Spectacle, Shock, and Surfacing

(Considering the practice of installation art to make meaning of everyday life in a technologically driven visual culture world)

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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in
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Abstract

*Spectacle, Shock, and Surfacing* is a conceptual thesis that involves making connections between meaning making for everyday life and the practice of installation art in a technologically driven visual culture. Key areas explored include: visual culture, how we stop and engage, and calling attention to visual culture through performative inquiry in installation art. These connections are theorized through phenomenology, embodiment, and performative inquiry related to spatiality, perception, and the human body. The point of departure is a historical overview of conceptual art, performance art, and installation art contributions to the social dimensions of inquiry. The potential of interrogating visual culture or reconfiguring understanding of who we are by entering into an installation art form as an embodied participant is explored through reference to several known art installations. The spectator/participant enters the installation art form as an active engager, as a means to decentre centred notions of everyday life through the appropriation of congruent images to challenge visual culture. Visual culture is explored conceptually, and through the author’s participation in an installation art project, “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe.” Such embodied participation allows for ‘stop’ moments of possibilities that call the spectator/participant to attention. The potential of learning and/or reconfiguring understanding of who we are by entering into an installation art form as an embodied participant presses for active inquiry, critical and creative engagement, through performative inquiry from the vantage point of a ‘wide awake’ individual. The potential for a reflexive pedagogy in understanding the art world, the world in which we dwell, in relationship to our selves and each other is heightened.

Key-Installation art, performative inquiry, reflexivity, phenomenology, enactivism, visual culture
I would like to take this time to thank those who provided me ‘space moments of possibilities’ to challenge my notions of the limits of my perceptions of spectacle representation during my doctoral work culminating in my thesis.

Dr. Lynn Fels, who, as my Senior Supervisor, continually challenged me to disrupt and interrupt my initial notions in and around performative inquiry—to engage first with experiencing before reflecting and theorizing.

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I couldn’t have moved forward though without the loving support from my little family: Donald, Sarah, Yan, and Tai; each who contributed in their own unique way their time and energy to many days and nights of listening (long distance) to many bits and pieces of my work and offering me loads of laughs, fresh cups of tea, and gentle walks along the ocean for pause.

My mum, Catherine, who tirelessly listened to my proposals, papers, articles, and presentations. She said that her ‘crossword solving’ was enhanced with her new-found knowledge of ancient philosophy. Out on her agora, we drank pots of tea, laughed, and talked endlessly about spectacle representation. Although my dad has passed away, his passion for knowledge, dialogue, and conviviality allowed me spaces to explore my sensibility of perspective.

My television crews and colleagues, especially Heather Lemeshuk and Norm Saele, who supported my research and allowed me ‘space moments of possibilities’ for reflection on the medium when out on a mobile shoot or in the studio; my visual culture students who allowed me to challenge through the creation of installation art the notion of spectacle representation in visual culture; the Graduate Studies office staff, especially Mauvereen, who always kept things moving systematically; and the library staff, who secured for me various journals and books, and guided me in my final thesis tidying.

Finally, I thank you, the reader, the educator, the student, the participant, the spectator, the artist: the consumer, manager, and producer of personal and collective stories, products, services, and images. You are the ones who influence the changes we make to our selves in order to bring about a better future for tomorrow as educators, participants, spectators, and artists, in this technologically driven visual world.
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Introduction: Installation Art as Meaning Making Visual Culture

“To describe experience is to describe the experienced world.”

This conceptual study involves making connections between meaning making for everyday life and the practice of installation art in a technologically driven visual culture. These connections are theorized through phenomenology, embodiment, and performative inquiry as related to spatiality, perception, relationality, and the human body. As an arts educator, I draw on my experience and work in television, theatre, drama, performance art, and installation art all which have allowed me opportunities to challenge the complex interplay of meaning making inter-relations between images and contexts of engaging in everyday life. However, it was specifically my work in television during the Gulf War and 9/11 when a space-time split occurred in me. Watching these mediated televised ‘live’ events created an intense force heightened by the paradox of immediacy produced through the mediated images. Further, there was a moral splitting: the paradox of disgust undercut by fascination of the mechanics of war and terrorism. Is it any wonder I thought, in waiting for the bombing of a targeted bomb point in real time, that we are a rather dysfunctional society suspended as we are between the obscene and spectacular? I was on auto pilot, moving through the images and the world passively.

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2 Visual culture here is premised on the unprecedented importance of mediated imaging and visual technologies in contemporary society, and concerned with all kinds of visual information, its meanings, pleasures, and consumption.

3 The term ‘passive’ (i.e. passivity, passive encounters, passive spectator) used throughout this thesis, is premised on the understanding there is a concern in contemporary society, that we are mediated by images from our daily visual culture that become our dominant model of social life. I am attending to this concern through
seeking diversions in my work with partial recognitions punctuated with complete abhorrence. I needed to critically distance myself in order to recognize and understand my role as active participant in the world, individually and collectively questioning what was taking place in my everyday life so inundated with information, images, news, and the spectacular. Rarely do we stand back from our encounters of daily experience and pause to ask how we come to understand the role visual culture plays in our inter-relationships with the world as lived. And further, how might we question visual culture’s effect on the way we think, act, and inter-act with the world and one another?

Challenging visual culture’s spectacle of everyday life requires taking a position by critically inquiring and engaging in what is taken for granted every day. Hence,

- How do we stop, engage, and question, visual culture’s role in our everyday relationships with the world as lived? 

and

- How can a participatory installation arts-based method allow for the possibilities of a reflexive pedagogy in understanding the art world, the world in which we dwell, in relationship to our selves and each other?

the performative inquiry lens in installation art. As cultural beings, we unconditionally accept and/or conform to what (visual) culture presents as the ‘norm’ and thus, allow the spectacles of visual culture to subjugate us, not allowing us to be alert, to critically question or challenge what is presented to us through the various mediums used to transmit visual culture practices.

Visual arts-based participatory methods are a specific set of practices for incorporating visual art into the research process. The research strategy I use is participatory installation arts-based research (i.e. performative inquiry) where spectator/participants are a significant part of the art form (since participatory installation art requires spectators who willingly enter in as a part of the art and experience it in order for meaning to occur in/with the installation). See Leavy, *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice*, 2009.
Close entanglement with visual culture and its practices...

Visual culture appropriates production, religion, politics, art, literature, family, state, law, morality, science, and so forth, as embodied in visual forms reflected back on us, the spectator and consumer, in the capacity of work, currency, clothing, shelter, family, foods, gods, moral codes, laws, art, and so forth. Thus, we are always striving to ‘fit in’ or conform to what visual culture presents as the ‘norm’. We are constantly re-presented through visual culture influences as ‘what we want, what we are capable of, what sacrifices we need to make, and what satisfies us’.

Culture is, however, how we survive and flourish. Culture is the production and exchange of meanings, the giving and taking of meaning between members of a group or society. Culture then is the shared practices of a group, community, or society through which meaning is made out of the visual, aural, material, and textual world of representations. Meaning, symbolism, interpretation and so on are essential to what and who we are. Being a cultural being presupposes shared practices. But culture also represents the kind of communications we establish. Technological obstacles for ‘understanding’ become transformed when we start talking about the particulars of visual culture that impact each and every one of us daily (e.g. genome technology, cloning, and cosmetic surgery).

Visual culture keeps reminding us of our selves and our mortality—always in need of the next ‘injection’ to satisfy our body image. Human identity has been reconfigured. The

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5 Culture (shared practices of a group, community, or society) according to the British cultural theorist Stuart Hall, is not so much a set of things (television shows or paintings) but more of a set of processes or practices through which individuals and groups come together to make sense of those things. See Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, 1997.
body, visual culture’s inconvenient reminder of mortality, is pierced, stretched, pumped up, shrunk, tattooed and remolded. Flesh has been converted into a deictic sign. Having molded the landscape to our own image and likeness (or someone else’s image of what we should be molded to look and be like) presses then for an active participatory inquiry into the visual to awaken and recreate our re-engagement with ourselves, our identity, our physicality in relationship to each other, and the world.

Today, it is important to acknowledge our investment in the technologised visual culture world, but at the same time within that investment, allow for active participation in forms that press for engagement and reflection. By presenting multiple assemblages of sites of understanding for personal and collective stories to emerge through deconstructing grand narratives, complete stories or one complete site of understanding, the spectacle of visual culture becomes an important starting point for understanding why as consumers, producers, and managers of personal and collective stories, products, services, and images, we willingly accept a life scripted by others who appear to be better producers, managers, storytellers and performers of our individual and collective stories. If culture, in the context of technology, becomes something we “do,” then it’s at the interface that defines how we do it and how the “doing” feels; the body becomes the inter-face, the text, the material, through performative inquiry in installation art. Heightening awareness of spectator/participant…

Installation art may be the penultimate expression or installation of visual culture in a technologically driven world. Or installation art may have the potential to help us pause for moments of insights or understanding how the production of (visual culture) images has revolutionized the way we communicate with and influence one another daily.
Through active engagement of participants in installation art forms (which appropriate congruent images from visual culture) there is an opportunity that speaks to moments of recognition, disruption, and interruption to arise. If the spectacle of visual culture “denotes a mode of passivity and subjugation that arrests thought and prevents an awakening of critical consciousness,” then performative inquiry within installation art aims to draw attention to the knowledge we enact, yet is relegated to the background of conscious experience—this becomes an important point of departure for intervening and learning through an active arts engagement, as the act itself is understanding.

The practice of installation art is significant here, since the desire of installation art is to heighten the spectator’s awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and of our bodily response to this. In a work of installation art, the space, and the ensemble of elements within it are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity. Installation art creates a situation into which the spectator physically enters, and becomes a significant element within the installation artwork: the artwork addresses directly the spectator through experience as a literal presence in the space. Installation art then presupposes an embodied spectator whose sense of touch, smell, and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. Installation art’s relationship to the spectator is underpinned by the idea of activating the spectator (regarded as emancipatory since it is analogous to the spectator’s engagement with the world) while concurrently decentring the spectator. The direct presentation of elements (texture, space, light and so on) in an installation art form presents these elements directly to the spectator to experience. This introduces an emphasis on sensory immediacy, on physical participation (the spectator is

activated due to having to walk in and around the installation art work), and on a heightened awareness of other people who also enter and become part of the work.

_Deconstruction of one complete story...

Beginning with a brief historical framework of spectacle, shock, and surfacing, in Chapter 1, the significance of Conceptual Art, Performance Art, and Installation Art are presented as important artistic injunctions in that they all contribute to the social dimension of inquiry through participation. The theoretical framework presented in this chapter underpins the whole conceptual study positioned in phenomenological and enactivist theory, that we are a “complex fabric of relations.” The body is understood to be culturally formed biologically and phenomenologically: the body engages first with experiencing before reflecting and theorizing. If we believe this to be true, then engagement with visual culture requires strategies for understanding our relation to it in the every day. It is through conceptual engagement with installation art forms through perceptually guided action of performative inquiry that has the possibility to produce a specific place of sociability of activation, authorship, and community. The participant actively engages and challenges dominant codes of visual culture, which serves to situate and validate the participant as a site of understanding through the face-to-face immersion in the world.

French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, in _Phenomenology of Perception_, argues that subject and object are not separate entities but reciprocally intertwined and

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interdependent.\textsuperscript{8} A significant assertion by Merleau-Ponty is that the thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it, and can never be actually in itself because it stands at the other end of our gaze of a sensory exploration that invests it with humanity.\textsuperscript{9} The perceiving subject and the perceived object are therefore considered as two systems applied upon one another. And further, perception for Merleau-Ponty is not simply a question of vision, but involves the whole body. The inter-relationship between the spectator/participant and the world is a matter of embodied perception, because what the spectator/participant perceives is necessarily dependent on being at any one moment physically present in a matrix of circumstances that determine how and what will be perceived: “I do not see [space] according to its exterior envelope; I live it from the inside; I am immersed in it. After all, the world is around me, not in front of me.”\textsuperscript{10} The enactment of the world and a mind by the spectator/participant is not simply as an observer of the world, but the spectator/participant is embedded in the world and is shaped both cognitively and as a whole physical person by interactions with the world.

Embodied action emphasizes then a negotiation of a ‘middle path,’ an in-between space of ‘moments of possibilities’ between Rene Descartes’ two separate cognitive worlds: a pre-given outer world (realism) and a pre-given inner world (idealism).\textsuperscript{11} The


\textsuperscript{9} Maurice Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}, p. 257-58.


interplay of negotiation in an installation art form insists upon the spectator’s centred physical presence precisely in order to subject it to an experience of decentring to make meaning from the visual culture of which he or she is a part.

Decentring the body...

Chapter 2, Body Embodied, situates the spectator/participant’s body in a variety of installation art forms of congruent images (appropriated visual images of the everyday visual culture) that press for encounters so that the spectator/participant may become more equipped to negotiate actions in this world and with other people. Through spectator/participant engagements within installation art examples, throughout this chapter, attempts to expose the spectator/participant to the ‘reality’ of his or her condition as centred subjects (the spectator/participant’s actual experiences) to decentred subjects (making the spectator/participants feel confused, disorientated, and destabilized by the encounter within the work) is heightened without closure. By allowing ‘in-between space moments of possibilities’, immersion in an installation art form in a space contiguous with the ‘real world’ has and continues to be a space of possibilities challenging the limits of our perceptions of spectacle representation of everyday visual culture.

Participatory inquiry incorporating the notion of ‘defamiliarising’ from the Brechtian epic model challenges the limits of our perceptions of spectacle representation of the everyday, which draws attention to the knowledge that we are constantly enacting (an active engagement of inquiry as the act, as understanding becomes enacted through the

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12 Bertolt Brecht in *Brecht on Theatre*, presents his strategy of ‘alienation effect’ that presents situations that disrupt the participant by interrupting the narrative pressing the spectator to question what is taking place on stage through montage and juxtaposition. The spectator’s identification with the protagonist is disrupted, compelling the spectator to take up a position towards the action.
body-as-text). It is however, the significance of the historical underpinnings of conceptual art, performance art, and installation art in Chapter 1, as important injunctions for active participatory inquiry in making meaning from and within the visual culture today. When different voices and perspectives enter into a continual development of one of these art forms, the bodies’ action(s), inter-action(s), re-action(s) interface through the interactivity of action(s) and technology in a web of connections (or assemblages). The web of connections destabilizes traditional performative systems (shifting the

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13 The interface is the point at which two or more systems or pieces of equipment are connected. The body becomes the interface of engagement through assemblages in an open and connectable linkage, or blurring of the boundaries between domains of ethnography, linguistics, society, politics, technology, and so on. The interface in this sense is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modification; since each domain is tied to each other and always fusing back together through the site of the body.

14 Technology becomes the machinery, tools, materials and processes to create a medium in which text exists or through which text is conveyed. Technological mechanisms for distributing messages include radio, television, satellite, Internet, and telephone (e.g., I-phone, Blackberry).

15 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s rhizomatic structures are significant here. The rhizome structure provides an interconnectedness of assemblages that create many possibilities for challenging cultural codes and re-presenting the body. There are no fixed points; the interrelationships change in nature as their connections expand to new possibilities; similar to the open video loop chain when addressing media technology (The video chain is mainly an open loop system, where the best operating point is chosen experimentally; it can also be made into a closed-loop—a continuous replay of video for objective viewing). See installation art works by Bruce Nauman. The assemblages’ configuration is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, and susceptible to constant modification. For further discussion on rhizomatic structures, see G. Deleuze & F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. B. Massumi, trans. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1987.

16 Traditional performative theatre systems are based on Aristotelian drama. Aristotle in *Poetics* asserts that tragedy is an imitation of action of life through the arrangement of incidents (complex plot) presented in which there is also affected through pity and fear—a catharsis—a purging of emotions in the audience through the work of
questioning process of dispensed information as in the closed conventions of traditional theatre) through engagement by “being in the moment.”  

Here, time and space cross, in the boundaries between spectator as participant and the art form to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion. Bodies in the space as text (embodied bodies) become culturally responsive sites of resistance (as a directly involved spectator/participant) providing the spectator/participant multiple strategies to critique the body’s intervention through active inquiry in the art form. I stress here that it is not about reverting to a fixed materiality or form of a body-technology image itself, but instead, situating the body-technology image as a process that “transforms formless information into an apprehensible form.”  


David Appelbaum, The Stop, New York: Univ. of New York Press, 1995. Appelbaum refers to the ‘moment’ where perception, as initiated by the stop, involves reference not to a world ‘out there’, but to a sensitive surface marked with text. This is a time/space continuum where “to perceive is to be myself perceived” (p. 85). Time ceases to be past, present, and future, in the moment, and the stop brings awareness back to the surface, out of hiding.

A boundary is not that at which something stops, but the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing. See Martin Heidegger, “Building, dwelling, thinking” in Poetry, Language, Thought, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, pp. 152-3. Intervention incites direct involvement of communication between e.g., participants in deliberating whatever oppositions are that are being contested by the performance/installation artist in the performance/artwork.

See Mark Hansen, New Philosophy for New Media, Cambridge, Mass. & London: The MIT Press, 1994, p. 11, where he discusses transforming information into an apprehensible form. For Hansen, the body undergoes a certain empowerment based on its own affection and memory in order to ‘enframe’ something (e.g., digital
the restless movement caught in the here and now, the back and forth, on all sides
assembled and disassembled. It is the in-between spaces that provide the terrain for
elaborating strategies of the body and technology—singular or communal—that initiate
new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of
understanding body as text, as an inter-face. The spectacle distance of visual culture then
becomes an important starting point of engagement. If culture in the context of
technology becomes something we “do,” then it’s by awakening our sensibilities through
‘critical distance’ and ‘space moments of possibilities’ of active inquiry, engagement,
and communication with others that defines how we do it and how the “doing” feels.

Challenging the dialectic of intervention...

Chapter 3, further calls attention to visual culture through performative inquiry in the
practice of installation art, which requires awakening sensibilities, as discussed in
Chapter 2, by repositioning one’s own body through the installation art form. This
becomes meaningful for the spectator/participant by incorporating a reflexive encounter
both historically (with visual culture) and socially where constructed techniques and
procedures are closed to contextual circumstances. In a system of relations, through an
engagement in counter-constructed spectacle strategies, learning involves the whole
person; it implies becoming a full participant.²¹ It is important to stress here that
encounters with an installation art form are never just an end-point, since it may

²¹ Jean Lave & Etienne Wenger, Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation,
challenge the spectator/participant to new encounters of experience. Chapter 3, Inter-facing Reflexive Pedagogy, opens with Merleau-Ponty linking these encounters as “a route,” an experience that proceeds through dialogue and evokes change. The second and final section, presents a further example of spectator/participant and artist/educator engagement by me, as arts educator through the co-creation of an installation artwork, “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe” with visual culture students. This installation presents the potentiality of moving spectator/participant, participant/artist (the visual culture students), and artist/educator away from a mode of passivity to awakened co-creators of the artwork, engaging inquiry through creative involvement in the installation. This installation project ran over a six-week period culminating in an exhibit at a gallery.

As the arts educator and facilitating artist of this project, I kept journal entries as to my engagements throughout the process as educator, artist, spectator/participant. Meanings were not formulated or pre-determined from an outer world, but enacted or lived through in a co-evolving world of the environment and the individual. Thus, the engagement through the interactivity of performative inquiry in the installation allowed me as spectator/participant/artist/educator to reflect on my engagement in the process of how the installation art form has the potential to reflect back on the student/participants as co-artists in order for them to act as catalysts for social, political, and/or cultural change. By incorporating three distinct actions: manipulation of objects in space, navigation through an information space, and communication with others, allowed opportunities to awaken constructions of identity, questions of location and community, problems of power, access, and transparency. By presenting moments of possibilities through physical,  

emotional, and intellectual spaces for discourse on all subjects in and around visual culture, the spectator/participant/artist has the opportunity to re-claim his or her agency and autonomy by first speaking through the installation and then to the community of which he or she is a significant part. The idea of making spaces of experiences individually and collectively is also written about by Martin Heidegger as a “clearing” where things happen now and then when an open space appears. David Appelbaum refers to this clearing as “the stop” (the shocks of awareness in a moment of time) that presses us (the spectator/participants) to “reach beyond what we are sure we know.” Enactivism is knowledge that emerges or is enacted through participation in a dynamic and changing environment. We exist in a reciprocal relationship with visual culture, what is important here is that we come to recognise this and allow for the space moments of possibilities, to recognize and to challenge this reciprocal relationship in order to re-position our relationship to visual culture and its practices. It is through the shared responsibility in an enactivist setting that presents the potential of heightened engagement through transformation of active participation and inquiry. Thomas S. Kuhn in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions says that there is an epistemological viewpoint in learning paradigms that as an organising principle governs perception and determines what we

23 Martin Heidegger, 1971, p. 53.


shall and shall not see. If an enactivist approach is used in a reflexive pedagogy, there may be a shift from the conventional learning paradigms (of which Kuhn refers) to an inter-personal paradigm of engagement and meaning making, which uses human-to-human interactivity with other users, or uses a human-relation interactivity with digital objects.

*Evolving an ethics of embodied intervention...*

What is the way forward in arts-based research and education? Chapter 4 attempts to present ‘a way forward’ beginning with philosopher Alfred Schutz’ notion of “wide-awareness as the full attention to life and its requirements.” The possibility of using installation art that draws from active human interactions and inter-relationships in the installation’s social context creates social exchange and interaction with the artwork for the participant and spectator inside the installation. The interactivity of reception and production presses for dissolution of any distinction between spectator, participant, spectacle, reception and production. The affect on the body is presented in reflexive experience through actions. It is through the feeling of the performing act where action becomes articulated—where wide-awareness emerges.

Arts theorist and educator, Maxine Greene articulates Schutz’s notion of ‘wide-awareness’ where educating through the arts is concerned. For Greene, “full attention to life” meant engaging educationally with the arts to provoke active reflectiveness.

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Finding significant ways to educate towards a sensitivity and potency becomes wide-awakeness for the educator and participants. For Greene, it is the distinctiveness of the arts that allows for communicating in such a way that the participant would become aware of their “personal mode of existence” as to what art should be about. A relational art encounter in installation art allows for a space of openness that inaugurates dialogue. These relational spaces incorporating human-to-human encounters and experiences try to re-awaken the constraints of the ideology of mass media communication; in a sense, relational spaces may become spaces of conviviality (a lively sociable space of encounters).

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological assumption of each person being a complex fabric of relations inextricably linked with everything else situates the human body and the world as linked through lived experience, as Schutz asserts with “being in the world through wide-awakeness.” Enactivists, such as Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, argue that the enactment of a world and a mind by an individual knower (who is not simply an observer of the world, but an individual embedded in the world and shaped cognitively and as a whole physical organism by interactions with the world).

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30 Greene (draws from Soren Kierkegaard’s ‘civilised malaise’) reflecting on the inability of civilization to actively awaken their freedom of communicating in a ‘lived’ reality. For Greene (as with Kierkegaard) and the industrial and then the technological age), there is a passive response to personalization, automation, and routinisation of daily life.


The practice of installation art underpinned by the theory of phenomenology, embodiment and performative inquiry may open spaces of possibilities to challenge the limits of our perceptions of spectacle representation of the everyday. Through active engagement, participants are given opportunities to discuss their place or space in the world, to challenge the forces that appear to dominate them, and to interpret the experiences they are having daily with visual culture. Only as we learn to make sense of what is happening by face-to-face communicating with others, manipulating objects and navigating through various information spaces through installation art forms can we begin to have agency and feel autonomous.

The body becomes the awakened inter-face of inquiry and engagement in the installation art form that begins to overcome the perception of spectacle in visual culture for which attention is directed to everything other than it/self. The invisible becomes visible through dialogue and participatory inquiry creating possibilities for arts-based educating and learning. I set forth here now and invite you, the reader (educator, student, participant, spectator, and artist), to challenge and reimagine how we engage with a technologically driven visual world, with each other, and our environments.
Chapter 1   Spectacle, Shock, and Surfacing

1.1 Historical framework

The notion in the 1960s of bringing artistic practices closer to everyday life (through the appropriation of *social* forms such as intangible experiences as Helio Oiticica’s dancing samba; Adrian Piper’s dancing funk; Joseph Beuys’ discussing politics; or Allen Ruppersberg’s running a café or hotel for example) implies a relationship to a performance art—the importance of collapsing the distinction between performer and audience, professional and amateur, production and reception. The emphasis is on collaboration and the collective dimension of the social experience: artist/artwork/space and spectator/artwork/space. This social experience exploded in the art of the 1960s with the inclusion of new technologies and the breakdown of arts’ specifics providing myriad opportunities for physically engaging the spectator in a work of art.\(^{34}\)

The physically engaging, socially orienting projects have a long history from the early twentieth century Dadaists though. During the 1920s the collective fervour (of the avant-garde) in France, of the theatrical spectacles was paralleled by new music such as the Hooter Symphonies: celebrations of machinic noise (factory sirens, motors, turbines, and so on) performed by hundreds of participants, directed by conductors signaling from rooftops.\(^ {35}\) In the Paris Dada-Season of April 1921 for example, collective fervour was

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\(^{35}\) For an account of these events see Rene Fulop-Miller, *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism*, London & New York: Putnams & Sons Ltd., 1929, p. 84.
harnessed and implemented in a series of manifestations that sought to involve the city’s public (beginning with an excursion to the church of Saint Julien le Pauvre which drew more than one hundred people; and soon after, Dada artists and writers held a mock trial of the anarchist author turned nationalist Maurice Barres, in which members of the public were invited to sit as jurors). Andre Breton’s phrase “Artificial Hells” was used to describe this new conception of Dada events that moved out of the cabaret and into the streets. At the other extreme from these collaborative (yet highly authored) collective experiences were the Soviet mass spectacles that substituted individualism for propagandistic displays of collectivity. “Storming of the Winter Palace” in 1920, for example, was held on the third anniversary of the October Revolution and involved over 8,000 performers in restaging the momentous events that led up to the Bolshevik victory. The paralleling of these theatrical spectacles and the proliferation of the proletarian music such as the Hooter Symphonies continue to be seen throughout participatory art that developed in their wake: an authored tradition that sought to provoke participants, and a de-authored lineage that aimed to embrace collective creativity. These instances of participatory art are significant as they begin a tradition of one being disruptive and interventionist, the other being constructive with the possibility of making life better. In both instances however, the issue of participation becomes increasingly impossible to untangle from the notion of political commitment of the day.

36 Andre Breton, “Artificial Hells, Inauguration of the 1921 Dada Season,” (1921), Matthew S. Witkovsky, trans., October, 105, Summer, 2003, p. 139. ‘Artificial Hells’ moved beyond the scandals incorporated by the Dada artists to the pleasure obtained in ‘taking to the street’ and conjoining thought with gesture. The Dadaists had ‘left the realm of shadows to venture onto solid ground out into the everyday.’

German theorist, Walter Benjamin, in 1934, argued that when judging a work’s politics, we should not look at the artist’s declared sympathies, but at the position that the work occupies in the production relations of its time. Of course, Benjamin refers to examples of Soviet Russia, however, he maintains that the work of art should actively intervene in and provide a model for allowing spectators to be involved in the processes of production: “this apparatus is better, the more consumers it is able to turn into producers—that is, the more readers or spectators into collaborators.”

Although Benjamin cites the letters page of a newspaper, it appears his ideal lies in the epic theatre of German dramatist Bertolt Brecht. As Benjamin explains, Brechtian epic theatre abandons long complex plots in favour of ‘situations’ that interrupt the narrative through a disruptive element, such as song. Through this technique of montage and juxtaposition, audiences were led to break their identification with the protagonists (as


39 Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic, John Willett, ed. & trans., London: Methuen Drama, (1964), 1993. Brecht uses a strategy of ‘alienation effect’ to distance the actor from empathy with the character. This ‘feeling with’ character or ‘feeling for’ character he argued against in Aristotelian theatre (although compelling and tragically pleasurable), Brecht argued that these ‘feeling’ responses were barriers to critical reflection on the social dimension of tragedy for the spectator sees the action of the play from the point of view of the central character, and therefore loses a broader viewpoint from which to analyse the social themes represented in the play (see Brecht’s Mother Courage or The Caucasian Chalk Circle as examples). See John Willet, The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, London: Eyre Methuen, 1993.

40 In Brecht’s The Caucasian Chalk Circle, the singer, by using a chilly and unemotional way of singing to describe the servant-girls’ rescue of the child as the action is mimed on stage, makes evident the terror of a period in which motherly instincts can become a suicidal weakness. The allowing of the audience to engage in critical reflection is a key element in Brecht’s epic theatre of which he refers to as ‘freedom of thought’.
seen in Aristotelian theatre where the audiences are filled with sentiment) on stage and to be incited with a “distancing effect”—compelling the spectator to take up a position towards this action.

Today, the Brechtian epic model may offer a relatively passive mode of spectatorship, since it relies on raising consciousness through a ‘critical distancing’ effect which prevents the audience from losing themselves passively and completely in the character created by the actor and which consequently leads the audience members to be consciously critical observers. As Brecht asserts in reference to his plays, “the object of performance is to make it easier to give an opinion.” His objections to the use of empathy in drama were connected to the goal of prompting freedom of thought in the audience. Critically conscious audiences/observers then for Brecht had an important social and political aspect: the thinking was aimed to elicit understanding of the specifically social and political nature of human life and the spectator’s role in supporting

41 Bertolt Brecht coined the phrase “distancing effect” from the German Verfremdungseffekt (commonly referred to as alienation effect) from the Russian Formalists notion of ‘making strange’ which literary critic, Victor Shklovsky claimed is the essence of all art.

42 Critical distance in relation to dramatic representation according to Brecht first: must have a cognitive aspect to critical thinking: the spectator must reach his or her own independently justified conclusions (the spectator must be able to give an opinion through a process that provides independent justification for the conclusion reached); second: as a Marxist, Brecht observed that people around him (p. 133) took for granted certain basic precepts—a) that society is a meritocracy in which individuals rise and fall economically depending on how clever they are or how hard they work; adherence to capitalism and Fascism in the early to mid twentieth century Europe. Brecht wanted the people to question what they saw so they would be ready to go from theatre to their everyday lives to change their situation in society. See Carla Glen, “Aristotle’s Catharsis: The Catalyst for Brecht’s Epic Theatre,” unpublished doctoral paper, Simon Fraser Univ., Vanc., B.C, November, 2006.

43 Brecht, [1964], 1993, p. 128.
and changing social hierarchies. By contrast, the involvement of Antonin Artaud’s Theatre of Cruelty (among others) sought to reduce emotional distance between actors and spectators by incorporating stark emotions and technical methods to desensitize the audience members.\textsuperscript{44} The emphasis on proximity for Artaud and his contemporaries was crucial to the many developments in avant-garde theatre (those artists who led the field in breaking with each successive tradition—for example, performance in the twentieth century as represented in the 1960s, which was paralleled by upheavals in visual art and pedagogy). In this framework, then, physical and emotional desensitizing involvement was considered essential precursors to social change. Today, the idea of a collective presence has (for better or worse) been scrutinized and dissected by some theorists\textsuperscript{45}; on a technical level, most contemporary art is collectively produced (even if the authorship remains resolutely individual); participation used in the business world as a tool for improving efficiency and workforce morale, as well as being all-pervasive in the mass-media in the form of reality television.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{44} The French playwright and director Antonin Artaud developed the term “Theatre of Cruelty” in the late 1930s. He used it to denote a type of ritualistic drama that aimed, through technical methods (sound, lighting, gesture), to express stark emotions and thereby desensitize the audience, allowing them to confront themselves. See Antonin Artaud, \textit{The Theatre and its Double}, London: John Calders Publ., [1964] 1970.

\textsuperscript{45} See Francois Matarasso’s \textit{Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts}, London: Comedia, 1997.

\textsuperscript{46} On a political level, participation is increasingly considered a privileged medium for British and EU government cultural funding policies seeking to create the impression of social inclusion. See Francois Matarasso, \textit{Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts}, London: Comedia, 1997. In Britain, Matarasso’s report has been key to the formulation of New Labour’s funding for the arts; for a critique of its claims, see Paolo Merli, “Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities: A Critical Review of Francois Matarasso’s Use or Ornament?,” in \textit{International Journal of Cultural Policy}, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2002, pp.
Despite this changing context however, there are significant continuities between the participatory impulse of the 1920s/30s, 1960s and today. First, there is a desire to create an active subject, one who will be empowered by the experience of physical or symbolic participation. Of course, the hope here is that for the newly emancipated, they will find themselves able to determine their own social and political reality. An aesthetic of participation therefore derives from a (desired) relationship between the experience of a work of art and the individual/collective agency. Second, the authorship, while maybe a creation of a single artist, is a shared production, a collective creativity understood to emerge from and to produce, a more positive and non-hierarchal social model. Third, it involves the perceived crisis in community and collective responsibility. This (third) concern, has become more acute since the fall of Communism, although it has its underpinnings in a tradition of Marxist thought that indict a alienating and isolating effect of capitalism— it is through participatory art forms though that the restoration of the social bond through a collective meaning-making encounter became significant.

Since the 1960s, activation, authorship, and community are terms of motivation for artistic explorations to encourage participation in art. It is also significant that these three concerns (activation, authorship and community) appear in Guy Debord’s writings.

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debating ‘spectacle’ through active participation in order to address the ‘separation and noncommunication’ that the mass spectacle constitutes. For Debord writing against the backdrop of his critique of capitalist ‘spectacle’ invariably became a debate on participation: the spectacle—as a social relationship between people mediated by images—is pacifying and divisive, uniting us only through our separation from one another. Debord asserts: “The spectacle is immune from human activity, inaccessible to any review or correction. It is the opposite of dialogue…it is a mode of passivity.” 49 Debord therefore advocated a construction of ‘situations’. These, he argued, were a logical development of Brecht’s epic theatre, but with one important difference: Debord’s ‘constructed situations’ would involve the audience function disappearing altogether in a new category of viveur50 (one who lives). Rather than simply awaken a critical consciousness as in epic theatre, Debord’s ‘constructed situations’ aimed to produce new social relationships, and the hope of new social realities in people’s everyday lives. The constructedness of situations begins however on the other side of the modern collapse of the idea of Aristotelian theatre (non-intervention by the spectators). Inversely, we see how the most valid of revolutionary cultural explorations have sought to break the spectator’s psychological identification with the hero, so as to incite the spectator into

49 Ibid.

50 In French, viveurs is a theatrical pun. Typically, the term means ‘rake’ or ‘playboy’ and was commonly linked with the dubious morality of the theatrical world; here though, Debord assigns a new meaning that recalls its roots in vivre, to live. For Debord, a revolutionary alternative to the ruling culture must be introduced; a unitary urbanism of experimental behaviour, of hyperpolitical propaganda, and of the construction of environments to contrast the influences of propaganda methods of late capitalism, and ultimately destroy the bourgeois idea of happiness--keep what works; destroy what doesn’t.
activity by provoking his or her capacities to revolutionize his or her own life. The situation then, is made to be ‘lived’ by its constructors (the people or spectators/participants). The role of the ‘public’, if not passive at least walk-ons must never diminish for Debord, while the share of those who cannot be called actors can increase, (in a new meaning of the term) and are called ‘livers’.  

The purpose of constructed situations (the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate engagement) developed through an intervention directed by the complicated factors of two significant components in perceptual interaction: the material setting of life and the behaviours that it incites and that overturn it. Art historian and curator, Nicolas Bourriaud in Relational Aesthetics refers to Debord’s ‘separation’ (the separation that affects relational channels that mass spectacle constitutes) as the final stage in the transformations to a ‘Society of Spectacle’. According to Debord, in the ‘Society of Spectacle’ human relations are no longer ‘directly experienced’ but began to blur in their ‘spectacular’ representation. The ‘constructed situation’ was intended to replace artistic representation by the experimental realization of artistic energy in the everyday world.

However, for Bourriaud, the Situationist theory overlooked the fact that if the spectacle deals first with forms of human relations (it is ‘a social relationship between people, with imagery as the go-between’), it can only be analyzed and fought through the

51 Ibid.


53 For Marx, the human essence is the set of human relations.
production of new types of relationships between people. Interestingly, the notion of situation does not necessarily imply a co-existence with others. It can be a solitary act, barring others. Artistic practice is (always) meant to be a relationship with the other, at the same time as it represents a relationship with the world. The ‘constructed situation’ however, does not necessarily correspond to a relational art world (formed on the basis of a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure human relations and their social context rather than an independent and private space). The art work that forms a relational world, and a social interstice, “updates Situationism and reconciles it, as far as it is possible, with the art world.”

The notion of constructed situations then may become an important point of reference in working with live events and people as materials for artists working in participatory art forms today.

The twentieth century was an arena for struggle between two visions of the world: a modest, rationalist conception, beginning in the eighteenth century, and a philosophy of spontaneity and liberation through the irrational (Dada, Surrealism, and Situationists), both visions of the world opposed to authoritarian and utilitarian forces eager to gauge human relations and subjugate people. Activation, authorship and community have been the most widely incorporated motivations for almost all artistic attempts to encourage human participation since the 1960s. Although there are important examples of social participation in the historic avant-garde (throughout the twentieth century), it was not until the 1960s that a fluid body of work emerged: Situationism in France, Happenings in United States, and Neo-Concretism in Brazil. Jacques Ranciere in “The Emancipated Spectator” (drawing links to the history of theatre and education) questioned theories that

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equated spectacle with passivity. He argued (in light of theatre and education) that the opposition of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ was riddled with presuppositions about looking and knowing, watching and acting, appearance and reality. This was because (in his view) the binary active/passive always ended up dividing a population into those with capacity on one hand and those with incapacity on the other. Ranciere calls for spectators that were active as interpreters:

Spectatorship is not the passivity that has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation. We learn and teach, we act and know as spectators who link what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt. There is no privileged medium as there no privileged starting point.

Ranciere implies that the politics of participation might best lie, not in anti-spectacular stagings of community or in the claim that mere physical activity would correspond to emancipation, but in putting to work the notion that we are all equally capable of inventing our own translations. Unattached to a(n) (privileged) artistic medium, this principle would not divide audiences into active and passive, capable and incapable, but instead would invite us all to appropriate works for ourselves and make use of these in ways that their authors might never have dreamed possible. The historical position for


56 The spectator does nothing while the actor performs on stage does something—or the converse where those who act are inferior to those who are able to look, contemplate ideas, and have critical distance on the world. Both positions can be switched but the structure remains the same. See Ranciere, “The Emancipated Spectator,” 2004.


participatory arts and its significance for recent-collaborative art then presses the claims and implications of the following Conceptual Art, Performance Art, and Installation Art movements and their subsequent art forms as possible artistic injunctions (the encounter between the spectator/participant and the art work linking layers of surfaces of meaning through relational interactions with the world and its social context) taking ‘face-to-face’ immersion in the world as a significant point of departure for intervening and understanding through active participatory art engagements.

A. Conceptual Art

... art now transcends itself, in that it forsakes the element of reconciled embodiment of the spirit in sensuous form and passes over from the poetry of imagination to the prose of thought.  

The emergence of the Conceptual Art movement in the 1960’s (Europe and America) is formally documented by American artist and journalist, Henry Flynt. He argues, “concept art is first of all an art of which the material is concepts…and since concepts are closely bound up with language, concept art is a kind of art of which the material is the language.” Concept art for Flynt then, is the presentation of verbally articulated ideas as artworks. If we believe that an idea is an image existing or formed in the mind, then the human capacity to contemplate ideas is associated with the capacity for reason, self-reflection, and the ability to acquire and apply knowledge (which is in accordance with


Rene Descartes mind-body dichotomy—where perception is a cognitive activity\(^6\)). According to Immanuel Kant, the aesthetic is experienced when our perceptual/interpretive processes do not manage to decode their input in terms of pre-existing concepts, but nonetheless display a meaningful kind of coherence.\(^6\) This suggests then that “worthwhile” art provides the spectator with perceptually ambiguous and indefinite input, and avoids the straightforward expression of unequivocal ideas. Nevertheless, for the conceptual artist, ideas themselves were another possibility that may be treated as artworks. Independently of their literal interpretation in terms of the real world, ideas may be the object of a possible “second-order perception,” one that considers them in their associative and metaphorical relations to other ideas in the same and other domains. Although for several centuries the dialogue in and around the “art of ideas” had been explored, it didn’t become an acknowledged artistic genre in the visual arts, until the mid-twentieth century with the Conceptual art movement.

The foundation to the Conceptual art movement itself began in the early part of the twentieth century based on the European Dada movement and the writings of philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.\(^6\) During this early period, the notion of conceptual art was being

\(^6\) Rene Descartes, “A Discourse on Method Meditations on the first Philosophy” [1641].


\(^6\) Ludwig Wittgenstein in Art as Language argues an analytical aesthetic where meaning is a mental phenomenon and thus, the analogy between language and art is determined in the mind of the artist; a mental object whose existence we, as the spectator, infer through the physical work itself. See G.L. Hagberg’s Art as Language: Wittgenstein, Meaning, and Aesthetic Theory, New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1998.
explored and first appeared particularly in the “anti-art” works of Marcel Duchamp,\(^6\) (his artworks are often sited as an underpinning of Conceptualism\(^6\)) as his works drew attention to the art world, artists’ fame, and the (in)/significance of art and artworks. Thus, Duchamp especially among Dadaists drew attention to the nature of art by challenging the established definitions within society about what art is. His works of the “ready-made” for example, were artworks made from found objects (the art created simply was in the choice of the objects) was significant as this form of Conceptual art in part, became a rebellion against the commercial art world. His artwork, “Fountain” for example, consists of a urinal signed 'R Mutt' shocked critics and public alike in the early part of the twentieth century. Duchamp produced many 'ready-mades', and as such, within the Conceptual art movement (which spread from Western Europe and North America to South America, Eastern Europe, Russia, China, and Japan) challenged

\(^6\) Marcel Duchamp a conceptual artist who used shock and spectacle in order to bring attention to the art world, mass production, and artists’ fame. In the early part of the twentieth century, Duchamp began his series of "ready-mades," His first "ready-made" was a bicycle wheel in 1913 followed by a bottle rack in 1914, a snow shovel titled "In Advance of a Broken Arm" (1915) , and perhaps his most famous, "Fountain" (1917), a urinal signed by Duchamp as R. Mutt and submitted to the Salon des Independents who rejected it. Marcel Duchamps’s artwork page link to site: [http://www.marcelduchamp.net/artworkspage.php](http://www.marcelduchamp.net/artworkspage.php)

\(^6\) The notion of Conceptualism began in the 1950s and has its roots in the Dada movement of the early twentieth century. Conceptualism signifies a way or ways of approaching the creation of an artwork. Conceptualism often relies on systems or patterns that are set in motion by the artist and allowed to generate the work with little interference. Consider Abstract Expressionism, perhaps the antithesis of Conceptualism in certain ways. A Jackson Pollock, for example, is created in the moment, dripped onto the canvas with little forethought. It is about emotion and creation; it is composed on the canvas. A Conceptual work may rely on a formula that dictates the end result even before the work is executed. In Serialism, for example, a number of works convey the different variations on an idea (such as Andy Warhol's paintings of Campbell’s soup cans) which lays within the concept of conceptual art--there are always arbitrary choices involved, but reliance is on systems.
notions about art, society, politics, and the media with its theory that art is ideas.
Specifically, that art can be written, published, performed, fabricated, or simply thought.

The paradox of using text in artworks is seen in the early twentieth century Sur-realist artist, Rene Magritte in his works such as “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (1928-29) or in “This is a piece of cheese” (1937):

Image #1 “ceci n’est pas une pipe” (1928-29); Image #2 “This is a piece of cheese (1937), by permission.

His playing with the meaning of words and text on a page or in an artwork displays how artists such as Magritte were exploring representations in the order of language and challenging it by making links where the connection between the visible and the readable are not mere reflections of one or the other—that there is an unstable relation between an image and text. Magritte explored this disorder of meaning through his art.

In the mid twentieth century, the American Art and Language group of the 1960s, headed by Joseph Kosuth ⁶⁶, believed that Conceptual art was created when the analysis of

⁶⁶ See Joseph Kosuth’s writing on Conceptual art in his article, “Art after Philosophy”, in
an art object succeeded the object itself. Conceptual art was any work that questioned the
meaning of art itself and intended to convey a concept to the spectator, rejecting the
importance of the creator of the artwork (as in the traditional art forms such as painting
and sculpture) through the incorporation of photographs, instructions, maps, and videos.

Image #3, Joseph Kosuth “Clock (One and Five),” English/Latin version, 1965, clock,
photograph and printed texts on paper, unique, 61.0 x 290.2 cm, Tate Gallery, London,
by permission.

The conceptual artwork may not be recognizable as art: such as Joseph Kosuth’s
“Clock” or a pile of candies on the floor created by Felix Gonzales-Torres, or even a
word written on a wall—“Art Against Art.” It may only exist for a moment, and survive
afterward in notes or photographs, which document the work without being the work
itself. These artworks however, were strongly based on text, which was used as much as
if not more often than imagery (see Kusuth’s “Art as Idea as Idea,” 1967. A Photostat, 48
x 48”, Leo Castelli Gallery, N.Y.). No matter what form the artwork may finally have,
then, it must begin with an idea and shift towards the public for meaning. It is the process
of conception and realization with which the conceptual artist is concerned. Once given

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67 See Felix Gonzales-Torres interviewed by Tim Rollins in Felix Gonzales-Torres, New
York: A.R.T. Press, 1993. For a view of some of Felix Gonzales-Torres’ works at
the American Pavilion of 52nd Venice Biennale go to:
http://www.e-flux.com/shows/view/4337 or
physical reality by the artist the artwork is open to the perception of the spectator, and this includes the artist.

In understanding Conceptual art to this point then, the function of conception and perception appear to be contradictory—as the artist would mitigate his or her idea by applying subjective judgment to it. For the conceptual artist, in order to explore his or her idea thoroughly, then arbitrary or chance decisions would be kept to a minimum. For conceptual artist, Sol LeWitt, who designed large wall drawings said, “to work with a plan that is preset is one way to avoid subjectivity…it doesn’t really matter if the viewer understands the concepts of the artist by seeing the art….Different people will understand the same thing in a different way.”

LeWitt’s “Wall Drawing #263” was a wall divided into sixteen equal parts with all one, two, three, and four part combinations of lines in four directions. His works amount to a plan or directions to the draftsperson who executes the work, much as an architect presenting plans to a builder. Since LeWitt does not use an intermediary support, such as a canvas or paper in the final work, he de-emphasizes the materiality of the aesthetic object, giving priority to the idea behind the artwork.

As with all good rebels, the Conceptualists did not create “consumer-friendly” or “worthwhile” artworks—they expected to be poor, as they had nothing to sell. However, if the core of the work is in the fundamental principle of the idea, the design, then, art as a form of creating chaos or shock in the commercial art world of the spectacle was achieved, and therefore a sense of worth or ‘worthwhileness’ was garnered by the artworks created by the Conceptual artists of the 1960s and the 1970s.

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Though the heyday of Conceptualism ended in the 1970's, (the first Conceptual art exhibit, titled "Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects" took place in 1970 at the New York Cultural Center), it was with later Conceptual artists who began formulating around the theory that the thought imputed and the knowledge gained in artistic production were more important than the finished product. The notion of Conceptual art as a basic concept, that art may exist solely as an idea and not in the physical realm and further, that the idea of a work matters more than its physical identity became the forerunner for performance, digital, and art installations today--generally art that can be actively experienced. Therefore, there is a blurring of the boundary of conceptual art and the notion of concepts verses perception in the art world, and the spectator/participant’s world of making meaning from the conceptual work. Today, art forms that evolved from the Conceptual Art movement are seen in the video artworks of artists such as Bruce Nauman.

B. Performance Art

“It is not a question of knowing whether this interests you but rather of whether you yourself could become interesting under new conditions of cultural creation.”

The late 1960s Conceptual Art movement provided a starting-point for performance art whose (visual) artists used performance as their wider canvas, as a means to ‘materialize’ their ideas—a canvas of body in action. Performance art developed its own aesthetics, style, and practices that operated within a recognizable tradition which developed out of the European movements of the early twentieth century including

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69 Guy Debord, *Towards a Situationist International.*
Futurism, Dadaism, Sur-realism—the avant-garde.\(^70\) It was the early Futurist painters though who gave performance art its subsequent gesture of a ‘no-fixed moment’ of universal dynamism\(^71\)—the dynamic sensation of the body, activity and change through an ‘art performance’ which found its components in its surroundings in real time.\(^72\) The Futurist performances became the most direct means of forcing an audience to take note of their ideas through a spectacle. Just like the Futurists, Sur-realists, and Dadaists, as with all avant-garde art of the twentieth century, performance art in the mid-twentieth century challenged the values of the mainstream in its out-of-the-way venues, through its

\(^70\) The avant garde—meaning those artists who led the field in breaking with each successive tradition. Performance in the twentieth century questioned the constricted boundaries of art and its concentration on art objects and attempted to resolve the question of ‘What is art?’ produced by each period. In her history of *Performance*, Rose Lee Goldberg traces the form to its links in the European avant-garde and Dadaism, Futurism, and Sur-realism. See: Rose Lee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art from 1909 to the Present*, London & New York: H.N. Abrams, Inc., 1979. The German Bauhaus, founded in 1919, included a theatre workshop to explore relationships between space, sound and light. The Black Mountain College (founded in the United States) by Bauhaus instructors continued incorporating theatrical studies with the visual arts—about twenty years before the 1960s ‘happenings’ occurred.


\(^72\) The manifestos being written by the Futurist artists in the early twentieth century Europe began to include playwrights, poets, painters, and musicians. The artists presented large spectacles of performance including improvisation. What was significant here for the Futurist artist performers was that their experiments had no tradition, no masters to speak of—it was the variety, the mixture of i.e. film, acrobats, song, dance, clowning and so forth which pushed the intelligence of the audience to the very borders of madness. Some manifesto performances included: “Pleasure of Being Booed” a section of *War, the only Hygiene* (1911-15) see *Performance*. Applause in “Pleasure of Being Booed” suggested a mediocre performance; booing assured the performer that the audience was alive.
devotion to its multidisciplinary nature of form, and the wide variety of activity it encompassed—it was by its very nature aimed at experimentation and its working at the boundaries, the interstices of art, society, the world, and the individual of everyday life. What was once seen and heard through the scriptedness of the body’s gestures in conventional theatre had now been transformed and played-out in real time in everyday public spaces. The element of place where the actual venue of the event is an important consideration is noted by performance artist Claes Oldenburg: “[the space is] the place in which the piece occurs, this large object, is part of the effect, and usually the first and most important factor determining the events (materials at hand being the second and the players the third)….The place could be any extent…“a room or a nation.”

In *Performance*, Goldberg defines performance (art) as “the expression of artists who wish to challenge the viewers’ perceptions of art and the limits of those perceptions.” The work then, is almost always deliberately provocative, unconventional, and even assaultive in its presentation. These were artists who wanted to take a stance in opposition to the political establishment in the commercialization of art using the artist’s body as the canvas of action. This important parallel of ‘materializing ideas’ with the concept arts and the Conceptual Art movement allowed performance artists to go directly to a public forum with their embodied ideas, thus completely eliminating the need for galleries, agents, brokers, tax accountants and any other aspect of capitalism.

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74 Goldberg, *Performance*. 
Performance arts’ historical framework, like the history of theatre, has involved a range of media including texts, scripts, photographic stills, film, video, digital media, descriptions from spectators, and live performance. The performance artists always used live performance as the significant means of expressing his or her ideas before (invited) audiences incorporating the spectators as participants in shaping meaning through the human-to-human interactions between artist and spectator. The performance (art) work was seen as “reducing the element of alienation between performer and viewer.” This inter-relationship between spectator and performance artist became a new space of bringing to life the many formal and conceptual ideas on which the making of art was based. This understanding of audience/performer relationships can be related to Bertolt Brecht’s idea of imposing an uncomfortable and self-conscious state on the audience in an attempt to reduce the gap between the two. Significantly, the artists used performance (art) transitioning from creating an object to acting through the projection of self and the world through the body in a process of chance (for example, as with ‘found’ objects used in a work) in a real space through a live presentation. The created work took everyday life as its subject.

Goldberg, Performance, p. 98. Goldberg discusses this alienation as something that fitted well into the socialist inspiration of the investigation of what the function of art was, since both artist and audience experienced the work simultaneously.

I refer to the “new space” here as a liminal space of engagement between the audience member and the artist, art form in a moment of time. David Appelbaum refers to this moment of time as a space where perception is initiated by a “stop” and involves reference not to a ‘world out there’ but to a ‘sensitive’ surface marked as text—the body—as the space of awareness for the spectator/participant. See David Appelbaum’s The Stop, New York: Univ. of New York Press, 1995, p. 85.

Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre.
Fundamentally, the performance art form became a record of the effort of the artist to assimilate more and more the realm of play and pleasure in art which observed less and less traditional limitations of making art objects, so that in the end, the artist took delight in the “liveness”\(^7\) of the activity of play in creating art through the body in the performance space. In Ulay/Marina Abramovic’s Performance 5, “Imponderabilia,”\(^7\) for example, two nudes (one male, one female) stand in a rebuilt main-entrance of a museum, facing each other. The space between them is forty centimetres. The public entering the museum has to pass sideways through the small space between the two nudes. Each person passing has to choose which one of the nudes he/she wants to face. There are two hidden video cameras recording each person passing. An installation of video monitors inside the central space of the museum has a continuous video feed showing the people choosing and passing. Performance art here became an embodied impetus to take art out of the strict confines of the (gallery and) museum and re-turn it to the (gallery and) museum with a ‘new’ engagement with space and place—the ‘uncomfortable’ everyday static spaces and places the spectators encountered.

\(^7\) I use “liveness” here as the live activity of human bodies in the action of doing a task or activity for example, in or to come to some clarification as to meaning derived from the ‘doing’ the action. Underpinning the theoretical argument of the ontology of “liveness” for many performance artists though may begin with Walter Benjamin’s central argument in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” that is: “even the most perfect reproduction is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.” It is the mechanical dilution of presence and liveness in a reproduction work of art (e.g. film) and its comparative lack of authenticity that Benjamin is most concerned with. For a counter argument to “liveness” see, Phillip Auslander’s *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2008.

Performance theorist Peggy Phelan asserts in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, that the “performance’s only life is in the present.” The ‘liveness’ experienced in Helio Oiticica’s “Dance in My Experience” used inter-personal ‘real space’ carried out as environmental artwork on the streets of Rio de Janeiro, being eternally mobile and transformable both in the action of the players and the action of the spectators. This process-based live experience became the vital process in performance art work. As Oiticica replied in a letter to artist Lygia Clark,

> The experiences through participation go beyond the facile manipulation of objects: there is the search for what could be described as a biological ritual, where interpersonal relations are enriched and establish a communication of growth…a vital inter-personal process based on experiences…[it is those elements] that are a part of it instead of being isolated objects: they are orders in a totality…

This notion of a totality produced through a liveness or presence in the moment in the performance art form implies Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s account of the body and the

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81 Helio Oiticica, “Dance in My Experience” (diary Entries)//1965-66 in *Helio Oiticica: Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto*, reprinted in L. Figueiredo, L. Pape, & W. Salomao, eds., Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1986, p. 72-5 & 75-6, trans., M. Asbury, 2006. Oiticica, a Brazilian artist of the 1960s, collaborated in this work with participants from the samba schools of the Rio favelas to produce disruptive events based around dancing in parangole (a slang term meaning an animated situation and sudden confusion and/or agitation between people) capes. These capes were strangely weighted and made from unusual fabrics that encouraged the wearers to dance and move, and forged a circular relationship between watcher and wearer. The work’s emphasis was on a Dionysian loss of self in social fusion.

world as one through a lived experience.\textsuperscript{83} The embodied subject enacted through perception (whether that is with the artist or spectator) is the fundamental level for meaning making upon the world, others, and the self—the performance art form’s use of a live relational interaction with the world and its social and political context is understood here to be culturally formed.

It wasn’t until the 1970s however, that ‘performance art’ became a recognized art term, and specifically meant that performance art was live, experimental, and was art not theatre.\textsuperscript{84} Performance art emerged as a discipline in its own right, moving away from the ‘ideas’ concerns of the Conceptual Art movement to personal narrative presentations of the artists that embraced more traditional performance values from vaudeville, dance, cabaret, and television. It further moved into a discipline of its own right by also incorporating and infiltrating mass media to blur the high art origins to popular culture, while simultaneously drawing artists from other disciplines—all culminating in collaborative experiments not only in theatre or gallery spaces, but also in site-specific or environmental spaces (where works which were made for and about the places were performed). Since performance art was live art by artists, the body became the artist’s canvas and vehicle through gestures of expression that presented a rather all-inclusive vision of art that no painting, sculpture, or architectural monument of the time had achieved. These artists ultimately raised questions about their role as artist, the role of the audience, and the nature of art itself (as did the conceptual artists of the time). In testing the boundaries between art and life, performance art traditionally centred on the

\textsuperscript{83} Merleau-Ponty, \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}. 1962.

\textsuperscript{84} Goldberg, \textit{Performance}.
expressiveness of the individual body, rejecting logical speech and thought, as well as exposition, symbolism, and psychologising as seen in the Conceptual Art movement around ‘ideas’.

In 1978, Laurie Anderson’s performance art work “Like A Stream” combined solo autobiographical work (which evolved from the visual art origins) and the “Theatre of Images,” work (which was indicative of performance art of the late seventies and eighties), was an assemblage of aural and visual images (not based on text or the individual psyche), which became elaborate spectacles embracing technology and mixed media. “Like a Stream,” for instance, was an extended piece for voice, tape, and instruments. The tape sections were played on bow instruments with play-back heads mounted on the bridges; horsehair was replaced in the bows with strips of quarter-inch audiotape. The information recorded on the bows was reversible—sounds which made as much sense on an up-bow as a down-bow (breathing in and out, walking forward and backward, and so on). The use of a slow dissolve of a series of projected slides commented on the text which was accompanied by non-theatrical vocal sounds such as ‘uh-huh…yes/no…uh-hhu-uh…I don’t know’. The work was blank, flat, spare, but very much an aural and visual spectacle.


“Theatre of Images” was a term used to describe performances that were dominated by visual images. There was the absence of straightforward narrative and dialogue, plot, character and setting as a ‘realistic’ place, emphasized the ‘stage picture’. Spoken words focused on the manner of presentation by the performers and on the perception of the audience at the same time. A good example is Richard Foreman’s 1975 work, Pandering to the Masses: A Misrepresentation whose taped voice spoke directly to the audience making sure that each section was interpreted how he intended (based on his inflections, etc.) at the time. Go to Richard Foreman Papers, 1942-2004 at: http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/fales/rforeman.html
Performance art as seen in Anderson’s work, had moved into the mainstream consciousness of society drawing on all aspects of spectacle and entertainment for the structure of their works. Some artists turned to cabaret as a means to convey their ideas, in the same ways the Dadaists and Futurists had done before. As presented in Ralston Farina’s 1977 cabaret-style magic show, “Doing a Painting Demonstration with Campbell’s Chicken Noodle/Tomato Soup,” the ‘art as object’ was used as props; and the intention, Farina said, was an investigation of “time and timing.” This entrance into the realm of entertainment and popular culture for performance artists in the mid-seventies, allowed artists’ performances to slip rather easily into the popular (youth) culture and ultimately embrace the punk aesthetic of the 1980s. The outrageous methods of presentation as the new aesthetic was demonstrated by the United Kingdom’s Sex Pistols or The Clash which were both characterized by ornaments of safety pins, razor blades and body tattoos. The cross-fertilization between punk performances (music) and the art performances for example of COUM Transmissions at the time, allowed youth (through popular culture) the freedom to experiment with a ‘harsher’ reality of risk-taking and risk-making for the artist and the audience, challenging the ‘predictable art establishment’s aesthetic platitudes’ (that again were reiterated through the performance artists’ works) as not having much value or were less satisfying for the audience members.

87 Goldberg, Performance & also see Performance By Artists.

88 Goldberg, Performance, p. 199.

89 Genesis P. Orridge & Peter Christopherson’s COUM Transmissions from London, England presented art performances which pressed the boundaries of the body, self and reality for the artist and spectator alike. Extremely controversial during the late seventies, many of their art performances were banned from presenting in the UK. See Performance By Artists, Toronto, 1979 and Goldberg’s Performance for further reading about COUM’s ‘annihilating reality’.
of everyday real life. The COUM Transmissions’ “Annihilating Reality” for example, grew from finding the art work of everyday life as ‘less satisfying on every level’ and that the more ‘interesting performance’ of real life for the performance artist was the psychopath, the fetishist, or an intense street individual who created more powerful socially-direct imagery. What this company did with their performance art was blur the boundary between popular culture and the mass media by incorporating information provided from daily newspapers. COUM’s actions through their performance art projects moved the ‘objects of art’ into the public arena (as their avant-garde predecessors) but used popular cultural archetypes as the visual representations for the spectator/participant to respond. For COUM, life was like a movie, trying to make each scene interesting viewing. They used the press to record their activities like a diary—the dialogue, ultimately between the performance art, artist, and spectator, but further, the dialogue was between the spectator and self, the spectator and the ‘other’, and the spectator and the world in everyday life.

Interestingly, in the past twenty years with the easy-accessibility to technology for the consumer and the artist, embracing more traditional theatrical techniques moved into the background. Performance art turned away from its emphasis on the artist’s body in the space to re-embrace language, text, and the technologically driven digital world moving towards an engagement through image-representation with the emphasis on the spectator’s role of engagement and meaning making with the work. As Walter Benjamin asserts, “the work of art in the era of technical reproduction cannot escape the socioeconomic-technological domination which determines its aesthetic dimension.”

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90 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in
Thus, the live performance art cannot remain ontologically pristine or operate in a cultural economy separate from that of mass media. For performance theorist Phillip Auslander, the performance as a ‘pristine’ live event had become mediatised and ‘artificial reproductions of the real.” Performance artist Jacki Apple has written that performance artists today are functioning as poets, storytellers, preachers, and rappers using “‘image at the service of the text.” And as language has emerged as a central technique of performance art, the content of the work has shifted political and social concerns, especially the performance art work created by individuals of marginalized culture. Class, race, gender, and sexuality have surfaced as primary concerns of contemporary performance. Performance artists such as Adrian Piper, Guillermo Gomez-Peria, Coco Fusco, Ron Athey, Rachel Rosenthal, Diamanda Galas, Ishael Houston-Jones, John Kelly, DANCENOISE, Lydia Lunch, and Robby McCauley for example, insist on self-definition that challenges the status and image that have been imposed on them as they explore a wide range of social, political, economic, and ecological concerns through the use of a vast array of performance activities and strategies.

Whether performance art artists explore the everyday social, political, ecological or economical concerns of the world, it is the constructed situations from the ‘happenings’, environmental encounters, or live performances of art breaking the spectacular bind of capitalism, that appear to have underpinned two fundamental factors in the overall perpetual interaction of performance art: 1) the material setting of life; and 2) the

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behaviours that it incites (with the possibility that overturn it). Hence, Debord’s query to the reader in the opening of this section: “that it is not a question of knowing whether [the art form] interests you, but rather of whether you yourself became interesting under the new conditions of cultural creation [through the art form].” The performance art form then encourages the spectator to be active-minded rather than passive, and not only see the work as it is taking place, but to project, imaginatively, alternates possible readings as well. If the spectator as an active participant queries what he/she sees, if he/she feels it in relation to what he/she already knows or has felt, then the experience of ‘watching the process’ can be a very rich one, and deeply satisfying—as well as unique.

In this age where order is power, think what chaos through a performance art form can provide. There is a seriousness and tragedy with chaos, but also, an emotional stimulus that assembles the past and its experiences to the present creating precious, yet expendable ‘no-fixed moments’ of collaboration and participation in real time. It is not about the importance of the nature of the final act of the art—but the art as a process, allowing for disruptions, interruptions, and corruptions of the known, which then requires renewal—an unsettling of what appears to be understood from an innovative art form such as performance art.

C. Installation Art

“These people are the actors. There is no possibility of escape. In fact the spectators have no choice. They are obliged violently to participate.”

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94 Graciela Carnevale, *Project for the Experimental Art Series, Rosario*, 1968. In 1968 an erruption of politicized participatory practice took a dramatic form in Argentina. The Experimental Art Cycle was a series of actions of Rosario, many of which worked
Installation art can be an enormous, perhaps bewildering, multi-media environment, or an empty room with empty walls; one wall made of glass, a light hangs above, which clicks on and off to the images motioning on a television screen in the far corner of the room. In the 1960s, the word installation was employed by magazines such as *Artforum*, *Arts magazine* and *Studio International* to describe the way in which an exhibition was arranged, and the photographic documentation of this arrangement was called an ‘installation shot’. What is interesting here is that it is with the neutrality of the term “installation shot” which became the important part of its appeal, particularly with artists associated with Minimalism who rejected the ‘messy expressionistic environments’ of their immediate precursors (such as Allan Kaprow and Claes Oldenburg\(^5\)). Minimalism drew attention to the space where the work was displayed or presented, and gave rise to a direct engagement with this space as a work in itself, often at the expense of any objects. The distinction today between the installation art and an installation of works of art has become blurred. Both point to a desire to heighten the spectator’s awareness of how

on the audience as a privileged artistic material. Graciela Carnevale’s project represents the most extreme example of this approach. In the years that followed, Carnevale, abandoned art for teaching. The work consisted of preparing a totally empty room. The participatory audience (who came together by chance) had been locked in this room without the audience’s awareness. Prisoners. The point is to allow people to enter but not leave. The audience members are the actors. The positive or negative outcome is determined by the audience members and what they will ultimately do to escape this locked room. This work is an act of aggression, and its intent is to provoke the spectator into awareness of the power with which violence is enacted in everyday life. Go to: http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue16/futurism1.htm

\(^5\) Allan Kaprow was an installation artist of the 1960s. He created environments and happenings. Installation artist, Claes Oldenburg was a significant part of the 1980s installation art movement that was characterised as visual and lavish--large and excessive. See, John C. Welchman’s article “Allan Kaprow: Art as Life,” in *Artforum*, Feb., 2007.
objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and the spectator’s response to that arrangement. An installed room (a gallery space) for example by David Rokeby becomes a significant part of the installation work. The whole situation in its totality claims to be the work of art. For instance, in Rokeby’s “Taken,” a site-specific work incorporates a surveillance camera installation that provides two readings of the activities in the gallery space. A large gallery space has one wall taken up by two very large projections. On the left hand side, gallery visitors are extracted from the ground of the gallery floors and walls, and then looped back onto themselves at 20-second intervals. The result is that every action that has taken place in the gallery since the computer was turned on occurs together on the screen, repeating every 20 seconds. The image stream provides a kind of seething chaos of activity that can be read both as a statistical plot of gallery activities (Where do most people stand in regard to a piece of art? Do they move around?, and so on) and as a record of each act of each visitor. The image is densely social, deeply layered and chaotic. The right hand side uses cooler colours of the gallery visitors. Individual visitors are tracked within the space. Their heads are zoomed in on, and adjectives are attributed to them (for example, ‘unsuspecting’, ‘complicit’, ‘hungry’). These individual head-shots are collected as a set of the last 200 visitors and presented as a matrix of 100 or occasionally 200 shots, moving in slow motion. This side is analytical and highly ordered and rather threatening. This work presents a particular way of viewing and capturing the histories and tendencies of a very public space. Interestingly, the spectators rather disturbingly had a tendency to lose track of which image of oneself on the left is actually one’s current image on the right (the mirror image). Hence, the

various spectators often were tracking a historical shadow, identifying with it in a way that relates to false shadows and reflections of an “other.” By making a work large enough for us to enter, installation artists are inescapably concerned with the spectator’s presence. The main actor in the installation is the spectator, the main centre for which everything is addressed, intended, is the spectator.

Since the 1960s, one of the dominant themes of installation art was the desire to provide an intense experience for the spectator. Over the decade, this activation of the spectator became seen as an alternative to the pacifying effects of mass-media television, mainstream film and magazines. For artists such as Vito Acconci interactivity could function as an artistic parallel for political activism. As Acconci noted, this kind of engagement ‘could lead to a revolution’. 97 In Brazil, which suffered a brutal military dictatorship during the 1960s and 1970s, the installations of Helio Oiticica, for example, focused on the idea of individual freedom from oppressive governmental forces. 98 He developed the term “supra-sensorial,” which he hoped could “release the individual from his oppressive conditioning” by the state. Inviting spectators to walk barefoot on sand and straw, or to listen to Jimi Hendrix records while relaxing in a hammock, Oiticica

97 For works by Vito Acconci go to: http://www.stylusart.com/noticias/macbavito/macbavitoen.htm

98 Helio Oiticica (1937-1980) was a Brazilian artist who worked in Rio de Janeiro and New York. He moved from neo-concretism in the 1960s to participatory works in the late 1960s involving ‘sensorial’ objects and installation structures, and environments which placed gallery visitors in material conditions evoking Latin American shanty town existence. Retrospectives include Witte de With, Rotterdam, 1992. See Performance.
advocated the radical potential of “hanging out,” rather than complying with society’s
demands.\footnote{99} 

Bruce Nauman’s\footnote{100} installations of the same period are emphatically less mellow
experiences. Although concerned, with the body’s response to space, Nauman’s works
often prevent the spectator from experiencing his or her anticipated experience, through
video feedback, mirrors and harsh coloured lighting. His austere video corridors of the
1970s aimed to make us feel out of sync with our surroundings. He created interruptions
and disruptions in the work, so that it was hard to resolve, so that the spectator is always
on the edge of one kind of way of relating to the space or another, and ultimately, the
spectator is never quite allowed to do either.\footnote{101}

The way in which installation art focuses on the spectator’s presence in a space has
necessarily led to a problem of how it is remembered; as the spectator, it is significant to
be present in order to make any meaning from the work. But most importantly, despite
this subjective insistence of presence, it is in the historical lineage from the Modernist
precursors such as the Dadaists, Sur-realists, and Minimalists, in such works as El
Lissitzky’s \textit{Proun Room} (1923), Kurt Schwitter’s \textit{Merzbau} (1933), and Kaprow’s\footnote{102}

\footnotetext[99]{Ibid.}

\footnotetext[100]{For Bruce Nauman’s work see S. Cooke’s \textit{Bruce Nauman: Theatre of Experience},
New York: Guggenheim, 2003.}

\footnotetext[101]{Ibid.}

\footnotetext[102]{Allan Kaprow was an American artist best known as the inventor of the Happenings in
1959, a term abandoned in 1967, after which, he explored other participatory
models. The range of his early 1960s work is documented in his \textit{Assemblages,}
\textit{Environments and Happenings}, 1966; his writings are collected in \textit{Essays on the
of California Press, 2003. An important early group show was \textit{Environments,}
environments and happenings of the early 1960s, as well as the Fluxus movement of infusing a new dialogue of everyday sounds, music, noises, and technology as a “legitimate” art form as well as the debates around Minimalism and post-Minimalist installation art of the early 1960s which underpin installation art today. The promotion of artistic experimentation mixed with social and political activism, just as the conceptual artists of the day intended to unite a new artistic front and act upon it. With the international rise of installation art in the 1980s, and its glorification as the institutionally approved art form in the 1990s, best seen in the spectacular pieces that fill the museums such as the Guggenheim in New York and the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, UK—is it sellable, now that it is the epicentre of institutional activity? This will be I’m sure, the next round of debates to surface in and around the art world and the installation art form.

Since the 1990s, however, installation works have focused upon making the visitor feel aware of the space he or she is in, with more emphasis placed on the spectator’s active participation in generating the meaning of the work—a trend that cultural critic Nicolas Bourriaud described as “relational aesthetics.” Artists, since the 1990s, have recreated apartments—the visitors can come and go on a 24-hour clock—eat, sleep, watch television, or have a bath. In 1997, Rirkrit Tiravanija’s “Untitled (tomorrow is another day),” the recreation of his New York apartment at the Cologne Kunstverein was

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installed. Other artists have turned installation art into a branch of interior design. Jorge Pardo’s “funky décor for the café bar of K21” in Dusseldorf exemplifies this trend.\textsuperscript{104} Another increasingly visible aspect to installation art today is the artist-curated exhibition. The exhibit basically works on two levels: as an exhibition of objects by other people, and as a single work by the artist. In Mike Kelley’s “The Uncanny,”\textsuperscript{105} for example, the spectators experienced a collection of unsettling sculptures and polychromatic human doubles.

The variety of works developed over the past 40-plus years for example, demonstrates that installation art means many things. However, as the term describes, it is a type of production in a site-specific space rather than a movement or strong ideological framework. It appears that to try and point to certain ideas in the work of contemporary artists who continue its tradition fundamentally lies in: a desire to activate the spectator—as opposed to the passivity of mass-media consumption; and to induce a critical dialogue towards the environments in which we find ourselves as spectators. Today, the best installation art may be marked by a sense of antagonism towards its environment, a friction with its context that resists organizational pressure and instead exerts its own terms of engagement. The primary impulse, though, appears to be a dialogue between artist and space/spectator and space.

\textsuperscript{104} For further exhibits on international and modern art go to Tate Modern: http://www.tate.org.uk/modern/. Also, refer to art historian and critic, Claire Bishop’s Installation Art: A Critical History, London & New York: Routledge, 2005. This key text focuses around the experiences that installation art structures for the viewer two key strategies: viewer activation and viewer decentring.

\textsuperscript{105} Mike Kelley, “The Uncanny,” Tate Liverpool, UK, 1993.
1.2 Theoretical framework

“In so far as we believe in the world’s past, in the physical world, in ‘stimuli,’ in the organism as our books depict it, it is first of all because we have present at this moment to us a perceptual field, a surface in contact with the world, a permanent rootedness in it, and because the world ceaselessly assails and beleaguers subjectivity as waves wash round a wreck on the shore.”

One’s own body—that forgotten land…

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s account of the body and the world is one through a lived experience rather than discounting the body as an accidental feature as in the Cartesian dualism of the subject-object relationship asserted by the seventeenth century theorist, Rene Descartes’ discussion on traditional cognitive theory of distinct principles of being: mind and body, acting independently. Descartes’ theoretical assumption creates a division between thinking and doing. The Cartesian separation of thought and perception of being for Merleau-Ponty is false:

Perception and the thing perceived belong together; in perception I am certain of things[...] Perception allows for the possibility of error [the possibility of error being bound up with the openness of the world]—there are no privileged fields of facts [regarding mental states] of which I can be certain[...] I am certain of my existence because I perform the acts of perceiving, reflecting, etc... ‘I think’, ‘I am’ are equivalent, because my thinking is integrated into the process of active transcendence in which my existence exists.


For Merleau-Ponty, “to perceive is to render oneself present to something through the body” and further, where “consciousness is being-towards-the-thing through the intermediary of the body.” Merleau-Ponty considers the body as our “general medium for having a world.” Hence, the embodied subject through perception is the fundamental level of making meaning upon the world, others, and the self; we have then a relational interaction with the world and its social context. Perception, for Merleau-Ponty then, is understood to be culturally (human-to-human) formed. This understanding of a culturally formed body, both as a physical-biological structure and simultaneously a lived-phenomenological structure, is a ‘double embodiment’. This notion that each person is doubly embodied then means that we are always engaged with experiencing that takes place before reflection and theorizing. It is not like symbolic communication, for it is concerned with representation, and the doubly embodied cannot be explained in a scientific manner, for it is not an object. Perception is not simply a cognitive activity, as Descartes would suggest, for the participant who engages in the experience is always embodied. Merleau-Ponty says in *Phenomenology of Perception* that the embodied human being can see, move around, and position his/herself in relation to things, and handle them. Sight, touch and movement provide particular ways of

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111 Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 146.

112 Ibid, p. 27.

113 Ibid, pp. 235-236.
entering into relationships with things, and none of these can be achieved by a disembodied mind. Hence, relational interactions are dispersed throughout the body rather than concentrated in the mind. In addition, Merleau-Ponty argues that sensations are not isolated sense-events. The body’s relationship with the world that it inhabits is charged with meaning, and each sensory episode both draws from and contributes to our experience and comprehension of everyday life. Sensations can be understood only in the wider context of a person’s immersion in the world.

The twentieth century enactivist theorists also reject the Cartesian dualism replacing it with a theory of cognition developed from Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological assumption that each person is a ‘complex fabric of relations inextricably linked with everything else, both biologically and phenomenologically.’\textsuperscript{114} Furthering Merleau-Ponty’s argument that the body and the world are one through a lived experience, the enactivist theorist, Humberto Maturana constructed a theory “which attempts to define living systems not as objects of observation and description, but as self-contained unities whose only reference is to themselves.”\textsuperscript{115} According to this theory it is pointless for an observer to try to describe these systems from the ‘outside’ as living systems are autonomous, self-constructing, closed systems. Maturana and Varela created the term ‘autopoeisis’ to refer to the property of complex, dynamic systems of spontaneous self-

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 405.

organization, and they assert, “the components of autopoeitic systems must be dynamically related in a network of ongoing interactions.”

In *The Embodied Mind*, Varela et al, argue that the enactment of a world and a mind by an individual knower is not simply as an observer of the world, but the individual is embedded in the world and is shaped both cognitively and as a whole physical organism by interactions with the world. This embodied action emphasizes a ‘negotiation of a middle path’ between Descartes two separate cognitive worlds: a pre-given outer world and a projection of a pre-given inner world. For Varela, these two cognitive extremes both take representation as their central notion: in the outer world, representation is used to recover what is outer; and in the inner world, it is used to project what is inner. The embodied action through sensorimotor experiences includes the mind, body, and culture of the individual. Varela stresses, “the cognitive and sensory, perception and action are

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117 Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*. In addition, enactivist theorists such as George Lakoff & Mark Johnson argue that enactivism’s embodiment of thought is achieved (through the role of metaphors) all human understanding, including meaning, imagination, and reason is based on schemes of bodily movement and its perception. See Lakoff & Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980; and Johnson’s *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987.

118 Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, p. 172. The ‘negotiation of a middle path’ is action embodied. The actions are not presented as separate cognitive thoughts, but of one that depends upon the experience of sensorimotor capacities of the individual that are embedded in an encompassing, biological, psychological, and cultural context. This conception of embodiment has been most emphasized in cognitive science by H. Dreyfus’ *What Computers Can’t Do*; Johnson’s *The Body and the Mind*; and Lakoff’s *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things*.

not simply linked by individuals however, but are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition.\textsuperscript{120} Varela argues enactive cognition is the mental acts characterized by concurrent participation of several functionally distinct and topographically distributed regions of the brain and their sensorimotor embodiment. These are self-organizing patterns of assemblages that give rise to temporality. Varela writes:

> A central idea here is that these various components require a frame or window of simultaneity that corresponds to the duration of the lived present. In this view, the constant stream of sensory activation and motor consequence is incorporated within the framework of an endogenous dynamics (not an informational-computational one), which gives it its depth or incompressibility.\textsuperscript{121}

Further to Varela’s argument on temporality though is his assertion that temporal flow is bound up biologically with affect.\textsuperscript{122} Varela argues that affect ‘precedes’ temporality and ‘sculpts’ the dynamics of time flow.\textsuperscript{123} Affect provides the bond between temporal flow and perceptual event. Installation artist, Bill Viola\textsuperscript{124} experiments in several video

\textsuperscript{120} Varela et al, 1991, p. 173.


\textsuperscript{122} Ibid, pp. 295-298.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid, p. 301.

\textsuperscript{124} Bill Viola, “Quintet of the Astonished,” 2002, Getty Center; also see Viola’s “Passage,”2000, Getty Center. See images at: http://images.google.ca/imghrd?imgurl=http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/FEATURES/krygier/Imges/krygier2-11-1s.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.artnet.com/Magazine/FEATURES/krygier/krygier2-11-03.asp&usg=9a6P86EJmWPMZ10BabMjzjM2pqa=\&h=115\&w=175\&sz=10\&hl=en\&start=7\&tbnid=M77zoG9PWEv2GM:\&tbnh=66\&tbwn=100\&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dinstallation%2Bart%2B%22Quintet%2Bof%2BAstonished%22%2Bby%2BBi
installations using high-speed film to capture events transpiring in the present that escape the ‘frame rates of normal perception’. Viola’s saturation of emotion in still images is relayed to the spectator from video shot at 384 frames per second. Viola’s installation experiment, however, challenges the spectator’s emotional engagement by simply not allowing normal perceptual reading to occur, emotion is outside of time. In several installations, Viola experimented with this idea by digitally converting to video film shot at high speed and then projecting the resulting video back at normal speed. Mark Hansen in *New Philosophy for New Media* notes, “the cinema-digital-video hybrid technique exposes the viewer to minute shifts in affective tonality well beyond what is visible to natural perception.” Viola’s hybrid digital video installation illustrates the positive engagement of the body with technology. We are daily exposed to machinic events, such as processing information on computers, and increasingly, we are becoming immersed in a visual computing culture/environment. In Varela’s terms, Viola’s installations technically expand the “now” revealing the role of ‘affect’ in the flux of consciousness. Rather than the machinic components inscribing and controlling the flux of consciousness, Viola’s work uses digital technology as a ‘mediator’ from making visible the imperceptible affective processes framing the digital image. For Hansen, new media art (such as in Viola’s installations for example) demonstrates how the affective and sensorimotor body serves to catalyze and frame information into the human-perceived

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125 The frame rate of normal perception is a .3 second threshold of the “now.”

digital image. In a very material sense then, the body becomes the ‘coprocessor’ of digital information. Moreover, digital aesthetics as seen in Viola’s work views technology as an extension of human capability that enlarges the grasp of the spectacle in the material world—an engagement with the world where living life in the present is ultimately creative, un-recordable, and always in excess of what can be inscribed and made available for repetition or representation.

Enactivism then is perception which consists in perceptually guided actions and that the sensorimotor patterns enable the action to be perceptually guided. According to Varela, the overall concern of an enactive approach to perception is not to determine how some perceiver-independent world is to be recovered; it is, rather, “to determine the common principles or lawful linkages between sensory and motor systems that explain how action can be perceptually guided in a perceiver-dependent world.”

This approach to perception was initially undertaken by Merleau-Ponty in his central insights of his phenomenological research where he states: “the organism both initiates and is shaped by the environment.” Merleau-Ponty clearly recognized that the organism and the environment are bound together in reciprocal specification and selection.

“The poetics of the ‘open’ work tends to encourage ‘acts of conscious freedom’ on the part of the performer [participant] and place him at the focal point of a network of limitless interrelations.”


128 Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behaviour*, A.L. Fisher, trans., Boston, MA: Beacon Press, p. 13. In this text, he presents one of his most visionary passages, that perception is not simply embedded within and constrained by the surrounding world; it also contributes to the enactment of this surrounding world.

129 Henri Pousseur cited by Umberto Eco in *The Open Work*, Anna Cancogni, trans.,
Enactivism and phenomenology provide a rich and powerful explanatory theory for an installation art engagement through performative inquiry; where an active action-interaction co-evolves within a moment in order to make meaning. An approach within relational art installation forms where the relational art form takes its theoretical foundation from the realm of human interactions and social context rather than the independent symbolic space of modern art forms. With performative inquiry, it is the action-interaction of inquiry and learning that draws its theoretical underpinning from phenomenology, enactivism and even complexity theory. Performative inquiry speaks of moments of recognition as moments of learning; a ‘spacemaker’ whose task is to

There are several versions to modernity. The twentieth century became an arena for a struggle between two visions of the world: a modest, rationalist conception, hailing from the eighteenth century, and a philosophy of spontaneity and liberation through the irrational (avant-garde, Dadaists, Surrealists, and the Situationists)—visions of the world opposed to the authoritarian and utilitarian forces to gauge human relations and subjugate people.

Complexity theory here is concerned with the relations between things in distinguishing knowledge from information. Knowledge being the active participation needed for learning and meaning making. What’s interesting in drawing from complexity theory is that as with enactivism, it also explicitly refers to active interaction for gaining knowledge. For further reading on complexity theory see: [http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~cc-texts.html](http://www.wisdom.weizmann.ac.il/~cc-texts.html)

Mark C. Taylor & Esa Saarinen, *Imagologies: Media Philosophy*, London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Taylor & Saarinen frame the ‘imagologist’ as a spacemaker where the task for this person is to make a space for other writers; for there to be such an opening though, everything must remain inconclusive. The absence of answers creates the opening of the media-philosopher’s quest-ion. For Taylor & Saarinen, the only writing worth reading is ‘s-p-a-c-e-y…turn on, tune in, and space out’. Although they speak with humour, it is clear that in today’s technologically-driven world of audio-visual images, the digitally transmitted signal must be read first (decoded) prior to the actual engagement of reading and writing text online. The
create a gap where others can engage. David Appelbaum’s ‘the stop'\textsuperscript{133} can be seen as this spacemaking site of action/learning where the understanding of performance as an action/site of learning maps the action and reflection by the participant(s) through interruptions, disruptions, and corruptions, challenging the status quo of everyday visual culture. As in phenomenology and enactivism, in performative inquiry the majority of meanings are not formulated or pre-determined from an outer world, but enacted or lived through in a co-evolving world of the environment and individual(s).

For enactivism, “the organism and environment enfold into each other and unfold from one another in a circular fashion.”\textsuperscript{134} This circularity represents no permanency, no fixed points of a world that cannot be found apart from embodiment. The Cartesian duality emphasized that the world is pre-given and grounded. The Cartesian argument in today’s spectacle-driven, consumerist society is well represented in the visual culture, where we experience the world as familiar, where we rely more and more on images to tell us about ourselves and the world. This notion of ‘familiarity’ proposes however, a priori that there is a limitation on human possibilities of development and transformation through an (active) engagement with the visual culture. As the world becomes fashioned

non-absent absence of writing (for Taylor and Saarinen) insinuates an irreducible distance into the apparent proximity of speech and vision.

\textsuperscript{133} Appelbaum, \textit{The Stop}. For Appelbaum, the “moment’ is where perception is initiated by “the stop” and involves reference not to a world ‘out there’ but, to a sensitive surface marked with text. This is a time-space continuum where “to perceive is to be myself perceived”(p. 85). The stop moment is a moment of risk, a moment of possibility (in which the participant comes into new awareness, becomes aware that there are new possibilities, other ways of engaging in the world, other lenses with which to engage with others), and so the stop becomes the moment of awareness that choices are possible—these moments of recognition in which we come to new learning, an understanding that something is possible.

\textsuperscript{134} Varela et al, 1991, 217.
by representations, it is through the mindfulness of one’s own experience in order to realize the power of the urge to grasp onto foundations of any sort. Through phenomenological enactivism there is a motivation of a freedom of no-fixed points, an open-ended engagement toward a community of human experience and meaning making which presses for activation and authorship through transformation of the world and the body as one.

“The entire experience into which art flows, the issue of liberty itself, of the expansion of the individual’s consciousness, of the return to myth, the rediscovery of rhythm, dance, the body, the senses, which finally are what we have as weapons of direct, perceptual, participatory knowledge...is revolutionary in the total sense of behaviour.”

Activation, authorship, and community have been used since the 1960s as motivations for almost all artistic attempts to encourage participation in art. The drive towards activating the spectator (so that we are surrounded and given a role within the work, as opposed to ‘just looking at’ a painting, sculpture and so on) becomes over time a desire for some type of social and/or political action. Activation, authorship and community as motivators appear in Debord’s writings. For Debord, the ‘spectacle’ is the representation as a social relationship between people mediated by images which pacifies and is divisive, uniting people only through separation from one another.

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136 Guy Debord French writer, theorist and filmmaker, formed the Situationist International with the artist Asger Jorn and others in 1957. Society of Spectacle (1967) is his influential critique of the social alienation engendered by the primacy of the image as mediator and regulator of capitalist society. Also see, Guy Debord and the Situationist International, 2002.
The specialization of the mass spectacle constitutes [...] the epicenter of separation and noncommunication.\textsuperscript{137}

The spectacle by definition immune from human activity, inaccessible to any projected review or correction. It is the opposite of dialogue. [...] It is the sun that never sets on the empire of modern passivity.\textsuperscript{138}

If spectacle denotes a mode of passivity and subjugation that arrests thought and prevents determination of one’s reality, then it is precisely as an injunction to activity that Debord advocated the construction of ‘situations’. These, he argued, were a logical development of Brechtian epic theatre,\textsuperscript{139} but with one important difference: they would involve the audience function disappearing altogether in the new category of ‘one who lives’. Rather than simply awakening critical consciousness, as in the Brechtian epic model, ‘constructed situations’ aimed to produce new social relationships and thus new social realities. The notion of constructed situations remains an important point of reference for contemporary artists working with live events and people as materials. For Nicholas Bourriaud\textsuperscript{140} in \textit{Relational Aesthetics}, a subsequent number of artists have

\textsuperscript{137} Debord, cited \textit{Guy Debord and the Situationist International}, p. 143.


\textsuperscript{139} German dramatist, Bertolt Brecht’s epic theatre abandons (Aristotelian) long complex plots in favour of ‘situations’ that interrupt the narrative through a disruptive element, such as song. Through this technique of montage and juxtaposition, audiences were led to break their identification with the protagonists on stage and be incited to critical distance. As in Aristotelian theatre which presents the illusion of action on stage filling the audience with sentiment, Brechtian epic theatre compels the spectator to take up a position towards this action. See \textit{Brecht on Theatre}.

\textsuperscript{140} Nicholas Bourriaud, \textit{Relational Aesthetics}.
begun to engage more directly with specific social circumstances and to intervene critically in participatory forms of mass media entertainment.\textsuperscript{141}

In Douglas Gordon’s “Through a looking glass”\textsuperscript{142} is recorded explorations of the body’s engagement with space, body and the world in the excerpt "You talkin' to me?" from Martin Scorseses Taxi Driver.\textsuperscript{143} This relational art installation merges the roles of spectator, participant, spectacle, and site of resistance that interface at the body of spectator/participant as the text for making meaning. Gordon's recorded exploration of the body’s engagement with spatiality, for example, is presented through a looped time\textsuperscript{144} video installation that explores how television media and film dictates our relationship, as spectators, with the mediums as to what is ‘real’ and what is a ‘reflection of the real’. Using ceiling to floor duel screens on opposite walls in the gallery space, the two views trap the spectator between the two images of Travis Bickle, one ‘real’ and the other a ‘reflection of the real’. The projections appear at first to be mirror images of one another but quickly fall out of sync and into a manic dialogue that bounces around the gallery

\textsuperscript{141} See as a further example Matthieu Laurette’s The Great Exchange (2000), a television programme in which the public exchange goods of progressively less value week by week; and Phil Collins, The Return of the Real (2005), which involved a press conference for former stars of Turkish reality television.

\textsuperscript{142} See Scottish artist, Douglas Gordon’s exhibits at the Guggenheim Museum @ http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_193_2.html. In 1996 Gordon won the turner Prize at the Tate Gallery, London for his innovative use of film, video and text. In 1997, he received the Premio 2000 at the Venice Biennale and has recently won the Hugo Boss Prize at the Guggenheim Museum, New York.

\textsuperscript{143} Taxi Driver, Martin Scorseses, Director, USA, 1976.

\textsuperscript{144} Looped time refers to a continuous operating system. A double looped time or segment refers to two simultaneously continuous operating video systems. Besides Nauman’s works, see Douglas Gordon’s exhibits at the Guggenheim Museum @ http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_193_2.html
space, both visually and audibly. In “Through a looking glass” Travis Bickle aims himself at us, the spectator, from two sides. The spectator is deprived of the secure place in the theatre or living room, and become much more vulnerable to Travis’ rage and mental breakdown during the projected looped scene. Gordon traps the spectator inside the two faces of the glass where the words “you” and “me” fly around the spectator’s head like bullets and the spectator ultimately doesn’t know which part of him or her self to protect first. Although the show/see pairing of the images represents film/television-related authoritarianism—the promote/receive images in the installation, ultimately presents in the form that is ‘a face looking at me’—the spectator/participant through the video loop that has specifically captured the spectator/participant as the object within the installation. Incorporating mechanical and electronic imaging, devices (which are already a part of our everyday life such as digitized cameras, video, and film) re-presents the body in this relational art installation form, by calling for the spectators to discuss their space or place in the world; to challenge the forces that appear to dominate them; and to interpret the experiences they are having daily with the technologised visual culture.

For Jacques Ranciere in “The Emancipated Spectator,” “spectatorship is not passivity that has to be turned into activity. It is our normal situation.” For Ranciere, we are all equally capable of enabling the possibility as a spectator/participant to reclaim, critique, and produce culture from each of our respective cultural identities. Through intervention where the integration of ideas, images and actions are played out in a


146 Intervention incites direct involvement of communication between participant(s) in deliberating whatever oppositions are being contested by the artist in the installation
three-dimensional space is one of the key properties of the image: its power of linkage (from the French, reliance). We rely on logos, signs, and icons to produce empathy and sharing all of which generate a bond collectively with the spectators. Images transmitted as technological, digitized codes via the installation site seem to be particularly suitable when it comes to expressing a “hands-on” relationship with the spectator because the installation site tightens the space of relations unlike watching television in a personal space for private consumption and further unlike the live theatre or cinema which only brings small groups together before specific, unmistakable images. At the installation there is no live comment made about what is seen; however, discussion does take place during the show. I see, I perceive, I comment, and I evolve in a unique space and time. The installation art form is a place then that produces a specific sociability (of activation, authorship, and community). Sumara and Davis contend that enactivism draws attention to the knowledge that is formulated within this social space:

Knowledge which we are constantly enacting as we move through the world, but which is relegated to the backdrop, the ground of our conscious experience. And while our enacted or embodied knowledge is available to conscious formulation, it tends to go unnoticed unless something—a surprise, a breech, a happening occurs to draw our attention to it. Thus, according to enactivist theory, actions are not simply manifestations of (internal) understandings. They are themselves understandings.\(^{147}\)

Perception for Gordon then is not simply a cognitive activity, as Descartes would suggest, for Gordon, the artist/participant, who engages in the experience, it is always

embodied. As Merleau-Ponty states, the embodied human being can see, move around, and position his/herself in relation to things, and handle them.\textsuperscript{148} Sight, touch and movement provide particular ways of entering into relationships with things, and none of these can be achieved by a disembodied mind in a two-dimensional space. Hence, inter-relationality for the spectator/participant is dispersed throughout the body rather than concentrated in the mind. To understand the transformations of the relational interaction between the body and the art installation form then, takes in the complex interplay of the individual and environment, connecting knowledge with action and the body—the body as the site of perception—the site of understanding. Davis et al in “Cognition, Co-Emergence, Curriculum” describes ‘coming to know’ as a creative process of action and interaction from experiences that are shared.\textsuperscript{149} Performative arts educator Lynn Fels furthers this understanding as “learning [as] a process in which ‘the students and teacher [the participants] are seen as bringing forth a world together’…the teacher and students ‘shape’ the world together.”\textsuperscript{150} For Fels, “knowledge is fluid, changing and personally and situationally interdependent.”\textsuperscript{151} In “Laying Down a Path in Walking,” Varela says, “…what we do…is what we know, and ours is but one of many possible worlds. It is not

\textsuperscript{148} Merleau-Ponty, 1962.


\textsuperscript{151} Fels, “In Dialogue and Interaction with Grumet: Erasing the Line,” 1995. The concept of knowledge as ‘knowing is doing is being’ is explored by Davis et al (1996). Fels includes the word ‘creating’ to embrace our imagining of the ‘not yet real’ which is embodied within our being becoming. For further on this see: Fels, \textit{in the wind clothes dance on a line}, Univ. of British Columbia doctoral Thesis, 1999.
a mirroring of the world, but the laying down of a world."\(^{152}\) From this perspective the self is regarded as being dynamic, constantly changing and re-configuring itself. Therefore, an enactivist perspective shifts the focus from the components of the experiences such as persons, objects, places, to the relations that bind these together in action. If cognition is understood to be the ‘coming to know’, learning as the transformations, then knowing is being/doing, In Appelbaum’s words, this ‘knowing/doing’ is the site where “the body’s light sees and is able to do.”\(^{153}\) For Fels, her enactivist deduction takes in art as a significant factor in making meaning. Fels asserts ‘art equals knowledge’ which recognizes the location to be critical is to be creative; thus, knowledge is creating. She argues in light of drama education:

> If it is to be successful, [drama/arts education] must embrace both the critical and the creative in the making of ‘new possible worlds’. If one criticizes, yet fails to introduce creative action, the reproduction as \textit{status quo} continues.”\(^{154}\)

For Fels, as with Appelbaum, the body surface is the location; the site of perception, the site of resistance. It is through effort and resistance that awareness, or Appelbaum’s \textit{the stop},\(^{155}\) is opened up. To understand this surfacing of awareness within a relational


\(^{153}\) Appelbaum, p. 121. Appelbaum’s ‘stop moment’ is a moment of risk, a moment of possibility in which the participant comes into new awareness and becomes aware of his/her possibilities—other ways of engaging in the world through the body in action. Fels, 1995.

\(^{154}\) Refer to Nauman’s video loop here where I refer to the looped time as \textit{the face looking at me}. Time ceases to be past, present, future; it is in the moment, and “the stop” brings awareness back to the surface, out of hiding. This is the “moment” for Appelbaum which involves reference not to a world ‘out there’ but to a sensitive surface marked with text—“to perceive is to be myself perceived” See Appelbaum,
encounter between the body and an art installation form can only take place in the moment of active participation through a creative performative inquiry space, or ‘stop’ which ‘smashes against the shore like a wave’ shocking the spectator/participant into action and inter-action. The transformation of learning and being become one in the space of inter-action between the real and the ‘not-yet-real’ world of a relational art form. It is the interstices of these worlds, which Fels refers to as “space-moments of learning” (moments of recognition), where the participant individually and collectively realize(s)/recognize(s) ‘not-yet-known’ possibilities within the active-action interaction presence which “moves us, silences us, gives us pause.” For Fels, this is the unknown becoming known.

The possibility of a relational art installation form points today to art forms which have a radical upsetting of the aesthetic, cultural, and political goals of the ‘real’ and the ‘not-yet-real’ worlds introduced in modernity. The artist, spectator and participant all

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*The Stop*, p. 85.

156 Fels, 1999, pp. 42-43. Fels refers to the real and the not-yet real worlds, not as separate worlds, but as co-evolving in creative action and inter-action. The interactions between participants encompass interactions of real world(s) and not-yet-real world(s) as experienced by individual participants and embodied within the action-interaction of performance.

157 Fels, 1999, p. 53.

158 The twentieth century was an arena of struggle between two visions of the world: a modest, rationalist conception, stemming from the eighteenth century, and a philosophy of spontaneity and liberation through the irrational (Dada, Surrealism, Situationists), both visions which were opposed to the authoritarian and utilitarian forces eager to gauge human relations and ultimately subjugate people. The modern emancipation plan of the avant-garde, from Dadaism to the Situationists fell within this tradition of changing culture, attitudes and individual and social living conditions. In the twentieth century, the avant-garde was the scout; today, the troupes are cautious around the uncertainties—art was intended to prepare and
dwell in the circumstances the present offers, so as to turn the links with the physical and conceptual world into a lasting world. Today, we catch the world on the move, ebbing and flowing. We, however, have the opportunity to also be the crest on the waves that shock the wreck on the shore to challenge the practices that overlap and intersect with constructions of images of the ‘real’ and ‘not-yet-real’ of our immediate everyday life. We don’t have to be the ‘wreck on the shore’ anymore.

“...in the 1950s and 1960s, people were at first amazed to see little people in their homes on a thing called a television, and the real changed them. But we have since got over how “spooky” television is, just as we have quickly become used to and have assimilated the capabilities of the computer and the World Wide Web—it is just part and parcel of what today is ‘real’....”

For French philosopher Jean Baudrillard, the late twentieth century was a period during which our encounters with images were more real than real. Today, we have passed from an era in which ‘reproduction’ and ‘representation’ are the most crucial aspects of how our meaning making relation with images works. Baudrillard writes that images are fascinating but not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation, but on the contrary, because they are “sites of the disappearance of meaning and representation; sites in which we are caught up quite apart from any judgement of reality.” For Baudrillard, the simulacra is the new image, a

clare a future world: today it is modeling possible universes. Artworks are ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever scale chosen by the artist.

159 Carla Glen, English Faculty Lecturer, University of Northern British Columbia, Television Studies 209 and 309 lecture notes, 2007-2008.
161 Simulacra/simulacrum is the simulation of reality in which Baudrillard argues humans engage with on a first order, rather than engage with reality itself. The simulacra is the reality, it no longer is a representation of reality. See Jean Baudrillard,
constructed reality; and for Debord, the concept of ‘spectacle’ represents a mechanism of pacifying social forces by distracting us from “recovering the full range of our human powers through a creative process.” As with Baudrillard’s ‘simulacra’, images then are not sites of production of meaning and representation, but rather, sites of the disappearance of meaning and representation—sites in which we are caught quite apart from a new reality. The spectacle in a constructed visual culture becomes another narrative and performance that legitimizes, rationalizes, and camouflages production and consumption in our everyday lives. Late capitalism according to Debord, enables social control in organizations through a celebration of manic consumption and production; a masquerade of individual development and social progress framed in a material-driven world. Debord argues that “the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images.” In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, then the spectacle is the dominant model of social life. Spectacle builds on Marx’s concept of commodity fetish, “where the tangible world is replaced by a selection of images which

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162 The constructed reality or in other words, the reified spectacle of visual culture corresponds to the moment in society where commodity completes social life. It is not that the relationship to commodities is plain to see, but commodities are now all that there is to see; the world seen is as the world of the commodity. See Guy Debord’s _The Society o the Spectacle_; Best, S. & Kellner, D.’s _The Postmodern Turn_, New York: The Guildford Press, 1997.

163 Best & Kellner, _The Postmodern Turn_, p. 84.

164 Performance here refers to an active action done by a person(s) in the present, real time.

exist above it, and which simultaneously impose themselves as the tangible par
excellence,” or in the words of cultural theorists, Steven Best and Douglas Kellner:

   When images determine and overtake reality, life is no longer lived directly and actively. The spectacle involves a form of social relations in which individuals passively consume commodity spectacles and services without active and creative involvement.  

The spectacle of a constructed visual culture then is the material re-construction of the ‘transcendent’ search; the moment “when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life” as an image. It is the point when life becomes theatre, where the line between theatre-as-metaphor and life-is-theatre becomes so blurred we no longer pause to reflect on the difference. For Baudrillard, this hyperreal realm of the constructed visual culture is an industry that is characteristic of postmodernity. In this

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166 Ch. 2, Part 36.


168 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* [1788], Part 1, sec. 1, p. 156.

169 Debord, Part 42.

170 Hyperreal and/or hyperreality have come to represent the simulated, constructed materialistic reality of commodity and consumerism. See Debord, *Society of Spectacle*.

171 Fredric Jameson, 1991. Postmoderism is a general cultural movement that challenges the convention of the previous modernist movement of the twentieth century that placed its argument in the Cartesian model of absolute truths and overarching meta-narratives in science and the arts. In postmodernism, there is a mixing of styles, a tolerance of ambiguity, an emphasis on diversity, and acceptance of innovation and change (which primarily draws on elements of pastiche). It does not present a single point of view, but many views—thus, many interpretations and meanings. Some theorists associated with postmodernism include: Jean-Francois Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, and Fredric Jameson. The theoretical approaches most commonly seen as postmodernist are deconstruction, post-structuralism, and neopragmatism (see Carol Nicholson, “Postmodernism,
realm, the constructed visual culture is a simulacrum, a hyperreal, simulated cultural condition that bears no relation to reality but functions as its own reality. The real and the imaginary continually “implode into each other.”\textsuperscript{172} The result is that reality and what Baudrillard calls ‘simulations’\textsuperscript{173} are experienced with no difference—butting up against each other on a continuum: for example, art and society, art and everyday life. Debord refers to this hyperreality of culture as the ‘society of spectacle’, a condition where social relationships between people are mediated by the commodified images.\textsuperscript{174} The spectacle, according to postmodern theorist, Jean-Francois Lyotard, is above all, a legitimizing mechanism of social control that masquerades as a celebration in individual ‘betterment’ by recycling pseudo-reforms as social progress.\textsuperscript{175}

“Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture.”\textsuperscript{176}

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Feminism, and Education: The Need for Solidarity,” in \textit{Educational Theory} 40, no. 1, 1990, p. 198). Others which could be included are Friedrich Nietzsche, the later Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Kuhn—even Jurgen Habermas, with his critical theory in hermeneutics and communicative ethics has postmodern elements, despite Habermas’ insistence that he is furthering the project of modernity rather than rejecting it. There is a great overlap between different schools of thought, and the pervasiveness of the postmodern outlook doesn’t fit into a neat central core—therefore there are many approaches, many outlooks, many meanings constructed.
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\textsuperscript{172} Baudrillard, \textit{Simulacra and Simulations}, 1994, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{173} Baudrillard, 1994, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{174} Debord, 1967.

\textsuperscript{175} J-F Lyotard, \textit{The Postmodern Condition}, 1979.

\textsuperscript{176} Allen Ginsberg, in \textit{The World of the Image}, Trudy Smoke & Alan Robbins, New York: Pearson Longman, 2007, p. 158. Ginsberg is referring to a most dangerous version of manipulation: not simple persuasion on the part of image-makers, but a desire for outright control.
One of the most powerful aspects of spectacles of images in our visual culture is the images’ ability to affect our attitudes and viewpoints by injecting themselves into our everyday lives. Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman assert ‘a propaganda model’ in *Manufacturing Consent* with the understanding that the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general public. The function of the mass media messages being to amuse, entertain, inform, and to further inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. Spectacles of visual culture equate material accumulation with happiness while ignoring the three billion people living on less than a dollar a day and the exhaustion of finite planet resources. All of us in some form or another are designers, reformers, and accumulators of spectacles of everyday life. Each of us needs to distance, to pause, to be able to read spectacle behaviour, to know how others’ change spectacles through the “will to power,” and to understand the consequences of spectacle managing in, for example, the entertainment field. For Ranciere, “we learn and teach, we act and know as spectators [of the everyday] who link

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177 Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1988. According the Chomsky and Herman, a propaganda approach to media coverage for example suggests a systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to important domestic power interests; observable in story choices and the volume and quality of coverage (i.e. 1975 media coverage of Pol Pot’s Cambodia genocide vs East Timor’s invasion by Indonesia).

178 Friedrich Nietzsche, in *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a philosophy of the Future*, 1979, uses the phrase ‘will to power’ which as a form describes manipulation by certain people under certain conditions where (in the visual culture for example images) can be used as an effective means of directing public opinion. This is specifically seen today in advertising and propaganda. To a lesser extent but more significant is the benign manipulation of individuals where images appear to be significant to us in our everyday.
what they see with what they have seen and told, done and dreamt." The spectacle distance becomes an important starting point of engagement in understanding as to why as consumers and producers of products, services, and images we willingly accept a life scripted by others who appear to be better storytellers and performers. For Fels, her work in performative inquiry “explores and maps unfolding landscapes that twist in sudden gusts of recognition like clothes on a line.” It is in this moment of pausing, of distancing; of surfacing ‘unfolding landscapes’ which interrupt, disrupt and challenge the spectacle of the visual culture through the active human participation that a shared responsibility for meaning making of the unfolding landscapes of the visual culture and our everyday living encounters occur. It is this sudden recognition that becomes the significance of art’s relevance in a constructed visual culture—a twist in the direction of things that eliminates dualities. Two sides of reality appear, the body and the world, but there is only one surface of perception, the body. The surface texts of sensations and perceptions can be read as indications of the presence of the world, of everyday life when performative inquiry is engaged in, for example, the installation art form.

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies, Relational Architecture 6,” is a work activated by the participation of the passersby, and includes more than 1000 square

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180 Fels, 1999, p. 29.

181 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a Mexican-Canadian installation artist who installs large-scale, interactive artworks in heavy-traffic zones of cities around the world. He explores the intersection between new technologies, public space, and active participation. Along with David Rokeby and Luc Courchesne, (also Canadian installation art artists who work with new media), Lozano-Hemmer has received the Prix Ars Electronica Award for distinction in Interactive Art. Body Movies, 2001-2002, see a series of images from Body Movies:
metres of projections onto Linz, Austria’s Old City Hall building. In this work, thousands of portraits taken on the streets of Linz, Rotterdam, Madrid, Mexico City and Montreal are projected on giant screens using robotically controlled projectors located on towers around the square. Powerful xenon light sources placed at ground level wash out the portraits, and as people cross the square, their shadows appear on the screen and reveal them. Each time the shadows of the participants match the scale and shape of the projected images, an automatic command introduces the new set of portraits. As the audience discovers the process, the viewers become the participants, and the playing becomes more sophisticated. As the participants express their identities in the huge public forum, the result is an artwork that invites its participants to retake urban space. “Body Movies” takes place on such a large scale and public space and yet the work is intimate and allows the distancing for reflection between spectators/participants and themselves, and how spectators/participants present themselves publicly. Lozano-Hemmer says “the intimate relationship between the interactive art work and the viewer is an integral part of the artwork…personalizing experiences, establishing close relationships, but it is also important to look for more theatrical kinds of interactivity.”

Today in our technologically driven world, we live in a culture dominated by new media: computer screens and television sets—a culture which has become the paradigm for global visual culture practices ruled by virtual media images. We skim the surface as


users between the real and the not-yet-real worlds unwilling to separate what is real; we become what Merleau-Ponty says as ‘the wrecks on the shore’ where subjectivity or the disorder of meaning is unchallenged.\textsuperscript{183} It is much easier to let someone else direct or navigate our path to understanding than to take responsibility for the meaning to be made. If we believe that the visible of the real in everyday life has been made a little harder to understand then, how do we come to challenge the seeming obvious and immediate world around us? How do we come to understand and value through an art form the relevance in challenging the limits of our perceptions of the spectacle in our immediate everyday? In this technologically driven world, challenging perception and navigating through a relational interaction with an art form such as Lozano-Hemmer’s work, may create an image-space interface of meaning making, in order to shape our lived experience. If culture, in the context of new media, becomes something we "do" then it's the interface that defines how we do it and how the "doing" feels: the body becomes the interface. As Merleau-Ponty accounts throughout \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}, our body as a physical-biological structure and a lived-phenomenological sensorimotor structure engages in the world as an embodied person. The body as interface then is charged with meaning through the relational experiences and encounters through the direct and active immersion in the world.\textsuperscript{184}

\textit{Untitled (Still) 1992 at 303 Gallery, New York... Tiravanija moved everything he found in the gallery office and storeroom into the main exhibition space, including the director, who was obliged to work in public: List of materials: lots of people.}\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{183} Merleau-Ponty, pp. 240-41.

\textsuperscript{184} Merleau-Ponty, 1962.

\textsuperscript{185} Rirkrit Tiravanija challenges the spectator with his installation-performances where he cooks vegetable curry for people attending the museum or gallery in which he has
The body in performance, whether in everyday living or in the theatrical, is one of the oldest types of relational encounters, and this relational action has been used and is still used as a direct visual experience of images as a way to make the experience for the spectator more immediate—to make the spectator feel more "there." Tiravanija’s Kunstverein project “Untitled (tomorrow is another day)” reiterated the assertion also presented in “Untitled (Still)” that the unique combination of art and life offered an impressive experience of togetherness to everybody. For Tiravanija, the involvement of the audience and the fostering of relationships between them appear to be the main focus of his work: the food seems to be a means to allow other issues to develop.\(^{186}\) With been invited to work. The phrase ‘lots of people’ appears in a list of materials for each piece, indicating that the spectator’s participation is crucial. See images @: http://images.google.ca/imgrs?imgurl=http://www.deutsche-bank-kunst.com/art/images/465/41.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.db-artmag.de/art/2006/5/e/1/465.php&usg=__JhvQoQnD43pJ7dloWhFa8Ddrh1M=&h=190&w=280&sz=12&hl=en&start=13&tbnid=lg52Z4IUW4A4_M:&tbnh=77&tbnw=114&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dinstallation%2Bart%2B%2522Untitled%2BTomorrow%2Bis%2Banother%2Bday%2522%2Bby%2BRirkrit%2BTiravanija%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official%26sa%3DG also see works: Untitled (tomorrow is another day), installed at Kolnischer Kunstverein, Köln, 1996. Here he built a wooden reconstruction of his New York apartment that was open to the public twenty-four hours a day. People could use the kitchen, make meals, and so on @: http://images.google.ca/imgrs?imgurl=http://www.deutsche-bank-kunst.com/art/images/465/48.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.db-artmag.de/art/2006/5/e/1/465.php&usg=__mA72PP69XmUMzJB-PTcypUA0W-c=&h=238&w=370&sz=21&hl=en&start=1&tbnid=QfcHCoN4VQ2RiM:&tbnh=78&tbnw=122&prev=/images%3Fq%3DInstallation%2Bart%2B%2522Untitled%2BTomorrow%2Bis%2Banother%2Bday%2522%2Bby%2BRirkrit%2BTiravanija%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official%26sa%3DG

\(^{186}\) Historical precursors for this type of art include Michael Asher’s untitled installation at the Clare Copley Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1974, in which he removed the partition between exhibition space and gallery office; or Gordon Matta-Clark’s restaurant Food, opened with his artist colleagues in the early 1970s. Other artists who presented food as a social and artistic event in the 1960s and early 1970s included Allan Ruppersberg, Daniel Spoerri, and the Fluxus group. For further
contemporary “theatre” experiences, the ‘performative’ experiences traditionally remain things that happen to the spectator. In 1964, however, Antonin Artaud in The Theatre and its Double argued that the stage and the auditorium should be abolished and replaced by a single site in which a direct communication would be re-established between the spectator and the spectacle, between the actor and the spectator, from the notion that the spectator, placed in the middle of the action, would be engulfed and physically affected by the spectacle. Artaud further argued that culture is not self-evident but predicated on protest. Using the totalizing crisis of a plague as a revolutionary metaphor, he called for the production of spectacle in performance to resist, expose, and transform the ‘petrified culture’ (the passivity) of the spectators (Merleau-Ponty’s ‘wrecks on the shore’). Artaud pressed for the extension of the historically and socially constructed performance space of the theatre to move beyond the proscenium to include the spectator. In doing this, Artaud established an emancipatory pedagogy of a postmodern art form where the spectacle of resistance is performance, where individual bodies and experiences of spectators, interrogate dominant codes of historical performance practices. Rather than a deterrence of traditional theatre art forms, Artaud’s open discourse of ideas

insight into Tiravanija’s work go to: http://www.culturebase.net/artist.php?905


190 Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, pp. 241.

191 Artaud, p. 22.
and interpretations encourages active participation in the theatre. His emancipatory pedagogy becomes a paradox of ‘Aristotelian drama’ — Artaud’s performance becomes multicentric, participatory, indeterminate, interdisciplinary, reflexive, and intercultural.

As with Artaud, the importance here is to recognize the site to resist, expose and transform the constructed visual culture, in order to challenge it. To some degree, it is what Debord refers to as ‘talking its language’. However, Debord’s strategies are to engage and mime the methodology in order to analyze the spectacle of culture. In a relational art installation form, such as in Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies” or Tiravanija’s “Untitled” works, the spectacle of the private body does not narrativise a totalizing agenda in advance—instead it represents the ironic possibility to resist the spectacle of the public by way of the body’s memory and cultural history. The premise in this thesis, of challenging the perception of the spectacle in visual culture, is not to mime the methodology as Debord refers, but to expose and disrupt the constructed spectacle(s) through embodiment—through the body’s action. Performance art theorist, Charles R. Garoian says that in pedagogical terms the reflexive nature of a postmodern performance “provides resistance precisely by not offering ‘messages’ that fit comfortably into popular representations of political thought, but by challenging the...
process of representation itself.” Hence, the purpose in challenging the spectacle through a relational art form is argued in support by Garoian’s performance art pedagogy as a space of resistance which is “not about the achievement of cultural superiority but rather in the creation of a contingent space wherein ideas and their means of representations are continually reconsidered.”

Embodiment through a relational art installation form re-presents the possibility of challenging the constructed visual culture by way of repositioning the body as the cultural stage, as the site of resistance and production recognizing cultural difference as a vital resource to develop a broader understanding of reality; in doing so, it represents the praxis of postmodern educational theory where subjectivity is performed within the contentious zones of culture and where it confronts the face of cultural domination—in the simulacra. Paulo Freire argues in *Education For Critical Consciousness* for an ‘integration’ with one's context which is distinctively a human activity. He says that integration results from the capacity for oneself to adapt to reality and have the critical

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198 Postmodernism’s plurality of thought in its educational theory, its diversity of cultures, and open systems of communication did not supplant modernism, rather, argues H.A. Giroux in *Border crossings: Cultural workers and the politics of education*, New York: Routledge, 1993, p. 63, that there is a signaling of a shift toward a set of social conditions that are reconstituting the social, cultural, and geopolitical map of the world, while simultaneously producing new forms of cultural criticism. Giroux’s pedagogy represents the contested zone—the liminal, contingent, and ephemeral spaces of performance art—where cultural codes and binaries are intentionally challenged. Thus, the limen is a wider context where multiple discourses can co-exist and serve as multiple strategies for learning.

capacity to make choices and to transform that reality. Constructing an arousing participatory interactivity between spectator and image/spectacle, reception and production in a technologically driven world, hinges today on the dissolution of any distinction between the spectator and image/spectacle, reception and production: all become one, the integrated text, or in a technologically driven world, the body as the interface. But how does the interactivity due to its active participatory nature offer a more profound experience of making meaning than traditional forms of art in a technologically driven world? The interactivity is drawn on the integration with one’s context, and as Freire says, it is a ‘distinctly human activity’. And further, Merleau-Ponty’s argument ‘that our encounters are understood to be of a lived experience, the direct immersion in the world—this is where we come to understand our relation with the world or everyday life’.

In *Where the Stress Falls*, Susan Sontag provides a useful impetus in regards to “liveness” or “presence” in activating and/or challenging audience reception of different media (art) forms. Although Sontag argues between television and film, it is through the differences of dimension which ultimately in her argument reveals that film rather than television holds the ritual elements of location, lighting and communality which become her criteria for the “live” experience of cinema over television viewing. “No amount of mourning will revive the vanished rituals—erotic, ruminative—of the darkened theater.”200 Extending her criteria however into the realm of performance in multi-media art forms (such as performance and installation art, where film, video and digital projections are used in conjunction with live performers), an interesting parallel can be

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drawn with Benjamin’s essay on Brecht’s epic theatre, where Benjamin discusses
Brecht’s concerns to have an audience “that is relaxed and follows the action without
strain,”\(^{201}\) (which Benjamin relates to the relaxation of reading a novel). Benjamin does,
however, stress the key difference that the epic theatre audience “always appears as a
collective, and this differentiates it from the reader, who is always alone with his text.”\(^{202}\)
“Collaboration is the answer but what is the question.”\(^{203}\)

To enter into the human activity of performance in an art installation form is to break
the frame of the firmly contained technologically driven passive practices of engagement
within the visual culture (however shocking or imagery affecting it is) and personally
confront the spectacle by entering into a site which disrupts, interrupts and shocks an
awareness of presence for the spectator. Performances whether ritualistic and/or dramatic
create and make realities vivid enough to terrify and/or amuse. Through active
presencing, there is the altering of moods, social relations, bodily dispositions, and states
of mind. The performance becomes an action of embodied acts, in specific sites,
witnessed by others (and/or watching oneself) in real time. For performance theorist
Peggy Phelan, this is the ‘ontology of performance’—“only life is in the
present…Performance occurs over a time which will not be repeated. It can be performed
again, but this repetition marks it as ‘different’.”\(^{204}\) Further then, the performance is the

\(^{201}\) Benjamin, “What is Epic Theatre,” in *Illuminations*, p. 147.

\(^{202}\) Ibid.

\(^{203}\) Hans Ulrich Obrist, in Hal Foster’s “Chat Rooms, “ published as “Arty Party,” in

\(^{204}\) Peggy Phelan. “The Ontology of Performance” in *Unmarked: The Politics of
event done in a moment in time and space; remembered, mis-remembered, interpreted and revisited by a spectator/participant through performative inquiry. For Swiss artist, Thomas Hirschhorn, however, the making of art does not take the form of activating the spectator in space:

I do not want to invite or oblige viewers to become interactive with what I do; I do not want to activate the public. I want to give myself, to engage myself to such as degree that viewers confronted with the work can take part and become involved, but not as actors.

For Phelan though, performance honours the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame (such as in Hirschhorn’s displays) can have an experience of value that leaves no visible trace afterward. The exposure to Hirschhorn’s art works, for example, do then allow for spacemaking or ‘the stop’ to happen through a performative inquiry. Significantly it is with performance in the now, real time, the present; the fact that its only continued existence is in the spectator’s memory is what enables it to “sidestep the economy of reproduction.” For Phelan, performance’s independence

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205 Thomas Hirschhorn, Swiss artist (b. 1957) has repeatedly rejected the term ‘installation’ as a description for his practice, instead preferring the commercial and pragmatic resonance of the word ‘display’. He wants his work ‘measured’ as a practice as sculpture is the broadest sense (refer to Beuy’s concept of Social Sculpture). Hirschhorn asserts that he does not make political art, but makes art politically. Interestingly, he does not regard his work as ‘open-ended’ or requiring a completion by the spectator (as other installation artists), since his work is dependent upon how the work is made.

206 Thomas Hirschhorn, in interview with Okwui Enwezor, in Thomas Hirschborn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, Chicago, 2000, p. 27. See images @:

http://images.google.ca/images?gbv=2&hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&sa=3&q=installation+art+"Jumbo+Spoons+and+Big+Cake"+by+Thomas+Hirschhorn&btnG=Search+images

207 Phelan, p. 146.
from mass production, technologically, economically, and linguistically, is its greatest strength.\textsuperscript{208} Thus, the performance is the action that enters into uncharted territory. It becomes an action that can only be charted or mapped after the event. This charting or mapping of such events repositions the body from its “marginalised status” and reinstates its “capacity to act and struggle.”\textsuperscript{209} Similarly Fels argues the significance of moments of recognition, mapped in reflection after a performative inquiry engagement:

Mapping in exploration is multi-dimensional as students [participants] (re)act in role as themselves, imagine ‘what if?’ and questioning ‘what matters? so what? who cares? What happens?’ within their journey and shared journey-landscapes and through reflection, come to understanding.\textsuperscript{210}

Fels’ ‘mapping in exploration’ embodies both the critical and creative action/interaction through personal and communal reflection. It is a “shared, remembering, and conversation, writing (in or out of role), (re)imagining, and questioning both within, during and following.”\textsuperscript{211} For Fels, the map exploration invites continued action and interaction, a temporal “trespassing” through possible new worlds.

The challenge for the postmodern spectator/participant engaging in a performative inquiry art installation form, according to postmodern theorist Fredric Jameson, is to cognitively map one’s individual social relationship to local, national, and international

\textsuperscript{208} Ibid, p. 149.


\textsuperscript{210} Fels, 1999, p. 46.

\textsuperscript{211} Ibid, p. 46.
cultural realities.\textsuperscript{212} For Baudrillard, the social charting or mapping of postmodern cultural reality is a place where the map itself is the reality. And for Fels, the mapping is the articulation of ‘reflection-in-action’, as with Varela, ‘the path we lay down for walking’. Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies” or Tiravanija’s “Untitled” works, for example, become maps. In Baudrillard’s analogy,\textsuperscript{213} however, the map is what people live in and engage with—the simulacra of reality; for Baudrillard, it is reality that is crumbling away from disuse. The relevance of the arts today may be the ways of living and becoming models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist. The artists, spectators, participants and the art form dwell in the circumstances the present offers, so as to turn the setting of our life (the links with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world. We therefore catch the world on the move—on the crest of a wave.

“Wanderer, the road is your footsteps… you lay down a path in walking… and when turning around you see the road you’ll never step on again…only tracks on ocean foam.”\textsuperscript{214}


\textsuperscript{213} Baudrillard, analogy to is to a fable derived from “On Exactitude in Science” by Jorge Luis Borges (1946, Spanish). In it, a great Empire created a map that was so detailed it was as large as the Empire itself. The actual map grew and decayed as the Empire itself conquered or lost territory. When the Empire crumbled, all that was left was the map. In Baudrillard’s rendition, it is the map that people live in, the simulation of reality, and it is reality that is crumbling way from disuse. For the art of cartography in the fable “On Exactitude of Science” see Suarez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes., Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658 in Jorge Luis Borges’ \textit{Collected Fictions}, Andrew Hurley, trans., New York: Penguin, 1999.

\textsuperscript{214} Varela in “Laying Down a Path in Walking,” uses Antonio Machado’s poem as a biological metaphor view that there is no split between what we do and what we know. Knowledge and the world are inseparable as the inseparability between perception and action. There is not a mirroring of the world, but the laying down of a world. See Fels, 1999, and Varela in \textit{GAIA: A Way of Knowing—Political}
Today, it is no longer possible to simply walk through a contemporary work as a space, but the space becomes presented as a point of time to be lived through, like an opening to unlimited discussion. As in the open-ended, participatory work of art of Tiravanija’s public relationships or Lozano-Hemmer’s large-scale public installation work, the work of the Radix Theatre Society also is an event of an interactive premise of relational art: all three of these artists’ installation/performative works are inextricably linked by their ‘social form’ capable of producing human inter-relationships. Tiravanija’s, Lozano-Hemmer’s, and Radix’s works can all be understood to be political of course in implication, but also emancipatory in effect. Rather than explore urban space, as Lozano-Hemmer’s work does, for example, Radix explores socially relevant topics through the creation of experimental, interdisciplinary installations that are always site specific. In “Assembly” for example, themes of wholeness and fragmentation, are gathered around the notions of the body, mind, and soul. The work is comprised of three sections: Experiment #1: The Abandoned Body; followed by Experiment #2: The Fractured Mind; and Experiment #3: The Shattered Soul. The three parts form “Assembly,” a surreal self-improvement seminar event that confronts the desire for unity in an increasingly divided world. In the work, four seminar leaders come together to share the secret to becoming whole as they gradually fall part during their conference meeting—ironically, the work is held in a conference room at a local Vancouver hotel.

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Radix Theatre Society, Vancouver, B.C., [1988 incorporated) is an experimental performance company that investigates socially relevant topics through the creation of original, interdisciplinary works/events that are site specific. In 2007, Radix won the Vancouver Sun’s Critics Choice Award for Innovation at the Jessie Richardson Awards with the work, Assembly.
Bizarre breakout sessions offer us, the spectator/participants, parody and absurdist drama, as we unlock our deepest desires and try to remember what getting together was all about. “Assembly” has ushered us in and has spread the hands-on experience: it is the tangible symbol and the historical setting of the state of our everyday life, that “state of encounter imposed on people” to use Louis Althusser’s expression, contrasting with that dense and ‘trouble-free’ jungle which the natural state once was, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a jungle hampering any lasting encounter. This system of encounters whether it is with Radix, Tiravanija or Lozano-Hemmer for example, has ended up producing linked artistic practices: an art form where the layers are surfaces linked by inter-subjectivity, and which takes being-together as a central theme—the “encounter” between the spectator and the art installation work, and further, the elaboration of the possibility of a participatory collective meaning making encounter.

Merleau-Ponty said:

Man taken as a concrete being is not a psyche joined to an organism, but the movement to and fro of existence which at one time allows itself to take corporeal form and at others moves towards personal acts.

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217 Jean-Jacques Rousseau eighteenth century philosopher had a view that man’s nature was inherently good and that the evils are inherent in civilization. One of his most famous works: *The Social Contract*. For further reading on Rousseau see, Ricahrd Tarnas’s *The Passion of the Western Mind: Understanding the Ideas That Have Shaped Our World View*, New York: Ballentine Books, 1991.

In a society devoted to and often "dominated by spectacle" it follows that images are almost always cast into a performative context, as Ranciere said, ‘spectatorship is our normal situation—we link what we see with what we have seen and been told, what we’ve done and what we’ve dreamt’. The act of engaging with images is as much a bodily function as it is a cultural one. Maurice Merleau-Ponty centres on corporeality and the embodiment of consciousness. This concern with the body led Merleau-Ponty to an understanding of subjectivity that I believe resonates in relation to inquiry and relational art installation forms. What we define as the visible, in the form of an image or the act of seeing, never fully contains within it the range of experiences we need to maintain a genuine feeling of control. The inquiry then, the site of possession reveals itself as ephemeral moving from the vertical: paintings on a wall, the television, film, or computer screen to a horizontal shift to a three-dimensional installation space. Enactivist theory shifts the focus from the components of the experiences such as persons, objects, places, to the relations that bind these things together in action in the space. It is not about the transmission of information from one site to another, which implies a separation; the surface, the perceptual surface of the body renders inner and outer functionally, but not spatially distinct. Through the shift towards surface awareness, the focus is not on the distant and indifferent, but presses in a multi-direction in which the visual culture of everyday life is revealed as sensations which can be read as indications of the presence of the world, or everyday life. It is through this bodily attentiveness that art aligns itself with meaning making and understanding.

219 Debord.

220 Ranciere.
Like the history of phenomenology itself, performative inquiry in art installations re-presents simply another way to challenge the evolving and increasingly complex responses to a set of essentially phenomenological questions concerning spatiality, embodiment, and perception. Installation art presents a visualisation of interior experiences three-dimensionally in real time where the space is a canvas. By altering this ‘canvas’ the artist and spectator/participant is pressed individually and collectively so as to evoke (complex) thoughts and moods associated with the pieces within the work, inviting the spectator to participate in the process of creatively making meaning.

Actively engaging with the artwork draws attention to the entanglement between the participant and his/her perceiver-dependent world and its passive practices of engagement. By presenting multiple assemblages of sites of understanding through a variety of installations, the inter-play between the art form and spectator/participant is what differentiates the spectator’s presence in installation art from the virtually eclipsed works of art (ideally, abstract painting and sculpture). Installation art insists on the spectator’s physical presence precisely in order to subject the spectator/participant to an experience of decentring. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is an account of our everyday relationships in the world and is not intended to engender specific mechanisms of subjective fragmentation. Installation art implicitly structures the spectator a priori as centred, by seeking to contrive a moment of decentring (See Bruce Nauman’s “Live-Taped Corridor” installation example in Chapter 2, where he sets-up possible ‘moments of recognition’ of tension for the spectator/participant’s anticipation and actual experience through the “Corridor” action-site of engagement and reflection). It is the overlap of what the installation’s subject matter is with the spectator/participant’s actual
experience (as seen in Nauman’s “Corridor” installation work) where we can genuinely feel confused, disorientated and destabilized by our encounter with the work. Thus, the personal and collective stories emerge through the deconstruction of the idea that there is not one complete story or one complete site of understanding for the perceiver-independent participator. By attempting to expose the spectator/participant to the ‘reality’ of the constructed visual culture by literally immersing him/her in a space contiguous with the real world, the spectator/participant has the opportunity to become more equipped to negotiate actions in and around the visual culture in the world and with other people.
Chapter 2  **Body Embodied**

“Art no longer wants to respond to the excess of commodities and signs but to a lack of connections.”

Everyday life today is characterized by a constant flow of images. On billboards, magazines, newspapers, television, film, and the Internet, the fast-paced production of the technology of disseminating images has revolutionized the way we communicate with and influence one another daily. How can we come to actively understand the role visual culture plays in our inter-relationships and further, how we can reverse its affect on the way we think, act and interact with it and one another? In Chapter I, section 1.2, I presented Merleau-Ponty’s account of the body and the world as ‘one through a lived experience’ and ‘perception being understood to be culturally formed’. In Chapter 2, the embodied subject is explored through perception as the fundamental level of meaning making in the world, the self and others. Our relational interaction with the world and its social context appears to be understood only in the wider context of a person’s immersion in the world. And further, our interpretation of meaning is due to our body’s relationship with the world that it inhabits which is charged with meaning (such as the visual culture influences); therefore, each inter-action both draws and contributes to our experience and meaning making in our every day—like a video loop (a continuous operating system).

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222 Visual culture is premised here on the unprecedented importance of imaging and visual technologies in contemporary society, and concerned with all kinds of visual information, its meanings, pleasures, and consumption.

223 See Varela, Thompson, & Rosch discussions on embodiment, enaction and cognition in *The Embodied Mind*.  

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Enactment through an “embodied mind” shifts the focus from the perceiver-dominant components of experiences such as of persons, places, and/or objects to the relations that link these things together in action. The active action-interaction that co-evolves in a moment in order to make meaning results in an interpretation through a participatory inquiry that is an understanding of meaning(s) through embodied action. Embodied action is dependent upon the kinds of experiences that come from having a body with a sensibility (such as a mode of perception, or orienting ourselves, and of interacting with other objects, events, and/or persons). And further, this sensibility is itself embedded within a biological, psychological, and cultural context. As I stated in Chapter 1, section 1.2, ‘coming to know’ can be described as a creative process of action and interaction from experiences that are shared. The meaning making then depends on being in the world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history—thus, it is taken from our dynamic, constantly changing and reconfiguring

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224 Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*; Also refer to Ch. I, sec. 1.2 for theoretical discussion on phenomenology, enactivism and embodiment in reference to perceptually guided performative inquiry in installation art forms.

225 These are actions that are perceptually guided by the (visual culture) image to the perceiver of the image, influencing how the perceiver will inter-act, re-act and make meaning from the image(s). See Varela et al *The Embodied Mind* & Debord’s *The Society of Spectacle* for further discussions on directed perceived meaning.


Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind* notes “meaning includes patterns of embodied experience and preconceptual structures of our sensibility.” These embodied patterns in enactivist terms, do not remain private to the person who experiences them. It is through the inter-relation, the inter-activity of the components of the experiences of these things together in action that creates the meaning between the body and our understanding of the world. The use of an art installation form becomes a way into understanding our relationship with visual culture through the use of congruous inter-relationships between objects, people, events, and places, which then become catalysts generating communicative processes for the spectator. The installation heightens the spectator’s awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and further, of our bodily response to this. The entering into the installation’s ‘situation’ for the spectator addresses the spectator directly as a literal presence in the space.

“We can smell the scent of a steaming pot of jasmine rice...Sunlight pours in from an October afternoon, and already we feel the compression of the gallery lifted from our shoulders...As one sits down for the bowl (white enamel with blue rims) of food, one begins to realize that this is a distinctively different experience from others we have had in an art gallery or with art.”

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228 For references to phenomenology, embodiment and enactivism see Ch. 1, sec. 1.2. Here I also underpin with Martin Heidegger in Being and Time, New York: Harper & Row, 1962, and Hans Gadamer see: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/gadamer/ from the field of philosophical hermeneutics; specifically their phenomenon of interpretation, understood as the *enactment or bringing forth* of meaning from a background of understanding. Phenomenology continues to present discussions in and around this knowledge and furthers the discussion of the body’s relationship to understanding and meaning making through embodiment.


230 Argentinean artist, Rirkrit Tiravanija, “No Ghosts in the Wall,”“Rirkrit Tiravanija: A Retrospective, Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2004, pp. 51-92. Tiravanija, most often, (as with “No Ghosts in the Wall”) leaves both his exhibitions and works untitled; it appears that he wants to direct our attention to the subtext of
Walking through the gallery with Tiravanija, the artist of “No Ghosts in the Wall,” the interestingly new engagement for the spectators in this ‘retrospective’ is that the spectators are not in the presence of the work itself and are instead given a story about or descriptions of the work or event. For Tiravanija, this appears to be one of the possible ways this body of work could be represented. There is no object, no picture, no moment, no space and even perhaps no time, but in this void of representations the spectators are challenged to have heard and to have imagined a picture of their own, a memory of their own, and that in the end was an experience of its own making. The writing on the body (of the spectators) as individual and collective text becomes an enactive approach to meaning making through the active action of sensory engagement, the performative inquiry for the spectators. In this instance, the spectator-distance, the pause, the awareness of self in the space becomes the significant factor as a starting point of engagement in understanding his/her embodied perception of making meaning within the installation form.

This moment of pause in Tiravanija’s open space gallery becomes a “sudden recognition of unfolding landscapes” for the spectator, a tactile and sensory environment challenging the spectator’s understanding of the ‘passive’ gallery experience of viewing two-dimensional works of art in relation to everyday life experiences and the work, or the subtitle, of how we as the spectators, can direct our thoughts and ideas towards the experience we are having with his works. He doesn’t normally participate in the process of his art works or even see the completion of the work in the e.g., gallery space. Like all his work, Tiravanija seems to be more interested in the spectators and how they come and go; how the spectators may have had different views and memories of what they had passed through.  

Fels, 1999, p. 29.
meaning making around food, smells, and memories thereof. It is the spectator’s active participation, his/her inquiry within this (e.g., minimalist) art installation which encourages the spectator to interact actively with his/her self in a space and place, with others in the space and place, in order to raise consciousness of images, sounds, smells, directly and actively to produce anticipated and actual active inter-relationships through the installation work/space. This performative inquiry activity allows the spectator to cross meaning making over to everyday life at large. In *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty refers to this crossing-over or ‘sudden recognition of unfolding landscapes’ between place/space, our selves, and the world as a ‘chasm’, heightening the ‘blind spot’ of object and subject “collapsing the point of coincidence in a moment of realization.”

This moment of recognition, of tension, is Appelbaum’s *the stop*. Jacques Lacan’s argument in “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of I” is critical here as it argues the significance of autonomy and independence while engaging with the mirror image of the self or in the case of an installation artwork, the visual culture and the self. This mirroring of the spectacle of images from the visual culture to self in an art installation impresses upon the spectator to answer the question as to how

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233 David Appelbaum, *The Stop*. The body surface is the site of perception, the site of resistance, the site of action and learning. It is the effort and resistance that awareness or what Appelbaum refers to as *the stop* is opened up.

234 French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, argues in “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of I” in *Ecrits*, 2006--that with a child, it is only when seeing itself in the mirror (or having its actions reflected by a parent) that the child realizes that it is autonomous and an independent entity in the world. What is significant here is that the ego is structured as an effect of an external or reciprocal gaze--the world looking back as us. Therefore, our perception can be socially determined and thus relies on the world that co-exists with our presence in it.
the images are the managers, producers and the better storytellers of the spectator’s everyday life story. In allowing the spectator to see a congruent representation of an aspect of the everyday visual culture in the installation work, the spectator then comes to recognize his/her autonomy as an independent entity in and with the world.

Dan Graham’s installations (of the 1970s) are significant because they argued against the notion that “the world could be experienced as pure presence, self-sufficient and without memory.” For Graham this (Cartesian) notion ‘of the world experienced as pure presence, self-sufficient and without memory’ was suspect because it paralleled consumerist amnesia: the way in which the just-past’ commodity is repressed in favour of the new. Graham’s installations of mirrors and video feedback are used to stage perceptual experiments for the spectator that demonstrate how our awareness of the world is dependent on interactions with others. Graham argued that the perceptual process should be understood as a continuum spanning past, present and future for the spectators. His interest in what happens when the spectators saw themselves looking at themselves or looking at other people in the installations pressed for a socialized and public point of inquiry through phenomenological perception. His work appears to be informed by Lacan: the installations “are always involved with the psychological aspect of your seeing your own gaze and other people gazing at you.”


236 Ibid, p. 144.


238 Graham, Two-Way Mirror-Power, p. 145. Graham has said that he came to Lacan’s
an experience that aims at “a socialized experience of encountering yourself among others.”

The harnessing of the spectator’s body in a manner more conceptual than sensuous is presented in Graham’s “Public Space/Two Audiences:” comprised of a ‘white cube’ gallery with a door at either end, bisected by a pane of sound-insulated glass. The far wall of the space was mirrored, while the other end was left white. Two systems of reflections were established—in the ghostly, semi-reflective glass divide, and in the mirrored wall—both of which offered the spectator a reflection of him/herself in relation to the other spectators. All spectators gaze at themselves, and at other spectators gazing at them. It is the presence of other spectators that ‘activate’ this installation—the network of returned glances making this work a ‘socially and psychologically self-conscious’ piece for the spectator by perceiving oneself in relation to a group. The tension of the ‘moment of recognition’ was made possible through mirrors and the use of reflections forcing the spectators to look, to glance, to seek out others in the space in relation to themselves—the performative inquiry.

For Bruce Nauman, the “Corridor” installations create the possibility for a ‘moment of recognition’ of tension between spectator anticipation and spectator actual experience, and occurs when:

They won’t quite fit. That’s what the piece is, that stuff that’s not coming together…My intention would be to set up [the

article, “The Mirror Stage” after he had begun using mirrors and reflective surfaces in his work, but he took the essay as confirmation of his thinking. See Graham in Birgit Pelzer. “Vision in Process,” October, no. 11, Winter 1979, pp. 105-19.


In “Live-Taped Video Corridor 1970,” two video monitors are installed at the far end of a long thin corridor; the top monitor is linked to a camera positioned high on the wall at the corridor’s entrance; the lower monitor plays a pre-recorded tape of an empty corridor. As the spectator walks into the work and advance towards the monitor, the image of the spectator’s head and body (videotaped from behind) becomes visible on the upper screen. The closer the spectator gets to the monitor, the smaller the spectator’s image appears on the screen, while the more the spectator may try to centre his/her image on the screen, the further away from the monitor the spectator is required to stand. At no point is the spectator allowed to feel ‘centred’ and in control. Nauman compared the spectator’s experience of the work to a moment of ‘stepping off a cliff or down into a hole’.  

The feeling that I had about a lot of that work was of going up the stairs in the dark and either having an extra stair that you didn’t expect or not having one that you thought was going to be there. That kind of misstep surprises you every time it happens. Even when you knew how those pieces were working, as the camera was always out in front of you…they seemed to work every time. You couldn’t avoid the sensation, which was very curious to me.  

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242 Nauman, in Willoughby Sharp, ““Interview with Bruce Nauman,” in Bruce Nauman, p. 97.

Although related to the Minimalist’s use of materials and manipulating the spectator’s perception of time and space, Nauman’s “Corridor” installations however do not reassure the spectator that he/she is a part of something larger (or a synthesized unity). There is a relishing in the spectator’s discomfort here. The mis-recognitions that take place in these corridors suggest that there may be a ‘blind spot’ in perception that becomes only apparent when our looking is returned to us by a camera or a mirror. This decentring, however, of the spectator in relation to the work can also demonstrate how easily perception can be, and might be, far more fragile and contingent than we allow. This failure of perception in both subject and object is evidenced once again as Merleau-Ponty’s ‘point of coincidence where the crossing-over between the spectator’s self and the world “collapses at the moment of realization.”’

He describes this as I said earlier, as a ‘blind spot’, evidenced when we try and feel our left hand touching our right hand at the same time as feeling our right hand touching our left. Each part of the body has its own tactile experience. Nauman’s installations likewise point to the impossibility of the spectator’s perception being immanent. Our awareness of the world (of everyday life) is subsequently dependent on interactions with others—the face-to-face immersion in the world; a sociability of activation, authorship, and community—the social dimension of active participation through performative inquiry by the spectator(s).

A further example of the significance of spectator embodied perception and the apparent tension of subject/object ‘collapse at the moment of realization’ in a space is seen in Vito Acconci’s works, most notably in his performance installation “Seedbed,”

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245 Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*, Barbara Gladstone Gallery archive, 1992. For images from
where the spectator was implicated in the work from the beginning: The gallery was empty but for the ramp of raised floorboards at one end of the room, culminating on either side with a loudspeaker. Beneath the ramp Acconci lay masturbating, his amplified voice dominating the room and responding verbally and physically to the visitor’s presence above. This piece is of course, uncomfortably ‘theatrical’ in the Minimalist sculpture sense and very intimate. The minimalist use of props in the space had initiated a significant shift in the spectator’s perception of the (gallery) space where the spectator took responsibility for the actions and emotions in the space questioning and challenging place and space in the installation with his/her perception of place, space, intimacy, and every day life—the crossing-over through the act of performative inquiry between ourselves and the world: Merleau-Ponty’s ‘chasm’, or Appelbaum’s ‘stop’. For Acconci: “I was forced to recognize an entire space, and the people in it…I had been taught, or I taught myself, to look only within a frame, with Minimalism the frame broke, or at least stretched.”

The spectator’s perception here became embodied. The corporeal, visceral and sensory aspects of the performance art installation moved the spectator into performative inquiry as inquiry informed through performative explorations or engagements. Here there was the room for ‘other selves’ now—the Minimalism’s literal use of ‘lack of materials’ and the foregrounding of the spectator’s perception in time and space forced the spectator to actively take responsibility within the art form: to challenge and retake the space creating a cross-over between object and subject through an


anticipation of what was going to happen in the moment and of course, what was going to happen in the actual experience of active engagement in the moment. This particular aim of decentring within the surrounding installation work activates the spectator to participate: to have a role (ethical or political) within the work, as opposed to just ‘looking at’ a painting or sculpture.

Installation art’s insistence on the spectator’s first-hand presence in the work has come to be founded on two clear notions: activated spectatorship (through performative inquiry) and the idea of a dispersed or decentred subject (within the congruous visual culture installation). The insistence of the installation art form’s use of the spectator’s physical presence is precisely in order to subject the spectator’s body to an experience of decentring, a transition adequate to the context-dependent work in which we engage today (the visual culture). For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is an account of our everyday relationship to the world and is not intended to engender specific mechanisms of subjective fragmentation; likewise for Lacan, we are ‘decentred’ all the time, not just when experiencing a work of art. If installation art though implicitly structures the spectator a temporary, elusive, moment as a priori as centred then linking through to decentring by seeking to create a moment of recognition through interruptions, corruptions, and disturbances of form implies Appelbaum’s use of a ‘hinge’. For Appelbaum, there is an effort and resistance where the ‘stop’ is opened up-- a ‘hinge’ between tension and poise for which every action, every event we experience, are joined and pivot. See Appelbaum’s *The Stop*, p. 17.
proximity between the congruous image subject matter and the spectator that is worth considering when technology becomes another form of engagement within the installation work.

“Space is not there for the eye only: it is not a picture; one wants to live in it...We reject space as a painted coffin for our living bodies.”

The sense of technology in our everyday living having transformed or destabilized notions of liveness, presence, and the ‘real’, asserts itself as both the performance and the wider cultural dominant: ‘the virtual and the actual appear to converge, or, the virtual replaces the real’ (according to Baudrillard). Art critic, Malcolm Le Grice follows Baudrillard’s line that mass media have progressively created a cultural schism between the representation and the cultural object. Instantaneous transmission of images and sounds across space have created a cultural habit reading the electronic representation as if it were present. Our discourse with the real has become a discourse with the represented image, a presence of the image not in conflict with its lack of physical proximity.

In phenomenological terms, liveness has more to do with temporality and “now-ness” than with the corporeality or virtuality of subjects being observed. The visual culture of which we are actively confronted through logos, signs, icons generate a ‘collective bond’ with us through a power of linkages through images. The ‘hands on’ relationships which phenomenologically engages first with experiencing before reflection requires the communication strategies for understanding the visual culture of which we are a part and


the fortitude to challenge the ‘other’ (the visual culture) who appears (as we allow them) to be better storytellers, producers, managers and performers of our individual and collective stories. The action emphasizes the perception and actions that are fundamentally inseparable in a lived body. Thus, an enactive approach to meaning making through performative inquiry then consists of: 1) perception that is a perceptually guided action and 2) knowledgeable action that is perceptually guided. The spectators are given the opportunity to autonomously become the managers, producers and performers of their individual and collective text(s) for making meaning. For Fels, this opportunity of a perceptually-guided action speaks in a ‘space-moment of possibility’ and reflects the dynamic freefall within co-evolving new worlds and or unfolding horizons realized and recognized through performance.\textsuperscript{250}

Fels asserts that she is not proposing a dichotomy or binary relationship between real and the not-yet-real worlds.

The imaginary world(s) of performance are interactive, dynamic, temporal, elusive, momentary (as are the so-called ‘real’ world(s)). It is within the actions and interactions of imaginary and ‘real’ play/performance/life, that performative inquiry aligns its quest.\textsuperscript{251}

Carsten Holler’s Lichtwand (Light Wall)\textsuperscript{252} is comprised of an intense barrage of flashing lights whose harsh impact on the spectator’s eye is almost intolerable for more than a few seconds.

\textsuperscript{250} Fels, 1999, p. 40. A space-moment of learning may be unique to one participant, but in the shared remembering, may become part of the group mapping of the process of meaning making.

\textsuperscript{251} Ibid, p. 40.

\textsuperscript{252} Carsten Holler (b. 1961), in Carsten Holler: Register, Milan, 2001. Holler began producing this type of work in the mid-1990s, harnessing the spectator’s physical and mental engagement via machines and installations.
minutes. Several thousand light bulbs flash incessantly at 7.8 hz—a frequency that is synchronous to that of brain activity and thereby capable of inducing visual hallucinations in the spectator. There is definitely a warning to those individuals who may find this type of installation unbearable (my sister for example who is epileptic). The oppressive heat generated by the bulbs and the relentless lighting assaults not only the eye but also the ear. This installation is designed to dislocate and disorient, but also requires the presence of the spectator in order to generate its effect. Holler describes *Lichtwand* and related pieces as “machines or devices intended to synchronize with the visitors in order to produce something together with them. They are not objects that can be given a ‘meaning’ of their own.”\(^2\) The work is therefore incomplete without the spectator’s direct participation. Holler’s *Lichtwand* creates the perceptually guided knowledgeable action/site of learning (through the knowing, doing, being, and creating of performative inquiry and the spectator’s body as text) as inseparable through enaction of the human participation and the changing environments of the installation work.

Performativ e inquiry recognizes, explores, and honours the ‘laying down a path in walking’ through space-moments of learning through the performative act in the installation form (understanding that creative action and interaction embodies critical thought and reflection).

Holler’s installations provoke alterations of consciousness and cast the stability of our everyday perception into doubt. For Holler, perception is understood to be something mutable and slippery: not the function of a detached gaze upon the world from a centred consciousness, but integral to the entire body and nervous system. Holler’s mechanical

\(^2\) Ibid.
installation *Flying Machine 1996* invites the spectator to be strapped into a harness and fly in circles above a room, able to control the speed but not the direction of his/her journey. This installation induces a sense of bodily euphoria—what the artist calls “a mixture of bliss and senselessness” that releases the spectator as participant from the gravitational certainty of daily life.\(^{254}\) Holler has described himself as an “orthopaedist who makes artificial limbs for parts of your body that you don’t even know you’ve lost.”\(^{255}\) This comment highlights the feelings of bodily revelation and dislocation that can occur when interacting/participating with his work. We get radically different perspectives of the world in Holler’s art works—through disorienting environments, he aims to induce doubt about the very structure of what we take to be reality. Although the spectator/participant may feel like a rat at times in a laboratory experiment in Holler’s installations, it appears that his works aim less to prescribe a particular outcome (as in a scientific experiment) than to provide a playful arena for unique perceptual discoveries.

The point of departure for an enactivist approach here is through the linking of the inter-relations of action(s) and inter-action(s) of the perceiver (the spectator) which guide his or her actions in visual culture encounters of making meaning of the every day world he or she is confronted. It is through the shock of upsetting a perceiver-dependent world (challenging the spectacle of visual culture) and making links between this world and the perceiver-independent world (which are in constant flux) through the spectator’s body (as the site of perception, the site of resistance) that a relational encounter between the body and the world becomes one in the space of active engagement. It is in the shock, the

\(^{254}\) Ibid.

\(^{255}\) Ibid.
distance, the awareness, the coming to a *stop*, the pause, the crossing-over between ourselves and everyday life, in order to challenge the perceiver-dependent world and become an embodied world where the perceiver can act and in turn reposition the influenced environmental events of the dependent world. Fels articulates this embodied meaning making exchange as ‘mapping-in-exploration’ which embodies both critical and creative action and interaction through personal and communal reflection, shared, remembered, and shared again.256 Significantly, it is through an engagement of performative inquiry that may allow an understanding of the possibilities of realizations of moments between the visual culture and the spectator/participant’s everyday, not yet realized for the spectator/participant until he or she is in active engagement within the art installation form.

“*Understanding has become impossible because nothing stands under. Interstanding has become unavoidable because everything stands between.*”257

In Appelbaum’s *the stop* moment of challenging the spectacle of visual culture, the perceiver-independent world determines the linkages between the sensitivity that explains how the action can be perceptually guided in a perceiver-dependent world (a world guided by the spectacle). This approach to perception, is a central insight undertaken by Merleau-Ponty in *The Structure of Behaviour*, who argues that the organism itself offers itself to actions from the outside. But it is the organism itself—according to the proper nature of its receptors, the thresholds of its nerve centres and the movements of the

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organs that choose the stimuli in the physical world to which it will be sensitive. For Merleau-Ponty, an organism can only exist if it succeeds in finding in the world an adequate environment. In this approach, perception is not simply embedded within and constrained by the surrounding world; it also contributes through interplay of moments, of interruptions, disruptions, and corruptions to the enactment of this surrounding world. As Merleau-Ponty recognised, we must see the body and environment as bound together in a reciprocal relationship; however, it is not yet realized—“it as yet un-marked by your presence.”

“The space theatre offers is a human space, a societal space, a political space. Theatre’s job is to keep that space relevant, and to keep it always open to question…. [As Artaud reminds us]—“We are not free, and the sky can still fall on our heads.” And the theatre has been created to teach us that first of all.”

The exhibition in the gallery has now turned into a performative technological installation set, but who comes to act in it? How do the performers make their way across it, and in the midst of what kind of scenery? How does technology alter this flow of passage? How does the dissolution of any distinction between spectator and spectacle, reception and production become one in this space? “The studio shot,” wrote Walter Benjamin, “is particular in that it replaces the audience by the camera, and enables the

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259 Fels, 1999, p. 41. ‘Fels speaks of ‘within your presence’ there is a co-evolving into a new possible world of knowing, doing, being, and creating even if we slip momentarily off balance, we as participants embrace the moment of disequilibrium—this is the space-moment of possibility of which Fels speaks.

image editing process to steal the player’s body.”

261 Seen in the installation by the Italian group Premiata Ditta, placing on the table (where a conference was going on) a television set broadcasting the picture of a man eating, oblivious to everything going on around him, conjures up those acclaimed videotapes of countless hours of logs burning in a fireplace, fish swimming in an aquarium, and so forth. The manoeuvrability of video means that it can be used as a constructed replacement for presence. The undifferentiated action of camera as audience now becomes differentiated. The first action, an enjoyable and predictable discovery of a clear image, the second action of engagement in the installation feels erratic, unpredictable, senseless, like groping for the image and dragging it out of darkness—then losing it again; as if getting stuck in a moment. Therefore, by actively challenging through performing the act, our psychological absorption in the work is often undercut by the heightened discovery of our physical awareness of our body and its relation to other people in the room. Just as the world around, and the relationship to the world around, the body’s presence in the world is re-discovered.

In 1974, Nam June Paik placed a statue of Buddha in front of a television that displayed live feedback of the figure entitled “TV Buddha” to be engaged as an


263 Nam June Paik, born in Seoul, was trained as a classical pianist. His music studies took him to Germany and allowed him to meet and work with composers John Cage and the conceptual artists Joseph Beuys and Wolf Vostell who inspired him to work in electronic art. See Christiane Paul, *Digital Art*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2003, pp. 14-15. Paik was a part of the Fluxis (Neo-Dada) art movement in New York, in the 1960s. Fluxis promoted artistic experimentation mixed with social and political activism—an international avant-garde movement (Dutch, English, French,
interactive installation. The Buddha, (an Eastern symbol of meditation and enlightenment) used in conjunction with the then new technology of the closed-circuit television loop, does raise interesting questions around the relationship between sensitivity, embodiment, and understanding. Does the Buddha meditate upon itself or is it just another media technology effect, an eternal return of the simulated image for the spectator? “TV Buddha” in these early technology stages is presenting an understanding of the control that media potentially has over the meaning making life of its spectators. The engagement in “TV Buddha” presents possibilities of installation art forms as instruments of interactive cultural exchanges through embodiment. The relational encounter through the interactivity within the installation takes its theoretical foundation from the realm of human interactions and social context rather than the independent symbolic space of modern art forms.\(^{265}\) The tension of course, in Paik’s “TV Buddha” installation resides in the precarious balance between meditation and mediation, between the consciousness and the constructedness of the perceiver-dependent world and the perceiver-independent world. “TV Buddha” becomes a still, a frozen moment for the

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\(^{265}\) See Chapter 1, section 1.2.
spectator, but one that does not do away with the flow of gestures and forms from which it culturally stems. The interactivity between spectator and spectacle (in this case the televised Buddha), reception and production, hinges on the dissolution of any distinction between spectator and spectacle, reception and production. In an installation form, when creating image texts for making meaning, the difference between actor (e.g., Buddha) and the passerby tends to diminish. In enactivism, or embodied cognition, Varela writes, “our lived world does not have predefined boundaries, and it is unrealistic to expect to capture understanding from a representation—where representation is understood as the re-presentation of a pre-given world. What makes the interactivity interesting with “TV Buddha” is that by feeling the performing act, the action on the television screen becomes articulated.

The artistic use of video images does not just happen. Because the installation art form is made of the same material as the social exchanges of every day, the installation has a

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266 Interactivity according to Jan Simons may take place in a human-human-relation with other users or in a human-data-relation with digital objects. This means that interaction itself is divisible in three distinct actions: communication with other users, manipulation of digital objects, and navigation through a (digital) information space. On each of these levels interactivity can vary from limited and trivial possibilities for choice and intervention to full control over form, content and development of the digital object. See Jan Simmons’ Interface en cyberspace. Inleiding in de nieuwe media, Amsterdam: Amsterdam Univ. Press, 2002, p. 79. Simons is very critical about the suggestion of free choice and creativity implicit in the notion of interactivity and stresses the fact that the user is usually very restricted in choices, and rather than manipulating is often being manipulated instead. On the other hand, interactive art can be the locus of affective and imaginative engagement of interpretive and critical depth, which can shift from the image as such to the process of interaction. See Mark Hansen’s New Philosophy for New Media, p. 9.

special place in the collective production process. It has a quality however, that sets it
apart from other things that are produced by human activities: its (relative) social
transparency. If the installation art form is successful, it will invariably set its sights
beyond its mere presence in space; it will open a dialogue, a discussion from the inter-
personal negotiation which Marcel Duchamp called “the coefficient in art:” a temporal
process being played out in the here and now. The negotiation process for performative
inquiry occurs through the action at the site of learning for the spectator/participant
within an installation work. This dynamic can suggest not only the installation’s
manufacturing and production process, its position within the set of exchanges, and the
place, or function it presents, but also the creative behaviour of the artist (the postures or
gestures which make up the artist’s work, and which each work passes on like a marker
for that artist). Hence, installation artist, Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s works link the flow
of electricity, light and shadow illuminating the artist’s behaviour, that the latter seems to
be the image of the former, like its “necessary product,” as Hubert Damisch has
written. Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies” specifically take place on a large scale in a

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268 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is a Mexican-born Canadian educated performance artist (first) and an installation artist today. He received the Prix Ars Electronica Award for Distinction in Interactive Art for Body Movies, 2002. He has been exhibiting his large scale installation artworks around the world for more than fifteen years as one of a few highly influential Canadian artists working in the new media field. His achievements along with Prix Ars Electronica 2002 winners David Rokeby and Luc Courchesne have all become widely recognized for their contributions to the development of interactive technologies, especially their innovations with “interfaces”—those boundaries across where people and computers meet and communicate.

269 Huber Damisch, Fenetre jaune cadmium, Editions du Seuil, p. 76.

public space, examining the relationship between spectators and themselves and how they present themselves publicly. Although this is a large outdoor installation, it still is rather intimate. It appears that intimacy is important for Lozano-Hemmer, as the spectator is an important part of the installation but through a theatrical, performative interactivity. Here there can be seen links with the understanding of Artaud, who argues that the stage and the auditorium should be abolished by a single site in which a direct communication would be re-established between spectator and spectacle—all placed in the middle of the action; engulfed and physically affected by the spectacle. Hence, the affect on the body is presented in the reflexive experience through action. Through feeling the act of engagement in the moment, the action becomes articulated through the body through the interactive nature of the “Body Movies” installation and spectator/participant.

“Technology is not something that happens out there; it happens as part of our body.”

Whether we believe the spectacle of visual culture is overt or not, it catapults its way through the complex intersections among visuality, embodiment, and the explosion of the mechanical, industrial, or cybernetic technologically driven systems today. Making and interpreting visual culture through the appropriation of congruent images from visual culture in an installation space have challenged the exploration of many aspects of the

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271 Artaud, 1970) [1964], p. 74.

272 Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, “Body Movies,” 2002. Lozano-Hemmer refers here to Marshall McLuhan’s writing around the notion of the idea that technology is not something that happens out there, that it happens as part of our body and we cannot observe it as if we can be objective. We are a part of it. This notion is very much a part of Lozano-Hemmer’s work.
Cartesian human body/mind complex as a “complicated machine” capable of extension into the world through sensory and active participation. Enacting technologies of representation through embodiment, performative inquiry in installation art forms allows for the articulation of “bodies” of e.g., visuality in images, action, and/or words, in each case performing the spectator’s own specific historical relationships to the body/machine matrix. For the avant-garde artists in the early twentieth century, their goal was to search new dimensions of the ‘industrial’ society and to translate the new findings into emotional engagements through visual form (see Chapter 1, Conceptual Art). To understand the significance of re-positioning the spectator from passive consumers of culture into active engagers and questioners of culture, “the spectator must complete the work” in order for meaning to be made. The spectators are the other half of making meaning in the installation form who ebb and flow through depths of sensation-engagements where enactment for articulating the hinge between body and technology is revealed as sensorial moments of forming and informing the spectator at the inter-face of body/machine, as seen in the video loop.

“When depth gives way to surface...[we no longer] grasp what lies beneath but to glimpse what lies between.”

As with Artaud, Lozano-Hemmer, in his installation works, explores bodily depth. Artaud works through language as text back into sensation. Words impinge on him in the

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manner of things as text. What their impingement invites are breaths and howls and their gestural doubles, expressing language as it can only be felt. The expressions go back in, in eddies inducting the spectator into the performed body, in an expanding and intensifying circle of sensational self-repetitions (as in the video loop seen in Nauman and Douglas’ installation works). The “cruelty” of Artaud’s work presses a collective expression of the spectator’s body as the identification form—it becomes the self-referential for making meaning. In Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies,” as the spectator/participant discovers the process, their playfulness becomes more sophisticated. As they express their identities in a large public forum, the result is an installation art form that invites its participants to retake urban space. Their bodies become the self-referential form in the installation. Lozano-Hemmer says that coming from a performance art background has given him the foundation to be more interested in the collective and connective experiences that several people take part in. “The idea of sharing in the complicity of a performance and watching something with people you don’t know goes beyond computers. There is a communion.” For Lozano-Hemmer, “Body Movies” is the first piece where “I have felt that there can be both an intimate personal presence—one’s shadow—and a larger social performance with emergent group narratives.”

The depth of ‘transparency’ of the art installation work comes from the vitality of the gestures forming and informing it, which are freely chosen or invented by the artist and


278 Ibid
the spectator/participant, and are a part of the overall subject. In perception, bodily depth is possibility. What is impressed as potential is expressed as possibility: what “infolds unfolds.” I would stress here that it is not about reverting to a fixed materiality or form of a body-technology image itself, but instead, situating the body-technology image as the process through the bodily activity of the spectator/participant that Mark Hansen in *New Philosophy for New Media* refers to as a process that “transforms formless information into an apprehensible form.” There is a sense of disorientation, a disturbance of direction, in the restless movement caught in the here and now, the back and forth, on all sides assembled and disassembled through performative inquiry in the art installation form. It is in the in-between spaces that provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of the body and technology—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation, in the act of understanding body as the inter-face of text.

“Living beings do not belong to a uniquely organic domain anymore. Our bodies are now made of machines, images, and information: We are becoming cultural bodies.”

Notwithstanding a century of machine-body explorations, cultural theorist Donna Haraway’s critique of modern science and technology as well as, Viola, Nauman,

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279 Refer to Fels, 1999. Here she argues that action-interaction, whether individual or collective, co-evolves between the known, unknown and the not-yet-known worlds of being. This also is the depth of surface Appelbaum refers to in *The Stop*.

280 Mark Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media*, p. 11.


282 Donna Haraway theorizes on cyborgs (hybrid of human-machine representing specific historical machines and people in an in-fused relationship) in, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” in *The*
Douglas, Paik, and Lozano-Hemmer’s recorded explorations of the body’s engagement with space, body, technology, and the world merges the roles of spectator, participant, spectacle, and site which interface at the spectator/participant’s body as individual text and collective text. Incorporating mechanical and electronic imaging devices (which are already a part of our everyday life such as webcams, digitized cameras, digitized video) to re-present the body in an installation art form challenges the location of the visual culture enabling the possibility for participants to reclaim, critique, and produce the visual culture from each of their respective identities. The body becomes the site of intervention where ideas, images, and actions are played out. According to performance theorist Amelia Jones, the “subject means always in relationship to others and the locus of identity is always elsewhere.” The body, in this case then, is a site of text that intertwines with what Merleau-Ponty says in that the body’s experiences are “flesh of the world” —an inter-connected perceptual experience between body(s), space, and the

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_Cybercultures Reader_, D. Bell & B. Kennedy, eds. London: Routledge, 2000. Exploring the doubled articulation that signals the end of traditional concepts of identity even as it points toward the cybernetic loop that generates a new kind of subjectivity. See Katherine Hayles’ _How We Became Posthuman_, 1999, for further discussion.

283 Amelia Jones. _Body Art/Performing the Subject_. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 14. Jones’ work as an art historian, art critic and curator traces the rise of the art world’s interest in inter-subjectivity, back to the early sixties, of Irving Goffman’s _The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life_, London & NY.: Penguin Books, 1959; and Merleau-Ponty’s _Phenomenology of Perception_, Acconci (See _Performance By Artists_, 1979) is a key figure for Jones. Acconci’s work demonstrates for Jones, that art maker and art interpreter are, in Merleau-Ponty’s phrase, “collaborators for each other in consummate reciprocity” (see _Body Art/Performing the Subject_, p. 41).

284 Maurice Merleau-Ponty. _The Visible and the Invisible_. Merleau-Ponty describes the body’s experience with the world as “flesh:” “The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance…midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort
world through what Jones calls a process of “reversibility.” This reversibility, this inter-connected relationship of body to the world and world to the body provides access to understanding in an installation art form the exploration and the mapping of multiple experiential possibilities through a network of assemblages (similar to the open video loop chain where the best operating point is chosen randomly) is continually co-evolving in a space-time relationship interconnecting the body, the world, to an other. All of these inter-connections become constituted through this reversibility of seeing and being seen, perceiving and being perceived. Hence, entailing a reciprocity and contingency between the body(s) in the installation form and in the world.

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of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being (p. 139). Merleau-Ponty refers to “element” in this sense, just as the elements of water, air, earth, and fire—a general category.

Reversibility for Jones is the relation to the self and the relation to the world, the relation to the other; all are constituted through a reversibility of seeing and being seen, perceiving and being perceived, and this entails a reciprocity and contingency for the subject(s) in the world. (Refer to Merleau-Ponty’s argument (1968) referenced earlier. Through art installation forms or even performance art, the Cartesian binaries of subject and object, are brought into an inter-connected relationship. Thus, the body and the world are experienced as one flesh.

Assemblages according to Deleuze and Guattari draws on their notion of rhizomatic structures: an interconnectedness of linkages which create many possibilities for challenging [visual] cultural codes and representing the body.

Lynn Fels, 1999, p. 4; pp. 8-10. In performative inquiry, Fels argues that performative inquiry as a research methodology explores and maps unexpected landscapes; a jigsaw puzzle approach with multiple possibilities to “dance us into an unexpected landscape.” For Fels, action-interaction is always in a co-evolving landscape in a moment (space-time relationship). The action-interaction is precariously balanced between the known, the unknown, and the not-yet known world(s) of being, realized through the “bringing together of possible worlds” (See F. Varela for further exploration on the ‘merging of possible worlds’ in, “Laying Down a Path in Walking.”)
Interestingly, using video in an installation art form speaks to an elsewhere (borrowing again from Emile Benveniste’s two planes of language). Video on one level excludes the spectator, physically separating him or her from the diegetic space temporally and physically. The frame (or screen), an impenetrable plane of representation shields the spectator from implication in the artwork. The significance of incorporating technology in the artwork of the installation form is to alleviate this inaccessibility of the spectator and to incorporate the spectator in the installation form as an active participant. By allowing a space-in-between through the installation form, the body and the image then begin to challenge the undifferentiated action of the camera (television screen) that now becomes differentiated. It could further be said, that the enacting or living through in the installation form merges the Cartesian binaries of subject and object, mind and body which are brought into this inter-connected relationship of reversibility whereby the body, mind, subject, object and the world are ‘experienced as one flesh’, writing on the body in real time rather than an illusionary reality such as in traditional/contemporary (Aristotelian) theatre.

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289 Rene Descartes’ binary opposition for example, was directed against Aristotelian philosophy where cognition begins with sensation: everything in the intellect comes first through the senses. Descartes philosophy, on the other hand, emphasizes the priority of reason over the senses—thus the mind-body dichotomy he posits. Descartes substituted a purely mechanical world of geometric bodies governed by laws of motion for an almost animalistic world of Aristotelian substances with innate tendencies to different kinds of behaviour. See Rene Descartes’s "A Discourse of Method Meditations on the First Philosophy [1641].

290 Installation art has characteristics of performance art’s focus on experimentation (testing the boundaries between art and life) and embodiment which works at the interstices and the cross-fertilizing of traditional artistic disciplines, which makes art
The manoeuvrability of the video image, performance, and art forms are now part of the array of aesthetic decisions an installation artist uses to manipulate even the basic operations used with a video cassette recorder (the VCR’s rewind, fast forward, hold, freeze, frame, etc.) or computer. The greatest change today lies in the new approaches brought on by the presence of home video of which the spectators of “Body Movies,” for example, are already aware. Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind* argues that the body’s orientation in time and space creates a “repository of experiences” that are encoded into language through assemblages of metaphoric networks; insisting that the body is an important part of the context from which language emerges. Envisioning that metaphors would vary in response to different experiences of embodiment created by historically positioned and culturally constructed bodies becomes an important consideration for performative inquiry through the art installation form. The experiences of embodiment to which Johnson refers to enrich the awareness of how inscribing and incorporating practices work together to create a text site for the body, culture, and technology. Johnson’s analysis therefore suggests that when people begin using their bodies in significantly different ways from which they are accustomed, either because of technological innovations for example, changing experiences of embodiment become articulated into our everyday language, affecting the ‘metaphoric’ networks at play within installations and performance art distinguishable from other modes of conventional or traditional theatre performance. The works are almost always deliberately provocative, unconventional, and even assaultive in its stance. The artists define their work through movement, space, and visual imagery; there is typically a more direct, inter-active relationship with the spectator. For further reading on the history of performance art see Goldberg’s *Performance*; as well as see *Performance By Artists*; on myth and the inner reaches of self, see Joseph Campbell’s *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, New York: Harper & Row Publ., 1986. On metaphors and enactment of thought, see Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 1980.
the “image culture” explored. It is the movement of bodies through time and space in a place in real time which influences the technology used, fused, and diffused at the interface between bodies and the technology.

*Mephistopheles to Faust: “Illusion holds you captive still.”*

Whether the cinematic or televisual mediums have a direct hold over us, there is a fascination or seduction, just as in our reflection in a mirror (as with Lacan’s ‘mirror stage’). Through performative inquiry, we can be armed with a counter-ideology in regards to the visual culture, whether this is internal (such as being critical as to what we

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291 Mark Johnson in *The Body in the Mind* developed a theory of “image schemata” as basic building blocks in cognitive linguistics for conceptual metaphor. He argues for a revised version of Kant’s notion of schema as the crucial imaginative link between our concrete perceptions of an object (e.g. my dog ‘Tai’) and our experience of categories (the class of things called dogs). However, where Kant wanted schemata to serve as a bridge between non-empirical concepts and perceptual images, Johnson maintained that image schemata are regularly recurring embodied patterns of experience that are acquired during the course of a person’s early stages of development. The schemata are image-like in that they are analogic brain patterns that preserve the perceptual experience as a cohesive whole. Johnson further states that image schemata are not restricted to visual modality and can be kinaesthetic, auditory and cross-modal. Johnson argues that his and Lakoff’s research in *Philosophy of the Flesh* presses the role of such bodily schemas in cognition and language showing the ways in which aesthetic aspects of experience structure every dimension of our experience and understanding. Johnson states that all our thought and language, all our symbolic expression and interaction are tied intimately to our embodiment and to the pervasive aesthetic characteristics of all experience. On image schemata see Johnson’s *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, USA: Univ. of Chicago, 1987; also as development from Merleau-Ponty’s theory of the “flesh and embodiment” see Lakoff & Johnson’s *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought*, USA: Basic Books, 1999. In regards to Kant’s theory of perception, see Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* [1788], Paul Guyer & Allen W. Wood, trans., USA: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005.


are watching or engaging) or external, via a film, television, or photography (as in Brechtian alienation). The enthrallment with the ‘surroundings’ of cinema is certainly the impulse behind so much contemporary video installations: its duel fascination with both the image on screen and the conditions of its presentation. Carpeting, seating, sound insulation, size and colour of space, type of projection (back, front, freestanding) are all ways with which to deduce and simultaneously produce a critically perceptive viewer.

Isaac Julien’s three-channel installation “Baltimore”\textsuperscript{294} entices the spectator by the smooth play of images across the screens, and also by the intense blue walls that surround them. In Douglas Gordon’s free-standing projections such as “Between Darkness and Light,”\textsuperscript{295} the spectators circumnavigate a large screen on either side of which two different films are simultaneously projected. The spectators’ split and desirous relationship to both the image and the physical ‘cinema-situation’ is integral to these artists’ works.

Exceeding the cinematic image in the installation form, then, provides an important alternative to the model of ‘activation’ together with the modality of destabilising the spectator (such as in Nauman’s “Corridor” works). The three-screen installation “Tiny Deaths”\textsuperscript{296} by Viola addresses our experience of darkness and lightness in a further way. The spectators are plunged into total darkness before emerging into a partially shaded region of the shadow cast by the object. On three walls are projections, dimly lit and


barely visible in the darkness. A low-level murmuring of indecipherable voices can be heard. The screens do not emit enough light to enable us to see where we are in the room, nor to identify the presence of others in the space. On each wall we gradually become aware of the dim shadow of a human form, flickering in slow motion. Gradually a light source appears on one of the figures, increasing in intensity until it is consumed in a flash of white light. During this burst of brightness, the whole room is momentarily illuminated; then abruptly, everything is plunged back into darkness until the cycle begins again. Viola’s work does not allow the spectator time to adjust eyesight to the drop in light, and the spectator is repeatedly made to undergo the experience of being plunged into darkness. This disorientation is integral to the installation, since it oscillates the spectator’s attention between identification with the figures on the screen, the silhouettes of other bodies in the space visible against each spectator, and the darkness into which everyone is submerged. Spectators are mimetically engulfed by the work on two levels: in the consuming darkness, and as shadows merging with the silhouettes on screen. The split of moving image and surrounding situation together serve to distance the art from spectacle and incorporate the spectator’s body as the site of text for making meaning from the installation work.

“If these images can be said to refer to anything it is to the millions of bits of electronic mathematical data. Increasingly, visuality will be situated on a cybernetic and electromagnetic terrain where abstract visual and linguistic elements coincide and are consumed circulated, and exchanged globally.”

Jonathan Crary has argued that new technologies of image production have become broadly institutionalised within the military, medicine, science, media, and the arts. For Crary, the shift taking place in the visual culture is the result of computer-based image processing signals supplanting the embodied human spectator’s repertoire of techniques for decoding sensations. See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992, p. 2. According to W.J.T. Mitchell, “A worldwide network of
According to theorist Jacques Derrida, the border of any text has blurred boundaries, since all texts are embedded in a larger system of discourse and always refer to and repeat other texts. Although Derrida critiques the status quo, in relation to print technology and its socio-economic workings in twentieth century Western culture, the body as a site of text in (technologically-induced) installation art forms captures these blurred boundaries from where words no longer pre-scribe, de-scribe and re-scribe a set position of story or doctrine, but rather re-position the spectator/participant as the textual body through the intertwining of subject and object, and body and world through the use of congruent images, movement and technology in real time. Nauman’s “Think,” Gordon’s “Through a looking glass,” as well as Viola’s “Tiny Deaths” all serve to engage with mechanisms of mirroring, doubling and looping of video which press the spectator in these instances to become an active participant; and as the active participant, the doubling and the mirroring are of a mobile, interactive nature, moving through the digital imaging systems is swiftly, silently constituting itself as the decentered subject’s reconfigured eye.” (See W.J.T. Mitchell, The Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992, p. 85).

A boundary I refer, is not that at which something stops, but the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing. See Martin Heidegger, “Building, dwelling, thinking” in Poetry, Language, Thought, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, pp. 152-3.


Looped time (as I said in Ch. 2) is a continuous operating video system. A double looped time or segment refers to two simultaneously continuous operating video systems. Douglas Gordon incorporates this into his installation works. See his exhibits at the Guggenheim Museum @ http://www.guggenheimcollection.org/site/artist_work_md_193_2.html
land of the looking glass that rivals a model of the Lacanian mirror stage. It is this rhythmic drive of the doubled, repeated frames, and most significantly, the position in-between them, that allows a momentary distraction of the body in the moment. Appelbaum says that this momentary distraction is a sensitivity that has no permanence and must be regained through effort. For the spectator/participant, it is through the active engagement with the congruent images in the art installation form which presses the spectator/participant to become a visual and interactive body-of-text in a complex and heterogeneous site blurring the boundaries of personal experiences (such as persons, objects, and place) to the relation that binds these things together in action. It is in this relational encounter through the assemblage of ‘space-moments of possibility’ where each component for the spectator/participant co-exists in an arbitrary (no fixed points) relationship. The challenge for the spectator/participant is in his or her flexibility (in those moments) to recognize the (fixed tension) dialectic of the technologically driven visual culture intervention on the body and in turn, reverse the intervention through the body as interface.

Taking Derrida’s notion that ‘any text has blurred boundaries’ and applying it to performative inquiry allows for the possibility of a hinge of intervention between text and inter-text, tension and poise (through embodied acts, in specific sites, questioning through actions, inter-actions, re-actions, and conceptual images) to occur. Appelbaum’s ‘hinge’

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301 Lacan. *Ecrits*. Lacan proposes that human infants pass through a stage in which an external image of the body (e.g. reflected in a mirror) produces a psychic response that gives rise to the identification of “I.” This identification with the image serves as establishing an ideal-I in the child, rather than “I” in adulthood.

creates a fluidity and flexibility between tension and poise (tension being the context, the poise as the moment just prior to action). The use of a hinge with Derrida’s ‘any text has blurred boundaries’ could be argued as providing what Roland Barthes describes as a “writerly text” (a text open to multiple ways of assembling knowing and understanding). For Appelbaum, however, the knowing and understanding is activated through the body as text; the body becomes an inter-text-uality of meaning making at the moment of the ‘stop’. The installation art form’s live body(s) and technology assemblages—where each component co-exists in an arbitrary (no fixed points) relationship situated within a larger body(s) of activity—emerges as a language to explore and critique the body(s)’ implications within visual culture. This co-existence between body and technology evolves an ethics of technological intervention: where the installation art form challenges and engages the spectator/participant(s) in the dialectic of technology’s intervention in the body and the body’s intervention in technology. The moment of pause, the space of liminality imposed in the installation art form creates

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305 The liminal space is an actual moment of poise, where the body’s physical, cultural and historical character is communicated through reflexive action. It offers choices, either to remain habit-bound or to regain freedom in one’s approach to an endeavor. Appelbaum refers to this space as the stop—a space-time interval where for example, performance artists create to expose and re-present the hidden codes of historically determined culture in order to evoke the body, memory, and cultural history (Laurie Anderson’s autobiographical work is a good example). See Appelbaum’s The Stop. The limen is a reflexive interval between for example, the private and the public spheres, or between high and low culture. It has been also been called a threshold, a border, a neutral zone between ideas, cultures, or territories that one must cross through, in order to become aware of the inter-connectedness with the body and the world. See Richard Schechner’s The End of Humanism: Writings on Performance.
the space for the hinge to connect body-technology reversibility where the participants can situate their own cultural identities and desires in relationship to the technology and others—in a ‘space-moment of possibility’ created to expose and re-present the hidden codes of the constructed spectacle of visual culture in relationship to technology and media. The reversibility of body to world and world to body situated in a liminal space also positions Barthes’ notion of the writerly text: through the installation art form, the body loses its socially created identity and becomes a text; a site for inscribing and exploring ethics or politics for example, of the body-culture interventions.

Inter-facing technology through an art installation form furthers the relationship between body-culture interventions; practices such as computer morphing and genetic cloning or home video and institutional surveillance show us just how permeable the boundaries are at the inter-face of body, text, culture and technology. Jean Baudrillard (as well as crediting Karl Marx and Marshall McLuhan) in *Simulacra and Simulation* says, “from a classical (even cybernetic) perspective, technology is an extension of the body…[technologies] are relays, extensions, media mediators of nature ideally destined

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306 For further discussion of Fels’ ‘space-moment of possibility’ and perceptually-guided actions see, Ch. 2.

307 Intervention incites direct involvement (a critical engagement of questioning and negotiation--possibly inciting change) of communication between the spectator/participant(s) in deliberating whatever oppositions are being contested by the installation artist and the visual culture within the installation form.

308 Cybernetics refers to the science of subjectivity--all human knowing is constrained by our perceptions and our beliefs, and hence, is subjective. http://www.pangaro.com/published/cyber-macmillan.html
to become the organic body of man...In this ‘rational’ perspective the body is nothing but a medium” an interface, thus, affirming as well, the parallel with Barthes’ writerly text. Inter-facing though, in installation art through performative inquiry’s action-site of inquiry and intervention to change, inter-change, and re-arrange the body’s ‘linguistic’ context, has the capacity to blur the boundaries in a contentious world of technology interfaces. However, installation art through performative inquiry first, must: dismantle the body’s function of its socially constructed identity; and second, just as a cyborg, reconstruct a hybrid identity that literally hosts technological devices within and without its physiological structure.

309 Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, p. 111.

310 According to Donna Haraway, a cybernetic mechanism, a hybrid of human and machine, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality, lived social relations is our most important political construction—a world-changing fiction. Cyborgs are not about the “machine” and the “human”, instead cyborgs represent specific historical machines and people in an in-fused relationship. Moving out of fiction, though, people with electronic pacemakers, artificial joints, drug implant systems, implanted corneal lenses, and artificial skin represent a portion of the population today—in a sense, as cyborgs. There are also metamorphic cyborgs, including the computer keyboarder joined in a cybernetic circuit with the screen, the neurosurgeon guided by fibre optic microscopy during an operation, and the teen game-player in the local videogame arcade. There becomes an unmistakably doubled articulation that signals the end of traditional concepts of identity even as it points toward the cybernetic loop that generates a new kind of subjectivity. See Hayles’ How We Became Posthuman. Haraway theorizes further on cyborgs in her article, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” in The Cybercultures Reader, D. Bell & B. Kennedy, eds. London: Routledge, 2000.

311 Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha appropriates the concept of hybridity from M.M. Bakhtin, in The Dialogic Imagination, 1981, where he refers to the ‘hybrid utterance’ as one in which multiple linguistic registers or various different voices co-exist—a multi-vocal-ity. Bhabha argues that the postcolonial subject is always split because of its ambivalent relationship to the dominant culture. This idea of the hybrid subject is similar to the idea of the “mestiza” as coined by Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, although Bhabha only focuses on the axis of ethnicity and fails to
The late twentieth century brought about Haraway’s cyborg myth, which according to her is about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities.” Her notion of cyborg in “Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s” situates the cyborg metaphor historically in an era where we as a Western society are moving from an industrial to a polymorphous information society. This societal change according to Haraway, is to urge us to reject any totalizing technophobic stance because this would render any taking of responsibility of the power embedded in the integrations of technologies and society impossible. The hybrid human-machine, the cyborg, is then not only a figuration but also has already lived multiple takes the axes of gender, sexuality and class into account. The concept of the mestiza implies a consciousness that is mobile, multiple, nomadic and schizoid. Anzaldúa points out that borders are places where different cultures, identities, sexualities, classes, geographies, races, and genders collide or interchange. This becomes essential in this paper in proposing that the body as a site for resistance and text-u-ality blurs the boundaries—the body becomes the site where cultures, identities, technologies, and so on, collide and inter-face. See Gloria Anzaldúa’s “La Conciencia de la Mestiza. Towards a New Consciousness” in Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza. San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987. Refer again to Derrida’s On Gramatotology, where the border of any text are in some sense always an illusion since all texts are embedded in a larger system of discourses and always refer or repeat other texts. This then potentially removes the mystifying uniqueness of the singular text and again affirms the notion of Deleuze’s configuration of assemblages.


314 Figurations provide powerful tools for rethinking certain notions within theories and practices; feminist theorists have come up with several: cyborg, hybrid, subaltern, nomad, mestiza) that may be useful in relation to discussions of technologies. In this paper, cyborg and hybrid are the figurations used.
embodied experiences. Simultaneously, a cyborg metaphor may through an installation form incite communication through intervention, the direct involvement of the participant deliberating any opposition contested by the installation artist. The performative inquiry is an engagement of reflecting, re-questioning, and re-mapping certain notions, practices, and theories in and around body-technology; the spectator/participant becomes armed with the information of the technology automatically making the participant, a cyborg.

Similarly, Bolter and Grushin point out that through their concept of remediation the Embodied here refers to the cyborg metaphor and how we are made aware of how our bodies are closely integrated with technologies, and how these integrations are entangled with gender, ethnicity, class and geographical location.

Bolter and Grushin claim in Remediation: Understanding New Media that all media and technologies are always in a dialectical relationship with their economical, historical and social contexts. This allows them to say that, without falling into the trap of technological determinism, not only does a society produce new technologies but similarly do new technologies shape society. Drawing on the ideas of Bruno Latour, they say that our highly technologised society in fact consists of and produces constantly multiple hybrids of technologies, subjects and language; in short, cyborgs. They go on to argue that all mediation in our society is really remediation and that henceforth all (re)mediations are in themselves ‘real as artifact in our culture, though not as autonomous agents’. See J. Bolter & R. Grushin, Remediation. Understanding New Media. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000. (cf. Baudrillard’s notion of the simulacrum as creating ‘hyperreality’ See Simulacra and Simulation. Because mediation is real, it implies a process of simultaneously reforming society as well. This argument effectively does away with any idea of a virtual as being less value than and opposed to a real. The real reform can be social or political, but as Bolter and Grushin present that what is hyper-mediate for one person may be immediate for another; we need to be careful to always take into account the specific context within which the medium operates. Taking this argument further in performance art through performative inquiry for example, it is important to remember that positive social change is never inherent to any medium—a tool can become a weapon if it is held right.

Although most definitions of medium (or media) emphasize that it is a middle term or transmitting device of some sort, Bolter and Grushin in Remediation (p. 65) argue that in our present state of media (or IT) history, each of us is experienced, used and defined by each of our relation to other media: A medium is that which re-mediates. It is that which appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other
body(s) may affectively be conceived as media in themselves through the refashioning of old media (e.g., perspective painting, photography, film, television). The cyborg metaphor thus, blurs the boundaries of text and body, between human and machine, and strongly refuses any idea of original centre or unity. The cyborg metaphor makes us aware of how the body(s) in a technologically driven world is closely integrated with technologies. When the blurring of boundaries occurs between in-and out-side-the-body, and especially when we consider that our in-side-the-body is constructed through discourses, ‘power relations and texts’ as Michel Foucault refers, our engagement with any information technology then automatically makes us into cyborgs. Drawing from Haraway, Derrida and Foucault then, the cyborg is committed to a temporal and a partial media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real (Similar to Derrida’s view of embedded texts in a larger text, thus blurring boundaries of text in the opening lines of this paper). For further reading on this topic also see J-F. Lyotard’s The Postmodern Condition, Geoff Bennington & Brian Massumi, eds. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1979; and Jean Baudrillard’s Selected Writings, Mark Poster, ed. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001. Also see Marshall McLuhan’s “The Medium is the Message” in Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. New York: Signet, 1964. A medium in Western culture for example, never operates in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media… There may be or may have been cultures in which a single form of representation through art forms (perhaps in painting or singing) exist with little or no reference to other media. Such isolation does not seem possible today, when recognition of the representational power of a medium is only in reference to other media.

In his book Hypertext 2.0 George Landow draws upon Derrida in arguing that hypertext provides for an ‘infinitely recentreable system’ as the reader(s) constantly adopt other organizing logics when moving through various lexias (or languages of text). Although Derrida notes that centres are not bad in themselves, the crucial point becomes however, to carefully look at situated workings of in and exclusion of both privileging and marginalizing effects of using new technologies in an installation art form. See George Landow. Hypertext 2.0. The Convergence of Contemporary Theory and Technology, Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1997.

and hence, this partial alliance presses the spectator/participant for the need for connections.

“Perception is the master of space in the exact manner that action is the master of time.”

For David Rokeby’s, “The Master of Space,” perception is the ‘master of space’.

Rokeby hung string from the art gallery ceiling at 1/2 metre intervals to establish the edges of the perceptual field of the system’s camera and its shadows. The camera was set up near the ceiling and angled so that the top of its field corresponded to the floor at the entrance to the space. As the spectator walked into the installation, he/she was in effect increasingly submerged in the interactive space. One hidden computer generated sounds of heartbeats and breathing that increased pace with continued motion and interaction by the spectator/participant(s) in the space; the sounds of waves, wind, and footsteps were also amplified within the space in direct relationship to the spectator/participant(s). As a spectator/participant approached the camera at the apex of the two walls of string, the intensity of the audible interaction increased. Certain sounds were mapped to specific

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320 Sandoval in *Methodology of the Oppressed* claims that the speed of the computer networks is crucial to endow temporal and partial alliances: these alliances will result in a continuous movement and constant structuring of the socio-political field. See C. Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2000.


322 David Rokeby, “The Master of Space,” MuuMedia Festival, Otso Gallery, Helsinki, Finland, 1991; European Media Arts Festival, Osnabruck, West Germany, 1990; European Software Festival, Gasteig, Munich, West Germany. For image see jpg #2 @: http://images.google.ca/images?gbv=2&hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&sa=1&q=installation+art+"Master+of+Space"+by+David+Rokeby&btnG=Search+Images&aq=f&oq=
areas of the space; for example, the smashing of glass was generated if a spectator/participant moved to a particular spot in the space in the view of the camera lens. A second hidden computer ran a Hypercard stack showing an eye observing the space and included audible verbal text reiterating the notion of the activity of perception and the fluidity of language.

Along with Nauman, Douglas, Lozano-Hemmer, and Viola, Rokeby’s installation also allows the fusing of connections through activation and decentring in the installation art form providing a possibility to a partial answer to the need of connections: such as when fusing connections with technologies undoubtedly will affect how we use our bodies and experience space and time. Formed by technology at the same time that the body creates technology, the installation art form re-mediates technology and discourse by creating new experiential congruent frameworks where the body in the space becomes the site of text in looped time between the body, text, culture, and technology. If we look at the art of the feedback loop\textsuperscript{323} of Nauman again, the space between technological innovations

\textsuperscript{323} Visual and performance artist Bruce Nauman’s first interest in video equipment was as a tool to record his explorations of the body’s engagement with space, namely his own exaggerated and repetitive movements within his studio. But he also became interested in exploring alienation and aggression as a way of reengaging with the question of inter-subjectivity. The (video) feedback loop is an aspect of Nauman’s works that explores the spectatorial role. In “Think” (1993), he created an art installation piece in which a seemingly passive viewing state by spectator is prodded into contemplation. By placing two monitors together, one upside down and on top of the other, each playing a looped video disc displaying his head moving into the screen, yelling \textit{THINK}, Nauman takes an aggressive look at the way in which television dictates, through direct address, the thoughts of the viewer. The circulating systems of these two loops (an indefinitely running live video feed and the continuously repeating video disc), where media generates the self and the self affirms media, pose the question of how we actually begin to approach thought or contemplation inside of the seemingly circular logic of media culture. The answer here is not in the alteration and subversion of the image, but in the duration and repetition of representation itself. The feedback and looping created mimics the
and textual practices incorporating the conditions of experiential motion in, around, and through a looped video art installation, moves beyond the static image of representation in what Fels refers to as “moments, insistent… looking for resonance.” Art video loops are by no means the only opportunity in which the effects of repeated spectacle can affect our understanding of the re-mediated body text. But installation video loops of congruent images from the visual culture do offer concrete examples of how the experience can be created within the flow of the technological stream. Looped time as with Jone’s ‘reversibility’ encourages the already continual motion of the eddying of our bodies in which it is possible to both acknowledge the force of technology in our lives, witness, and perhaps take, the opportunity to re-consider our re-connection through re-inscribing time-effected logic of repetition in the media. What’s important here is that feedback loops are not a new tactic of audience engagement. Minimalists exposed the myth of the museum as white cubes by reducing white cubes within its spaces. Conceptual artists exposed the capitalist operating logic of the museum by simply making its business activity visible as part of the exhibition. In this context, the artist’s ambition of course is to bring the phenomenological and critical awareness to both the gallery space and the media system through a feedback loop. It is not the intention of this paper to come across here as privileging the gallery context as a site for effectively critiquing media culture over the movie complex, the couch, or any other site of spectatorship; the focus of choice here is simply to acknowledge that there’s an uniqueness as a viewing space which offers ways for artists to play with the repetition of media time that might differently affect each of our experiences with the media. For more information on dialogue between media culture in current video installations, see Malcolm Turvey, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, George Baker, and Matthew Buckingham, *Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, October, no. 104 (Spring, 2003), pp. 71-96. Ultimately the question is, whether, and then why, what we are watching or participating in is interesting or important to each of us. For more on Nauman’s video experiences, see Susan Cross, *Bruce Nauman: Theater of Experience*. New York: Guggenheim, 2003; and Marcia Tucker, “PhENauMANology,” in *Artforum* 9, No. 4 (Dec, 1970), pp. 38-44; also anthologized in *Bruce Nauman*. Robert Morgan, ed. Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 2002. See note 7 & 24, on closed and open video loop technology.

324 Fels, 1999, p. 2.
our engagement practices on our body(s) through the inter-relationship with technology and visual culture differently.

Understanding that technologies have come to both enhance and/or challenge the dominant meanings of visual culture (it is those dominant meanings though that we have often taken for granted as we passively sit in front of our computer screen or television, clicking keys, mouses, and remote controls, or guided through highly lit galleries looking passively at paintings, sculptures, and photography), what’s important here is that through the installation art form the body’s intervention with technology, text, and/or image serves to surface, shock, and situate the spectator as a perceiver-independent active participant through decentring and re-questioning the dominant meanings, in order to validate his or her individual and collective site of resistance in everyday life.

At present, the power of visual culture and technology in our everyday lives seems to be a condition with which we need to come to terms rather than to try and escape. In an era where society is predominantly highly technologised, strategies for understanding our place in the world must alter accordingly. It is important to freely acknowledge our investment in the technologised culture; but at the same time within that involvement,

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325 Images present the spectator clues about the dominant meaning. The dominant meaning can refer to the artist or producer’s intent or the overall cultural intent of a group of people. There is an unquestioning manner of identification by the spectator/participant of the dominant message being presented by the image or text.

326 To challenge the meaning of an image is a negotiated interpretation from the image and its dominant meanings. This brings into play the spectator’s own memories, knowledge, and cultural frameworks as well as the image itself and the dominant meanings that cling to it. Interpretation becomes a process of acceptance and rejections of meanings and associations that adhere to a given image in the visual culture. The process disrupts, interrupts and corrupts dominant ideologies and dominant meanings which places the spectator as an active participant in the process rather than a passive, unquestioning spectator.
allow for ‘space-moments of possibilities’ through active and inter-active participation in art installation forms that press for engagement and reflection, and thus mark hidden dimensions of everyday life in a number of ways: 1) in our close entanglement with technology and its practices; 2) in the deconstruction of the idea of one complete story or one complete site of performance allowing for multiple assemblages of sites and/or stories to emerge; 3) on a beginning of a shift to move away from the mono-linearity of conventional theatre as passive spectator resulting in a decentring of inscribing practices where the body becomes the site of text in order to engage the spectacle of mechanical and electronic devices in technology; 4) to explore and critique technology’s implications in order to evolve an ethics of embodied technological intervention; 5) in creative inquiry through an installation art form to challenge the dialectic of technology’s intervention in the body and the body’s intervention in technology—only then can we turn our attention upon itself. This may be provide freedom, possibly, from the confines of the technology flow that is finally achieved and sustained just as in the video loop: the technology through the body as text is constantly being incorporated back into spectacle time, but it is always in the process of creating new markers of the tide for itself. The body as interface stands upright, alive and vibrant, but vulnerable in the face of visual culture’s buffeting technological storm.
Chapter 3  Inter-facing Reflexive Pedagogy

3.1 Inter-facing Reflexive Pedagogy

“[a route]...an experience which gradually clarifies itself, which gradually rectifies itself and proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others.”

Encounters with an art form can never just be an end-point, since it may challenge the spectator/participant to new encounters of experience. In investigating such encounters through referencing several well-known art installations, I shall be positioning the spectator/participant as an active embodied presence who experiences decentring, and in becoming so, is required to reconsider centred notions of visual culture, the human body, and who she or he is in the world of mediated images. As we move into “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe,” (Ch. 3.2), I will speak to my experience and learning through the lens of a spectator/participant and artist/educator who enters into the installation art form. Merleau-Ponty talked of these encounters of new experiences as “a route” being given to us, an experience that proceeds through dialogue and evokes change. The idea of making spaces for ourselves, experiencing ourselves in our connectedness and taking the action to move through those spaces individually and collectively is what Martin Heidegger writes about in how things happen now and then, when an open space appears: “There is a clearing,” or what Appelbaum refers to as the stop (the shocks of awareness in a moment of time) which press us to—“reach beyond what we are sure we know.” Among others and with enactivists, Fels argues (see

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328 Ibid
Chapter 2) that knowledge is enacted through human participation (e.g., through conversations enacting situations with a mutual sharing of endeavours and ideas) in a dynamic and changing environment.\textsuperscript{330} There is a shared responsibility (in an enactivist setting), for the learning occurs through a transformation of active participation and inquiry. If an enactivist approach is adopted in an inter-facing reflexive pedagogy there will be a shift from the conventional learning paradigms\textsuperscript{331} to an ‘inter-personal’ paradigm of learning (which uses interactivity in a human-to-human relation with other users or in a human-relation with digital objects). As I stated in my Introduction, ‘rarely do we stand back from our encounters of experience and ask how we can come to actively understand the role the visual culture plays in our inter-relationships, and further, how we can reverse the visual culture’s effect on the way we think, act, and inter-act with it and one another’. As Merleau-Ponty said, our encounters are understood to be one through a lived experience; it is through the direct immersion in the world that we come to understand our relation with the world. Awakening our sensibilities through one’s own body, that forgotten land, is significant through 1) a reflexive encounter both historically (e.g., with visual culture) and socially where constructed techniques and procedures are closed to contextual circumstances; 2) an engagement in counter-constructed spectacle strategies which are open to multiple possibilities of any given context—a space where the installation art form can re-present action to resist predetermined assumptions and

\textsuperscript{330} Fels, 1999.

\textsuperscript{331} According to Thomas S. Kuhn in \textit{The Structure of Scientific Revolutions}, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1970, there is an epistemological viewpoint in paradigms that as an organising principle governs perception and determines what we shall and shall not see.
methods. The complicity and opposition to dominant ideologies contains the possibility for interventions of constructed visual culture spectacle through the installation art form. For Appelbaum, this space is neither poised nor unpoised, but a place where the moment of cultural and personal story stands at a crossroads:

Between closing and beginning lives a gap, a caesura, a discontinuity. The betweenness is a hinge that belongs to neither one nor the other. It is neither poised or unpoised, yet moves both ways—It is the stop.  

This is the unknown territory of the presence: the new, the dangerous, the risky active encounter in the installation art form. The human-to-human or human to digital media technology for example, allows for a possible shift in making meaning from object to the process of human interaction. In Chapter 1, section 1.2, I spoke of moments of recognition as moments of meaning, and from this perspective the focus from the components of the experiences of persons, objects, places shifts to the relation that binds these things together in action. For Appelbaum and Fels, this relation is at the site of the body’s surface, the site of perception, the stop. Cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, talks though of this ‘relational site’ as a liminal space (a space of perception, awareness), a place of negotiation of cultural identity across differences of race, class, gender, and cultural traditions. He argues that cultural identities cannot be ascribed to pre-given, irreducible, scripted traits.  

Bhabha’s liminal space of negotiation of cultural identity involves the continual inter-face and exchange of cultural performances that in turn produce a mutual and mutable recognition or representation of cultural differences. There

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332 Appelbaum, pp. 15-16.

333 Homi Bhabha, Location of Culture, New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 2-5.
is an active pressing in his argument to re-present the body as a site of resistance, reclaiming and producing culture from the respective cultural identities. Henry A. Giroux, on the other hand, views liminal space as a wider context which represents a “contested zone” where cultural codes and binaries are intentionally challenged and reconstituted. It is this (liminal) space, the stop, where the spectator/participant is provided with agency, to act on and take responsibility for his or her education and understanding. This (liminal) space is one of reflexivity of inquiry of the self and (visual) culture through active engagement where “perception is opened-up through affirmation and denial, effort and resistance, and creates tension within the confines of the body.”

The spectator/participant transforms then from being a passive consumer of the dominant cultural practices within the visual culture through effort and resistance to being an active reflexive producer thereby creating a dynamic relationship between the visual culture world and self. Cultural critic and artist Trinh T. Minhha offers the liminal space as a ‘reflexive interval’ space where “cultural workers challenge and resist cultural domination and where they construct and participate in public life.” For Giroux “it is within the tension between what might be called the trauma of identity formation and the demand of public life that cultural work is both theorised and made performative.”

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336 Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography: Towards a Critical Cultural Politics” in *Communications Monographs* 58 (2).

stated earlier, the possibility of a relational installation art form points today then to art forms which have a radical upsetting of the aesthetic, cultural, and political goals of the real and the not-yet-real worlds introduced in modernity.338

“I’m giving you this sugary thing: you put it in your mouth and you suck on someone else’s body. And in this way, my work becomes part of so many other people’s bodies…For just a few seconds, I have put something sweet in someone’s mouth and that is very sexy.”339

Embodiment in installation art forms interconnect possibilities for dialogue challenging the cultural codes and re-presenting the body heightening the principles of a ‘rhizomatic structure’340 described by Deleuze and Guattari. (In a rhizomatic structure, the interconnectedness through many entry points presents the liminal space as one where the participants are provided with agency to challenge their understanding which is neither linear nor contested, but rich with new possibilities and incorporates a structure which is embodied). Because there are no fixed points, the interrelationships are in

338 See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2, Giroux footnote 199.

Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Installation: Untitled (Placebo) 1991, one thousand pounds of identical silver-cellophane wrapped sweets were laid out in the shape of a long rectangle on the gallery floor for the spectators to partake as they entered the gallery installation space. Debate and dialogue became important aspects of Group Material’s practice of which Gonzalez-Torres the Cuban artist’s work emerged. Group Material began in 1979 with fifteen members (which dropped to three (Julie Ault, Mundy McLaughlin, and Tim Rollins). In 1988 after Rollins and McLaughlin left, Ault merged with Gonzalez-Torres. Group Material is best known for blurring installation art and exhibition making; there was always controversy centred around whether what they were doing was viewed as art, curating, or activism. See Group Material, ‘Caution! Alternative Space!’ (1981), in But is it Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism, Nina Felshin, ed., Seattle, USA, 1995. for images see: http://images.google.ca/images?gbv=2&hl=en&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3AOfficial&sa=1&q=installation+art+"Untitled+(Placebo)"+by+Felix+Gonzalez-Torres&btnG=Search+Images&aq=f&oq=

constant flux—the space is open, and connectable, detachable, reversible, and susceptible to a process of constant change. How does the body of the installation artist relate to the body of the spectator to resist the spectacle of the public? Garoian in *Performing Pedagogy* argues in light of performance artists, that liminality, contingency, and ephemerality,\(^{341}\) are the three major characteristics that challenge the ideological absolutes of reified [constructed] culture, make possible the production of spectacle, rather than its reproduction, thus creating a space where spectators can situate their own identities and desires.\(^{342}\) Since the body is the (liminal) space within the installation art form, the body therefore serves as the principal means by which subjectivity is expressed by the spectator/participant.\(^{343}\) Merleau-Ponty referred to this interrelationship as ‘the flesh of the world’ where an intertwining of subject and object, self and body, body and world merge as one body. Jones argues this as a reversibility of seeing and being seen and entails a reciprocity and contingency for the subject in the world. Performative inquiry in liminal space becomes an evolving process, never completed, contingent upon

\(^{341}\) Liminal space is created by the spectator/participants and exposes and re-presents the hidden codes of the constructed (reified) visual culture to enable interrogation by the spectator/participants. Contingency occurs as spectator/participant interprets the cultural issues presented in the installation artwork from the context of the spectator/participants’ subjectivity. The ephemeral condition created by the spectator/participants created by the spectator/participants as liminality and contingency take place in real time and space, making possible the witnessing of the event.

\(^{342}\) Garoian, in *Performing Pedagogy*, p. 72. Other art(s) educators/artists working in the field of visual culture, visual arts, and knowing/meaning making practices include: Paul Duncum, Univ. of Illinois and Kerry Freedman of Northern Illinois Univ.

\(^{343}\) The liminal space where through performative inquiry action and reflection, ideas, images, myths, utopias and so forth, can be contested and new ones constructed as they pertain to the spectator/participants’ experiences of reality and desires to transform that reality.
cultural circumstances and the circumstances of its impossibility. In Gonzalez-Torres’
“Untitled (Placebo)” for example, the audience is invited to help themselves to a sweet
off the gallery floor, and the installation work gradually disappears over the course of the
exhibition. This installation artwork exists as an instruction and can be endlessly remade,
but its key idea is the spectator participation, since it is the gallery visitor who creates the
work’s precarious physical identity. Gonzalez-Torres spoke of the interaction with his
installation as a metaphor for the relationship between

public and private, between personal and social, between
fear of loss and the joy of loving, of growing, of changing,
of always becoming more, of losing oneself slowly and
then being replenished all over again from scratch. I need
the viewer, I need the public interaction. Without public
these works are nothing, nothing, I need the public to
complete the work. I ask the public to help me, to take
responsibility, to become part of my work, to join in.344

Through one’s own body the creation of the event of presence through performative
inquiry in the installation art form in a liminal, contingent (where the outcome cannot be
predicted) and ephemeral (living for a very short time) space challenges the ideological
absolutes of the constructed visual culture of the spectator/participant in real time, and

344 Felix Gonzalez-Torres, interviewed by Tim Rollins in Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Los
Angeles, 1993, p. 23. The ‘candy spills’ began in 1991 when Gonzalez-Torres’
partner died of AIDS. The weight of the candy spills alludes to the weight of both
their body weights combined, thus an unbearable poignancy in the installation work.
Further ‘candy spills’ are seen in Untitled (Loverboys) 1991. Comprising of 350
pounds of white sugar and blue cellophane-wrapped sweets. There is a sense of
political-subjectivity in his work that has revolved around an assertion of political
will and identity. Subjective activism also appears in works by Beuys, Oiticica and
Group Material. See French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy’s The Inoperative
Community, Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1991. Nancy proposes a
vision of community as ‘inoperative’ or un-worked; one that opens us up to the
threshold of others’ existence, and which is calibrated on the death of those we call
its members. His theory provides a reading of politics that is not based on activism.
makes possible the creation of presence where the spectator/participant situates his or her own identities and desires which are remembered, misremembered, interpreted and revisited. Fels says that the purpose of performative inquiry is not about working towards a fixed goal, but rather through a “process of opening up” that supports Appelbaum’s notion of opening-up through awareness as a way of perceiving through resistance, because without tension our perception would be without content. Fels, Appelbaum, Deleuze and Guattari all speak of an ‘opening up’ a rhizomatic way of connecting in a liminal space which challenges possibilities for new ways of understanding through installation art forms.

The contingency and ephemerality challenges the installation art form through the action and interaction by the spectator/participant in real time and in flux, however, it is only mapped after the moment has passed. Thus, the contingency cannot necessarily be identified as it occurs, as the spectator/participant interprets the subject installed by the installation artist from the context of the spectator/participant’s personal understanding of the content of the installation artwork. And further, since the ephemeral condition is created by the spectator/participant as a space of liminality and contingency makes possible then the witnessing of the installation event in real time as a form of decentring and shock of temporality. In Gonzalez-Torres’ installation work is an idea of community centred around loss, always on the verge of disappearance. The viewing subject in “Untitled (Placebo)” appears to be implicitly incomplete, existing as an effect of being-in-common with others rather than as a self-sufficient and autonomous entity. The embodied

345 Fels, 1995.

reflexive engagement in the installation art form invites the spectator/participant to work (drawing from theatre practitioner Augusto Boal) in moments of crisis in which danger and opportunity of action co-exist; there are always possibilities of change.\textsuperscript{347}

In a technologically driven world, learning through active participation (in installation art forms) and practice concerns the whole person acting in the world. Conceiving of learning in terms of active participation focuses attention on ways in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations and inter-relations; a relational view of persons, their actions, and the world which is consistent with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of social practice in \textit{Outline of a Theory of Practice}:\textsuperscript{348} a vision of ‘conductorless orchestras, regulation without rules, embodied practices and cultural dispositions concerted in class habitus’ suggests the possibility of a break with dualisms that have kept persons reduced to their minds (mental processes of engagement and learning).\textsuperscript{349} Drawing on conceptual, performance, and installation arts’ historical nature of motivation, desire, and the very relations by which socially and culturally mediated experiences are available to spectator/participants through these art forms becomes significant in inter-facing a reflexive pedagogy of practice.


\textsuperscript{349} The Cartesian model of mind/body dualism as presented by Descartes (see Ch. 1, sec. 1.2) effectively segregates the everyday world from active engaged participation.
Reflexive pedagogy requires a practice and praxis (action and reflection) emphasizing the relational process of “bringing forth a world together”\textsuperscript{350} of the spectator/participant and his or her everyday world through the engagement of congruent images. The ‘coming to know’\textsuperscript{351} is the creative process of action and interaction from experiences and encounters that are shared. The meaning making in a reflexive pedagogy in an installation art form depends then on being in the world that is inseparable from our bodies, our language, and our social history that is dynamic, constantly changing and reconfiguring through embodiment.\textsuperscript{352} The materialization and acknowledgement of the body and its performative subjectivity in the installation form is not seen as (themselves) a transparent window on the world; instead the spectator/participants (as co-artists) and the installation art form draw attention to each of their(its) own constructiveness, and the fact that all are representations. It is through this continuously renewed set of relations, consistent with a relational view of persons, their actions, and the world through performative inquiry, which presents a reflexive pedagogy of social practice, praxis, activity and the development of meaning making through human-to-human (and human-to-technology) participation in the ongoing everyday world of the spectator/participant. For Fels, learning through performative inquiry embodies mind and body with a discernment,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{350} Fels asserts that understanding as learning is a process in which the participants shape the world together. See Chapter 1, 1.2. Also, see Freire’s Chapter 3 in \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, where he discusses “praxis” (action-reflection) as the way to transform the world.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{351} Refer to Ch. 1, 1.2 and Ch. 2.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{352} Refer to Ch. 1, 1.2 and Ch. 2 for further discussion on enactivism, embodiment and phenomenology. Also refer to Garoian’s \textit{Performing Pedagogy}, pp. 73-74.}
appreciation, understanding and an honouring of the person, thing or event in the interaction, and further, a respect (in which we look again more fully and appreciatively at who or what is before us) to educational drama [arts] programmes. The practice of embodiment in a reflexive pedagogy includes moment-by-moment awareness, and fully engages all of our senses so that we can be present for everything in the interaction within the installation art form. The possibility to break with the dualisms that have kept spectators reduced to their minds, mental processes to instrumental rationalism and learning segregates the everyday world from engaged participation. Motivation, desire, and the very relations by which social and culturally mediated experience is available to the spectator/participant-in-action are significant in performative inquiry in a reflexive pedagogy and become entry points to making meaning. Fels claims learning is through a ‘space moment of possibility’, the knowing, doing, being, creating are relations among the participants in activity, with activity, and arising from the socially and culturally structured activity in the world. The embodiment simplifies and illuminates

353 Fels, 1999. Embodiment is a fullness of attention, a presence, awareness or an awakeness. It includes a compassionate awareness of thoughts, motives and actions.

354 Theorising in terms of practice, or praxis, also requires a broad view of human agency, see A. Giddens in Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979; for emphasising the integration in practice of agent, world, and activity, see Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu’s Outline of a Theory of Practice. A theory of social practice asserted by these theorists emphasises the inherently socially negotiated character of meaning and the interested, concerned character of the thought and action of persons-in-activity.

355 See Ch. 2.

356 Garoian in articulating on performance art pedagogy, claims as Fels, that learning is through active participation and reflection in order to identify the dialectical relationship between a group’s performance art making and performance art teaching.

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by linking our physical senses with our intuitive ones. The spectator/participant’s discernment is the seeing and knowing through active engagement of what is not immediately evident. Knowledge of the socially constructed world then is socially mediated and open-ended.

For Freire, his argument is for integration with one’s context that is a distinctively human activity. And although Debord refers to ‘constructed situations’ which are participatory events using experimental behaviour to break the spectacular bind of capitalism, the goal of providing people (spectator/participants) with a means to attain cultural identity and agency through a reflexive pedagogy of performative inquiry in an installation art form acknowledges the body and its ability, both as a physical-biological structure and simultaneously a lived-phenomenological structure—meaning that each person is doubly embodied and that we are always engaged with experiencing that takes place before reflection and theorising. In enactivist terms, performative inquiry the co-evolving active-action interaction of participants within a social context is enacted (lived through) in order to make meaning. As introduced in Chapter 2, if we take the spectacle as the social relationship between people mediated by images, then, we must reverse this mediated relationship of the spectacle in order to understand it and its influence on us in our everyday lives. Arts educator and theorist, Maxine Greene in

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358 Debord, “Towards a Situationist International.”

359 As I pointed out in Ch. 1, sec. 1.2, Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of perception is culturally formed—both physically and phenomenologically. This understanding he termed double-embodiment. See *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 131.
“Texts and Margins” ask (in the domains of arts teaching and aesthetic education) for a sense of agency, even of power for the participant. Just as with Fels’ who ‘recognizes that the location to be critical is to be creative’, for both Fels and Greene, things then absent are revealed when the participant is enabled to present through the active engagement in art forms other ways of seeing, speaking to and understanding of (visual culture in) the everyday.

Because the everyday is filled with a constant flow of images of heavily coded communication (predominately delivered through words, sounds, and symbols) stimulating our imagination to render a meaning-making experience in a pre-determined framed space precisely is the reason why we must challenge through active reflexive engagements the fast-paced production of images (which has revolutionized the way we communicate with and influence one another daily). But how do we come to re-direct the perceiver-dependent relationship we have with these images? Possibly it may be to re-enact the relationship as a form of active-action dialogue(s). Perhaps what then we are engaged with is more related to face-to-face activities of speaking, viewing, and challenging the intersection of images where the process of negotiating and renegotiating meaning, pleasure, and affective investment are mutually bound and dialogically engaged through the re-presentation of subject/object and subject/subject in an "adaptive" construction through the body as inter-face. This would suggest that a rather ephemeral nature of image-based experiences might be situated in an interactive process, which cannot be divided into image and spectator. It may be that the possession reveals itself as


361 See Fels, in Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.
ephemeral, and the only space within which some order can be brought into this set of experiences is through moments of possibility in a space of inquiry.

If we believe there appears to be an unstable relation between images, texts, and the spectator/participant in technologically driven visual culture then active participatory inquiry (with inter-relations to the reflexivity to congruent images, texts, and technology) may be required. Situated negotiation and renegotiation of meaning making through active participation which implies that understanding and experience are in constant flux (are mutually dependent) and implicated through performative inquiry, may upset or shock the instability and affect the way in which we think and interact with the content, context, and one another. What are the potential possibilities then of repositioning the site of resistance from the spectacle to the body (from the two-dimensional image-adaptive dimension to the three-dimensional body in a space) as the cultural stage, the site of resistance, the voice, the multiple voice using perceptually guided performative inquiry to address the visual culture practices (that overlap and intersect the heavily coded constructions of images), in order to enable the spectator as participant to acknowledge and challenge the very limits of perceptions of the image/spectacle?

The installation art “Half a Tank” by Radix Theatre acknowledges and challenges the very limits of perceptions of the image/spectacle. The installation is a spectacle meditation on our relationship with the technological seduction of the automobile. The show takes place in a large parking lot, with audience members seated inside their cars, parked in a circle facing inward. Inside

Radix Theatre’s Half a Tank first presented in 2003/04, Vancouver, B.C. An installation work that fits into today’s ‘economically challenged and oil depleted’ world has been performed throughout Canada in the past two years.

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the circle is a 1978 Dodge Diplomat that rotates endlessly, with a driver at the wheel. The audience members listen to their car radios as the radio station CKAR is ‘on location’ covering this historic event—the technology of the automobile, its place in our lives, significantly embraced in the Diplomat which is about to pass 500,000 miles on the odometer. CKAR’s host celebrates the Diplomat and the automobile technology with a collection of stories, samples and songs created by Radix company players. Included is a real pit crew and real special guests reflecting on the car’s significance. The show reflects our dysfunctional relationship with the automobile: we love our cars but they are killing us. “Half a Tank” culminates in a lavish ceremony as the Diplomat dies and is towed away to ‘the next lot’, crammed with a teeming mass of humanity. The audience is left to ponder a flaming oil drum as the show comes to an end. The active participatory nature of the audience in this show is significant as it allows the space for disseminating the images of the Diplomat, the fast-paced production of automobile technology, and the car’s place in our eco-sensitive world today. By allowing the dissemination of the images to occur in the installation form, the audience has the opportunity to distance his or herself (stand back) from these experiences and ask how this spectacle of the automobile industry, oil industry, and so forth creates a dysfunctional relationship of seduction.

Today, new media interfaces create many sites of resistance through spectacles defining relations between images and the spaces of seeing, doing, feeling, creating, and making meaning for the spectator/participant. Our everyday life is driven by the power and seduction of technology whether it is the technology of the automobile industry and the oil industry as in the Radix Theatre installation, or, computers, televisions, films, I-pods, I-Phones, webcams, and so on. Both the three-dimensional construct of the theatre
and the two-dimensional construct of new media present a certain set of ideas about the body and spatiality in the world. Each of these systems of engagement has become the “standard browser” for viewing and understanding our place in the world. Merleau-Ponty in “The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences” said “to perceive is to render oneself present to something through the body.” This is seen in the Radix Theatre’s “Half a Tank” installation where, rather than discounting the body as an accidental feature of Descarte’s subject-object relationship, the Radix Theatre installation draws on Merleau-Ponty’s consideration of the body as the embodied subject through perception which is the fundamental surface of making meaning upon the world, others, and the self.

“Going to the cinema results in an immobilisation of the body. Not much gets in the way of one’s perception. All one can do is look and listen. One forgets where one is sitting. The luminous screen spreads a murky light throughout the darkness...The outside world fades as the eyes probe the screen.”

Many of the assumptions around place and space built into theatre and technology systems grip the imagination of the spectator. As with Robert Smithson’s excerpt from “A Cinematic Atopia” (above) describes the engulfing lethargy of sitting in a cinema and watching films. The consuming darkness removes us from the world, suspending us in an alternative reality in which our bodies are subordinated to eyesight. Technological simulations offer us unimaginable experiences of making meaning, however, the foundations of these simulations are built up from relatively narrow sets of structures of

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363 See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2, for further discussion. Also see, Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception and its Philosophical Consequences,” p. 42; and also cited in Phenomenology of Perception, p. 138-139.

experience. An interface (whether that is film, television, theatre, or new media) inherently constructs a representation of the "user." New media interactive systems for example, involve feedback, however, the representation of the user is distorted--the interface in a sense becomes one like a fun-house mirror--the interactive new media system may be seen as giving the user power to affect the course of the system, or ultimately initiate a meaning making understanding of content, but predominately interferes in the user's subjective process of negotiation and renegotiation of exploration of meaning-making (as witnessed in “Half a Tank”). Hence, meaning is created by a narrow set of general structures for the user.

Freire said that adapting to others' choices blocks the person's capacity to critically make his/her own choices and transform reality because of the result of external prescriptions--the person is no longer integrated. The person has adapted instead. If we believe in the seduction of the automobile industry (as in “Half a Tank”), for example in producing, directing, and managing how we should act, re-act, and inter-act in and around the automobile, then it is not surprising that for Freire, ‘adaption’ is a "most weak form of self-defense." Specifically, with technology, the ‘interface designers’ have diverted the spectator from the challenge of where life becomes theatre, or where the line between theatre-as-metaphor and life-is-theatre blurs. Exposure to technologies through an active participatory inquiry in an art installation form can begin to challenge and thus change the ways that we re-act, re-think, and talk about the meanings of our experiences (such as the seduction of technology or automobile industry).

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Today we use terms borrowed from computer technology when describing our own mental and social processes. We "access" our memories, we "interface" with each other, we "erase" thoughts, we "input" and "output." Interestingly, these terms are also used in the marketing strategies of the automobile industry and the new technology being used for example in the navigation consoles of new cars. Marketers of the automobile industry already know that the new consumers are technologically savvy in the terminology and the uses of it. Alan Turing, a computer pioneer wrote, "I believe that at the end of the [twentieth] century, the use of words and general educated opinion will be altered so much that one will be able to speak of machines thinking without expecting to be contradicted."\(^{366}\) What Turing is saying is that our ideas of what thinking is and what computers can do will converge to the point that we cannot express or grasp the difference. This sort of convergence then may also take place in the realm of experience; we may lose our ability to differentiate between raw and simulated experiences. By establishing a way of sensing and a way of acting in an interactive system, the interface defines the "experience of being" for that system and user. Using Freire’s term, the ‘adaptive’ person in this sense is an object; the person is incapable of changing reality; we simply adjust to the reality given instead. We end up ‘skimming the surface’ as users unwilling to separate what is real: the disorder of meaning unchallenged. It is much easier to let someone else direct or navigate our path to understanding than to take responsibility for the meaning to be made. How do we challenge perception and navigate through an art form the technology of a two-dimensionally created image-space interface of meaning making, in order to shape our lived experience of the content? If culture, in the context of

new media becomes something we "do" then it's at the interface that defines how we do it and how the "doing" feels.

Luc Courchesne’s “Portraits of Dialogue,” challenges perception of the two-dimensional image-space interface through the interactivity presented in the form of dialogue between people—an ethical relation in which questions of inter-subjectivity, seduction, and “the face” are all combined. These portraits prefigure a form of sociability (a type of relation with the “other”). In the “Family Portrait” (1993) installation for example, the spectator is invited to participate in the “group portrait”—a documentary in which a small community of friends is filmed by the artist, who ultimately inserts himself into the scene as well. The artist reconstructs this society in virtual space and then provides the spectator with entry points that allow the aspectatot to participate by interposing him or herself into the conversation between characters. In Courchesne’s video portraits, whether they are collective or individual, the interactivity manifests itself as active dialogue. Besides actively engaging in a dialogue, however, there also needs to be incorporated a level of compassion (which is an essential feature of performative inquiry when learning through an art form) that allows the most significant questions to be asked. With a compassionate knowing there is no intrusion, no object, and no subject.

Luc Courchesne is a Canadian installation artist who has won numerous awards (such as the Prix Arts Electronics Award, 2002) internationally in ‘technology and arts connection’. He explores how new technologies create ties between people; to what extent the act of connecting with others is at the heart of artistic experiences in the field of new media. His works and activities at Montreal’s SAT (The Society for Arts and Technology) are based on encounters, networking and partnerships, and illustrate how the terrain of new media artistry is founded upon dialogue and exchange between individuals. Portrait One, 1990; Family Portrait, 1993, shown at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, Sept.-Dec., 2007. For the exhibition e-art: New Technologies and Contemporary Art, Ten Years of Accomplishments by the Daniel Langlois Foundation. See http://dynamicmedianetwork.org/people/luc-courchesne
Fels calls this “participatory knowing”—a different way of knowing when all preoccupations with self are given over to a state of complete attention. The question of process as a form of dialogue between artists, spectators and participants becomes of paramount importance to a reflexive pedagogy of learning through installation art forms. This fluidity of the inter-relationship through dialogue blurs (or washes out) the boundaries of the artwork form at the height of the process. The spectator/participant becomes the site (the centre and meaning of the work) which has resulted in a movement from the aesthetic dimensions of the artwork itself and the art-historical issues to a concern with the social integration and interactivity of the installation and the spectator/participant’s everyday life.

Interactivity, the ability for the spectator to become an active participant by intervening in the unfolding of a work, or the potential of the active engagement with a static work is opposed to the traditional more passive contemplation often associated with two-dimensional art works and traditional/contemporary (Aristotelian) theatre. Dialogue as a conceptual form has resurfaced in the work of Emanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur, and in the philosophy of language. Interestingly, dialogue opens up the notion of inter-subjectivity. In other words: if I do not speak to the “other”, then I do not exist. This is crucial in our affair with the visual culture—the seduction of images only exacerbates the

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368 Fels, 1999.

369 For more on the philosophical consideration of dialogue, see Jean Gagnon’s essay: “Blind date in cyberspace, or the figure that speaks,” first published in Artinact 2, ZKM and Cantz Verlag, 1995. The essay is online @ http://www.fondation-langlois.org/flash/f/stage.php?NumPage=158.
perceiver-dependent world and the control media potentially have over the meaning making life of its spectators.

“When images determine and overtake reality, life is no longer lived directly and actively. The spectacle involves a form of social relations in which individuals passively consume commodity spectacles and services without active and creative involvement.”

In the art installation form, it is through performative inquiry that dialogue comes into play. Our relation with the world and its social context appears, according to Merleau-Ponty, to be ‘only understood in the wider context of our immersion in the world’. Our interpretation of meaning is due to our body’s relationship with the world that it inhabits, which is charged with much meaning (such as in the perceiver-dependent visual culture). Therefore, our inter-actions in an installation form both draw and contribute to our experiences and meaning making. Our everyday practices of looking, seeing, touching, tasting, hearing, and engaging are ways in which we try to make sense of the world. To see is a process of observing and recognizing the world around us. To materialize and acknowledge the body is to actively make meaning of that world through performative inquiry to facilitate cultural transgression and transformation. Seeing is something we do somewhat arbitrarily as we go about our daily lives. Materializing and acknowledging is an activity that involves a greater sense of purpose and direction through the creation of installation art. Materializing and acknowledging involves learning to interpret what we see and how we see it, and like our other practices of engagement (strategies to challenge), materializing and acknowledging involves relationships of power.

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370 Best & Kellner, p. 88.
371 See Merleau-Ponty, Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.
372 Foucault, 1980.
willfully engage or not is to exercise choice and influence. Through critical performative inquiry, identity and agency of the spectator/participant in installation art forms provide the possibility of engaging with questioning strategies that challenge the body as ‘the stage’ the site (upon which the spectacle of our everyday visual culture enacts its social, political, economic, and aesthetic agendas) of resistance, to evoke a site of change.

With a perceptually guided knowledgeable action such as performative inquiry, our point of departure through dialoguing (negotiating and renegotiating) challenges our perceiver-dependent world (challenging the spectacle of visual culture) and makes the links between the world and the perceiver-independent world (which are in constant flux) one in a space of active reciprocal engagement. Despite all of this, Courchesne’s video portraits are not simply illustrations of complex philosophies in and around dialogue, because if they were, they would not engage the spectator’s complete sense of involvement (e.g., compassion and discernment). Merleau-Ponty in *Phenomenology of Perception* implies that perception is not simply a cognitive activity—the embodied person can see, move around, and position his/herself in relation to things, and handle them.\(^{373}\) For myself, if “Family Portrait” and the other portraits reached out and captivated my attention, it was because there was something else present: faces, voices—bodies. There was a seduction face-to-face.

Seduction’s role here is aesthetic; it acts to transform a mechanical computer system into a successful work of art. The voices establish a presence and create an opening, a fissure, through which I feel obliged to enter and respond. I respond to this reaching out through voice(s), whether the dialogue is sustained or interrupted. The

\(^{373}\) Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 203.
spectator/participant may respond positively or negatively, enter into the dialogue or withdraw from it, but either way, we are all drawn into the ethical dilemmas that hang upon our relationship as Emmanuel Levinas and Paul Ricoeur present in regards to the “other” and ultimately who we are. For Levinas and Ricoeur, our relationship with the “other” allows us to see the differences; and by seeing these differences, we come to understand them in relation to ourselves; there needs to be a break-out encounter face-to-face with the “other” in order to evoke change in understanding the self. There is then a sociability, a dialogue, an inter-subjectivity through the relational and inter-relational relationships that bind the “other” and the self together in reflexivity.

As with Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies,” Courchesne’s portraits incorporation of new media technology has grounded himself and his installations in a foundation of sociability, dialogue, intersubjectivity, and seduction. Whether the spectator/participants are moving across the square and re-acting and inter-acting with their shadows as in “Body Movies,” or engaging in a dialogue with Courchesne’s ‘Marie’ in “Portrait One,” both these artists’ installations prove themselves indicative of the new technological sociability that has emerged since the late 1990s with the World Wide Web. The

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spectator/participant has the tools already, and knows how to navigate the interface of the technology; however, what is important here is that it is in the active participation where the questioning of self is brought into the foreground from the technology. Marie from “Portrait One” said it all:

With me it’s too easy. I can only be the impossible love, a detour which occupies desire at no risk!…[and] yes, but with me, your gesture doesn’t bear any consequences. Will you dare as much with the person standing nearby?

It is remarkable that in our society with its powerful communication media, solitude is so widely spread, and so deeply felt. The sociability brought about today by the new media technologies offers more of a fear of the “other” and the refusal of dialogue as a principle. I guess we could say that there is a fear of being led off the path, of venturing from the well-trodden route, of embarking on adventures. Varela said that, “what we do… is what we know…it is not a mirroring of the world, but the laying down of a world.”

Courchesne’s interactive portraits allow the spectator/participant to question the condition of sociability itself, by pressing us (the spectator/participant) to recognize that part of our self is based on the “other.” His portraits invite us to pass through the participatory inquiry of dialogue in space moments of possibility in order to awaken our responsibility to the self which requires the “other;” and of course, an experience that signifies our individual self’s responsibility toward the “other” in return. Reflexivity becomes a way of decentring the spectator/participant in relational terms which is needed today in our encounter with visual culture in order for us not to over-identify with the other (through commitment, self-othering, and so on) that may compromise this otherness. Paradoxically, as Benjamin implied in Illuminations, this over-identification

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375 See Varela, in Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.
may alienate the other further if it does not allow for the othering already at work in representation. In the face of too little or too much distance, framing the spectator/participant simultaneously frames the other.

The promise of today's technological interactivity—that the experience of visual culture can be something we do rather than something we are given is still situated in the "something done to" the spectator in a two-dimensional realm of technology's artificiality of the illusion of doing through something the spectator is given; thus Aristotelian. The way of sensing and the way of acting in an interactive two-dimensional technologically-driven experience is defining the way in which we are coming to understand our experience of being in the world. Through a design of a two-dimensional computer interface, creators have largely defined the user's quality of life while the user interacts with the system. Hence, with the new media interfaces, our interaction with reality is an artificial interaction with simulations; however, multi-sensory, multi-media, or multi-modal—we can talk, scream, gesture, and pose, we can interpret, analyze, or simply enjoy the raw sensation—the danger here is in losing sight of the fact that our models and ideas of "reality" are drastically simplified representations. The user here is the "adaptive" object, to which Freire refers, one who is incapable of changing reality. Our experience of being may be significantly diminished. If we lose the lived experience of negotiating/creating, being/doing, in space moments of possibility, the effort and resistance of the awareness of perception is lost--the world as it is lived is lost.

The disclosure of unexpected relationships that bring something new into the spectator’s world can be achieved by experiencing the everyday (visual culture) either from the outside or from within. The spectators in “Body Movies,” “Portraits,” or “Half a
Tank," for example, enter into a dialectic between body, space, and text. The art installation form as an epistemological art form challenges and allows for the spectators to discover ‘that there are things they are ‘coming to know’ through a creative process of action and interaction from experiences that are shared. If cognition is understood to be the ‘coming to know’, as argued by Davis, and action is understood as knowing, doing, being, and creating, as argued by Fels, then the dynamic, constantly changing and re-configuring relations of enactivism bind these experiences in action at the site of the body, the site of resistance through a relational encounter.

A reflexive pedagogy that integrates an art form and aesthetic education is one that encompasses a more informed and imaginative awareness; but it also utilizes creative critical analysis that empowers the spectator/participant to resist both the elitism and objectivism of the spectacle of everyday life, and allows the spectator/participant to read and name, to write and rewrite their own lived worlds. Educational theorist, John Dewey, insisted that the aesthetic is not an intruder from without, nor an affair “for odd moments.” He used the example of a crowd being conducted rapidly through an art gallery by a guide. Learning to overcome passivity then, is learning to notice what is being noticed—which may lead on and on to new disclosures of understanding.

Reflexive pedagogy in installation art is an open system of discourse: it includes technology, and all forms of media. As a strategy, reflexive pedagogy creates critical sites of learning, and makes it possible for all spectators to become participants and for all

376 Davis, Sumara & Kieren, 1996. See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.

377 Fels, See Chapter 1, 1.2; and “Cross-Country Skiing with Madeline Grumet” in Educational Insights, 1995.

participants to be creators of cultural meaning. In doing so, spectator/participants learn about culture (and visual culture) as well as ways in which to question its hegemonic authority. The inter-relational and dialogic interactive participatory nature encourages the cultural experiences, memories, and perspectives of the participants’ multiple voices as meaningful contributions. Reflexive pedagogy in installation art serves as a site where participants learn to take conceptual and emotional risks as well as responsibility for what they imagine and what they create. By confronting the spectacle of the technologically driven visual culture through reflexive pedagogy in installation art, one challenges the processes of representation: the contingent space wherein ideas and their means of representation are continually reconsidered.

Since encounters with the arts can never be end-points, they may challenge us to new encounters. We may have the encounter of “the route,” Merleau-Ponty says, that proceeds by dialogue with itself and with others. To feel oneself en route, to feel oneself in a place where there is always possibilities of clearings, of new openings, this may be the communication needed to awaken the spectator as participant to his or her lived situations, enabling each to make sense of, and name his or her world through reflexive pedagogy. For philosopher Charles Taylor, the recovery of lived experience and the meaningful forms and relationships that underpin our everyday perception is often ignored. In *Sources of the Self*, Taylor writes:

…patterns, lines of force, whole aspects of things, which are certainly there in our visual field, but overshadowed, made recessive, by our normal ways of attending to and apprehending things. There is a vast latent content to our awareness of things and indefinite multiplicity of patterns only tacitly there, unthematized in what is called our pre-
It is this convergence of visible objects or the entering into an installation art form then, that which would have, without them, remained walled up in the separate life of each spectator’s body. Hence, things absent are made present, or are at least revealed to those who are willing to break from the ‘well-worn path’ and try to surface awareness and understanding within the relational encounter that is presented in an installation art form. In many respects, this surfacing of the individual and collective understanding or meaning making opens the self to other ways of engaging, other ways of speaking to an art form, each other, and the every day visual culture.

Because the world of the arts is a shared world and because the realities to which arts give rise emerge through acts of communication, the encounters being sought are never wholly autonomous or private. The movement from the individual’s personal exploration of space to a conscious encounter with an installation form such as Gonzalez-Torres’ “Untitled (Placebo),” Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies,” Radix Theatre’s “Half a Tank,” or Cheschesne’s “Family Portrait” always enter into dialogue with those around. Communities of the ‘wide-awake’ may take shape even if it is in the parking lot for “Half a Tank,” the square in “Body Movies” or the art gallery in “Family Portrait” or “Untitled (Placebo).” It is making visible and accessible the blurred boundaries between the spectacle of visual culture and everyday life through the engagement with congruent images, text, sound, and silence in space-moments of possibilities in installation art forms through performative inquiry if we are to encourage ‘a route’ a dialectic reversal of the objective world.379

effect of the experiences of (visual) culture and spectacle on how we act and interact with it and one another.

3.2 “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe”

A. Repositioning the body through installation art

In a system of relations, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant. Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are a part of a broader system of relations in which the inter-relation has meaning among persons.380

In May/June, 2008, at the University of Northern British Columbia, I co-created and implemented, as an artist and educator, an installation art project, as part of a visual culture course, at Tourism Prince George Gallery, Prince George, BC.381 The “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe” art installation work culminated in a community exhibit after the six-week summer course. The opportunity to engage the gallery space with the creation of the installation, provided me along with a diverse group of upper level inter-disciplinary undergraduate university students, an opportunity to interrogate our experiences and understanding of the technologically driven visual culture society of daily life. This project called my attention to visual culture, and changed my perception of how I educate through art forms. “Escape from Amnesia,” was crucial in actualizing (i.e. putting into practice) my conceptualization of performative inquiry in the installation art, and furthered my understanding of educating through the arts. Through this


381 Tourism Prince George Gallery, Prince George, BC has allowed me to use their name in any publications that refer to “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe” installation at the gallery. All installation pieces are published with permission.
performative inquiry, I was able to experience the embodied positioning of the spectator/participant within installation art forms.

This installation art project served as a context to inform my conceptual work and understanding of the mass-mediated culture of which I was an active participant in the television medium as producer, director, videographer, editor, and manager. The spectacle of this mass-mediated culture constructed of jump cuts and sound bites to represent the world events in television, film, and advertisements, informed my understanding when entering this installation project at the beginning of the course. Through performative inquiry, as conceptualised in this thesis, my intent, over the six-week intensive period, was for the unframed form of the installation to transform into a constructed pastiche or collage containing manipulative objects and mediated spaces, where the interstices between artist and space and spectator and space would be challenged, interrogated, and made visible and accessible through the overlapping worlds of: information, propaganda, science, advertising, film, television, and popular culture, to name a few. These investigations would create opportunities for myself and my students (bringing their familiarity and experiences from their everyday lives and fields of study\textsuperscript{382}), to think about ways in which the technologically driven visual culture representations and the theories\textsuperscript{383} presented were a significant part of making meaning in

\textsuperscript{382} The participants came from a cross-section of disciplines that included English, education, political science, psychology, fine arts, sociology, and anthropology.

\textsuperscript{383} Theories that underpinned this project were drawn from a variety of contemporary theorists in the fields of: phenomenology and perception, semiotics and language, visual culture theory and spectatorship, visual arts, psychology and aesthetic ideology.
everyday life. The resonance between my initial understanding of mass-mediated culture and the contextualization of the research and development of individual components during the installation (six week) process served to situate my reflexive pedagogical understanding which evolved and changed, revealing new insights and surfaces of meaning as presented in my six journal entries throughout this section. The culmination of the project, June 8-14, was the co-creation and assembly of “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe” art installation in the gallery for public presentation, interaction and discussion.

Given its interactive form, the “Escape from Amnesia” installation had the potential to become a place of action for communication between participant/artists (the students) and community, for communication within the community, against the dialectic sterility of the modern art gallery. The gallery is where objects are worshipped and valued above human contact, against the predominant mentality of artist-hiding-behind-object, and against the consumerist commodification of art. The means for this affront of traditional engagement with artworks is embedded in both the form of the installation and the function of engagement; embodied and reflective encounters within the installation had the possibility to cause a change in the way we accept visual culture and its practices. Entering into the art installation, we anticipated, would help the spectator/participant understand how to understand through our decentring centred notions of perceptions,

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384 Some key areas which underpinned the class work over the six weeks included key articles in ‘visual culture theory; the global/digital era; spectacle; visual colonialism and transculture; the gaze, the body, and sexuality’ in The Visual Culture Reader, edited by Nicholas Mirzoeff, 2nd edition, 2002.
conceptions, and behaviours as they engaged in the creative process of performative inquiry.

The way art (in visual culture) is understood, created, and shared in everyday life has always been (and still is) a temporal and cultural reality. This cultural reality must be constantly confronted and critically examined so that the culture may evolve to a further state of understanding self in relationship to it and in the world. One way to stress cultural understanding in “Escape from Amnesia” was through the conscious juxtaposition of new or different values or behaviour patterns in relation to congruent images of visual culture. By bringing embodied energies into performative, honest, and reflexive embodied dialogue, within the installation space, the students, (through their art installation components), acted as catalysts for the possibility for cultural change, creating the potential to cause important spatial and temporal genesis in the ‘language of art’.

B. Awakening sensibilities

“There’s no reality except the one contained within us. That’s why so many people live an unreal life. They take images outside them for reality and never allow the one within them to assert itself.”

As an arts educator, I strove to create a welcoming environment (a space to build trust, share perspectives and students’ work) that would encourage the students to maintain their attentiveness and speak freely about their concerns about and hopes for the installation project. What was significant for me was the fact that students enrolled in

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386 The reflections as journal entries presented in this chapter section are taken from my engagement in the six-week class project from an educator/artist/spectator/participant
the course project were already interested in learning more about visual culture, its relevance and meaning in the world and to them. Their eagerness to participate in the art installation and willingness to inquire into their understanding of visual culture allowed participatory engagement within social practices of inter-action, re-action, and location in the lived world—thereby presenting opportunities for us to speak to each of our moments of recognition, disruption, and interruption (e.g., through the installation, discussions, journals) that arose during the process of the project. I sought opportunities for the students to discuss openly (with me and among the group) the collective theme and the theories that ultimately underpinned “Escape from Amnesia.” In order for the students to feel comfortable and encouraged to contribute their ideas as to how they see themselves in relation to the larger world (through visual culture), I sought to create a social space, a hospitable space by integrating active listening and maintaining a mindfulness to students’ feelings, curiosities, resistances, ideas, and questions. Throughout the course of the project, I encouraged negotiation and re-negotiation.

stance, as these perspectives inform this thesis. I reflected on my personal journey throughout the process, and the experiences I had informed my understanding of performative inquiry as a pedagogical action-site of understanding. The journal entries I have included in this section are links between the work and myself.

387 Lave & Wenger in *Situated learning*, discuss ways of belonging to a social group. They assert that active participation allows the members of the group to become located in the social world. Changing locations and perspectives are part of a person’s learning trajectories, developing identities, and forming memberships with others. (p. 36).

388 Theories that underpinned this project were drawn from a variety of contemporary theorists in the fields of: phenomenology and perception, semiotics and language, visual culture theory and spectatorship, visual arts, psychology and aesthetic ideology.
Educator and writer, M.R. O'Reilly, captures the relationship between a contemplative space and teaching when she says, “hospitality defines a space for the visitor—the student to be herself, because she is received graciously.”

Within the social space of trust, the negotiation and re-negotiation that we engaged in throughout the project, required that I actively listen to my students’ contributions, maintain a mindfulness awareness of what matters, and be cooperative, flexible, sensitive, and committed, as I guided them through the collaborative process. Artwork has the potentiality to take on a life of its own, and my task was to listen and guide individual and collective journeys where theory, practice and exploration of the relationship between real-life events, encounters with visual culture and installation art-making co-exist. Through active listening, my teaching practice shifted from instruction to attending to being in the present moment recognizing the needs of the individual, and helping to sort out ideas that would ultimately constitute the installation.

Just as the students kept journals of their experiences, images, and reflections throughout the installation project, I also chose to reflect and write personal journal entries, so I could come to understand my engagement throughout the installation process and respond to the various elements of the installation project. These journal entries

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389 M.R. O’Reilly, *Radical presence: teaching as contemplative practice*, Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook/Heinemann, 1998, p. 8. Arts educator Celeste Snowber in “The mentor as artist: a poetic exploration of listening, creating, and mentoring,” in *Mentoring and Tutoring*, Vo. 13, No. 3, December, 2005, pp. 345-353 asserts the similarities between the mentor and the spiritual director, one who sits alongside others as he or she discerns life’s choices. For Snowber, the mentor’s task is to open up a hospitable space, rooted in spirituality, listening and mindfulness. Lynn Fels also presses for a mindfulness in learning environments; see Ch. 2, “Body Embodied.” Also see Fels, 1999, and Varela et al, 1993; both speak of ‘mindful awareness’ with action and interaction guiding the participant through inquiry, participation, reframing, reimagining, and questionering which reshapes understanding through moments of possibilities.
became ‘stop’ moments for my interrogation of my knowledge and understanding of visual culture, how we stop and engage, and educating through an art form using performative inquiry. Sitting in the art gallery within the art installation, my experience in relationship to the components was heightened:

“I am enveloped by the silence of the space. I back into a corner of the ‘interior’ space looking out, looking in. Silence becomes a force that has the potential to be as forceful as speech. When no one is there, I sit quietly and still, gazing out through the many windows covered with duplicated transparencies of train tracks, at the world, quietly, waiting for things to happen. Nothing happens. There’s a calming in the moment. It feels like I am slipping out of consciousness. My body enveloped in a darkness as if by a soft black cloud drifting past the window beyond the transparencies of tracks. I fumble to stand as I listen to the low tones of chatter of others entering the space. It is late. The supper hour has come and gone. I orient myself to the streams of light of a video projection that in the moment becomes visible as the main focus of the work. I strain to locate my body in relation to the dark environment where I sit. I am at the train station. There are people present now and I act as listener, moderator, observer, stimulator, mediator, host, director, speaker, waiter, guest, photographer, performer, bartender, analyst, and grateful artist.”

The journal entries that speak to my ‘stop’ moments, became significant sites of meaning making as I wrote my reflections and questions of what I encountered, experienced and why. My awareness of myself surfaced through my engagement of moving into and within the installation work. I became actively cognizant of the importance of entering into and engaging with the installation, where ultimately concerns are directed towards the spectator/participant’s presence. The main location of embodied meaning making is the spectator/participant for which everything is intended. In this particular section, I speak to my ‘stop’ moments as an educator, artist, and spectator/participant. These moments called me to attention. The six subsequent journal entries were reflections that

390 Journal entry #1 by Carla Glen, arts educator/facilitator of the project “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe” installation exhibition, Tourism Prince George Gallery, VIA Rail station, Prince George, BC, June, 2008. All subsequent journal entries are from my journal.
led me to question my role as artist, educator, and consumer. I remembered and
misremembered my past as an artist, and educator through my active engagement of how
deeply the ‘reading’ of the installation resonated with my place and space as artist and
educator. My engagement with the world as lived, as artist, educator, and consumer
shifted from a kind of verbal internal correspondence to perceptual embodied coherence
of what it means to be in the world as lived. These ‘stop’ moments revealed me to me
through the sensitivity of engagement with my work as artist, educator, and consumer in
the visual world—my awareness surfaced in these moments with a heightened sense of
attentiveness and sensitivity to my daily encounters and relationships as an artist,
educator, and consumer of visual culture.

How I, along with the (student) participant/artists, responded to daily life encounters
throughout and within the project, was captured in our individual journals through
photographs, writings, drawings, poetry, lyrics, and even dramatizations. (e.g., journals
included map information, street theatre, signs, television, movies, advertising,
photography, art [originals, reproductions], architecture and design, and so on). The
project emerged as a reflexive and reflective inquiry of the self and visual culture where
perceptions were challenged and opened-up through affirmation and denial, effort and
resistance, creating tension.391 As we collectively, gathered, conceptualized, and created
the installation components, my moments of recognition that emerged through this
journey and during the installation art exhibit at the gallery, allowed multiple entry points
to understanding the interrelationship between visual culture and our everyday life. To

391 Susanne Langer in Feeling and Form, (1953) identifies tension between the present
and the future, a present loaded with ‘commitments and consequences’.
enter, contribute, challenge, and create personal and collective moments of possibilities (to create our own stories that are in constant flux), as well as offer moments of possibilities for other selves to enter, the art installation became a space for me where understanding and the world became inseparable as the inseparability between my perception and action. The space of creative embodied inquiry became an action-site for “laying down a path in walking.”\(^{392}\) My active performative engagement, within the art installation, awakened an inquiry of critical and creative involvement (through the manipulation of objects and navigating through information spaces). As we worked together, as I attended to my ‘stop’ moments, and learning, and listened to the students’ speak to theirs’, and how they were engaging anew with visual culture, or seeing how it impacts on them, I realized that engaging this way, incorporating the active action of Brecht’s alienation strategies of ‘defamiliarising’\(^{393}\) was a rich area for future research.

The art installation melded fine arts with products from the everyday (artifacts, grocery store objects/foods, documentation, and homemade pieces) challenging the very means of abstraction or generalisation of knowledge, and led me to consider how we as a (societal) group, think about our personal practices of engagement and making meaning. My experience of enaction through ‘defamiliarising’, created, within me, a sense of empowerment and agency in the action of understanding through embodied engagement and inquiry. Inquiry through creating and installing the installation art exhibit at the gallery, and entering into the exhibit, allowed my tension as a passive consumer of the


\(^{393}\) See Brecht’s Brecht on Theatre, p. 136-137.
dominant cultural practices within the visual culture to be transformed and articulated as an active spectator and artist engaged in re-examining the dynamic inter-relationship between my self and visual culture. The reflexive and reflective tension became a catalyst for my work in this installation, but further, having participated in the work, has changed me as an educator and engager, with respect to my future artwork and educating through the art form.

The first week is completed and the first installment of photographs, the collection of images of objects, places, and people: information, advertisement, entertainment, propaganda, are now on display all around me on the floor; resting against a wall, inverted, hidden, stacked. In between all this absurdity where I sit, I interrogate my mass-mediated knowledge, its position of ‘truth’. I realize at this moment that I represent a breach of self-evidence—it is obvious that this encounter in this space at this time presses me to challenge my pre-determined social and historical cultural codes of my mediated visual culture. In this given moment, this installment of chosen moments from my students establishes me as an inter-actor; an inter-actor that has the opportunity to re-write my personal narrative. This was a significant ‘stop’ moment for me as an educator and artist.

As Minhha offered, the active (liminal) space of inquiry is a reflexive space as I experienced as spectator/participant and educator/artist in “Escape from Amnesia;” I experienced a decentring through a resisted (visual) cultural domination. Communicating with others, manipulating installed objects, and navigating through information spaces individually and collectively revealed an inter-relational space of interactivity that became the locus of affective and imaginative engagement. My interpretive and critical depth shifted from the passive encounter with an image to an inter-active process of human-to-human inter-relations. It was the process of “doing”, through inquiry of creative engagement, that engaged me as spectator/participant and educator/artist, and

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394 Journal entry #2.

395 See Conquergood’s “Rethinking Ethnography,” p. 2.
ultimately granted me agency (to feel equipped with a quality of personal investment with the installation) to challenge and reconfigure my visual culture interpretation and understanding as installation art and interactive artist for further discussion with others.

“Escape from Amnesia” was not intended to make definitive evaluations or declarative statements about art, but to create moments of reflectiveness and meaning making akin with Merleau-Ponty: one in which subject and object are not separate entities but are reciprocally intertwined and interdependent. For Merleau-Ponty in *The Visible and the Invisible* the moment of perceptual acknowledgement is when it becomes impossible for the spectator/participant, for example, to separate subject from object. Merleau-Ponty refers to this “as the point of coincidence that collapses at the moment of realization.” This decentred engagement presents the chosen subject of self through the installation. In “Escape from Amnesia,” ‘visual culture, community and self’ became a complex and open-ended issue of ‘stop’ moments for me, which had the potential to re-surface past-dialogue about ‘conflicts with oneself and others’ in making meaning through words, images, and technology as an artist and educator.

By allowing for moments of possibilities to emerge through the interactivity of performative inquiry in “Escape from Amnesia,” opportunities to act as catalysts for social, political, and/or cultural change surfaced by incorporating three distinct actions: communication with others, manipulation of objects in a space, and navigation through an information space. In using reflexive pedagogy in the installation, the materialization

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396 For Merleau-Ponty, the thing being observed is inseparable from the person perceiving it, and can never be actually in itself because it stands at the other end of our gaze. See *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 320.

and acknowledgement of the body and its performative subjectivity was not seen as a transparent window on the world; instead, co-creating and entering into the installation artwork drew attention to my constructiveness, and revealed that I also (as spectator/participant) embodied representations of the visual culture. Further heightened though, through the physical, emotional and intellectual spaces for discourse on all subjects in and around (the visual) culture, was the opportunity to re-claim agency by first speaking through the installation and then to the community of which we are a significant part.

C. Establishing presence

“We don’t see things as they are; we see things as we are.”

In a technologically driven world, inundated with a constant flow of images, words and sound bites, our communication strategies are changing rapidly (e.g., use of Twitter, Flickr, Facebook). This fast-paced production of ‘bits and bites’ of information and entertainment has revolutionized the way we present ourselves, communicate with, and influence each other daily. “Escape form Amnesia” presented possibilities to challenge how the visual culture affects the way we think, act, and interact with it and one another. The installation process allowed spaces for reflection on personal experiences and encounters with elements from visual culture in order to enable the construct of a tangible re-presentation of understanding in an installation art form. Such an engagement led to this critical question for myself and my students: How do we continuously re-invent ourselves (our personal and social narratives) by retrieving information through our

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personal and social memories, facts, and beliefs, from the conventions of market systems in visual culture?

Through found or invented narratives, objects, and images, another critical question that surfaced for me throughout the process of creating and entering as a spectator/participant in “Escape from Amnesia” was: “who are we?” Rather than willingly accepting a life scripted by “others” who appear to be better producers, managers, storytellers, and performers of our individual and collective stories, my students and I—through presenting multiple installed assemblages of sites of understanding in the installation—challenged ‘time and memory’ by constructing spaces of memory governed as issues of identity, visual culture, and value systems. These collaged components provided entry points into understanding frameworks of moral (or aesthetic) judgment from everyday living. The disruption of beliefs and personal understanding as to why—as consumers, producers, and managers of personal and collective stories, products, services, and images—we willingly accept a life scripted by an ‘other’ as represented as spectacle in visual culture can appear to be insurmountable. But re-presenting components of visual culture (through objects, images, and narratives in the installation), which trigger inquiry and personal ‘stop’ moments, in turn challenges “what appears to be divisive in visual culture, uniting people only through separation from one another.” By entering “Escape from Amnesia,” as a spectator/participant, I

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399 For Debord the ‘spectacle’ is the representation as a social relationship between people mediated by images in a society driven by consumerism. See Society of Spectacle.

400 Debord, Society of Spectacle, p. 17.
learned that the embodied spectacle of visual culture could become a catalyst for personal
dialogue, reflection, and journal entries.

Photographic cameras documented significant (unique, valuable, and so on) images
from daily life and experiences within the community over the course of the project.
Some photographs captured family, some captured cityscapes and bridges, while others
captured artwork such as graffiti in the urban areas. Camera images historically have
been associated with truth-value in more everyday settings⁴⁰¹: a photograph in a family

Image #4 “Bridging Community” in “Escape from Amnesia” installation, 2008, Tourism
Prince George Gallery, Ann Tiffany, student installation artist/photographer, by
permission.

In “Rhetoric of Image,” Barthes describes two levels of meaning: denotative and connotative in semiotic terms. For Barthes, an image can denote certain apparent truths, providing documentary evidence of objective circumstances as evident. “Bridging

Image #5 “Pine Center Mall” in “Escape from Amnesia” installation, 2008, Tourism Prince George Gallery, Michelle Milburn, student installation artist/photographer, by permission.

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402 Ibid. The denotative meaning of the image refers to its literal, descriptive meaning. The connotative meanings rely on the cultural and historical context of the image and its viewers’ lived and felt knowledge of those circumstances—all that the image means to the photographer and viewer of the photographed image personally and socially.
Community” denotes apparent truths about the community, nature areas and human
collection. The image “Pine Center Mall” (Image #5) is of a store window and the
reflections of merchandise captured on camera by one of the students. This same student
painted the glass passageway and windows with merchandise ‘for sale’ (see Image #15
“Window Shopping”). Barthes argues that the term ‘myth’ refers to the cultural values
and beliefs that are expressed at the connotative level. For Barthes, myth is the hidden set
of rules and conventions through which meanings, which are in reality specific to certain
groups are made to seem universal and given for a whole society. For example, in
“Escape from Amnesia,” opportunities to debate Barthes’ notions in relationship to
contemporary concepts of beauty and thinness surfaced. Through entering and
confronting the installation component “Beautiful Me,” I was pressed by the artist’s
choice and manipulation of the objects and images of faces used in the installation
to question visual culture’s “naturalized” norms of appearance as being
universal. In “Beautiful Me,” culturally created norms were reimagined and represented,
calling attention to a North American concept of beauty and thinness, (if not a universal
concept of beauty and thinness), as portrayed in visual culture. In “Beautiful Me,” these
culturally created norms (to be consumed) were represented and brought to my attention
constituting a myth, as they were not ‘natural’.

Barthes argues in “Myth Today,” that a French advertisement for Italian sauce and
pasta was not simply presenting a product but was producing myth about Italian
culture—the concept of “Italianicity.” See “Rhetoric of Image,” in The Visual
Culture Reader, 2005, p. 34. The image of the pasta and sauce is not intended for
Italians, wrote Barthes, but is specifically about a French concept of Italian culture.

Barthes argues that myth involves connotative meaning of a particular thing or image
to appear to the denotative, therefore literal or natural. The notion of a set of rules or
conventions where meanings are made to appear to be universal are culturally created.
“Gaze, Self, and Other” (Image # 6) presented a search for individual context and scope within the cosmetic re-construction world of visual culture. The apparent relationship between the cosmetic surgery industry in society and the constructed collage of many faces (glued onto two mannequin heads that faced towards two convex mirrors reflecting the many ‘faces’) invited the spectator/participant to alternately see herself or himself reflected in the convex mirrors simultaneously: my face, as I engaged in this art component or ‘event’ as spectator/participant, merged with the ’surgical’ faces. My vulnerability was exposed in the presence of my reflection in the mirror. Through creating the possibility of an encounter between mirrors and spectator/participant, the concern in this installed component or ‘event’ centred on the spectator/participant as the subject matter. The significance of simply looking at multiple and manipulated images of other selves, moved meaning making through decentring: the crossing over between my self and the world ‘collapsed at the moment of realisation’. The mirroring between the spectator/participant and the spectator/participant of “Gaze, Self, and Other” called attention to my beliefs and assumed knowledge. I thought I understood cosmetic surgery and beauty based on what has been presented to us everyday in various media forms. Jacques Lacan stated: “I see myself seeing myself…I see outside, that perception is not in me…it is on the objects that it apprehends.”

Thus, in “Gaze, Self, and Other,” I, as

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spectator/participant, could not see without being seen. I began to question my perception of my self. I didn’t feel centred at this moment: who was watching me watch myself? The desire, however, for a secluded viewing experience is always a possibility and accompanied by the self-conscious thrill of being caught in the act of looking at oneself in a mirror.

Since “Escape from Amnesia” incorporated the notion of ‘retrieval of memory’ through found or invented narratives, each of the installed components or ‘events’ within the overall installation allowed spectator/participants many possibilities to search, travel, as to what is widely accepted as the norm of conformity in society (i.e. supermodels,

remember, and misremember details that reveal time as an important subject within the context of the installation. If we agree that all narratives reference time (whether the distant past, immediate past, present, and so forth), the impetus of ‘presence’ or ‘being in the moment’ (that which holds the elements of location and communality) interrupts and challenges the spectator/participant’s passive acceptance or agreement (without question) actors, popular culture icons as role models of behaviour, looks, achievement, status, even agency, and autonomy), by inviting the spectator/participant to engage in the emergence of space of beauty and naturalness, and what it means to be accepted in world driven by body moments that recognize and question our immersion in the visual culture world. “Beautiful Me” challenged ‘truth value’ in advertisement image consumption. Interpreting the truth from images requires an examination of assumptions we bring to body image.

How do we decode the layers of meanings that include cultural and socio-historical references as well as the context that the body image displays? When engaging with “Beautiful Me,” I am pressed as spectator/participant to interrupt my passive acts of consumption (i.e. reading, looking, accepting) and begin to consider how I individually and collectively (in society) influence meanings and uses assigned to images (i.e. in glossy magazines) that are a part of our everyday lives. By passively accepting the images presented to me daily in advertising, television and so forth, I, as a consumer of visual culture, am allowing an ‘other’ to produce, manage, and direct my personal narrative of i.e. body image. In “Beautiful Me,” I, as spectator/participant, had the

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Roland Barthes in “Rhetoric of the Image”, 2005, asserts that the mis-recognitions (by the spectator) demonstrate how fragile and contingent perception can be through the manipulation and re-presentation of what is ‘real’ in photographs.
opportunity to physically touch, move and reposition the mannequin torso that is stabilized on a disk that can rotate 360 degrees. As I stand behind the torso, my head becomes the head of the torso and when looking directing into the full-length mirror four feet in front of the torso, the image reflected in the full-length mirror is that of me, with a mannequin body. As with “Gaze, Self, and Other” the predicament for me as the spectator/participant was acknowledging the confrontation between self and image in the present moment: “one cannot see without being aware of being seen.”

D. Mechanisms of representation

“The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled.”

An embodied navigation through an information space through the world of representation as presented in “Beautiful Me” and “Gaze, Self, and Other” refer to the use of language and images from magazines, film, television, and newspapers, all, which have the ability to reproduce life in such a manner that it seems more real than real. We use words to understand, describe, and define the world as we engage it, and we also frame still shots, use close-up shots, wide shots, slow motion pans, dissolves, wipes and cuts for example, to change our view of the world and allow us to focus on chosen details that were once unimaginable. Visual systems of representations in visual media have rules and conventions about how they are organised and we learn these rules and conventions of what makes meaning in the visual world within a given culture. Some artists though, break the rules of various systems of representation and push the

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definitions of representation. ‘Breaking the rules’ is reflected in Surrealist painter Rene Magritte’s comments on the process of representation in The Treachery of Images. The painting he describes depicts a pipe with the heading, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” (“This is not a pipe”).

“Escape from Amnesia” became a space to borrow from Magritte’s notion of “Treachery of Images.” and the “concept of reality.” Through a process of manipulating images of everyday visual culture (that are normally taken for granted) those engaged in the art installation project began to explore (through manipulation of objects in the installation) how the complexity of how words, images and technology has the possibility to produce a multitude of meanings in everyday life. I recall group arguments, where, students argued that Magritte was making a joke, that of course the painting of the pipe was an image of a pipe that Magritte had created. (Magritte was pointing to the relationship between words and things, since the illustration is not a pipe

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409 Magritte, “Magritte and Contemporary Art: The Treachery of Images,” is a series of iconic images/paintings juxtaposed with works by other contemporary artists. The exhibition explored Magritte’s influence, looking at quotations of both ideas and images. Magritte’s painting “The Treachery of Images” “Ceci n’est pas une pipe” served as the catalyst for the exhibition. His idea of the representation of a pipe was also similar to Marcel Duchamps’ idea of the ‘readymade’ and a model for Joseph Kosuth’s “Definition (Thing),” in which he painted dictionary definitions of specific words. Magritte, Duchamp, and Kosuth along with many contemporary conceptual artists laid the groundwork for the path of change in contemporary art in the twentieth century and today. For examples from exhibition go to: http://artscenecal.com/ArticlesFile/Archive/Articles2006/Articles1206/RMagritteA.html

410 See Ch. 1, Conceptual Art section for image, p. 30.

411 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Illuminations, 1968. Benjamin argues in his essay (although it is prior to the advent of television, cable television, and Internet) speaking to filmmaking drew the parallel as to how images would alter our concept of reality.
itself but rather the representation of a pipe; a painting rather than the material object itself). I drew in Michel Foucault’s elaboration on Magritte’s ideas from a short text about the painting and a drawing by Magritte that preceded it. Not only did Foucault

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address the painting’s implied commentary about the relationship between words and things, I articulated the discovery that Foucault also considered the complex relationship between the drawing, the painting, their words, and their referent (the pipe). (One could not pick up and smoke this pipe). So, Magritte could be seen to be warning the spectator/participant (of the artwork). Thus, do not mistake the image for the real thing (as I observed when I encountered the installed component, “Meal Place Setting).

Magritte marked the very act of naming, drawing our attention to the word “pipe” itself, and its function in representing the object. Both the word “pipe” and the image of the pipe represented the material object pipe, and in pointing this out, Magritte’s assertion then pressed me to consider through the manipulation of objects and navigating through

information spaces of “Escape from Amnesia,”, how the image and words produce meaning about the object. There was a comfort to clinging to set notions around the (historical) ‘truth value’ of photographs. However, in my engagement in ”Escape from Amnesia,” I began to question these set notions. When I stopped, and examined the process of representation, as Magritte pressed in “Treachery of Images”, it was through my journey of manipulating rail transparency images (i.e. Rail 020, Rail 010 and Rail 006, normally taken for granted), that I began to see the complexity of how words and images and technology (using Photoshop as well as the creation of multiple duplications in transparencies of the rail photos for the windows) have the possibility to produce another tactile engagement about commodity, mass-production and consumption of
places and things. This began to alter meaning making in my world as artist, educator, spectator/participant. “Fishbowl, go fishin’,” for example, disrupted the notion of the function of “fish” and pressed me to question: what the subject was in the installed component for the spectator. Is the subject ‘fish’, the representation of ‘fish’, or is this


413 In the 1960s, Andy Warhol made works about commodity culture that rendered women like Marilyn Monroe cultural icons by printing multiple versions of her image into a colourful grid. His Marilyn Diptych (1962) comments not only upon the star’s iconic status as a glamour figure, but also on the role of the star as media commodity—as a product of the entertainment industry that could be infinitely reproduced for mass consumption. Warhol’s work emphasizes one of the most important aspects of contemporary images: the capacity to reproduce them in many different contexts, thereby changing their meaning and altering their value—the objects, people, or places they represent as commodities. The reproductions do not refer back to the original so much as they indicate the endless reproductivity as a person, place, or thing as being mass-produced and consumed.
installation component a metaphor for the spectator/participant? The fish (with a magnet attached) dangled from a hook on a fishing line and could be plunged into a small aquarium. By physically pushing and pulling on a regulating weight, I, as the spectator/participant, could actively participate in moving the fish and retrieve “words” from the bottom of the aquarium. The physical activity of retrieving the information balls activated ‘stop’ moments of remembering: ‘having a goldfish in a bowl as a child’ or ‘going fishing with family or friends’, ‘living in a fishbowl, and so forth. “Fishbowl, go fishin’” allowed the aquatic space to serve as a memory trigger for the spectator/participant to imagine what remains invisible. By creating moments of possibilities of making visible the invisible, this installation component pressed me, as spectator/participant to ‘defamiliarise’ (draw attention to myself and to the knowledge I possessed). As the spectator/participant, I began to challenge my personal understanding as to what I experience in the installation component and how I come to understand the connotations of the images presented.

As spectator/participant, I had the opportunity to ‘lay down a path in walking’ by actively entering and engaging in/with the installation where preconceived notions are disrupted and interrupted in order to shock the spectator/participant into making links to everyday real life. “Escape from Amnesia” specifically invited the spectator/participant to physically enter the installation and draw on personal memory.

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415 The links presented in each of the installation components challenge the perceiver-dependent world and the perceiver-independent world. See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.
from past personal narratives in order for the possibility of new narratives (of what ‘naming’ something represents, and further, how words trigger our memories) to occur.

In a rapidly changing visual culture world, borrowing from existing Conceptual Art\textsuperscript{416} notions, such as Magritte’s “Treachery of Images,” the co-creators of “Escape from Amnesia” incorporated through reflexivity, available technology\textsuperscript{417} to access the art world and daily life (as historical and personal experience) in order to construct spaces of memory. The singular term ‘history’ as memory is under constant threat in a postmodern world with the emergence of multiple ‘histories’,\textsuperscript{418} multiple memories that are in constant flux (and being reconfigured) today. The immediacy of communication technologies and the accessibility through the technology, to ‘name’ something as ‘new’, by reusing, reimagining, and recreating the images taken from history as reflexive forms of memory, can also be seen in the technological sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Flickr, but significantly in the installed components of “Escape from Amnesia.”

My role as educator and facilitator of the project was not to dictate individual choices, but to oversee the process and guide choices, ideas, and so forth. I actively presented theories, ideas, and principles of what is considered acceptable, absolutely or conditionally, good and right, from our social everyday life. “Escape from Amnesia” focused each installed component on individual stories of everyday living incorporating

\textsuperscript{416} See Ch. 1, sec. 1.1, Conceptual Art.

\textsuperscript{417} Available technology as new media, cameras, audio and video recorders, televisions, paintings, advertisements, and so forth.

theories discussed. The purpose of the installation art form was to activate the ‘liveness’
of spectatorship so that the surrounding images, objects and technological devices, would
trigger memory the spectator/participant’s memory of personal past experiences, travel
and presence. The spectator/participant would be pressed to take on a ‘role’ as ‘traveler’
within the work, as opposed to simply ‘looking at’ a painting or sculpture at an
exhibition. As Varella states: “knowledge and its world are inseparable as the
inseparability between perception and action. Each of us lays down a path in the
world.” As spectator/participant, I had the opportunity to escape from amnesia and
start walking.

The ability to enter, walk in and around the installation artwork space allows for close
examination of objects, images, and people by the spectator/participant. The
spectator/participant is expected to play a significant part in the work, in its creation and
reception. (An installation artwork is always made large enough for the
spectator/participant to enter, pressing for concerns to be directed towards the
spectator/participant’s presence). Art historian Jonathon Crary asserts: “Spectacle is not
primarily concerned with a looking at images but rather with the construction of
conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in
which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous.” Although Crary is speaking to the role
of the spectator looking at images, in “Escape form Amnesia,” the spectator/participant
enters, moves around and engages with her or his whole body, the objects that make up
the installation work. There is the possibility of a perspective shift occurring. Whatever

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420 Jonathon Crary, Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture.
the spectator/participant can see, feel, and so forth, constitutes one point from which she or he could be seen, felt, and so on. Thus, the mirrors and the mirroring in “Escape from Amnesia” create an endless encounter in the installation. As Lacan said, “I see myself seeing myself.” The mirrors placed within the installation have the potential to press the spectator/participant to be self-aware: one cannot see without being aware of being seen. As seen in the earlier example, “Beautiful Me,” the perfect torso body image with the photographic images of parts of models’ bodies attached, represents glamorous models and a body which is desirable. The torso can be said to represent the ultimate simulation of a human being: it appears like one, yet its removal from everyday reality is absolute. the more the spectator/participant sees her or his self in everyday life.

Image #12 “Cybercases 1” in “Escape from Amnesia” installation, 2008, Tourism Prince George Gallery, Joanna Smythe, student installation artist, by permission.
The installed component disrupts my self-centred perception of me, as spectator/participant, and provides multiple viewpoints from which I can engage. The end of the journey is the possibility of realization of spectator/participant self’s appearance in the art form. The more the spectator/participant looks and engages with the installation, the more the spectator/participant sees her or his self in everyday life.

Incorporating the site-specific VIA Rail station challenged the relational engagement between person, place, space, travel, and exploit (make good use of) what ‘traveler’ can come to represent in the installation and every life.

“'Cybercases’ acts to represent the moment we leave reality encumbered with our personal “baggage” and become cyber-tourists. The train station is our traditional point of departure—the Internet is our contemporary point of departure. Cyber-tourism is a new and specific form of travel experience that uses new media technologies. This type of travel will allow us to go to places free of the usual restrictions of time, distance, cost and human frailty.”

The “Cybercases” component (see Images #12 and #13) with the painted white suitcases strategically placed in the open-space of the ‘exterior’ room of the installation confronts the spectator/participant as if at a train station entry platform. The spectator/participant can move in and around the cases; pick them up, even re-position them (which some spectator/participants did during the installation exhibit). There was a silent presence of an ‘other’, an invisible traveler created by the still, homogenous cases, waiting to be picked up; waiting to go somewhere. This component pressed the spectator/participant to question the possibility of encountering a tourist (who owned the baggage), or a traveler, a wanderer. Upon entering the art installation, the question I posed for my self was whether I, as the spectator/participant, could envision taking a journey to somewhere. The actual presence of being in a rail station and having the possibility to purchase a ticket to somewhere was real. This component presented the embodied spectator/participant (in entering the installation) as already being pre-regulated by economic conditions and personal baggage carried throughout daily life. As the encumbered spectator/participant, I had a choice to simply take the well-worn path (that I had been walking) or take the risk of possibilities, and lay down a new path in walking. “Cybercases” challenged the spectator/participant to ‘take the risk’ of possibilities. As I walk through the glass and windowed passageway through “Cybercases” and into the ‘interior’ of the installation, I am again challenged with

421 Journal entry #3.
remembering and even misremembering past experiences of travel (by train) and the purchasing of items as ‘memory-keepsakes.’

“Remembering, misremembering and preserving memory-keepsakes intrude my memory as I look through the painted windows at the placement of objects in photographs, artworks, sculptures, and projections. I continue to make my way through the installation. The ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ spaces meld and there is something cryptically similar, not necessarily similar to something ‘out there’, but similar to something in me: the game rules have not been provided though. The open-ended silent participatory implication by me is directed away from passive contemplation of artwork in a gallery space to a social forum of engagement. I need to talk about what I am encountering.”


422 Journal entry #4.
The silence once again of the presence and perception of the present as represented in the ‘exterior’ station encounter is again represented in the ‘interior’ space of being pre-regulated by economics, personal choices, and encumbered baggage (i.e. food, shelter, clothing, and safety of self and family). Paulo Freire says that dialogue as pure expression of heart and soul can be understood to be the core of all meaningful change in order to transform the world.\footnote{Freire, \textit{Pedagogy of the Oppressed}, p. 61.} And although “Escape from Amnesia” draws on images from visual culture and not specifically on “the word” (as Freire refers to the essence of
dialogue itself\textsuperscript{424}, the literal and visual icons of visual culture are also instruments which make dialogue possible through action and reflection. I propose that visual culture dialogue through an installation art form, such as “Escape from Amnesia,” actively carries and transmits the social consciousness of those engaging in the artwork. The relational encounters throughout the installation between people, objects, and places, is underpinned by the notion that people engaging in the installation have ‘something in common’ when in a community of others engaging with objects, people, and places. I again encounter decentring as I move from an olfactory presence of “Exterior 1 and 2” to a visual presence of self specifically in the component of the “closed-circuit video projections.

“\textit{Crossing from the pungent ‘exterior’ space to the ‘interior’ space, the scale and lighting of the installation generated a physical unease. The height, expanse, cedar and earth smells emerging from the exterior component exported me back to remembering times when I walked with my dog in the forest and mountains in northern BC: the pathways in the installation as in the forest, were narrow in parts and could only be entered sideways, while the lighting saturated my vision with reflections of dots of amber and teal which bounced upon the objects, people, and hidden spaces as if bouncing off water within the installation.}”\textsuperscript{425}

\textsuperscript{424} Ibid, p. 60-63.

\textsuperscript{425} Journal entry #5.
Hidden in a curtained display case (beneath the display counter in the ‘interior’ room) the video imaging is projected through two connected video display projectors positioned strategically: one located behind the display case and pointing to an upper corner wall.
and door of the installation’s ‘interior’ section; the second projector located at an entrance point in the ‘exterior’ space of the installation. The first projector played pre-recorded looped tape of the empty ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ spaces intermittently dispersed with back shots of portions of bodies of spectator/participants moving through the installation in ‘real’ time. Projections from both videos could be seen at the same time by the spectator/participant, thus creating a sense of confusion: I became disorientated as to what I was perceiving of myself in ‘real’ time. The confusion for the spectator/participant is heightened when crossing from one space into the other (i.e. ‘exterior’ to the ‘interior’ space of the installation); the ‘exterior’ projector making visible only the image of the spectator/participant’s upper body and the back of the head, not the spectator/participant’s whole body or frontal view.

This technology component in “Escape from Amnesia” created moments of ‘bodily confusion’ for myself as the spectator/participant through the disruption of self-reflexive sensory perception. Allowing only back shots, for example, of the spectator/participant (as I moved forward toward a camera) did not allow for feeling rationally ‘centred’ (by being in the dominant plane of the monitor’s frame or in a head to toe frontal shot as the spectator/participant moved forward towards the projected image). Nor did I feel in control of myself in the space when I was engaged with walking forward through the installation space. Experiencing and understanding the significance of “Escape from Amnesia” requires the spectator/participant to enter in to the installation, and, also, to be a thoughtful and reflective visitor who would ultimately engage in dialogue about what he or she is confronted by within the installation.
In "Video Installation Art: The Body, the Image, and the Space-in-Between," Margaret Morse speculates that exploring the materialization of the conceptual through all the various modes available to our heavily mediated society [which in her argument] is at the heart of the cultural function of video installation. Emerging and evolving technologies and their respective means of presenting a space then has profound ontological and cultural implications. Glancing at the projections and other people in “Escape from Amnesia” installation space and seeing only anterior parts of bodies displayed created disruptions and confusion in my perceptual ‘reading’ of the projections. I listened as questions from other spectator/participants arose concerning the video display and whether the projections were ‘working properly’. These questions for me became ‘stop’ moments and were crucial in my understanding of the significance in creating and implementing a starting point from a ‘rationally centred’ position and then decentring the spectator/participant’s rationality of ‘what we see is what we know’ in order to create a ‘distancing effect’ with what was being engaged. I began to understand as spectator/participant, educator, and artist, how we come to communicate with each other and influence each other daily through the manipulation of technological devices’ (see Image #14 “Interior” for projection).


427 Brecht uses an ‘alienation effect’ which is a technique of ‘distancing’ the spectator by taking human social incidents to be portrayed (i.e. in Brecht’s Epic theatre) and labeling them as something that calls for explanation—it is not to be taken for granted, not just natural. This ‘effect’ is to allow the spectator to criticize constructively from a social point of view. For further reading see Brecht’s Brecht on Theatre, p. 125.
The use of minimal materials (significant in Minimalist art\textsuperscript{428}) and manipulating the spectator/participant’s perception of time and space did not then reassure me, as spectator/participant, of being a part of a unified perceptual understanding (as was experienced for the spectator/participant in Lozano-Hemmer’s “Body Movies,” in which individual spectators were able to see his or her whole body in huge illuminated outdoor projections\textsuperscript{429}). Instead, I witnessed from my position as spectator/participant, what I perceived as a bit of \textit{relishing} on the part of the students and noted the discomfort of my fellow spectator/participants’ perception of self as displayed in the wall projections. The mis-recognitions (by spectator/participant) that took place in the technology component of the installation demonstrated how fragile and contingent perception can be through manipulation and re-presentation of ‘truth value’\textsuperscript{430} (what is ‘real’).\textsuperscript{431}

Similarly, I experienced interruptions, disruptions, and corruptions of self as the spectator/participant, by the placement of the installed components in “My Child’s Bed,” “Bed and TV’, Museum Artifact’, and ‘KFC’ (fast food chicken). These display components were designed to challenge the spectator/participant’s sense of ‘consumerist amnesia’ where the just-past commodity is repressed in favour of something new, something better, something needed. My awareness as a consumer and a traveler was heightened by the confrontation of images, objects, and places, appropriated from visual

\textsuperscript{428} See Ch. 1, sec. 1.1, Installation Art.

\textsuperscript{429} See Ch. 2 on Lozano-Hemmer’s installation art work, “Body Movies.”


\textsuperscript{431} Merleau-Ponty explained this mis-recognition as the “point of coincidence where the crossing-over between the spectator/participant’s self and the world collapses in a moment of realisation.”
culture, and represented in these installed components. As I entered into each component and involved myself, as spectator/participant, I shifted my perception of the rail station, the gallery space, and further, my everyday relationship to ‘rail travel, food, and the memory keepsakes’ elicited by travel and childhood memories that called me to attention as to what matters, and how we engage in experiences remembered.

“My Child’s Bed” presented the daily excursions taken from journal entries. Images then silk-screened onto a child’s bed cover. The bed represented the space and place of children, family, work, school, dreams, and sleep. The six images depicted were created.
strategically from a vantage point of physically driving a car, sitting in a lecture hall, reading texts, observing rooms that need cleaning, all culminating in a map which charts daily life. A map of the town is silk-screened onto the pillow with daily routes visible. As I entered the “Interior” space where “My Child’s Bed” and “Bed and TV” were located, I experienced emotional disorientation and physical vulnerability as I awkwardly navigated through this narrow area of low lighting, raked display portions, objects and images. My embodied confrontation with the assembled display in juxtaposition with my memory of familiar places, objects, and faces of daily life such as children’s faces in a playground, single lane wooden bridges, and kitchen utensils as they were reimagined through the
appropriated images, objects, and faces from visual culture in this component, created moments of unfamiliarity for me as I maneuvered my way through this area. The degree of emotional proximity between subject matter and my own memories and experiences blurred ‘what is real’ or ‘what is truth value (footnoted) and what is not’.


Images from daily life and face-to-face encounters converged at various points in the installation, as in the ‘Museum Artifact’. Here, a small dog constructed out of turkey bones is positioned in the ‘interior’ display case window for observation. It was in my interactions with my students through actively inquiring, engaging, reflecting, and dialoguing about the subject matter (e.g., the notion of what is a ‘real’ artifact in the
“Museum Artifact” display for example), what is real, what is manufactured, what is being represented as our real, that significant ‘stop’ moments of reflection emerged for me. Specifically, questioning what the role was of the spectator/participant in challenging and possibly changing how together we engage or change our everyday encounters with the visual culture (see Image #14 for a wide shot of “Museum Artifact” display) became critical focus in my inquiry as I co-created, assembled, and then moved, as spectator/participant through our art installation.

In the display component of “Meal Place Setting,” questions of ‘truth value’ were further ignited for me, when I spotted a manipulated (Photoshop) photographed image of a hamburger placed on an actual dinner plate with cutlery (set with actual napkin, fork, knife, and cup) for consumption. This re-presentation of a pleasantly and minimally displayed hamburger interrogates perceptual relationship to this food and the fast-food industry. Designed to decentre spectator/participants’ centred notions (of fast-food industry presented in e.g., magazines, billboards, films, television) around the ‘need for fast fuel for life’, the hamburger image became the catalyst, in “Meal Place Setting,” challenging through the burger’s seductiveness (conjuring memories of summertime, barbeques, beaches, camping, friends, family) by offering a re-presentation of the ‘image’ of the burger: colour, texture, taste, smell, presentation, cost, and speed of delivery for consumption. ‘Truth value’ was manipulated in “Meal Place Setting,” in order for the spectator/participant to consider the possibility that: “what is seen and what is known is never settled.”

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Curiously, the “KFC” display component actually used a real bucket of chicken. A bucket of chicken was placed in the installation daily. As spectator/participant, I could take a piece of chicken and eat it. The smells permeated the installation at times, drawing some spectator/participants (and repelling others) to the bucket of chicken to take a peek/to take a piece. Observing this spectacle, there appeared to be hesitation in some spectator/participants’ voices before they reached for a piece of chicken even as they continued to speak of the “wonderful memories of summertime, travels, picnics, friends, family, special occasions and the bucket of KFC.” What was crucial here is the direct involvement of the spectator/participant: for the body in performance, whether in
everyday living or theatrical, the relational encounter using direct visual, sensory, and/or tactile experiences, such as the chicken, is a way to make the experience for the spectator/participant more immediate—to make the spectator/participant feel more ‘inside’ the installation. Incorporating the tangibility of real food into the art component has the potential to foster dialogue amongst those present: the chicken becomes a means to involve the spectator/participant by being placed in the middle of the action and therefore becoming personally, socially, and physically affected. ‘What are we eating? and why are we eating it?’ ultimately becomes the questions directed to and by the spectator/participant. Touching, smelling, and tasting real food as presented in the “KFC” component is charged with the potentiality of new meaning making through making visible the relational experiences and encounters between visual culture and everyday life that are experienced daily as we engage in re-presenting, re-creating, and re-engaging with our selves, and our identity as marked by the “KFC” installed component. Through inviting participation, inquiry, and reflection, the potentiality for the spectator/participant to critically and mindfully engage with and interpret the experiences she or he is having daily with visual culture is heightened. Engaging through performative inquiry embodies a mindfulness, discernment, appreciation, understanding and honouring of the person, thing or event in the interaction, and further, a respect in which we look again more fully and appreciatively at who or what is before us. Embodiment simplifies and illuminates the linkages between our physical senses and our intuitive ones and further allows moments of possibilities for further understanding what is not immediately evident.

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Fels, 1999.
“We are image makers and image-ridden.”

As an arts educator, I am humbled to see how quickly the installation took form through the manipulation of the objects and space prior to and during assembly in order to re-present issues and concerns in and around the visual culture of everyday life. The installation appears simple. The playfulness of the components (such as the ‘fish bowl and the fishing rod’, ‘the bed’, the ‘cybercases’) contributes to the simplicity of the artwork; like children playing in the sand, making things with their bodies—sorting, stacking, and placing—spectator/participants were invited to experience their surroundings through manipulation of objects, and moving into and through the art installation. To create things through play seems to be one of our most compulsive needs in order to remake the world, and create direct and powerful ways to communicate, to understand, and to make meaning. The marked, gestured, painted, photographed, and projected images from the community heightened my understanding of place, space, and objects, but most importantly, made visible the relations between these things. The ways I thought, imagined, behaved, and dreamed about the status quo of (visual) culture were challenged in this installation space. The risk to ‘change the art world, to change our world’ by relational embodied encounters through installation art forms has the possibility to reveal a larger picture of something significant about our selves; and in

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435 Philip Guston, American visual artist, painter suggests that images are deep within us, an essential part of who and what we are.

436 Play is a serious business for young children; a group life experience is as important to them as family life. They will show great curiosity and a thirst for new experiences through interactions in social contexts (building, playing, arguing, creating, negotiating and so on). See Jerome Bruner’s *Play: Its Role in Development*, New York: Penguin Books, 1976; and *Acts of Meaning*, London: Harvard Univ. Press, 1990.
doing so, we come to recognise visual culture’s influence on us as ‘image-ridden’
humans.

“My purpose is to tell of bodies that have been changed into shapes of different kinds.”

Reflection or introspection became a process that unwound slowly, from the inception
of “Escape from Amnesia,” to entering into and engaging with the installed exhibit. As
educator, artist, spectator/participant, I searched for boundaries to interrupt: I challenged
(pushed back) existing frames (boundaries), created (scripted) by others (e.g., mediated
visual culture, advertising, entertainment). French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard
explains how an artwork searches for its own boundaries in a postmodern world:

A Postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher:
the text he writes, the work he produces is not in principle
governed by pre-established rules. [These] rules and
categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The
artist or writer, then, is working without rules in order to
formulate the rules of what will have been done. Hence, the
fact that work and text have the characters of event.

In this way then, working with retrieval of memory through found or invented narratives
in “Escape from Amnesia,” created new ‘events’, or other ‘events’ in which the
installation artwork searched for its own context (its own location of meaning) within a
certain period of time. (“Escape from Amnesia” was in existence as an installation for the
duration of the exhibition time frame only: nine days; at which it was dismantled and
never to be engaged with in the same way again).

By presenting multiple sites of understanding in the installed components, time was
revealed and experienced as a constant reminder to me, as educator, artist, and

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437 Ovid, Metamorphoses, 1 A.C.E., Sir Samuel Garth, John Dryden, et al, trans.@
http://classics.mit.edu/Ovid/metam.html

spectator/participant, that story, encounters, and experiences, exist in lived moments, retrieved as memory, re-visited, and re-presented, to be engaged with again, but never in the same way. Peggy Phelan in the “Ontology of Performance” stated: “performance is the action that enters uncharted territory. It can only be charted or mapped after the event.” Working through performative inquiry towards mindful and embodied awareness through full active participatory attentiveness pressed me to expand my scope, and widen my frame (and/or eliminate the frame) as I attended to lived visual culture experiences and encounters from the everyday.

“In the seventies and eighties, we lived in a society of spectacle, in the nineties in the society of participants, and we are now developing a ‘society of inter-actors’.”

In “Escape from Amnesia” the spectator/participant enters and interacts with the installed objects, images, and technology that further affects the interrelationship between the artwork and the spectator/participant. The cross-fertilization between disciplines (of which the students brought to the project), the exchange between fellow artists, and the interaction as spectator/participant, as a way of generating the work itself have all been instrumental in shaping “Escape from Amnesia: this is not a pipe.” Through the act of contributing directly and jointly, I had the opportunity to actively create process, document, argue, and share personal stories; develop interactive situations or ‘events’ based on exchange and interaction, and invite an open-ended and inclusive approach to learning and/or reconfiguring understanding through installation art.

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440 Journal entry #6.
Finally, if we believe that “the relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled,” then the possibilities for teaching and learning through arts-based projects to achieve understanding of the everyday are endless. Incorporating installation art and experiencing its multiple, theoretically generative, interconnections with persons, objects and places, pressed me to reconsider the relationship of what I see and what I know. Installation art takes place in a social world, dialectically constituted in social practices that are in constant flux of reproduction, transformation, and change, never to remain the same for an indefinite period of time. Throughout the performative inquiry, the challenge for me as educator, artist, spectator/participant, has been to address and ultimately facilitate the construction of the structural character of the everyday world (over a six week period) at the level of which it is lived in an installation art form. Installation art through the installed components of congruent images and objects and technology from everyday life allows spectator/participants only a brief encounter, as an inter-actor, to create links between the visual culture and everyday life.

Such encounters, however brief, can prove to be dynamic, generative embodied spaces of new learning and understanding. Performative inquiry through art installation elicited ‘stop moments of awareness that called my attention to constructions of identity, questions of location and community. As I experienced as spectator/participant, embodiment illuminates ‘centredness’ through the process of creating and entering into an art installation. As artist and educator, through the art installation form process, I learned how to facilitate discussions and encourage the creation of critical and decentring representations of visual culture that offered the students and spectator/participants

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opportunities to re-examine their place or space in the world, and to re-interpret their daily experiences with visual culture. Actively engaging in the co-creation and then entering into the art installation allowed me to have a deeper understanding of my place in the social world as artist, educator, and consumer.

Experiencing installation art and visual culture to take on new meaning for me: I experienced how the public sphere of communication, practice, and the possibility of change, can become a contradiction between what we think is continuity in everyday life and what constitutes representation of continuity in everyday life. I positioned myself to provide mindful and discerning ways of interventions, while seeking to honour the students’ capacity in the practice, theory, and the installation art form. My confidence as an artist in using flexible, un-framed art form allowed me the freedom to move in many directions during the installation, as I learned to engage with sensitivity to students’ individual and collective needs but at the same time pressing the students to take risks.

“The morning is quiet, except for the hum of the overhead lights in the gallery. “Escape from Amnesia” is silent. I cross to the windows, and look out. I see a train pulling in. I smile. I pull the transparencies off of the window-panes and place each in a stack on the floor. The projector sits silent. I move towards a corner filled with objects, photos, lights, and cables; I put them into boxes. The students and I hug, wish each other well, and then they leave. I stand, once again, in the empty gallery space. The space empty as it was when I first entered the gallery six weeks ago. As I look into this empty space I pause. I feel a little strange, a little sad, remembering. I smile. It is a good memory. I turn off the overhead lights, and leave.”

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442 Journal entry #7. Final entry.
Chapter 4 Conclusion: The Way Forward

“There cannot be an art world without theory, for the art world is logically dependent upon theory...An art theory can detach objects from the real world and make them part of a different world, an art world, a world of interpreted things.”

The art world of which Danto speaks is a constructed visual world, therefore provisional, contingent, and always then open to critique, expansion and revision. In the multimedia environment today, mechanical and electronic images, text, and sound are an almost constant presence. The various mass media (i.e. television, radio, newspapers, magazines, cinema, Internet, World Wide Web, digital multimedia) work in unison to generate specific dominant or popular representations of events, people, and places, whether these events are fictional, actual, or somewhere in-between. These media are pervasive in much of a person’s everyday life, yet these mediums tend to be taken for granted. Today’s computer-mediated visual culture is shrouded in a cyberspace that renders bodies immaterial, or one in which bodies that are marked, often violently, according to racial, sexual, and social differences which create a new intensity of a dis-connected world. In the course of a day, this dis-connection can consist of the next round of Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, Iran’s 2009 election deemed as

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444 Mass media is used to define those media that reach a large audience perceived of having shared interests.


446 Merleau-Ponty speaks of the body and the world as one through a lived experience. See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2. The dis-connected body and world here, is the dis-embodied world; we are unable to make meaning upon the world through relational interactions within the social context of the visual culture world.
democratic by Ahmadinejad, Bashir genocide charges, ethnic riots in Urumqi in western China (also streamed on YouTube), the pandemic Swine flu viral attacks, the bombings of EnCana’s natural gas pipeline in northern British Columbia, the YouTube video of the racial attack of three young white men beating up a young Black man in Courtenay, BC, and the popular culture icon Michael Jackson’s death and memorial spectacle all contribute to the spectacular ‘wired’ events consumers of information and entertainment have become accustomed. This wiring connects and disconnects the mass media consumer simultaneously, renders him or her both psycho-technologically immediate to events and geopolitically removed from them. This simultaneous wiring underpins the effects of spectacle of which Debord refers in *Society of Spectacle*.447

Has the technological-media wired society unconditionally accepted a blending of the boundaries between news and fiction, between entertainment and information in the daily ration of information, news, and entertainment? As I related earlier, when the Gulf War was televised live, I was repelled by the politics (working in television at the time) but at the same time riveted by the spectacular images of missiles flying through the darkness of the night and exploding like fireworks—a smart bomb and I as spectator were locked in as one. I was able to see what the bomb was going to destroy, and what it did destroy, from the safety of my television studio in British Columbia, Canada. Further when 9/11 occurred, I watched the unfolding of the repetitive (looped) images and events again and again from my studio. I remember about nine hours of looped video over the course of the day—the spectacular blended with numbing horror.

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447 Debord, *Society of Spectacle*. For Debord, ‘spectacle’ is the representation as social relationship between people mediated by images which also creates a divisiveness between people. See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.
Watching these mediated events created a new intensity derived from the televised ‘live’ event. I was haunted by the paradox of disgust undercut by fascination of the mechanics of war and terrorism; a splitting of the body image in the ecstasy of dispersal rescued by armour (military troupes and firefighters). What happens to a technologically driven society when its members are suspended between an obscene proximity and a spectacular separation? Might it be possible that people begin to function on auto pilot—moving through the world passively, seeking diversions with partial recognitions punctuated with complete abhorrence? How do members of a technologically driven society come to critically distance themselves in order to recognize and understand their role as active participants in the world, individually and collectively questioning what is taking place in an everyday so inundated with information, images, news, and the spectacular, 24-7?

“You’ve been living in a dream world, Neo.”

Too far, too close: the imperative of proper perspective. Have people today been overshadowed by global events, mediated through violent images and fear, and punctuated with the spectacular in the technologically driven world? Has mass media consumerism rendered people complacent and unaccustomed to arousing deep echoes daily from within? To judge or to decide: the analogy between pictorial and spatial construct is reflected, filtered, and projected as images over and over again that no longer connect us with our sensibility and thus keep us in an intellectual stupor. Each person appears to be in the world, but only through representations of his or herself through the ‘other’: the other being visual culture. As for Artaud, our sensibility has reached the point

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where we surely need art forms that wake us up heart and nerves. How are we to respond, to regain agency, and speak to our own understandings of what matters? As we have seen through this thesis, the potentiality of installation art is that it offers spectator/participants the opportunity to actively engage through embodiment, and question visual culture’s role in our everyday relationships as lived. Art forms that possesses exaltant feeling and embodied stimulation by physically entering the work in a site-specific space have been redirected and expanded from the borders of theatre, conceptual art, and performance art, so as to comprise the installation art form as reinvigorating it/self. The ultimate concerns are directed towards the spectator/participant’s presence. Installation art through performative inquiry evokes a desire to activate the individual from a passive mass-media consumer, and to induce critical dialogue towards the environments individuals find themselves daily. The main centre is the individual, the spectator/participant, for which everything is intended.

Philosopher Alfred Schutz speaks of “wide-awakening” as being in the world, as actively engaging and reflecting critically and passionately with respect to our daily undertakings in life:

…the wide-awakening…full attention to life and its requirements. [The fully attentive and interested self] lives within its acts and its attention and is exclusively directed to carrying its project into effect, to executing its plan. This attention is an active, not a passive one. Passive attention is the opposite to full awareness.  

Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, p. 64. Artaud speaks to theatre however, any art form that arouses the participants to be connected, alive to their sensibilities in a fiery, magnetic manner.

Performative inquiry and active engagement through installation art offers a possible marker as a way forward of ‘being in the world’ as a wide-awake active participant in/with the visual culture. The possibility of a relational installation art form that draws from human interactions and relationships in its social context has the potential of creating social exchange and interaction with the installation artwork for the spectator as participant inside the installation. This inter-activity, reception and production then, becomes the dissolution of any distinction between spectator, participant, and spectacle, reception and production. The affect on the body is presented in the reflexive experience through actions. What makes the interactivity interesting is that by feeling the performing act, the action becomes articulated; wide-awakening occurs. What was once an undifferentiated experience, such as passively looking at artwork on a gallery wall, or watching the 9/11 events unfold over and over again on television, for some sort of pleasurable experience, becomes differentiated in the performative act. The first action can be an enjoyable (or not) predictable passive discovery of a clear image; however, the second action of actively inquiring and engaging within the installation form feels risky, erratic, unpredictable, senseless, like groping for the image and dragging it out of darkness—then losing it again: as if getting stuck. Hence, by performing the act,

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Greene’s *Landscapes of Learning* as she refers to Schutz’s notion of ‘wide-awareness’ in educational terms.

451 Merleau-Ponty also discusses ‘being in the world’ in phenomenological terms. See Ch. 1, sec. 1.2.

452 Interactivity in art forms is not new. Marcel Duchamp’s 1957 lecture on ‘the creative act’ became a starting point and a point of arrival, or in other words, the main theme that informed the artist’s work. See, [http://iaaa.nl/cursusAA&AI/duchamp.html](http://iaaa.nl/cursusAA&AI/duchamp.html)
discovery of the body is heightened—as well as the world around, and the relationship to
the world around—the body’s presence in the world is heightened. This is what Maxine
Greene articulates in “Towards Wide-Awakening”\(^4\) where she positions the significance
of being a fully active engager through Schutz’s notion of ‘wide-awakening’ where
educating through the arts is concerned. For Greene, engaging through the educational
involvement of arts has the potential for provoking precisely Schutz’s notion of active
reflectiveness. Greene asserts:

we need to devise ways of integrating arts and humanities
into what we teach at all levels of the educational enterprise:
we need to do so consciously, with a clear perception of what
it means to enable people to pay, from their own distinctive
vantage points, ‘full attention to life’.\(^5\)

For Greene it is the distinctiveness of the arts that allows for communicating in such a
way that the participator would become aware of their “personal mode of existence”\(^6\)
as to what arts should be about. A relational art encounter as in installation art allows for
a space of openness that inaugurates dialogue. These relational spaces incorporating

\(^4\) Maxine Greene, professor of philosophy and education, “Towards Wide-Awakening”
in *Landscapes of Learning*, New York & London: Teachers College Press,


\(^6\) Soren Kierkegaard, *The Point of View for My Work as An Author*, Benjamin Nelson,
the inability of civilization directed to material improvement—higher incomes,
better diets, miracles of medicine and so forth—to satisfy the human spirit to
underpin her argument for active participatory arts engagements in education in
order for people to awaken to their freedom of communicating in a ‘lived’ reality.
For Greene (as with Kierkegaard) and the industrial then the technological age),
there is a passive response to personalisation, automatisation, and routinisation of
daily life.
human-to-human encounters and experiences try to re-awaken the constraints of the ideology of mass media communication; in a sense, relational spaces may become spaces of conviviality. This is where and how learning should be engaged. Interestingly though, with the speed of audiovisual technological change and a reified\(^4\) (constructed) spectacle of culture that today confronts telecommunications, entertainment, educational media, and the individual within the audiovisual technological world, the inter-connected relationship between the body and technology appear to be gradually morphing with the appearance of new forms of the communicating formats such as Facebook, Flicker, Twitter, and virtual reality technology. Technology becomes an extension of our bodies that can blunt the body’s capacity to feel for one another. It is easier to simply let a message be sent to a blog, Facebook, or Twitter website rather than have the direct communication (with the e.g., friend or colleague) face-to-face at a coffee shop or at the office.

The communication technology of cell phones, I-Phones, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and even Flicker have destroyed the immediacy of face-to-face communication with others. It is so easy today to launch multiple images of ‘vehicle surfing’\(^4\) on YouTube for the thrill of mass communicating the ‘disastrous event’ rather than it is to meet face-to-face and talk about the ‘disastrous event’ that occurred. We have moved our

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\(^4\) The reified (constructed) spectacle of culture corresponds to the moment in society where commodity completes social life. It is not that the relationship to commodities is plain to see, but commodities are now all that there is to see; the world we see is the constructed world of the commodity. Refer to Debord’s Society of Spectacle; Best & Kellner, The Postmodern Turn. Marx & Engels’, The Communist Manifesto, and Ollman’s Alienation: Marx’ conception of man in capitalist society.

\(^4\) Truck Surfing, on YouTube. Go to: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7899CfQNTVI
bodies into the spectacle of mass communication with an indifference to consequences. Greene, in “Wide-Awakeness and the Moral Life,” speaks of moral action that demands choosing between alternatives, usually between two goods, not between bad and good, right or wrong.\textsuperscript{458} The problem today is finding ways to instill an empowerment to people in order for them to internalize and incarnate the kinds of principles that will enable them to make such choices. The fast, easy and accessible audio/video technology makes our bodies far more flexible, but in some ways much less responsive. Technology corporations recognize our senses for swiftness and multiplicity rather than depth, persistence or intensity. Karl Marx considered that by turning even our senses into commodities, capitalism had plundered us of our bodies. In his view, we would need a considerable political transformation in order to come to our senses.\textsuperscript{459} According to Marx, social conditions determine character, both directly, through their effect on our individual powers and needs, and indirectly, through the creation of interests which we strive to satisfy.

“If we are to change our world view, images have to change.”\textsuperscript{460}

As I stated in the beginning of this thesis, visual culture has been allowed to appropriate production, religion, politics, art, morality, literature, and etc., as a form of visual embodiment reflected back on us the spectator and consumer in the capacity of work, currency, clothing, shelter, family, foods, gods, moral codes, laws, art, and so on.


\textsuperscript{460} David Hockney, British Pop artist. Go to: \url{http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/hockney/}
that all become what we have become, or what we want to become. We are always striving to find our place, our space, in what visual culture presents as the ‘norm’. We are constantly re-presented through visual culture influences as to ‘what we want, what we are capable of, what sacrifices we need to make, and what satisfies us. Material production has become the necessary character of our daily tasks and the amount of time devoted to achieving our tasks is evident in the areas of our lives where our power to achieve and accumulate is most evident. Underpinning visual culture is human culture comprised of knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, language, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a person as a member of society. Culture is a system of building identity. It is how people survive and flourish, produce and exchange meanings, and give and take meaning between members of a group or society. Stuart Hall states,

It is the participants in a culture who give meaning to people, objects, and events…It is by our use of things, and what we say, think and feel about them—how we represent them—that we give them meaning.”

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461 Culture (e.g., shared practices of a group, community, or society) according to the British cultural theorist Stuart Hall, is not so much a set of things (television shows or paintings) but moreso a set of processes or practices through which individuals and groups come together to make sense of those things. See Stuart Hall, Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices, 1997.

462 E.B. Tylor, Primitive culture: researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom, 1874. Although Tylor was not aiming to propose a general theory of culture (his explanation was situated around the nature of religion), his theory has underpinned many North American anthropologists as refinements of Tylor’s work.

Culture, through its shared practices is how meaning is made—it is a variable and changing process. People are materially programmed towards culture because meaning, symbolism, interpretation and so on are essential to what and who they are; this is why people access the visual culture of which they are an active part. The preoccupation of image-making techniques in visual culture keeps reminding us of our selves and how we make sense of things in our everyday lives. Through the appropriation of congruent images from visual culture, installation art offers a mutual and reciprocal point of departure for the individual to recognize other perspectives, acknowledge them, transform them, and be ready to be transformed by them. Perceptually guided performative inquiry in installation art has the potentiality to move towards a predominant form of expression in today’s world, as we know it, with global character, desire for sensory overload, and demand for non-elitist practices.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological assumption of each person being a complex fabric of relations inextricably linked with everything else situates the human body and the world as linked through lived experience as Schutz asserts with “being in the world through wide-awakeness.” The enactivists, such as Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana argue that the enactment of a world and a mind by an individual knower is not simply as an observer of the world, but the individual is embedded in the world and is shaped both cognitively and as a whole physical organism by interactions with the world. The practice of installation art, underpinned by the theory of

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phenomenology, embodiment and performative inquiry, allows spaces of possibilities to challenge the limits of our perceptions of spectacle representation of the everyday. Through active, physical engagement, individuals are given opportunities to discuss their place or space in the world, to challenge the forces that appear to dominate them, and to interpret the experiences they are having daily with the visual culture. Only as people learn to make sense of what is happening by face-to-face communicating with others, manipulating objects and navigating through various information spaces through installation art forms can each person begin to have agency and feel autonomous.

To find ways of educating by challenging the visual culture spectacle representation of the everyday requires taking a position by critically inquiring and engaging with what is taken for granted. The Brechtian epic model of ‘defamiliarising’ can be used to raise consciousness of critical thinking. The spectacle distance becomes an important starting point of engagement in understanding as to why we as consumers, producers, and

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467 Bertolt Brecht in *Brecht on Theatre*, presents his strategy of ‘alienation effect’ which presents situations that disrupts the participant by interrupting the narrative pressing the spectator to question what is taking place on stage through montage and juxtaposition. The spectator’s identification with the protagonist is disrupted. Compelling the spectator to take up a position towards the action.

468 Critical thinking in relation to dramatic representation according to Bertolt Brecht first: must have a cognitive aspect to critical thinking: the participant must reach his or her own independently justified conclusions (the participant must be able to give an opinion through a process that provides independent justification for the conclusion reached); second: as a Marxist, Brecht observed that people around him (p. 133) took for granted certain basic precepts—that society is a meritocracy in which individuals rise and fall economically depending on how clever they are or how hard they work; adherence to capitalism and Fascism in the early to mid twentieth century Europe. Brecht wanted the people to question what they saw so they would be ready to go from theatre to their everyday lives to change their situation in society. See Carla Glen, “Aristotle’s Catharsis: The Catalyst for Brecht’s Epic Theatre,” unpublished doctoral paper, Simon Fraser Univ., Vanc., B.C, November, 2006.
managers of personal and collective stories, products, services, and images, we willingly accept a life scripted by an ‘other’ who appears to be a better producer, manager, storyteller and performer of our individual and collective stories. If culture in the context of technology becomes something we “do” then it’s by awakening our sensibilities through performative inquiry that defines how we do it and how the “doing” feels. The body becomes the awakened inter-face of inquiry and engagement in the installation art form.

“If I...ask if all be right, from mirror after mirror, no vanity’s displayed: I’m looking for the face I had before the world was made.”

Educating by challenging the moral implications is presented in Greene’s example of young people pressed to take a moment and recall the feelings they had when they first, for example, smoked marijuana: the nervousness of losing touch with themselves, the dread about what may happen later and so forth. Finding significant ways of educating to a sensitivity and potency becomes the wide-awakeness for the educator as well as for the individuals. Drawing from Greene then, it is through the significance of considering the implications of doing the act (e.g., the ‘vehicle surfing’ spectacle for play on YouTube), confronting his or her reluctance to breaking the law, deciding to possibly back away—is the agency, the autonomy, the freedom allowed in a space of active participatory engagement that presents possibilities for individuals to assess the situation and choose one course of action over another. Actively involved people in installation art forms have the potentiality to question and begin to understand implications of visual spectacle

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actions and be on their way to becoming moral agents through the act of performative inquiry of visual culture. The installation art form (by its appropriation of congruent images of visual culture) presents space-moments of possibilities for individuals to develop the sense of moral agency to speak to moments of recognition, disruption, and interruption that arise from daily life and visual culture through active inquiry and engagement in the installation.

If we believe that we are “inextricably linked through a complex fabric of relations in a lived world,” then active engagement within a predominately highly technologised visual culture today is crucial, as we must come to recognize and incorporate communication strategies for understanding visual culture and our relation to it in the everyday. The inter-relationship between spectator/participant and installation art form and the (wider) world becomes a matter of embodied perception because what the spectator/participant perceives is necessarily bound on being at any moment physically present within a matrix of encounters that determine how and what will be perceived. Embodied action emphasizes a negotiation of an in-between space of moments of possibilities of understanding our relationship with and in visual culture. The body engages first with experiencing the visual culture before reflection and theorizing. Active engagement through an installation art form through the perceptually guided and embodied action of performative inquiry allows for possibilities to produce a specific place of sociability of activation, authorship, and community. The participant actively engages and challenges dominant codes of visual culture and services to situate and

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validate the individual as a site of understanding (a site of autonomy—of freedom, of action) through the face-to-face immersion in the installation and ultimately in the world.

“Caution: Objects in mirror are closer than they appear.”

French philosopher Jean Baudrillard described the late twentieth century as a period during which images were more real than real. He writes,

if they [images] fascinate us so much it is not because they are sites of the production of meaning and representation this would not be new—it is on the contrary because they are sites of the disappearance of meaning and representation, sites in which we are caught quite apart from any judgement of reality.

Now in the twenty-first century, we have passed from an era in which ‘reproduction’ and ‘representation’ are the most crucial aspects of how we come to understand the visual culture. Wide-awareness is needed to affect contemporary thought and particularly the moral responsibility and commitment today in educating and learning through the arts as we strive to live out our daily lives in a mechanical round of habitual activities inundated with images technologically driven from visual culture. For Baudrillard, simulation is the new image paradigm that replaces representation. We live in a culture dominated by duel computer screens, high-definition television sets, I-Pods, I-Phones, Blackberries, and the Internet and World Wide Web; a culture that has become the paradigm for global visual culture practices ruled by the simulacra of fast-paced virtual media images. Unlike

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473 Taken from the side mirror on the passenger side of a motor vehicle.


475 In the past few decades, we have begun to perfect art and science of creating virtual worlds and elaborate theme parks (i.e. Disneyland, Disneyworld). As a result, we can now take the realm of imagination and make it seem to come to life. Fiction begins to look like fact—the ‘house hippo’ advertisement on television is a positive
representations, which make reference to something real, simulacra stands on its own without requiring recourse to real objects or worlds elsewhere.

Within Baudrillard’s terms, the ‘hyperreal’ overtakes the real, and the simulacra rises, partly through new media technology as the new forms of our postmodern existence today. This is a static engagement with the visual culture; the engagement with representations and the hyperreality are replacements for the immediacy of what Greene offers as an example of paradoxes in arts education. For Greene in “Texts and Margins,” any transcendent encounters with art objects establish a kind of “clearing”\textsuperscript{476} for critical transactions—in other words, in understanding our inter-relationship with visual culture, a shock of awareness to which arts encounters give rise that establishes and evokes an illumination of invisibilities\textsuperscript{477} and floods spaces of resistance (a tension between the present and the future, a present loaded with commitments and consequences), which leaves individuals less immersed in the everyday and more compelled to wonder and to question the everyday.

In our fast-paced technologically driven world where our engagement with spectacle representations of the everyday (the passive social relationship between people mediated

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\textsuperscript{476} Greene, “Texts and Margins,” p. 2. A clearing is an inclusive space that reaches for collectively and individually distinct perspectives on the world. It becomes a community of sharing through dialogue moving the participants from passivity into a willingness to open spaces for themselves, the participants.

\textsuperscript{477} Merleau-Ponty speaks of the invisibility in \textit{The Visible and the Invisible}, where objects are not separate entities but are reciprocally intertwined and interdependent. See p. 320.
by images and separation\textsuperscript{478} determine and overtake our reality, life no longer is lived directly and actively.\textsuperscript{479} We passively consume commodity spectacles and services without active and creative involvement. The practice of installation art drawing from the theory of phenomenology, embodiment and performative inquiry allows a ‘clearing’ a space of creative learning, of making meaning, to challenge the limits of our perceptions of spectacle representation of the everyday. The active engagement of people in an installation art form (which appropriates and remediates\textsuperscript{480} congruent images from visual culture) creates an opportunity to speak to ‘wide-awakeness’: moments of recognition, disruption, and interruption for the individual through performative inquiry. If spectacle ‘denotes a mode of passivity and subjugation that arrests thought and prevents an awakening of critical consciousness’ then the aim of arts educating and learning through installation art forms is to draw attention to the knowledge we are constantly enacting, but is relegated to the background of conscious experience of confining ourselves to a “main text” of which Michel Foucault describes as being conceived as the ordinary, the everyday, a normalization of what is worthy, what is respectable.\textsuperscript{481} The active act of performative inquiry becomes an important point of departure for intervening and

\textsuperscript{478} Debord, cited in Guy Debord and the Situationist International, pp. 143 & 33.

\textsuperscript{479} Best and Kellner in The Postmodern Turn, 1997, p 88.

\textsuperscript{480} The term ‘remediatation’ means to refashion old media such as perspective painting, photography, film and television in order to reuse it in another way presenting a new reflexive meaning.

\textsuperscript{481} Michel Foucault, “The means of correct training,” in P. Rabinow, ed., The Foucault Reader, New York: Pantheon Press, 1984, p. 197. Foucault describes ‘normalization’ as the power that imposes homogeneity that allows people to determine levels, to fix specialties, and to render the differences useful by fitting them one to another.
communicating beyond the boundaries of a ‘main text’ and learning through active creative engagement, as the act itself is understanding.\textsuperscript{482}

At present, we live in a confusing world. The power of the technologically driven visual culture in our everyday lives is a condition with which we need to come to terms rather than to try and escape. We must freely acknowledge our investment in this visual culture, but at the same time within that involvement, allow for ‘space-moments of possibilities’ through active and inter-active participation in installation art forms that press for participatory inquiry, engagement, and reflection in a number of ways:

1) in our close entanglement with technology (visual culture) and its practices;

2) in the deconstruction of the idea of one complete story or one complete site of performance allowing for multiple assemblages of sites and/or stories to emerge;

3) on a beginning of a shift to move away from the mono-linearity of conventional theatre as passive spectator resulting in a decentring of inscribing practices where the body becomes the site of text in order to engage the spectacle of mechanical and electronic devices in technology;

4) in creative inquiry through an installation art form to challenge the dialectic of technology’s (visual culture’s) intervention in the body and the body’s intervention in technology (visual culture);

5) to explore and critique technologies (visual culture’s) implications in order to evolve an ethics of embodied technological/visual culture intervention.

A singular vision of the future of our everyday is indeterminate. However, we must come to understand the art world and its inter-relationship to our everyday lives.

\textsuperscript{482} Fels, 1999.
Installation art forms that create ‘space-moments of possibilities’ of active inquiry, engagement, and communication with others become a form of endless possibilities of meaningful encounters by overcoming the perception of spectacle in visual culture for which attention is made attentive to everything other than itself. The invisible becomes visible through dialogue and participatory inquiry creating possibilities for arts-based educating and learning through projects that incorporate theories from phenomenology, embodiment, and performative inquiry. Arts-based projects in this capacity have the potentiality to consciously awaken our autonomy as situated persons, individually and collectively. It is through our choices by understanding the variety of perspectives and the incompleteness of our selves in the visual world that merge when coming to understand our place in and with the visual culture and the world. These choices influence the changes we make to our selves in order to bring about the best future for tomorrow as educators, learners and participants in our technologically driven global community.

In closing, Gilles Deleuze addressed a notion of the relationship of politics to art through the reflection on the ‘creation of people’ that seems to me to apply to the significance of the need for active participation, inquiry and the wide-awakeness of people dialoguing in, through, and around the installation art form:

When a people is created ['creates itself'], it does so through its own means, but in a way that rejoins something in art…or in such a way that art rejoins that which it lacks.484

483 A situated person is grounded in his or her sense-making and understanding of what it is to exist in the (visual culture) world. The situated person is far less likely to confuse abstractions with concreteness, formalized and schematized reality with what is ‘real’. See Greene’s article, “Towards Wide-Awakeness.”

Artists and artworks cannot themselves create a people, and everyday struggles cannot concern themselves directly with artist or artwork. Processes emerge that connect artist, artwork and the citizenry. When individuals begin to take form (work together), or physically and actively inquire and engage, interactive processes emerge that connect artist, artwork and individuals. To actively inquire and critically engage by entering installation art forms from the vantage point of a ‘wide-awake’ individual in everyday life allows then endless confrontations for the possibilities of ‘laying down a path in walking’ with the art world, the worlds he or she dwells, in relationship to him or herself and others.

If I, as an artist and educator, working in the way that I do, might aid or otherwise stimulate an evolution of understanding through installation art forms and embodied engagements within the local and wider community, then I hope to continue through this work a critical and creative interrogation of self and world in relationship with others.

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485 Greene, “Towards Wide-Awakeness.”

486 Varela, “Laying Down a Path in Walking.”
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