenomenon: "Dream fits into object-relating in the real world, and living in the real world fits into the dream-world in ways that are quite familiar, especially to psychoanalysts. By contrast, however, fantasying remains an isolated phenomenon, absorbing energy but not contributing-in either to dreaming or to living." Dissociation characterizes fantasying; when a person is, for instance, sitting in a room doing nothing, while in their mind they have created a painting or made progress at work, they are in a dissociated state which is likely to prevent them either from dreaming or from living. Instead, energy that could be invested productively into these realms becomes directed toward this

\[114\] Ibid.
\[115\] Ibid., 36.
dissociated state,\footnote{Ibid., 37.} which hangs like "static over the whole of this patient's life."\footnote{Ibid., 36.}

Winnicott stresses that the differences between fantasying and, for instance, imagining are very subtle and easily go unrecognized; however, there is a qualitative difference between the content of dream and the content of fantasy. Fantasying is that which "interferes with action and with life in the real or external world, but much more so it interferes with dream and with the personal or inner psychic reality, the living core of the individual personality."\footnote{Ibid., 43.} Further, the difference between fantasying and imagining or dreaming can be explained in terms of symbolic value. For instance, in the instance of a patient who is imagining making a dress: "the fantasying is simply about making a dress. The dress has no symbolic value. A dog is a dog is a dog. In the dream, by contrast… the same thing would indeed have symbolic meaning."\footnote{Ibid., 45.} Elsewhere, Winnicott explains dreaming and fantasying to a patient in terms of poetic value; "fantasying was about a certain subject and it was a dead end. It had no poetic value. The corresponding dream, however, had poetry in it, that is to say, layer upon layer of meaning related to past, present, and future, and to inner and outer, and always fundamentally about herself."\footnote{Ibid., 48.} There is a depth, a strength of resonance (to borrow a term which Massumi uses to describe affect) with which the dream content is imbued; there is a strong motion of expression, a smooth,
unstunted semiosis from Peirce’s phenomenological states of Firstness (the
dream’s qualities) through to Secondness/fact (the literal content of the dream)
through to Thirdness/thought (its symbolic values). This resonant depth is absent
from the content of fantasy, which dissociates one from both dreaming and living,
and thus makes play impossible, since play always involves “manipulat[ing]
external phenomena in the service of the dream and invest[ing] chosen external
phenomena with dream meaning and feeling.”121 This dissociated state of
fantasying is the abject realm of lost connection with the world, a state in which
expression is stunted, semiosis is weak, and the basis for social experience
(which stems from shared play) is absent, and there is lack rather than
productivity.

I recognize the existence of both playing and fantasying in my installation.
There are certain aspects of it that were dreamed into being; either from a simple
process in which I literally dreamt of them in a state of near-sleep, or in a more
complex process in which I work with an initial, fuzzy intuition about a form and

\[121\] Ibid., 69.
refine it, slowly “filtering” it into a dream-vision. The blob shelf and the small

bridge on the “seabus” plinth, perched atop a piece of plywood in turn balanced
on two rubber balls, are two examples of the former, simple process of dreaming
directing my sculptural practice; the overall form of the installation (worked out
over many sketches and experiments, and greatly influenced by vague memories
of Salman Rushdie’s *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*) is an example of the latter.
These elements all possess poetic resonance; however, there are also areas of
the installation that did not achieve this resonance. The blue area behind the
drifting wall corner, wrought in a pile of blue blanket, blue buttons, and clear
plastic, is struggling toward resonance but never gets there; its material
combinations amount to a colour study rather than any poetic depth of
significance.\textsuperscript{122} Similarly, the pile of white garbage spilling from the overturned plinth and several of the small pieces on the low "seabus" plinth do not resonate; they are the products of repetitive or compulsive action, a fulfilment of possibility rather than a purposive expression.

There are several possible ways in which I can conceive of these fantasying areas. The first, and simplest is that these areas are the least successful in my piece, and I should remove the aspects that do not resonate in order to maximize expressive effect (and in fact, I did experiment with this as a logic for changing the piece over the summer, with success). The second is that these non-resonating areas signal the unfinished quality of the installation (a principle for composing installation which I inherited from Paul Thek's work — whose conception of his installations as constantly in process is related to their social and ritualistic character\textsuperscript{123}). Sculptural actions that originate in fantasying (for instance, compulsively drawing lines or peeling coffee cups), can "move up" into resonance little by little over time; sculpting has the ability to transform fantasying into living. The areas that do not resonate are areas that are still in motion toward resonance, and this keeps the space temporally dynamic. A third possible conception is that these areas, because they are like "static" rather than expressing purposively, abject themselves, giving the visitor a slight "ego boost" in relation to this abjecting motion that is already happening outside. A fourth explanation is that fantasying is an essential subject matter, and thus also

\textsuperscript{122} I am indebted to Colleen Brown for her most helpful reading of my installation, which allowed me to see the distinction between dreaming/living and fantasying in the piece.

process, of the piece, since shyness — withheld expression and “failed”
communication — is a sort of fantasizing within social space, a sense of
dissociation from the social. While some individual sculptural elements of my
piece, such as the blob shelf and the bridge that is held up by plywood and
rubber balls (its function thus erased), represent inarticulateness and the
incohesiveness poetically, others literally become it. To explain this, I return to
another aspect of Winnicott’s terminology. He describes two separate aspects
existent in both male and female subjects, which he calls the pure male elements
and pure female elements. These roughly correspond to doing and being,
respectively. While the pure male element in both males and females “does
traffic in terms of active relating or passive being related to, each being backed
by instinct,” the pure female element “relates to the breast (or to the mother) in
the sense of the baby becoming the breast (or mother), in the sense that the
object is the subject.”124 If miscommunication and withheld sociality are main
concerns of my installation, and poetic explorations of these themes do
something with them, then the other, fantasizing aspects of the piece are being
withheld or stunted expression — a state of dissociation that is associated with
fantasying. Though I do not think I achieved the perfect balance between these
elements, I am interested in this meeting I discovered between aesthetic “doing”
and anaesthetic “being.” In some areas, these things are meant to balance each
other directly; the “seabus” plinth, for instance, aimed at achieving a balance
between image — made by the dream elements — and texture — comprised of

124 Winnicott, 107.
anaesthetic fantasying elements. I let the intentionality of the piece “bleed out” in certain areas – beer cans left along the wall underneath a sheet of plastic, the garbage plinth – and thus enact a range of degrees to which subjectivity can be displaced into objects. I wish to embrace these states of non-resonance – which punctuate everyday existence – with care – care that supports the subject and thus the subject’s future ability to resonate with poetic dreaming/living significance. Care, here, is seen as a force that supports the subject (even the abject, fantasying subject) in order to turn dissociation into association, expression, transmission.

The fantasying state is one that lacks meaningful association with the world, and, with it, the possibility for poetry or sociality; it is, thus, a site of the experience of desire-as-lack rather than desiring production. Just as the fantasying person lacks, so the shy person is conceived in terms of lack, of inability to move expressively within social space. In her book *Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence*, Susie Scott argues that, while it is true that shy people really do suffer from the crushing inability to let their feelings show, shyness is also a discursive construct: a culturally perceived, historically specific phenomenon that is the negatively-perceived, lesser “other” to individualistic notions of competence and self-actualization in a competitive late capitalist culture.
According to Scott, shyness "involves a shift into the state of 'objective self-awareness.'"\textsuperscript{125} Unsure about their ability to perform in public, shy people view themselves from the outside in social situations, and thus further inhibit themselves from performing. The theatrical sense of my space, the raising of the fake floor of the central room and its bright central lights create for visitors a feeling of self-consciousness in performing, perhaps seeing themselves as more object-like as a result. This sense of self-consciousness may manifest in awkward stops, starts and inconsistencies in communication, and these awkward states are modelled in sculptural objects. I also manifest in objects or in the will to become invisible in space, or the "temptation by space" as Caillois called it. I think of clear materials as "shy;" having only very quiet surface characteristics of their own, they influence the space around them in the smallest possible way visually. They resist becoming part of the formal structure of the space – yet they breathe beautiful depth into it. They enact the temptation by space at the expense of the individual.

To speak in non-psychological terms (although the psychological, subjectifying terms I am using here can also be described as affect moving through the psychological), and to borrow from Deleuze, I might say that shyness is a force that keeps expression and/or sociality in the virtual.\textsuperscript{126} Viewed outside of lack and beyond the psychological (though it inhabits the psychological), shyness is a force that produces an effect on social space, not a lack of

\textsuperscript{125} Susie Scott, \textit{Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence} (Basingstroke: Palgrave, 2007), 7.

productivity. The more common conception of shyness as lack, as Scott points out, it historically specific; “It is only since the late twentieth century that shyness has been defined as a failure to assert oneself, to be in touch with one’s feelings and to ‘be all that you can be.”127 This conception of shyness-as-failure has an interested relationship to the construction of subjectivity in late capitalism:

the work ethic of a ‘twenty-four-hour society’ based upon flexible but long working hours, individual achievement and skills of teamwork and communication almost by definition discriminates against those who are more reticent, and it is not surprising that they learn to evaluate their own conduct as problematic in relation to these values. In many ways, the shy person represents the complete anathema of contemporary Western culture’s ‘ideal’ worker: by appearing to reject the go-getting, team-building, you-can-do-it ethos of the modern office, they pose a silent threat to the goals of an efficient, streamlined service economy and the social benefits of exploiting human resources.128

Though the reticent, non-competitive person might just as easily be viewed in positive terms in light of this information, as someone who “takes the heat off” the competition a little for other, more competitive workers, as Silverman shows us, that which is considered desirable most often closely resembles that which is most widely promulgated as useful in a given social order. In this context, I bow out a little, making imperfect, subtle and/or awkward formations that slowly let one in. Though shyness is easiest viewed with all the weight of the current cultural bias as something that prevents sociality from developing, and while myself and many others have experienced dismay at having “prevented” a social connection from developing due to inhibition, through material I try to reclaim shyness as a mode of sociality created in relation, that changes rather than

127 Scott, 10.
128 Ibid., 19.
merely inhibiting the flow of expression, adding complexity and depth to social space. Though shyness may appear to inhibit sociality until "after" a particular social connection was possible, it may also be taken up as effective and useful in its own right, slowing down and rendering more complex the process of social signification. In my thinking about shyness, as in my thinking about fantasying, I am interested in a range of intentionality, in the possibility for transforming a lacking-conception into a production-conception through making installation.

My installation straddles the states of association and dissociation, and coherent and incoherent sculptural expression; it endeavors to accept and care for subjectivity in all these states, to both describe and, at times, become inhibited or dissociated expression in order to support the growth of affective flow through these abject areas of subjectivity. As such, though I experienced much of what I sculpted in terms of lack, the act of using objects allowed me to act as a "caring machine" that worked toward, but never completed, the task of transforming these lacks into production. (Over the summer, I continued, without ever "achieving," this work, reconfiguring my installation.) Working with materials that enact the transitional and the playful, creating a "chewed up" architectural space and "messed up" decoration and furniture, working with the abject subjectivities of the fantasying and the shy, I enact a motion toward seeing these forces as positive contributors to social space, as builders of complexity that create a richer, more rooted experience both formally and socially. It is, perhaps, the sorrow experienced by those existing outside the striations of an "acceptable" subjectivity that carves out the empty void, the stomach that does the chewing,
undoing the striations of social space, developing understanding slowly,
rendering more complex the resonances of affective flow within these hybridized spaces.
CONCLUSION

This is a stomach. A mouth, esophagus, small intestine, and its contents, all co-identified, for a moment, as a body without organs. A meeting point between the logics of two (and many more) bodies.

These walls, gypsum folds, wrought in pale turquoise with underbellies of green and red, beads of sweat and tongues of the clearest plastic, carrying indecipherable pearls of expression, opening themselves, embracing the crumbs of subjectivities breaking off lightly from their speakers, these voices that the walls are housing – people eating cake and acting and reacting and floating through a river made of kitchen, an immanent smooth space, a series of surfaces encrusted with puns, a temporary architecture-turned-geometry, an impossible, glimmering meeting point between growth and decay.

My kitchen is both a social arrangement of material in itself, and the material extension of sociality. It is a site that negotiates between two conceptions of sociality: one based on smooth space and desiring-production – an ever-changing site through which affect moves – and one based on subject, lack and striation. My kitchen is immanence and also a subject, a constraining container and also an architecture of affect; a place, in all its aspects, to care for and a place that cares. In my installation and supporting theoretical inquiry, I have struggled through various material enactments, and theoretical conceptualizations, of balancing forces within social space. How to exist
consciously within social realms, with their various tensions in their various balances or imbalances – power and powerlessness, smoothness and striation, constriction and laughter, playfulness, mutual recognition, domination and submission, togetherness and separateness, hanging on and letting go, growth and decay, immanence and shyness? How to conceive of these forces, which, though they are quite often conceptualized within language founded upon the formation of the subject (via Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Lacan in turn based in Saussurean semiotics), also belong to no one, and can be spoken of in non-psychological terms of immanence, semiosis and affective transmission, as in the Peircean and Deleuze-Guattarian views? Given these forces and their conceptions, how can one follow one’s best desire, and become a conscious agent that cares for social space? How to do this, given that the very notion of agency itself is, perhaps, something of an illusion – founded again on notions of the subject, within social spaces agency can never be owned, but only shared, belonging to no one. Founded, in turn, on notions of agency, responsibility for the health and maintenance of social spaces can be felt individually, but also belongs to no one – it must be a shared phenomenon, inhabiting, but not being of, the personal.

These are the questions and problems that will continue to be driving forces in my work. They are not questions that I can answer; they are questions that will last me a lifetime, generating many new vectors of inquiry. I arrived at this set of questions by making work, and examining its effects in relation to various bodies of knowledge. Within this project, I have explored these questions
as my work has related to discourses around consumption, arguing that food articulates power struggles that surround subjectivity at its borders. I have explored the ideas of smoothness and striation, arguing that my work engages in a type of smoothing, and attempts a motion from acting on desire based on lack toward enacting desire-as-production, although this motion must always keep in mind the necessity of this coexistent conception in lack. I have explored these notions in relation to mass-produced objects and semiosis, arguing that mass-produced objects model subjectivity, and an act of changing the signifying patterns of mass-produced objects is an act of caring for them. I have examined my work as decoration, as a playful mediation between subjectivity and architectural space. I have examined notions of selfhood and agency as they have related to incorporative installation, arguing that immersive installation work can function to increase one’s awareness of agency questions when entering social space. Finally, I have spoken of withheld communication through shyness, motioning for the loss of communication to be re-viewed as a productive force within social space.

Within these areas of theoretical inquiry, I have observed that, while my thinking of late has begun to have more and more Deleuze-Guattarian, schizoanalytic tendencies, and while I believe their re-ordering of thought away from the subject-centeredness in so much psychoanalytic discourse is extremely valuable and empowering, taken to its extreme this theoretical motion is also very idealistic and unrealizable. There is not a way to act as only a body without organs, only as desiring-production, or only as war-machine; our status as
subjects to state, as proponents of striated space and as enactors of lacking-desire will always creep back into our actions at certain points, no matter how we try to evade them. In order to care, we must preserve and maintain subjects that care, and subjects and objects that are cared for; we must care with, for and through ourselves and others as containers, compilers and complexifiers of the affective motion associated with caring for, adding nuances to, and maintaining social space. A discourse that does not relate to these subjective constructions at all risks amounting to a diminishing-motion, taking apart the subject as site of care that must be created, housed, and transmitted from within a subject, though the significance of its motion stretches far beyond subject.

Within the material enquiries that were both the origin and endpoint for this project, I became more confident that (at risk of stating the obvious) my main outlet for these enquiries is in material and form. While this is to date my project most closely resembling a relational aesthetics approach – in which the emphasis shifts significantly toward the actual creation of social spaces, rather than considering form as the driving force of the work – and though I wished for the space to function socially and it did so on a number of occasions, I was surprised at the very private nature of the work, and my own relative reluctance in turning it into a site for social events. While I wanted people to experience the work socially, it was fundamentally social as a formal inquiry, working with the social spaces of material and architecture, which I invite people to witness, and to situate themselves within. This palpable tension in my conception of the work – between sociality for subjects and sociality with objects and spaces – was the
reason, I believe, that I was especially interested in the additions of the blob-shaped shelf— a piece of sculpture, not installation— and the two videos in the installation. As one who is always seeking new ways of working with myriad components that don’t add up to a totalizing logic that permeates the piece and subsumes all its materials, yet also avoid completely collapsing into incoherence, I was pleased with these experiments. The piece of discreet sculpture alongside the installation, and the videos at either end, did not monopolize the space or overwhelm it, but rather complicated it, adding a separate chunk to the qualities of space and types of immersion with which I played. This was, truly, a “smoothing” installation— one that consists of irregular, incongruous chunks that do not add up to installation or video or theatre set or sculpture. It is in this sense of working with space that gave me my strongest link to Deleuze and Guattari. For me, smoothness and striation are the most important component of their work; these concepts show so clearly how the form of space is, in and of itself, socially significant, complex, and constantly in negotiation. It is this link between space and sociality that is the new driving force I have found for my ethics and my practice.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


