Almost Everywhere

by

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Abstract

Centred around the theme of uncertainty and the limits of reason and inquiry, the research I do has shaped my practice in a manner that allows for digressions, tinkering and experimentation. My thesis project is the result of this entangled and seemingly chaotic practice. It consists of a video-installation that attempts to intervene in the programmatic processes that allow for understanding by blurring the borders that distinguish one element from another. At the core lies an affinity with the absurd and the theoretical limits of its antithesis – logic and pure reason. While realizing my thesis project, I have fluxed between exercising strict control and letting go; permitting interventions and allowing improvisations to destabilize the decision-making process. The work that comes out of this process problematizes the notion of the 'finished' work of art.

Keywords: Uncertainty; visual art; video art; installation art; the absurd

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1. Artist Statement

“I am not really sure what we are talking about when we say art” [1]. I use Jimmie Durham to carry these words for me, as I too am not at all certain what it is that we are talking about when we say “art”. Still, I attribute my very first encounter with art as an encounter with the absurd. This happened in my childhood and I cannot remember a specific first encounter, but I see it likely that it happened in primary school, perhaps when we learned about Socrates, the phrase “I know that I know nothing” and his provocatively naive inquisitive approach to learning, or perhaps it was seeing Monty Python and the Flying Circus on TV for the first time. Anyway, it does not really matter what the first encounter was, or if it really was an encounter with either the absurd or art, what is relevant is that these encounters caused tremors in a ground that I thought was stable and reliable. I gradually became aware that the reality I perceive is not self-evident.

Today I engage in a cultivation of this sense of instability in my art practice. Centred around the theme of uncertainty and the limits of reason and inquiry, the research I do has shaped my practice to allow for digression, tinkering and experimentation. If at any point I become absolutely certain about what it is that I am doing, I feel that it would be my ethical obligation as an artist to trouble that foundation of certainty until it becomes unstable again. The work that comes out of this process problematizes the notion of the 'finished' work of art.

My thesis project, *Almost Everywhere,* is a result of this entangled and chaotic practice. It is a video-installation which attempts to intervene with the programmatic processes which allow for understanding by blurring the borders that distinguishes one element from another. The piece is comprised by physical structures made of painted wood brought together to carry and compliment the sound and video components,

[1] Interview by Manuel Cirauqui, p. 81 BOMB Magazine #118, 2012

offering a mode of display which interrupts habituated ways of encountering the video-image.

Through DIY experimentation and tinkering I have developed ways of using sound-projection which helps mask the sound from spilling into a shared gallery space, and in the case of *Almost Everywhere,* adds to the improvisational aesthetic of the piece. The sound-projection device also situates the viewer in a certain 'sweet spot' to best enjoy the work. When editing the video I have been conscious of composition, wanting to create a stimulating experience for the viewer by varying the intensity and the dynamic of the flow of information through calculated, minimal, and brute decisions.

My aim has been to make a work which delivers an experience that captivates by its form, not merely by its content. The video is edited in such a way that the viewer can join the work at any point and stay with it for as long as they want to, while it navigates between the unpredictable and the familiar, making use of scenes with contrasting qualities to captivate through short segments stitched together to complete a whole. Apart from the few segments of found and appropriated footage, the footage is mostly created by myself, ranging from intimate shots and observations through the camera lens in a natural environment, to orchestrated scenes employing actors and improvised sets built in my studio. I tie the different scenes together by the use of sound and music to soothe the transitions, or by purposefully hard edits as to interrupt the viewer from settling into any one scene and drive the video forward in an unsuspected direction.

Inspired by the work of poetic video artists such as Jan Peacock, Steve Reinke and Gary Hill's early videos like the *Happenstance* series (1982-83), I am interested in revealing the limitations of language, to play with the differences between written text and performed text, and to explore the eternal separation between language and thought — how language dictates our understanding of phenomena and ideas. Within the seemingly half-hazard combination of materials and video segments in my piece, I try to retain a sense of hidden logic, aside from language, through the accumulative experience of viewing the many parts that make up the whole.

With my thesis project I have sought to create a tension between the desire to resolve meaning and make sense out of the seemingly chaotic, meaningless and absurd. Absurdism, as a philosophy, describes 'the absurd' as something that arises out

of the conflict between the human search for meaning and purpose, and the inability to find these values, because 'value' and 'meaning' is not something that exists independently in nature apart from being the construct of human consciousness. *Almost Everywhere* opens by addressing the desire for total knowledge with an excerpt from a radio broadcast of a speech by the mathematician David Hilbert. In 1930 he addressed the German Society of Scientists and Physicians denying the "*ignorabimus*", a latin term for 'what we cannot know', and ends his speech offering the slogan *"Wir müssen wissen, wir werden wissen/We must know, we will know"*. This extreme positivist perspective, promoting limitless inquiry and the belief that one can prove all mathematical problems and theoretically attain all possible knowledge, was a call to arms for scientists to abolish uncertainty. In reality this is an impossibility as explored by Luis Borges' short story *Library of Babel*[2] and proved mathematically by Kurt Gödel, who ironically gave the first announcement of his Incompleteness Theorem the day before Hilbert's radio address[3].

In light of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem, Hilbert's slogan "*Wir müssen wissen, wir werden wissen"* becomes absurd, almost perverse in its futile optimism. I have appropriated the slogan in my thesis project, using it repeatedly as a teasing irritation. Through the progression of the video all that is offered to the viewer are broken sentences, unfinished scenes, censored words and jumbled genre. Hilbert's slogan becomes a relentless mocking reminder that there is really nothing to grasp or to hold on to. The reticence of the work provokes a conflict between it and the viewer's ability to make sense of it, and in this way *Almost Everywhere* synthesizes an encounter with the absurd.

I consider the absurd to not only be a sensation one may encounter, or something that simply defies logic; it is a tool with which one can actively intervene in the normative to provoke unpredictable results in ways of doing and thinking. I take cues from practices such as the *Dogma 95* movement who's manifesto troubles the process of making work, and intervenes with the illusion of having full creative freedom by offering a set of rules the film maker has to follow. In return the rules propose a different

2 *Labyrinths*, Penguin Modern Classics, 1976

3 Casti, John L.; DePauli, Werner. *Gödel – A Life of Logic,* Perseus Publishing, 2000

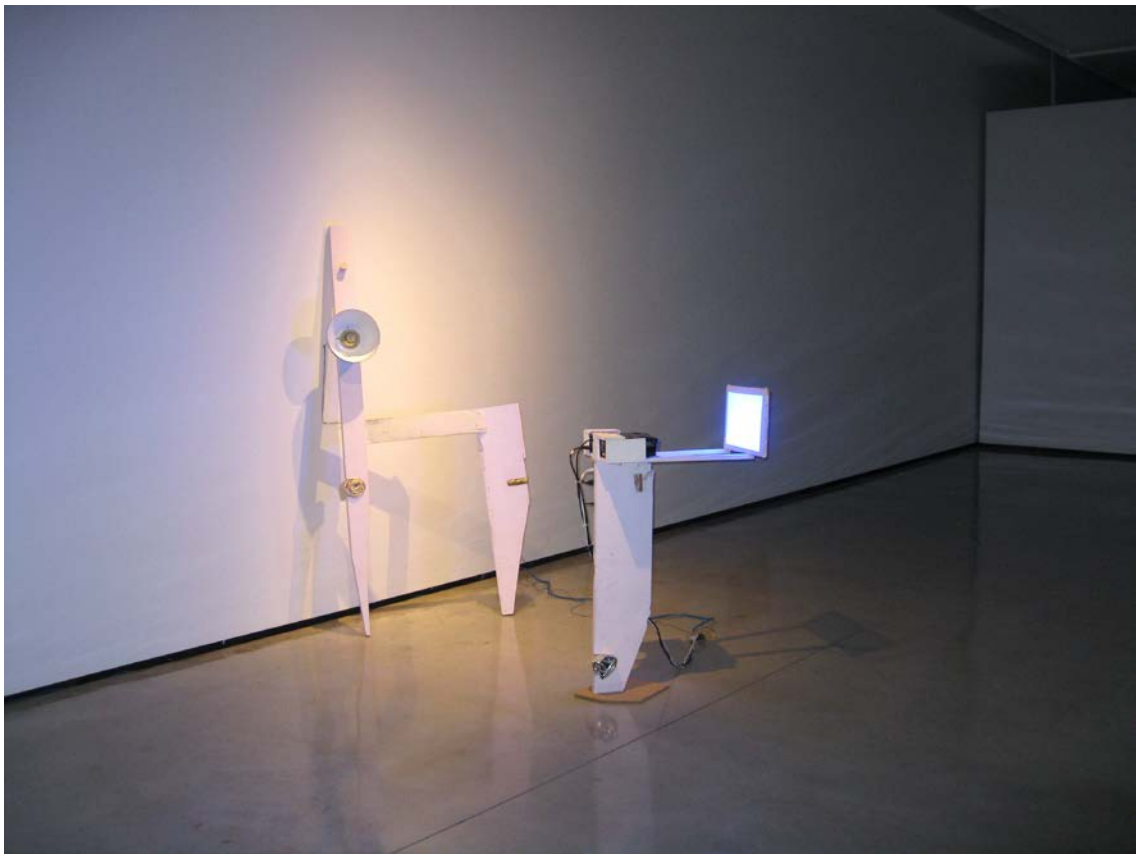
kind of freedom by forcing creative solutions, liberating the film maker from the possibility of making conventional and uninspired artistic choices.

In my own practice, although I do not incorporate set parameters to work by, I seek to destabilize my working methods and allow myself to give up control so as to discover when I, as an artist, actually sense a critical urgency to act; either to intervene in a process, take back control or to make a resolute decision. Because of my own methods of operation, I feel a kinship towards artists who are conscious of chaos and use it methodically to stir up unpredictable results and situations. While making *Almost Everywhere* the work of artist Jimmie Durham and certain films by filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge, such as *Willi Tobler and the Decline of the 6th Fleet* (1972) and *The Big Mess* (1969) have been especially inspirational and guided my aesthetic to allow for improvisation and to flux between strict control and letting go. I have not had any desire to unfold a narrative or unpack and make clear the ideas that lie at the foundation of the work. I do not want my art to be an illustration or prop for theory and philosophy. Instead, I see my thesis project as the remnants, perhaps even an expression, of an art practice which is in constant unrest, fuelled by a crisis between playful credulous curiosity, uncertainty and doubt.

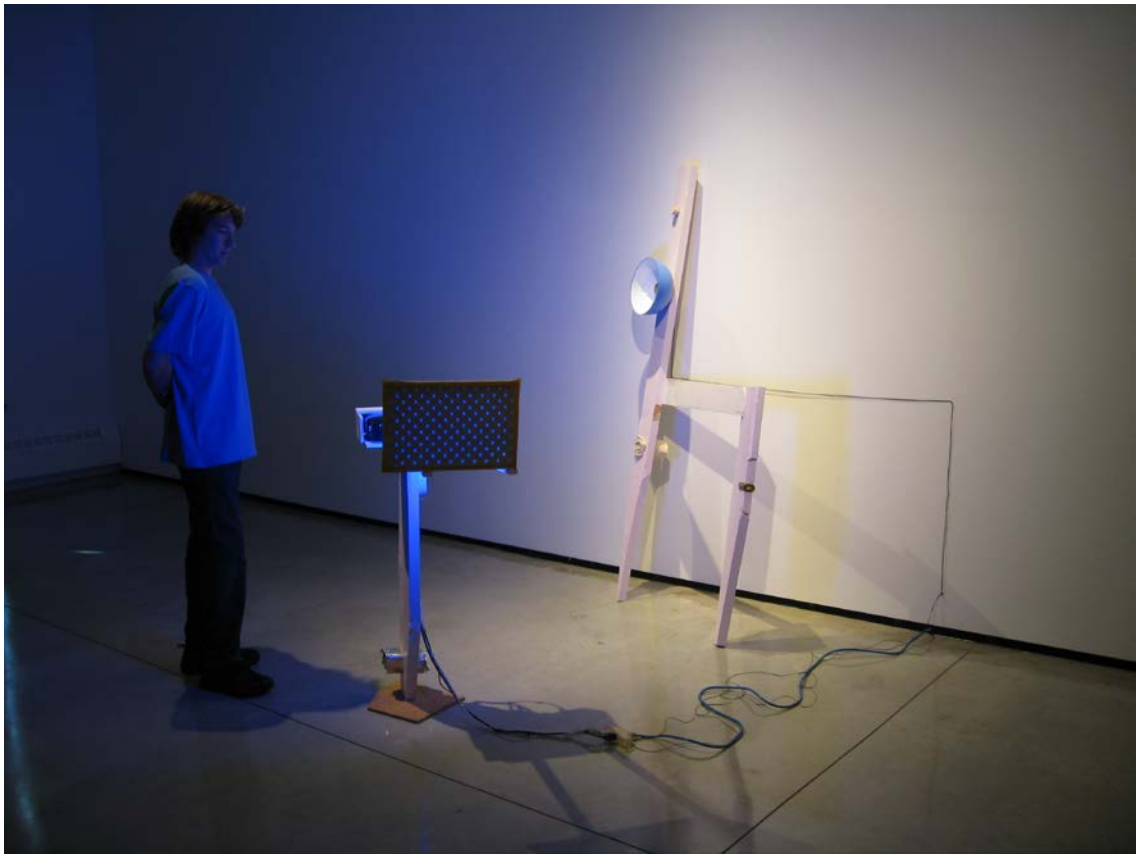
2. Documentation: Gallery Installation

The following photographs documents the project, *Almost Everywhere,* exhibited at the Audain Gallery from September 6 to September 15, 2012. The photographs are presented to illustrate the sculptural aspects of the video-installation and how it was installed in the gallery space.

Installation Image 1



Installation Image 2



3. Appendices

Appendix A.

FPA 812: Seminar Research Paper Fall 2011

As to introduce the main theme of investigation for this paper, let us consider this declaration by Dover Publishing found on the back of a copy I own of Arthur Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation Vol. II* (1966):

> We have made every effort to make this the best book possible. Our paper is opaque, with minimal show-through; it will not discolour or become brittle with age. Pages are sewn in signatures, in the method traditionally used for the best books, and will not drop out, as often happens with paperbacks held together with glue. Books open flat for easy reference. The binding will not crack or split. This is a permanent Book.

It is important to note that the above description of *The World as Will and Representation*, is referring to the book as an object and not to the book as text or any of its contents. In this case the book as object is considered to be of such quality that it is declared to be "*permanent*". Such a declaration is of course problematic. Evidently nothing lasts forever, but in the context of this paper it serves as an ironic entry-point to my interest in fundamental thought and physics. This paper is an attempt to present and draw parallels between a selection of science history, philosophy and works of literature and art which is related to the research that informs me in my practice. Let me begin by rooting this paper's subject-matter to my own artistic practice.

My practice is interdisciplinary and I do not have a specific medium or field of expertise, however, one characteristic of my practice is its source of inspiration. The art I create is informed by areas within science and philosophy that question and probe the fundamental reality we experience and find ourselves alive in. The role I pose for myself is not that of a scientific researcher or a philosopher in the traditional sense, but an artist who can function as a mediator of scientific and philosophical concepts and problems through the artwork I produce in my studio. I do not consider myself strictly tied to any discipline or field of research. The freedom I have carved for myself is a delightful privilege, but it also comes with responsibility. It looks bad when a non-expert does or says something within someone else's field of expertise, for example if a professor in computer science claims to have answers to questions within the field of behavioural

psychology. Or a better example, local to fine art, my own field of research; having hardly ever touched a paint brush or looked into theory of painting, how can I as a non-painter partake or contribute to the ongoing discourse on painting? This is not usually a problem for me. When I understand that I have nothing valuable to contribute I try to keep my mouth shut, but it is not always as easy as that. I have to try to be aware of *when* my work is overlapping or venturing into a field I am not an expert in which can easily become a slippery slope. In other words, because I am drawing from various fields and sources of information which I am no expert in, *I must try to be aware of what I am not aware of.*

However, I am not fully without expertise. My education in fine art has equipped me with general knowledge of contemporary art and art history. It is in relation to this knowledge-base I allow myself to make the choices I do when I make art. I know in general terms what challenges have been faced and what has been done before me. Although there are elements of self-reflexivity in the art I make, I avoid the endlessness of making art about art, or art within the genre of art-institutional critique. I try to position myself aside of contemporary-art problematics, or rather, deal with contemporary formal and art-political issues as a *side-effect* of my main subject of investigation, so that my art is not part of a fad or hype that is hard to appreciate five years after it is made.

Still, it is because I lack a strict discipline and narrow field of research, but at the same time draw information from a myriad of fields, that I have had such difficulty writing this paper. How can I write about something that is, when it comes down to it, plain curiosity and fascination for the world I find myself in? It is easier for me to express this through making art in my studio where I materialize ideas in a way which is specific in a different way than words on a page, and open for different conceptual and formal ways of contemplation. Perhaps it is a bit of a stretch, but I see a discreet parallel between different mediums and means of expression and wave-particle duality.

In 1906 the physicist Joseph John Thomson won the Nobel Prize in Physics for proving that the electron is a particle. Thirty one years later, in an interesting twist of history, his son George Paget Thomson received the 1937 Nobel Prize in Physics for proving that the electron in fact is a wave (Navarro, 2010). Paradoxically they were both right. Their discoveries typifies the scientific climate of the early 20th century which saw a decisive break with the traditional orderly Newtonian world view which we will get back to

later. How can anything be a particle and a wave at the same time? Is our limited and subjective perception of reality hindering a more correct and objective comprehension?

I want to further digress and draw a comparison here between the intuitive problem we have understanding wave-particle duality and Magritte's famous painting *The Treachery of Images,* the painting of a pipe with the text "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe." (*1928-29). Here is a painting that is more than formal composition or decoration, it challenges us to be more aware of the way we comprehend images, words and the way we perceive symbols. Michel Foucault later wrote an essay *This is Not a Pipe* (1968) discussing its paradox; the use of the word for 'pipe' to refer to the painted symbolical pipe as not being a real pipe. Perhaps our comprehension of the painting is tricky and challenged because of the way our brains are hard-wired to understand images and words? Magritte would have had found it interesting that contemporary neuroscientists have discovered what they have dubbed "The Grandma Cell" also called the "Jennifer Anniston Cell" . The human brain has a way to maximize its efficiency by compressing the memory of words, images, faces or things that it sees on a regular basis. Instead of needing a network of active neurones to store the memory of someone or something, in some cases only a single cell is needed. (Goseline, 2005; Zimmer, 2009) By subjecting research-subjects to different pictures of their grandma, or famous people like Jennifer Anniston while having their brain activity monitored, researchers have discovered that only a single cell 'fire' or is active, not a network of cells. The same cell also fire when confronted with the name or word for the person or object they were exposed pictures of. In Magritte's painting we are subjected to two signifiers of a pipe through a word and an image, and also told that "it", the image, is not a pipe. If we are only equipped with one cell that is triggered when confronted with a pipe, a "Pipe-cell", it might explain the interesting loops of thought we find ourselves in when considering the painting.

Before we go back to discuss causes for the dramatic changes in thought and science in the beginning of the 20th century, and what these changes were, we have to go a few hundred years back to the time before Isaac Newton.

The idea that the universe could be understood at the root through mathematics, is old. Although they were most likely mathematicians building on ancient traditions rather than the original pioneers, Euclid and Pythagorus are known in the West for being the fathers of classic geometry. They are associated with the discovery of Pi and the

Golden Mean or Golden Ratio. These, both as numbers and ratios, can be found all over the natural world, for example in the shape of any river delta, in the way a pineapple grows, in snail houses or a sunflower. Because of this mysterious connection between math and nature, the path between theology, mysticism and mathematics is not very long. Geometry became sacred. In *Representing Order: Natural Philosophy, Mathematics and Theology in the Newtonian Revolution* (1991**),** Robert Markley discusses the influence theology had on natural philosophy in the 16th century just before the Newtonian revolution, with the Church aligning themselves with an Aristotelean empirical world view. Mathematics and geometry was considered to be a means to decipher the code of reality which Markley illustrates by quoting from Galileo's *The Assayer:*

> Philosophy [i.e. physics] is written in this grand book — I mean the universe — which stands continually open to our gaze, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the characters in which it is written. It is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it; without these, one is wandering around in a dark labyrinth. (p. 125, Markley, 1991)

Newton brought a lantern to Galileo's "dark labyrinth" by formalizing the laws of motion, gravity and light. Newton for the first time in history proved that the space we and all matter occupy was *real* and universally effected by the same laws of nature. There was something 'behind the scenes' so to speak that effected that which was "on the stage": matter and energy (Greene, 2004). It also suited the world view of the time; Newtonian physics is intuitive and at heart deterministic: every cause has an effect. One of the strongest proponents of Newtonian mechanical determinism was Pierre-Simon Laplace. He theorized that a being with perfect knowledge of the universe, from the largest heavenly bodies to the smallest particles, would be able to understand all chain-reactions of cause and effect and therefore be able to see the past, the present and the future all the same. Such extreme determinism essentially negates the possibility for free will, yet for scientists it was a cause for optimism. If the universe was just a big machine behaving deterministically, it was just a matter of identifying its parts and study how the natural laws effected them to gain complete understanding the universe (Gleick, 2011).

Towards the end of the 19th century however, certain discoveries did not fit the Newtonian models. Specifically, there were three major discoveries that caused a shift away from old ways of thinking about physics: sub-atomic particles were observed to not behave after the same laws of Newtonian physics and new set of laws for the microscopic was formulated and called 'quantum mechanics' (Greene, 2004); the discovery of entropy and the arrow of time thanks to Ludwig Boltzman's contributions to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which essentially denied the idea that the universe, like a clockwork, could work both backwards and forwards in time (Gleick, 2011); and most importantly Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity which proved that time is relative to one's velocity, and that matter is energy (Greene, 2004). For over 200 years, the natural laws as described by Newton, were thought to be permanent and unchangeable, its effect the same on large bodies as microscopic objects. His description of gravity, motion and the properties of light, had been successfully applied to disciplines such as engineering, astronomy, and architecture for over two centuries. (Gleick, 2011) With Einstein's theories, these familiar laws, which had caused such dramatic advancements in human civilization, were suddenly no longer as permanent and orderly as once thought, they became flexible and subject to change.

Charles Babbage was one of these optimistic scientists. In the middle of the 19th century he was working on a machine he called the “Difference Engine”, a steam driven computer capable of solving advanced mathematical problems. He saw a parallel between the workings of the universe and the machine he was attempting to build. Theoretically he hoped it was ultimately possible to simulate the universe with one of these machines and thus use it to predict future events. Poetically he mused:

> What a strange chaos is this wide atmosphere we breath!.... The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said or women whispered. There, in their mutable unerring characters, mixed with the earliest, as well as the latest sights of mortality, stand for ever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating in the united movement of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will. (p. 374, Gleick, 2011)

Years later, and probably unaware of Charles Babbage, writer Luis Borges would pen something very similar in his short fictional story *Tower of Babel*:

> The universe (which others call the Library) [...]. When it was proclaimed that the Library contained all books, the first impression was one of extravagant happiness. All men felt themselves to be the masters of an intact and secret treasure. There was no personal or world problem whose eloquent solution did not exist in some hexagon. The universe was justified, the universe suddenly usurped the unlimited dimensions of hope. (p. 78, Borges, 1976)

In this story, written in the early 40's, Borges describes the optimism of discovering a library containing all the information of the universe, past, present and future. Initially the discovery is cause for great joy, people thinking they would be able to have answers for everything and end suffering, but it quickly turns to grief when realizing that the library is unmanageable because of its infiniteness. The story illustrates the problems of information overload. Even if we have access to all information and can understand everything about the universe, because of its enormous size and complexity, we will not be able to find what we are looking.

Still, mathematically speaking, it was up until the 1930's thought to be *theoretically* possible to understand the entire universe through logic. Bertrand Russel and Alfred North Whitehead set out to create a calculus, a language of symbolic logic, free of possible misinterpretations, that could be used to do just that. From 1910 to 1913 they released their monumental treatise *Principia Mathematica* in three volumes (Casti, DePauli, 2000) and for a few years it seemed possible to comprehend the workings of the universe again, until 1931 when a theoretical mathematician named Kurt Gödel (1906 - 1978) published his *Incompleteness Theorem*. This theorem proves, by the use of logic, that there are mathematical problems which are impossible to solve or rather: to *prove*. (Casti, DePauli, 2000; Gleick, 2011) The mathematical and philosophical implications of this theorem essentially means that logic has limits; or to phrase it differently: *there are things about the universe we will never be able to understand.*

Alan Turing, came to a similar conclusion as Gödel (Casti, DePauli, 2000; Gleick, 2011), and refuted the possibility of building a machine that could simulate nature in the way which Charles Babbage had dreamed of about a hundred years earlier:

> The system of the “universe as a whole” is such that quite small errors in the initial conditions can have an overwhelming effect at a later time. The displacement of a single electron by a billionth of a centimetre at one

> moment might make the difference between a man being killed by an avalanche a year later, or escaping. (p. 377, Gleick, 2011)

Turing is here describing what is commonly known as the “Butterfly Effect”. This effect is linked to complexity. In chaos theory, the more complex a system is, the harder it is to accurately predict how a process within the system will behave, or rather, the more *chaotic* it becomes, this is why for example weather is so hard to predict. Related to Chaos Theory is a phenomena in nature called s*elf-similarity,* which we can observe in our everyday surroundings. A coastline, the patterns of erosion on a mountain side, or the shape of a cloud: their patterns look similar from afar and up close*.* The mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot discussed this phenomena in his famous paper: *How Long Is the Coast of Britain? Statistical Self-Similarity and Fractional Dimension* (1967)*,* in relation to the difficulties it posed when attempting to measure a coastline because of its self-similar and fractal nature. The closer and more detailed one looks, the longer the coastline becomes, in effect any coastline can be as long as one wants!

James Gleick was one of the popularizers of chaos theory and brought it to the mainstream in the late 80's with his book *Chaos* (1986). The time coincided with a peak of activity within postmodernist critical theory, and some critical theorists like Kathrine Hayles saw this new science as a paradigm shift with far reaching implications, similar to the shift that happened in the early 20th century with the break from the safe and certain Newtonian world-view. In the editorial of *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science* (1991)*,* she observes that chaos theory makes reality uncertain and unpredictable which goes well with postmodernist ideals of deconstructing institutionalized ideas and a simple logic of dichotomies. She also argues that the similarities between chaos theory and postmodernist techniques of social deconstruction and reconstruction go beyond allegorical similarities*:*

> If reality is not natural and self-evident, it can obviously be deconstructed. Repeatedly in postmodern theory and literature , the constructed fabric of the world (or the text-as-world) is torn to reveal the void underneath. [...] No longer simply what is there, reality is subject to constant revision, deconstruction and reconstruction. (p. 14, Hayles, 1991)

The energy and optimism detected in her writing towards chaos theory, breaks with the cynical and ironic tone of other critical theorists such as Baudrillard or Sartre,

perhaps because it is linked with hope for something new, how the “paradigm shift” Hayles hoped for did not happen on a socio-cultural scale, at least not yet.

Jan Wervoert addresses some of the problems with over-eager contemporary self-reflexivity, the restless eager for 'the next new thing', and problems that arise when attempting to position oneself historically by defining one's place in time in relation to past movements. In his contribution to e-flux *What is Contemporary Art?* (2010), *V*erwoert has a more sombre view on his contemporary situation than Hayles had in 1991. In the poetic text *Standing at the Gates of Hell,* he hints towards a stand-still, that we are still bobbing on the ripples of modernity, and that we should not understand postmodernity, although a real critique of previous ideals, as an isolated segment in time that chronologically broke with and continued where Modernity ended:

> Remaining on the gates of hell, I will promise you none of this. I can only tell you there is *more.* No more of *this.* But much more than you have ever wanted before, or thought you deserved. For this too is modernism, of another, an always uncontemporary kind, a nagging doubt and mocking voice, speaking softly, close to your ear: “what if there was something *more* to life? Than this? Something altogether different, something both/neither old and/nor new, something that was there for you, if you you had the guts to face it...” This is not my voice speaking. But another voice. (p. 198, Verwoert, 2010)

Conclusion

This year's (2011) Nobel Prize in Physics was awarded to Saul Perlmutter, Brian Schmidt and Adam Riess for their work leading to the discovery that the universe is accelerating as it expands. An accelerating universe was not what the scientists thought they would find when they started their initial experiments (A, Brumfiel, 2011). Originally published in 1998, the discovery of an accelerating universe lead to the discovery of Dark Energy, a force which is yet to be explained by contemporary physics, but has to exist for the universe to be able to accelerate according to the models used in astrophysics today. From the frontiers of cosmology to cutting edge research on the sub-atomic level: physicists at CERN's Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at the border between Switzerland and France, are finally undergoing the experiments the LHC was ultimately built for. By accelerating protons and crashing them together, they hope to achieve enough energy to tear a piece off the fabric of space itself - the Higgs Field, which might reveal a particle which in theoretical physics is called the *Higgs-Boson.* (B, Brumfiel,

2011; Greene, 2004) In between the very large and the very small, we might find ourselves thinking that we will remain unaffected by this type of research which is so distant from problems related to our daily lives. This constant tearing, and restless folding and unfolding, where will it lead us to? Where will it end? Is there an ultimate reality beyond what we are experiencing, and so what?

If we finally open Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation vol. II,* instead of just studying its cover, we will find no answers to these questions. However, Schopenhauer has an interesting perspective: "*It is true that space is only in my head; but empirically my head is in space"* (p. 19).

Schopenhauer has here, more than just aligning himself with Platonic realism, without any knowledge of contemporary science struck an alliance with the holographic universe theory, a contemporary theory which has recently gained experimental backing from observing how black holes behave. The theory suggests that the reality we empirically experience as three dimensional is in actuality a holographic projection of information originating from a two-dimensional surface in a sphere at the edges of our universe. (Greene, 2011) This is an interesting thought to try to comprehend.

Mandelbrot observed while measuring the fractal nature of coastlines that the closer one looks the more there is to measure. It is in my opinion precisely because we know there will be more to see, more to know, and more to measure that we should continue probing and looking at nature. Those who consider the enormous amount of money and resources put into the LHC and the search for the Higgs-Boson to be a waste, forget to appreciate the incredible consequences Newton's formulation of the natural laws have had. Knowing how gravity works might not directly fill a hungry stomach, but the insight he has given us on how nature works has benefited humanity tremendously by the means of science and technology. Einstein in turn gave us an even more precise model, which in turn have given us even more powerful technology (GPS technology for example, takes the theory of relativity in account to calculate the minute difference in space time between the ground stations on earth and the GPS satellites). Despite the development of fiercer and more efficient weapons, we live in a world which is statistically far less violent and disease-ridden than ever before. (Pinker, 2011) The positive contributions of science and technology counter-weighs that of the negative impacts; humanity is without a doubt benefiting from education and knowledge.

This is important to me, because it aligns my practice with something that is more than the mere pleasures of aesthetics. Yet, it is easy to find oneself navel-gazing in one's own discipline, and not all navel-gazing is beneficial, as illustrated in the last passage of Italo Calvino's novel *Mr. Palomar:*

> “If time has to end, it can be described, instant by instant,” Mr. Palomar thinks “and each instant, when described, expands so that its end can no longer be seen.” He decides that he will set himself to describing every instant of his life, and until he has described them all he will no longer think of being dead. At that moment he dies. (p. 125, Calvino, 1985)

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Appendix B.

DVD: *Almost Everywhere*

Creator

Nikolai Gauer

Description

This DVD contains a compressed version of the video component for *Almost Everywhere* and a short video-clip documenting the artwork as it was installed in the Audain Gallery.

Filename

Almost Everywhere video component.mp4 [20:47]

Documentation.mp4 [0:50]