

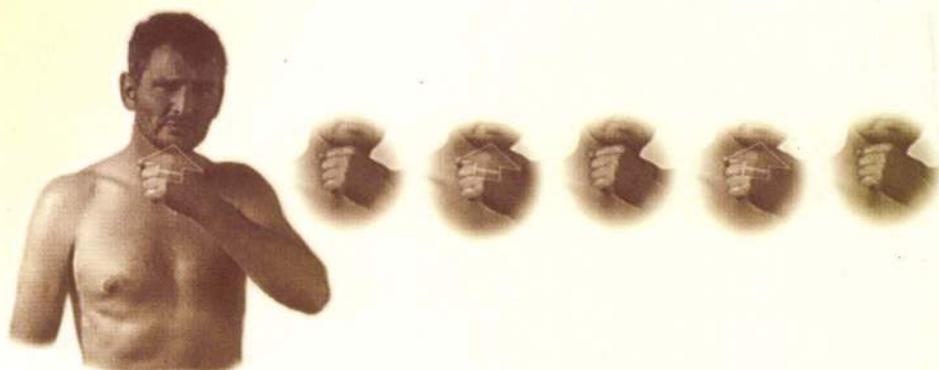
Kunst / Art



Mediamatic VOL 6 # 2/3

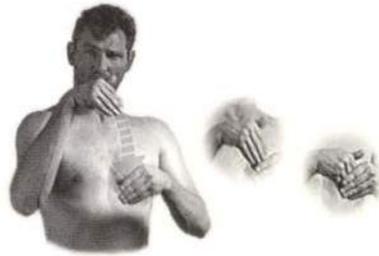


OLD MEDIA!



Oud / Old

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in hoc signo vinces

Bij de artikelen in dit nummer staan trefgebaren in Nederlandse doven-gebarentaal. Ze worden voorgedragen door John van Gelder, acteur bij het Nederlandse Gebarentheater.

Gebarentaal is het oudste tijdgebaseerde visuele medium. Pas de laatste decennia beginnen horenden zich te realiseren dat gebarentaal geen prothese is maar een heel eigen communicatiemiddel dat over de wereld in ontelbare variaties gebruikt wordt.

Het is een taal van ideogrammen (eigenlijk ideogesten). Zoals bijvoorbeeld het geschreven Chinees, dat geen directe relatie heeft met de klanken van het gesproken Chinees. Ook gebarentalen hebben geen directe relatie met talen die gesproken of geschreven worden in dezelfde omgeving. Er zijn gebaren waar sprekenden geen woord voor hebben en er zijn woorden waar doven geen gebaar voor hebben. Weliswaar bestaan er vingeralfabetten waarmee woorden uit spreektaal gespeld kunnen worden; die zijn echter niet meer dan hulpmiddeltjes. Gebarentalen ontstaan op dezelfde natuurlijke manier als spreektaal en kennen eenzelfde variatie. Kennelijk heeft de taalvaardigheid van de menselijke soort niet zo veel te maken met horen of spreken maar is op een abstracter niveau aanwezig.

Gebarentalen hebben een heel eigen structuur. Westerse spreektaal codeert veel betekenis in de volgorde van woorden en kan niet veel uitdrukken zonder tijdsbepalingen (het werkwoord moet vervoegd worden). Gebarentalen daarentegen, hebben in eerste instantie een ruimtelijke grammatica. Het is praktisch niet mogelijk iets samenhangends te gebaren zonder de elementen van die mededeling een plaats toe te wijzen in de zogenaamde gebarenruimte (de ruimte die je met je handen kunt bestrijken). Niet alleen handgebaren spelen daarbij een rol maar ook de blikrichting en de uitdrukking van het gehele bovenlichaam. De elementen van een betoog blijven ook nadat ze gebaard zijn op hun plek in de gebarenruimte beschikbaar voor interactie. Zelfs tijd wordt omgezet in ruimte; vroeger is op een andere plaats dan nu of toekomst.

Gebarentalen zijn een fascinerend gebied voor mensen die zich bezighouden met beeldtaal. Je kunt erin discussiëren, dichten of lesgeven. Hoe zou een gebarentaalfilosofie er uitzien? Zou een dove Wittgenstein met dezelfde vragen hebben geworsteld? Wat zou de ruimtelijke structuur van gebarentaal voor consequenties voor zijn denken hebben gehad? En hadden we dat dan nog in het Duits kunnen vertalen? En wat zou zo'n filosofie hebben betekend voor de theorie van andere visuele media?

• The headings of the articles in this issue contain images of *key signs* taken from Dutch Sign Language, performed by John van Gelder, actor with the Nederlandse Gebarentheater (Dutch Sign Theater).

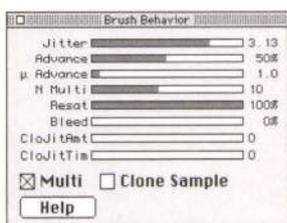
Sign language is the oldest time-based visual medium. Only in recent decades have those with a normal sense of hearing begun to realize that deaf sign language is not simply a 'crutch'; it is a medium of communication in its own right, with countless variations all over the world.

It is an 'ideogram' (actually 'ideogesture') language, like written Chinese, for example, which is not based on the sounds of spoken Chinese. In the same way, deaf sign languages are not directly related to the languages spoken or written in the area. There are signs without an equivalent in spoken language and words for which deaf people have no corresponding sign. While there are manual alphabets, with which deaf people can spell words from the spoken language, they are used only as an occasional, supplementary aid. Sign languages emerged in the same way as spoken languages and are just as varied. Apparently, the language capacity of human beings is largely independent of hearing or speaking and is present on a more abstract level.

Sign languages have a structure of their own. Western spoken language encodes much of its meaning in the order of words in a sentence, and cannot express very much without time-indicators (the verb must be conjugated). Sign languages, on the other hand, have a fundamentally 'spatial' grammar. It is practically impossible to sign something coherently without first assigning the elements of the message a place within the 'sign space' (the space defined by the reach of one's hands). Not only do hand gestures play a role; so does the direction of one's gaze and the expression of one's upper body as a whole. The elements of a discourse also remain in the sign space after they have been gestured, accessible for further interaction. Even time is converted into space: the past has a different location than the present or future.

Deaf sign languages are a fascinating area for those who study the language of images. One can discuss, create poetry or teach in them. What would a sign philosophy of language be like? Would a deaf Wittgenstein have wrestled with the same questions? What would the consequences of the spatial structure of deaf sign language have been for his thinking? And could it then have been translated into German? What would the significance of such a philosophy have been for the theory of other visual media?





De koppen in deze *Mediamatic* zijn geschilderd met het programma *Painter* (versie 1.0, © 1991 Fractal Design Corporation). Het is een van de prachtigste en tegelijk meest wezenloze programma's die dit jaar voor de Macintosh zijn uitgebracht.

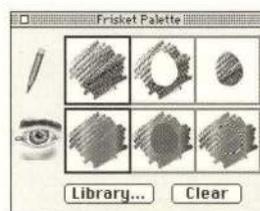
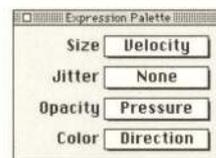
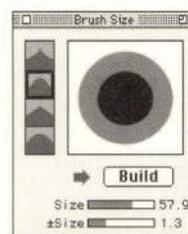
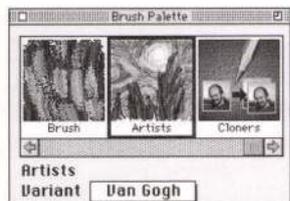
Painter biedt een perfecte emulatie van traditionele teken- en schildergereedschappen. Het programma wordt geleverd met een ruime sortering papier- en doektexturen, aangevuld met etsplaat, fotoraster enzovoort. Je kunt nat en droog tekenen met, onder andere, verschillende soorten potlood, olieverf, airbrush, wasco, houtskool, waterverf, Japans penseel of kalligrafiepen. Dat alles natuurlijk in ruim 16.000.000 kleuren. Het meest verbijsterend zijn wel de *artist modes*, in versie 1.0 kunnen we kiezen uit van Gogh en Seurat. Nooit meer vieze vingers!

Schilderen in virtuele realiteit. Pak je plastic kerstbomen, opblaaspoppen en instantpudding maar in, hier is *Painter*! Nieuwe media imiteren oude media. Het schijnt dat in het laat—middeleeuwse Europa de schilderkunst in eerste instantie werd gebruikt om het duurdere inlegwerk van kostbare metalen, ivoor en edelstenen te imiteren. Wel, we hebben hier te maken met een nieuwe mijlpaal. Dit programma is zo sterk gericht op het imiteren van bestaand materiaal dat elk perspectief op de ontwikkeling van een eigen beeldtaal voor digitale media verduisterd is zolang het aanstaat.

The headings in this issue of *Mediamatic* were painted with the computer program *Painter* (version 1.0, © 1991, Fractal Design Corporation). It is at once one of the most splendid and most vacuous programs put out for the Macintosh this year.

Painter offers a perfect simulation of traditional drawing and painting tools. The program comes with a wide assortment of paper and canvas textures, supplemented by etching plate, photo rasters, etc. etc. etc. One can draw with both wet and dry techniques, using various kinds of pencil, oil paint, air brush, wasco, charcoal, japanese brush or calligraphy pen, among other things. All of this in roughly 16,000,000 colors, of course. The most astonishing thing is the 'artist modes': in version 1.0, we can choose between Van Gogh and Seurat. No more dirty fingers!

Paint in virtual reality! Put away your plastic Christmas trees, blow-up dolls and instant pudding mix, here comes *Painter*! New media imitate old media. It seems that in late medieval Europe, painting was used mainly to imitate the more expensive inlay techniques, which made use of precious metals, stones and ivory. Well, here we have a new milestone. This program focuses so strongly on the imitation of existing material that any prospects the digital media may have for developing a language of images of their own recede into darkness as long as it is turned on.





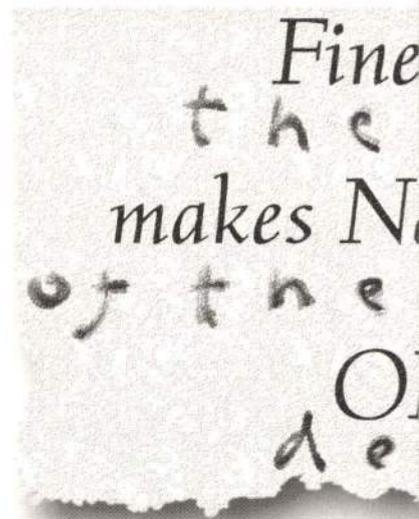
Over de onmogelijkheid van het gebruik van

nieuwe media in de beeldende kunst (en vice versa)

De *sex* van de beeldende kunst, de moeder van die kunst, is het financiële *ding*. Dat object draagt de inhoudelijke waarde. In de negentiende eeuw werden, door de notie van *l'Art pour l'Art*, de angst voor het lichaam, de kuisheid en de daaruit volgende hysterische sfeer bepalend voor de beeldende kunst. In de twintigste eeuw probeert de kunst, onder andere via de *nieuwe media*, zich van dat lichaam te ontdoen.

Dit artikel laat zien hoe het gebruik van die nieuwe media in de beeldende kunst alleen iets betekent in de context van het ontkennen van de lichamelijke van de kunst. In een spel van de kunst en haar fetisjistische verzamelaars.

De criteria van de beeldende kunst zijn van geen betekenis voor de media. En nieuwe media zijn aan het eind van de twintigste eeuw, nu de kunst niet meer worstelt of koketteert met haar Victoriaanse preutsheid, ook van geen betekenis meer als drager voor de beeldende kunst.



Two persons eyeing each other under erotical tension



About the impossibility of using new media
in Fine Art (and vice versa).

• The sex of Fine Art, the mother of that art, is the financial object, an attractive *thing*. The object carries the content-value. In the nineteenth century, through the notion of *l'Art pour l'Art*, fear of the body (somaphobia), chastity, and the resulting hysterical atmosphere came to determine Fine Art. In the twentieth century Art is trying to free itself of this body, partly via *new media*.

This article will argue that the use of these new media in Fine Art only has meaning in denying the corporeality of art — in the game of art and its fetishistic collectors. The criteria of Fine Art have no significance for media. And since at the end of the twentieth century Art is no longer wrestling or coquetting with Victorian prudishness, nor are new media of any significance as bearers of Fine Art.

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De boze Fee van de Kunst als Handlangster van de Wegwerpcultuur

Met de industriële revolutie verandert de beeldende kunst die tot dan toe in de maatschappij de bespeler van de visuele media was. Met de opkomst van de mechanische reproductie worden de media van de beeldende kunst economisch gediskwalificeerd.

De beeldende kunst blijft een *pre-industriële discipline* die, met de hand, begerenswaardige objecten produceert. In die zin is beeldende kunst net zo archaïsch als handgemaakte schoenen. De *verzamelaars* van handgemaakte schoenen zijn dezelfde als die van beeldende kunst.

Na de industriële revolutie wordt de eerste kwaliteit van kunst de *artistiek inhoudelijke kwaliteit*. Van een aan de kunst toegevoegde waarde is deze kwaliteit tot enige functie van de kunst geworden. Kunst blijkt alleen nog maar een drager van *esthetische kwaliteit*. De kunst wordt Kunst. De aura van de verworven voorwerpen wordt bepalend voor de sfeer.

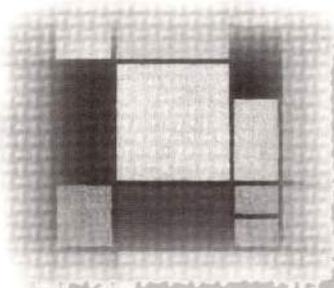
De Kunst is rijp voor het museum. Het museum?

Het Museum als Nieuw Medium

In dezelfde periode waarin de beeldende kunst maatschappelijk gediskwalificeerd raakt ontwikkelt zich een geheel nieuw medium: het Museum.

Het museum is een verzamel-punt en showroom van historisch/cultureel significante objecten: van voormalig actuele objecten die hun nut voor de maatschappij bewezen hebben. Het museum vreet deze objecten op en plaatst ze in dienst van zijn eigen actualiteit. Het verschil tussen het museum en de daarvoor al bestaande privé-verzamelingen is dat het museum de objecten uit de sfeer van het particuliere fetisjisme trekt en de verzamelde objecten van een nieuwe gezamenlijke inhoud voorziet. De fetisjen die in de particuliere verzamelingen nog een flakkerend beeld vertonen worden in het museum gereduceerd tot *pixels*. Tot elementen in het beeld dat het museum op ons netvlies schrijft.

De musea vervangen niet de particuliere verzamelingen. Het fetisjisme van de verzamelaar is een normale menselijke eigenschap die niet door een medium vervangen kan worden. Eerder geeft het museum een maatschappelijke



status aan de fetisjist. Een beetje verzameling lijkt toch al gauw op een *Wereldtentoonstelling*, op een *Museum*, of tenminste op een *Salon*. Het Museum is de ambitie van de Verzamelaar en de Verzameling het voorportaal van het Museum. De verzameling is de schilderij van het Museum.

Een ingehaalde techniek is definitief overwonnen zodra er een *museale sanctie* over de technische mogelijkheden komt te liggen.

De esthetiek gaat de techniek aflösen. Zoals ook de producten van de beeldende kunst door de rigide, allesvervalkende idee van schoonheid *kaltgesteld* worden. De kunst spint een esthetisch, nostalgische sluier om de sfeer van haar technieken en maakt deze daarmee onbruikbaar. De beeldende kunst sluit zich in praktische zin uit van een *Maatschappelijk Relevant Discours*.

De nieuwe ambitie van de beeldende kunst is het produceren van cultureel significante objecten. De kunst wordt een slaaf van de fetisjist. Zij slaat de maatschappij over en produceert haar

objecten direct voor de fetisjist en het museum. Daarmee raakt zij definitief afhankelijk van het object.

Nieuwe media als Wapen in een uitgespeeld Verzet

De gloriënde vervulling van de geheime verlangens van de beeldende kunst — *l'Art pour l'Art*; de vooropstelling van de *inhoudelijke/artistieke kwaliteit* — wordt gefrustreerd door het fetisjisme. Een fetisjisme dat de kunst als directe cliënt in een financiële houdgreep neemt.

De kunst wordt een leverancier van pixels. Ze voelt dat haar eigen inhoud ten dienste gesteld wordt van een nieuw medium en er eigenlijk steeds minder toe doet zolang ze maar

objecten levert. Deze groeiende regressieve tendentie heeft in de loop van de afgelopen jaren bij de kunst tot een ware manische obsessie geleid.

De kunst begint haar relatie met het object te problematiseren en thematiseren. Het conceptuele idee wordt losgetrokken van het object zelf en van rudimenten van het maatschappelijk functioneren van kunst (zoals figuratie). Er begint een *hybridische onfysieke kunst* te ontstaan.

Hoewel Duchamp de situatie al vroeg door heeft en de zaken omdraait — hij ontdoet de kunst radicaal van haar inhoud en

The Bad Fairy of Art as accomplice to Disposable Culture

• Fine Art, which until then had been the manipulator of visual media in society, changes with the industrial revolution. The emergence of mechanical reproduction economically disqualifies Fine Art mediums such as sculpture and painting.

Fine Art remains a pre-industrial-revolution discipline which produces desirable objects by hand. In this sense, Fine Art is as anachronistic as handmade shoes. The buyers of handmade shoes are the same people who collect Fine Art.

The foremost quality of art (the intrinsic artistic quality) then is no longer that of normally functioning media; this quality, which used to be an additional value, is now its sole remaining function. Art becomes nothing but a bearer of aesthetic quality. Ordinary art became Art. The aura of acquired objects now establishes the atmosphere.

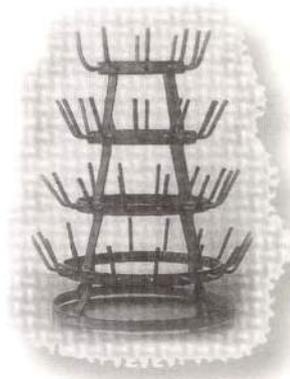
Art is ripe for the museum. The museum?

The Museum as New Medium

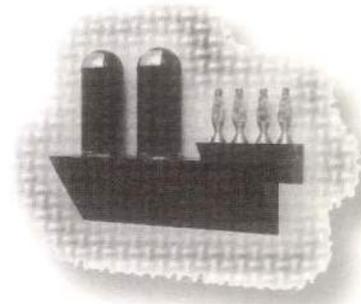
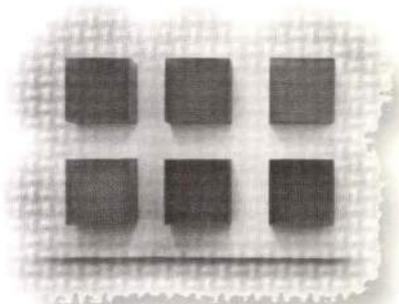
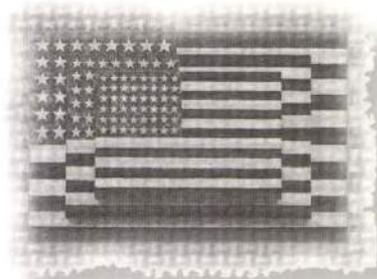
During this same period in which Fine Art becomes socially disqualified, a whole new medium was taking shape: the Museum.

The museum is a depot and showroom of historically/culturally significant objects: formerly contemporary objects which have proven their use in society. The museum devours these objects and places them in service of its own timeliness. What differentiates the museum from existing private collections is that the museum takes objects out of the sphere of individual fetishism and supplies the collected objects with a new collective content. The fetishes, which still display the flicker of an image in individual collections, are reduced in the museum to pixels, to elements in the total picture that the museum etches onto our retinas.

Museums did not replace individual collections. The collector's fetishism is a normal human trait that cannot be replaced by a medium. Rather, the museum gave the fetishist social status. Any decent collection, after all, can easily resemble a World Exhibition, a museum, or at least a Salon. The



excludes itself in a practical sense from any *socially relevant discourse*.



Museum is the ambition of the Collector, and the Collection the vestibule of the Museum. The collection is the paintbox of the Museum.

An obsolete technique is definitively vanquished once the technical possibilities are subject to *museum sanction*. Aesthetics start to replace technique, just as the products of Fine Art are chilled by the rigid, all-ossifying idea of beauty. Art spins an aesthetic, nostalgic veil around its techniques and thus renders them unusable. Fine Art

The new ambition of Fine Art is to produce culturally significant objects. Art becomes a slave of the fetishist. It passes over society and produces its objects directly for the fetishist and the museum, and thereby becomes definitively dependent on those objects.

New Media as Weapon in a played-out Resistance

The glowing fulfillment of the secret longings of Fine Art — *l'Art pour l'Art*; putting the quality of *content/artistry* first — is frustrated by fetishism. Fetishism, the direct client, puts art in a financial stranglehold.

Art has become a purveyor of pixels. It sees its own content placed in the service of a new medium; content matters less and less, as long as Art keeps supplying objects. This increasingly regressive tendency has led to a manic obsession in Art over the last few years.

Art begins to problematise and thematise its relation with the object.

Concept is divorced from the object and from the rudiments of art's function in society (like figuration). A *hybrid non-physical art* begins to form.

Although Duchamp took notice of the situation early on and turned things around — he radically stripped art of its content and ridiculed its somaphobia — one important movement in Art continues to pursue immateriality. But Art cannot abandon the object, because it would then sever the

ridiculiseert haar lichaamsvrees — blijft er een belangrijke stroming in de kunst de *immaterialiteit* najagen. De kunst kan het object niet verlaten omdat zij daarmee de navelstreng zou doorsnijden waardoor zij gevoed wordt door de fetisjistische verzamelaars en waardoor zij verbonden is met de traditie.

De fetisjisten zien geboeid toe hoe de Kunst zich steeds verder in bochten wringt uit minachting voor de eigen lichamelijke. In haar nood begint de Kunst meer en meer te lenen bij andere disciplines: theater, film, literatuur, architectuur, video, filosofie.

Met name de nieuwe media zijn gehandicapt in de beeldende kunst. Ze moeten een *begerenswaardig object* als drager ontberen. Deze handicap wordt door de kunst uitgespeeld tegen de fetisjist. Daarmee dringt de beeldende kunst haar taal, die onverbrekkelijk verbonden is met het begerenswaardige object, op aan de Media.

Dan is het Begerenswaardige Handgemaakte Object dus pas echt aanwezig; in haar afwezigheid.

De producten van deze disciplines worden na aanraking door de Kunst welwillend door de fetisjisten aanvaard en de materiële voortbrengselen — vaak slechts souvenirs of certificaten — worden gewoon doorverzameld. De fetisjist raakt inmiddels zeer opgewonden en begint steeds hogere prijzen te betalen om aan zijn gerief te komen.

De elektronische media, video en computer, komen zo echter in een zeer prematuur stadium in het museum terecht. Ze zijn eigenlijk de meest actuele communicatiemediën maar worden door de kunst gemummificeerd in haar pogingen cultureel significante objecten te produceren volgens de oude criteria van het museum. Het gebruik van nieuwe media is op dat moment een artistiek statement; de kunst doet ermee een uitspraak over haar eigen bestaan. De kunst reduceert de nieuwe media tot pixels voor het museummedium. De kunst maakt de nieuwe media oud.

De provocatie van Duchamp, die tijdens al deze onlichamelijke opwinding slechts in mindere mate werd opgemerkt als een mogelijk nieuwe inzet, begint ondertussen aan aantrekkelijkheid te winnen.

Als het spel rond het afwezige object zijn hoogtepunt nadert groeit een parallelle en tegelijk tegengestelde stroom van pure, betekenisloze objecten. Die zero-objecten met minimal-betekenis bevredigen direct en ongecompliceerd. Ze worden door de fetisjist gretig aanvaard als welkome ontspannende afwisseling op de steeds verder uitgestelde hoogtepunten van het verfijnde ontkenningsspel.

Een nieuw Spel

Als inmiddels de mogelijkheden van de nieuwe media, het theater en de filosofie voldoende uitgediept zijn begint de vlucht uit het object haar opwindendheid te verliezen. De perversie is tot het uiterste gevoerd en begint de grenzen van de verveling te naderen. Alle aandacht in het meester/slaafspel verschuift dan naar de nieuwe variant waar het object een constante aanwezigheid heeft en juist de mogelijkheid van een artistieke inhoud op de proef wordt gesteld. Zo drijft men de kunst steeds verder en blijft ze spannend.

In deze nieuwe *mainstream* kunnen de elektronische media

geen enkele rol meer spelen omdat zij het inmiddels weer vanzelfsprekende object niet kunnen produceren. Het wordt nu pas goed duidelijk dat de kunst de nieuwe media nooit heeft gebruikt vanwege hun intrinsieke mogelijkheden maar juist vanwege hun onmogelijkheden. Daarom kan de beeldende kunst ook de werkelijke mogelijkheden van de nieuwe media nooit onderzoeken en ontwikkelen zoals zij dat in het verleden met haar oude media heeft gedaan. Mensen die nu nog Beeldende Kunst proberen te maken met nieuwe media volgen in feite de pervertering van de jaren zeventig. En niets is zo vervelend als een pervertering die tot norm wordt verheven.

Musea Gebruiken

Musea zijn uit historisch oogpunt gezien een zeer belangrijke vorm van collectief geheugen. Maar omdat musea zelf media zijn onderdrukken zij onvermijdelijk de vitaliteit van de mediaproducten die zij opnemen. Die wordt onverbidde-lijk ondergeschikt gemaakt aan de beelden die het museum uitzendt. Als je zelf actie wilt moet je bij het museum uit de buurt blijven. Probeer nooit aan de eisen van het museum te voldoen want daarmee diskwalificeer je je als zelfstandige bron van beelden of andere maatschappelijk relevante producten. Het museum biedt alleen mogelijkheden voor hen die het weten in te zetten voor hun eigen doeleinden. Niet voor hen die het dienen.

MediaBejaardenTehuizen

Het feit dat inmiddels de eerste musea voor de nieuwe media aan het ontstaan zijn doet het ergste vermoeden voor hun toekomst. De film bijvoorbeeld raakt al totaal ingekapseld. Men begint film voor festivals en filmhuizen te produceren in een laatste poging zich van een plaats te voorzien naast de groten van weleer. Filmmakers die daaraan meedoen plaatsen zich buiten elk maatschappelijk relevant discours en maken met hun *Kunstzinnige Film de Cinema oud*. Des te tragischer is het dat ze niet zien dat de Cinema uiterst vitaal voortbestaat op de televisie. De culturele betekenis van een film die op televisie wordt uitgezonden is oneindig veel groter dan die van dezelfde film vertoond in een filmmuseum.

Nu de culturele waarde van televisie erkend begint te worden en de opvolgers van de televisietechniek zich aandienen, begint het filmmuseum zich te ontwikkelen tot *Museum of the Moving Image*. Hier kunnen ook de door de Beeldende-Kunstmusea afgewezen MediaKunstenaars terecht! Begraaft U! Begraaft U!

Nieuwe Media

Nieuwe media richten zich sui generis niet op de esthetiek van de beeldende kunst en haar oude media. Nieuwe media richten zich ook niet op het museum. Nieuwe media ontwikkelen hun eigen programma en esthetiek. Ze worden niet bedreigd door het Museum of de Kunst. Nieuwe media kunnen zo oud zijn als de wereld, zolang ze hun eigen gang maar gaan. In dit licht bezien is het in kringen van *Mediakunst* wel gehoorde idee dat kunstenaars een noodzakelijke rol spelen in het ontwikkelen van nieuwe media, dat kunstenaars nieuwe media hun stem geven, een wanstaltige omdraaiing van ontwikkelingen die we inmiddels vaak genoeg hebben gezien. Het zijn juist de nieuwe media die de kunstenaars hun stem geven.



• umbilical cord through which it is nurtured by fetishistic collectors and by which it is tied to tradition.

The fetishists look on spellbound as Art twisted itself into knots in disdain of its own corporeality. In its desperation Art begins to borrow more and more from other disciplines: theatre, film, literature, architecture, video, philosophy.

Electric media in particular are handicapped in Fine Art. They have no *desirable object* as their carrier. Art plays this handicap off against the fetishist. On the other hand, in so doing, Fine Art forces its language, which is indissolubly connected with the desirable object, on electric media.

Only then is the Desirable Handmade Object really present: in its absence.

After being touched by Art, the products of these disciplines are accepted benevolently by the fetishists, who simply go on collecting the material offspring, often mere souvenirs or certificates. The fetishist meanwhile gets extremely excited and begins to pay ever-higher prices in order to come by his pleasures.

Electric media, video and computer, thus becoming collected, end up in the museum in a very premature stage. Whilst in fact the most timely communications media, they are mummified by Art in its attempts to produce culturally significant objects according to the old criteria of the museum. From that moment on, the use of new media is an artistic statement; Art is making a statement about its own existence. Art reduces new media to pixels for the museum medium. Art makes new media old.

Meanwhile, Duchamp's provocation, which during all this non-corporeal excitement was only partially recognised as a possible new tactic, begins to look more attractive.

As the dance around the absent object approached its climax, a parallel and at the same time opposite current of pure, meaningless objects arose. These zero-objects with minimal-meanings were directly and uncomplicatedly satisfying. The fetishists greedily accepted them as a welcome, relaxing change from the ever-further postponed climaxes of the refined game of promise and denial.

A New Game

Once the possibilities of new media, theatre and philosophy have been explored sufficiently, the flight from the object begins to lose its thrill in the master/slave game of Art and fetishist. The perversion has been taken as far as it can go and begins to approach the threshold of boredom. All attention then shifts to that new variant wherein the object's presence is constant and the sheer possibility of artistic content is put to the test. Art is thus driven ever-further and remains exciting.

Within this new mainstream, electric media no longer play a role, because they cannot produce the object, which has again become the norm. Only now does it become really clear that Art has never used new

media for their intrinsic possibilities, but because of their impossibilities. Thus, Fine Art never investigated nor developed the real possibilities of new media as it did in the past with its old media. People who are still trying to produce Fine Art using new media are in fact living a 1970s perversion. And there is nothing so tiresome as a perversion elevated to a norm.

Using Museums

Seen from a historical point of view, the museum is an extremely important form of collective memory. But because the museum is itself a medium, it inevitably oppresses the vitality of those media products it encompasses, which are inexorably subordinated to the images the museum is sending out. If you want to be on top of things, better stay away from museums. Never try to meet the demands of the museum, because you will only disqualify yourself as an independent source of images or any other product relevant to society. The museum only offers possibilities to those who know how to use it for their own ends — not to those who serve it.

A Home for Aged Media

The museification of media eliminates them as practical instruments and transforms them into idle aesthetics. The fact that the first museums for new media are now appearing makes one fear the worst for their future. Film, for example, is already being encapsulated. People are producing films for festivals and art cinemas in a last-ditch attempt to secure themselves a place alongside the greats of yesteryear. Filmmakers who participate in this phenomenon place themselves outside any socially relevant discourse and make Cinema *old* with their *Artistic Film*. Which is all the more tragic because they fail to notice that Cinema lives on with utmost vitality on television. The cultural significance of a film shown on television is infinitely greater than that of the same film shown in a film museum.

Now that the cultural value of television is beginning to be recognized and the successors of the television technique are coming forward, the film museum is developing into a *Museum of the Moving Image*. Media Artists rejected by the Fine Art museums are welcome here too! Bury yourself! Bury yourself!

New Media rule OK!

New media do not focus *sui generis* on the aesthetic of Fine Art and its old media. Nor do new media focus on the museum. New media are developing their own agenda and aesthetics. They are not threatened by Art or the Museum. New media can be as old as time, as long as they go their own way. Viewed in this light, the idea — oft-heard in *Media Art* circles — that artists play a necessary role in the development of new media, that artists give new media their voice, is a deformed reversal of developments we have by now seen often enough. It is new media that give these artists their voice.



Oud / Old



Media Scapes

*A written survey among our friends
on the use of old and new media in daily life*

Next to product comparisons which assure us of a future which is constantly renewing itself, reflections on the acquisition of the past and the place the older media occupy in our minds might at first glance be a less than stimulating proposition.

Mediamatic conducted a written poll into the use of old and new media in the daily practice of artists, writers and businesspeople. We silently hoped we might be able to detect some possible reevaluation of the old media surrounding us. That we might therefore construct an idea of how interaction between the present and the past, between the past and a future, might take shape in mutually-enhancing scenarios, maybe illustrated by means of so-called *MediaScapes*.

The results of the questionnaire on the use of old and new media, possibilities and impossibilities, can be read on the following pages.

The road to the *MediaScape* has obviously not been an easy one. Whatever we may have expected, the challenges of the modern media have evidently eclipsed interest in the older networks. Our thoughts were somewhat focused on the question of how people handle the old media despite the claims of the new, and whether an unexpected old media revival might possibly be observed.

A naïve expectation. Everyday contact with the older media is part of a nostalgic portion of the mind which is excluded from our daily experiences. The use of these media is so intimate and familiar that it happens without a thought. This situation has created an abstract, unconsciously functioning enclave between nostalgia and practice. Only if a critical boundary is crossed, and this abstract area consigned to nostalgia, is conscious reflection again possible.

Then there is suddenly an addiction to old Bakelite radios, or a pronounced love for the primitive transistor. This produces the image of a sensibility which has still not been displaced by new media, which has not yet achieved museum status, and has thus become harmless: an area where the old media can still function, alive, without having acquired cult status.

We are still just learning to live with the new media. The fountain pen, the drawing pen, the eraser, each has been given a place on the program menus, and finally the *Notepad* has returned to us what the computer had deprived us of: the pencil.

The software programmers have a sophisticated grasp of the thinking process and of the fantasy that keeps our minds lively. As the X-ray shows a transparent view of our skulls, the diverse programs give us a vivid view of the vibrations and the wave movements of our thoughts. The processes in our minds are finally shown to have adopted a more or less regular pattern!

But how does music from a computer differ from the sounds that Beethoven conjured up in his mind? What are the differences in abstraction between the mind of Stanley Morrison and the *Laser Writer*? Did Seurat feel something of the warmth that one experiences behind the computer when running *PhotoShop*, or would he as a cool calculator have felt more at home at *Mathematica*? What is the difference between *Inspiration*™ and real inspiration?

I think I'm just going to go and read a good book.

translation LAURA MARTZ





fawcett

Brian Fawcett is a Canadian writer and journalist. The author of *Cambodia and the Public Eye*, two pessimistic books about media and society, that in their form redefine the book as a medium itself.

Using Media

About a month ago I got fired from my job as a columnist for Canada's national newspaper, *The Globe & Mail*, because I was, in the minds of the editors, *out of control*. My columns were supposed to focus on media, and I'd taken that as an invitation to write about whatever I damned well pleased. Several times I attacked the newspaper's advertisers, once the Nike Corporation for hiring international visual arts superstars to interpret a Nike running shoe which featured an 'advanced technological module' filled with the same substance that I thought fills the heads of anyone who'll buy the shoe: air. Another column attacked the stockmarket for being nothing more than a government — subsidized gambling racket that feeds on the genuine productive forces in society. Each time I erred, I was called into central control and asked to concentrate on media. My answer, each time was the same: *Isn't everything media?*

I got axed for this attitude, as much as for any of my wacky ideas, but it hasn't and won't deter me from thinking this way. So when I'm asked to describe my use of media, my first reaction is laughter. Okay, I begin, my first three media are oxygen, water and earth (soil, because I'm a gardener rather than a walker of pavements). Then there's sexuality, (I've been married four times) which is a primary life-sustaining medium that remains pleasantly mysterious to me. I also use another equally mysterious but peculiarly North American medium to sustain me: baseball. I've played the game since I was nine years old, and still do. During the last three weeks, actually, I've been terrorizing the Vancouver Writer's League with my hitting, even though I'm 15 years older than most of the other players.

Past that and into the realm of what we conventionally think of as media, I begin to do some serious self examination. Because I am in my 40s and grew up in an outpost within the last biotic wilderness of North America, one where books were magical devices and writers the only heroes I could imagine who wielded devices of instruction (pens, paper, ideas) rather than destruction (hunting rifles, chain saws, heavy-duty trucks) I am first and finally print oriented. Books remain my favoured media. I like to hold them in my hand, read them, and write them.

But wait a minute, that may no longer be entirely true. Since 1979 I've done most of my writing on a word processor, and on an average week I will spend about 50 hours sitting in front of a video display terminal. When I'm working on a book the hours go up dramatically. I use data retrieval systems for research and I file copy electronically via modem several times a week. I may enjoy having books around, and I still use them extensively for research and aesthetic pleasure, but I produce them very differently than I and other writers did in the past.

Thirty years ago, when I was just beginning to think about being a writer, I imagined writing much differently. A writer worked with pen and paper, sat at a wooden table in an elegant room with a cigarette butt-filled ashtray and a bottle of scotch close at hand. He — I — waited for inspiration to come, and when it did, I hand-wrote the compositions and sent them out to be typed. Then came the glory and acclaim. The reality today is very different. I have become a processor of electronic words, sentences and paragraphs, working with complicated digital technologies to produce patterned compositions of ideas and images that happen to be printed on paper because electronic reproductive technologies have not yet come up with anything that can carry complex — and discursive — idea patterns. Meanwhile, I recognize that the books, at least in part, have become technologically and culturally vestigial. Personally I see no reason to continue with poetry and prose fiction in print. Popular music (specifically rock videos) and television commercials are a better, if still largely unexplored format for poetry, and television and film are truer and more efficient media for fiction.

There is a lot of talk these days about how electronic media hold promise for more democratic and swift access to information. If you're wealthy, this is true. But for most people in the world, books remain the most reliable informational access, and will continue to for the foreseeable future. They can't be unplugged, they can be reread, and they're portable and cheap.

Finally, I'll give you a list. Beyond the first five primary media I noted, I use media in the following order of importance: word processing; books; newspapers and magazines; talking to friends and professional colleagues, television, film, visual arts, alcohol, music, theatre and recreational drugs.



Verschil / Difference



Mulder

Bert Mulder is a pioneer in computer supported corporate work. He works at Veronica Broadcasting Company and is currently learning Chinese in order to read Confucius.

Media, Information & Me

Gregory Bateson calls information a *difference that makes a difference*. What makes a difference? Anything I can get my mind on! All the world is a source of learning, as long as I mind. *The reflection of the sunlight on the water may lead one to enlightenment* it is said in Tibetan Tantrism.

I need information like a bird needs the air to fly. But my needs are dressed in different questions: basic questions—with—one—answer, the stuff—that—has—many—answers and needs the best one, the stuff—of—life—that—has—no—answer.

In dealing with questions—with—one—answer I can hunt for the answer and I'll know when I'm there. When the question is there the hunt is on. No question, no hunt. In finding the answer I may use anything: thoughts (is the mind a medium?), books, magazines or people.

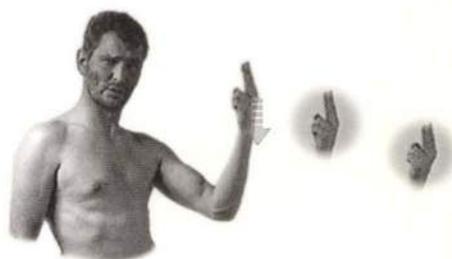
With the stuff—that—has—many—answers the game is different: there is a best answer, but you don't know where it is. To get the best answer I have to be 'in the know', soaring like an eagle over the field. The eagle's flight lets me spot my target. Spanning a field of knowledge requires breadth and depth. Magazines, bookstores, conversations and seminars I attend help me to develop breath of knowledge, extending above and beyond the known. The depth I get from books and conversations, differentiating the known into ever richer sources of distinction. Lectures I have to give force me to integrate these, interweaving breadth and depth into conceptual structures that turn into stepping stones.

The stuff—of—life—that—has—no—answer concerns life itself and the answer is my living. Being human I am free to choose: either I may live the answer while looking the other way or I may mind it. I like to mind the answer. I go visit philosophers of different cultures on the pages of their writings. The subject is me, the goal is human living. Information defines me defining information. This age is first where one may read the wise like Confucius or Lao Tze, the Indian sages, ancient African stories, Jewish and Islamic sources by just picking up their books. The world's cultural heritage is accessible. As a classicist once remarked: *I work together with many people. Many of which are dead of course....* It's mind turning to mind, time collapsing.

The specific, the general and the movement between them is what keeps my mind going, like the waves are the expression of the sea. As information is *the difference that makes the difference*, distinction is the source of life. I create distinction, it is not there all by itself. As a human being I imbue these with meaning and with that I shape life.

A medium is there when I see the distinctions it carries for me. Anything that carries distinction carries life with it. My media are anything that carries differences: the day, the night, the flower, the rainbow, a book, a magazine, a conversation, a look: they all spell life.

Media, information and me are like Life. As they say: life is putting your finger in the pie: in which we are the pie, the finger and the putting.



Paul Perry is a Canadian artist based in Groningen. He'd rather read a math book.

Desiderata

Love is a submarine, sinking below the surface
of thought, a sharp blade, a monstrous moon all
windows and no teeth.

Love is a bird's beak, two sharp knives silently
shearing two young lambs, tender and cold
fingers thickening to ice.

A million miles from here, reaching out
all thawing and nerves, love lives in
a throbbing paradise.

Inside my chest, land locked, a hungry cat
scratches out my insides.

Lie down with me here
I will listen
Lie down with me here
you will lie

Your tongue is concentric, wet, running
amuck of your mouth, flooding an already swollen
river of black rain.

Your body is a living cross.

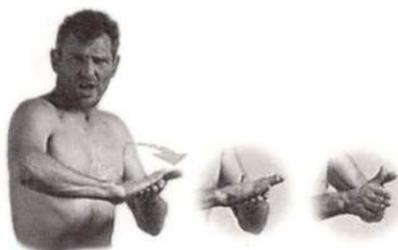
While you sleep, your breathing sounds
like the squeal of brakes.

Your body is a scarecrow of bleach bottles tied
together.

Your short hair is an electrical train set, the scene of
many a childhood accident. Your laugh reminds
me of a woman crying in the rain.

I wear clothes that smell like you
I am a tenant in your arms.





NIEMÖLLER

*Joost Niemöller is the soft voiced, mild-mannered author of the novel *Revenge*.*

He is currently writer in residence at the University of Texas, Austin.

The best money can buy

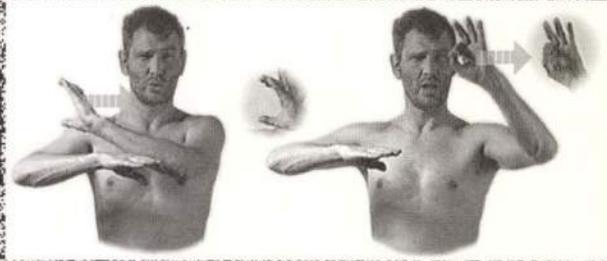
Okay. So I've arrived here in Austin, TX. I don't have anything in this house, you know? Only a note pad. I call it my television pad. I watch and make notes of what I see. For instance, what the strongest TV advertisements are here. Pizza Hut: we're the guys! Or American Pie. Okay, they're dumb, but really professional. Okay. So I've only got a telephone here. Go with my landlady and pick up a superfax, no kidding. Panasonic KX-190. Answering machine and Fax. Speed dialing. Programming secret phone numbers. Copy machine. You can record a two way conversation. Automatic dialer. Auto receive timer. Polling. Privacy Ring. Message playback. And more! Okay. I got the thing for \$577.82. Not bad. Would cost you more than two thousand guilders in Holland for sure. Next day I see it in another discount place, same thing for \$450.00. That puts you on the alert, makes an American buyer out of you. Okay. Got my fax, that makes a big difference. But what I really need is my PC. I can't think anymore, without that thing. I get scattered. Everything gets scattered. I'm sitting here with a Goddamn Smith Corona SL 500 electric typewriter. I can only correct one line at a time. Structure a text, forget it. Okay, in my room at the UT, I have a Macintosh, an old one. Hadn't ever worked with it. Was always into IBM. So I go to the Computer lab at UT, there are all these cyberpunks in shorts, screaming their codes at one another across the room. Okay. I get a disc, to learn

it with. The world of Mac. The world of Mac puts my nerves on edge so badly that once I'm outside, everything on campus looks like the world of Mac. So. But I want my own PC at home. I'm getting more and more scattered. I'm falling apart. So. Me and the landlady go to Austin in her car. To every discount shop. Now I know exactly what I want. I want a notebook. I see a Sharp for \$1200. Not bad. Too bad, just sold out. So, off to Radio Shack, where they only sell Tandy. Good, they've got one for a thousand. With a big printer. \$2200 for the whole works — not bad. But they don't want to take my Visa credit card, Goddamnit. Standing there in that shop, like a jerk. Back home. Wait for a check. Waiting, waiting, waiting. The guy from Radio Shack calls. Good, we can get the stuff anyway, it turns out. Have till January to pay for it! Great! Off I go. Fill in the form. They want all my personal information on paper. My employment information. My personal references. My financial references. I find this all pretty unpleasant. This guy, C. Kainen, calls up the main office, they still say: No. Shit. But there's still hope. In the BIZMART (the biggest discount shop in Austin that I've seen yet), they sell a Toshiba notebook for almost 800, a real little one, and the Canon BJ-10E bubble-jet printer is real little and new, too, for 330. So my bad luck gets me more than a thousand bucks. It's God, my landlady says. Okay. Cash my check, and then I can think again.

translation JIM BOEKBINDER



Computer – Taal / Computer – Language



Scha
Remko Scha is a Dutch artist and scientist
who is experimenting with speech and computers.

*[[Fragment of a mediascape:]
The preparation of this page involved four telephone calls and two chance encounters between Paul Groot and Remko Scha, seven telephone calls and four meetings between Remko Scha and Hein Ebersson (Trademark™), two calls by Remko Scha to Hein Ebersson's answering machine, and two fax transmissions and one hand-delivered letter from Hein Ebersson to Remko Scha. The text was written by Remko Scha, using a blue Pilot Hi-Tecpoint 5 (0.3 mm) on white A4 Xerox copy-paper for the first two drafts, and Microsoft Word 4.0 on Macintosh LC for the final version. An MFD-2HD floppy with the MsWord file was hand-delivered to Hein Ebersson, who prepared the final typesetting. The image is a sample of the output of a HyperTalk program developed by Remko Scha on Macintosh LC. It was laserprinted at the Department of Computational Linguistics of the University of Amsterdam. Software development assistance by Anthony Bijnen (Metaform Software)]*

Art is not a means of communication. It is meaningless raw material, to be used in open-ended processes of esthetic reflection by a culturally diverse audience whose interpretations are totally arbitrary. There are no serious reasons for making one particular artwork rather than another.

An artistic project that wants to acknowledge this state of affairs, faces an interesting technical challenge: to avoid choices, to transcend styles, to show everything: to generate arbitrary instances from the set of all possibilities. The spontaneous individual artist will not be able to accomplish this. Only a deliberate scientific/technological undertaking may ultimately approximate the ideal of a serenely all-encompassing art, by developing an explicit algebraic system that articulates the conceptual space of all visual possibilities, and by implementing software that systematically draws random samples from this space.

In this enterprise, digital technology will play an essential role: designs of art works will be generated as data structures on electronic computers. Their execution, however, will eventually involve all technology. It would be a mistake for automatic art generation to forsake the sensory richness of the material world, and to remain secluded inside an impoverished digitally transmitted virtuality. We can use any medium, as long as the message is

ARTIFICIAL

(when the layout + print was delivered at the Mediamatic offices, they were discarded. We asked for the original floppies and copied the image directly from Remko's Hypercard stack. Also we copied the text from the Word file. Text and image (cropped) were pasted into a lay out program, according to Hein Ebersson's instructions. The other page elements and this text were superimposed and the page was printed directly on an image setter)



Groeten / Greetings



SEYDEL

Jorinde Seydel is a Dutch art historian who is always right and in Barcelona.

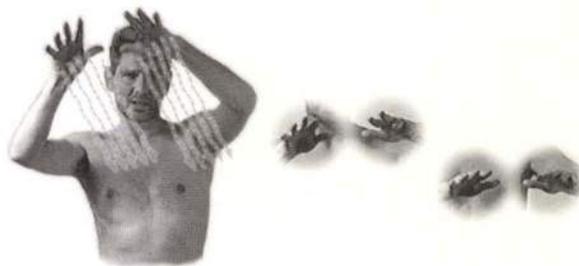
And furthermore I would like to say hello to:

Mijn ouders in Wassenaar, de honden Sam en Kaas, mijn zusje Ariane en haar Pepijn en Rob (*Heers Robje, heers*), mijn broertje Robin (7 september getrouwd met Brigit: welcome in the family Brigit!, hahaha), Elodie in Dinteloord, haar kinderen en hun verkeringen, de Infanta Angelina & Ruud, de ouders van Manel in Eibergen, Jolie & Sander, Rudolf, Woutertje P., Jaap, Annelie & Allard, Noline & Kas, Corinne, Ruth & Leo & Hanneke, (hopelijk leest hij dit) groenteboer Frans Ruurs in de Jan Pieter Heyststraat, Timothy A. & Karin, Ruud B., Willem van de W. (kom je nog?), Willem van de P., Peter, Hansje, ZsaZsa & Gert Jan, Dorine M. & W.B., Piet, Daphne, Gabrielle S., Gabrielle N., Sheila, Pietje, Milco, Marcos & Paula, Helen & Hans, Frans & Mercedes, Herman & Amalia, Max (let op het nieuwe vpro-logo!), Frank R. (gefeliciteerd met je nieuwe boek, Frank), Antoinette & Rob & de kleine Leon, Lex, Maurice, Willem V. (paella met churros??), de redactie, het bestuur en de adviesraad van Mediamatic, Reggy & Gabrielle, Randolph & Saskia, Han & Deanna, Barry van de English Book Exchange aan de Kloveniersburgwal in Amsterdam, JC & Riet (van restaurant Zuid Zeeland, Herengracht 413, A'dam), Montevideo, Michael, Steven, Emo, Servaas, Daan, Maria, Ab, Mathilde, Annig, Stasjo, Wanda, Mireille, Fabienne, Sean. En natuurlijk aan Emile. Ook nog aan Filidor ergens in de bossen, Simon in Groningen, Joop & Marjolein & Roos in Huisduinen (ik kom echt langs!), Jan in Utrecht (mooie compositie Jan!), Henck in Eindhoven, Thomas H. in Mettmann, Duitsland, Ilja, Francesca & Cesare in Milaan, meneer Palomar in Rome, Alfred in Tokyo, Kathy in Linz, Tristram S. in Clonmel. Manel doet via mij speciaal de groeten aan: Rian (bedankt voor het bidden, Rian), Ymkje,

Ben, Joep, Geer, Gijs, anti-Filidor en Christian in Rotterdam. Groeten aan Jan & Cathrien in Gent, Udine & Andy in München, Anette en de Deutsche Denkers in Berlijn, Perejaume in San Pol, Cristian 'Cutty' ergens in de vs, aan Bruce N. (je zal me wel niet kennen, maar toch de groeten Bruce). Groeten aan Narcis & Bruna, Teuny in Antwerpen. Love for Branda, David, Jeroen and Tishan in New York, also for Dona in the same city. Love for Andrew, Chris, Bridget, Jan, Bill in Boston. I also say hello to the Slaughter of Milwaukee. Beterschap voor meneer Gorbachev, tijdens zijn vakantie overvallen door ziekte. Y también saludos a nuestros amigos en Barcelona: a Luis F.P., Pere, Jaume, Claudio & Monica, Syd, Belinda, Bas, Adri B. (leest allen zijn vertaling van het dagboek van Josep Pla, te verschijnen bij de Arbeiderspers), Petra & Remo, Xavi del Marxbar y su perro Faust, los empleados del supermercat Roca, Jeffrey & Lola, Carles & Clara, Antonio, Jordi & Lidia, Joanne, Eulalia, Jacky, Marijke, Monique, Bruno, Joe, Patrick, Renée, Antoine & Marta, Ignacius, Yamandu, la yaya y tía de Manel (petons), Chris, Ana, Manuel, Maria, Anton & Carmen & Izaak, Antonio M., Dolores, Claude & Philly. Recuerdos a rc Barcelona, especialmente a Zubizaretta (el mejor portero del mundo). Recuerdos a Tunga en Rio de Janeiro, a Guillermo K. en Buenos Aires. Dan wil ik onze Claus beterschap wenssen: beterschap Prins! Ook aan de lieve albino gorilla Copito de Nieve in de Barcelonese dierentuin de groeten/saludos. Speciaal *niet* de groeten aan: de Gemakmarkt in de Jan Pieter Heyststraat in Amsterdam, mijn voormalig rij-instructeur, Seymour L., alle jury- en commissieleden, de Postgiro. En Barcelona no quiero saludar a esta mujer de Roser, tampoco a Tapies, ni a Isabel Pantoja. Punt. Point. Punto.



Regen / Rain



Reynolds

Brian Reynolds has been asked by Gruppo Feruzzi to turn his farm into the most technologically sophisticated in England.

Old MacDonald had a fax, ee-ai-ee-ai-oh

Gruppo Feruzzi, the largest farming conglomerate in the world, took over this family-run 2,500-acre farm in late 1986 and installed me as estate manager. We decided that with 1.2 million acres farmed worldwide, there had to be some kind of common, group-wide recording system. We'd inherited a traditional paper-based one system and the detail we required was not available and nothing was retrievable.

Computer use in agriculture was still in its infancy — there are still people out there using horses — but we decided we needed them. We started with a 20 MB Amstrad running *Farmplan* for financial control and monthly budgeting and accounting, plus *CMS Optimix* which functions as a field recording system recording every application to every field, as well as all other costs, plus payroll etc. The farm doesn't actually handle any money at all. We also use a program called *Prolion* coupled with weather data to predict crop disease. The farm has two weather stations linked to an IBM AT which logs conditions every ten seconds. We can't predict the weather, but having a historical record is useful. We had a spraying failure recently and when I took the rep to task about it he gave me the old excuse that it must have rained after applying. I could check in about five seconds, and he was wrong.

Technology increases predictability. I can say *okay, we've spent this much on field and we expect that much back, so we won't bother doing anything else to it.* We can record

weed levels, soil pH, phosphate levels etc as well as harvest details and put them all in a database.

Even so, we've really only scratched the surface. Much of what we're doing on computer lends itself to the next step. For example, our weigh-bridge produces a little paper ticket which we carry across the yard and input manually. How much should we spend just to eliminate this piece of paper? There is an electronic farming network, but only about 20 per cent of farms in the UK have a computer, let alone a modem. Without a critical mass of users it's not much use. Similarly, we send diskettes to Feruzzi headquarters. I don't know how useful a worldwide network would be as we use different languages throughout the group.

We could link up to the commodities market on Prestel (videotext), but we don't as Feruzzi has their own trading office. There are other areas waiting to be computerised — something like a Psion Organiser in each tractor cab would be useful, but again, is it worth the investment at the moment? It will come.

Our fax machine is vital. Talking to someone on the other side of the world is so much easier if they have a piece of paper in front of them. All in all, new media have made our decision making process easier. I get a gut reaction, and sooner or later I get the figures out to back it up! On the downside, when the auditors come, they are able to audit us down to the last penny — and do. Before, as long as the numbers added up, that was good enough.

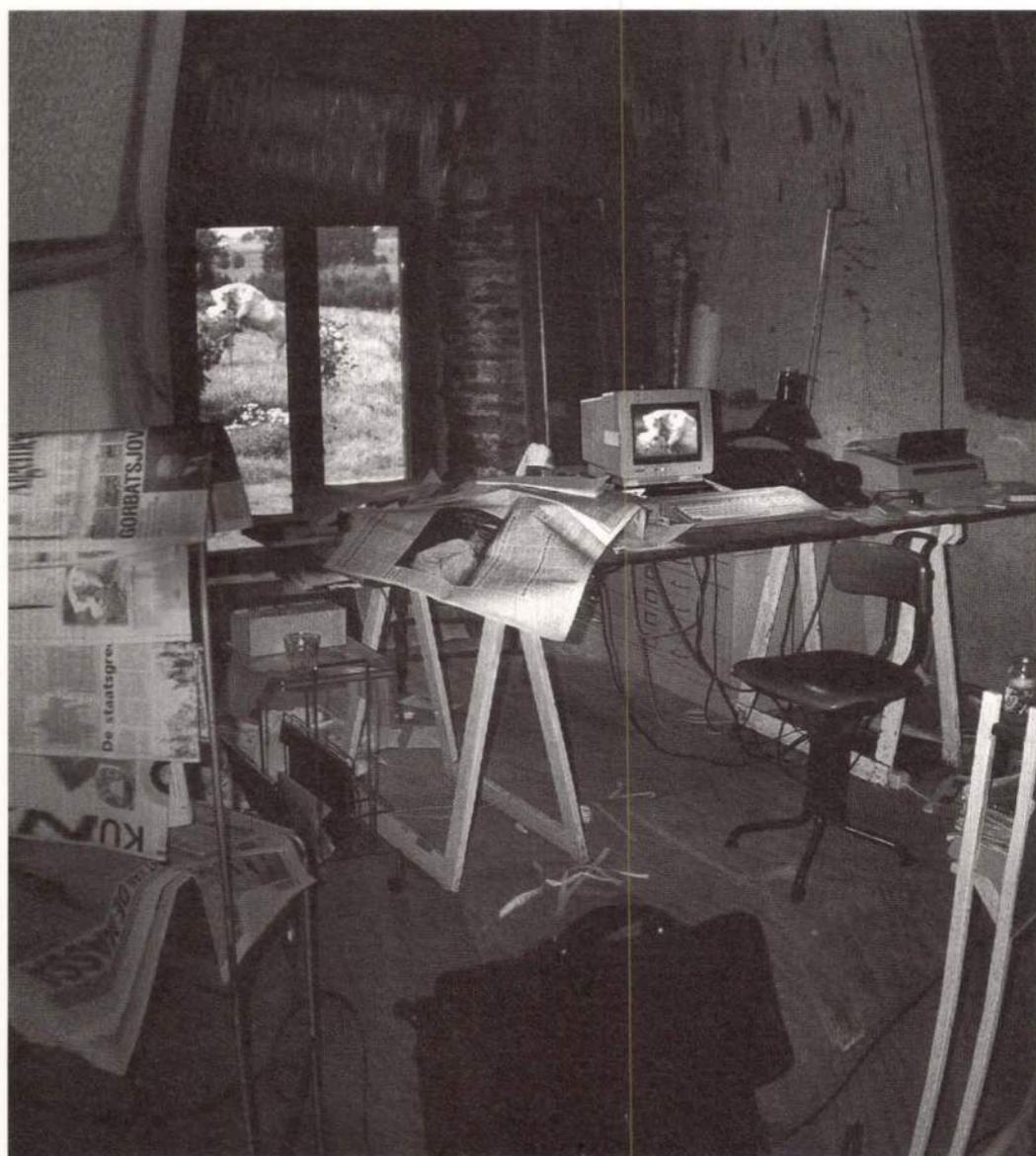


Geil / Horney



Toebosch

Moniek Toebosch is the mother of the multi media artists in Holland. She rather lives in Belgium.



HET BEGRIJPEND ATELIER KNIKKEBOLLEND VOOR BEELD

Sterren / Stars



PRUSTI

*Timo Prusti is a Finnish astronomer who is specialised in star formation.
He currently works at the Osservatorio Astrofisico di Arcetri, Firenze.*

An Astronomer with the Remnants of old Media

Unfortunately the romantic picture of an astronomer gazing at the sky through the night is for most astronomers not true. The real morning is also my morning. I get to my work and switch the computer on and get started.

In modern astronomical research, the computer is an essential tool to hasten the often tedious calculations. So one tends to get quite familiar with a screen and a keyboard. This close relationship makes the road familiarity with all the capabilities of a computer smoother and the transition from old media to the new media happens more or less by itself. The only step I remember requiring some effort in this process, was the change to tick text directly into the magnetic memory without first organizing thoughts on a piece of paper with a pen.

Practically all my information goes through computers. Communication to colleagues is primarily done via electronic mail, observations from telescopes or satellites is secured on computer readable format, data reduction and analysis is done with number crunchers and finally an article written with a text processing program is stored on a floppy and forwarded to a journal for publication. However, this is not the whole truth. Libraries, type writers, corridor conversations, letters with real stamps and hand written addresses, telexes, colloquiums and conferences are still here to give a taste of life without computers. Some of these old establish-

ments will survive the time while others will not. Now we are living in the era of the dying letter. For years the only hand written professional letters I got and wrote were with astronomers in East European countries. The opening of borders has opened the way to electronic networks thereby ending both the pleasure of receiving real letters and the frustration of trying to create replies. The most annoying preservation of old media is done by the new media maniacs. I hate the days when observing proposal forms designed with the most advanced layout program force me to turn to a type writer. The sentences do not fit into the spaces reserved and the x is never within the borders of the tiny box reserved for this marker.

Predicting the future media used in astronomy is difficult. A few years ago it was easy to see the approaching replacement of a professionally qualified draughtsman by a handy plotting package installed in a computer with a good laser printer, but the death of pcs in research under the pressure of work stations was at least to me surprisingly fast. Philosophically the most fundamental change of medium in astronomy is the collection of satellite measurements on enormous data banks. The sky is being moved on magnetic tapes. However, this impressive development cannot change the basic need for direct observations of the sky. There will always be space for the crucial observation made with a ground based telescope by an enthusiastic astronomer.



1 On the flip-side, Japan probably also tops the list in mass-marketed compulsive acquisition of authenticity — 'old media' as *real estate*. With Japan now become easily the most artificial, processed place on the face of the earth, a certain inverse fetishism was only to be expected. Fixations do not stop merely at rare vinyl instead of digital recordings. Witness the *otaku* collectionists (vis. the *Mediamatic* 'Radical Boredom' issue) of everything from 'authentic' snuff videos to 'authentic Fender Stratocasters; witness also the prices paid for original Van Goghs. Either way, marketing reigns supreme.



2 Curiously, some communications media stay persistently coded to set social roles. Although nearly all space-hire wedding halls in Japan have fax machines for business purposes, no well-wishers would ever dream of sending congratulations by fax; the telegram is *de rigueur*. Do today's kids sent faxes to Santa Claus?

Humor / Humour



birnbaum

Alfred Birnbaum is an American telematic nomad and polyglot, who works as a writer, translator and artist. Most of his time he hovers around Asia.

Old Media

The notion of 'old media' at first seems to call for plotting on the simple, if quaint cultural axes of habit, nostalgia and paranoia: attachment to existing patterns of usage, longing for past grammars of behaviour, fear of displacement through redundancy. A triadic *ménage* hinging on physical analogues, most typically on corporeality itself — the sensate love of the 'non-obsolete body' against the virtual coming of a virtual world. There is something to be said for getting your hands dirty.

In this regard, however reductionist, I must agree. If it's all a matter of getting screwed in the end, then go with the better class of foreplay. I continue to enjoy the direct contact of surfaces — fingertips upon bound volumes of printed paper, *tom yam kung* or *pesto genovese* upon tongue... and the rest — all augmented or diminished by a palette of sign-values and significances. But this is surely a different question: these pleasures are generally considered ends in themselves, not means; or rather, not media. Somewhere closer to target is travel, which no degree of teleconferencing or electronic mail will ever render superfluous for me — if I can afford it. Happily, a portable profession in writing and translation allows me to deduct some trips as business expenses. Which came first, the means or the ends?

Naturally, I do not claim to be consistent about these things. I choose to go places in person (whatever that means), yet cannot really get down to work (whatever that means) without a word-processor. Hence I find myself lugging a laptop half way around the world as I commute between fax outposts. What kind of life is this? I ask you! (Anyone who cares to respond to that will have to find me first).

It merely goes to underscore the standard observation that no 'new medium' ever totally supplants an 'old medium'. Rarely, if ever, is the 'old medium' actively suppressed, and never is its supersession immediate. Nowhere except possibly contemporary Japan, the country that truly perfected the American R&D scheme of

planned obsolescence. (Forget about Betamax, just try getting your DAT Walkman repaired in ten years time! *Designed out of existence for your convenience!*) The point here, then, as I see it, is what is precisely not the point. Or at least, the question is not 'old' or 'new', 'new-old' or 'old-new', but the very purpose-specificity of 'media', things made to do things. This is what we now generally call 'design' as opposed to what used to be called 'art', before that too came to be made for museums. In other words, whereas design can most often be mapped as a problem-process-product lineal function proceeding from a grasp of a niche to be filled, most artists had no conscious realisation of what actual 'problem' they were grappling with until afterwards, if reflexivity even prevails at all. Art, on the other hand, was essentially aberrant behaviour — socially condoned experimentation, but so undefined as to possibly yield no benefits to society. Irreducible can mean undesirable.

Granted today's designed object or system may prove as moving as an *objet d'art* or synesthetically pleasing in ways their designers never intended; communications technologies, although invented to serve very predetermined functions, are particularly prone to hijacking, as with the overwhelming sexual appropriation of French Minitel or Japanese *Dengon Dial Q*² telephone messageboards³. Still, despite the ever-increasing tides of longer-and-broader-range media on the market, the intensive focus of designer detailing coupled to the machinations of economic share-think may ultimately make for narrowing, not expanding of possibilities for human interaction, expression and discovery. Even programming with random number series is not truly serendipitous. There is a sense that, if it has to be designed, it's already too late.

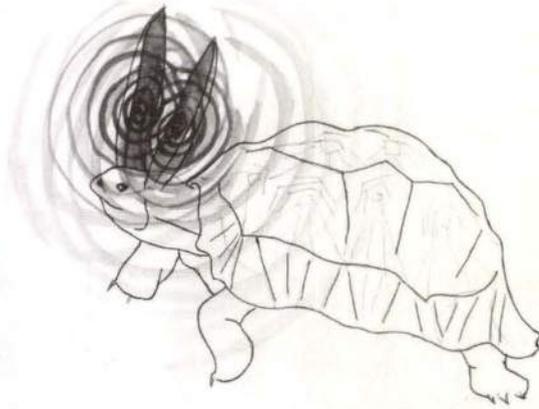
What ecology of ideas can survive a wholly designed environment? Reactionary that I am, I must say, the 'old media' I depend on most and whose future most concerns me is chance (read: humour). This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but by marketing.

Balpen / Ballpoint Pen



Fabre

Jan Fabre uses, as a Belgian artist and theatre maker, a zillion Bic pencils a year.



EX

}} HE ILEHADO AVITES, MURCIA '90



FORTUYN

Prof. W.S.P. Fortuyn was responsible for the free public transport network for students in Holland.

Professor Fortuyn is a converted Marxist

who now calls himself an adviser in political and strategic questions.

The Communicator is a Human Being

The human being distinguishes itself from other life forms by its capacity for communication. Human beings are 'language'd beings. Through language, they express themselves in an extremely varied manner. Emotions acquire profundity when given a name and analysed: in short, through being captured in language. Emotions can also be blocked or talked through by expressing them in language; without language, no human life or emotion.

Language knows a number of expressive forms. Talking, screaming, writing, painting, sculpting are all means of expression which are used by human beings to communicate with each other through language. Even the most abstract work of art must be translated into language if it is to cause a reaction in us: language which forms in the head of the spectator and is sometimes poured into the article of the art critic.

The media which I use in my own life to express myself through language are varied, and, at the same time, limited. Fundamentally, I am a speaker, an orator. As a little catholic boy, I was impressed by the travelling priests who visited us in the parish and took their flock thoroughly to task on moral and religious questions. The procedure never varied. Observe, analyse, moralise and finally, the festive salvation. These men used nothing other than the spoken word and could enrapture their listeners, and sometimes challenge them into making great sacrifices.

Much more negative, but therefore no less impressive, were orators like Hitler and Mussolini. They also followed the pattern described above and could inflame entire crowds. Churchill and Kennedy did the same thing in their own way, with one difference: the setting was a democratic one.

The time of the great orators seems to have passed. The modern media, the emancipation of large segments (classes) of the population have contributed much to people's capacity for seeing things in perspective. Seeing things in perspective: because one belongs less than ever to a single, recognizable group, because events take place at an ever increasing tempo. One day, a complete modern war is being fought out in the Gulf, the next; old-fashioned, cynical holders of power attempt to reverse the emancipation of millions of Russians. We see it immediately, on television, with commentary.

Besides the spoken word, I make a great deal of use of the written word. I write letters and memos, books and articles. Previously, they were of a scientific nature, based on thorough empirical research. Today, they are more politico-philosophical, reflective, analytical, and a bit literary. More than ever, I try to formulate what I myself think and feel, and to find an effective expressive form for it. This attitude extends to my work as a professor and director of a highly automated company. I supervise automation processes, while I myself can barely use a text editor. I supervise these processes by speaking and writing, in short, by using language in every possible way. I influence all kinds of specialists through use of language, both rationally and emotionally, which allows us to create a product. A result which, without this supervision, communication, if you will, would never have been achieved.

And yet, everything which we communicate is already there. It's only the form we seek. Or, as a sculptor once told me, so aptly, as he began kneading the first lumps of clay for a sculpture: *This sculpture is already there: I just need to make it.*

translation JIM BOEKBINDER

Droom / Dream



KERCKHOVEN

Annemie van Kerckhoven is a Belgian artist who wears her politics on her panties.

The Dream as Point of Departure and Epilogue: description kills foundation

I was lying in the room I had as a child, the room in which I lived until I was fifteen. An attic room with an irregular, slanted ceiling: the wall was three metres high on the one side and one metre high on the other. A tall gas radiator painted reddish brown, divided into five, separate, elliptical heating elements with a shiny metal cap, stood in front of the chimney on the newly scrubbed, bare wooden floor.

I'd just had a short romance with a young, ambitious art critic, in the bed which was at right angles to the radiator and at an equal distance from the slanted roof with the window. It was dark outside, and the light at the head of the bed was very bright. The boy was tired and wanted to stay in bed for a while yet; the thin blanket didn't provide very much warmth.

Because something had attracted my attention, something which hadn't been there before, I'd climbed out of the bed. On the radiator was a kind of fish bowl, very large, filled to the rim with some kind of yoghurt-like substance. The substance was of an icy, dull blue-green colour, and smelled pleasantly chemical and very poisonous. Fear hung in the air of the room. A tune became barely audible in the room; oddly enough, it seemed to come from the bowl. I carefully brought my ear as close as I could to the substance, and, automatically, the urge came to hum along softly with the familiar ditty. This was what was expected of me and this is what I did. In this way, I came into contact with the liquid in the bowl. It was an intelligence which wished to communicate. What did it want to make me understand? I became afraid, and looked around at the critic, who was half asleep and oblivious to what was happening.

The next moment, the bowl was in a far corner of the room, where it was cold, because it was freezing outside.

After a few distracted moments, I looked at the bowl, from which heavy, jagged crystals were growing upwards, leaning to the right. They were also mint coloured and taught me that the liquid didn't tolerate cold well.

There was noise at the door of the room and I let in the rest of the family, so that they could look at the frozen, apparently dead phenomenon. Their gazes were disturbed and uneasy.

The decision was made to thaw the bowl out on the radiator and it was put on top of it, once again. The liquid regained its normal state immediately and another soft tune became audible. I laid my ear close against it and hummed along. The entity in the bowl and I merged together and had a dialogue. A feeling of great happiness and contentment came over me. I also felt the beginnings of a kind of tension; something dangerous was happening. Aggression, raw and unformed, grew and developed, disembodied. Infrasonic vibrations became tangible. White-hot hatred, humiliating, contemptuous disapproval, rude fervency filled the air. I experienced this all breathlessly, frozen to the floor. The marble on the chimney burst into pieces, the wooden mantel was torn away, carefully placed explosions affirmed a tangible presence which felt compelled to defend itself, in some way.

My housemates had long since fled down the staircase in panic, and the art critic tried to analyse the whole thing in an abstract way. I felt very privileged to have been able to experience all of these things, even though I must admit that it took several months until I felt my old self again, afterwards.

Written July 17, 1991 / Dreamed July, 1990

translation JIM BOEKRINDER





DALSTRA

Koos Dalstra is a Friesian poet and a cheat.

Under an assumed name

It is apparent that I am dependent on the media just by the fact that I work for several magazines, including *Mediamatic*, under a false name (John Toledo). How has it come to this?

At the age of six I was sitting on my grandpa's knee. We were leafing through a magazine portfolio. The Russians were occupying Budapest. Photographs of partisans in shot-apart streets, on a leisurely stroll, two men and a woman, tommy guns loosely in the wrist or along the flank. Their eyes are blacked out. Caption: *The women too are bravely working for the resistance.* Another picture, obviously shot with a telephoto lens. A road runs to the horizon. A forest. A tank, blocking the road, but with the barrel pointing at the camera. Caption: *The road to freedom is hermetically sealed.* And finally, a picture of a square, with tall houses. Evening. Candles are burning behind all the windows. Why is that, Grandpa?

Grandpa and his *Nieuwe Revu* magazine again. The barred trio had stuck in my memory. They were fighting for a lost cause. They were losers, but actually winners, that was why. But the Russians weren't supposed to know that.

What a sensation! Grandpa and I devised a plan of flight to America, in the event that the Russians should come here. Our fictive escape would take place in a fighter jet, loaded full of cattle manure (Grandpa's nest egg for the States), from which a rope ladder constantly hung at the ready. Busy milking until the last second, he could step right onto his old bicycle, and I would pick him up at full speed on the runway.

America, the medium of the future. We got television. I was immediately addicted. I sat glued to the tube, three feet from the screen, watching the test pattern for fifteen solid minutes. Already waiting for the

children's news. For I wanted to know exactly what those kids in Australia got up to at Christmas. It was summer there, which was really far out. And then of course science fiction. It kept me awake at night.

Tomorrow it will happen became a downright nightmare.

It all started very innocently. You had your professor in a spaceship outside earth. He was the only actor. The set consisted of two small rooms, connected by a sort of tunnel, but also by the spiral staircase. Then you had the earth, and that was the director at his monitors. Everything went fine, until the scholar found a hair. The only explanation could be that someone else was on the spaceship. I didn't finish watching that series. I was told later that it had been some terrible monsters, but I missed that. It was too thrilling for me and I quit watching.

This is how I learned to lie. To be rid of things. When I came back from America, then a 19-year-old boy going off to study, I pulled the leg of a provincial daily paper, told them that 90% of American youths used drugs. I myself had never smoked a joint then. Pure corniness, pure bluff. I went to study sociology, so I wouldn't have to go into the service. I took heaps of girlfriends, so I wouldn't have to marry. I became a poet in the hopes of becoming a medium myself.

That is what happened. I have become someone else. John Toledo makes art. He specialises in lacquerwork. He has to stay abreast of what's happening in his field. This is the reason, among others, that he reads *Mediamatic*.

Thus my fraud has become a captioning device for virtual work. I make, as it were, advertising for the medium under a false name, but that name sounds better! Granted, I am fighting for a lost cause, yet in the service of a winning medium.

translation LAURA MARTZ



Schoon / Clean



STRIK

Berend Strik is Dutch artist who has a girlfriend now. Sorry ladies!



Dood / Death



MARSHALL

*Jules Marshall is an Oxford graduate and a hack journalist with ideas above his station.
He believes in the symbiosis between science and art.*

Media for mah mind, mah body an' mah soh-wul.

You are what you eat. My primary medium is therefore food — the medium that carries life from the eaten to the eater. Or is it? In the Information Age, surely *you are what you read.* You can tell a lot about a man by the company he keeps — or the book under his arm — just as you can never really know a woman until you've seen her bookshelf. Would you count as your friend someone who got all their news from the *Dow Jones Online News* headlines and *cnn*? Garbage in, garbage out...

As a freelance journalist with no other source of income, information sustains my physical body. If I don't inform, I don't eat, pay the rent or get my hands on fresh information. I expend as much thought — more — on deciding what to read as what to eat. I find *The Guardian International* provides me with my daily requirements, covering all the major information groups. I augment this diet with a range of weekly and monthly magazines and books, fiction and non-fiction. Not much poetry as it's the *nouvelle cuisine* of information — too pretty to eat.

Amsterdam is cabled, so I watch a lot of tv, with a varying degree of interactivity from creative grazing mode (reading, cooking or talking over it) through active vocal annotation to total absorption. I recently caught a couple of the *bbc*'s fascinating *Cine Memo* series — home

movies made by European families between about 1910 and 1950 edited according to themes (*The Family, Travel*, etc). The most noticeable theme of the series, however, was not one made explicit by the programme makers. All the films, particularly, the urban shots, were remarkable for their extreme barrenness of sensory and linguistic information. The past looked, well, a bit boring really.

I realised how much I'd miss the data-rich sensory environment — the real-life *mtv* — of modern urban life. Not just the fly posters, commercial transactions, concerts, bar-crawls, advertising and access to printed matter but the additional bytes of sensory titillation for the rest of my body: the colour, the movement, the smells, the house parties, the sudden blasts of hot air from shops on a cold day and noises of the city streets (of Oxford, Cardiff, London and Amsterdam) I've lived and walked in for ten years.

It's the *buzz*, that feeling that condenses on my skin like city sweat, that augments and makes coherent the other information in my media ecology. I resist the cyberpunk assertion that I am becoming little more than an appendage to a terminal, *the meat*, no longer the master of my machines but a mere partner in an organo-silicate symbiosis. The cult of info-tech underestimates the role of experience and pre-existing knowledge in the processing and generation of new knowledge.





ADILKNO

ADILKNO is the Dutch society for the advancement of illegal knowledge.

ADILKNO and its media

Speculation begins beyond the zero point of meaning. Once words are set free of the burden of information they must bear, they are transported away and go out exploring. Once they go their way, they prove able to follow any logic and able to anticipate any information with which they could ever possibly be saddled. Speculating with language follows the maxim *Prevention is better than deconstruction*. During the working hours of the ADILKNO options market, idea systems, arbitrary data and unavoidable situations are short-circuited to the vanishing point in the future after which nothing meaningful can be done with all these expectations. The ADILKNO speculator operates beyond the future, away from any potential readers' market. The rampant growth of words summons a chaos field through which the text determines its fatal course. Then everyone can only look on, including the mixmasters themselves.

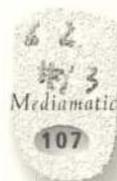
These speculative practices operate in a vacuum which the urge for text renewal has not been able to fill. A corrupt atmosphere hangs around the ADILKNO contributions which smells of failure. The columns do not fulfil the legitimate desire for shrieking assertion of the manifesto and just as little for the careful openings the essay can offer. One doesn't quite want any academic discourses or journalistic impressions, just to air the mind. This serene frame of mind is soon spoiled if one accidentally gets caught up in the fire of an adilknoian line of reasoning. *Every sentence an open end* — it doesn't purify the thoughts; it simply makes you clam up. It offers you no perspective if you know how everything will end, without it being said whether anything constructive can be thought about it. The experiments with words in the 20th century were expeditions to the innermost places in language. They were always fun to look at. Speculation, nonetheless, seeks the outer edge of language, there where shadows from elsewhere become readable. Here too lie the edges where the garbage heaps up and vague rumours go around and where the vermin scuttles about, hatches plots and yanks at the slot machines, in the hope that the right combination of discourses produces the winning sentence, at which point the profits are immediately put to use for new

speculations. Writing ultimately only costs ADILKNO money, just like with the gambling addicts.

ADILKNO never states its sources. This is not done out of a desire for secrecy. In the media the text needs no context; that only increases the information load. Once the quote is pulled out of its context and perverted, magic words sprout from the remains of the text: imploded universes that don't even need to be unfolded. The magic word is not the result of reduction by data compression. It is not so much what remains after all extraneous wording is deleted. The key word simply presents itself. The magic word does not invite hermeneutics. It unfolds during the writing in the future and needs no historical background in order to operate. The etymology of the magic word often discloses unexpected figures and displays what is taken for granted in everyday language use.

There exists a certain pleasure in thinking of posterity, who may set about deciphering it all — that is not the issue here. Sensible questions about the deeper meaning and coherence will unavoidably lead to new ADILKNO texts. The exegesis of a compact text quickly reaches overload, a particular problem in contemporary text production. Speculation does not look to quality or quantity, but to wonder over the now or never of the jam session of discourses. It won't make you any richer or wiser; poorer, rather, since the accidentally compiled soc/pol/cul/eco/hist-ballast gets pulverized during the instant consumption of the ADILKNO product. Big connections, eras, entities, themes, moralities and world issues disappear like a snowball in the sun.

The media's unbearable lightness of being does not have to be compensated for by diligent archive labour. ADILKNO is not expressing the fear that the text has one foot in the grave, but joyfully admitting that the media has won. The old-fashioned text is thereby relieved at last of the obligation to mean something else, and may become impossible. The holy Script has become a child's toy at the moment that the media are wrestling with the introduction of the picture text. Pictorialization campaigns for the world population tread the familiar path of crisis, war and other ecstatic moments in order to convince the public at large of the importance of what's going on in the world. In this rising picture culture the



text may, in a severely reduced form, fulfil a supporting function. As subtitle or credit it disappears to the edge, while it flashes in the centre as a rhythmic eye-catcher.

The formulation of ADILKNO texts is drudgery compared to the dimensions of data communication. Although the notes are preferably made in a flush of intoxication, the production time seems endlessly long. Not because such thorough research preceded it or the 'final version' was so long in coming. Deleting, rewriting, improving or discussing is remarkably unpopular among adilknoians and is done only on pain of a whole new story — *tis but text*. To us *The Satanic Verses* is not worth a war; words are things and need no reassessment, which is by definition reactionary. Backward text writers need not think up some artificial legitimization or pedagogical intent. Hobbyists are simply possessed.

Where there is text, there is ADILtext. It seems excessive to question its usefulness or achievement. The ADILtext is the weather report of the European mini-media in which it participates. From out of a marginal corner it gives dubious predictions based on observations done by our local amateurs. The detailed weather prediction delivered by ADILKNO every so often can be found in the neighbourhood of R&TV programming, recommended viewing and media criticism, the cooking show, the cryptogram, the philatelic news, the bridge reports and the comics. ADILKNO is no enfant terrible of opinion

formation. It takes no dissident position with regard to the prevailing analyses and has no cultural mission to fulfil. Contact with the audience is by chance and does not have to be maintained by means of a fan club or alternative circuit. ADILKNO does not make use of scandal in order to enter the picture, although it is permanently distorting, under-lighting and negatively approaching its subject, and, moreover, gives evidence of fixations on sex, filth and vermin. The ADILKNO text is difficult, but never leads to misunderstandings about its drift, admissible or otherwise. For ADILKNO the dangerous text about the dangerous subject is played out and ruled out. ADILKNO has a warm interest in all the taboos of the world, but no need to break them. It has no interest in openly flirting with or rehashing yet again the body of thought of the glorious 20s and 30s, which explored borders, depths and heights of *Dasein* (being) in the era of technology. The deadly angle is removed from the text and cannot be put back. Every ADILKNO text, intentionally or not, begins with this confirmation. It is writing beyond the Cold War. It inspires the beautiful illusion that the comparison between Then and Now no longer holds, and that to write about the present, one can better gamble on there being a vanishing point somewhere in the future of all current developments which are *passé* beforehand for ADILKNO. Only then does the story begin.

translation LAURA MARTZ



Film



• This article might give foreigners a bad impression of our local cultural scene. Therefore we cannot print it in English

*Kun je dat tv-kabaal zachter zetten? Ik probeer te strijken hier.
Ik heb nog veel strijkwerk te doen. En mijn dieetpil is uitgewerkt.*

DIVINE ALS MISS EDNA IN JOHN WATERS *Hairspray*

*het Lyrisch
Handsticht.*



by Paul Groot

Zijn officiële filmcultuur is capricieus als zijn Borsalino's, zijn maatpakken en de open brogues: opzichtige opvulsels van een assepoester. Een Vlaamse kameleon die in de Nederlandse vrijetijdscultuur een eerste viool speelt; een semiologische poststructuralist die zich tot de litteratuur bekennt; een vrijetijdscultuur die zich in competitie met Godard en Fellini waant; een bureaucraat die in zijn vrije tijd een Dandy speelt. Als artistiek beheerder van de erfenis van Jan de Vaal is de goeroe van het Vondelpark, de onderdirecteur van het Nederlands Filmmuseum, op het eerste gezicht een ongrijpbaar fenomeen geweest. Hij poseerde als de onschuldige filmfiefhebber die zijn hobby in zijn werktijd mocht uitleven, maar speelde tegelijk de litterator die zijn talent helaas alleen in zijn vrije tijd waar kon maken. Een immigrant uit Schaarbeek die zich in het Vondelpark niet alleen de natuurlijke opvolger van Henri Langois van de Parijse cinemateek waande, maar tezelfdertijd probeerde te wennen aan de idee de gelijke van Marcel Proust én van Kenneth Anger te zijn. Een opmerkelijke lijst waar ik nóg een gestalte aan toe zou willen voegen: zijn gelijkenis met Divine.

Nu hij aangekondigd heeft het Filmmuseum te verlaten wordt het tijd voor een evaluatie en ook een bezinning op de toekomst. Immers, als De Kuyper weg is, zijn we nog lang niet van hem af. Zijn geestelijke erfenis zal door de beoogde opvolger Peter Delpout ongetwijfeld vurig verdedigd worden. De Kuyper weet zich zo verzekerd van een gedurige invloed op het beleid van het Filmmuseum. En wij blijven voorlopig opgescheept met de fnuikende kostschoolseer van die der Kuyperianen.

Vorig jaar schreef Eric de Kuyper voor een catalogus bij een videotentoonstelling een kleine bijdrage over zichzelf, tv kijkend tijdens de wekelijkse zondagse strijkbeurt: *Telkens wanneer ik mijn ogen opsla — wanneer ik mijn blik eventjes afwend van een pas gestreken mouw, alvorens ik met de bout de rug strijk — is er een ander beeld, daar op het scherm.(...) De eindeloze sliert van beelden houdt me net zolang bezig als mijn strijkactiviteit. Is die huistaak eenmaal voorbij, dan zet ik de knop voor een weekje af. Ik laat de bout afkoelen en berg de strijkplank op tot de volgende zondag.*

Als openbaar fenomeen zou de Kuyper een bijfiguur geweest kunnen zijn in Salman Rushdies *De Duivelsverzen*. Daar vallen de personages letterlijk de film uit het boek in. Ze zijn het produkt van een professionele filmgekte, opgenomen in een surrealistisch spel, reëel als jewelste en tegelijkertijd een ongrijpbare abstractie. Zonder onderscheid tussen een filmische, literaire of werkelijke existentie. Rushdie stáát voor ze: het zijn geen produkten van de vrije tijd, behoeven geen verontschuldiging dat ze in de trein, tussen twee afspraken door geschreven zijn, zijn geen restprodukt van het echte werk, van iets hogers, iets belangrijkers. Je ziet het voor je: iemand als Erik de Kuyper als een kleine zelfstandige bioscoopondernemer in Bombay. Tientallen personeelsleden die allemaal vol ambitie zitten en hopen nog eens een rolletje in een echte film te mogen spelen. Een echte liefdesfilm, en als het echt niet anders kan, dan maar in de softporno homemovies van de baas zelf.

De Kuyperianen zijn als geen

ander verantwoordelijk voor het artistieke filmbeleid, zowel binnen het Filmmuseum als ver daarbuiten. Ze hebben de versleten erfenis van Jan de Vaal in korte tijd in een al even versleten, postmoderne variant weten om te toveren. De rigide ideologie van Eisenstein en Ivens is vervangen door de gesimuleerde beeldreligie van Hollywood.

Voor de buitenwereld is De Kuyper die merkwaardige connaisseur, die het artistieke geweten van het Filmmuseum vormt. Waar hij die reputatie aan te danken heeft is wel duidelijk. Hij vertoont in veel opzichten de karakteristieken van de man zonder eigenschappen. In zijn carrière verandert hij voortdurend van gedaante, zonder ooit zichzelf te kunnen worden. Als programmamaker voor de BRT was Warhol zijn grote held, als wetenschapper aan de Nijmeegse universiteit moest hij zich tot het Eco-model bekennen, voor de in zijn 'vrije tijd' gemaakte films is Kenneth Anger zijn filmografische voorbeeld, op zijn werkplek in het Vondelpark waande hij zich in de MGM of de Universal Studio's. De waarachtig gerealiseerde dromen van een Brusselse estheet. En vooral, sinds de literaire criticus van *Vrij Nederland*, Carel Peeters, zijn literaire werk met dat van Marcel Proust in verband bracht, lijkt zijn reputatie als het wonderkind van het Vondelpark onomspreken. De fijnzinnige estheet die in een heldere, precieze taal de eigen sfeer van zijn kinderjaren weet op te roepen.

Er was een tijd dat de De Kuyper-school verslingerd was aan het structuralistische jargon. In de Nijmeegse *Versus*-periode, die onbedoeld een persiflage werd van een te lang aangehouden discussie uit *Screen* en *Cahiers du Cinéma*, vormde ze het centrum van een filmische eredienst die de onverwerkte roomse beeldtaal in dienst stelde van een marxistisch *angehauchte* ideologische analyse. De universitaire enclave waar zich dit allemaal afspeelde wist nog de charme van de onschuld uit te stralen. Een roomse studeerkamer vol sigarerook, waar de pastoor had plaatsgemaakt voor de dandy,

waar de stoute spelletjes met de misdienaars in de sacristie waren vervangen door de filmische softporno-sfeer van de *Naughty Boys*, die, wanneer zij zich aan- en uitkleedden, dat natuurlijk wel voor een hoger esthetisch doel deden.

Alles werd pas echt serieus toen De Kuyper door directeur Hoos Blotkamp en voorzitter Martijn Sanders aan het Nederlandse Filmmuseum werd verbonden. De hobbyistische onschuld van een gastarbeider, die op de golven van de Vlaamse artistieke opbloei hierheen was gevoerd, werd plotseling de inzet van een cultureel-politieke strijd. Zijn veresthetiseerde dogmatisme moest als het uithangbord dienen van een conservatief machtsblok in de filmwereld. Het verbond van het Sanderssyndicaat en de Blotkampconnection, bijna onverslaanbaar in de wereld van de beeldende kunst, ging ook hier aan de slag. De kans om nu ook de filmgeschiedenis van zijn ideologische en politiek gevaarlijke kanten te ontdoen en deze definitief tot museumkunst te verheffen. Dat de Kuyperianen daarbij de ideologie van het poststructuralisme wel moesten inruilen voor de *shopping art* van het postmodernisme, bleek geen onoverkomelijk probleem.

Zo werd het Kuyperiaanse erfgoed tot een speelbal in het spel dat over hun hoofden door cultureel Nederland, politiek Den Haag en artistiek Amsterdam gespeeld werd. Een produkt van een gefragmenteerde en gepijnigde ziel (die èn schrijver èn filmer èn onderdirecteur is, maar vooral alles apart en nooit in samenhang), dat voor voor hogere doelen ingezet kon worden. Een produkt van een vrijetijdsmaker die absoluut geen onderlinge samenhang kan en wil herkennen. En een produkt van een beheerder van veel talent, die zichzelf in compartimenten heeft gesplitst en de confrontaties zoveel mogelijk uit de weg gaat. De Kuyper was een ideaal voorwerp in de handen van ambitieuze bestuurders met een bureaucratische visie op lange termijn.

De Kuyperiaanse filmische hartstochten konden door gebrek



aan een serieus alternatief in het artistieke vacuüm dat in de Nederlandse Filmwereld heerst tot programmatisch leven gebracht worden. Opererend als een eenogig verschijnsel in het land der blinden heeft deze esthetische sfeer de weg terug gewezen naar de bioscoopstoel uit de vorige eeuw. *Parisien* werd tot het hart van het Filmmuseum. De beeldcultuur van de film werd definitief vermusealiseerd. Daarmee kon de hedendaagse elektronische beeldoverdracht, die zeker ook in verband met de conservering van oude films interessante perspectieven oplevert, gemakkelijk de weg afgesneden worden. Want de ontwikkeling van de analoge naar de digitale technieken is voor de Kuypertianen zoïets als een definitieve breuk met een zorgvuldig te koesteren verleden. Ze houden zich blind voor het feit dat de theoretische en praktische mogelijkheden van deze nieuwe technieken nu juist naadloos aansluiten bij de hoogtepunten van de filmgeschiedenis: bij de montage technieken van Eisenstein, bij de ijzeren logica van Hitchcock, bij de mediasfeer van Welles of de simulatie van Disney, Spielberg en Lucas. En je hoeft Godards geloof in moderne technieken, zijn enthousiasme voor de pencamera (Godard: *een schilderachtig centrum; twee richtingen waarin de camera kan focussen*) niet te delen, om toch te begrijpen dat de Kuypertianen met hun blinde hartstocht voor een hygiënische sfeer van 'de zuivere filmkunst' op een jammerlijk dood spoor zijn beland.

De Kuypert poseert voor de museale bureaucraten als een conservatieve film liefhebber. Voor de in zijn 'vrije tijd' gemaakte filmpjes oriënteert hij zich op een geheime voorkeur: Kenneth Anger, chroniqueur van Hollywoodse lijkjes in kasten en tevens subcultureel, homo-georiënteerd, avant-garde filmer. Zijn films zijn bepalend voor de richting die de Kuypert gaat. In *Scorpio Rising* is het een groep van vijftien in het wit geklede matrozen die een jonge gevoelige ziel attackeren; jongens met glimmende motoren, leren jacks, spiegelende motoroppervlakken, opzichtige kruis- en buiks-

treek, die een grootse droom uitbeelden. Maar wat een schrille tegenstelling: tegenover de hardcore van *Fireworks*, *Lucifer Rising*, *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* of *Invocation of My Demon Brothers*, stelt de Kuypert de softporno van het esthetische homoseksuele ego dat filmisch wordt beleden, maar daarbuiten, vermomd als de travestie van een goede smaak, in het dandyeske wordt uitgeleefd. Met de voorganger in de gedaante van de smaakvolle Europeaan die alles zoveel beter weet.

Anger poseert als de macho, is via Aleister Crowley werkelijk geëngageerd in zijn wilde orgieën die hier tot slappe aftreksels van de beschaafde smaak zijn teruggebracht. Anger celebreert een zwarte mis van de straat, die door de museale Amsterdamse kringen vertaald is in een negentiende-eeuwse Parijse literaire versie. De Kuypertianen spelen, in Hollywood op bezoek, de artistiekelingen die boven dit vulgaire, commerciële gedoe staan; in het Filmmuseum is het weer helemaal Hollywood dat de klok slaat. Zo zijn de Kuypertianen met hun Hollywoodsyndroom een perfecte partner voor de, in steeds grotere dimensies, op steeds grotere schaal, in een steeds verder expandierend denken ingebedde, bureaucratistische sfeer van het Filmmuseum.

Wat staat de Kuypertianen in hun werkkring eigenlijk voor ogen? De Kuyperts zeer bevlogen 'memoires' kunnen helaas nauwelijks als programmatische voorkeur gelden. Ik wil hem ook niet lastig vallen met zijn *Versus*-structuralisme. Misschien moeten we de stukken van De Kuypert uit *het Parool* als zijn artistieke leidraad opvatten? Bladzijden vol nieuwtjes over in het Filmmuseum te draaien films, herinneringen uit de tijd dat films nog echt kleurbestendig waren, en liefdesverklaringen aan jongens in spijkerbroek die op de tram wachten, vormen echter geen weerspiegeling van een artistieke visie. En wat moeten we ervan denken nu hij het ook al opneemt tegen Jan-Luc Godard? 't Scheen toch niet

dat Godard het Fingerspitzengefühl verloren had en om de Kuyperts aanbevelingen verlegen zat? Godard werkt het liefst in de periferie, geeft vrije, spontane argumenten voor en tegen film, is bereid *A Bout de Souffle* in te kleuren en daarbij de museale esthetiek aan zijn laars te lappen. De bureaucratistische Kuypertianen die zich van de geldstroom willen verzekeren, kennen die vrijheid niet. Het probleem van onderdirecteuren is dat zij, anders dan het genie van de kleine zelfstandige, hun vrijheid hebben opgeofferd. Als bureau-craat, als schrijver, als dandy fungeren zij als een uithangbord voor iets anders dan zichzelf. Godard met afgebeten sigaar, verkeerde bril, afgerafelde hoed en binnensmonds mompelend, is een onafhankelijke die zijn pogingen open en bloot toont en zo de ene na de andere 'mislukking' in filmische mijlpalen ziet veranderen. De Kuypert schrijft onmiskenbaar beter, filmt misschien zelfs wel beter, is een betere manager dan Godard, en toch lukt hem op geen afstand wat Godard kennelijk zo makkelijk aangaat. Bestaat er één film van Godard die niet over het mislukken van het getoonde project gaat? Is er één film van hem waarin hij niet iemand een boek laat lezen dat wijst op hoe hij met zichzelf vecht en gefrustreerd raakt omdat hij zelf weer geen scenario in elkaar wist te zetten? Godard is filmer geworden uit frustratie dat hij niet schrijven kan, De Kuypert schrijver uit frustratie dat hij niet filmen kan. En hij roept op tot wraak. Het is de oude Shakespeariaanse truc om iemand onder complimentjes het graf in te prijzen en dan tenslotte zijn eigen prestatie tegen die van de ander af te zetten. De Kuypert waarschuwt Godard in *het Parool* niet, maar het ware beter geweest als hij wat meer naar de produktiewijze van De Kuypert had gekeken. Hij had wat meer in teamverband moeten werken, meer uit handen moeten geven.

Meent de Kuypert misschien dat Godard ook Filmmuseumpje moet gaan spelen? Of wil hij zo alleen zijn eigen nieuw ontwikkel-



de filmproductie nog eens onder de ogen van de lezer wrijven? Als ik het me goed herinner zorgt Godard bij menig film voor een nieuwe aanvoer van sterretjes door advertenties in *le Figaro* te plaatsen. Ik denk dat De Kuyper dat iets beneden zijn stand vindt. Iedereen die wel eens het Filmmuseum bezoekt weet dat hij zich niet tot contactadvertenties hoeft te verlagen. Vanuit de Parnassus van het Vondelpark krijgen de sterretjes gewoon een contract en zijn zo op afroep voor ieder project beschikbaar. En wie is er langzamerhand in de Amsterdamse intellectuele of artistieke filmwereld niet op een of andere manier schatplichtig aan hem? Tot in de projectiekamer, tot in het café, tot in de kassa's komen we de Kuyperiaanse esthetische en seksuele voorkeuren tegen. Je hoeft maar het Filmmuseum te bezoeken: het is alsof je in een van zijn films rondwaalt.

De Kuyperianen hebben het talent zichzelf op de voorgrond te plaatsen, maar nog groter is hun talent om zich onzichtbaar te houden. In het eerste deel van zijn autobiografische cyclus, *Aan zee*, beschrijft de Kuyper heel beeldend hoe hij zich zomers lang aan het strand met spelletjes, dansoefeningen en andere kinderactiviteiten bezighoudt. Hij roept een verloren tijdsbeeld op van het familieleven aan het strand, maar naar de precieze inhoud van zijn eigen spelletjes moet je maar raden. Die geheimzinnigheid heeft hij goed weten vol te houden. Voorzover ik heb begrepen is het enige discussiepunt in de politiek van het Filmmuseum dat echte emotie heeft opgeleverd de vraag hoe de door de tand des tijds bedreigde oude filmstroken te conserveren. Peter Delpouts *Lyrisch Nitraat*, een collage van oud materiaal uit de Desmet-archieven, is misschien wel het enige echte artistieke discussiestuk. En daaruit blijkt dat filmische filmkunst voor alles een negentiende-eeuws, fin de siècle-fenomeen is dat conceptueel nauwelijks over de grens van onze eeuw reikt. Het Filmmuseum niet als een actieve gesprekspartner in een hedendaagse discussie, maar een werkelijk museum waar de film als een allang

ontzield fenomeen wordt gekoesterd en geconserveerd. *Lyrisch Nitraat* als een cultureel-politieke verklaring die inderdaad heel goed aansluit bij de vreugde van de staf dat het oude interieur van de pornobioscoop *Parisien* in een van de filmzalen is verwerkt. Zo maak je een tot de verbeelding van het grote publiek sprekende omgeving.

Peter Delpout wordt als opvolger van De Kuyper verantwoordelijk voor de conserveringen in het Filmmuseum. Een archivaris, die geen objectieve maatstaven hanteert, maar met zijn persoonlijke smaak het verleden van onze filmcultuur naar een Kuyperiaanse toon omzet. De zwart-witte toets van het modernisme, de harde cuttings van Eisenstein, de schaduwwereld van Orson Welles, allemaal moeten ze wijken voor het lyrisch hartstocht. Het lyrisch hartstocht als een hybridische esthetiek die de filosofie van het Filmmuseum is geworden, waarbij het verleden helemaal gekleurd is naar de lila toonzetting zoals die door de Kuyper in hoofdlijnen aangegeven is. Een filmcultuur die zich in de negentiende eeuw heeft ingegraven met die kunstmatige scheiding tussen de analoge en de digitale media. Daaronder ligt de conservatieafdeling, daar gaan de programmeringen onder gebukt en daaronder ligt *Skrien*, een voormalige marxistisch filmblad dat nu zo ongeveer als het ideologische huisorgaan van het Filmmuseum functioneert. Sinds de Kuyperianen dit tijdschrift in het museum ondergebracht hebben, lijkt het vooral als spreekbuis voor hun eigen ideeën te fungeren en als pleitbezorger voor een terugkeer naar een hoogpolige filmische sensibiliteit. Men wil de poëtische, analoge, zuivere filmkunst onderscheiden van de ketterse digitale beeldwereld en haar zo in een eigen museaal veld onderbrengen dat in de Haagse subsidiekanalen kan participeren. Een zuiver economisch-subsidiar-technisch probleem wordt door het Filmmuseum als een artistieke strijd gepresenteerd, waarbij alle museale argumenten eenvoudig-

weg als vanzelf als pluspunten opgevat worden. En die strijd wordt op alle fronten geleverd. Omdat de narratieve in- en output van film en digitale beelddrager nauwelijks kunnen verschillen, zou je toch denken dat de litterator in De Kuyper als eerste de verschillen in ervaring zou bagatelliseren. De nostalgie van de film in de donkere kamer en het spel van licht en schaduw tegenover de *white noise* van de digitale overdracht: alleen wie die tegenstelling voor de werkelijkheid gaat aanzien, en de metaforische sfeer ervan niet begrijpt, zal zich er druk over maken

Filmische hartstochten die de archieven doen verpulveren, verpoederen, vervagen en verloederen. De digitale drager zou op zijn minst tot hartstochtelijke gedachtenuitwisselingen aanleiding moeten geven. Maar aan het Vondelpark is het conserveren niet meer dan een bureaucratische werkzaamheid, die af en toe een filmpje als beloning oplevert. Als een Haags museum een voorstel doet een Picasso af te stoten is de wereld te klein. Hier is het conserveringsbeleid in handen van een nostalgische gay-gevoeligheid en niemand die zich er druk om maakt. Alsof er sinds de filmpraktijk van Lumière niks meer gebeurd is en we onze artistieke discussie nog steeds via negentiende-eeuwse argumenten zouden moeten voeren.

In *Aan Zee* peinst De Kuyper over de jongen aan het strand in de roman en de film *Dood in Venetië*, waar hij een hekel aan heeft: *Al die esthetiek die de erotiek dient te verantwoorden: de dood van zowel het ene als het andere. Is erotiek niet juist de exacte verwezenlijking van een esthetiek van de dagelijksheid*. Ergens opgesloten in dit grensgebied van erotiek en esthetiek moet De Kuyper besloten hebben zich als een gewillig zetstuk in te laten zetten ten behoeve van een conservatieve Nederlandse culturele politiek. Het lijkt niet waarschijnlijk dat met de aflossing van De Kuyper door Delpout daar veel verandering in zal komen.

De wraak van een Vlaamse Brusselaar op Nederlandse arrogantie?



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*More
and Bigger,
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The Museum Fodor is an art gallery without a collection and it is a unique establishment. There is a permanent pot for its expenses in the budget of the Amsterdam City Council and equally fixed is what the city of Amsterdam receives in return: exhibitions of contemporary art. The Museum Fodor has the particular task of exhibiting work by artists who have a specific connection with Amsterdam, a commission that can be freely interpreted. It includes exchanges and cooperation with institutions and artists from abroad as well as the organization of lectures and mini-festivals. The aim behind all these activities is to turn the Museum Fodor into *the* centre for artistic activity in Amsterdam. This collection of six lectures has a triple goal: it is to clarify the position of the Museum Fodor, to reinforce the ongoing discussion in Amsterdam about expansion of museums and galleries, and to contribute to the dialogue concerning management of collections and information transference that is now taking place in the international museum world.

The house museum was built a hundred years ago to provide a home for a great variety of objects, thereafter called a collection. New objects kept on coming, and still do, the house is bursting its seams. So what now? There are two obvious answers and they are the ones that have been constantly proffered by the press: either a bigger house and more objects, or the same house and less.

Does this mean the curtain falls on all discussion? Is there nothing left to say? Far from it! Let us take those four words: bigger, more, same, less. Let us link them with the words 'house' and 'object' and what might we get also?

- a bigger house for fewer objects
- a bigger house for the same number of objects
- a smaller house for fewer objects.

These additions are in fact no more than variations on a theme. The problems connected with museums are, and remain, three-dimensional ones, of a nineteenth-century nature, a question of height, width and depth.

Possibly the last-mentioned variation – a smaller house for fewer objects – offers the opening for further discussion. The words 'smaller' and 'fewer' sound like a punishment, as if a job has not been properly done, and now may be attempted in a more modest manner. This is certainly not the intention – as if expansion were the only means of demonstrating success. It is far more the case now that people feel the need for a certain condensation and the quick spread of knowledge. A crucial question is whether a museum for contemporary art must necessarily exhibit objects in their three-dimensionality in order to demonstrate what these objects are all about. Simply to exhibit is not enough, nor does it seem possible to pass on knowledge without some sort of material (physical) presence. Thus every answer will suggest a relationship between, on the one hand the minimum of three-dimensional space that is required in order to transfer a maximum of knowledge, and on the other hand the maximum space needed in order to air a minimum of the information thought necessary.

Here we witness the conflict between the crowd and the individual, the specialist and the tourist, the glutton and the connoisseur. This conflict is utterly predictable and logical because the museums and galleries have for years defended – as has no other social body – the traditional art-historical values such as authenticity and originality.

And now we have to foot the bill. At the very moment that the house bursts its seams, the guided tour operators and those with a commercial nose are pounding on the door. How do we accommodate the crowd? How do we preserve the individual?

The crowd wants more of the same thing: unique objects arranged in an eye-catching composition. The individual wants something else: to meander and to discover.

As I have said, the answer is a certain type of relationship. In order to create a relationship the first thing to do is define the outer limits.

This collection of papers is by way of being such a definition.

The texts are absolute, they should be seen in a certain perspective, they are time-restricted. This is a cross-section of how some people – artists and those professionally involved with art – think about things. Uniting them is a critical question mark beside the self-imposed mission of museums and galleries to exhibit the authentic object. The texts are written independently from each other. Overlapping and conflicting meanings pop up as unexpected treasures. It is to the reader to collect these treasures ¶

translation WENDIE SHAFFER

PETER FEND

*If you're
Not
Engaged in
History,
you're
Not
Engaged*

Mediamatic 6 # 2

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My career began in 1977 when John Gibson, then famous for his commissioning of large artists' projects, told patron Maya Hoffmann and artist Dennis Oppenheim that he would not work on getting an assemblage of large outdoor works built on her vast holdings in the Camargue marsh of southern France. He said giant projects are too much work, and that the patron and artist should settle for having clay models put on display at the Basel Kunstmuseum, just in time that year for the Art Fair.

I decided to do what Gibson would not do.

I took literally the stated ambitions of Walter De Maria to have a construction company to build large outdoor projects, instead of just an art foundation building one-of-a-kinds.

I took literally what De Maria told me about wanting to build many Lightning Fields, thinking that they might have both an ecological and artistic value.

I took literally the voicings by Oppenheim and Acconci to make architecture – spaces in which the body is participant – not just art.

I took literally the ambitions of Beuys and Smithson to operate in the real world, to make ideas from art manifest in daily life.

Recalling the Futurists and Constructivists, and knowing from Gordon Matta-Clark what he was intending to start with his follow-through on Leonidov's *Sky Hook*, only halted by death, I focused on directing ideas from art to mass media, the media which people commonly believe, and to large-scale construction and industry. This had occurred in many times past, like the Renaissance. Why not now?

I discovered a few obstacles:

1 The existing power structure does not want an immanent change in the means of production, in the industrial and hence social fabric, of new art. David Rockefeller explained to Les Levine that dole-granting institutions like the National Endowment for the Arts were created to isolate artists from each other, to confine their attention to polite tasks, and to prevent them from combining and gaining the sort of power over material culture and the built reality as it is enjoyed by, for example, the big oil firms. Art is left in a condition of requiring 'support'.

2 The secret police regard art as essentially dangerous, being heretical, and they seek consistently to slow it down, de-fang it, distort its market and incentives, render it nearly harmless. I can cite from experience the authorities in Germany, the us, France, the UK, even Holland. A game goes on. It is little different from what has been going on in allegedly totalitarian states like the Soviet Union, where secret police efforts to control art were well known.

3 After observing the Iran-Contra scandal (at the UN, in respected newspapers, in Pakistan, in Germany), and after observing efforts by German secret agents to doctor satellite photographs, plant false news stories and create fake scenarios of alleged assassination attempts to accelerate unification, I conclude that there are two professional avenues for people with artistic imaginations: the art world, including museums, galleries and critics; and the secret police. One is proclamatory and public, but with little power; the other operates quietly, behind the scenes, but usually – except in the case of political breakdown – has dominant power over public opinion and business policy. One professes to try making people more intelligent. The other has the task, in addition of conserving 'intelligence' for itself, of keeping people stupid.

4 The art world is penetrated by the secret police. The secret police are not penetrated by the art world – but they can be outflanked. Artists can spread their ideas and work to many countries, many cultures, many different social strata and cultural markets. Generally, the more respectable and well-funded an art institution or gallery, the greater the likelihood a penetration or compromise. The more likely there are national government efforts to decide what is part of a national cultural voice. The artist can outflank by going pan-national.

5 The art critic, though necessary to the representation of new ideas, can also be an obstacle. Usually, given their role of survey and selection, and their career need to not make mistakes, they tend to manage portfolios of artists and ideas much as stockbrokers manage portfolios of companies to trade. They prefer to rest secure with whatever paradigms of selection they have developed. To command proper respect, one must outflank them.

In 1989, for example, a show of mine, when reviewed by a leading critic, earned doubt, incomprehension, a complaint that the ideas may be good and may be well-intentioned but are not clear. At the same time, the producer of a popular us tv show,

reaching a daily audience of 10-20 million, saw the show, promptly understood and liked the ideas, and arranged for a 45-minute broadcast. The audience is chiefly working class. The host, a national figure, is famous for making fun of his guests. But in this broadcast, the host and his studio audience liked what the guest was saying, understood what he was saying and showing, and endorsed it all heartily. The people understood; the art critic did not: who's more intelligent? The same happens with other professions: architects get it, scientists get it, TV journalists get it, politicians from aggrieved countries get it, but – even though all the ideas can be traced directly to art – most critics do not. An artist who attempts to be understood by critics but who fails to attend to a diversified public is bound for oblivion.

6 In the world of art, unlike virtually all other fields of inquiry and action – with the exception, possibly, of dentistry – it is both possible and even encouraged to know virtually nothing outside of what is known in the world of art. The knowledge that educated people at cocktail parties are supposed to have of world affairs, of economics, of science and engineering – or even architecture – is neither expected or desired among those who call themselves artists or who make a profession of selecting, writing about or being curators for artists. As one who has moved in many circles, I conclude that there are two kinds of parties: one, for people who generally know what's going on, but tend to know little about art; the other, for people in the art world, who tend to know nothing about what's going on. This makes art cut off from the rest of the world. Even though it may be important, it has no interface. What it knows cannot be integrated with what other people know. In 1978, when I was explaining to a major curator how scientists were advocating the controlled harvesting of wild animal species as more efficient than animal or even most plant domestication, and how artists like Joseph Beuys – calling himself *Chief of the Hunters* – were meeting what the scientists said was a major requirement, a change in cultural attitudes, the curator dismissed the scientific views as absurd. Within a month a front-page story of a major news magazine featured the scientists' views. The curator refused to entertain new ideas from outside her immediate profession. More, she refused to entertain ideas which in the normal world would be cover-story news. I met this curator, now more powerful, at a party recently in Paris: she is very busy buying and selling the names of individual star artists. It would have been futile to raise the issue of overall change in the material culture. Why did Beuys do *Coyote*? The question is better discussed outside the art world.

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I do not speak alone. A bid for genuine power and a genuine hearing expands. Artists increasingly seek ways out of the art world. Jeff Koons, Jenny Holzer, Rebecca Horn, Richard Prince – all seek a wider audience.

What can the museum, the institutional structure specified for art, do about that?

First, as I know from experience, the museum – like the church of centuries before – provides sanctuary. What you cannot do in the real world, or what causes interference or blockage from the secret police, can – at least on a simulative level – be conducted with safety within the museum or curatorial context. If I propose a Black Sea consolidation in public in Germany or Austria, I risk criminalization, but if I propose it through a museum or culture-fest context, I can. Then, as one curator emphasized, *it's only art*. By rendering ideas in a context of art, hence harmless and unreal, the museum allows ideas at least to survive.

Next, how might we allow the ideas to expand? How might we allow ideas to take root and spread? Why else have an idea if it cannot become manifest in the world?

Richard Serra has spent decades executing the same ideas about great weights positioned in space: where is the architecture that can ensue?

Michael Heizer, Dennis Oppenheim, Walter De Maria, Bruce Nauman and others produced giant earthworks, starting almost 30 years ago. Their ideas have had no succession. Instead, their contemporaries in the Soviet Union, if working as military

engineers, as we noticed with satellite imagery of the Iran-Iraq war zone, have more chance of building what the Western artists once tried out. But what the Soviets built has been largely destroyed by Western military action, covert in Iran in 1987, overt in Kuwait in 1991. Nothing yet stands, achieved, from the art initiated over a generation ago. Instead we live with a sterile imitator (it looks like the earth art of the 60s and 70s, but it does not act like it, nor has any intellectual continuation of it) named Turrell.

So, art is without consequence. It remains furtive, occasional, confined to efforts by individualists now and then, no efforts taking hold to become standard in mass media or architecture. No artist today has anything near to the power of contract construction of, say, Michelangelo, and none has close to the seminal role in engineering and science, in the invention of machines, cameras and weapons, of Leonardo da Vinci and his (many) competitors.

This is less the fault of artists, who cannot help what they do or think, than of the art world. This is the fault of curators, collectors, critics, and the fault ultimately of the institution to which they are all beholden: the museum.

If someone tells me to accommodate someone so that I could (maybe) have a museum show, and if accommodation means being 'Peter Fend' an 'artist' or 'Peter Fend' the 'art star', then I avoid the arrangement. No contemporary art star with museum exhibitions can get anything truly achieved with his or her ideas. The individuation of the artist, and the isolation of intellectual exchange into one person, renders the art sterile, unfulfilled.

By now, the discourse started by Serra, Matta-Clark and Highstein should have yielded buildings as epic as the Pantheon.

By now, the structures first tested by Heizer and Smithson should have yielded a radical transformation in land use throughout Africa, the Americas and Asia.

By now, the rapid-sequence work of Sharits, Paik and Snow should have led to forms of commercial information display mimicking the eye-brain system, as a rapid change-detector, for use by people who make decisions.

By now, questions of whether to do high-definition television, or do real-time image processing, or do parallel screen display of analogic color fields, should have been solved – given the trillions of guilders at stake.

What people know of the world, and how they arrange their material affairs in this world, will be critical to their evolution as a species. Art, as a probe into the future modalities of knowing and display, and into future possible arranging of space for living, and into future standards of wealth and value, therefore of investment and accumulation, is critical to evolution. It must be followed up with new techniques of construction, of information display, of information diffusion, of materials extraction and recycling. It must be followed up with a more efficient industrial system. Otherwise it is just a bauble for the idle, a toy for those who seek status, a nothing distracting those who think from what must be done.

The art world is the last bastion of royalism. It has many people who would pretend to be king, or queen, or – as Steve Pollack said – dictator. It has an elaborate ritual for consuming time and money, called the one-person show, the international – properly selected – museum show, and the vagabondage among art-market capitals worldwide, such that wherever you are you're in the same place, with some selection of the same people, all proving that laughing and smiling can be done anywhere, as money is not a problem and work is, well, done by someone else. Nothing big needs to get built. No world problems, no architectural needs, no state disinformation, need to be met. And once an idea gets as far as being a model for presentation on the lawn of the Basel Kunstmuseum, or some such place for drinks and talk, then there is nothing more necessary to do about it. If the idea should die or be forgotten, well, there's still the piece. And it looks good. So let's party. And let them, the public, those not with us, eat some phrases like *Stupid people shouldn't breed*.

If you're Not Engaged in History, you're Not Engaged

A few months ago I was asked to propose a software program for Sony for its new High-Definition TV. I was asked to do so as an artist. That is, I was asked to do so as someone with ideas who can be rewarded enough with a name in an advertisement ('star artist'), but without any notable rights of follow-through or business control in case the ideas should work. This is a sure way to be 'appropriated'.

Considering this difficulty, I discussed with a colleague how to develop the software program on our own, in our home country. It turns out that virtually any funding for a program would come either directly or indirectly from the US Department of Defense. Another sure way to be appropriated.

What others take from inventive minds is far more than what inventive minds, the so-called artists, can appropriate from others.

Where is it safe to develop a new idea for visual culture? I propose, for discussion in Europe and The Netherlands (leave aside the rest of the art world, for now), the museum.

I do not mean the present-day museum. I do not mean the institution which, anxious for prestige, seeks to confer prestige and honour on safely-established artists as soon as their work has become well-known – to the art world – and already become boring – to the art world. Most of the real world does not care, anyway. If there would be a visit to a museum to see the work of an established artist, it would be conducted as a matter of Culture and Prestige, as a way of becoming more correct, not especially in order to get any ideas that can be put to use. I had the honor once of travelling with about 30 art world insiders by TGV to the Center for Communication and Culture in St. Etienne to attend the opening of a show about public issues and communication within St. Etienne. Not one person from St. Etienne, or from outside the immediate travelling entourage, with the exception of two or three museum employees, attended the opening. And probably very, very few from St. Etienne ever saw the show. The entire episode was a waste of government money – probably to the pleasure of the secret police, who would like art to have no consequence.

And now, in Berlin, the Nationalgalerie presented to the international art world, plus a few public visitors who would like to be intimidated by Art, a one-man exhibition of someone everyone already knows, Anselm Kiefer. The museum has done its job of making what is past and done Official. This is too small. It must stop.

There should be two types of museums.

One, in line with recent custom, that conserves and archives the art of the past. I do not mean 'recent past', such that artists and curators alike spend their lives trying to be involved in commemorative shows while an artist is still alive, conferring on each other a joint prestige. I mean the Closed Past. The artists involved are dead. The issues they raise are no longer current. There is nothing contemporary or modern about the work.

The other, completely different, not trying to dignify or memorialize or elevate to long-term memory the work of anything contemporary, not trying to archive or conserve or make Official what happened in recent years, is an institution involved directly, hands on, in the production of art today. One might speak less of a museum than of a sanctuary, a protected place in which new ideas and invention flourish, without having to be appropriated by Sony or converted by the Pentagon. The museum becomes a copyright-sharing workshop, a place in which artists can collect energy and generate co-reflective work. A prime example, I believe, was the *News Room* at Museum Fodor in 1989. Another example: the performances and in-situ actions of conceptual artists during the 1970s. The competition is not for an authoritative exhibition of already past art by an already too-well-known personality. The competition is for the hottest event in town, the biggest splash, the greatest attention, the most press, and not art press especially. If a museum of contemporary art cannot draw a large public audience from its immediate region, never mind the

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vagabond art milieu, then it fails to perform its function. This function, like that of the church in medieval Europe, is public display.

The art on a church was meant to say to everyone what in Latin they could not understand. Why not now? The art at a museum allegedly modern or contemporary should have no dignifying function, meant to elevate the status of already-established reputations, but rather a publicity function. Whatever happens there is produced and invented now, by people engaged in discourse on current questions, now, with all the riot and confusion of now. No retrospectives. Not even any authoritative shows or catalogs. Not even any curator's surveys. Certainly not what has become of *Documenta*, an attempt by all involved to make inscriptions in Art History.

Art History is bunk. No one engaged in art should be thinking about whether they will be in Art History. That decision will not rest with the curators, or critics, or even artists. It will rest with the generals and politicians. It will rest with whoever controls the political and economic power of coming centuries. If Western or American power is in eclipse, then the art of course goes into eclipse. If there were many scholars, priests and artists once in Alexandria, the destruction of their civilization meant, of course, the end of their 'art history'. A culture is strong only as its economy is strong, not the other way around.

Which is to say... since we are all trying to overcome mortality... if you wish to make contemporary art with highest impact and durability, then don't spend time addressing the art world. Spend time addressing the real world, the world around you, the public altogether. And don't spend time making sure that some critic or collector likes what you do. Spend time using your artistic capabilities, or your critical scrutiny, or your curatorial sense, or your architectural drive, to assure as strong and durable a material culture as possible. That means working on current problems, current issues, in current time, for the greatest vigor possible of a material culture in concurrence with the other species. As with the cave artists before, an artist earns that title only if directly engaged in assuring fertility, of the tribe, of the human race, of the other species, of the world altogether. Where are the fora, where the meeting halls and exposition rooms, where the urgent cave art of today can be seen? There, I propose, shall be the present museums of present-day responsive art.

A dealer in Cologne, despite having bought a piece of mine, once said to me that a show about the Persian Gulf at the time of the Persian Gulf crisis was incorrect: art, he explained, should not be engaged in current events; it should not be engaged in History. Oh? What are we to say, then, of Trajan's Column, or the paintings of Jean-Louis David, or the great room of Rubens at the Louvre (more a museum of life than of 'art'), or the Ara Pacis, or the Dying Soldier on the frieze of the Parthenon? Art, in my view, should only be engaged in current events. For only there, at the centre of the stream of History, is the vitality of Life.

There are museums to save what has happened, to assure a record.

There are museums, or rather *kunsthalle*, where full riot and tempest can occur. These should not try to assure or save anything. They should simply be congresses, meeting halls, conflict zones, stadia, in which artists variously struggle to address not just each other or an art world but an entire community around them, to restore their leadership in the formation of the material culture upon which the survival of all depends.

An artist who seeks to have 'a museum show' may as well be deposited in a morgue. Nobody in power takes a museum show seriously.

Seek the people. Speak out and show to them. If any scribes can come afterwards to inscribe what was done in Art History, that will be a consequence of the success of the people you address in maintaining a strong Economy amidst a Variety Theatre of species. ¶

MARK MADEL

Museum :

Friend

or

Foe

?

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99% of all the art in all the art museums around the world should be immediately removed and burnt (in environmentally-safe power generators) to provide electrical power for the planet for an hour or two.

Well, alright, I'm not unfeeling. Instead, we'll have a massive lottery at each museum. Everyone is invited. All the art prior to 1900, or 1875, or 1850, what-ever (we'll take a vote), is up for grabs. Pass out the da Vinci's, the Rembrandts, the Monets; no one leaves empty-handed.

These proposals might amaze or anger some people. Destroy or disperse our cultural heritage, those beautiful artworks, those vessels of history? Never!

But what exactly is the purpose for us, the audience, of incredibly large buildings filled to the brim (including the basements and storage rooms) with old, reconstructed, often mediocre man-made objects? And, most importantly for me, do these objects continue to 'operate' in a way similar to that which various artists had originally desired?

Let's examine first the assumption that the museums act as a sort-of cultural/aesthetic bank.

There is a widely-held belief among the public, although less accepted in the artistic community, that art, at it's best, can embody something 'eternal'. This notion seems rather outdated, and susceptible to logical scrutiny.

Nothing in this universe is eternal. Objects aren't eternal; ideas aren't eternal; the earth isn't eternal; even the universe itself isn't eternal. Everything, including art, is subject to continual change, and has what we might call a 'viable life span'.

A piece of art is created, and then it begins to be transformed immediately. In a material sense, by natural atrophy and constant retouching and restoring. Conceptually, via interpretation and re-interpretation, and the passage of ideological time. Eventually the artwork is destroyed or it 'dies'; it changes so much that it becomes something else. In Duchamp's words: *After (it dies), it's called the history of art.*

If we imagine, as most of us do, that art is an expression or reflection of a particular moment in time by a particular person in a particular place (an attempt at a different type of communication, you might say), then it's feasible to consider it as functioning successfully if this 'message', or some part of it, is passed along to other people. Now, the possibility of this happening accurately, in other words, without a high level of misinterpretation, seems most likely the closer you are to the moment of creation. The greatest impact can occur during this 'viable life span' of the artwork. This explains why most artists I know, myself included, are inspired most by art of our own period, and less by work from an other era.

The fact that some people prefer 'Old Masters' to modern art, has more to do with the failure of modern artists to converse with anyone but themselves, than with the ability of those people to experience the older work as actually intended.

For example, how do I appreciate a 300 year old painting I'm confronted with in a museum? On a physical level, how similar is it to how the artist wanted it to appear 300 years ago? The materials with which the painting was made have been subject to intense aging, and, most likely, many cleanings and retouchings; it may even have been considerably altered by a restorer at some point in time. It may be hung behind glass, obscuring a real evaluation, or, in the case of the most famous artworks such as the *Mona Lisa*, it may not be the actual object at all, but only a duplicate on display, while the genuine painting is tucked safely away in some vault.

In conceptual terms, how am I to interpret the 300 year old thoughts and purposes behind this piece of art? The ideas inherent in anything created are intrinsically linked to the place and point in time in which it's created. As time flows on, ideas are modified and revised; social and artistic perspectives and beliefs are altered; until a moment is reached where what is truly grasped is further away rather than closer to what was intended. I can understand what the artist's motives may have been, and I can imagine the period in which the work was produced, but I can't 'experience' that object from that unique place.

I'm not arguing that older artworks can't be appreciated in some way. I'm saying that what we see and comprehend has little relation to what the piece looked like and meant when it was created. Instead, we perceive what it has *become* over time. I wonder how many artists would be pleased to see what their work has transformed into 200 or 300 years later? I know it scares the hell out of me.

Now, many people will already understand, and some might even agree with the premise, that what we encounter in art museums has less to do with the integrity or

purpose of individual works and more to do with art history. But what exactly is the historical reasoning behind keeping virtually everything from as far back as possible jammed into these buildings?

Well, stripped of artistic motives, so to speak, some of these objects could conceivably be useful as straight historical records. But this role might be better exploited in a museum devoted specifically to human history.

As a possible chronicle of art from a certain time, these collections seem highly suspect. There's no reason to believe that the most interesting, the most innovative, or even the most beautiful works from any given period are what ends up in the museums. There is just too much chance and economic or personal motivation involved in the selection process. Basically, we can assume that what is accumulated in museums is not a catalogue of the diversity of art from a particular era, but more the random remains of human judgement and stupidity.

In terms of linear communication, art history can be perceived as a series of gestures and messages passed along and built-upon over time. Some with great influence, and others with little or no consequence. Yet, distinctions along these lines, especially in regard to ancient art, are seldom made in art museums. And the decisions of what is displayed, how it's displayed, and where it's displayed, can appear to bend art history in a direction different from the way it might actually have occurred. So, functioning as pure records of art history, there is again reason to doubt the accuracy of museums.

Perhaps, given all this, many of us can recognise that most art museums that deal in 'dead' artwork don't serve one purpose well, but many purposes only slightly. A bit of barely functioning art, a dash of human history, and a touch of art history, all mixed-up together with questionable motives for buying or supporting or displaying certain art.

This model of the art museum, developed in the 18th century (when 'visual' art was mostly just that: visual), seems out of step not only with current art practices and the conversion of the artist from craftsman to reflexive messenger, but also with the ever decreasing amount of space and money available, and the sky-rocketing prices of older work.

When I was young, I was naive enough to believe that art museums operated outside of market pressures and critical prejudices, and with the interests of artists and their audience in mind. Perhaps it's time to rebuild the role of how museums should function, and to bring it closer to this unsophisticated ideal.

I have, surprisingly, a few suggestions along these lines. These proposals are based on the assumption that, as an artist, I have at least a small inkling of the wishes and desires of other artists, and perhaps even, God forbid, of the audience. On the other hand, I have absolutely no idea what goes through the minds of curators and museum directors.

I'm also working from the premise that art can be its most exciting and most revealing when experienced within its 'viable life span'. It's during that span that it might truly speak to us, from our own shared moment in time.

Okay, so what should museums do with all that 'old stuff'?

Obviously, first it should be catalogued and documented using the best methods and the latest technology available. There is always room to electronically store information. Scholars of history and anyone else fascinated with the past can study these electronic records.

Now, what about the objects themselves?

Well, I personally prefer the lottery method of distribution, but I suppose it makes more economic sense for museums to sell what they can in order to generate income. Wealthy individuals and private institutions can take over the care of these antiques, instead of the other way around. With rapidly inflating art prices, this is happening anyway.

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Museums could then concentrate on showing currently functioning work, and the 'true' art history discourse could be relegated to books and panel discussions.

But which artworks should be kept, and which should be sold?

In digital technology there is an acronym known as FIFO; which stands for 'first in, first out'. Simply put, when you have a specific amount of space, and that space becomes filled, the first thing that entered, in other words, the oldest, is the first thing to exit.

So, if you apply this policy to a museum, there would be a constantly shifting collection, with newer pieces arriving, and older works 'leaving'. Museums should never own more work than can be displayed at any time. A basic cut-off point, 150 years, for example, could be set, by a committee of historians, artists, and the public, which would be the approximate limit for keeping and exhibiting works of art.

Of course, every piece of art has its own individual life span; so exceptions to this cut-off point would have to be allowed for. But how do we determine these exceptions, or, more specifically, if an artwork is still alive for the majority of its audience?

This brings me to my last and most passionate point; the desire to see museums stop interfering, physically and intellectually, with the functioning of works of art.

All retouching, restoring, reconstruction, protection, or *any* type of intervention in the normal, material life of a piece of art should be completely prohibited. These manipulations are, to me, equivalent to keeping a person alive on life-support equipment months or years after its brain is dead. I would like to believe that most artists would prefer not to have their work altered or 'improved' by other people. Decay and death are natural and inseparable parts of creation. They can be fascinating in and of themselves.

Also, once the incentive of 'eternal' preservation is banished from museums, they won't need to rob some artworks of their most basic functions; such as keeping people from touching an object that was made to be touched, or placing a highly visual object like a painting behind glass; in effect, concealing its visual appearance. These ridiculous symptoms of protection should be a thing of the past.

In a conceptual sense, museums should be as neutral as possible. Any attempts at explanation or education, about the motivations of an artist, or what a certain piece of art might mean, should be eliminated. If an artwork can't communicate without the need for added, external information, it's either dead or was never alive to begin with. Besides, what's most important is not the museum's opinion, but the public's. Let interpretations of influence, significance and viability be left to the audience.

In fact, I think museums should keep a data-base of audience reaction and interaction with the art. Members of the public should be enticed, with social or economic incentives (maybe that lottery idea...), to supply information, either by form or some electronic means, about their feelings and responses to specific work and to the collection in general. If enough of this knowledge were gathered, not only could it provide vital data about which works were still actively functioning and in what way; but it would also give statistics about (and this I find most fascinating from the standpoint of my own work) how the relationship between artwork and audience, in all its subtle manifestations, changes over time.

So, this data-base, along with other accumulated opinions, could be used to help determine which works were still 'living', and which works might be sold, recycled or raffled off. The cycle of life, you know; the old *must* die and leave in order to make room for the new.

Consequently, I think if these few, modest proposals on my part were implemented, museums could be much more vibrant and stimulating places of artistic expression and audience participation. The functioning of the artwork, in as complete a way as possible, would be the prime concern of the museum, from the inception of a piece until its death. †

PAUL PERRY

*New
Collector*

I

It was August and a terrible month.

Would new pleasure keep growing and burst red?

The salmon ascended rivers, jumping stones.

Leap frogging the tall trees, fallen long ago.

Leaves gone, trunk softened from exposure to water and sun.

The salmon too are becoming soft.

Their organs withering, their bodies

filling up with sperm and eggs.

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Moss is giving a party in his garden. Over the lawns and across the gravel paths leading down to the river, guests circulate, carried along by the warm breezes and the gently perfumed puffs of a summer afternoon. In the shade of the aviary, Mandarin Joe Kwan stands in his pale orange ski jacket – much too hot for this weather – lecturing to a group of disciples. In one hand he holds a nearly finished glass of orange juice, in the other a handkerchief. As he talks his arms pump up and down as if signalling some sort of coded yellow semaphore, mouth saying one thing – arms saying another.

This method of discourse always ensures some confusion, there being a distinct possibility that his words are carrying a double meaning. Mindful of his tricks, his listeners both watch carefully and listen, against a background of warbling birds, flowers, and ruffled cocktail dresses. As Kwan's words spread out over the dahlias, the handkerchief folds and unfolds itself in his fingers.

Behind him, in the distance, the door of the teahouse is open. A particularly well dressed couple pauses on the stone steps. (The microphone moves in closer.)

ALEX

*You've missed the point completely, Julia.
There were no tigers. That was the point.*

JULIA

*Then what were you doing up in the tree:
You and the Maharaja?*

A face appears in the doorway: *Alex! Julia!*

ALEX

*My dear Julia!
(Julia begins to laugh)
It's perfectly hopeless. You haven't been listening.*

JULIA

You'll just have to tell me all over again, Alex.

ALEX

I refuse to tell the same story twice.

JULIA

*But I'm still waiting to know what happened.
I know it started as a story about tigers.*

ALEX

Julia I told you, there were never any tigers.

The face, without waiting for a reply, turns back to the crowd in the room and cracks into a grin, sharing their joke. A round face, which you could describe as dark and symmetrical, except for the two rows of white teeth, in good condition but tossed every which way, like trees in a village square after rogue elephants have been by.

A tea trolley arrives, laden with a large white pot and cups. Steam pours and spoons clatter as cups and saucers pass from hand to hand.

Ta.

Ta, love.

Milk?

JULIA

Sir Salar, we do so look forward to paying a visit. And seeing your collection.

SALAR

*(His round face again breaks into that grin.)
Absolutely smashing, Julia. You know you and your children are always welcome.*

ALEX

Khyber winters come early, Julia. That is if you still plan it this year.

SALAR

Oh please, you must not worry about the details. Kwan will be there. He will arrange everything.

The character in this story called Salar is really Sir Salar Jang, Maharaja of Hyderabad, a late 19th century potentate who adored England and things English and spent a fortune trying to collect both, on his annual shopping visits to London. Because of his habit of buying seemingly without discrimination, purchasing whatever struck his fancy and apparently without troubling to ascertain its value or worth to his collection, he was labelled by many a *hoarder*, the worst and lowest type of collector. The fact was that none of the art or antique dealers could follow his choices, or put a precise finger on his taste. One moment he would show exquisite judgement in picking from a cabinet of mediocrities a rare piece of crystal, and the next he would be choosing drawings from a portfolio that a dealer had agreed to keep for a day or two to look at – but had found absolutely worthless. But in London business was business, and each year while the Maharaja was in town, the Maharaja bought, and the dealers naturally did their very best to accommodate him. For those couple of months, they kept their shops specially preened and primed for his visits and looked up expectantly each time the bell above the door jingled. Some dealers, thinking the Maharaja was attracted to the showy and bright, tried to bait him by placing gaudy umbrella stands in their ordinarily tasteful windows and propping peculiar clocks and hat racks in prominent places. Others were less opportunistic and gently attempted to instill some consistent rudiments of taste into this strange man, showing him their best pieces, explaining their stock of pictures and offering quiet advice. What most tried their patience however, was attempting to convince the Maharaja of the extra worth of a piece that was unique – for if the Maharaja found an object that he liked he would always think it better if he could order a dozen. The good dealer could produce arguments until he was blue in the face, but in his conviction Sir Salar would remain unmoved. He preferred pieces available in duplicate, and refused to see the desirability of owning the sole exemplar of anything.

It was the same at Harrods and the other establishments in Knightsbridge. In those days Harrods advertised that they could supply anything in the world anywhere in the world. The Maharaja loved Harrods for this, and the floor managers loved him. Not only would he buy in bulk, he would consistently buy items that had gone out of fashion or which no one else wanted, what the managers termed *slow movers*. For his part, Sir Salar was continually enchanted by the enormous range of products and manufactured goods that the department store offered under one roof. It was as if the best stalls of all the bazaars of India had been sewn and welded together for his pleasure. And what's more, Harrods could supply things impossible to find in India – beaver skin coats for example, or blue Aztec jewelry. The Indian *bazaarwallah* simply could not match the diversity of Knightsbridge or keep up with the latest technology. It was in Harrods that the Maharaja truly became a consumer king. He would spend many happy hours wandering up and down the aisles of goods, trailing clerks carrying packages and lists itemising his purchases. A typical week day would find him on the third floor examining cameras or choosing boxes of thimbles, or on the first floor admiring spider-web Tiffany lamps just imported from the master's studio in New York.

Even though Salar's collection included many priceless art works, his reputation as a hoarder and of being absolutely unable to discern between the good and the bad caused most of the cultured class and literary society of London to gradually snub

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his company. Each year it became worse. They started to turn their backs on him at the theatre. They whispered and sniggered in Pall Mall. Eventually it seemed that only Oscar Wilde's crowd would have him to their parties – and then only in his role as a colourful and controversial figure – but this was a small mercy, for they themselves had recently found disgrace. And of course the society columnists, little maggots that they are, had a field-day. As the Maharaja fell from social grace they made him into something of a public laughing stock. It got so bad that Mandarin Joe would have to spend a half hour in the morning checking the papers and removing the pages containing derisive comments and ridicule. Had the Maharaja seen these, he would have found himself portrayed on alternate days as either the Human Magpie or Sir Flypaper. *The Human Magpie was sighted yesterday swooping down in Earls Court...* and so on. Even P&O, the great ocean liner company, could not escape the popular press's mocking tone. When the boat docked in Southampton to carry him and his treasures home, the notices listed it as the arrival of Noah's ark. It was all very cruel. Perhaps this cruelty was concealed jealously that a foreigner could afford to buy so much. Perhaps it was rooted in a deep seated – and barely recognised – outrage that the Maharaja could, each year, take away from England a number of important works of art and, along with everything else, bury them in India.

And it was true that his palaces in Hyderabad and Chitral were perversely filled with a mixture of the most commonplace and the rare, most rooms stacked up in this fashion literally to the ceiling. And it was true that his care for those priceless works of art, and the manner in which he kept them, shocked even his few friends who came from England to visit him and his collection, sympathetic to his project and intrigued. For it was not unusual for a visitor, browsing in the library at Hyderabad, to stumble across some treasure – a moth eaten first edition Cervantes, a mediaeval bible – lying tucked between old Sears and Roebuck catalogues.

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II

The gathering necessity is universal to all men. Every member of the *Family of Man*, from Eskimo to Aborigine, collects things, or in one way or another strives to maintain a set of personal possessions to which he or she can add. The differences between men lie in the scale and content of the collection – the degree of disinterest, the freedom of choice. Each collection varies according to the individual's and the culture's means. Some have better territory, some have more money, some are more greedy.

The role that collecting plays in our personal psyche has not really changed much over the last couple of thousand years. If we stop and consider for a while, we would be surprised to see that the act of collecting – that is our predisposition to hunting, gathering, and storing away for a rainy day – plays as important a role in our lives as it did for our paleolithic ancestors, who lived – compared to our Northern European ease today – in an existentially much tougher world. Where they gathered food, we gather information. Where they stockpiled for the coming winter, we collect things for pleasure and aesthetic reasons.

This is not to say that our contemporary forms of collecting are less essential to our existence. We still hunt for what we need because we need it. No matter what we call the hunting, or how we manage to camouflage the fact that we are doing it.

The essence of our collecting nature lies in the inner need we have to preserve objects and information which might prove useful to us later. This need probably runs metres deep, attached to a gene every human inherits. We are born with this trait, this urge to own and possess, and like all the other biological urges in our lives, we can subdue it and place it under control but never completely suppress it. The urge rises and is endlessly repeated. We remain, at heart, cavemen and women. With the brains of cavemen and women.

Every type of collecting, to remain true to the term, requires at least a minimal amount of discernment and involves making choices; but, as in the principle of natural selection, only by collecting the right things do we ensure our own and our culture's survival.

III

Moss's greatest passion was his bird collection, his aviary numbering as one of the finest in Britain. He was specially renowned for his magpies and birds of paradise. He was considered an expert on Passerines, or perching birds, and had contributed an article on these to the 9th edition *Britannica*.

Sing-a-song of sixpence,
pocket full of rye.
Four and twenty blackbirds,
baked in a pie.
When the pie was opened,
the birds began to sing.
Wasn't that a dainty dish,
to set before the King.

The magpie, a member of the order *Passerines*, is a European bird with a long pointed tail and black and white plumage. It, like the Australian bowerbird, has a reputation for stealing bright shiny objects and collecting all manner of strange things to line and decorate its nest. The male bowerbird in particular presents ethologists with a striking example of collecting behaviour in the animal kingdom. It designs and builds its bower – a tent or teepee-like construction which in some species can be up to two metres tall – so as to excite and attract a female for the purpose of mating. The male bowerbird also make the collections that are displayed in and around the bowers. It is quite extraordinary how each species of bowerbird specialises in collecting specific categories. The male Archbold's bowerbird, for example, collects things that are black, the male Gardner bowerbird, things that are red, and the male Satin bowerbird, things that are white or things that are shiny. The proportion and form of the bower construction and especially the quality and placement of the collection in and around the bower, influence the degree of the female interest and excitement. Thus a poor or carelessly put together collection severely decreases the chance of the male finding a mate.

Magpies and bowerbirds themselves are much sought after – attractive feathers and a twist of fate turn the collector into the collected. In the west the passerines have been kept as cage birds for a very long time. The origins of this practice are lost in antiquity, but it is known that by the 5th or 6th century BC the Greeks collected and kept a variety of songbirds, including magpies. Man's aesthetic tastes are attracted to the almost infinite variety of colours, patterns, behavioural traits, and songs found in these birds. The magnitude of today's cage-bird *fancy* is indicated by importation statistics on wild and semi-domestic birds: in one recent year alone, over 420,000 passerines – excluding canaries and parrots – were legally imported into the United States as cage birds.

Apart from referring to the bird and its collecting habits, the word magpie has a few other connotations which should be mentioned. A magpie is a term that a hunter will use to mean a rifle shot that strikes the outermost division but one of a target, as in *two bull's eyes and a magpie*. When such a shot is fired it is usually signalled by the waving of a black and white flag. The word magpie can also be used in a derogatory sense – because the bird's black and white feathers resemble clerical vestments – to indicate an Anglican bishop. By a strange extension and some word play, magpiety, both in and out of church, has come to mean a display of false piety.

Somewhat coarser, it has been left to those gentlemen belonging to the lower circles of society to invent the expression *magpie nest*, referring of course, to the place on a woman's body where a male member tries to roost. But by and large the most common associations with the word magpie suggest either those poor souls who share the bird's proverbial habits of stealing and hoarding or who are constant in their idle chatting.

IV

The biggest collector of all is our mind, which stores gigabytes of memories and experience: books, faces, painful lessons and past holidays are all locked away. The recording of these memories and their accumulation forms the shared database which is the basis of our civilisation. The rate or speed of our civilisation's development has always been in direct relation to – and in accordance with – the ability to access this database.

Our entire world has been built on foundations laid down in the past by others. The Japanese symbolise this in the landscaping of their gardens as the primordial tortoise on which the world rests. The tortoise is an island, poking his head up as a mountain. One of my favourite collectors of the 19th century, Des Esseintes, the hero of the novel *Against the Grain*, made an oblique reference to this imagery when he had a live tortoise back encrusted with carefully chosen gem stones in order to arrange a moving highlight for his Persian carpet. Des Esseintes was an estranged aristocrat, a withered end to a long family tree, whose life and collection can either be seen as a diseased *cul de sac* of old world values, an end game of aestheticism, or as a model precursor to the possibility of a New Collector. We today, living in the wealthy western world, collect our money and use it, as he did, as a key to access our culture and civilisation. Money, since at least the Renaissance, has been making not only the world but also culture go round. Civilisation grows. *We are standing on the shoulders of giants*. We are constantly on the verge of the new. New developments in the market place have ushered in the possibility of using money both to access civilisation *and* to make even more money. Our past plays a role in the economy. In an article on the history of western collecting in volume 12 of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia we find a socialist encapsulation of this phenomena:

In the time of the 20th century, collecting became a profitable form of tax-exempt investment, first in the USA and then in Europe, giving rise to considerable speculation on collectable objects.

Or as David Lynch portraying Gordon Cole in *Twin Peaks* so aptly put it:
MASSIVE, MASSIVE quantities of cherry pie!

V

The museums of this world are nothing but big refrigerators, categorising, sorting and storing our collections – and all very full. They too, form part of our inheritance, but unlike our instinct to collect, the idea of the museum is neither archaic nor innately human, it being a comparative latecomer to our social scene. Whatever the museum's lineage and from wherever its roots, the world that we are born into finds it sitting pretty and well established. There follows a tendency on our part to act as if the museum has always been there, to accept its premises as God given and its methods as natural laws. This poses a problem. We all know what the museum is and what it is for. Even before we step through the door of the foreign museum we know what we are going to find inside. The trouble is we do not question it, or its continued feasibility in the face of the new odds and changing conditions. Each new innovation is an update – but what good is that if the basic concept is hopelessly obsolete? How will we tell, if this concept remains a fixture in our lives?

What are museums?

Museums preserve our society's culture and heritage, or the culture and heritage of another.

Museums store our collected objects and museums divide those objects into categories.

Museums are security. Even if we never go into museums, the facade alone is enough to satisfy us that someone else is taking care of things.

Museums have over the decades become indispensable to us as social institutions, but like banks and hospitals, they must be trusted in order to be really useful. Is our feeling of security warranted?

It is just like a man who went on a journey, who called his servants and put his wealth in their charge. The servants thus should act for him in his best interest. Each according to his capacity.

I should point out that we have briefly returned to Moss's garden party. Mandarin Joe stands in the shade of an aviary filled with rustling magpies. He translates a biblical story for the benefit of his disciples:

To one he gave five pounds, to another two, to another one; to each according to his ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

The one who received five pounds then went and traded with them, and he earned five more.

Likewise the second one by trading gained two others.

But he who received one pound went and dug in the ground and hid his lord's money.

Wherever we travel today in the world we know we will find at least one friendly museum. Museums are in business as cultural hotels. They provide familiar watering-holes for the disoriented. Like good hotels they strive to be comfortable for the traveller and attract his or her return business the next time he or she is in town. Museums are designed and marketed to be visited by strangers, by tourists. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the rise of the modern museum was connected with the rise of mass tourism. Henry Ford himself was instrumental in bringing about the first open air museum in America. He had visions of the future.

Likewise our museum directors today closely follow the latest developments in mass tourism and hotel management, for it is assumed these will provide excellent models for the future directions of the museum. Recently I watched a television program concerning the development of MASSMOCA, the new Massachusetts Museum of Modern Art. A lot of research was done before the project was started: when all the different market analyses, prognoses for the future and feasibility studies were put together on a bookshelf, they measured a full metre of paper.

We can read in books and magazines about the *Museification of the World*. To what do these words refer? And what are the implications of this move? If we follow the news with any regularity we know that our world is in deep trouble, that man's technological advancements have caused the world's environment to change and this change is taking place at an accelerating rate. The word is - we are approaching ecological chaos and catastrophe. If we haven't yet acclimatised to the news of a generation in ecological decline, the signs are all around for us to see. For the cause of our species, other species are being shed at a sickening rate. Sixty years from now we can expect the human population of our already overpopulated planet to be

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double what it is today and at the same time a quarter of today's known species to be extinct. All this is going to occur without our raising an extra finger to help the process along and in spite of any measures we take now to stop it. We've built up considerable momentum, now we must deal with the consequences. The realisation is dawning that in order to survive man must become a planet manager. Sorting and storing the resources of the planet. So we see the Museification of the World.

From the informative media we learn that at this moment our own human genes, and those of the animals and plants that are important to us, are being mapped and preserved in enormous projects. Why? To record the genetic information before it is lost forever. Seed libraries containing complete gene pools are being built and placed in locations around the earth that are considered statistically safe from natural disaster. As cultural diversity disappears, endangered languages and traditions are recorded and collected in the field, and the information is stored and protected in warehouses and databases. Some of the more *folkloric* living traditions enjoy a status leap and become protected tourist sites. Safari parks are built and mediaeval villages reconstructed. Likewise a few of the more *cute* or visually attractive species are privileged enough to be left alone in their wild habitat. This is then fenced in around them and they are preserved in the open air for a few more generations. Business has the task of turning ecology into business. When the concerns of industry and business can afford it, legislation is passed creating 21st century Indian reservations, fish and wildlife parks are set aside and new monument lists are drawn up. There is no other solution open to us. Human life is supported by business. If business gave way now completely to ecology, the human catastrophe would be immeasurable. Our dependence has developed as we have progressed. As Thoreau warned in *Walden*: *But lo! Men have become the tools of their tools.*

The Museification of the World can engage two quite different approaches. Type 1 follows contemporary trends in order to keep abreast of the flood and up to date. It turns sections of the world into an informative and entertaining theme park. This seemingly modern approach actually continues the historical site of the museum as *wunderkammer* and place of dead roads. Like the more traditional museum it extends and replaces, it presents a set of tyre tracks into the past or to the momentarily non-accessible. The objects or information that are relegated to Type 1 museums are tokens, stand-ins for what they were, what is no longer, or what is somewhere else. This is why some schools of thought in this century have scorned museums as *dead* places.

It was August and it was warm. We were sitting outside with our espressos. The discussion was whether a love of museums was in fact a form of suppressed necrophilia.

MARK *Duchamp said once that every work of art has its own life span. It functions as an artwork only for a certain length of time, and after its time is up it belongs to the museum. What you see in the museum is only a dried shell of what once was.*

WILLEM

But when an artwork dies, does it hope to go to museum heaven?

MARK

Do horses want to go to glue factories?

WILLEM

If it means surviving death in one form or another – I imagine yes.

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FRED

I have always wondered where artwork hell was.

WILLEM

Again, the question Fred asked was: What does the museum mean to today's artist.

MARK

I know quite a few artists who would answer that question by asking whether the museum was a major museum.

The second sort of Museified World, Type II, breaks the mould of how we look at preserving and collecting things. It opens new categories and forms of collection, both in the finite physical realm and in the virtual world of information. Instead of being merely representative, the new realities erase the old.

The first Museification concept is like bottling jam and calling it fruit. You end up looking at jam and trying to imagine what the fruit looked like. After the fruit is no longer around you even begin to wonder whether it ever existed. Type I Museification is surrogate. The second preserve – and we have only just started to explore such avenues – can be imagined to be comparable to *in vitro* culture, the horticultural practice where new plants are cloned from a piece of material taken from anywhere on the original plant – even if it is just a minuscule bit of stem. With Museification Type II, the fruit is still bottled into jam, but the jam can be later raised from the dead, opened and planted to produce new fruit trees. Museification II represents a positive approach to the changing world and is truly progressive. Man takes control and, by creating and using new technology, manages to manage his environment. Control and the *will to power* rule again.

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Art's role?

And the artist's role?

And the museum's role?

And the collector's role?

Aloha. There's mangoes for breakfast.

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VI

But lol! Men have become the tools of their tools.

During the past decades, while the world has rapidly evolved in complexity, information has replaced gold, oil and diamonds as the world's most valuable commodity. Why? Because in a world of change and with so many variables in play, information allows us to anticipate altering conditions and prepare ourselves for the onslaught of new phenomena. It allows us to be able to predict the increasingly non-uniform behaviour of others; who they are, what they think and how they might possibly act towards us. Information provides us with a context in which to operate and interact with the world. We need to have high quality information. The better the quality, the better we can map our current position – our global position – and form an appropriate attitude and world picture.

In order to meet this need for information we have become a society of media watchers and subscribers. Media are our life lines. As the media become more demassified, major media are breaking down into multiple smaller and more specialised channels and more of us are given – and taking – the opportunity to talk back. We are becoming a society of message producers, casting out our own lines and networking. The definition of the artist in this world is expanding. As the amount of information increases the messages tend to become shorter and more fragmentary, so we can take in more in less time. The long discourse has yielded to

the magazine, newspaper and television, which delivers information in short bursts and clips. It becomes a major challenge to find and piece together enough consistent bits of information to bake a pie. Some of us are dealt wild cards. We are forced to hunt for what we need. The missing ingredients to our cognitive puzzle are floating around somewhere in the ether.

Most bits of information, when taken alone, are quite harmless, but there are some which, when combined improperly, produce poisons. To date, there are no controls over what is pumped into the information sphere and recently there has been voiced concern over the pollution of our idea space. What once was a singular figure, the *Spy who came in from the Cold*, is replaced by an increasing mass of business artists and entrepreneurs who have caught on to the lucrative wave of marketing and producing new and fresher information. Breeding data breeds contempt and, like the joke with rabbits, suddenly we are confronted with an enormous glut, a gargantuan surplus. We wake up to a nightmare on the information highway, our eyes fixed to a rising speedometer and the accelerator pedal stuck to the floor.

Looking at examples of our society's exponential growth has been a disconcerting pastime since Alvin Toffler published *Future Shock* in the early 70's. The facts and figures contained in these books and tracts are truly unnerving. I find that memorising a few helps me stand up at parties to postmodernist smart-asses, when they truck out the cliché that *there is nothing new under the sun*. I recently picked up this one from *Mediamatic* magazine: If we take the amount of information in the world available in the year 1 AD as 1 unit, it took 1500 years to double and another 250 years to double again. That is, the citizen of 1750 had 4 times as much information at his disposal as the citizen of the year 1. By 1900 it had doubled again to 8 times. And by 1950 it had doubled again to 16 times. The final year of the study was 1973 and by then the citizen had 128 times more information available to him than his ancestor in the year 1. Today – in 1991 – it is estimated that the total amount of information available to us is doubling every 18 months. My question to you is this – actually it's two questions: How long is it going to be before it is doubling daily? And how are we going to keep track of it all?

Storing the information is not going to be such a problem, because even though the recording of the information must rely upon physical means and that takes space – even personal memory depends upon acids and cells – information is principally a virtual commodity and virtuality can be packed tight. Perhaps this is why, contrary to all our other commodities, the amount of accessible and embodied information in the world is exploding. Not only is there a market for it, but we have enough room. The spirit survives in another space. Virtual worlds, where forms are made of data, are going to allow new possibilities for the tourist and collector. Charles Fort, in his book *New Lands*, written at the end of the First World War, suggested this possibility when all the known land has been settled and used up. *The young man is no longer urged, or is no longer much inclined, to go westward. He will, or must, go somewhere. If directions alone no longer invite him, he may hear invitation in dimensions. Our will to power triumphs in the jaws of physical misfortune. We can only match the generative force of nature through endless gibberish applied superiorly.* Point forward. There will be new things to collect.

VII

Joe Kwan came from an ancient Mandarin family, which had lived several generations in Singapore before settling in Goa in the 1860's. The son of two doctors, Joe was the youngest of four children and the only one born in Goa. He was a precocious child, showing signs at an early age of being a prodigy. At two and half, he was fluent in Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, English and Hindi.

On his fifth birthday, as was the custom for such celebrations, his father and mother engaged a small troupe of entertainers to perform for his party. The troupe consisted of a snake charmer, two musicians, a contortionist, a fakir and a juggler. The afternoon before the performance, while the whole house was in an uproar of preparation, a tent was set up for them in the garden; and before going to bed, Joe, who was quite excited by the party's prospects, received permission from his parents to peek inside.

Accompanied by a family servant and chatting like a magpie, Joe waited as the cloth covering the entrance was pulled back. Inside was a low bed or divan, strung with rope and apparently devoid of cushions. Beside it, a nearly naked man lay stretched out on the ground asleep. This was the fakir of the troupe, his brown body looking as weathered as a discarded cigar. Smitten with youthful curiosity, the boy reached up for the servant's hand and together they took a few cautious steps forward until they were standing next to the sleeping figure. Trying to wake him, the boy addressed him first softly in Hindi, and then, when there was no response, more loudly in Portuguese. The fakir remained oblivious to these salutations. The boy repeated them even louder. The fakir, though obviously not dead, remained as if dead. Sensing something was not right, the servant pulled Joe back. But Joe, not accustomed to having his will thwarted, shook free from the servant and, before he could be stopped, landed the fakir a small kick. A slight tremor moved through the man's body and his eyelids opened for a fraction of a second, revealing only white. Suddenly embarrassed and thinking the man must be sick, the boy opened his mouth to apologise, his embarrassment rapidly turning to fear when he found that no words came out. With wide open eyes, and with the servant vigorously thumping his back, young Joe silently moved his lips up and down. By the next morning Joe still hadn't recovered his ability to speak, and when the fakir was summoned, it was reported that he had disappeared during the night. Joe's parents, the two doctors, both well versed in Chinese medicine, tried everything to restore his speech but without success. They were on the verge of despair when his voice returned, as mysteriously as it had left him. This occurred the instant that Joe – playing again in the garden after a week in bed – accidentally discovered a rupee, buried in the ground.

After this strange experience Joe read everything he could find on fakirs and yoga. He learned to read Sanskrit, and when he ran out of books, pleaded with his parents until they agreed to find him a tutor on the subject. Appalled by the idea that their son might end up leading the impoverished life of a beggar, they sought the aid of a wealthy brahmin who was as renowned for his business sense as for his scholarship in religious matters. After meeting with Joe, the brahmin was so impressed by his intelligence that he decided to tutor the boy himself. So it was that Mandarin Joe grew up making weekly visits to this man for spiritual instruction.

This brahmin, although married, was himself childless, and as is often the case in these situations, grew – after a time – so fond of his pupil that he began to think of him as a son, in spite of their difference of race. Thus the brahmin held back nothing, and taught the boy everything he knew, including the art of Kundalini yoga in which the brahmin was a secret adept. Kundalini yoga, also known as the serpent power, involves the raising of the *snake* or the coiled energy said to be buried sleeping at the base of the spine. Using ancient techniques, the breath is first *collected* and *stored* in the solar plexus, and then given a *charge* by sharply contracting the heart. In this manner the Kundalini energy is awakened. This is not without danger, for if the snake is awakened facing downwards there is a good chance the practitioner will die. Once aroused, the energy is slowly raised up the spine and, by using specific operations to open each door, moves from one *chakra* to the next. If all goes well, after much effort and internal discipline, the practitioner's Kundalini nears the final destination, the crown chakra situated at the top of the skull.

Years later, Mandarin Joe would stand in Moss's garden, his mind on magpies and a buried rupee, his mouth and arms telling his disciples a biblical story.

After a long time the lord of those servants who had gone away returned and took an accounting of them.

Then the one who received five pounds came up and offered five others, and he said, My lord, you gave me five pounds; behold, I have added five others to them.

His lord said to him, Well done, good and reliable servant; you have been faithful over little, I will appoint you over much; enter into your master's joy.

Then the one with the two pounds came and said, My lord, you gave me two pounds; behold, I have added two others to them.

His lord said to him, Well done, good and reliable servant; you have been faithful over little, I will appoint you over much; enter into your master's joy.

Then the one who had received one pound also came up, and he said, My lord, I knew that you are a hard man, and you reap where you did not sow and gather where you did not scatter.

So I was afraid, and I went and hid your pound in the ground; here is the very one you gave me.

His lord answered, saying, O wicked and lazy servant, you knew me that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I did not scatter.

You should then have put my money in the bank, and when I returned I would have demanded my own with interest.

Therefore take away the pound from him, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.

For to him who has, it shall be given, and it shall increase to him; but he who has not, even that which he has shall be taken away from him.

When the time arrived in his schooling to choose a university, Joe Kwan decided on engineering at the University of Bangalore. This is where he met and became friends with Prince Salar Jang, who was to later become the Maharaja of Hyderabad. Both Joe and Salar enjoyed a certain degree of notoriety around campus. Joe because of his mango trick: a trick where, in a few hours, a tree sprang up and produced fruit. No one could explain how he did it. Salar because he was a descendant of Tippu Sahib, the rebellious prince known to the British as the Tiger of Mysore, who had developed the world's first war rocket and used it so effectively against the British army in the 1790's. As a matter of fact Salar shared many similarities with his illustrious ancestor, physically as well as in character. Besides having red hair and sporting an enormous moustache, Salar, like Tippu Sahib, blended a taste for reading literature together with a passion for hunting bordering on the fanatic. However, Salar's friends happily found him less prone to war than the feared Tippu and noted one trait that none of Tippu's biographers had mentioned: Prince Salar was an incorrigible collector, and already, barely twenty, his collection was *vast*. Salar's taste was entirely eclectic, not limited to any particular category or thing. When he chose something he always made a big show of choosing with certainty,

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but his choices followed laws no one else could follow. An old brass table, a few yards of yellow silk, a hand painted on the door of a shop. Like Mandarin Joe, Prince Salar was a little mysterious. Everyone agreed upon seeing his installations there was a certain logic, that it somehow worked. But it was impossible to explain. Nobody had ever seen a collection like Salar's before.

Our story ends with Joe and Salar hitting it off immediately, discovering that they shared many mutual interests. After classes Joe accompanied Salar as he walked through the bazaars searching for *things*, very often astonishing Salar's other friends by anticipating his choices. It seemed that Joe was the only one besides Salar who knew what it was all about. Salar appreciated this, and grew very close to Joe. It surprised no one when, at graduation, Salar hired Joe as his secretary.

VIII

The sound of waves moving pebbles. The crunch of cereal and milk. Boots on beach gravel.

I can't find my glasses.

You don't need them now, it's dark.

I know but I want to make sure that I haven't lost them.

You haven't lost them. Go get your guitar.

I don't know why we are taping this... this is going to be completely incoherent.

The museum! The museum!

Coherent. That's the name of a big laser manufacturer.

Now it's dark.

Isn't that the company that built the laser that was fired from the earth to the moon? Did you know that by the time it reached the moon the beam was only six feet wide!

Wow!

(a shooting star)

That was a big one.

And what about laser sights on hunting rifles?

What about them?

Just point and shoot. No muss, no fuss. Just line up the red dot and take a deer home. It even comes standard on the new cameras.

Get a load of the Deer Hunter.

Hey guys, aren't we on a fishing trip?

I prefer my old Pentax - don't trust those new automatic jobs.

They look like a bloody laser - either that or...

Hey, you know the new one with a lid? Looks like you are holding a bottle of jam in your hand.

Who wants another can of beer?

You know I have still got an old Leica - doesn't even have a light meter.

By God that's the only way to really learn photography.

Hey look, the Artist.

Might as well be using a bow and arrow. By the time you are ready to shoot with that thing the deer has gone home to bed.

Bullshit. You never heard of Cartier-Bresson? What do you think he used?

(chorus)

The decisive moment!

(puzzling)

What exactly is coherent anyway?

Coherent means something easily followed or a substance that sticks together — not rambling or inconsequential.

Touché.

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Paul Perry

I sure could have stuck that girl at the gas station.
Hey clean it up. We're on tape here.
No, I mean a laser works because the light is coherent, right?
Where's Mort? (looking around)
I don't know, he left a while ago.
Probably went looking for the white lodge.
(general laughter)
Think he left a trail of bread crumbs?
In the moonlight?
You know what mort means?
Note sounded on a horn at the death of deer.
Smart ass.
Hey, what's that? (pointing)
Don't point. It's bad manners to point.
I thought I saw a salmon jump.
Hey asshole, salmon don't jump at night. ¶

ALBERT KUIPER

Words
about
Art

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A museum has various tasks within the cultural field. We tend to associate a museum with collecting, conserving and exhibiting works of art. But its task to exhibit material evidence can also be performed by showing documents referring to the works of art made. This is an alternative to going on collecting until we have all run out of budget or space.

We could talk about a new kind of institute, but existing museums could also perform this task.

Informing the public about what is happening all around the world by giving access to a new information channel will also enable the curatorial staff to perform their tasks better. So every museum should be 'plugged into this circuit' anyway.

What we should aim for is an information network with many nodes (the museums and other institutes, galleries and companies) that all enter information about what they are doing; also individual members of the artistic community should be able to 'advertise themselves'. This information can be typewritten, in the form of stills and video sequences.

At the various nodes, terminals give access to an index, and the data is then transferred to that node on request. All this can be done with normal 20th century technology.

Just as a precaution, I would like to add: documenting art cannot replace the need to form a collection. The value of an original artwork is evident. So I would like to ask: *Who is afraid of black and white?*, being the colours we predominantly use when we are documenting?

Defining the Museum

The ICOM, the International Council of Museums, defines a museum as: *a non-profit making, permanent institution, in the service of society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment.*¹ With the task: *to acquire objects and keep them for posterity.*

Evidently, this is a broad and sweeping definition, to cover the wide range of museums there is. Let's state frankly that today we are mainly interested in museums for the visual arts.²

We can look closer at this definition of the ICOM (and introduce several values):

- 1 Non-profit: We see that galleries which have an intention to sell exhibited works of art, and make profits on them, fall outside of this definition.
- 2 Museums are permanent, not open and functioning one day and gone the next. They are stable institutional elements within society. They have a function.
- 3 A museum must develop society, that is, it must enable society to learn, to attain higher goals, to develop in intellectual and spiritual ways. When they are closed and shut down, museums do not enable the transfer of cultural values. To say it with other words: museums are generators of culture.
- 4 Acquiring and conserving works of art means that a museum has the resources to get hold of new artifacts for the collection of specimens. And once you've got something, you have to keep it in good shape. So there should be adequate funding. Keeping means that these objects be contained within the confines of the museum (not in a restaurant, that is) and kept in a good shape representative of what it was like when it was produced.
- 5 Study and education implies presenting a context, within which the works get a significance. That means that additional information outside of the domain of the work at hand should be available. The collection should have a holistic unity, because these focussing points make it possible to do research and to make exhibitions that have some sense.
- 6 Material evidence of people. The production of the workers in the arts. Acquiring these man-made objects means having the physical presence of those objects at hand.

Museums should enable students to study the collection, its history and background. It should enable education of those members of the public that are not yet well-informed. It should also give people looking for enjoyment or a break a place to relax. Museums are a safe-place outside of the visual bombardment of mass-media.

All this sounds quite straight-forward. But things are a little bit more complicated. By posing some questions I will try to establish where we think we have our limits.

Words about Art

- 1 Especially in modern art, form and content have been separated, in such a way that the material thing sometimes doesn't coincide at all with the artwork. So what do we collect?
- 2 We can pose the question whether the availability of information in general about the arts and its development also fall within the domain of the ICOM definition. This is an important question. Because an artwork gets part of its significance in the contextual layer placed around it by the museum. Merely presenting a work of art without information about it, an explanation of its meaning and content does not make sense. Therefore, making this framework for giving additional information should also be part of the primary tasks of the museum.
- 3 Can we replace the material work with documentation? Can we fulfil our task of acquiring by collecting and presenting information? When we think of a theatre museum, it is quite evident that the performances can never be maintained in the way once presented to the public. An audio-visual is one of the nearest things we can get for now. I have experienced the same problems when working with artists making performances.
- 4 If and when we can acquire a performance by documenting it – and placing it in its correct art-historical context – can we then also acquire a painting, a drawing or sculpture in that way?

The groups of the public that we distinguish need a different approach to the presentation of the art. For example, for a tourist a museum should give in a short overview, the structure of a body of cultural objects and thoughts specific for the museum, as a short example of the collection, the country or the specific part of the arts the museum has focussed itself on.

An art-loving visitor expects the latest exhibition, with the *state of the art*. (Here at last we really can talk about that!). The student wants to have access to more information than only the superficial names. He wants background, etcetera.

Formerly, in the museum profession this extra information demand has been the domain of the education department; I think reflection on this flow of information concerning the structure of what the content of the artworks is, belongs to the central tasks of the museum staff.

Working out the Organizational Structure

Let's take the ICOM definition as a statement of mission for a particular museum for art. Almost every verb signifies an area of attention, meriting a specific task or organizational group. When we go top-down from these intentions, then we can easily see, that the organizational structure will develop along the lines of:

- external relations;
- acquiring, with all kinds of networking by the curator;
- conserving;
- keeping works of art with all kinds of logistics;
- education;
- exhibiting and
- art historical research.

For all of these tasks, information is required to perform the work at hand. Information is a general resource. A resource that is used by all the people working in the museum, that is also produced by them, as a product of the tasks performed by the one to trigger another.

Problems

Within some of these tasks there are some specific problem areas:

- Acquiring is mostly a problem of finance, and otherwise knowing what's going

on. What's for sale (galleries, auctions). What is being made. What has been documented.

- Conserving and keeping is a problem of space, know-how, information, finance: where to keep things, how to maintain their well-being, having the information of what the objects are, where they are, in what shape they are etcetera.
- Data should be available: what is known about the works, the contents and what has been written about them. This can be called the body of knowledge of a museum, the prerequisite for the task of educating and making exhibitions that make sense. The 'data' (strings of information about the works of art) should have a high accessibility. In former times the brains of the curator gave real-time information retrieval. But nowadays this just doesn't work any more. I think we have already reached our cognitive limits. And people leave the museum, leaving others behind in despair.
- Budget deficits. Collecting needs a lot of investment: keeping all those artworks forces one to have infinite confines, and gathering and presenting information is labour intensive work.

Murphy's Law (Anything that can go wrong, will go wrong) can be stated as:

- 1 when you want to acquire a work it doesn't fit into your museum, because it is full,
- 2 the work you want to lend out can't be found.
- 3 when you start to make a catalogue, the information on the works is not available.
- 4 when you want to acquire a work of art, you can't find documentation on it or its artist for the committee.

So here we have some critical success-factors:

- The physical limitations, or confines of the museum.
- The making and keeping track of information on the objects in the possession of the museum.
- Knowing what's going on. (Of course this list can be elaborated on.)

In what Ways can we Solve these Problems?

First of all: we can throw a lot of money at the museums. The strategy of 'more of the same'. We can build better and bigger store-rooms for all those works. Add a new museum, specifically for an art historical period, or clone a museum into separate parts.

We can make a survival-plan for the works, describing them etcetera, and subsequently keeping them confined in a nice, quiet place somewhere. Maybe throwing away, de-accessioning part of your collection will give us some space to breath.

Well actually, I don't think this will solve any problem at all. Within a short time we would be back where we are. These solutions don't solve the problem at hand in a structural way. I'll show you why.

Growth-Rates

Let me show you what a mess we are in:

In science, a growth-rate can be plotted, and these growth-rates are always an exponential function. The growth increases. And if we encourage growth by creating favourable circumstances, the growth increases even more.

Art production will stimulate more art production, so that what is added every year will increase. That doesn't mean making any qualitative judgement, just the fact that people make artifacts in the domain of the visual arts. In the age of mass-reproduction, art production grew because of new technologies, with mass-media and the new division of labour it grew even more.

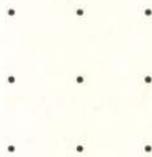
Words about Art

So if we keep the same system of collecting art as we have had for the last two centuries, it will place us in serious difficulties. When we keep on buying those works of art that have merited attention, that have influenced others and that we can make sense of in addition to what we already have, we will get stuck somewhere. We shouldn't collect when we cannot take proper care of the work.³ Because more is communicated on art (this is an era of mass media, of a Global Village), traditional criteria pose problems. Everything seems important. Many museums have had difficulties here already, and have budget deficiencies.

Structural Changes

Only by making structural choices, by looking at the problem at hand in a different and new way, can a new solution be found. Here we enter a narrow and dark alley. What are the confines of our problem. What would we allow ourselves to do? Making structural choices means doing something differently.

Let's pose a problem: can you connect the dots in the following diagram by a continuous drawn line of four straight segments?



This is not possible unless we go outside of the common way of thinking, outside of the boundaries we normally set. Structurally making a choice, confining the focus of the collection, what comes in, is of some help.

I'd like to offer an inventory of solutions:

- 1 With a new policy on collecting we can restrict the growth.
- 2 Curators can make agreements and confine themselves to certain areas to collect.
- 3 Internationally, curators and some galleries can by agreement limit what's important to the development of art, and thus what is of art historical interest and value, and what therefore deserves collecting in a museum. (Of course galleries and artists will oppose this solution.)

These solutions still more or less confine themselves to doing the same things in a different way. Probably solutions like these are of some help. But let's take a look again at the tasks the museum has: acquiring, keeping/conserving, study, education and exhibitions.

The basic statement concerns informing the public. A means to this end is acquiring and conserving. But we can also put our main emphasis on the other means given: researching, communicating and exhibiting.

Proposal

Now here I have a quite different proposal: Why collect the works of art themselves? Why don't we go over to the aim of documenting the abundance of art production. Design an information system that enables several dataflows to coincide: internal and external. This would enable an elaborate documentation of works of art and the collection in one and the same framework both data about and visual evidence from the existence of an artwork, somewhere. Add the information stored in the library, and there you have a media bonanza – open to the public!

This would be atuned to the new world we appear to be living in. This would take away the burden on collecting the physical things themselves, keeping them in good shape, and storing them someplace.

This will satisfy problems in a lot of our basic tasks, elaborated on in the organizational structure of the museum. Many critical success-factors have a relationship with information.

Within one database we can collect information on art, and present it to the staff and to the public; within the same information context we can give access to other kinds of information like images, stills or movies, so that in a certain way, we get a *superstructure of information technology*.

Okay, I agree directly that studying this information about art is of no value compared to studying the works themselves.

What I would like to add is that we should also collect and present documentation about what's happening elsewhere.

Access to Material Evidence

Being trained as an art historian, I have seen more works in the form of a reproduction than in their real form and surroundings. And to me that has always been okay.

For instance, reading about the dancer Simone Forti studying the behaviour of polar bears in the zoo to use in her work really triggered me. Just reporting on what was happening had a lot of sense in the seventies. Lucy Lippard saw this clearly when she wrote her book about conceptual art.⁴ Magazines like *Avalanche* were attuned to this kind of publishing. These information channels gave material evidence of the works of artists all around the world, who worked within the paradigm of the then current avant-garde. These publications still remain one of the prime factors for the rapid dissemination of the ideas that were current at that time. The same can be said of the publications the avant-garde served itself with in the beginning of the century.⁵

Leaving material traces in this way is of course important for artists who make ephemeral works. But in The Hague several years ago, an artists' committee was formed, that demanded attention from art historians. Not for want of being shown in public, only to be documented, to be part of history.⁶ This group doesn't concern performing artists. So for this group just making art wasn't enough, they wanted to appear in the archives as well. Therefore, documenting can safely be claimed to be a complement to production.

Consuming Art in these two Ways in a Museum

We can differentiate between two kinds of art-consumption: one in its real life form: in the museum, the gallery, or at home, and one in the secondhand form: information about art, contextual or referential. Of course, both types of consumption of art can be placed within the museum.

Besides the general public we have a group that is well aware of what's going on. These are the artists, art historians and curators with a developed sense of what's going on. Wanting access to more information in new ways. Always wanting the newest leads available. Well aware of making its own choices, valuations, and communicating and developing its own tastes and likings. This relatively small but extremely influential group can be the focus for attention and can be *given access to an imagebank and art historical database*. Shared between several institutes (because this would go beyond the scope of a regular institute).

Such a database would enable all kinds of tasks internally to be performed better. At the same time this partially relieves the museum of the task of actually acquiring, education and exhibiting works of art, at least in some ways.

In a set up focussing on documenting what's going on, many people would gladly participate. And should be obliged to do so.

Documentation cannot Replace Art, of Course

Art has a kind of mystique, artworks define things and are of a different order than normal day-to-day human artifacts. Within the art context, we make works that have something special. Even when we try to go outside the boundaries and state daily life as part of the art world, this assertion remains. This is evident from the importance that is placed on the craftsmanship, the handiwork aspect of the work of art. This begs the question: is it important to have the artwork itself at hand, or can we use a replica, a reproduction of one or another sort?

We can maybe make a distinction in two groups: there is a group of art-lovers that thinks there is something that the master added by doing it himself. Imperceptible, infinitely small refinements. That's why we always talk about the hand of the master.

Others think that only the external form of the artwork is important. Maybe these people are analytics who don't go outside the confines of that which they can measure and deduct from what they know. Or these are consumers aimed solely at the environment the museum gives.

The first category is difficult to describe without going into lyricisms or into some faint and otherworldly assertions. The brushstroke of the artist can be seen as the stroke of genius. In our culture this seems to be a central trait. We cannot replace the material fact of this by documenting. Roy Lichtenstein has made Brushstroke paintings, evidently referring to Abstract Expressionism.⁷ But seen as Pop-art, he is referring to the traditional place of painting in our culture.

I think such things as authenticity of the work exhibited matter. Even in a documentary exhibition an original poster is valued more than a reproduction. A modern copy of a Rietveld chair just doesn't have the extra historical dimension of an original, even if that original is in bad shape. That also holds for works of art. The original about which you now have some information should still exist somewhere.

There are members of the public that won't care if they are looking at a replica (as long as they don't know), maybe because they are interested in other things. First of all I can think of the tourist, brought to the museum by a tour-operator.⁸ Would this group also accept a big polaroid replica? Or a small replica? Or a video still? Or a description in language?

A last remark on this topic. A museum cannot forsake the whole idea of exhibiting and collecting the works of art because it is documenting.

Post-Modernistic Approach

In this age of mass media, we are constantly bombarded with images. For a large part these images pertain to works of art or other cultural artifacts. This has led to the idea of post-modernism. As Charles Jencks put it, everyone has these pictures stored in an imagebank: *Any middle-class urbanite in any large city from Teheran to Tokyo is bound to have a well-stocked, indeed over-stocked 'image-bank' that is continually restuffed by travel and magazines. His musée imaginaire may mirror the pot-pourri of the producers, but it is nonetheless natural to his way of life.*⁹ These members of the public are part of an international culture and should be served according to this need.

Using an imagebank and a database-approach to fulfil our greedy hunger for news on art can be seen as a 'post-modernistic answer' to the task of the museum.

Organizational Requirements

How do we have to organize in order for this to take place? How do we get the organizational framework that uses state of the art information technology to form a body of knowledge about art.

Sharing this information means that several museums are part of a network. A network in two senses: both a physical distribution network, along which information is shared. But in another sense, we can talk about members of a network: a network is a group of people or institutions, participating in a certain activity.

Information technology is the domain of the carrier of the information: the range is from terminals with question and answer possibilities (queries of a database) to video-disk sessions and audio-visuals, including library functions.

Information technology claiming such a broad area of attention in the museum would demand a new kind of worker: the chief information officer. The CIO keeps a grip on information flows, designing ways for employees and public to use information, while assuring that many people will enter data into the system.

Collecting Data

Museums should enter information about what they are organizing. Which exhibitions will take place, what has taken place. With information on the works shown. For instance, we can enter the texts made for flyers and leaflets (storing a whole catalogue is too much, except for Humpty Dumpty). But we should also be able to add video sources, and distribute these.

Galleries would gladly participate, especially when they understand that this network gives them access directly to the curators. Through these screens one can see what is being painted elsewhere.

Centres for the performing arts can in this way make more public a witness to what they have staged.

Critics and magazines might be willing to enter the information. So this database will also perform the tasks of the Art-Bibliographies. Maybe this periodical will itself use this information channel.

Information should be shared between member institutions.

What is entered into the network at one node, will have to be available at all other nodes, as soon as technically possible.

The Paul Getty Museum has taken the lead in establishing an international database, available to subscribers around the world. Many museums have terminals through which they can access data. Mostly traditional art historical information.¹⁰ What we should add to this networking concept, is entering data about what's going on. We should add that real-time aspect, because that's what turns us on.

Data-Management

Through the use of optical-disks (WORM, write once, read many) we can (ourselves) easily store huge quantities of data. Even slides, stills and parts of video recordings can be stored. Internationally, a shared index can be made of what every user has in his own portfolio. When consulting the index, we can ask for copies of the data. That can be made available right there and then, but also overnight.

Distribution of Data

The museums should have terminals available to the public. They could be used like the telex machine that you can find at the bank. Information flows continually. Or they can be used like a video set that shows semi-live evidence of the work of artists in the several disciplines.

A structural problem in normal publishing is filtering. The editorial board and the authors decide what's important. They don't give information on what they haven't focussed. But things might be happening right under their eyes that might still be of interest to someone else somewhere else. By letting the requestor do the searching, the problem of the information threshold is reduced. So essentially we are talking about getting words and images about art at our front door.

Direct-Costing

Let the user pay! We can ask fees from those requesting our data. We can set our own fee, so that our expenses are covered. Of course, with some subsidies a lower break-even point will be reached. And we can subsidize governmentally, but we can also seek sponsorship. And we can expect private initiatives, through which we can see this network for generating income if there is enough demand for the information we have collected ourselves. For instance, a publisher might give information away freely, because this will generate additional sales. When being used for advertisements some fee can also be charged.

So what I have added is some of the flavours of the Dutch 06-telephone numbers. Or the French Minitel system – quite an institute in itself.

Technical Requirements

There are already many international networks that are used for data transfer. An interesting network is one that is shared between universities all around the world. These work like a postbox system. A user can send data to an addressee. But the data to be transferred is kept in a central computer.

I propose a different setup. Everyone keeps his own information and shares this when this is requested. We should need two subsystems:

- 1 an index in which the various forms of data that can be accessed is recorded,
- 2 and every node should keep a file of the data that is kept available to others.

The node must permanently have a computer ready and functioning. The equipment needed at every node can be customized for the bulk of data.

A minimum would be a PC with a hard disc, a scanner and a printer, plus a modem to connect to the network.

But a setup of a PC with a scanner (that's a kind of photocopying device that makes an electronic image), a videocamera and video recording device, a printer, a large hard disc and a WORM drive connected would enable larger quantities of data to be stored and retrieved. In this setup we can customise some workstations for retrieval of data, while others are used for entering data into the electronic archive and network-index.

The index holds data on the exact location of the information and images. There is a local index (of what you have yourself) and there is a central copy in the network so that everybody knows what information you have. Upon request for information, the network server will try to access the data at the node given in the index, and send it to the requestor. There it will be stored on the local hard disc of the PC at that node. When the request is made in the node (the museum) locally, this is handled locally.

Electronic images can be stored digitally on the WORM (which can contain up to 6 gigabytes of data on one single disk such as the Sony 12" WORM-drive), even videotape sequences can be stored this way. Also texts can be stored like this.

On the retrieval workstations we can see both images and further information on that what we are looking at. With Hypertext, data can be interconnected. This means that the person that searches the network for information can go from one subject to another, guided along the way by associations (automatically) made on the basis of names, subjects, media, places, dates etcetera.

Organizational networking means that the various members will have to cooperate in defining standards. This whole framework then is not futuristic but quite feasible. Furthermore, it is the same infrastructure that the museum should have anyway when performing the tasks of documenting the collection for administrative purposes and for the making of an on-line catalogue. What I have described is basically also a way of working with information technology in a museum. ¶

- 1 ICOM Statutes and code of professional ethics, 1990. Statutes article 2.
- 2 (Though the conclusions reached at the end of this argument might hold also for other museums outside of the arts, for instance for theatre, history or natural history.)
- 3 ICOM code paragraph 3.1 states *Museums should not, except in very exceptional instances, acquire material that the museum is unlikely to be able to catalogue, conserve, store or exhibit, as appropriate, in a proper manner.* One can as oneself, if existing collections should be reduced if the possibilities for proper maintenance are not available. For instance the London Zoo gave part of its collection away and fired some keepers because of budgetary reasons. Can museums of art can be expected to do the same?
- 4 Lucy Lippard, *Six years, the de-materialization of the artobject*, Preager, New York, 1973.
- 5 See A. Kuiper, *Tristan Tzara en 'l'esprit Dada'*, Kunsthistorisch Instituut Groningen 1981
- 6 The HCAK, Haags Centrum voor Beeldende Kunst is an independent artist's gallery.
- 7 J. Lipman and R. Marshall, *Art about Art*, Dutton, New York, 1978, p. 33. (from an interview in *Artforum*, 1967).
- 8 Many visitors to the Rijksmuseum looking at *the Nachtwacht* wouldn't know there was a replica if the original is being restored. Or for the same matter, who really knows that the *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre is not an exhibition copy?
- 9 Charles Jencks, *The languages of post-modern architecture*, Academy Editions, 2nd ed. 1978, p 127.
- 10 Paul Getty Museum database.

RUUD NEDERVEEN

*The
Fodor
Cycle*

*Alternative Approaches
to
Financing Museums*

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If the question is asked of the methods a museum can adopt to raise the funds needed to carry out its function, a couple of things should first be clarified. First of all it should be stated that we talk about museums of contemporary art that are responsible for their own collection. Moreover we are certainly not talking about the Museum Fodor. The second point is that I do not intend to discuss every aspect of museum policy. I will not deal with the creation of the collection, or the museum's policy towards the public, or how it publicizes itself; nor with the running of the building or personnel policy. Let us imagine a museum of contemporary art. Let us say that it is in the city ϵ and let us call it the Museum. The Museum has a Board of Management. And the Management has one Problem, namely that the Museum would be able to carry its function out better if there was more money.

The Management assesses the collection of the museum and realizes that under previous management certain somewhat one-sided emphases have been placed in collection policy. The budget for making purchases is limited enough. The Museum is entirely financed by the authorities: local and central government fix the budget; although it is tied to the rate of inflation over the past few years this does not represent any real increase. Moreover the Management has other expenditures: parts of the collection are due for restoration, security must be modernised, etc. The Management turns to its regular source of supply: the authorities. But they are currently seeing where they can make cuts. The authorities admit that they are responsible for developing an art policy, and that they must also do this through the Museum. Art policy is the responsibility of government at least in the sense that they must create the conditions in which art can be produced. They never bother about the content of art, but they are aware of its social importance. Daniel de Lange proposes a thesis that is a clear statement of the social importance of art: *Time and again art gives life to culture, either by validating it or through its function of criticism. It disturbs the mirror image in which every culture becomes a Medusa's head; staring at its own image freezes the culture until it becomes a lifeless ghost. In this sense art is an indispensable factor for the survival and for the possibilities for growth and change of every culture; the reverse is also true – the willingness of the culture to allow the mirror image of itself to be altered by art, is a measure of its vitality.* Considerations such as these are a convincing argument for the authorities to release funds for art policy; they are in keeping with the Thorbeckian principle of never commenting on the content of art. (Thorbecke: *19th century Dutch Prime Minister responsible for the introduction of the Dutch written constitution.* Translator's note.) In the meantime there is no chance of allocating more funds to the art budget.

The Management is not prepared to leave it at that. If government is unable to raise more money then they must look to the private sector. Large-scale funds for the promotion of culture do in fact exist, but it soon turns out that these sources of money have their limitations; they are insufficient to provide structural support for the functions of the museum. The Museum is used to getting money simply by asking for it. Normally speaking it turns to governmental or semi-governmental bodies. The request is turned down, even though it is described as being not unreasonable. Why should there be a request for extra money right now, and why can it not be granted? The Management considers that it is time to pause for reflection.

The question why the Museum needs more money is not so difficult to answer. The largest proportion of the extra money it needs goes to building up the collection. The reason for this is that the price of contemporary art is very high, certainly if we are talking about work that is patently representative of a specific development or tendency. A museum needs to buy work at a very early stage. If it has missed out on a specific tendency it is often too late: the prices have soared to such an extent that they simply do not bear any relation with the budget available for making purchases. As soon as someone's work gets a certain name for itself its market price rises on average 15 to 20 per cent per year. Art is increasingly seen as an object for investment. This tendency is partially responsible for the fact that the prices for art are constantly rising. Contemporary art is part of the economic process of supply and demand. This development takes some time to emerge. The market first waits for a certain level of recognition and only then does a movement in price occur. Moreover this movement is strange in more than one respect: the work has not been created in response to a demand from the market; it is a progressive response to a demand, that, in view of the value placed on it, must imply a great scarcity. Market research would indicate that our mode of production is a response to a quite specific demand. Prices are normally speaking determined by production and distribution costs. In the case of art these aspects of evaluation play a negligible role. This is the basic difference between art and other processes of production. During the moment of its creation art fails to comply

with the laws that we recognize in economic affairs. Once it has been produced and receives recognition, it begins step by step to participate in our economic cycle. This is a development that artists have not failed to notice. Not so long ago artists had an image of themselves that was still modelled on a 19th century non-economic pattern; now we have the phenomenon of artists who are acquainted with their business interests. This is a development that the museums follow with mixed feelings. After all isn't it the museums that have given art and the artist their position in the market?

Museums are a 19th century institution. This was the century that invented industrial capitalism and it needed a protected and privileged place where cultural values could be celebrated by and on behalf of the established bourgeoisie in order to demonstrate that they weren't just ferocious money grubbers. In every city concert halls and museums rose from the ground and public art was able to get under way. A public art moreover that gradually emancipated itself from both the church and the secular rulers, who were the original patrons of art. As the process of democratization developed the authorities increasingly gave form to these bourgeois aspirations. The museums and the concert halls were created by the bourgeoisie who met in their art salons, but they gave the responsibility for them to the institutions of government which were in fact run by the same group of people. In the meantime to all appearances the artists complied with the wishes of their masters. They presented themselves as political or a-political depending on the times. But they always maintained a display of being non-economic in their work and in their mode of production. They stormed the Bastilles that were permitted them: the theatre and the museum. And the people in power were highly entertained by the artists, regarding them perhaps as pampered children.

The Management went on with its evaluation: it began to notice that somewhere along the line art had taken another direction that no longer corresponded to its original model. Even so the artists continued indefatigably to use the museums to exhibit their work, but there was a discrepancy in their attitude. Where however did that discrepancy lie?

Art is cunning. It is so cunning that it has always found a way, often an underground one and often unconsciously, to resist the arguments of power. Or else it has made use of these very arguments to erode power itself from within. Because it is in this way that art becomes a mirror held up to culture. It is an apocryphal and dialectical process: statement is constantly met with counter-statement that confirms while at the same time proposing a meaning that erodes the original meaning till it becomes something entirely different. This cunning, this vital will to live that is the nature of art, is not a quality that the museums possess. A museum is literally a follower of tendencies.

This discussion will perhaps need some elaboration. It can be found in the realm of casuistry. When Mondrian produced his apple tree series he was, of course, producing an experiment in form, but at the same time he was also demonstrating in a fashion that almost reminds one of Foucault that the order of nature escapes our ability to perceive it. He did not make an abstraction of the apple tree. He simply painted it. And he painted a new world order. This is why Mondrian was both child and prophet of his time. What about the museum then? The museum waits a while, but in the end it decides to hang the work.

Meanwhile we have landed in the post-capitalist era and our mode of production has also become a subject for art. Moreover the authorities have switched their emphasis from artists' policy to art policy; they have abolished the BKR (*government regulation by which artists were guaranteed a basic income*. Translator's note.) and in its stead they have created the conditions for a broader commissions policy. The artist once again apparently does his master's bidding and organizes himself in a more business-effective fashion. The museum follows suit. The museum does this by focusing on management techniques and sponsoring facilities.

The Management of our Museum has some experience with sponsoring. The conclusion it reached confirmed the research carried out in England. Sponsoring is useful for additional financing of thematic activities up to a maximum of 10% of its own budget. It is clear to the Management that sponsoring and fund-raising (the latter has never got off the ground in Holland) are not the answer to its Problem. But gradually the Management is beginning to appreciate one thing very clearly: to raise money you have to be cunning. Art is cunning. Why shouldn't the Museum be like art? It understands art after all. How to put this idea into practice however requires a great deal of thought.

If the current slogan is: be business effective – in what respects can museums be business effective in their approach? And, moreover, how can they achieve this in the area of generating revenues? The Museum has already become as business effective as possible in its policy of expenditures: it applied a whole variety of techniques in a number of areas: financial administration, building and personnel management, security and public relations, but all of this only covered the aspect of expenditure. How can you become business-effective with regard to raising revenues?

Traditionally the museums carry out a variety of activities in the field of publications; sometimes they also issue special editions of multiples. These raised plenty of money but always on too small a scale to solve the Problem. Even an adequate fiscal policy, for instance in the area of sales tax, might offer some room for manoeuvre but not enough to be equal to the Problem. No, it is time to do a radical about-turn. What does a museum possess then that is both valuable and that can be converted into money? Its own collection. Discussion has already begun about the important capital that art in museums represents. The Mondrian in Hilversum set the tune; Rudi Fuchs of the Haags Gemeentemuseum has formulated the question more incisively: why do we not sell a number of the works that we keep in storage in order to make substantial improvements in our collection? There are a number of arguments against doing this and this is not the place to go over this discussion all over again. There is, it is true, something relative about a museum collection in the sense that it accumulates by chance: purchases, bequests in sums of money and in works owned by collectors and artists – from the point of view of developing a collection, there are bargains enough to be made here – and, of course, there are 'remainders' from projects. Even so, despite its weaker elements, this collection is also a product of time and circumstance. The Management sees no reason for selling...

The collection of the Museum may represent a source of capital, but it is a fixed asset, and therefore from the point of view of the 'firm' it is an unalienable, active reserve. The Museum has another active element at its disposal: its expertise.

The Management ended its evaluation by drawing three main conclusions:

- the museum is an institute that is distinguished by a 19th century task and form of organisation.
- the museum would be well advised to situate itself closer to art than to society.
- the museum must acquire greater familiarity with the world of finance and economics.

The Management prepared to draw up plans.

But before the Management could make its plans it first had to have an answer to an important question. How does the price-making process develop in the case of art and why does it show such a tendency to soar?

Sotheby's, the art auctioneers, maintain an index of the sales of modern art. The course this index has taken since 1975 definitely deserves further study: the average annual increase is 136.73%; at the same time there are hardly any fluctuations in the trend towards growth. The annual performance seems to be hardly affected by the fluctuations in the economic situation. The oil crisis of 1979, for instance, to mention a moment in recent history that was a major cause of fluctuations in the economy for that year and for some years afterwards, had hardly any perceptible influence on the

development of the stock market index for art. This is all the more striking if we also bear in mind that the index is made up of the total turnover of modern art that is sold in that year. Good or mediocre, famous or obscure, it all comes under the hammer of the auction houses. The stock market index may show a steady increase for art; but the absolute increase in the value in modern art for the periods of modern art described here is, to an investor's way of thinking, simply incredible. A share in the collection that had the index value of DFL 100,- in 1975 would be worth DFL 2.051 in March 1991. To make a comparison: an investor's portfolio with a real profit of 6 to 8% is regarded as very promising. Investors would call it a 'good performance'. The performance of modern art and, it should be stressed, of contemporary art as well would amount to many times the amount of an effective year's profit. The reverse of this situation is in fact the cause of the problem: the prices paid for art are rocketing to such a degree that museums are hardly able to continue collecting. The Museum disposes of the expertise to spot valuable art at an early stage, or to be able to distinguish between passing trends and genuine new tendencies. A museum possesses the expertise it needs for collecting and managing its collections. A collection increases in value to the extent that it is put together on the basis of quality. For this reason the Museum needs to have the same expertise as the art investor.

Let us take a closer look at the business of investing in art:

Both the fact that it is unaffected by the fluctuations of temperature on the market and the size of the increase in its value call for an explanation that we do not yet have. Too little research has been done on the subject of art investment. And yet the phenomenon can hardly be called a new one. The only thing that is new about it is that in Europe a broader social circle is beginning to participate in it than was previously the case. So far, however, they seem to me to be doing so with a degree of hesitation. Apparently we still prefer to preserve the 19th century attitude towards art intact. Because no other explanation can be found than 'cold feet' for the fact that, contrary to all the evidence of the figures, the interest in art as an object of investment is taking root so slowly. Any new product that was put on the market with a performance forecast comparable to that of art would normally speaking be assimilated by the market much faster. The hesitant attitude can only be explained by a cultural paradigm: the price-making process in art is shrouded in mystery: it is worth what anyone is crazy enough to pay for it. There are no objective indicators for ascertaining the value of art.

In art circles the development of art as an investment object is being followed with deep suspicion. Once again the reaction is one of cold feet. In one respect artists have admittedly every reason in the world to react in this way. Speculation with your products is obviously no joke if you don't profit from it substantially yourself. But this does not seem to be the main cause of complaint: more important is the fact that artists often want to know where their work has ended up and who owns it. They boggle at the thought of air-conditioned vaults where their works may remain deposited for 30 years without people ever getting the chance of seeing them. This picture, however, is not entirely accurate: it is in the investment funds' interest to make the contents of its collection known, to encourage loans and publications of work and perhaps to show work somewhere for an extended period of time. This means that the work has much greater exposure than when it hangs in a private house or a board room. Furthermore, and this seems to me to be the most important argument: by means of an investment fund money is released for art and this contributes directly to the creation of income for artists. Moreover, this money also means an expansion of the volume of the art market in the full sense of the term: the participation capital of the investment funds would otherwise never have become available on the art market.

The Museum realized that making its own expertise in collecting available to an investment fund was one possible solution for the Problem. In fact, in addition to its own collection which, we should again stress, is inalienable, the Museum disposes of

the specific knowledge that will enable investors to make choices that will maximize the returns on their investment. In addition to its own collection the Museum is in a position to fulfil the functions of administering an investor's collection and organizing its purchasing policy. What is in this for the Museum?

Here is one calculation. The Museum or its representative writes out participation certificates for the investment funds to be developed. Let us say there are 1,000 shares with a par value of Dfl 10,000. The starting capital amounts to Dfl 10 million guilders in the first year. The staff of the Museum uses this to buy art. With adequate preparation the staff will be able to convert the 10 million guilders into art in a space of no more than 2 months. The 10 millions will be invested with a maximum spreading of risks: 6 millions go to pre-war modern art: Picasso, Boccioni, Klee, De Chirico etc. 20%, 2 million that is, then goes to post-war work: Rothko, Stella, Johns, Kienholz, Moore, Oldenburg etc. The final 2 million is reserved for work that is being made now, by the generations that are not yet to be found in the art guides and which are gradually beginning to be purchased by the larger museums. The bulk of the fund consists of recognized work of museum quality. The good pieces by well-known artists, that have already reached a certain price, but which show a powerful increase in value in the above-mentioned index. The index relates to this part of the collection in particular. The collection that was bought for 6 million is worth more than 123 million 15 years later. The remaining 4 million will show a somewhat more graduated increase in value and will represent a value of 95 million guilders after 15 years.

The total collection that was bought in the subscription year gives a gross return of 208 million guilders on the investment at the end of the period of 15 years. That is a lot of money. A staggering amount of money. If the investment returns after 15 years were 9 millions, it would still be considered a good performance. To achieve returns like this there are still some costs that must be reckoned, from management and security, say 3% of the nominal capital per year. In our calculation that means 4.5 millions. Finally the museum can calculate 20% of the gross investment returns for the contribution of its own expertise. In this case then a revenue of 50 million guilders.

The Management sat at its computer and blushed. Figures like this were absurd. Furthermore to have a collection of such outstanding quality for 15 years was very worthwhile. And to think that every year you could launch a new investment collection.

The Management was faced with the prospect of a whole new set of problems: would government continue to serve as a co-financier if the museums themselves were able to develop revenues on this scale? Moreover an investment project brings organizational problems with it. Moreover, is the market really so insatiable that the ad lib increase in values will continue indefinitely? What would be the effects on the price development if funds like these became generally accepted? In short, it is high time to ask the government for a subsidy to do the necessary research...

From an economic point of view art is a strange phenomenon. In the meantime it is becoming fashionable for museums, along with other non-profit making organizations, to make use of all kinds of management techniques from the private sector. We are talking about a shift towards the cultural institutions: museum directors are going on courses and a new market is opening up for the banks, certainly since the authorities are amongst other things also making proposals to privatize the museums. To pass any judgment on this policy is beyond the scope of this essay. I would only say that if the museum world wants to solve its money problems, that there are ways of doing this but they require another mentality than the museums or the authorities in this area seem to possess. The feasibility of one source of museum financing as I have described it here – and it is possible to imagine other sources – would seem to offer enough material to make a start. Ladies and Gentlemen, who's turn is it next? ¶

translation DONALD GARDNER

PAUL GROOT

O n
R e d e s i g n i n g
t h e
M u s e u m p l e i n
a s a
D r e a m A r e a

Mediamatic 6 # 2

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The Stedelijk Museum
a s a
Virtual Model Museum

I should first like to mention two events, *La Grande Parade*¹ and Ulay & Marina's Amsterdam part of the series *Nightsea Crossing*².

La Grande Parade was the huge exhibition to mark Edy de Wilde's departure as director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, and Ulay and Marina's immobile performance took place around a golden table, together with an Australian Aboriginal and a Tibetan monk. In retrospect these are events which are exactly in keeping with what Fukuyama has referred to as the 'end of history'.

In a long line of saying farewell to the Big Stories, already heralded by the French philosopher Lyotard, we have seen many walls crumble anyhow, including the one in the Stedelijk. There, with the departure of De Wilde, the end of the supremacy of New York's modernistic story was celebrated. A celebration that did honour to his name. Isn't there the pressing thought when thinking of a large parade of that one to celebrate East Germany's 40-year existence?

This artistic grand parade was the last spasm of a very successful but apparently outmoded tradition of the modernistic ideal of painting. Here the fate of an incestuous abstract painting tradition was sealed. This was once more emphasized when with the appointment of a new director the so-called room of honour in the Stedelijk, where contemporary works had hung for twenty years, was immediately dismantled. *Who's afraid of red, yellow and blue*, a painting that had been the high light of this triumphal installation, was relegated to a side room.

I was not the only one unprepared for this drastic move. My confusion and desperation brought about at the time by the moving of the canvas were not unique. A systems analyst, on reading a diatribe from the originally abstract but later fervently figurative-advocating painter Willink, set about Newman's work with a Stanley knife. For him the symbolic value of this canvas as a prototype for modernistic representation was also of special significance. The result reached us only on photograph: a shocking image of a painting in shreds as a result of a series of gashes.

That was five years ago. When a short time ago the canvas – totally restored – took up its old position in the museum, I was left completely indifferent. After the *corpus delicti* had first been removed from the room of honour (*Lenin taken out of the Mausoleum and dumped in a remote spot*, I once heard someone say sneeringly), the lamentable desperate act of the systems analyst had led in the long run to Newman being reinstated. For the time being *La Grande Parade* was on its way again.

In the intervening years my 'belief' in Newman's story had got lost. From a believer I had become an opponent of this 'religion', and through the opposition to rigid modernism, which I now exercised, I had gained more understanding of the reasons for this desperate act. What I had always experienced with Fontana's work, the artist who makes a speciality of slicing through his canvases, as being a sort of decadent, somewhat powerless aesthetic symbol, had in this case become deadly serious. Why not accept this outrage as an historical fact like the portrait of Queen Wilhelmina damaged by Indonesian freedom fighters in the Rijksmuseum? Or like, in the Boymans-van Beuningen Museum in Rotterdam, *the Men of Emmaus* the most famous 'Vermeer' by Van Meegeren, which hangs in a draughty corner somewhere as a curiosity?

Moreover, the restoration was disputed. According to Prof. Ernst van de Wetering, known from the Rembrandt Research Project, this is not the original canvas. A layer of acrylic paint protects the original canvas against our curious stares. But even making the scars public again cannot conceal the fact that this relic has had its day. Darwin and Marx have been toppled from their pedestals and every cobbled-together New York story by Greenberg, Marxist and Darwinist, and the modernistic avant-garde of progress and finality has suffered the same fate. Nevertheless, this dogmatic doctrine is still defended tooth and nail in the museum world. Nowhere is there such a stubborn belief in art history as there is there. The return of Newman's totally-cured curiosity to its original place in the room of honour is an ultimate attempt to resurrect a past long since given an historical context. It makes clear that the red of Newman (also Marxist schooled) is far less removed from the red of Lenin than we would perhaps assume. Newman, who as a child of his time became bewitched and fascinated by an artistic version of an ideology and was busy making history, must now pay for his highly one-sided vision of history.

The confusion in which our museum world currently finds itself is the result of the fact that the Big Stories, from which today's museums derived their justification

as it were, are played out. Not only the nineteenth-century nationalistic version, which inspired diverse patriotic fatherland museums and which survives for us in a nostalgic, educational, understandably sentimental atmosphere of the national department of the Rijksmuseum. On the eve of the 21st century the age of international modernism, which postwar reconstruction could reflect and which was fleshed out in the Stedelijk Museum, is also definitely at an end. Our age has finished with the history and certainly with the phantoms of modernism. Major ideological impulses have lost their powers and with the crushing of modernism's plausibility the idea of the traditional museum as fundament has been swept away.

In this there is a clearly connected development: an overburdened welfare state assigns socialist ideals to the sidelines; a destitute commando economy ultimately curses the communists; our individualised concept of art ultimately dismisses the coercive structures of modernism. Our culture is compartmentalised, we do not ask of art history a simple, straightforward story any more. There are just as many stories as there are individuals with understanding and imagination.

What the museums are lacking nowadays is a flexible programme that could be fitted into a larger masterplan. Without a broad framework it is already too difficult. The older nationalism-related museums were according to the ideas of the day laid out as copies of large department stores. Twentieth-century museums (contemporary, modernistic or post modernistic) are still allied to an industrial society. That goes for the Netherlands, that goes for elsewhere. Paris, particularly the historical and contemporary, shows that clearly. There is no better guide than Baudelaire or, following in his footsteps, Benjamin with his *Passagenwerk*. Their preoccupation with the Grand Palais and the Galleries Modernes is nowadays reflected in public buildings like the Musée d'Orsay and Disneyland. Elsewhere, in America, the large-scale Guggenheim plans for developing a sort of world museum in New York, Venice, Salzburg and Boston are gaining currency. The Getty Museum in California knows no other operational structure than the continuous circulation of liquid assets. A thousand-and-one formulas have been tried out elsewhere. Yet you constantly encounter one outlived art historical ideology as a palliative among the most diverse pragmatic, philosophical or artistic rationales. The new German museums are also still ideologically orientated. They are expressions of a tempered nationalistic 'overtaking' manoeuvre, with a view to post-modern 'ideology-of-victory-over-ideology', which, more Darwinian in character than modernism, is somehow experienced more deeply. In the same way that you clutch at the last straw. For while these museums were still in the pipeline the ideology had started to crumble. The museums were just ready when the hackneyed tale of art history no longer tallied.

Master of severe Post Modernism

How has the Netherlands attempted to mask the lost innocence? There is no better example than the new building plans for the regional museum of modern art. In Groningen the natural successor to Sandberg was installed as director of the museum, but the neutral architectural autonomy of Sandberg's Stedelijk Museum has been swapped here for the forcefulness and inflexibility of post-modern design, which only wants to exist for itself. The fairytale prince of frivolous post modernism, the wily Mendini, has known how to use his client's fascination for Sandberg by creating a new museum building which even by the time of its opening will probably already be a dated historicism of post-modern's colour-crazed history. In Maastricht Aldo Rossi, the master of severe post modernism, will leave a relic behind in the form of a building that seals the fate of the lost style of post modernism. In Eindhoven the monastic-like building of the Van Abbemuseum is totally snowed under by a genuine contemporary lightweight construction. This, in fact, still symbolises best the lost ideals of the museum world. The contemporary

museum as a parasite on the back of a cultural climate come to an end.

At the moment important decisions are on the agenda for Amsterdam's Museumplein. The most obviously interesting of these is what will be decided regarding the new extension of the Stedelijk. What does a council do, saddled with a tourist attraction which has lost its ideological footing? Simply skirt the issue and ease the Stedelijk Museum into the configuration comprising the Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh, the Concertgebouw and, further away, the Filmmuseum and the Rijksacademie! For if the ideological reason for modern art museums' existence is no longer there, then there is nothing for it but to latch on to the still, as yet, insatiable hunger of the tourist for icons in order to conceal the existential crisis as much as possible. It certainly looks like the choice will be for a solution that steers clear of the real issues. The idea is to see a general plan realised that closely resembles the *Museuminsel* in Berlin, in the former eastern sector. Thus a relatively small site crammed with several museums where visitors will certainly have their work cut out. And as is the case in Berlin, the set-up of the Museumplein like the *Museuminsel*, will have obvious nineteenth-century features.

Travel – in the style of tourist or real traveller – is something the art world cannot do without any more. The difference is between the motivated, non-conforming traveller and the submissive, all-admiring programmed tourist. This will make a great deal of difference especially to the Stedelijk's atmosphere. Keeping in mind the anarchy of Sandberg, the intellectual chic of De Wilde and the current post-modern trend, the aim it seems is to adapt the Stedelijk along with other museums ensconced on the Museumplein to a model made suitable for the tourist, but which is unable to deal satisfactorily with the needs and desires of the interested traveller. The concept behind the redesigning of the Museumplein is based on an outdated Darwinist development whereby art moves itself from a figurative to an abstract objective. Even the events surrounding Barnett Newman will not change anything on this score. The planned worship around Malevich's *Black Square*, Yves Klein's *Azure*, Robert Ryman's *Fingerprints*, Fontana's *Cuts* or Newman's *Red* will simply continue. An atmosphere of *après moi le deluge*.

Let us just imagine that new Museumplein. The two state museums have it easiest. The Rijksmuseum knows how to bring together the interests of the tourist with the task of portraying Dutch national history. The Van Gogh museum sui generis defends a view of painting that is validated by an alive-and-kicking myth and a superabundance of tourists. The modern age can take note of this.

But with the tourist so much at home in these museums, the Stedelijk should choose rather for the traveller. The choice between traveller and tourist has long been thrown off balance in Amsterdam. Politicians have championed tourists and made way in the city for mass culture. The question is how to position the Museum with regard to history, but equally, with regard to the future. Grabbing the opportunity and building as soon as possible seems to drive thinking at this time. This is a fatalistic attitude. Once, the new café terrace of the Stedelijk was the place where it happened, but the new up-and-coming, well-endowed-with-pavement-café lay-out for the Museumplein can never make up for this.

What modern art museums lack nowadays is a reliable artistic plan that does justice to the interests of the intelligent visitor. That is to say no more outside cafés for tourists, there are enough in the city already, but challenges for the traveller, or to make a traveller of the tourist: to replace the consumption of passive art with active discovery. To recognise the rights of the art lover over and above those of the outdoor café owner.

Dinosaur

In discussing the possibilities of the Museumplein as a site enclosed by museums, its surrounding satellites are also important. They partly determine how the Stedelijk

could re-define itself. Therefore the Rijksacademie, the Filmmuseum and the Concertgebouw are no less vital to the image of the Stedelijk than the Rijksmuseum or the Van Gogh Museum. As far as the artistic climate of the Rijksacademie is concerned, its direction is clear. The tone has been set: *At the Rijksacademie artistic questioning is the main objective, even with new technological media*, says the management, but of *technocratic tomfoolery* remain wary: *the dinosaurs within the visual arts: big, impressive, possibly a necessary step in evolution but of only fleeting importance*. This then is the cautious trend. The Concertgebouw and the Filmmuseum are also programmed with an artistic code that aligns with the artistic achievements of a nineteenth century model. In both institutes this code has almost reached a perfect form of programming. For the passive art lover an ideal position to take up. The Filmmuseum's refurbishment of the old sex cinema *Parisien* has shown clearly that nostalgia and looking to the past are being used to create the overriding atmosphere. In the Concertgebouw a retro feel pervades. The artistic augmentation of such an atmosphere need not give rise to too many uncertainties. With modernism outdated, there are sufficient harmless alternatives at hand. Most suitable is probably the Kraaijpoel method. Based on the controversial diatribe by Diederik Kraaijpoel³, *De Nieuwe Salon (The New Salon)*, only the last offshoots of modernism from the seventies and eighties need be removed from the museum and replaced by a somewhat more figurative content. Kraaijpoel still believes in the truth and the applicability of conventional art history and the Greenberg version of this. In fact his world view does not differ much from that of his opponents. One could also extract a methodology from the new *Amsterdamse Grachtenboek* (Amsterdam Book of Canals)*. There we find a smooth account of history which in many ways is adapted for tourists. And it does not betray the traveller either. It is a topical book that does not want to surrender a part of a city at the end of its history entirely to chaos, but at the same time picks enough holes in (art) history to remain credible.

We need have no illusions, however, concerning the official climate in which projects are developed: the tourist grip is the only thing that matters here, the arguments are economic ones – art as a component of the economic process. The council has pressed for an extension to the Stedelijk that closely resembles the extension of the Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Brussels – namely the feeling of being in an air-raid shelter. Unfortunately not the pleasant atmosphere you can sometimes inhale in a depot opened for the public.

But if in the end you have to choose for the tourist there are enough starting points to operate a sound museum policy. For sometimes the interests of tourists prove to be tied in to relevant questions which come to the fore in the constant demands for a new museum. For the question, *How to cope with all the visitors?* lies side-by-side with the question: how to store the increasingly growing collection? And suddenly I realise that my image of an ideally functioning Stedelijk (and of every new modern art museum for that matter) *can* be achieved via a tourist version. For my ideal image of a museum is that of a virtual museum. A museum that is incorporated into a digital data bank and does not need to exist in reality, but can be called up as desired. Within the constellation of Filmmuseum and Rijksmuseum and Van Gogh, where the emphasis lies on the *aura* of the work, where the idea of the materiality is more appreciated than the virtuality of the idea, where the fetishism of paint and film roll is celebrated, a Stedelijk that adopted a somewhat more distant approach towards the object would be able to have its own special niche.

Nowhere is there so much knowledge about the opportunities for storing data as in the world of information technology. Without allowing technology to take over the duties of director and curator, you should, in a metaphorical sense, think over these problems. And nowhere is there such an intuitive feeling for huge crowds of people then by the tourist himself. The tourist has a nose for his own place in the crowd. As part of an entire systematic plan the public willingly allows itself to be

tickled. Where there are queues they happily join them. No one is more knowledgeable about tourists than tourists themselves. In fact a long queue inspires, makes them determined to join and become an object of attention themselves. When Big Exhibitions are on, arranging a pass before arranging a visit has become the norm, yet despite this procedure there is still a stampede. In this context the choice of the 'stylish' expurgated-from-bodily-odours interior of the discarded *Parisien sex* and porn cinema for the Filmmuseum's screening room is a masterstroke. You do not sit down to watch the film any more, but you go because you know that in the auditorium you yourself are henceforth an object of attention. Edward Kienholz' *Beanery* falls into the same category. As one of the special cult attractions of the Stedelijk and until now permanently erected in a small, tucked away room, this unique artistic bar – an oppressive space where together with a couple of other museum visitors you are drawn into an American atmosphere – has been moved to a larger public space. Now suddenly queues formed which in themselves became part of the attraction of the work. This summer you did not queue outside the museum but within it!

3-D Buildings

Why is it, incidentally, that up until now the Japanese spirit has nestled itself into so many spheres, but in art it has hardly been given a chance? Is it a question of time, that the problems of visitors and storage (which in many aspects is comparable to the silting-up of motorways and the problem of processing waste) will effect a definitive turnabout in museum collections. And have not the Japanese even trumped the Dutch when solving problems of organising space? I predict that the current museum problems will finally experience a manageable solution. Not by constantly expanding the museums – the Museumplein variant so far – but by reducing the core issue to the 'rucksack problem': how and what to take in your backpack as economically as possible. In this context, and everyone can take comfort from it, Marcel Duchamp jumps out like a Jack-in-the-box with his exemplary solution: a Duchamp collection in the form of a transportable case.

One Japanese inspired solution to the museology problem involves a master plan that dryly reduces the processing of x number of data on input to a digital database. Such a format should at the same time influence decisions regarding acquisition, exhibitions and treatment of the material. You can for instance look at our museums through Japanese eyes. The Van Gogh Museum then suffers from totally contrary premises: livingroom-sized paintings in far too big an overcoat. Vincent van Gogh had something about Japan, for obvious reasons so does the museum. But it is a strange relationship. The ponderous building is just as much in contradiction with Vincent's sense of proportion as with the Japanese culture. You see that the museum has a great desire to communicate with Japan. Perhaps it is worth considering the idea of acquiring Rietveld's *Schröderhuis* in Utrecht as annex for the museum. There you can at least trace Rietveld's ingenious spatial considerations which embrace those of Japan. Or place the compact, hiding-within-itself space of the *Schröderhuis* in an empty space of the Van Gogh Museum as a continual reminder of what it is all about. The Rijksmuseum should be returned to its original nineteenth century exemplification, with the many perfectly balanced small rooms, in order to get rid of the constantly new alterations being realised and to return what remains of the original architecture. This would mean a jump back to the past and a reconstruction giving a sense of how the nineteenth century coped even then with considerable numbers of visitors.

In this sense the Japanese labyrinths are worth mentioning. They are a way of speeding up the flow of visitor traffic. Here the interests of public and operator come together: a labyrinth is nothing more than a means of hustling through as many visitors as possible at different speeds. This sort of approach could mean the

answer to absorbing large groups of people: a maze with wooden dividing walls which from above looks like computer hardware. The visitor enters the labyrinth in order to come out as quickly as possible at the other end. A card announces the time available to him. The system is versatile, you can adjust the route. Anywhere within the three-dimensional structures – with four towers and bridges and passageways running underneath – you can open and close doors to adapt the system to any total-number-of-visitors variant. During peak hours the tourist is hustled through the one-way system so that he is unable to return to parts of the exhibition already seen. The traveller in the quieter periods has a more difficult task and can hang around the maze much longer.

As a proven concept in accommodating as many people as possible in as restricted a space as possible, and exhibits in as small and compact a space as possible, exact made-to-measure space offers one of several solutions. The historical representation is also different. In Japan the traditional temples and holy shrines are often contemporary copies. The impact of the weather or unexpected disasters, which have affected the original materials, means constant renovation. It is a country where the past is continually renewing itself in the present and future, a country where they are consciously preparing themselves to store the old culture digitally. The old objects are being prepared to be included in the magnetic and digital data bases. The past is there to be called up as virtual reality.

And here the traveller makes his entrance. He is the self-possessed museum visitor who goes his own way, that prefers not to be eased along, who does not fear the experimental and apart from tactile desires (the actual work should be there) has also conceptual interests. He is philosophical and not afraid of an experiment. He asks questions about reality and the interpretation of it. For surely in a museology atmosphere there is the pressing question of whether actual reality has ever existed? Has not reality always been something manipulated, have not all our realities been continually subordinate to the concepts of some order or another that made it possible for us to have a grip on reality? If this is so, what is it that makes us so anxious about a speculative digital processing of our past, when we feel so comfortable with a nostalgic/tactile one?

I have my own views on this. You see a similar display of fear in relation to statements made on the status of art by French philosophers. Of course, speculative elements in that philosophy are considerable and invite contradiction, but that does not explain why in the museum world Lyotard or Baudrillard are so loathed. They have done nothing more than ask questions about the existential and ontological nature of the aura of the artwork. Questions which showed no respect for the nostalgic or tactile aspect of a work. Nevertheless, the actual situation has affirmed them both. Lyotard for anticipating the demise of the Big Stories and Baudrillard for establishing that we all live in an illusionary world – whether there is living art on the wall or not. If you no longer believe in the story of Newman what hangs there now is simply nothing more than a piece of red-painted cloth.

And should not the Stedelijk ask itself – rather than questions already long answered about art of the past – questions about the art, the art registering and the art collecting of tomorrow? Or simply become involved with art in a different way than the standard one? Constantly modify the paradigms and as soon as a fashion changes re-order all the data? The highly seductive tricks of conceptual art, however, take on a curious form in the light of computer language. And since we can compare the computer pixels with the dots of Seurat as cross-fertilized metaphors, the nature of Kiefer's painting is changed. Only after a management course can we properly assess the shopping-art philosophy of the neo-conceptualists or the Benetton philosophy of Koons and company.

Nothing is more exciting than to visualise these points of change. The virtual atmosphere of digital storage, a digital presentation and a few other possibilities that

change the passive viewing of an observer into a much more conscious activity. From Seurat to Gerald van der Kaap, the past of the present digitalised: Malevich's *Black Square*, the linear Renaissance windows, the curvature of Baroque. The widely diverging paradigms of art history have always displayed circumlocution due to the problems of filing and recording. Every generation wants to avoid the superabundance of the previous one by working with new macros, by lightening the memory so as to leave the day free for a new output of ideas. Art history as a world of data-base information for those who do not wish to remain loyal to the rigid classification schemata. A virtual reality of visual material. The narrative structure and exciting scenarios that can be stirred up by the pictorial passions.

Moreover, the opportunities for storage and information processing could provide an enormous stimulus for solving the pressing depot problems. The storage period does not then have any problems any more, you store the material digitally, you recall it as necessary. In America when the private car reached its absolute aesthetic zenith, with nineteen fifties designed tail fins, and there was no limit to its size – when American battleships on the road were celebrated, the Japanese Trade Ministry (MITI) was working on the scenario of how the car in the nineteen eighties would look. We all know how that scenario, which had not even taken the development of the computer chip into account, produced the compact passenger car. By 1969, when the first chips were integrated into the American car, the lag in development was already too great. Thinking in smaller measurements is still not standard practice. Perhaps the American car industry has now finally learned, but contemporary museological culture still suffers from what I would like to term 'American car-thinking'. Based on an eradicable, misinterpreted philosophy, a misadapted high-school philosophy, this culture could make wrong choices for both modernism and post-modernism in fact: Barnett Newman who was the first to bring size into play by paintings which are largely experienced as *andachtsbilder* or as mandalas. Anselm Kiefer, who used big and heavy as principle starting points and in our museum world, both in the US and Europe, is regarded as the most important artist. The empty talk of a personal mythology, badly applied paint and the arbitrary collage technique suggest a European culture. But what makes him really popular are of course the enormous sizes of his works which measure up to nineteenth century prairie thinking.

If I gaze into the crystal ball for a second, what would happen if instead of a nostalgic feeling to the Museumplein a forward-looking interactive agenda were realised? It will be no longer the traditional curator or restorer who determines the image of a modern museum but the programmer or the in-house archive manager. In a way, a total programme could be realised that in many aspects closely resembles the set-up of digital visual media in Karlsruhe and Cologne. If the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum, plus the Concertgebouw, the Filmmuseum and the Rijksacademie represent the classical aspect, then the Stedelijk should develop a much more experimental, less restricted agenda and atmosphere in which to study.

Song Lines

In my book *Engelen* (*Angels*) I considered one of the many possibilities for an individually arranged art history. It is an offshoot of a branch long since sanctioned in André Malraux's *Musée imaginaire* and tested in the nineteen seventies from an entirely different starting point by John Berger in his *Ways of Seeing*. Although always suspect in museum circles, Rudi Fuchs' 'At-eye-level-and-not-too-close-together' dialogue with painters has a strong affinity to this. *Engelen* is a collection of dreams which, as a network of possibilities and considered designs, claims its own rightful position over that one, made-difficult route that dominates the museums. This dream method is borrowed from the idea of *Songlines*.

Back then to the beginning and the performance of Ulay and Marina. As it has gradually become known, especially since the publication of Bruce Chatwin's book, *The Songlines*, the Australian continent is entirely covered by a system of singing paths. This web, thousands of years old, proved to hold some kind of validity for the Aboriginals in their claim for possession of land. This almost atavistic cultural code is a last weapon in the hands of the original people to put a stop to modern civilisation in important cultural places.

The Aboriginals have always cherished the concept of the *Dream* in their culture, a singing dream which they regard as the source of the Creation and which at the same time upholds the creation. Across the entire continent countless invisible lines have been stretched, along which the Ancestors made their journeys and which have to be woven afresh by each new generation. Every piece of land is covered by Dreams, which are handed down from generation to generation, and thus keep the land intact. In this way, through song and story, culture is brought into play. It has long remained hidden within the circle. But nowadays in the declining years of this almost extinct culture, this method has suddenly become very typical in the Aboriginals' fight with European 'civilisation'. They demand that these lines be respected and that roads, building projects and mining sites do not dissect their paths. From an old secret cultural precept they have fashioned a strong political weapon. Ulay and Marina introduced the Dream of the Aboriginals to Amsterdam in 1985. In the cupola of the Sonesta Hotel they invited an Aboriginal and a Tibetan monk to sit with them around a table and to meditate totally motionlessly for four days. For me it is an image that still holds some credibility.

It is similar to the way I imagine the structure of a new museum. No everyday place honouring the claims of an artistic order long discredited, but one that is in service of the personal, individual Dreaming of visitors. Without removing the painterly fetishistic atmosphere immediately, there would have to be a far greater emphasis placed on a different type of structure. The assimilation of *Songlines* would produce a weaving loom of widely diverging atmospheres that could all lead, via computer data processing, to an art history for every individual which is entirely his own. With the help of visual technology an entire flashing sweep of many traditions can be maintained. And also of course to challenge constantly the old fetish for an art object. In the end art history as a museological classification system of objects has only survived in the form of song-making works. In its consistency this historical incontrovertibility has always been very debatable and does not go along anymore with historical reality and certainly not with a vision for the future.

The Aboriginal is equipped for the future because he is not attached to objects and material values yet with the concept of dreams and songs has assured himself of the truth. A superabundance of art objects has deprived us of the conceptual value of an artistic experience. Today paintings are tested for their value on the market; it is the insurance premiums that determine the value of a canvas or the body of work of an artist. For those whom the tactile, fetish-like experiencing of artworks constitutes the real essence of artistic experience (Yes, I know, we are all victims of it), they will find what they are looking for in the Stedelijk, but more so in the Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum. There lies the data base for classical art, there the memory of modern art is to be found. The Stedelijk must then have the role of stimulating the development of new agendas. But in particular should not exhibit too many artworks; that only distracts. In the Stedelijk a higher language is spoken, a language from the outset in art theory, in the art of Seurat and De Stijl, which gains its demonstrable right to exist in conceptual art. Duchamp can have his spot with his case. An image of a computer-related atmosphere: the museum reduced to minimum dimensions. The hardware from the past, as it is stored in the collection, must provide sufficient room for the developing of new software.

A Series of Wiggles

From the computer world we know that object-oriented programming is very conceptual. That should be the motto behind the new Museum policy. A dreamworld for the twentieth century, art liberated from historical and nationalistic tendencies. The end of history also means that totalitarian thinking is outmoded. The end of history as well as the beginning of a history without boundaries, just like that long experienced by the Aborigines, an almost perfect interpretation of the end of the Big Stories as heralded by Fukuyama, Lyotard and others. If it were left to me the Museumplein would really become a Dream Square. And then as a reference for an exceptional group of artists, the Aborigines should provide the opening exhibition. But no songlines on canvas on the wall, that would look totally out of place. The idea would be to bring the spirit of the songlines to the city; redesign the Museumplein on the basis of their sung dreams and experiences. No outdoor cafés, no footpaths, but a sung and dreamed public work. And in particular as an example of absurdity. For if there is one culture that is able to take itself with a pinch of salt it is the Aboriginal one. As an example here is an extract from Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*:

Aborigines, when tracing a Songline in the sand, will draw a series of lines with circles in between. The line represents a stage in the Ancestor's journey (usually a day's march). Each circle is a 'stop', 'waterhole', or one of the Ancestor's campsites. But the story of the Big Fly One was beyond me.

It began with a few straight sweeps; then it wound into a rectangular maze, and finally ended in a series of wiggles. As he traced each section, Joshua kept calling a refrain, in English, Ho! Ho! They got the money over there.

I must have been very dim-witted that morning: it took me ages to realize that this was a Quantas Dreaming. Joshua had fled once into London. The 'maze' was London Airport: the Arrival Gate, Health, Immigration, Customs, and then ride into the city on the Underground. The 'wiggles' were the twists and turns of the taxi, from the tube station to the hotel.

In London, Joshua had seen all the usual sights – the Tower of London, Changing of the Guard and so on – but his real destination had been Amsterdam.

The ideogram for Amsterdam was even more perplexing. There was a circle. There were four smaller circles around it: and there were wires from each of these circles which led to a rectangular box.

Eventually, it dawned on me that this was some kind of round-table conference at which he, Joshua, had been one of four participants. The others, in a clockwise direction, had been 'a white one, a Father one', 'a thin one, a red one', 'a black one, a fat one'.

I asked if the 'wires' were microphone cables; Joshua shook his head vigorously. He knew all about microphones. They had microphones, on the table.

No! No! he shouted, pointing his fingers at his temples.

Were they electrodes or something?

Hey! he cackled. You got him.

The picture I pieced together – true or false I can't begin to say – was of a 'scientific' experiment at which an Aboriginal had sung his Dreaming, a Catholic monk had sung the Gregorian Chant, a Tibetan lama had sung his mantras, and an African had sung whatever: all four of them singing their heads off, to test the effect of different song styles on the rhythmic structure of the brain.

The episode struck Joshua, in retrospect, as so unbelievably funny that he had to hold his stomach for laughing.

So did I.

We laughed ourselves into hysterics and lay grasping for breath on the sand.

It seems to me the right tone for a new policy for the Stedelijk would be set if the

On Redesigning the Museumplein as a Dream Area

adventure and the unexpected entanglements, the evil and misunderstandings of rumour and knowing-everything-better hearsay and the pre-established policies of a pre-determined route were to be replaced.

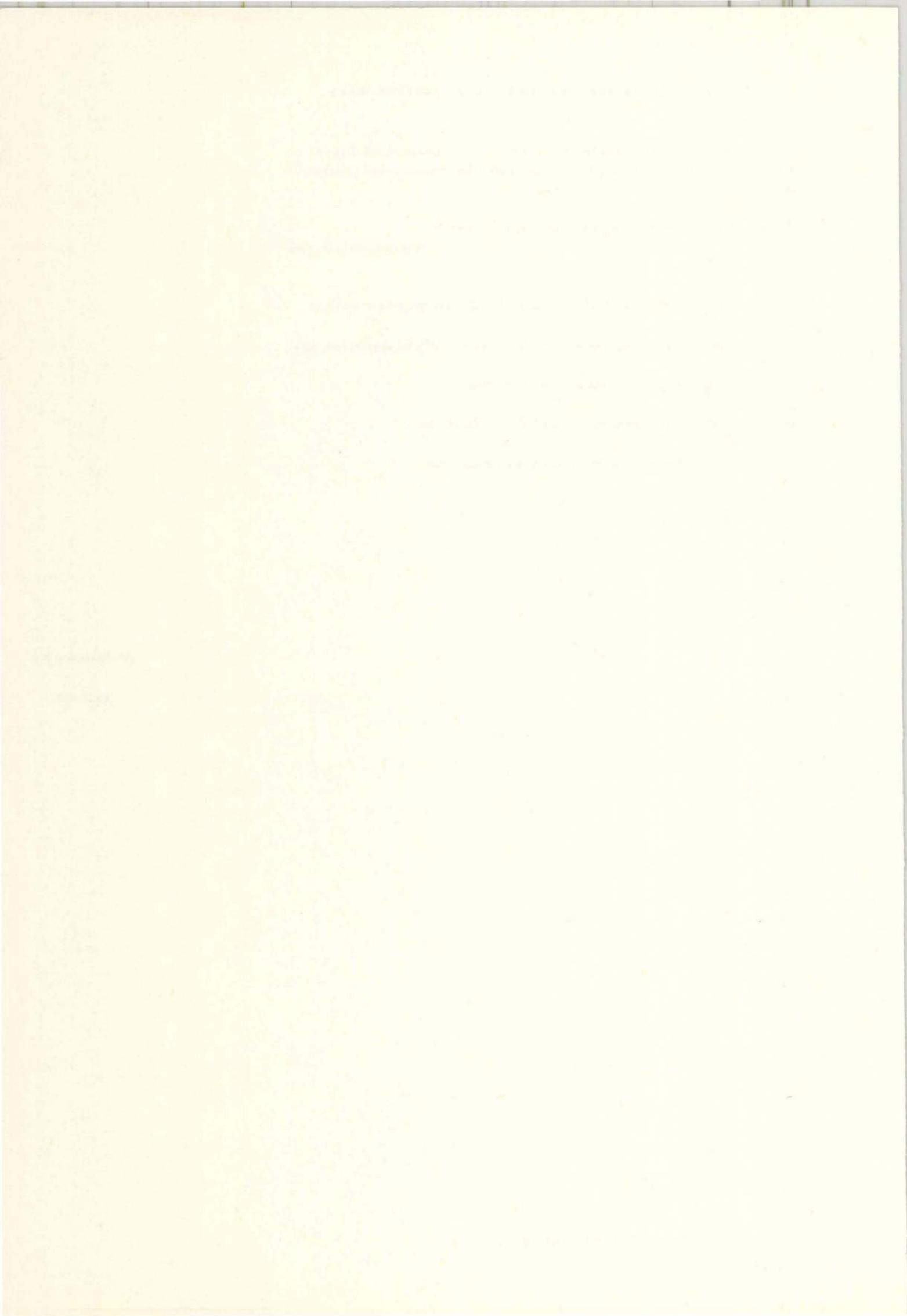
Truth is what you make of it yourself. Even in art history. ¶

translation LYNN GEORGE

- 1 *La Grande Parade* exhibition, Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, 15-12-84 — 15-4-85
- 2 Ulay & Marina, *The Nightsea Crossing*, Cupola of the Sonesta Hotel, Amsterdam, 1983
- 3 Diederik Kraaiipoel, *De Nieuwe Salon*, Groningen, 1990
- 4 Paul Spies et al, *Het Amsterdamse Grachtenboek*, The Hague, 1991
- 5 Paul Groot, *Engelen*, scenarios for visual art, Amsterdam, 1990
- 6 Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, London, 1987

Mediamatic 6 # 2

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Bezorgd / Worried



the souring of the
Old Arts

Het Onbehagen in de Media bij Steiner & Syberberg

Discomfort in the Media in Steiner and Syberberg

het verzuren van
de
Oude Kunst

by Geert Lovink & Basjan van Stam

'Who are you?' 'Oh. Sorry.' He handed Zoyd a card that read,

DR. DENNIS DEEPLY, M.S.W., PH.D.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR VIDEO EDUCATION AND REHABILITATION,'

someplace down north of Santa Barbara, a struck circle around a tv set, above the Latin motto

Ex luce ad sanitatem. 'We study and treat Tubal abuse and other video-related disorders.'

THOMAS PYNCHON *Vineland*





Het is gedaan met de onschuld van de media. Na de uitbundige groei in de jaren '80 begint nu een periode van stagnatie. Deze wordt aangekondigd door een mentaliteit van matiging te propageren. Van alle kanten wordt ons duidelijk gemaakt dat het afgelopen moet zijn met de zorgeloze omgang met informatie en beeldmateriaal. De media en het dataverkeer dienen zich voortaan in hun presentatie, net als andere sectoren van de Westerse samenlevingen, te onderwerpen aan het dictaat van de ecologie. Het milieu is meer dan bedreigde planten en dieren. Het is een mentaliteit die met abstracte begrippen als 'besparing' en 'recycling' de geconstrueerde mediasfeer als een (derde of vierde) natuur ziet. Daarbinnen heerst waakzaamheid tegen alle mogelijke nutteloze vervuiling en zinloze verspilling.



Bewuste mediagebruikers anno nu vinden bij zichzelf een 'natuurlijk evenwicht' tussen de opname en afgifte van informatie. Na de euforische kennismaking met de nieuwe technologieën zoeken ze een balans tussen de immateriële omgeving die imaginaire werelden oproept en het biografisch milieu waarin het eigen fysiek verkeert.

Dit evenwicht wordt nodig geacht om de pioniers in dataland (die aan de *electronic frontier* werkzaam zijn) te behoeden voor een cold turkey. Na de extase in de experimentele fase treedt een onbehagen in de techno-cultuur op, die mogelijksterwijs een destructieve uitweg zoekt. Hoge verwachtingen gaan maar al te gemakkelijk over in een grote teleurstelling, die de haat tegen de machinerie aanwakkert. Deleuze en Guattari zouden dat simpelweg betitelen als 'anti-productie': de walging die plotseling opkomt bij degenen die zich hebben laten meesleuren in de tekenstromen. Zou dat nou het 'drama van de communicatie' zijn (vrij naar Alice Miller), dat wij op het moment enkel nog ontvangen en niets meer terugseinen? Of omgekeerd: teveel data in de

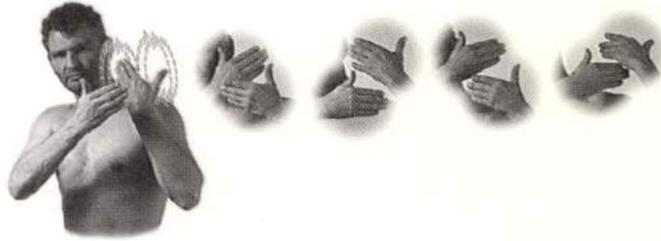
wereld zetten, zonder daar ook maar iets voor terug te krijgen? Er ontstaat onder datawerkers een gevoel van ledigheid en zinloosheid, die slechts tijdelijk kan worden gecompenseerd door de introductie van alweer nieuwe hard- en software. Misschien biedt een ecologische therapie uitkomst; in elk geval is dat wat de media-ecologen G. Steiner en H.J. Syberberg suggereren in hun recente publikaties.

Het lichaam lijkt bij langdurig verblijf in het mediaal milieu te gaan verdampen. Met de grenzen van de eigen omgeving vervaagt ook de afperking van het eigen lichaam. Maar voordat de kritische grens van de 'virtuele werkelijkheid' genomen wordt, willen de ecosofen ons daarvoor behoeden. Ze kijken met weemoed naar het vervlogen tijdperk waarin authenticiteit en *real presence* zo floreerden, in een poging te redden wat er te redden valt.

Door de 'dreigende' vestiging van de permanente media wordt onvermijdelijk een nieuw verlangen geproduceerd naar 'direct contact', zonder al die bemiddelende instanties en gekunstelde prothesen. Aan de ongebreidelde

kolonisatie van het persoonlijk leven dient tijdelijk een halt toegeeroepen te worden. Eind jaren '80 wordt ineens de ergernis verwoord over de mediale brei waar men zich iedere dag doorheen moet vreten om op de hoogte te blijven. Niet nog meer bladen, tv-series en computer software! Niet nog meer wereldschokkende media-events! Het mediadiet dat men zichzelf volautomatisch oplegt om niet bedolven te raken, begint bon ton te worden. Verveling en onverschilligheid vermengen zich met actieve vormen van weigering nog langer bewust te consumeren. De aangeschafte bestseller-boeken mogen best ongelezen blijven, de tv kan ook zappend of zelfs slapend worden bekeken... of gewoon worden uitgelaten. Het onbewust registreren van de headlines blijkt voldoende om mee te kunnen praten.

De 'Franse' theorieën uit de jaren '70, die zich keerden tegen begrippen als eenheid, waarheid en zingeving en ongebreideld de deconstructie en de differentie praktizeerden, hebben het afgelegd tegen de supersonische wereld van de simulatie. De oneindige tekstproductie blijkt geen oplos-



• The innocence of the media has been lost. After its exuberant growth in the '80s, a period of stagnation is beginning, heralded by the propagation of a mentality of restraint. From all sides, it is being made clear to us that the time has come to stop handling information and visual material carelessly. From now on, the media and data traffic in their presentation must subject themselves, like any other sector of Western society, to the diktate of ecology.

The environment is more than endangered plants and animals. It is a mentality which views the constructed media sphere, with abstract concepts like 'conservation' and 'recycling', as a third or fourth nature. Inside this sphere, watchfulness prevails towards all possible needless pollution and senseless waste.

Aware media users at the present are finding a 'natural balance' in their own lives between the reception and issue of information. After euphorically getting to know the new technologies, they are seeking a balance between the immaterial environment which evokes imaginary worlds and the biographical environment in which their own physique finds itself.

This balance is considered necessary to protect the data pioneers who work at the 'electronic frontier' from cold turkey. After the ecstasy of the experimental phase a discomfort appears in the technoculture, which is possibly seeking a destructive outlet. High expectations all too easily end in great disappointment, which breeds hatred towards the machinery. Deleuze and Guattari would simply call it 'anti-production': the disgust that suddenly arises in those who have let themselves be carried away by the stream of signals. Would this be the 'drama of communication' (adapted from Alice Miller) — that at the moment we are only receiving and signaling nothing

back? Or the reverse: putting too much data into the world, without getting anything whatsoever in return? Among data workers there is a feeling of emptiness and pointlessness which can only temporarily be compensated for by the introduction of yet more new hard- and software. Perhaps an ecological therapy can help; in any case this is what media ecologists G. Steiner and H. J. Syberberg suggest in their recent publications.

The body seems likely to evaporate from a long stay in the medial milieu. Along with the boundaries of the personal environment, the definition of one's own body is growing vague as well. But before the critical limit of 'virtual reality' is transgressed, the ecosophers want to protect us. They look wistfully back to the long-ago era when authenticity and 'real presence' so flourished, in an attempt to salvage what there is to salvage.

The 'impending' establishment of permanent media unavoidably produces a new longing for 'direct contact', without all those mediating bodies and elaborate prostheses.

The unbridled colonization of the personal life must be temporarily halted. At the end of the '80s people suddenly expressed annoyance at the tapestry of media we all had to eat through in order to keep up on things. Not *more* magazines, tv series and computer software! Not *more* world-shocking media events! The diet of media we automatically impose on ourselves, lest we get swamped, is becoming the done thing. Boredom and indifference mingle with active forms of refusal to keep consciously consuming. The bestsellers we've bought can just stay unread, the tv can be watched zapping or even sleeping... or just left off. Unconscious registration of the headlines proves enough for keeping up in conversation.

The 'French' theories from the 1970s, which turned against concepts like unity, truth and meaning and practised unrestrained deconstruction and difference, are no match for the supersonic world of stimulation. Endless text production has turned out to offer no solution, but rather to cause problems. Moaning and groaning about the *excess of interpretations* is turning into a



sing te bieden, maar eerder problemen te veroorzaken. Het gesteun en gekreun over een *overdaad aan interpretaties* gaat over in een publieke klaagzang die velen blijkt aan te spreken. Volgens de diagnose van de mediadiëtenisten bevinden we ons momenteel in een *betekenisvacuüm* dat wordt veroorzaakt door het *geleuter van journalisten* en de overloze academische verhandelingen van de *specialisten*. Wij zouden in een verdorven wereld leven waarin de *parasieten van het Secundaire* het voor 't zeggen hebben. Deze tweederangs schrijvers en filmers, die de redactielokalen bevolken, zorgen ervoor dat *iedere originele ervaring in de kiem gesmoord wordt*. Volgens deze mediakritiek zou er geen reëel heden meer bestaan, maar enkel nog *imaginaire zones, indirecte vertogen en geënceneerde gebeurtenissen*. Bovenal zou ons *de toegang tot het kunstwerk* versperd worden door een afvalberg van exegeses, commentaren en kritieken. Als iets de zingeving kan terughalen, dan is het wel echte kunst, die je met stomheid slaat en geen verdere uitleg nodig heeft.

Society of the Primary

De antipathie voor de leegte die de overvloed met zich meebrengt, wordt onder woorden gebracht door George Steiner in zijn *Real Presences* (1989). In deze essays zoekt hij aansluiting bij de huidige worsteling met de mediale overkill en maakt de lezer warm voor een *society of the primary* waarin *all talk about the arts, music and literature is prohibited. In this society all discourse is held to be illicit verbiage*. De kritiek kan aan de kapstok worden gehangen, immers *all serious art, music and literature is a critical act*. We hoeven ons geen zorgen te maken dat in deze tegenhanger van Plato's republiek a *blank and passive silence* zou heersen. Alle opvoeringen van de Grote Werken die de *imaginary community of the immediate* voortbrengt zijn immers als interpretaties te beschouwen en zijn *understanding in action*.

Steiner is zeker niet op z'n achterhoofd gevallen. Hij begrijpt ook wel hoe moeilijk het is een

scheidslijn te trekken tussen primaire en secundaire teksten. Zijn oproep tot het ontmantelen van de cultuurindustrie moeten we vooral zien als een teken van wanhoop over het vluchtige karakter van de huidige producten. *The great bulk is totally ephemeral, ze zijn soon out of print en sepulchred in the decent dust of deposit libraries*. Ze komen en gaan *like querulous shadows*, leveren hooguit wat *transiant pleasure* op en de nodige werkgelegenheid voor de *secondary souls*.

De Werken van vandaag wijden zich inderdaad niet aan een imaginaire eeuwigheid, zoals die vroeger bestond. Ze worden vervaardigd om na opname te worden gereproduceerd, preciezer gezegd: gekopieerd. Hun vervaardiging staat geheel en al in het teken van de mogelijke mediaschakelingen. De vluchtigheid die Steiner zo betreurt is niets anders dan de snelheid van de huidige registratie-technieken. Het media-verbond waarin de 'eeuwige' kunstwerken van voorheen zijn opgenomen, is een dynamisch multi-mediaal archief, waarin technische verbindingen tussen woord, beeld en geluid tot stand worden gebracht. Zonder deze ontwikkeling bij haar naam te noemen, ziet Steiner hierin een verlies aan authenticiteit.

Het huidige media-verbond, waarin de cultuur zich als informatie voortbeweegt, lijkt in geen velden of wegen op Steiners model van de secundaire lagen met in het midden de authentieke, primaire kern. Voor de informatie bestaat er geen verschil tussen eerste- en tweederangs data (er bestaan hooguit bewerkte en ruwe data). In principe zijn ze allemaal onderhevig aan ruis en erosie en overgeleverd aan de stand van de techniek.

Voor Steiner zijn media synoniem aan een dreigende ondergang van het subject. Deze wil zich op eigen wijze uitdrukken, maar komt daar niet meer aan toe omdat hij omvergekegeld wordt door een informatielawine. *Literate humanity is solicited daily by millions of words, printed, broadcast, screened, about books*

which it will never open, music it will not hear, works of arts it will never set eyes on. Zelfs de computer en de elektronische databanken kunnen deze massa niet verwerken. Maar wie maakt zich zorgen over de machines? Steiner wil vooral zelfmedelijden opwekken. De geleerden kunnen het simpelweg niet meer aan. Erger nog: de media tasten hun geestelijk vermogen aan en worden *superieur*. *A mandarin madness of secondary discourse infects thought and sensibility*. Stilletjes hoopt hij dat de geschiedenis een vernietigend oordeel zal vellen over ons *imperialism of the second- and third-hand*. *Perhaps our age will come to be known as that of the marginalists, of the clerics of the market*.

Van de fascinatie voor de media uit de jaren '80 blijft bij Steiner weinig over. Zelfs een analyse van het globale mediakapitalisme hoeft niet gemaakt te worden. De taak van de geleerde is blijkbaar niet gelegen in het begrijpen van de wereld om hem heen. Media verzieken de geest en het aanwijzen van de schulden is voldoende. Dat zijn de persmusketen: *Journalistic presentation generates a temporality of equivalent instantaneity. All things are more or less of equal import; all are only daily. (data are equal, but some are more equal.)*

Dichters, componisten en schilders zouden volgens Steiner geen genoeg moeten nemen met de vijf minuten waarin ze als ster mogen schitteren. Zij zijn immers *wagers on lastingness*. Dat de media tegenwoordig zorgdragen voor de opname van kunst in het mythologisch universum (denk aan Van Gogh, Mozart of The Doors) is Steiner nog niet opgevallen. De media hebben onder tussen hun eigen onsterfelijke helden en mythen voortgebracht, die zich kunnen meten aan de traditionele en daar bovendien vrolijk op voortborduren.

Journalism bids us invest in the bourse of momentary sensation. Hele volksstammen die *serious art* bedrijven, gaan blijkbaar door de knieën voor dit verleidelijke aanbod. Eigenlijk zouden ze een radicale desinteresse voor de



public lament which appeals to many. According to the media dietitians' diagnosis, we are currently in a *media vacuum* caused by the *drivel of journalists* and the endless academic discourse of the *specialists*. We live, they say, in a corrupt world where *the parasites of the Secondary* call the shots. These second-rate writers and filmmakers who populate editorial centres make sure *every original experience is nipped in the bud*. According to this media criticism, a real present no longer exists, just *imaginary zones, indirect discourses and staged events*. Above all, *access to the work of art* is being closed off to us by a garbage heap of exegesis, commentaries and criticisms. If anything can recapture meaning, it is real art, which strikes you dumb and requires no further explanation.

Society of the Primary

George Steiner's *Real Presences* (1989) articulates the antipathy for emptiness which accompanies the flood. In these essays he seeks alliance with the modern struggle with media overkill and arouses the reader's interest in a *society of the primary* in which *all talk about the arts, music and literature is prohibited*. In this society all discourse is held to be illicit verbiage. Criticism can be put on the shelf; *all serious art, music and literature is a critical act*, anyway. We don't have to worry about a *blank and passive silence* prevailing in this counterpart to Plato's republic. After all, all presentations of the Great Works which create an *imaginary community of the immediate* are to be considered as interpretations and are *understanding in action*.

Steiner is without doubt playing with a full deck. He also understands how difficult it is to draw a dividing line between primary and secondary texts. We must see his call for the dismantling of the culture industry as, above all, a sign of desperation at the fleeting character of modern products. *The great bulk is totally ephemeral; it will be soon out of print and*

sepulchred in the decent dust of deposit libraries. These works come and go like *querulous shadows*, provide at most some *transient pleasure* and the necessary job opportunities for the *secondary souls*.

Indeed, the Works of today do not dedicate themselves to an imaginary eternity as once existed. They are manufactured to be recorded and reproduced — more precisely, copied. Their manufacture is entirely dominated by possible media connections. The fleetingness Steiner so deplores is nothing more than the speed of modern registration techniques. The media alliance into which the 'eternal' works of art have been incorporated is a dynamic multimedia archive where technical connections between word, image and sound are created. Without calling this development by name, Steiner sees a loss of authenticity here.

The modern media alliance, in which culture moves forward as information, in no way resembles Steiner's model of secondary layers with an authentic, primary core at the centre. In information science there is no difference between first- and second-rate data (at most there are processed and raw data). In principle, they are all subject to static and erosion and at the mercy of the state of the technology.

For Steiner, media are synonymous with the imminent fall of the subject, which would express itself in its own way, but cannot because it is bowled over by an avalanche of information. *Literate humanity is solicited daily by millions of words, printed, broadcast, screened, about books which it will never open, music it will not hear, works of art it will never set eyes on*. Not even the computer and the electronic databanks can process this mass. But who's worrying about the machines? Steiner is mainly looking to arouse self-pity. It's all simply come to be too much for the scholars. Even worse: the media are impairing their intellectual capability and are becoming

superior. *A mandarin madness of secondary discourse infects thought and sensibility*. He tacitly hopes that history will pass devastating judgment on our *imperialism of the second- and third-hand*. *Perhaps our age will come to be known as that of the marginalists, of the clerics of the market*.

Steiner has little of the '80s fascination for the media. No analysis of global media capitalism even need be made. The task of the scholar evidently does not lie in understanding the world around him. Media ruin the mind, and pointing out the culprits is sufficient. These are the press hounds: *Journalistic presentation generates a temporality of equivalent instantaneity*. *All things are more or less of equal import: all are only daily*. (Data are equal, but some are more equal.) Poets, composers and painters, according to Steiner, should not be satisfied with the five minutes for which they are allowed to shine as stars. They are, after all, *wagers on lastingness*. That the media are concerned these days with the incorporation of art into the mythological universe (think of Van Gogh, Mozart or The Doors) has not yet occurred to Steiner. Meanwhile, the media have produced their own immortal heroes and myths, which can compete with the traditional ones and moreover happily embroider on them.

Journalism bids us invest in the bourse of momentary sensation. Whole masses of people who practise *serious art* are caving in to this seductive offer. Actually they should display a radical disinterest in timeliness, since according to Steiner *meaningful art* is by definition not new, and just as timely 30 years later. *Originality is antithetical to novelty*. But creativity has become fatally entangled in the academic-journalistic discourse which twines around it. In placing such emphasis on the compulsion to present oneself as shocking, new or modern and succumbing to the patterns of fashion, Steiner cannot get involved with the current use of media in art. In his



actualiteit aan de dag moeten leggen, aangezien *meaningful art* volgens Steiner per definitie niet nieuw is, want over 30 jaar nog steeds even actueel is. *Originality is antithetical to novelty*. Maar de creativiteit is op noodlottige wijze verstrikt geraakt in het academisch-journalistieke vertoog dat om haar heen is gevlochten. Door zo'n nadruk te leggen op de dwang, zichzelf te presenteren als schokkend, nieuw of modern en toe te geven aan de wetmatigheden van de mode, kan Steiner zich niet bezighouden met het huidige mediagebruik in de kunst. In zijn ogen houden de media zich nog steeds buiten het creatieve proces op. Zij hangen als parasieten aan het kunstwerk en vreten het van buitenaf aan. Als dit geknaag de pijngrens bereikt, kunnen we inderdaad verwachten dat kunstenaars gefrustreerd raken over de *paper Leviathan of secondary talk* waarvan ze tegen wil en dank onderdeel uitmaken. Op dat moment kan het ecologisch appél een gevoelige snaar raken en de matiging een moreel fundament geven.

Als we daarentegen de media zien als podium en ervan uitgaan dat de kunsten contact moeten zoeken met andere datastromen om te kunnen overleven, wordt het vinden van een interpretatievrije werkruimte buiten de media wel erg moeilijk. Het verlangen daarnaar is nostalgisch en van alle tijden. Het heeft toeristische trekjes om even de boel de boel te laten en je in een mediavrije omgeving te wijden aan nieuw werk. Zien we de media ook nog als grondstof, dan staan zij met al hun secundaire replays de kunstenaar vrij ter beschikking. Als de poging slaagt om media zuiver als materiaal te gebruiken, is het een primaire kunst-in-action geworden. Dan is de verspilling weer aan het juiste adres en kunnen we het *Gerede* over het mediaoverschot en de mentale matiging rustig door laten woekeren. Dan is het niet storend, maar juist bijval, applaus in de vorm van ruis. Het secundaire leidt dan niet langer af en belemmert de 'art-in-action' in het geheel niet.

Tweederangs Kunst

Dezelfde onzalige alliantie tussen media en kunst die Steiner beklagt, is ook de steen des aanstoots in het geruchtmakende boek dat de Westduitse filmregisseur Hans Jürgen Syberberg in de woelige overgangstijd van '89/'90 schreef. *Vom Unglück und Glück der Kunst in Deutschland nach dem Kriege* kwam bij verschijnen onmiddellijk in de aandacht vanwege de Nazi-formuleringen die de auteur hierin ongeremd bezigt. Het schandaal verhinderde dat men preciezer naar de redeneertrant keek. De 'secondary talk' had hier inderdaad het effect dat de primaire theorie buiten schot bleef. Het bijzondere van *Kunst in Deutschland* is dat het populaire vooroordelen over de naoorlogse kunst verwoordt en vervolgens verbindt aan een kunsttheorie. Omdat Syberberg ziet dat met de val van de Muur een tijdperk ten einde komt, is hij er als de kippen bij om te voorzien in de behoefte aan nieuwe paradigma's. Eindelijk kan hij hardop zeggen wat iedereen altijd al dacht, namelijk dat hedendaagse kunst tweederangs zooi is. Net als Steiner verlangt hij terug naar een kunst die zuiverheid, deugdelijkheid en schoonheid uitstraalt: authentieke monumenten voor de eeuwigheid.

Om opgenomen te worden in de media heeft de kunst zich daaraan moeten onderwerpen. Daar zit volgens de conservatieve denkers de oorzaak van de naoorlogse vervlakking en vervuiling. Deze *Kunst ohne Volk* resulteerde volgens Syberberg in *Wegwerfwaren wie Punk, Pop oder Junk. Alles mutiert ins Maßlose, alles schießt ins ungesunde Verderben bei vollem Lob*. In de tijd van hoogconjunctuur zegevierde een anti-kunst, waar de media wel pap van lustten: *Den Gegenwelten des Schönen waren alle Tore geöffnet, grinsend und marktbeherrschend, frech*. Syberberg ziet als kenmerk van deze kunstvorm de voorrang die het 'kleine, ondergeschikte, het mismaakte, zieke en de vuiligheid' krijgt

boven de schittering. *Das Häßlichkeitsgebot beherrscht Leben wie Kunst und die Ratte wird zum Symbol des Interessanten, wie das Schwein*.

Hans Jürgen ergert zich bont en blauw aan de 'Hamlet in onderbroek', de 'Don Giovanni in de hoerenkast van de fast-foodketen', 'de dichter Kleist met een stahlhelm', 'Wilhelm Tell in een jeep' en Richard Wagners *Götterdämmerung* die wordt verknipt tot *ein Videoclip für Fast-food-Pornos*. De lezer moet onwillekeurig lachen om deze bombastische dronkemanstaal waarin Syberberg zijn frustraties over het arme Duitsland uitbraakt. Hij tiert over al die vieze kunstenaars en hun voze produkten, die in zelfvernietiging culminerend ('de rocker die zijn viool stukslaat'). Het 'neurotisch maniërisme' typeert de huidige kunstsector. *Überall subventionierte, organisierte Endzeitstimmung, Kultur ohne Identität, gelähmt im Nicht-authentischen*. Hoewel Syberberg na wo ii met zijn monsterfilms successen boekte, beschouwt hij deze periode toch als een hel, *die zijn zege vierde zonder te feesten en walgde van zijn eigen kots*.

Uit zijn hallucinaties spreekt een enorme angst voor de chaos van de vermenging, waarin alles aan alles gekoppeld wordt, iedereen met elkaar naar bed gaat: *Nationen, Rassen, Essen, Pflanze, Tiere, Populationen*. Vooral de media zijn hem boven het hoofd gegroeid. Hij kan de vele beelden niet onderscheiden en vasthouden en ziet enkel de massa's media die hem overspoelen. De *internationale Beliebigkeit* van het *multikulturelle Mediencharisma* is voor hem een brei, die van bovenaf uitgestort wordt over de *Boden ohne Blut*. Dat geeft hij ruitertlijk toe: *So sitzen wir da im Schlaraffenland der Realitäten, auf 5 bis 40 Kanälen aus aller Welt, einsamen Lebens, gesättigt und der Kunst nicht mächtig mehr*. De media-functionarissen, die van zichzelf zeggen de spreekbuis van het protest te zijn, hebben een gespleten tong: *Lebenslügen entstehen auf den Märkten der Medien als Dialektik der Minderheiten*. De *Schreibtischkriege der*



view, the media still maintain themselves outside the creative process. They attach themselves like parasites to the work of art and consume from the outside. When this gnawing reaches the threshold of pain, we can indeed expect artists to become frustrated with the *paper Leviathan of secondary talk* of which they unwillingly comprise a part. At that moment, the ecological appeal can strike a chord and give restraint a moral fundament.

If, on the other hand, we see the media as a platform, and start with the assumption that the arts must seek contact with other data currents if they are to survive, finding an interpretation-free work space outside the media does become quite difficult. The longing for that is nostalgic and timeless. Leaving things as they are and applying yourself to new work in your media-free surroundings has a touristic quality. If we see the media as more raw material, they and all their secondary replays are freely at the artist's disposal. If we succeed in using media purely as material, it's been primary art-in-action. Then the wastefulness is back on track and we can calmly let Babble continue to grow rampant over media excess and mental moderation. Then it is not interference, but applause in the form of static. The secondary no longer distracts or impedes 'art-in-action' at all.

Second-Rate Art

This same unholy alliance between media and art bemoaned by Steiner is also the bone of contention in the controversial book written by West German film director Hans Jürgen Syberberg in the turbulent transitional period of '89/'90. *Vom Unglück und Glück der Kunst in Deutschland nach dem Kriege* (On the Misfortune and Fortune of Art in Germany after the War) immediately drew attention to itself when published because of the Nazi terms used unrestrainedly by its author. The scandal prevented people from looking more closely at his line of

reasoning. The 'secondary talk' indeed had the effect here that the primary theory remained out of range. What is remarkable about *Kunst in Deutschland* is that it articulates popular prejudices about postwar art and then connects them to a theory of art. Syberberg sees an era coming to an end with the fall of the Wall, and is there in no time to fill the need for new paradigms. Finally he can say aloud what everyone was already thinking, namely that contemporary art is second-rate garbage. Like Steiner he thinks back longingly to an art that radiates purity, durability and beauty: authentic monuments for eternity.

In order to be included in the media, art has had to defer to them. According to the conservative thinkers, this is the reason for postwar superficiality and pollution. This art without a people resulted, according to Syberberg, in *throwaway goods like punk, pop and junk. Everything mutates boundlessly, everything degenerates into unhealthy decay, with wholehearted approval.* In the boom period an anti-art triumphed which was pounced on by the media: *All doors opened for this anti-world of beauty, grinning, dominating the market, shameless.* Syberberg sees the preference of the small, the inferior, the deformed, the sick, and filth over brilliance as a hallmark of this art form. *The command of ugliness dominates life and art and the rats become the symbol of what is interesting, as do the swine.*

Hans Jürgen is livid with annoyance at 'Hamlet in undershorts', 'Don Giovanni in the warehouse of the fast-food chain', 'the poet Kleist with a *stahlhelm*', 'William Tell in a Jeep' and Richard Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* cut up into 'a fast food porno videoclip'. The reader has to laugh involuntarily at this bombastic drunken language in which Syberberg spews out his frustrations about poor Germany. He rants about all those filthy artists and their hollow products that culminate in

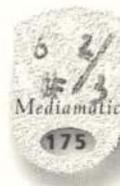
self-destruction ('the rocker who smashes his violin'). A 'neurotic mannerism' typifies the contemporary art sector. *Everywhere a subsidized, organized apocalyptic mood, a culture without identity, crippled by inauthenticity.* Although Syberberg achieved success with his monster films after ww II, he nevertheless considers this period a hell, *which celebrated its triumph without making merry and was nauseated by its own vomit.*

From his hallucinations there speaks a tremendous fear of the chaos of hybridization, in which everything is connected to everything, everyone goes to bed with everyone: *nations, races, food, plants, animals, populations.* The media in particular have become too much for him. He cannot distinguish between the many images and sees only the masses of media that engulf him. The *international arbitrariness of multicultural media charisma* is to him a mess emptied over the *bloodless land* from above. This he frankly admits: *So we sit there in the land of plenty of realities, on 5 to 40 channels from all over the world, our lives lonely, sated and having lost art.* The media officials, calling themselves the mouthpiece of protest, speak with forked tongue: *life-lies arise from the media markets as a result of the dialectic of minorities. The wars from behind the desks of the opinion industry,* according to Syberberg's masochistic cultural philosophy, result in a gigantic *environmental pollution of the soul.* Art has degenerated into the *show business of the leisure industry.* It has been reduced to *charismatic electronic art.* Syberberg's own medium too is guilty of *dissolution in the international electronic multimedia marketing show,* when he writes that film has lowered art to pure industry. The aesthetic situation, it seems, is so hopeless that he no longer embarrasses himself by coming out with such nonsense.

Return to the Authentic

Steiner and Syberberg fill a need. For the time being, experiments

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Meinungsindustrie resulteren volgens Syberbergs masochistische cultuurfilosofie in een gigantische *Umweltverschmutzung der Seele*. Kunst is vervallen tot een *Showgeschäft der Freizeitindustrie*. Ze is ten onder gegaan in *charismatischen Elektronikunst*. Ook Syberbergs eigen medium is schuldig aan de *Selbstauflösung in der elektronischen Multimediashow internationaler Vermarktung*, wanneer hij schrijft dat de film de kunst heeft verlaagd tot pure industrie. De esthetische situatie is blijkaar zo hopeloos dat hij er zich ook niet meer voor geneert om met deze wartaal naar buiten te komen.

Terugkeer van het Authentieke

Steiner en Syberberg voorzien in een behoefte. De experimenten met elektronische kunst hebben vooralsnog een open einde en bieden geen vastigheid in de wankel kunstwereld. Vandaar dat de roep om een terugkeer van het Authentieke op bijval kan rekenen. De reëel bestaande overkill is echter een logisch gevolg van de introductiefase van de nieuwe media op de markt. Deze zal zich vanzelf reguleren via matigingen en faillissementen, onverschillig de authenticiteits-hoos. Het tromgeroffel van de eikehouten stokken op strakgespannen varkensblazen dat op braderieën en uitmarkten te horen is (al dan niet versterkt), trekt in de consolidatiefase van de media momenteel aan ons voorbij, gevolgd door een authentiek sixties-bandje en de nieuwste technodisco. Het is bij gebrek aan een primaire mediatheorie dat Syberberg en Steiner niet alleen zo naïef conservatief kunnen uithalen, maar bovendien ook nog eens als grensverleggende denkers worden bediscussieerd. Als genoeg bekend zou zijn over de mediale schakelingen en technische mogelijkheden (en zijn geschiedenis), zouden zulke bijdragen meteen ten ondergaan in het multi-culturele geroezemoes van alledag.

Fascinatie en verveling wisselen elkaar voortdurend af. Het belang dat men hecht aan de media

is net zo groot als het ongelooft waardoor men een moment later wordt overvallen. Deze zigzagbeweging leidt tot verwarring, die niet kan worden opgelost, behalve door alle media uit te schakelen. Dat zou ook het einde van het authentieke kunstwerk zijn, want die bloeit juist op uit verwarring en is niet gebaat bij welk dieet dan ook. De kunst is onmatig en verspillend, en niet alleen omdat ze tijd en ruimte achter zich laat. De eeuwigheid die Syberberg en Steiner propageren op basis van eenvoud en matiging is bij uitstek een kenmerk van de nieuwe media. Zij laten tijd en ruimte achter zich, terwijl de eeuwigheid voor Syberberg nog geen duizend jaar haalde en Steiners Plato mystiek bezig was om het idee in natuurlijke getallen uit te drukken.

» continued from p 175 «

with electronic art are open-ended and offer no certainty in the unstable art world. So the call for a return to the Authentic can count on public approval. The overkill, however, which is real, is a logical consequence of the new media's phase of introduction onto the market. This will regulate itself via restraints and bankruptcies, irrespective of the authenticity wrapper. The drumroll of the oaken sticks on tightly stretched pig's bladders which can be heard at fêtes and street festivals (amplified or not) is at present passing before us in the media's consolidation phase, followed by an authentic tape of '60s music and the latest technodisco. It is for lack of a primary media theory that Syberberg and Steiner can not only lash out so naively and conservatively, but on top of it get discussed as groundbreaking thinkers. If enough were known about the connections and technical possibilities of the media (and its history), such contributions would instantly be lost in the everyday multicultural shuffle.

Fascination and boredom constantly alternate. The importance we attach to the media is just as great as the disbelief which overcomes us moments later. This zigzag motion causes confusion which cannot be cleared except by switching off all the media. That would be the end of the authentic work of art as well, because it blooms out of confusion and is not availed by any diet whatsoever. Art is immoderate, and not just because it leaves time and space behind. The eternity propagated by Syberberg and Steiner on the basis of simplicity and moderation is an outstanding hallmark of the new media. They leave time and space behind, while for Syberberg eternity didn't last even 1000 years and Steiner's Plato was mystically busy expressing the idea in natural numbers.

translation LAURA MARTZ



Telefoon / Telephone



De telefoon gaat. *Yes?* De oorsprong van de telefonie ligt in deze aarzelende instemming. Eenmaal aangenomen stelt men zich aansprakelijk. Dat is het uitgangspunt van *Het Telefoonboek* dat Avital Ronell produceerde. Naar wie of wat luisteren wij als we de hoorn opnemen? In onderstaande fragmenten wordt het eerste oor voorgesteld dat de sprong maakte naar het medium van de telefonica. Voor Ronell is communiceren geen vrijblijvende aangelegenheid. Telefoneren = onderbreken. *There's no such thing as a free call.* Een recensie van *Het Telefoonboek* is te vinden in de Drukwerkrubriek achterin.

• The telephone rings. *Yes?* Telephony originates from this hesitating acceptance. Taking a call means making oneself answerable. This is the point of departure for *The Telephone Book*, produced by Avital Ronell. To whom or what are we listening? In the extracts below Ronell presents the first ear that made the leap to the medium of telephonics. According to Ronell communication is not an activity without engagement. Placing a call = getting disconnected. *There's no such thing as a free call.* In the back of this Mediamatic you will find a review of *The Telephone Book*.

Karin Bloemen belt je.....

.....En toch, je zegt ja, bijna automatisch, plotseling, soms onherroepelijk. Opnemen betekent dat het signaal is doorgekomen. Het betekent meer: je leent je ertoe, je gaat in op zijn eis om gehoor te geven, om een schuld te betalen. Je weet niet wie er opbelt of wat je gevraagd zal worden te doen, maar even zo goed, je leent je oor, je verleent iets toegang, je ontvangt een bevel. Het draait om aansprakelijkheid. Wie beantwoordt de aanspraken die de telefoon stelt, de aanspraken van het plichtsbef, wie neemt de verantwoording op zich voor de belasting die de telefoon lijkt op te leggen?

Het project om een telefoonboek te presenteren, maakt deel uit van het angst/verlangen-register van de geschiedschrijving. Het is bij uitstek een filosofisch project, al pinde Heidegger lang geleden Nietzsche vast als de laatste filosoof. Toch zullen wij, in gelijke mate als van Nietzsche werd gezegd dat hij met de hamer filosofeerde, een ander stuk gereedschap ter hand nemen, één dat de puurheid van een identiteit als gereedschap afwerpt door zijn verbondenheid met de imaterialiteit en door de verschillende wijzen waarop hij gebruikt wordt: spiritueel, technisch, intiem, muzikaal, militair, schizoïde, bureaucratisch, obscene, politiek. Natuurlijk valt ook een hamer onder het idee van politiek gereedschap, en je kunt er altijd meer mee doen dan filosoferen: je kunt hem laten zingen of schreeuwen, je kunt hem tooien met het Heideggeriaanse *cri/écrit*, het *Schreiben/Schrei* van een technische mutatie. Ons gereedschap kan dus een soort werktuig zijn, een technisch object waarvan de techniciteit lijkt op te lossen op het moment dat hij wordt ingeschakeld.

Wanneer wordt de telefoon wat hij is? Hij vooronderstelt het bestaan van een andere telefoon, ergens, al is het juist zijn atotaliteit als apparaat, zijn singulariteit, waaraan we denken als we "telefoon" zeggen. Om te zijn wat hij is, moet hij in het meervoud worden gezet, vermenigvuldigd, verbonden met een andere lijn, hoogst gespannen en gericht op jou.

(...)

De plaatsen van overdracht en telefoonverslaving volgend, hebben we in dit werk naar Amerika moeten immigreren, of om nauwkeuriger te zijn, naar het vertoog dat uit is op de vergroting van een Amerika van het technologisch geestloze boven. Amerika opereert volgens een logica van interrupties en hulpkreten. Het is de plaats vanwaaruit Alexander Graham Bell recht probeerde te doen aan het contract dat hij met zijn broer had afgesloten. Wie van hen als eerste zou vertrekken, moest contact opnemen met de overlevende via een medium dat aantoonbaar beter moest zijn dan het meer traditionele kanaal van het spiritisme. Nietzsche moet dit onderaardse contract hebben aangevoeld, want in zijn *Genealogie van de Moraal* schrijft hij over een telefoon naar gene zijde. De wetenschap staat zozeer in het krijt bij de verwoesting, dat ik haar verhaal heb willen beperken tot deze story over een persoonlijke catastrofe, waarvan de hoofdlijnen zich ontwikkelden vanuit een gestorven broer. Tel hierbij twee paar dove oren op: die van Bells moeder en van zijn vrouw, Mabel Bell.

Handhavend en verbindend, houdt de telefoonlijn samen wat hij scheidt. Hij creëert een ruimte van niet-betekenende breuken en is door de vrouwelijke nood gestemd op de navelstreng die hij opnieuw in het spel brengt. De telefoon werd voldragen binnen de scheid van het dove oor van een moe-

der. Toch, het was een oor dat een roep deed uitgaan en, zoals de testsonars in de wateren, is het open gebleven voor jouw signalen. De lijnen waaraan het ongevoelige oor ons opnieuw verbindt zijn onthutsend, verbroken, ze breken het oppervlak van het gebied dat we als een Boek zijn gaan beschouwen grondig aan stukken.

Desondanks, het telefoonboek antwoordt even onverschrokken als het andere boek der boeken, een vindplaats die alle namen van de geschiedenis vastlegt, al was het alleen maar om toe te zien op de afwijzing van de eigenaam. Als gedeeltelijke archivering van de namen van de levenden verbindt het telefoonboek de levenden en de doden in een onuitgesproken catalogus van het lot. Wie schrijft het telefoonboek, neemt zijn eigenaardige idioom aan of maakt het verwijzingsstelsel ervan? En wie zou er zo dwaas zijn, vol overtuiging te beweren dat de hoofdzorg ervan is om de essentiële ontsluiting van de waarheid aan het licht te brengen? De telefoonlijn vormt een elliptische constructie die niet een (vind)plaats omsluit, maar het boek verstrooit, het mee de straat op neemt, en zichzelf radicaal openhoudt voor het buiten. We zullen koorddansers op deze lijn van een speculatieve telefonica en het schakelbord van de bewustzijnssignalen bedienen, waarop u en ik en ieder gedeeltelijk getechnologiseerd subject kan worden gevraagd om te antwoorden.

Het Telefoonboek opent, wanneer u akkoord gaat met deze voorwaarden, met de hachelijke en enigszins transcendente situatie van het beantwoorden van het signaal van de telefoon. Wat betekent het dat je de hoorn opneemt, dat je jezelf ervoor aansprakelijk maakt in een toestand waarvan de gebarengamma alleen al ja betekent, zelfs als deze vestiging zich gevolgd ziet door een vraagteken: ja? Hoe je het ook wendt of keert, aan weerszijden van de lijn, er bestaat niet zoiets als gratis bellen. Vandaar de vragende stembuiging van een ja dat bemerkt dat het een rekening gepresenteerd zal krijgen.

Voor zover je bent geworden wat je bent, namelijk, deels, een antwoordapparaat, wordt het noodzakelijk om vragen te stellen in de orde van: wie geeft er antwoord op de aanspraak van de telefoon, op de aanspraken van het plichtsbef, wie neemt de verantwoording op zich voor de belasting die de telefoon lijkt op te leggen? Zijn ontvangst bepaalt zijn *Geschied*, de richting die zijn lot neemt, na de erkenning dat er een signaal is doorgekomen. Maar het is precies op het moment van de schakeling, nog voor er mogelijkkerwijs fatsoenlijk betekenis kan worden geven of een inhoud kan worden uitgesproken, dat men zich afvraagt: Wie is daar?

Alexander Graham Bell beschouwde de telefoon nooit als een louter wetenschappelijk ding, een object of zelfs een machine die op een dag ondergeschikt kon worden gemaakt aan een notie van technologische overheersing. Zijn partner, Thomas Watson, schreef over de kunst van de telefonie en was een spiritist die geesten opriep op nachtelijke séances in Salem. Hij was, een tijd lang, een sterk medium. De geneze van de telefoon, waarvan de rizomatische uitlopers nog altijd nagegaan moeten worden, kan wortel hebben geschoten in het dode oor dat Bell met zich ronddroeg en waar-



Delay Call Forwarding.....

.....And yet your saying yes, almost automatically, suddenly, sometimes irreversibly. Your picking it up means the call has come through. It means more: you're its beneficiary, rising to meet its demand, to pay a debt. You don't know who's calling or what you are going to be called upon to do, and still, you are lending your ear, giving something up, receiving an order. It is a question of answerability. Who answers the call of the telephone, the call of duty, and accounts for the taxes it appears to impose?

The project of presenting a telephone book belongs to the anxiety registers of historical recounting. It is essentially a philosophical project, although Heidegger long ago arrested Nietzsche as the last philosopher. Still, to the extent that Nietzsche was said to philosophize with a hammer, we shall take another tool in hand, one that sheds the purity of an identity as tool, however, through its engagement with immateriality and by the uses to which it is put: spiritual, technical, intimate, musical, military, schizoid, bureaucratic, obscene, political. Of course a hammer also falls under the idea of a political tool, and one can always do more than philosophize with it; one can make it sing or cry; one can invest it with the Heideggerian *cri/écrit*, the *Schreiben/Schrei* of a technical mutation. Ours could be a sort of tool, then, a technical object whose technicity appears to dissolve at the moment of essential connection.

When does the telephone become what it is? It presupposes the existence of another telephone, somewhere, though its atotality as apparatus, its singularity, is what we think of when we say "telephone." To be what it is, it has to be pluralized, multiplied, engaged by another line, high strung and heading for you.

(...)

Following the sites of transference and telephonic addiction we have had to immigrate in this work to America, or more correctly, to the discourse inflating an America of the technologically ghostless above. America operates according to the logic of interruption and emergency calling. It is the place from which Alexander Graham Bell tried to honor the contract he had signed with his brother. Whoever departed first was to contact the survivor through a medium demonstrably superior to the more traditional channel of spiritualism. Nietzsche must have sensed this subterranean pact, for in the *Genealogy of Morals* he writes of a telephone to the beyond. Science's debt to devastation is so large that I have wanted to limit its narrative to this story of a personal catastrophe whose principal figures evolved out of of deceased brother. Add to that two pairs of deaf ears: those of Bell's mother and his wife, Mabel Bell.

Maintaining and joining, the telephone holds together what it separates. It creates a space of asignifying breaks and is tuned by the emergency feminine on the maternal cord reissued. The telephone was borne up by the invaginated structures of a mother's deaf ear. Still, it was an ear that placed calls, and, like the probing sonar in the waters, it has remained open to your signals. The lines to

which the insensible ear reconnects us are consternating, broken up, severely cracking the surface of the region we have come to hold as a Book.

Even so, the telephone book boldly answers as the other book of books, a site which registers all the names of history, if only to attend the refusal of the proper name. A partial archivization of the names of the living, the telephone book binds the living and the dead in an unarticulated thematics of destination. Who writes the telephone book, assumes its peculiar idiom or makes its referential assignments? And who would be so foolish as to assert with conviction that its principal concern lies in eliciting the essential disclosure of truth? Indeed, the telephone line forms an elliptical construction that does not close around a place but disperses the book, takes it into the streets, keeping itself radically open to the outside. We shall be tightroping along this line of a speculative telephonics, operating the calls of conscience to which you or I or any partially technologized subject might be asked to respond.

The Telephone Book, should you agree to these terms, opens with the somewhat transcendental predicament of accepting a call. What does it mean to answer the telephone, to make oneself answerable to it in a situation whose gestural syntax already means yes, even if the affirmation should find itself followed by a question mark: Yes? No matter how you cut it, on either side of the line, there is no such thing as a free call. Hence the interrogative inflection of a yes that finds itself accepting charges.

To the extent that you have become what you are, namely, in part, an automatic answering machine, it becomes necessary for questions to be asked on the order of, Who answers the call of the telephone, the call of duty, or accounts for the taxes it appears to impose? Its reception determines its *Geschick*, its destined arrangement, affirming that a call has taken place. But is precisely at the moment of connection, prior to any proper signification or articulation of content, that one wonders, Who's there?

The Televisual Metaphysics

Alexander Graham Bell never considered the telephone to constitute a mere scientific thing, an object or even a machine that one day would be subsumable under a notion of technological dominion. His partner, Thomas Watson, wrote of the *art* of telephony and was a spiritualist who conjured ghosts at nightly séances in Salem. He was, for a time, a strong medium. The telephone's genesis, whose rhizomesque shoots still need to be traced, could have taken root in the dead ear Bell carried around with him and into which he spoke. He carried the ear, it transported him, during one summer vacation spent at his parent's home. **Now, the dead** ear was lent to Aleck by the Harvard medical institution may have been the other ear of Hamlet's father or more likely, too, of Van Gogh, insofar as ears tend to come in pairs. Or it could have been that of his deaf mother, calling him home. Still, ears rarely are pricked up for stereophonic listening, so that it might be reasonable to assume that one



in hij praatte. Hij droeg het oor, het vervoerde hem, tijdens een zomervakantie die hij doorbracht in het huis van zijn ouders. **Nu kan het dode** oor, dat aan Aleck was uitgeleend door het medische instituut van de Harvard, het tweede oor van Hamlets vader zijn geweest, of, waarschijnlijker ook, van Vincent van Gogh, voorzover men bij oren meestal met tweetallen van doen heeft. Of het kan het oor zijn geweest van zijn dode moeder, die hem naar huis riep. Toch, oren worden zelden gespist om stereofonisch te luisteren, en we kunnen er daarom wel van uit gaan dat één oor zowel genoeg is voor de telefoon als voor het doen van een uitvinding. Het oor van de ander is niet het andere oor, het oordat wordt uitgesloten van de partiële koptelefoon die eeuwig schijnt te wachten op de bij hem passende eenheid. Misschien kan deze scheiding in het orenpaar worden verduidelijkt door te gaan zwemmen. Tijdens het crawlen bevindt één oor zich onder water — aangezien we regrederen naar een begin is dit net zo'n goede plek om te starten als om het even welke: bij de crawl, dus, is één hand uitgestrekt en één oor ondergedompeld in een domein van resonerende verstillig. De samenwerking tussen het oor en de spoor-makende hand produceert een kortstondige disruptie van het metafysische sensoriele apparaat (dat een steviger basis heeft in de oor-mond, hand-oog complexiteit). Tegelijkertijd staat het andere oor open voor het "buiten" en stelt het zichzelf ertoe in staat om de herrie uit een ander geluidsregister te horen, die het opvangt alvorens omlaag te draaien. Het ene en het andere oor verwisselen voortdurend hun posities, die vaag te vergelijken zijn met buiten en binnen. Aldus lijken, op het eerste gezicht, de oren inderdaad stereofonisch te opereren: ze luisteren naar dubbele sonische gebeurtenissen, ze vangen op en sluiten af, al naar gelang de verschillende signalen van lucht- en waterdruk. Soms treedt er een onderlinge inwerking van beide streng gescheiden sferen op, bijvoorbeeld wanneer er water in het oor komt. Dit valt, over het algemeen, pas op wanneer men aan land is. Desondanks, al zijn de oren ongetwijfeld afgestemd op verschillende golven of kanalen, het is absoluut niet zeker dat de oren niet tóch functioneren als een monolithische eenheid. Want het valt helemaal binnen ons bereik om te veronderstellen dat het oor onder water als versterker opereert van het luistervermogen van het regelmatig opduikende oor, dat als een luisterperiscope boven water uitrijst. **Het oor boven** water neemt vrijzwevende transmissies waar, die van hun versluieringen ontdaan zijn door het terrein onder water. Betekent dit dat het verstilde oor niet kan horen? Aangezien de koptelefoon functioneert, kan niet worden geconcludeerd dat er werkelijk een toestand van totale doofheid is teweeggebracht. Net zo min is het mogelijk om te stellen dat men, omdat de telefoon normaliter een van de twee oren isoleert, niets hoort. Integendeel, het dove oor laat zich actief in met het luisterende oor en creëert aldus een kamer die op zijn beurt het submariene zelf of een onderbewustzijn uitnodigt om af te stemmen op het signaal. Eén enkel oor doet het werk om de telefoon te beluisteren, al heeft men bij oren vaak met tweetallen van doen. Eén oor daalt af in de afgrond, terwijl het andere zijn pantser aflegt ten opzichte van de Open Ruimte. Het is niet duidelijk wat het andere, latente oor doet. Dit enigszins splitsende paar is niet als zodanig te dialectiseren; er is geen derde oor om het probleem op te lossen, al

wordt van Hölderlin beweerd dat hij een derde oog had. Of, als er wel een derde oor is, en dat is er natuurlijk altijd — het oor van de staat bijvoorbeeld, van de telefoniste, of het oor van de ander —, dan functioneert dat als een tweede oor bij het inschuifbare orenpaar. Anders dan de mond heeft het oor een stille metgezel nodig, een *double* en een schaduwbeeld van zichzelf.

De Geboorte van een Telefoon

■ Net als bij schoenen, de telefoon of een schizofreen was Alexander Graham Bell niet alleen, maar een duo. Als het noodzakelijk mocht zijn om het feit te verhullen dat hij vaak aan de ontvangende kant stond van het paarsgewijze fenomeen, zou daarmee de dynamiek van de conceptie al zijn overgeleverd aan wanbegrip. In de beroemde openingszin, de eerste volledig begrijpelijke grammatica die elektrisch werd overgedragen, riep Bell Thomas A. Watson op met een autoritaire uiting. De eerste legendarische zin zal een dwingende taaldaad zijn geweest van het soort dat ons in de circuits van de telefonie is blijven commanderen: "Watson, come here! I want you!" De order trekt verschillende registers van interpretatieve valentie aan — een moeder die een kind roept misschien, zoals in Heideggers evocatie van Nietzsche in *Was heißt Denken?* Kom tevoorschijn, maak jezelf kenbaar, Wat-zoon, verbreek de lijnen die ons scheiden maar waarvan de wonden me in staat stellen jouw aankomst, jouw richting en lot te bepalen. Verschijn, verander deze oproep in een waarneembaar beeld. ■ Hoe je het wendt of keert, "I want you" suggereert dat het verlangen een woordje meespreekt. Of het verlangende bevel nu vanuit de politieke of de particuliere sector wordt uitgevaardigd, het duwt je langzaam maar zeker in de richting van de vernietiging. Het komt voort uit wat niet onmiddellijk aanwezig is; daarom maakt "I want you" een spookbeeld van je. Ik wil wat ik niet bezit, ik heb jou niet, ik mis je: Kom hier, Watson, ik wil dat je komt. Misschien is dit een echo van de oorspronkelijker roep van een mannelijke god, een god die niet volledig is, omdat hij vol zit met ressentiment, jaloezie, achterdocht enzovoort. Hij schreeuwt het uit, hij verlangt, hij ontbeert, hij roept om het complement of het supplement of, zoals Benjamin zegt, om hetgene dat zal opdagen om hem te verrijken. De god heeft de controle in handen, maar zonder te weten wat hij onder controle heeft, tot de Ander — die nog afwezig is — zijn roep beantwoordt. Terwijl de roep als zodanig een bevelskracht suggereert, kan degene die roept, gemaskeerd door het machtsapparaat, in feite zwak zijn, lijdend, in paniek, een hulpkreet uitslakend. ■ We gaan ervan uit dat de fonetische omzetting betrouwbaar gebeurt. Toch is er niets dat ons garandeert dat we, na telefonische overdracht, niet worden gevraagd om dubbel te horen, om beide oren open te stellen, stereofonisch, teneinde de homonymie te vatten van het grote bevel: kom-hier, kom-hoor: **Sjmah!** Dit levert misschien niet exact dezelfde problemen op als de folio-editie van Shakespeare, die vol varianten staat die ofwel moeten worden opgespoord ofwel op verschillende manieren moeten worden voorgelezen, toch laat het niet-beschikbaar-zijn van een primaire tekst de taal los in de lucht, een taal waarvan de betekenis, afgezien van het feit dat ze een bevel vormt, een gammele of helemaal geen basis heeft. Hoe dat ook zij, pas het komen van de ander

• ear suffices for the telephone as well as for the purpose of invention. The ear of the other is not the other ear, the one excluded from the partial headset that seems eternally to await its fitting unity. Perhaps this division in the set of ears could be clarified by swimming. When crawling, one ear is submerged under water — since we are regressing to a beginning this is as good a place to start as any: with the crawl, then, one hand tends to be extended and one ear submerged into a place of resonant silencing. This cooperation of the ear and the trace-making hand produces a momentary disruption of the metaphysical sensorial apparatus (which relies more steadily on the ear-mouth, hand-eye complicities). In the meantime, the other ear exposes itself to the “outside,” making itself capable of hearing the din of a different register of noises, which it receives before turning down. It exchanges places vaguely comparable to outside and inside with the other ear. In this way, at first sight, it would appear that the ears are indeed operating stereophonically, attending to double sonic events, receiving and shutting out, responding to varied calls of air and water pressures. Sometimes an immixation of the two distinct states can take place, as for example, when the ear retains water. This generally becomes noticeable on land. However, while they are surely attuned to different waves or channels, it is by no means clear that the ears are not operating as one monophonic unit. For it would be entirely within our range to suppose that the submerged ear deepens the listening capacity of the periotic one, rising above the water like a periscope that hears. **The ear above** water perceives free-floating transmissions which are unmuffled by the underwater terrain. Does this mean that the silenced ear cannot hear? Since the headset works, it cannot be determined that a condition of pure deafness is in fact induced. Nor would it be possible to state with conviction that because the telephone normally isolates a single ear, one does not hear. On the contrary, the deaf ear lends itself to the listening ear, creating a chamber that in turn invites the submarine self or a subconscious to tune in the call. One ear alone does the work of receiving the call, even though ears often come in pairs. One ear goes down into the abyss while the other exfoliates to the Open. It is not clear what the other, latent ear is doing. This somewhat disjunctive pair is not as such dialectizable; there is not a third ear to resolve the issue, though Hölderlin is said to have found a third eye. Or if there should be a third ear, which of course there always is — the ear of the state, for example, the operator, or the ear of the other — it acts as a second ear to the collapsible pair of ears. Unlike the mouth, the ear needs a silent partner, a double and phantom itself.

Birth of a Telephone

■ As with shoes, the telephone, or a schizophrenic, Alexander Graham Bell, was not one, but a pair. If it was necessary to obscure the fact that often he was on the receiving end of the coupled phenomenon, then the dynamics of the conception will have already been given

over to misunderstanding. In the famous inaugural sentence, the first fully intelligible grammar transmitted electrically, Bell conjured up Thomas A. Watson with a commanding utterance. The first legendary sentence will have been a perlocutionary speech act of the kind that has been ordering us around the circuits of telephony: “Watson, come here! I want you!” The command attracts different registers of interpretive valency — a mother calling to a child perhaps, as in Heidegger’s evocation of Nietzsche in *What Is Called Thinking?* Come forth, manifest yourself Wat-son, cut the lines that separate us but whose wound enables me to command your arrival, your destination and destiny. Appear, turn this call into a phenomenal image. ■ By all evidence, “I want you” suggests that desire is on the line. Whether issuing from the political or the private sector, the desiring command inches you toward annihilation. It emerges from what is not present-at-hand; thus, “I want you” phantomizes you. I want that which I do not possess, I do not have you, I lack you, I miss you: Come here, Watson, I want you. Or this may echo the more original call of a male god, a god that is not full, since he is full of resentment, jealousy, suspicion, and so on. He calls out, he desires, he lacks, he calls for the complement or the supplement or, as Benjamin says, for that which will come along to enrich him. The god is at the controls but without knowing what he controls until the Other — still lacking — answers his call. Where the call as such suggests a commanding force, the caller, masked by the power apparatus, may in fact be weak, suffering, panicked, putting through a call for help. ■ We suppose that the phonetic inscription has been rendered faithfully. Yet nothing guarantees that, being telephonically transmitted, one is not asked to hear double, to open both ears, stereophonically, in order to grasp the homonymy of a great command: Come, hear: **Schmah!** While this does not quite present the same difficulties as the Shakespearean folio, whose variations have to be discerned or left multiply dictated, the unavailability of a primary script frees a language into the air whose meaning, beyond the fact that it constitutes a demand, remains on shaky, if any, ground. In any case, it is the coming of the other that first enlists or clairaudience, as Joyce calls it, the rejoining other who was presumed to be second, secondary, a shadow of an ear receiving the electric command. The first proper name that the telephone was to call out was: “Watson.” Pregnant with this other, the telephone also engages a resuscitating resurrection: “Watson, arise!” At once unborn and corpse, the Other is made answerable to the call. ■ He himself offered the utterance as an instance of emergency calling, a kind of sensibility of disaster which traverses the telephone wire sentenced in this call for help. The telephone, which was until that moment somewhat ill behaved, had refused to carry out an order, but in the heat of the moment, just as Bell accidentally spilled a burning chemical on his lap, the telephone cried out, responding in effect to a master’s distress. The telephone’s opening sentence let through a burning body’s call for help. It is necessary to look to the figure of an assisting other in order to grasp what it was the telephone was calling to in the recorded moment of its birth pang. It is necessary,

activeert onze helderhorendheid, zoals Joyce het noemde: door de komst van de antwoordende ander waarvan werd gedacht dat hij op de tweede plaats kwam, secundair was, een schaduw van een oor dat het elektrisch bevel doorrijgt. De eerste eigenaam die de telefoon zou uitroepen was: "Watson." Zwanger van deze ander, is de telefoon ook uit op een reanimerende resurrectie: "Watson, verrijst!" Tegelijkertijd ongeboren en lijk, wordt de Ander aansprakelijk gesteld voor de eis die de telefoon stelt. ■ Hijzelf haalde de uitspraak aan als voorbeeld van bellen in een noodsituatie, een soort gevoeligheid voor catastrofen die aanwezig is in de telefoondraad en tot uitdrukking kwam in deze hulpkreet. De telefoon, die tot dat moment enigszins onbeleefd was, had geweigerd om een bevel uit te voeren, maar in het vuur van het ogenblik, toen Bell net per ongeluk een brandende chemische stof op zijn schoot had gemorst, schreeuwde de telefoon het uit en gaf daarmee in feite antwoord op een meester in nood. De eerste zin van de telefoon liet een hulpkreet van een brandend lichaam door. Het is noodzakelijk de figuur van een hulpbiedende ander nader te bezien, teneinde te vatten waar de telefoon naar riep op het geregistreerde moment van zijn geboortepijn. Dit is noodzakelijk, omdat de telefoon nooit degene is vergeten waarnaar hij de eerste les overdroeg van wat ontbreekt, kapot is, of pijn heeft. Een ongeval spleet de eerste woorden van wat Watson de kunst van de telefonie noemt. Echter, tegen de tijd dat deze zin werd voortgebracht, was de telefoon zelf oud genoeg om met een begrijpelijke zin voor de dag te komen, oud genoeg om Watson een andere plaats te geven op de binnenkomende lijn, want de telefoon experimenteerde met dit duo, keerde hun posities regelmatig om en maakte het moeilijk om te bepalen wie de zender, wie de ontvanger was — wie, met andere woorden, verantwoordelijk was voor zijn geboorte. Eerder, op de hete junidag in 1875, had Watson al de vrije loop gelaten aan een geluidsvormende elektrische stroom en eiste hij de eer daarvan gedeeltelijk voor zichzelf op:

Een van mijn trilplaten hield op met trillen. Ik tokkelde er met mijn vingers op om hem weer aan de gang te krijgen... Deze fijne golvende stroom, die op andere momenten overstemd was door de zware fluctuerende stroom, doorliep de ontvanger die Graham Bell aan zijn oor hield en werd erdoor omgezet in een zeer zwakke echo van het geluid dat de trilplaat maakte toen ik erop tokkelde. Deze situatie zou vermoedelijk tot niets hebben geleid als er op dat moment iemand anders dan Bell had staan luisteren... Het 'geploink' van de trilplaat waar ik op tokkelde op 2 juni 1875 markeerde de geboorte van een van de grootste moderne uitvindingen, want toen de elektrisch gedragen geest van het tikgeluid het oor van Bell bereikte, vormde zijn vruchtbare brein de eerste elektrische sprekende telefoon die de wereld ooit had gekend.

Dit zijn de woorden die Watson aan het papier toevertrouwde in zijn autobiografie, die hij bijna guldig *Exploring*

Life noemde, want Watson was een man met ironie, zoals uit zijn geschriften blijkt, en de geest die hij naar Bells oor stuurt geeft aan in welke richting zijn onderzoeken gingen. De geschiedenis van hun compliciteit maakt het waarschijnlijk dat er die dag meer dan één geest het oor van Bell bereikte, maar we zullen deze nog even verborgen houden om in alle eenvoud te constateren dat er geen zekerheid bestaat over wie naar wie de eerste emissie verzond en wiens oren ontvankelijk open stonden voor welke geest, die nog steeds uw binnenoer bewoont. Watson, die ook een dichter was, had "er met mijn vingers op getokkeld om hem weer aan de gang te krijgen." Hij eist het geboorterecht op, lijkt het, en begint een soort vaderschap die past bij het 'geploink' van een trilplaat waar "ik op tokkelde op 2 juni 1875 en die de geboorte markeerde." ■ Het is misschien subtieler aangeduid dan ik het hier weergeef, maar de verwarring die voortkomt uit deze koppeling creëert kanalen die opheldering verschaffen over hoe we de dringende noodzaak van deze allereerste transmissies moeten inschatten. Op dit moment, nu we Heidegger hebben uitgehoord, begrijpen we dat luisteren — een pose die Watson aan Bell toeschrijft — niet enkel een modulatie is van een terughoudende passiviteit. Het hoort eerder thuis in een lange genealogie van ingekehrtheid, die misschien op gang is gebracht door Rousseau's zichzelf-verzamelande energetica van de onbeweeglijkheid die hij, in de *Rêveries*, benoemde als *far niente*, het niets dat doende is. De aandachtige alertheid van *far niente*, de ontologische stromen ervan, zijn hier nog steeds aan de orde. Daardoor blijft het waarschijnlijk dat "deze situatie vermoedelijk tot niets zou hebben geleid als er op dat moment iemand anders dan Bell had staan luisteren." Degene die in stille ontvankelijkheid wacht, luistert met een actief en niet met een reactief oor. Echter, deze toeschrijving is, zoals met veel dat zal volgen het geval is, tweesnijdend, aangezien Bell consequent wordt beschreven als een weinig begaafde luisteraar, terwijl het winnende paar oren integendeel aan Watson toebehoort. ■ Aangezien de telefoon uitdrukkelijk geconcipieerd was als het verlangen van dit koppel, zou ik de verbinding met de niet-onderzochte ander willen openhouden, degene die zo weinig heeft ontvangen — maar niet vanwege een of ander welwillend sentiment, wat een weerzinwekkende manier is om een interpretatieve houding aan te nemen. Eerder moeten we het in deze richting zoeken, omdat de telefoon Watson uitkoos op een manier die sterk zou bepalen uit welke elementen het bestaan van de telefoon opgebouwd zou blijven. Als zijn maker was Watson tegelijk de eerste dienaar van de telefoon, degene die hem naar het daglicht leidde. Watsons hechte vriendschap met geesten moet niet worden ondergewaardeerd, en ze werd ook niet genegeerd door Bell, wiens investering in het tevoorschijn toveren van de telefoon nog steeds aan geheim belang wint; laten we deze investering beschouwen als een beheerd fonds dat nog niet zijn volle rente heeft opgebracht voor de telefoon. ■ De berichten wijzen op ambivalentie. Wie liet als eerste de telefoon spreken? De suggestie van een conflict, die wij in de weergave van de geboorte van de telefoon aan het licht lijken te hebben gebracht, is te vinden in een subtiële schuilplaats in de autobiografie. Toch is het bepaald niet de enige van dit soort uitingen, waarvan een aantal uitgekozen zouden kunnen worden. Dit is van belang omdat het meest serieuze concept van ambivalentie, zoals beschreven door Freud, in de telefoon is ingebouwd,



• because the telephone has never forgotten the one to whom it carried the first lesson of what is missing, broken, or in pain. An accident cleaved the original words of what Watson calls the art of telephony. However, by the time this sentence was produced, the telephone was itself old enough to come up with an intelligible sentence, old enough to rearrange Watson on the receiving line, for the telephone experimented with this couple, regularly changing its positions, making it difficult to determine who was the sender, who the recipient — who, in other words, was responsible for its birth. Earlier, on the hot June day of 1875, Watson had already given vent to a sound-shaped electric current, claiming some credit for himself:

One of my transmitter reeds stopped vibrating. I plucked it with my fingers to start it going.... That delicate undulatory current, which at other times had been drowned out by the heavy intermittant current passing through the receiver Graham Bell had at his ear, had been converted by it into a very faint echo of the sound of the transmitter reed I had plucked. Probably nothing would have come from the circumstance if any other man than Bell had been listening at that moment.... The twang of that reed that I plucked on June 2, marked the birth of one of the greatest modern inventions, for when the electrically carried ghost of that twang reached Bell's ear his teeming brain shaped the first electric speaking telephone the world had ever known.

These are the words which Watson committed to paper in his autobiography, almost mischievously entitled *Exploring Life*, for Watson was a man of irony, as his writing reveals, and the ghost which he sent to Bell's ear suggests the directions his explorations took. The history of their complicity carries with it the probability that more than one ghost reached Bell's ear that day, but we shall keep them hidden away momentarily in order simply to note that there is nothing sure about who gave whom the first emission, whose ears were receptively opened to which ghost that continues to inhabit your inner ear. Watson, who was also a poet, had "plucked it with my fingers to start it going." He claims the birthright, it would appear, and commences a certain paternity suit for the twang of the reed that "I plucked on June 2, 1875, [which] marked the birth." ■ It is perhaps more delicately indicated than I am allowing, but which we can gauge the urgency of the preliminary transmissions that were made. By now, having heard out Heidegger we also understand that listening, a pose Watson attributes to Bell, is not a mere modulation of withholding passivity. It belongs rather to a long lineage of inwardness touched off perhaps by Rousseau's self-gathering energetics of stillness which, in the *Rêveries*, he names *far niente*, the nothing that is doing. The attentive heeding of *far niente*, its ontological currents, are still at issue here. Thus it remains probable that "nothing would have come from the circumstance if

any other man than Bell had been listening at that moment." The one who waits in silent receptivity lends an active, and not reactive, ear. However, this attribution, as with many that follow, is double-edged, since Bell is shown consistently to be a deficient listener, the prize pair of ears belonging instead to Watson. ■ Since the telephone was expressly conceived as the desire of this couple, I should like to keep the unexplored other on the line, the one who has received so little, but not out of some charitable sentiment, which would be a revolting way to strike an interpretive pose. Rather, we need to pass it in this direction because the telephone chose Watson in a way that strongly determines the factors of its being. As its maker, Watson was also its first servant who saw it to the light of day. Watson's intimate friendship with ghosts should not be undervalued, nor was this overlooked by Bell, whose investment in its conjurings still accumulates a secret interest; let us think of this as a thrust fund that as yet has not matured for the telephone. ■ The reports indicate ambivalence. Who first made the telephone talk? The conflictual tone we appear to have uncovered in the rendering of the telephone's birth is situated in a subtle hiding place of the autobiography. Yet it hardly stands alone among such utterances, of which a few might be singled out. This is important because the most earnest concept of ambivalence, as described by Freud, is built into the telephone, harboring a double rapport of one to the other in which the other is always wanting or it is from you that the want has been extrapolated — a cut of presence has been constitutively left out, there is something missing, which also, however, makes certain telephonic couplings at all possible. Ambivalence can be read according to various frequencies of desire and horror, channeling the hierarchies that tend to build up when two are on the line, the caller and the called, though these stations do not constitute an oppositional or stable pair. "Pair" is to be understood in the singular, a pair, effecting thus an internal series of controls which may be difficult to master or delimit. ■ It falls within the norm to assume that Watson ranks second to Bell in terms of the contract that unites them. Nothing seriously disputes this assumption, which Watson himself of course shares. The subject who comes second is sometimes so immoderate in praise and admiration that number one falls into a darkened sphere of projection created by the resourceful suitor. For his part it seems that Watson has pitched an eternalizing space for the primary mover, rendering him immortal rather sooner than he might have bargained for. Early in the autobiography (Chapter 3) Watson has a word to say about his schooling. In the schoolroom we find a microchip of a theory telling us what it means for the young and delicate Watson to be second. A second-place theory comes on the heels of the sadism that jogs his memory: "The details of my work in [the schools] are very hazy in mind probably because the work was so uninteresting. I remember chiefly the frequent thrashings the boys got from some of the teachers who seemed to delight in punishing for the least offence. But some of the women teachers I recall were kind and patient with us." Now for a bit of theory: "I was usually second in rank in my classes and never envied the boy who stood at the

»Continued on page 184«



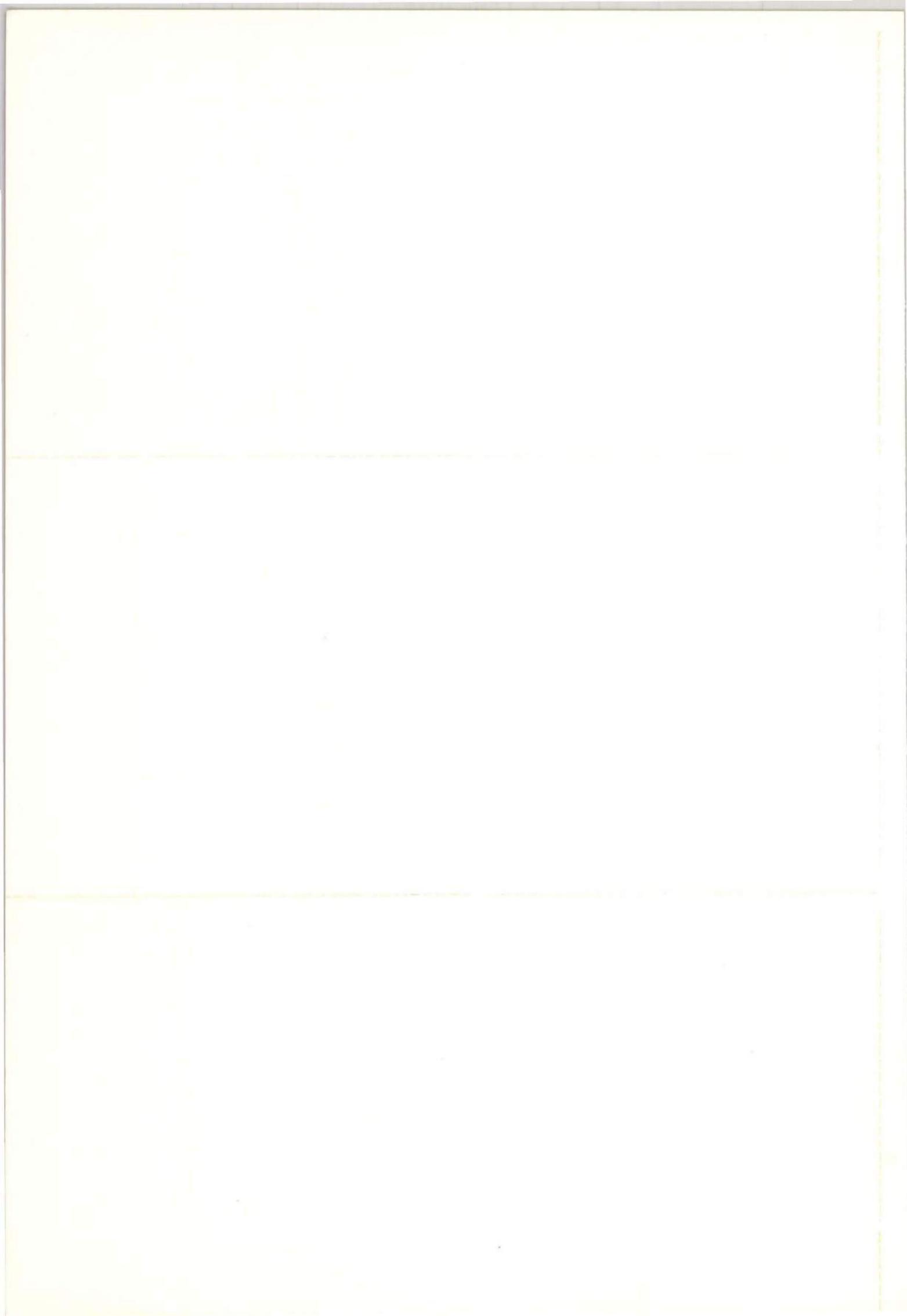
waardoor er een dubbele verbinding van de een naar de ander in is verankerend, een verbinding waarin de ander altijd verlangt of jijzelf degene bent van wie het verlangen is geëxtrapoleerd — een part aanwezigheid is weggelaten, er ontbreekt iets, maar precies dat maakt ook bepaalde telefonische koppelingen mogelijk. Ambivalentie kan worden gelezen volgens verschillende frequenties van verlangen en verschrikking, die de hiërarchieën kanaliseren die meestal ontstaan wanneer er twee op dezelfde lijn zijn aangesloten, de beller en de gebelde, al vormen deze stations geen oppositioeneel of stabiel paar. "Paar" moet in het enkelvoud worden gelezen, een paar, wat een interne reeks controlemaatregelen te weegbrengt, die moeilijk te beheersen of af te perken kan zijn. ■ Het valt binnen de norm om aan te nemen dat Watson, in termen van het contract dat hen bijeenbrengt, op de tweede plaats kwam achter Bell. Niets stelt deze aanname serieus ter discussie en Watson deelt deze aanname natuurlijk zelf ook. De ondergeschikte, het subject op de tweede plaats, is soms zo buitenissig in zijn lof en bewondering, dat nummer één wegvalt in een verduisterde sfeer van projectie, die in leven is geroepen door de vindingrijke aanhankelijkheidsbetuiger. Wat hemzelf betreft lijkt Watson een vereeuwigende ruimte te hebben gecreëerd voor de eerste beweging en maakt hij deze veel eerder onsterfelijk dan degene in kwestie zelf ooit zou hebben willen bedingen. Vroeg in de autobiografie (hoofdstuk 3) heeft Watson het een en ander te zeggen over zijn opleiding. In het klaslokaal vinden we een microchip van een theorie, die ons vertelt wat het voor de jonge en gevoelige Watson betekent om de tweede te zijn. Een tweede-rangstheorie volgt pal op het sadisme dat zijn geheugen oprijst: "De details van mijn werk in [de scholen] staan me zeer onduidelijk voor de geest, vermoedelijk omdat het werk zo oninteressant was. Ik herinner me hoofdzakelijk al die keren dat de jongens slaag kregen van een aantal leraren die er een groot genoegen in schenen te vinden om voor de minste overtredding straf uit te delen. Maar ik herinner me ook een aantal leraren die vriendelijk waren en geduld met ons hadden." Nu een beetje theorie: "Ik was meestal de tweede van mijn klas en benijdde nooit de jongen die aan de leiding stond, want het viel me op dat hij het eerste slachtoffer was wanneer de leraar bij een bezoeker wilde pronken met haar leerlingen." Nummer één wordt dus afgeschilderd als een slachtoffer. Deze ambivalentie is ingebouwd in de structuur van de argumentatie, want een figuur die eerst wordt gepresenteerd in een gunstig, ja zelfs bewonderend licht, komt al snel in moeilijkheden. Dit is van toepassing op de gedachte die begint met: "Ik benijdde nooit de jongen die aan de leiding stond." Watsons tevredenheid met de tweede plaats neemt een fantastisch morbide wending: "Mijn tevredenheid met mijn plaats in de rangorde nam nog toe toen de jongen, die een heel jaar lang aan het hoofd van de klas had gestaan, stierf aan de tering. Het leek me dat ik op het nippertje gered was en ik zei op de dag van de begrafenis van de jongen tegen mijn moeder dat de jongen die mij voor was in de klas altijd doodging, maar deze verbazingwekkende generalisatie was slechts gebaseerd op die ene observatie." We begrijpen nu voor wie de klokken luiden. De onbenijde nummer één die aan het hoofd staat van het lichaam waarin Watson een rol speelt, draagt het teken van vertrek, onthoofding, hij alleen ("die ene observatie") geeft aan wat er altijd gebeurt. Hij vertelt het aan zijn moeder, die vriendelijk zal zijn en tolerant jegens de theorie en die, als vrouw, hem voor zijn uitspraak niet zal straffen

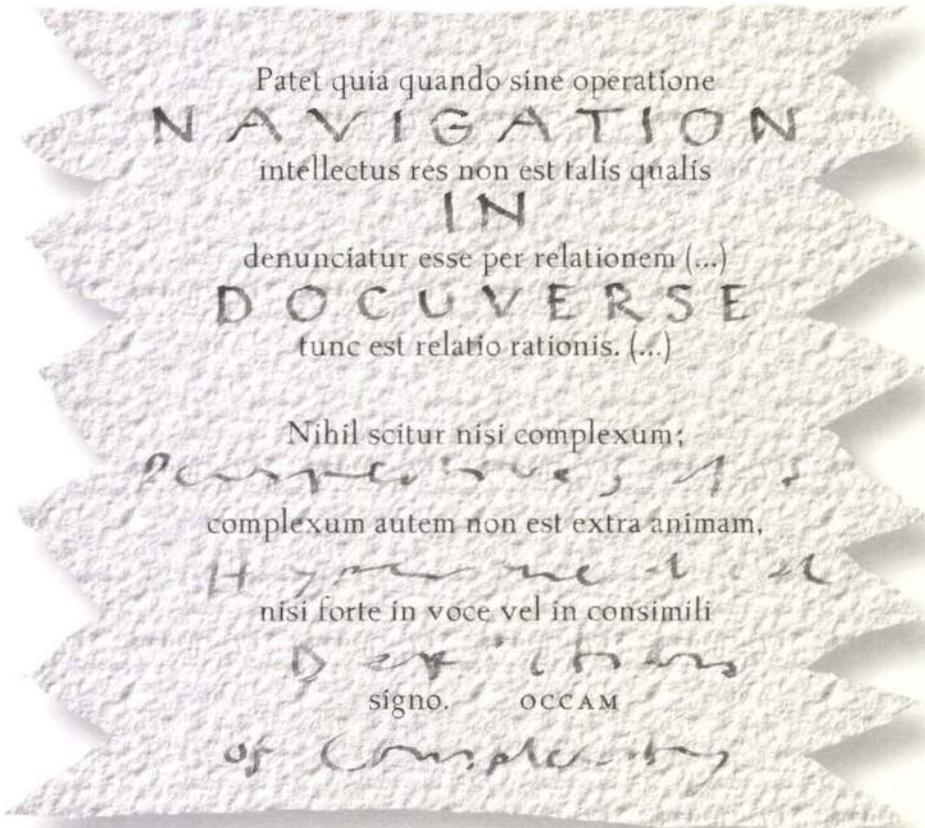
met een pak slaag. ■ Maar door zo'n "verbazingwekkende generalisatie" te produceren, alleen bestemd voor het oor van Moeder — iets dat slechts één keer is gebeurd — zeg je eigenlijk dat jij, Watson, nog niet bent begonnen om een tweederangs relatie te beschrijven met Alexander Graham Bell, die je nog niet hebt ontmoet, al schrijf je jouw autobiografie na zijn dood. Liever vertel je je moeder, vertel je mij, over wat er met nummer één gebeurt, de stoere jongen die je voor is, aan het hoofd staat van het huishouden. De vader van de telefoon of de vader bij jouw bestaan, de jongen die de eerste is voor jou, draagt het teken van vertrek en sterven waarover je jouw moeder vertelt. Als tweede ben jij de verhalende overlevende die op het nippertje ontsnapt, een ontsnapping die je altijd aan je moeder zult blijven vertellen, die het gehoorapparaat is voor de dubbele waarheid van de ambivalentie — de ontvanger van jouw autobiografische verslag, misschien de enige aan wie het gericht is, de vorm en het lot van jouw receptiegeschiedenis.

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head for I noticed he was the principal victim when the teacher wanted to show off her pupils to a visitor." Hence number one is depicted as a victim. The ambivalence is built into the structure of the argumentation, for a figure that had been originally presented in a favorable, even admiring light, gets into trouble quickly. This holds for the sentiment beginning "I never envied the boy who stood at the head." Watson's satisfaction with second place takes a grandly morbid turn: "My satisfaction with my rank increased when the boy, who for one whole year had been at the head of my class, died of consumption. It seemed a narrow escape for me and I told my mother on the day of the boy's funeral that the boy ahead of me in the class always died, but that startling generalization was based on that single observation." We can gather now for whom the bell tolls. The unenvied number one who heads the body of which Watson plays a part, is marked for departure, decapitation, uniquely ("this single observation") delineating what always happens. He tells this to his mother, who will be kind and patient with the theory, and who, being a woman, will not punish him for this statement with a thrashing. ■ But producing such a "startling generalization" for Mother's ears alone — something that has happened only once and forever — really means that you, Watson, have still not begun to narrate a secondary relationship to Alexander Graham Bell, whom you have not yet met, although you are writing your autobiography after his death. Rather, you are telling your mother, you are telling me, about what happens to number one, the guy ahead of you, the head of the household. The father of the telephone or the father to your existence, the boy ahead of you, is marked for the departure and demise of which you tell your mother. As second you are to be the narrating survivor in a narrow escape which you will always be telling your mother, the listening device for the double truth of ambivalence — the receiver of your autobiographical report, perhaps, its sole addressee, the shape and destiny of your reception history.







by Norbert Bolz

Sinds kinderen helemaal te gek gaan in de multi-media-environments van de grote steden en in de oneindige datastromen van de nieuwe media, zijn de opvoedingsstrategieën aan het eind van hun Latijn gekomen. *Swamped by information overload* zitten nu al kleuters als jagers voor hun beeldscherm. De enige methode die ze kennen om iets te zoeken en te onderzoeken bestaat uit *pattern recognition*.

• Ever since children became absorbed in the multimedia environments of the cities and the infinite data flow of the new media, the educational strategies of the Gutenberg galaxy have been finished. *Swamped by information overload*, even the pre-school child is a huntsman before the screens. All searching and investigating takes place via *pattern recognition*.



Retrospectief kan men de media-theorie van Marshall McLuhan en zelfs het *Passagen-Werk* van Walter Benjamin als pogingen beschouwen om een weergavetechniek te vinden die recht doet aan deze nieuwe mediawereld. Zij schreven geen boeken meer, maar mozaïeken van citaten en gedachtenfragmenten — schrijven als film. Deze pogingen om boeken te maken die de boekvorm te buiten gingen, zijn juist in hun wansucces leerrijk. Blijkbaar is het informatieverwerkingsstelsel boek niet meer opgewassen tegen de complexiteit van onze sociale systemen. Daarom richten auteurs die dat weten en toch auteur willen blijven hun boeken in naar structuren en modellen die ze ontleen aan niet-lineaire informatieverwerkingsstelsels.

Zo zijn de *Filosofische Onderzoekingen* van Wittgenstein hypertext avant-la-lettre — een zigzagreis door gedachtenvelden. Hij kon de extreem gecompliceerde relaties tussen zijn filosofische opmerkingen alleen nog duidelijk maken door ze rigoreus te verbinden aan een netwerk van cijfers. Als deze intensieve verbindingen nu ook nog worden bevrijd van het fantoom dat de opmerkingen zelf een gedachtenveld zouden vormen dat een eenheid is, ontstaat er intertekstualiteit: een differentieel netwerk van tekstsporen die eindeloos naar elkaar verwijzen. Een duidelijk, zij het qua effect niet erg overtuigend voorbeeld hiervan biedt de intertekstualiteit van de Hegel/Genet-kolommen in *Glas* van Derrida.

Het bekendste voorbeeld is natuurlijk Hofstadters *Gödel, Escher, Bach: an eternal golden braid*. Het boek ontwikkelt zijn argumentatie door middel van zichzelf versterkende resonanties, die ontstaan als gevolg van *strange loops* tussen verschillende niveaus in de reflexie/de weergave. Wat men vroeger vol afschuw zou hebben verworpen als oneindige regressie, wordt nu elegant geherdefinieerd als een wetenschappelijke esthetiek van de recursie. Maar ook een boek over *strange loops* dat zelf als een *strange loop* is geconstrueerd, blijft een boek. Juist omdat het niet-lineair

is opgebouwd, wordt degene die het van voor- naar achterplat leest, onvermijdelijk overvallen door verveling.

Labyrintische argumentaties — van Luhmann tot Hofstadter — zijn nu eenmaal niet in boekvorm stap voor stap achter elkaar te zetten. Om de beoogde complexiteit zonder informatieverlies weer te geven, zouden ze gebruik moeten maken van een simultaanpresentatie op verschillende niveaus. Niklas Luhmann, die zijn data nog altijd met kaartenbakjes beheert, heeft dat duidelijk ingezien. De weergave van complexiteit vereist complexe theorieën, die niet meer serieel te maken zijn omdat de reflexie op verschillende punten tegelijk instapt. Bovendien vooronderstelt ieder punt waar de reflexie binnenkomt een groot aantal niet-expliciteerbare premissen. Dit wordt allemaal te veel om nog in een lineaire lectuur te realiseren. Men zoekt dan ook naar een medium voor een schriftuur die op verschillende lagen tegelijk present is: *Het zou mooi zijn als men deze enigszins labyrintische theorie-opbouw zou kunnen weergeven in boeken die zogezegd tweedimensionaal zijn ingericht, dus verschillende leesroutes aanbieden.* (Luhmann)

Maar dat is precies wat hypermedia doen. Hypermedia hebben een sterke affiniteit met RDBMS, de *relational database management systems* die dynamische structuren afwerken met relationele operatoren; dat wil zeggen: ze werken — zonder nog iets te maken te hebben met lineaire dataprocessing — met *many-to-many-relaties*. En hier tekent zich een mogelijkheid tot implementatie af die van doorslaggevend belang is voor de complexe theorie van het complexe: hoogwaardige hypermedia gaan met *second-order-links* opereren, dat wil zeggen: met *links to links*. Daarmee zal hun software-structuur identiek worden aan de structuur van de theorie van complexe constellaties: beide zijn gericht op het aan elkaar relateren van relaties. Bekende dynamische structuren als het weer kunnen op deze manier worden gesimuleerd. Hypermedia maken de weergave mogelijk van de interactie tussen relaties en waar-

den in de loop van een bepaalde tijdsruimte.

Ook de thans aan iedere hypermedia-gebruiker bekende *typed links* zijn tools voor de management van complexiteit. Deze *typed links* reduceren de complexiteit van de informatie door een veelvoud aan virtuele navigatiemogelijkheden aan te bieden. Dit moet niet worden verward met het traditionele klasseren van informatie. Hypermedia kennen geen *lingua franca* voor de weergave van kennis (vgl. Woodhead 36). Ze integreren uiterst heterogeen materiaal, opereren ook fuzzy en probabilistisch, ze processen parallel en 'connectionistisch' en kunnen daardoor de ideale tools bieden om te brainstormen (vgl. Woodhead 143).

Hypertext sluit echter niet alleen aan bij de meest recente technische ontwikkeling, maar ook bij de alleroudste tradities. Het eerste hoofdstuk over de geschiedenis van hypertext moet de commentaren op Bijbel en Thora behandelen. Want wat deden de middeleeuwse manuscripten van monniken en rabbi's anders dan links, guided tours en superlinks produceren tussen de oerdocumenten en de religieuze en filosofische traditie: voetnoten, kanttekeningen, voorbeelden. Het is daarom niet meer dan consequent dat het Bijbelonderzoek als een der eerste is overgeschakeld op hypertext.

De informatieruimte van de hypermediacultuur heeft *n* dimensies. En juist omdat informatie geen natuurlijke topografie heeft, interveniëren op het gebruikersoppervlak voortdurend mediametaforen die voor de nodige oriëntatie zorgen: bibliotheek, kompas, netwerk, film, *Hitch Hiker's Guide*. Hypermedia gebruiken dus de karakteristieke prestaties van oudere media als metaforische hulpmiddelen bij de navigatie door de *n*-dimensionale informatieruimte. Vooral de filmmetaforen, bijvoorbeeld op de *HyperCard* van Apple, accentueren het afscheid van de lineaire informatiestructuren: fade-out, cut, montage, flashback, zoom in/out. Door dit soort niet-lineaire structuren van datamanagement wordt natuurlijk een



In retrospect, Marshall McLuhan's media theory and even Walter Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* (*Passage Work*) can be understood as attempts to do justice to this new media world at a level of technical depiction. These are no longer books but mosaics consisting of quotations and fragments of thought — writing as in cinema. It is in part the failure of these attempts at writing such books, which burst through the limits of the book form, which is so instructive. The information processing system 'book' is clearly no longer up to the complexity of our social systems. For this reason, authors who are aware of this and yet want to remain authors, organize their books according to structures and patterns taken from non-linear information processing systems.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (*Philosophical Investigations*) are therefore hypertext *avant la lettre* — a zig zag journey across fields of thought. He was only able to make clear the extremely complicated relationships of his philosophical observations by means of rigorous linking with a number network. If this intense linking is then released from the uniform phantom in one's own field of thought, the result is intertextuality: a differential network of text tracks which refer interminably to others. A clear, if in effect rather modest example of this is provided by the intertextuality of the Hegel/Genet columns in Derrida's *Glas*.

The most prominent example is, of course, Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach: the eternal golden braid*. This is a book which argues with self-strengthening resonances emerging from *strange loops* between various levels of reflection/depiction. What would have formerly been rebuffed as infinite regress, is elegantly reinterpreted as scientific aesthetics of recursion. Yet even a book on *strange loops*, constructed like a strange loop, remains a book. It will inevitably

bore those reading it from cover to cover for the very reason that it consists of non-linear structures.

Labyrinthine argumentations — from Luhmann to Hofstadter — simply can not be sequenced in book form. In order to depict the complexity aimed at here without loss of information, it would be necessary to provide a simultaneous presentation at several levels. Niklas Luhmann, who still manages his data by means of card-indexes, sees this very clearly. Depictions of complexity require complex theories which are no longer serializable, as reflection begins simultaneously at several points of entry. Moreover, every reflection entry presupposes an abundance of non-explicable prerequisites. All of this cannot be realised in linear reading matter. What we are therefore looking for is a medium of simultaneously-presented depiction: *What a pleasure it would be if this tendentially labyrinthine theory conception could be depicted in books which are, as it were, structured two-dimensionally i.e. presenting several reading tracks.* (Luhmann)

It is, however, just this which hypermedia achieve. They have a strong affinity to RDBMS, the *relational database management systems*, which work out dynamic structures with relational operators; i.e. they work with *many-to-many relations*, a far cry from linear data processing. It is here that a decisive means of implementation emerges for that complex theory of the complex: elaborated hypermedia are to work with *second-order-links* i.e. with links to links. This would, however, make their software structure identical to the theory structure of complex facts: relationing of relations. Familiar dynamic structures such as the weather could be simulated in this way. Hypermedia allow the depiction of the interaction of relations and values over and above a certain period of time.

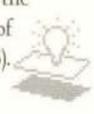
The *typed links* already familiar to every user of hypermedia are

also tools for complexity management. They reduce data complexity by opening up a variety of virtual navigation perspectives. This must not be confused with conventional classification processes.

Hypermedia do not recognize the *lingua franca* of the depiction of knowledge (cf. Woodhead 36). They integrate the most heterogeneous material, also operate at a fuzzy and probabilistic level, process in a parallel and 'connectionistic' way and are therefore able to provide ideal brainstorming tools (cf. Woodhead 143).

However, hypertext follows not only the most up-to-date technical development but also the oldest tradition. The first chapter of its history should be dedicated to the commentaries of the Bible and Torah. For what else did the manuscripts of monks and rabbis in the Middle Ages produce than links, guided tours and superlinks between the first documents and religious and philosophical tradition: footnotes, glosses, images. It is therefore only consistent for Bible research to be one of the first to be converted to hypertext.

The information sphere of the hypermedia culture has *n* dimensions. And especially in view of the fact that information has no natural topography, orienting media metaphors repeatedly intervene on the user surface: library, compass, network, film, *Hitch Hiker's Guide*. Hypermedia thus use the characteristic attainments of older media as metaphorical navigation aids in the *n*-dimensional information sphere. Above all, it is the film metaphors, for example on Apple's HyperCard, which mark the parting from linear information structures: dissolution, cut, montage, flashback, zoom in/out. Such non-linear structures of data management do, of course, produce a much higher linkage density (*busy screen*) than would ever be possible in the case of books. Books react to this rather helplessly with the strange loop



veel grotere fijnmazigheid van het informatienetwerk (*busy screen*) in het leven geroepen dan ooit bereikbaar is voor een boek. Hierop reageren boeken nogal hulpeloos met de bovenvermelde *strange-loop*- en *labyrint*-technieken, met speciale tekens die de aandacht sturen en tekstlagen moeten indiceren (bijvoorbeeld in Mandelbrots *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*) — of zelfs met diskettes die in een hoesje op het achterplat worden bijgeleverd. Met zulke hulpeloze gestes reikt de Gutenberg-galaxis naar de mogelijkheden van de docuverse. Maar pas de hypermedia maken mogelijk wat tot nu toe niet implementeerbaar was: de *browsing between media*. Deze zal een naadloze hypermedia-environment tot stand brengen, die zich reproduceert door middel van interactief informatiegebruik.

Als alleen de logica van de hypersystemen in het spel was, zou de nieuwe tekstmaatschappij — Ted Nelson heeft haar *docuverse* gedoopt — beslist afscheid nemen van particuliere, discrete documenten en zich ontvouwen in de *free speech* van oneindige (re)combinaties van *fragment showers of information*. Maar in de komende tijd zullen er nog steeds 'auteurs' bestaan, simpelweg omdat de kapitalistische invulling van het project 'tekstmaatschappij' moet blijven vasthouden aan het copyright. Piraterij wordt het hoofdprobleem. Daarom — en niet om bijvoorbeeld technische redenen — moeten CD-ROMS momenteel zijn: *read only memories* en niets anders. De vraag naar auteurschap, copyright en piraterij markeert het beslissende punt waar de wegen van *closed* en *compound hypermedia* scheiden (Nelson, 1M).

H.G. Wells heeft gedroomd van een 'World Encyclopedia': *spread like a nervous network (...) knitting all the intellectual workers of the world through a common interest and a common medium*. Vannevar Bush, die het werk van 6000 Amerikaanse topwetenschappers aan de militair-technische toepassing van hun kennis coördineerde, begint deze droom al in de jaren dertig te concretiseren. Zijn beroemde opstel uit juli 1945 *As we may think*, dat opent met

de Freudiaanse ontkenning: *This has not been a scientist's war*, herformuleert het kernprobleem van de Tweede Wereldoorlog als het grote beschavingsprobleem van de twintigste eeuw: de snelle verwerking van een informatiemassa die iedere menselijke maat te buiten gaat. Om deze opgave te realiseren is een symbolisme nodig dat het mogelijk maakt, wiskundige transformaties te reduceren tot machineprocessen. Pas dan zou de ontlasting van het menselijke denken zijn bereikt, waarover Leibnitz en Babbage al droomden: *to click off arguments on a machine* (Bush 105). De technische implementatie hiervan mislukte steeds doordat iedere toename aan complexiteit leidde tot een afname aan betrouwbaarheid. Pas het tijdperk van de elektriciteit en de nieuwe media heeft de massale en goedkope productie van hoogcomplexen gadgets met een grote betrouwbaarheid gebracht. Sindsdien is het mogelijk om de weergave en reductie van complexiteit te machinaliseren.

Bush ziet zeer scherp dat de toenemende complexiteit van de westerse beschaving noopt tot het mechaniseren van herinnering, opslag en archivering. Alleen met deze technische implementaties van geheugenfuncties als achtergrond, kan de mens erin slagen opnieuw het *privilege of forgetting* te verwerven. Het ontlasten van mensenhermens van zo'n voor de beschaving onontbeerlijke complexiteit leidt dan ook tot een pregnant beroepsprofiel: de nieuwe functie van de *trail blazer* (Bush 108) is erop gericht plaatsvervangend voor anderen wegen te banen door het labyrint van de opgeslagen informatie en deze aldus begaanbaar te maken; als kennissarbeiders zouden deze *trail blazers* menselijke dataprocessors zijn.

Trail blazers maken iets duidelijk: de hoofdproblemen van het informatietijdperk zijn de selectie uit en de toegang tot de *record*. Wat deze problematisch maakt, is de traditionele wijze om opgeslagen kennis te organiseren, namelijk door indices. Daartegenover plaatst Bush het associatie-mechanisme van de menselijke geest, dat technisch geïmplementeerd moet worden:

Selection by association, rather than by indexing — dat blijft het principe van alle hypermedia-structuren en situeert hen op hetzelfde niveau als connectionistische modellen, neurale netwerken en *parallel distributed processing*. Hoe traag de rekenmachines ook zijn, voor al deze concepten van selectie door mechanisch associatieve verbindingen geldt: *it should be possible to beat the mind decisively in regard to the permanence and clarity of the items resurrected from storage* (Bush 106).

Memex, de *memory extender* van Bush, was geplant als een gemechaniseerde privé-bibliotheek die de toegang tot de opgeslagen informatie extreem versnelde — een supplement bij het menselijke geheugen. Het functioneert op basis van een enkelvoudig proces: de verbinding van twee trefwoorden, waardoor een automatische selectie van het ene trefwoord door het andere mogelijk wordt; dat noemt Bush *associative indexing* (Bush 107). Alleen het actuele kennisbelang van de memex-gebruiker bepaalt de kenbare wegen door het mechanisch geassocieerde vlechtwerk van de data.

Memex als supplement bij het geheugen, associatieve *indexing* van data volgens het connectionistische model van de hersenfuncties — het visioen van Vannevar Bush over een synergetica van mens en machine gaat nog een stap verder. Als alle vormen van kennis ter wereld gereduceerd kunnen worden tot variërende stromen in schakelcircuits en ook de menselijke hersenen volgens exact zo'n schema te werk gaan, moet interceptie in een radicale betekenis mogelijk zijn. Interceptie wil immers zeggen: de onmiddellijke overgang van het ene elektrische fenomeen (*inside*) naar het andere elektrische fenomeen (*outside*), zonder dat het eerst in een mechanische beweging hoeft te worden omgezet (zoals bijvoorbeeld bij encefalografie gebeurt). *Your inside is out and your outside is in*.

Hier is de stap van science fiction naar normal science erg klein. Lang geleden al is het visioen van Bush uitgekomen over de onderzoeker van de toekomst die de ketens van het experimentele heeft doorbroken en rondzwerft, waarneemt, fotografeert,



and labyrinth techniques already mentioned, with special signs meant to control attention and indicate text levels (e.g. in Mandelbrot's *The Fractal Geometry of Nature*) — or simply by sticking in diskettes. With such helpless gestures, the Gutenberg galaxy gropes for the possibilities of docuverse. It is, however, hypermedia which first allows that which up to now has not been implementable: *browsing between media*. It is to constitute a smooth hypermedia environment, reproduced by means of interactive information usage.

If it were only a matter of the logic of the hyper systems, the new text society — Ted Nelson has called it the *docuverse* — would resolutely take its leave of private, discreet documents and would develop in the *free speech* of infinite (re)combinations of *fragment showers of information*. Yet there will still be 'authors' in the foreseeable future for the simple reason that the capitalistic specification of the project 'text society' must insist on copyright. Piratry will become a key problem. For this reason — and not, say, for technical reasons — CD-ROMS, for instance, will have to remain that which their name suggests: simply *read only memories*. The question of authorship, copyright and piratry marks the decisive point of ramification between closed and compound hypermedia (Nelson, 1M).

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H.G. Wells dreamt of a 'World Encyclopaedia': *spread like a nervous network (...) knitting all the intellectual workers of the world through a common interest and a common medium*. Vannevar Bush, who has coordinated the work of 6000 leading American scientists on the military-technical application of their knowledge, begins as early as the thirties to put this dream into concrete terms. His famous essay of July 1945 *As we may think*, disclosing the Freudian negation: *This has not been a scientist's war*,

reformulates the central problem of the Second World War as the great civilisation problem of the 20th century: fast processing of a mass of information bursting all human measure. A symbolism is required for this which allows mathematical transformations to be reduced to machine processes. Only then would a relief for human thought be achieved, a state dreamed of by Leibniz and Babbage: *to click off arguments on a machine* (Bush 105). The technical implementation of this has, up to now, also failed because every increase in complexity meant a reduction in reliability. It is the age of electricity and new media which has brought along the mass, cheap production of highly-complex gadgets of great reliability. Since then it has been possible to machinize the depiction and reduction of complexity.

Bush sees very clearly that the growing complexity of Western civilisation forces the complete mechanizing of memory, storage and the keeping of archives. It is only against the background of these technical implementations of memory functions that man may succeed in regaining the *privilege of forgetting*. Relieving human brains of indispensable complexity in terms of civilisation to such an extent can also stamp a terse vocational profile: the new profession of *trail blazers* (Bush 108) is marked by the task of paving on behalf of others practicable ways through the maze of stored material; as workers in the field of knowledge they would be human information processors.

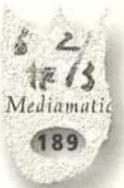
Trail blazers make one thing clear: The main problems of the information age are selection and access to the *record*. What makes them a problem is the traditional way of organizing the stored knowledge — namely by means of indices. Bush answers this with the association mechanics of the human spirit which is to be technically implemented: *Selection by association, rather than by indexing* — this remains the principle of all hypermedia

structures and situates them at the same level as connectionist models, neural networks and the parallel distributed processing. Despite the slowness of the calculators, it is true of all these concepts of selection by mechanically associative linking that: *it should be possible to beat the mind decisively in regard to the permanence and clarity of the items resurrected from storage*. (Bush 106)

Memex, Bush's memory extender, was planned as a mechanised private library, greatly accelerating access to the material stored — a supplement to the human memory. It works on the basis of the simple process of the link between two entries thus allowing an automatic selection of one by the other; Bush calls this *associative indexing* (Bush 107). It is only the Memex user's respective thirst for knowledge which then paves discernible paths in the mechanically associated web of data.

Memex as a memory supplement, associative 'indexing' of data according to the connectionist model of brain functions — Vannevar Bush's vision of a synergy between man and machine goes even one step further. If all forms of knowledge in the world can be reduced to varying currents in switching circuits, and the human brain also proceeds according to just this pattern, interception should be possible in a radical sense. Interception means indeed the immediate transition from one electric phenomenon (inside) to another electric phenomenon (outside) without it first having to be transformed into a mechanical movement (e.g. as for an encephalograph). *Your inside is out and your outside is in*.

Here the step from science fiction to normal science is very small. It is a long time since Bush's vision of the researcher of the future was fulfilled, a researcher who has burst the bonds of the experimental, walks round, observes, photographs, comments, machinizes all



becommentarieert, alle repetitieve geheugenprocessen machinaliseert en dan de opgeslagen data vrij bewerkt. Zijn grafieken-tekenende apparaten produceren het schrift van de natuur in de numerische schriftruimte van de computer. Jay David Bolter beweert zelfs: *The book of nature is a hypertext, whose language is the computational mathematics of directed graphs.* (Bolter 106; vgl. 77ff).



Ted Nelson, die zichzelf karakteriseert als een cynische romanticus en *computopian*, heeft als eerste de grondbegrippen gedefinieerd van het schrijven onder computervoorwaarden. Daarin wordt literatuur benoemd als een systeem van aan elkaar geschakelde teksten: *Literature is an ongoing system of interconnecting documents* (Nelson, LM 2). Het *Xanadu-Paradigma* van Nelson is een online wereldbibliotheek, dat wil zeggen: niet alleen een bibliotheek voor de hele wereld, maar ook een gedaanteverandering van de wereld tot universele elektronische bibliotheek. Alle documenten zijn daarin virtueel alomtegenwoordig — ze nemen de vorm aan van een 'instant-literatuur'; *the Xanadu system provides a universal data structure to which all other data may be mapped* (Nelson, XP 1). Dit is zeer zeker ook cartografisch op te vatten: de instant-literatuur produceert een nieuwe wereldkaart. Iedere byte van de wereld kan van een eigen adres worden voorzien. Dat reduceert de redundantie van kopieën en identieke formuleringen; opgeslagen worden alleen de originele documenten en de varianten/versies. Xanadu schraapt daarom ook geen teksten.



Ted Nelson neemt afscheid van de Gutenberg-wereld van discrete, particuliere documenten en ontwerpt een media-environment, die het de gebruikers mogelijk maakt eigen links te creëren tussen de in een uitwisselbaar bestandsformaat opgeslagen gegevens van de wereld — het nieuwe systeem noemt hij *docuverse* (Nelson, LM). Natuurlijk kan men gemakkelijk aantonen op welke hardware-grenzen het Xanadu-paradigma van een systeem van alle wereldteksten online op dit

moment stoot. Men heeft het daarom ook al over *docuislands*. Maar een principiële beschouwing laat zien, dat juist Xanadu technisch implementeerbaar is; de hardware grenzen worden gevormd door de standards die zijn verordend door commerciële en publieksrechtelijke uitbaters. Waar zij bang voor zijn, is de in Nelsons systeem ingebouwde mogelijkheid van een radicaal democratische samenwerking; want precies daarop is de *computopian* uit. *Therefore*, wordt er consequent gemeld in een hypermedia-paper van een NATO Advanced Research Workshop uit 1989, *therefore this scenario is not considered further here*. Puur technisch gesproken moet echter worden geconstateerd: *The concurrency control of a distributed HyperInformation system fits all the technical needs of this scenario* (NATO 314).

De radicaal democratische samenwerking in de navigatie door de *docuverse*, dat wil zeggen door een online wereldbibliotheek, is volgens Nelson de enige mogelijkheid van menselijke hersenen om zich opgewassen te tonen tegen de massa en complexiteit van informaties. Het afscheid van de discrete, particuliere documenten van de Gutenberg-galaxis is nu eenmaal ook een afscheid van de ordeningsmodellen hiërarchie, categorie en sequentie. De beslissende karakteristieke eigenschap van de *docuverse* is *intertwingle* — vervlechting, netwerk, rizoom. *Everything is deeply intertwined* (Nelson, DM). Dat is de feitelijke grondslag voor de eis van een hypertext-adequate herstructurering van de kennis. Hardnekkiger dan de hardware-grenzen zijn daarbij de receptielimits van de mens. Als data niet meer discreet en lineair maar met hoge dichtheid op *busy screens* worden aangeboden, dreigt cognitieve entropie. Dat is de keerzijde van de onbegrensde manipulatiemacht die hypermedia verlenen: verloren te gaan in hyperspace.

Tegen aanhoudende data-overbelasting bestaan principieel slechts twee technieken tot ontlasting: filtering en compressie. Bij een F 18-gevechtsvliegtuig wordt een gebruiksaanwijzing meegeleverd van 300 000 pagina's. Als men die

niet op papier maar op CD-ROMS opslaat, reduceert men de opslagruimte met een factor 1200. Dat geldt in geringere mate ook voor de diagnostische reparatiehandleidingen van de grote autofirma's: zo wordt de vw Golf gerepareerd aan de hand van het hypertext-systeem Thoth II. Dat bespaart niet alleen ruimte, maar versnelt ook de effectiviteit van de informatie en een dynamische herconfiguratie van de data mogelijk. Het is daarom niet meer dan logisch dat de us Navy het Interactive Graphical Documents System voor de reparatie van elektronisch materieel (Brown University) heeft gefinancierd.

Het cruciale opslagprobleem wordt natuurlijk niet veroorzaakt door teksten maar door beelden. Het belang van het aanvankelijk indrukwekkende gegeven dat men op een CD-ROM zo'n 1000 romans kan opslaan, moet worden afgemeten aan het feit dat een enkel kleurentelevisiebeeld ongeveer 100 kilobyte verbruikt. Om een gebruiksaanwijzing of reparatiehandleiding vergezeld te doen gaan van een video die één minuut duurt, moet een opslagcapaciteit van ongeveer 200 megabyte worden gereserveerd. CD-ROMS slaan als bekend zo'n 600 megabyte op. Maar de vooruitgang in datacompressie heeft — tenminste momenteel nog — zijn prijs. Zoals de naam al zegt zijn compact disks Read Only Memories en vallen ze daarmee onder Ted Nelsons kritische begrip van de *compound hypermedia*.

Datacompressie was de ene ontlastingstechniek. Om opgewassen te blijven tegen de *plethora of information* (McKnight 7), is het evenwel nog belangrijker om intelligente filters te ontwikkelen voor de ecologische taak van de dataverwerking, die een andere cynische romanticus, Marshall McLuhan, op de pregnante formulering van een 'beperking' van de *media-fallout* heeft gebracht. Navigatie in de informatieruimte van de hypermedia houdt echter precies dit in: een reductie van de complexiteit van mogelijke *views*, anders gezegd: een uitfiltering van irrelevante data. Juist een *docuverse* à la Ted Nelson zou moeten leven met het permanente probleem van *junk information*. Over



repetitive thought processes and then freely works with the stored data. His graph-drawing apparatus produce the writing of nature in the numerical writing scope of the computer. Jay David Bolter even thinks: *The book of nature is a hypertext, whose language is the computational mathematics of directed graphs.* (Bolter 106; cf. 77ff)



Ted Nelson, who characterises himself as a cynical romantic and *computopian*, has for the first time defined the basic concepts of writing under computer conditions. According to Nelson, literature is a system of interconnected scripts: *Literature is an ongoing system of interconnecting documents.* (Nelson, LM 2). Nelson's *Xanadu-paradigm* is the software of an online-world-library i.e. not only of a library for the whole world but also of a transformation of the world into an electronic universal library. All the documents contained in this library are virtually omnipresent and ubiquitous — they take on the form of *instant literature*; *the Xanadu system provides a universal data structure to which all other data may be mapped* (Nelson, XP1). This can also be understood cartographically: the instant literature produces a new world map. Every byte of the world can be provided with its own address. This reduces the redundancy of the copies and identical formulations; only the original documents and variants/readings are stored. Xanadu therefore does not delete texts.



Nelson takes leave of the Gutenberg world of discreet, private documents and designs a media environment enabling users to establish their own 'links' between the world's documents drawn up into a compatible format — he calls it *docuverse* (Nelson, LM). Of course it is easy to show the hardware limits reached nowadays by the Xanadu paradigm of a system of all world texts online. For this reason we now talk about *docuislands*. Yet one principle



contemplation shows that it is precisely Xanadu which is technically implementable; the hardware limits of which are standards prescribed by commercial and public-law users. What they fear is the possibility of a radical-democratic collaboration as contained in Nelson's system; it is just this which the 'computopian' is aiming at. *Therefore*, it says consistently in a hypermedia paper of a NATO Advanced Research Workshop of 1989, *therefore this scenario is not considered further here.* However, from a purely technical point of view it applies that: *The concurrency control of a distributed HyperInformation system fits all the technical needs of this scenario.* (NATO 314)

The radical-democratic collaboration in the navigation through the *docuverse* i.e. through an online world library, is for Nelson the only possibility for human brains to show that they are matched up to the mass and complexity of information. Leave taken of the discreet, private documents of the Gutenberg galaxy is simply leave taken of the classification patterns of hierarchy, category and sequence. The decisive characteristic of *docuverse* is *intertwingerity* — interweaving, interlacing, rhizome. *Everything is deeply intertwined* (Nelson, DM). That is the factual reason for demanding a hypertext-suited restructuring of knowledge. Even more stubborn than the hardware limits are, however, the reception limits of man. If information is no longer provided discreetly and in a linear fashion, but at a high level of compactness on busy screens, there is a threat of cognitive entropy. This is the reverse of the unlimited manipulation power provided by hypermedia: getting lost in hyperspace.



In principle there are two relief techniques against a perpetual information overload: filtering and compression. An F18-fighter plane has operating instructions consisting of

300,000 pages. If these are stored on CD-ROMS instead of on paper, the storage space is reduced by a factor of 1200. This also applies on a smaller scale to the diagnostic repair manuals of the large car firms; thus the vw Rabbit is repaired according to the hypertext system *Thoth II*. This saves not only space but accelerates access and enables trouble-free 'updating' of information and a dynamic reconfiguration of data. It is therefore completely logical that the us Navy has financed the Interactive Graphical Documents System for repairing electronic equipment (Brown University).

The crucial storage problem is, of course, caused not by texts but by images. The initially impressive fact that up to 1000 novels can be stored on a CD-ROM must be measured by the consideration that a single colour television picture consumes around 100 kilobytes. Therefore in order to add a one-minute video to operating or repair instructions, it is necessary to reserve a storage capacity of approx. 200 megabytes. As is known, CD-ROMS store around 600 megabytes. Yet the progress of data compression has a price to pay — or at least this is still the case today. As the name suggests, Compact Disks are simply Read Only Memories, and therefore come under Ted Nelson's critical concept of *compound hypermedia*.

Data compression is one thing. To prove a match for the *plethora of information* (McKnight 7), it is, however, even more important to develop intelligent filters for that ecological task of data processing which another romantic cynic, namely Marshall McLuhan, has reduced to the terse formula of a media-fallout-rationing. Navigation in the information sphere of the hypermedia is indeed identical to a reduction of the complexity of possible 'views' i.e. to a filtering out of irrelevant data. Just such a *docuverse* of Nelson stamp should live with the permanent problem of 'junk information'. All documents would be headed by innumerable



E. BARRETT
*Text, ConText and
Hypertext*
Cambridge, Ma. 1988

JAY DAVID BOLTER
Writing Space
Hillsdale 1991

VANNEVAR BUSH
'As we may think'
in: *Atlantic Monthly*
July 1945



*Designing Hypermedia
for Learning*
NATO ASI Series, F 67

CLIFF MCKNIGHT,
ANDREW DILLON,
JOHN RICHARDSON
Hypertext in Context

TED NELSON
Dream Machines
—, *Literary Machines*
—, *The Xanadu Paradigm*

JACOB NIELSEN
Hypertext & Hypermedia

NIGEL WOODHEAD
Hypertext & Hypermedia

alle documenten zouden immers ontelbare commentaren, links en varianten worden heengeschreven, als bij een palimpsest. Wie maakt het onderscheid tussen belangrijke en junk informatie? Wie filtert de data zodat ze bruikbaar worden? De trail blazers van Vannevar Bush natuurlijk. Ook implementeerbaar zou een terugkoppeling zijn over de bruikbaarheid van bepaalde nodes en links, anders gezegd een voting filter (...) based on relevance feedback from other users (Nielsen 142, vgl. 188f).

De meeste schrijvers hebben schijnvrede gesloten met de computer als word processor, omdat die het conventionele begrip van de lineaire tekst niet ter discussie stelt; eenvoudige zoekprogramma's, grafische mogelijkheden en tekstmontage leiden niet per se tot hypertext. Beslissend is veeleer de niet-lineaire structuur van de tekst als geheel, die expliciet en gemakkelijk modificeerbaar moet zijn. *The main distinctive utility of outliners is in being able to fold away lower levels of an outline, allowing a high-level view of the structural backbone of a document* (Woodhead 30).

Dit differentieercriterium maakt ook een nuchtere kijk mogelijk op zaken als interactief televisiekijken, virtual reality, elektronische amusementsparken en interactieve musea voor wetenschap en techniek. Hoe verder de desbetreffende computerprogramma's zijn ontwikkeld, des te meer beslissingen (vooraf) nemen ze op zich, om deze dan te presenteren in een visuele vorm; al doende vergeet men het symbolische. De lezer wordt toeschouwer; wanneer hij, in plaats van te lezen, onderduikt in een environment, ondergaat hij de suggestie dat hij ervaringen opdoet door middel van waarnemingen. De 'tour'-metafoor maakt duidelijk dat hypermedia hier opnieuw gereduceerd worden tot een sequentiële en lineaire structuur. Guided tours zijn het werk van Vannevar Bush's trail blazers; ze bieden 'superlinks' aan, die niet bestaan uit enkelvoudige verbindingen tussen twee nodes, maar uit een complete 'string' (vgl. Bolter 98; Nielsen 127).

Beter dan de guide- en tour-metaforen geven, zoals reeds ver-

meld, filmmetaforen de niet-lineaire structuren van de navigatie in de n-dimensionale informatieruimte weer; ze signaleren links binnen en tussen documenten, alleen kunnen ze niet verwijzen naar de referenties tussen verschillende media. Ook filmmetaforen schieten tekort wat betreft het eigen moment van hypertext: *to browse between media using a single delivery device* (Woodhead 58).

Een van de eenvoudigste manieren om binnen lineaire schriftbewegingen gelaagdheid en complexiteit aan te duiden is de voetnoot. Daarom karakteriseert de simpelste definitie een hypertext als gegeneraliseerde voetnoten. Hypertext vormt immers een netwerk van voetnoten bij voetnoten. Maar precies dat is in gedrukte media niet meer zinvol weer te geven. Het lineair-sequentiële lezen wordt vervangen door het peripathetische lezen. Hypertext maakt expliciet wat lineaire teksten nog als huiswerk aan de hermeneutiek meegaven: het netwerk van zijn verwijzingen. Terwijl het lineaire schrift suggereert dat zijn ideeën homogeen georganiseerd zijn, maakt de elektronische tekst een coëxistentie van de meest uiteenlopende structuren mogelijk. Daarbij wordt duidelijk dat schrijven niets anders is dan een arrangement van taalkundige gestes: *How to do things with topics*. Dit schrijfspeel met formele structuren wordt in de *outline processing* voor het eerst technisch hanteerbaar (vgl. Bolter 15, 19, 95). Datzelfde is het geval voor leeswijzen en interpretaties. Het complete hermeneutische gehalte van een tekst is in de vertakkingsstructuur van zijn elektronische weergave manifest. *A hypertext system spells out the process of interpretation in an algorithm and embodies that process in a programming language* (Bolter 200).

De betekenis van een elektronische tekst is de manier waarop hij gebruikt wordt in de lectuur van het gegeven moment. Het *scripta manet* heeft zijn geldigheid verloren; de tekststructuren zijn kinetisch. En dat wil in concreto zeggen: elektronische literatuur bestaat alleen in real time. Het differentieële netwerk van de hypertext roept

dit juist niet het gevoel van het eeuwige te laat op dat kenmerkend is voor de literatuur, maar suggereert de immersie in het permanente heden van de tekstbeweging. *Bringing a desired bit of text or data into view always happens next* (NATO 51; vgl. Bolter 130, 198).

De kinetiek van elektronische literatuur fundeert een nieuw tekstbegrip, dat ruim genoeg is om alle digitaliseerbare data — wat wil zeggen: alle data — te omvatten. Inzoverre is de terminologische onbeslistheid tussen hypermedia en hypertext goed onderbouwd. De manipuleerbaarheid van iedere pixel maakt een bit-mapping mogelijk, waarin een beeld als (deel van een) tekst wordt behandeld. Bolter is zelfs van mening: *hypermedia is the revenge of text upon television* (Bolter 26, vgl. NATO 55). Computerprogramma's zijn immers teksten, die teksten lezen en schrijven zonder dat daaraan nog een auteur-subject kan worden toegeschreven. Dat fundeert een centrale karakteristieke eigenschap van hypermediale weergaven — ze zijn *selfauthoring texts* (Barrett xix).

Hier wordt literaire arbeid herkenbaar als collectief proces. Voor de eerste maal beginnen de technische hulpmiddelen beschikbaar te komen om de oude utopie te implementeren: het onderscheid tussen auteur en lezer op te heffen. Literatuur kan ontstaan wanneer users navigeren door een fictionele dataruimte die door hypertexten wordt opgetrokken — interactieve fictie. De computerspelen waar vaak om gemeesmuild wordt, bemoeilijken opzettelijk de navigatie naar een gewenst doel — dat maakt ze tot oefenterrein van een nieuwe literariteit. Want net als adventuregames bouwen ook hypertexten simulatiewerelden op, die men al lezend kan verkennen. Het verhaal ontstaat dan in de real time van de navigatie. Daarbij functioneert de storyspace als fictioneel docuverse — met ander woorden: schrijvers zijn enkel nog trail blazers in storyspace. Ook zij doen niets anders dan wat de gebruikers van hun programma's doen: kijken, lezen, navigeren, spelen. Daarin verdwijnt dan de vraag: *Wat is een auteur?*

vertaling ARJEN MULDER



commentaries, 'links' and variations similar to a palimpsest. Who is now to decide on important and junk information? Who is to filter the data into workability? Obviously Vannevar Bush's trail blazers. A re-registration of the workability of certain nodes and links i.e. a voting filter (...) based on relevance feedback from other users (Nielsen 141; cf. 188f) would also be implementable.



*

Most writers have made their semblance of peace with the computer as a word processor as it does not question the conventional concept of linear writing; simple search programmes, graphic abilities and text installation do not lead per se to the hypertext. What is more decisive is the non-linear structure of the complete text which must be explicit and easily modifiable. *The main distinctive utility of outliners is in being able to fold away lower levels of an outline, allowing a high-level view of the structural backbone of a document.* (Woodhead 30)



This difference criterion also allows a sober view of the so-called interactive television, virtual reality, electronic amusement parks and interactive science museums. For the more developed the corresponding computer programmes are, the more (preliminary) decisions they take on which are then presented in image form; they make the symbolic forgotten. The reader becomes the viewer; instead of reading he is immersed in an environment, succumbs to the suggestion of experiencing by perceiving. It becomes clear in the 'tour' metaphor that hypermedia are here again reduced to a sequential-linear structure. Guided tours are the work of Vannevar Bush's trail blazers; they offer 'superlinks', which do not simply combine two nodes but a whole 'string'. (cf. Bolter 98; Nielsen 127f)



Film metaphors, as already mentioned, make clear the non-linear structures of navigation in

the n-dimensional information sphere better than the guide and tour metaphors; they signalize links within and between documents, but they cannot depict references between various media. Even film metaphors fail with regard to the actual achievement of the hypertext: *to browse between media using a single delivery device.* (Woodhead 58)



One of the most simple forms of depicting a multi-stage arrangement and complexity within linear writing movements is the footnote. For this reason the simplest definition characterizes a hypertext as a generalized footnote. It does, indeed, form a network consisting of footnotes to footnotes. This can, however, no longer be meaningfully depicted in print media. Peripatetic reading takes the place of linear-sequential reading. Hypertext makes explicit that which linear writings still encumber hermeneutic work with: the network of its references. Whereas linear writing suggests that its ideas are homogeneously organized, the electronic text allows a coexistence of various structures. At the same time it becomes clear that writing is nothing other than an arrangement of linguistic gestures: How to do things with topics. This writing game with formal structures becomes technically manageable for the first time in *outline processing* (cf. Bolter 15,19,95). The same applies to reading matter and interpretation. The entire hermeneutic content of a text is manifest in the ramification structure of its electronic depiction. *A hypertext system spells out the process of interpretation in an algorithm and embodies that process in a programming language* (Bolter 200).



The significance of an electronic text is its use in the respective reading matter. The *scripta manet* no longer applies; the text structures are kinetic. And that simply means: electronic literature exists only in real time. The differential network

of the hypertext therefore does not produce the feeling of postponement and delay, but suggests immersion into a permanent present of text movement. *Bringing a desired bit of text of data into view always happens next* (NATO 51; cf. Bolter 130,198).



The kinetics of electronic literature justify a new text concept which goes far enough to comprise all digitalisable data — i.e. all data. The terminological undecidedness between hypermedia and hypertext is in this respect well-founded. The manipulatability of each pixel allows a bit-mapping in which an image is treated as (part of the) text. Bolter even thinks; *hypermedia is the revenge of text upon television* (Bolter 26; cf. NATO 55). Computer programmes are texts which read and write texts without it being possible to assign an author subject to them. This accounts for a central characteristic of hypermedial depictions — they are *self-authoring texts* (Barrett XIX).



Here literary work becomes discernible as a collective process. For the first time technical expedients are provided to implement the old utopia: to retract the difference between author and reader. Literature may arise when users navigate through a fictional data space, drawn up by hypertexts — interactive fiction. The much smiled-at computer games intentionally impede navigation to a desired goal — that makes them the exercitium of a new literature. For hypertexts build up simulation worlds just as adventure games do, and these can be explored by reading. The story always exists in the real time of navigation. At the same time the story space works as fictional docuverse — in other words: authors are merely trail blazers in story space. They too do nothing other than that which the users of their programmes do: see, read, navigate, play. The question *What is an author?* then becomes lost.

translation ANN THURSFIELD

E. BARRETT
Text, ConText and Hypertext
Cambridge, Ma. 1988

JAY DAVID BOLTER
Writing Space
Hillsdale 1991

VANNEVAR BUSH
'As we may think'
in: *Atlantic Monthly*
July 1945



Designing Hypermedia for Learning
NATO ASI Series, F 67

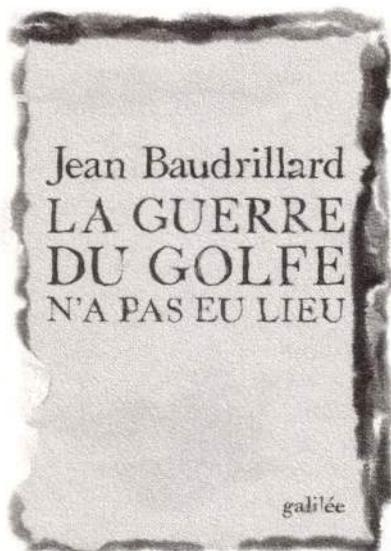
CLIFF MCKNIGHT,
ANDREW DILLON,
JOHN RICHARDSON
Hypertext in Context

TED NELSON
Dream Machines
—, *Literary Machines*
—, *The Xanadu Paradigm*

JACOB NIELSEN
Hypertext & Hypermedia

NIGEL WOODHEAD
Hypertext & Hypermedia





La Guerre du Golfe n'a pas eu lieu

JEAN BAUDRILLARD Éditions Galilée, Paris 1991, ISBN 2-7186-0395, French text, pp. 100, FF 65

by Arjen Mulder



The Gulf War was a conflict between a carpet merchant and a weapons manufacturer. Both followed a strategy which in view of their professions was clever and responsible, but one's had little to do with the other's. The carpet merchant first called as much attention as possible to his product and then started at the highest price possible, with the intention of arriving at a reasonable offer after extensive bartering. When no price was offered, he rolled up his carpet and left, in search of other bidders. The weapons magnate was looking for the most favourable publicity possible for his materials: the range of his advertising campaign as well as its impact had to be maximal, and the effect of the demonstrations so smashing that henceforth no one could ignore him. The Gulf War may, then, have been the first war which was dominated from beginning to end by the media; its two leading actors, Saddam Hussein and George Bush, or Iraq and the us, never communicated face to face. That's why nothing has changed in the region where the 'war' took place: the weapons supplier was unable to get anywhere with the carpet seller, and the carpet merchant didn't understand what the weapons industrialist was so excited about.

Therefore, this was not a war, according to Baudrillard. In a war there are two adversaries who have contact on at least one common level. But the us understood nothing of Saddam's symbolic provocations, and the fear the us tried to incite failed to come across in Iraq. When Desert Storm broke loose the Iraqis had nothing to put up against the us arms superiority. If one side can only be destroyed, as has now happened, and the other can only win, there is violent mass death, but not a war. So, in the

absence of a war, the information carriers simply hyped one on screen.

Baudrillard's book consists of three parts. The first is from early January 1991: *The Gulf War will not happen*. Here Baudrillard delivers another rather classical piece of Cold War thought. His ancient idea system is still functioning, without causing a stir: deterrence, blackmail, kidnapping, banality. At that time no one yet believed there would be war.

Once violence does break out, Baudrillard writes during February the piece, *Is the Gulf War really happening?* Here he makes various efforts to connect his idea system to the new situation. *This non-war is the continuation of the absence of politics with other methods. If this war is being fought for anything, it is to prove that war can still be fought.* The ideas keep working. *Does this war exist? You may wonder.* One side gets bombarded with smart and stupid bombs and disappears into the desert sand without ever having seen the enemy, the other side is showered with a bombardment of information, and is swept (or goes) along in a virtual war without adversaries. *Information is like a non-intelligent missile; it never hits its target (nor its anti-missile), it crashes down anywhere, or disappears into the void...* Information = war. The more instantaneously, the more 'live' an event is transmitted, the more it is packaged in information and the more inaccessible it becomes. *We're just watching a live broadcast in the hope that the event will overtake the information.* A vain hope in this case. The 'Gulf War' was a publicity stunt for the war, with the aim of creating a post-Cold War deterrent, by means of the virtual war: the one that can be seen on every screen.

And then the war was over. Baudrillard's recap, *The Gulf War did not happen*, is the most interesting part of the book (it is here that he develops the metaphor of non-communication between the carpet and weapons merchants). For the first time anger strikes in the idea system. The anger, remarkably, is aimed in two directions: on one hand at the war itself, which was a model war, a destruction programme against local populations with the goal of a unipolar deterrent balance; on the other, at the media-watchers, who just stay glued to the damn tube the whole time and thereby become accomplices to the mass murder. The old trusted ideas take on a new implications. We, Europeans, Westerners, have lost the event. We have lost all conviction, we, a bunch of stupid, irresponsible, 'really free', indifferent stimulation addicts. That's certainly different from ecstatic tales about the object strategies of silent majorities! Baudrillard is really beginning to worry. The Other is being chased out of the world through this sort of violence in the name of Democracy, Human Rights and the all-encompassing consensus that Order will soon prevail everywhere. New World Order, where nothing happens anymore, nothing exists anymore, nothing offers dedication or challenge anymore. The last thing offering resistance against this new order is, nota bene, Islam, but behind that lurk all cultural forms which continue to reject the

Western world. And no one knows who will win here. Yet where there is danger, salvation also grows; Baudrillard is now quoting Hölderlin, and translates this into his concerned hope: *The more the hegemony of the global consensus grows, the greater the risk — or the luck — that it will suddenly collapse.*

Baudrillard seems to have come to the conclusion that a choice must be made, now that the tension is mounting and the media are just riding along on the high of their own functioning. At the moment Baudrillard can be little more than a moralist in search of new ethics. The question with which he wrestled in the *Fatal Strategies* — whether the effects of obscenity (the media) and those of seduction are the same or whether they preclude one another — he appears to have definitively answered with 'preclude'. If a new morality appears, it will be antimodal and as positive value recognize only the Other, that which battles disillusionment and so salvages the charm of the world. The law of the New World Order says that everything which is singular and irreducible must be reduced and brought down. At the hour of simulation, the object to which Baudrillard defected long ago has proven not to consist of the silent majorities in front of the screen, but of all the barbarians out there who are at least a solution.

translation LAURA MARTZ

Oud / Old



Rumeurs, Le plus vieux média du monde

JEAN-NOËL KAPFERER Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1987, ISBN 2-02-012110-7, French text, pp 305

by Lex Wouterloot

Speed is the key word for the series of events which make up the Gulf War. The battle for a strip of costly desert ground is just barely over with and many who live in the modern media

have already forgotten what it was all about. There isn't much room for memory in the instant information era of CIA and CNN. We might almost be able to forget how disoriented the viewing

public was in the actual coordinate system of space and time of the contemporary media. The lack of live reporting could only be concealed with great difficulty, with advertising for superior weapon systems and expert commentary from above a sand box. The actual location of the fighting had become invisible and the home front was entertained with imposing images of a chronic advance.

After CNN's brief exercise in television diplomacy, the contact was broken off. Around the world, television viewers witnessed their medium's collapse, as it became old-fashioned radio. At their best, the broadcasts reminded one of the early days of tv, when only live studio takes were possible, due to the medium's technical limitations. There they were again, the talks and the panels of experts. The implosion of the media didn't stop there. Even in the US, as a consequence of the 'live vacuum' on CNN and the big networks, an increase in interest in the kind of solid information which the newspapers had always provided could be observed. A somewhat stodgy Dutch foreign affairs periodical attempted to profit from the falling-domino movement in the media with an advertisement that read: *Watching experts on tv? You can read them, too!*

This shift reminded me very much of the stories about the Second World War which I grew up with. Legend has it that the churches were full and that people had never read so much. You couldn't go out because of the curfew which the Germans had imposed, and, besides, outside of those churches, there was nothing to do and you had no money. The only thing you could do was read. A great deal of talking was done. The wildest rumours made the rounds: the Allies are already in Paris, we'll be liberated in two weeks! That's why oral culture suddenly revived during the Gulf War. In the cafes and the streets, there was only one subject of conversation: the war against Iraq. Once again, the wildest rumours made the rounds.

Everywhere, frightened consumers began hoarding. Supermarkets reported a greater demand for rice, canned goods and mineral water. In the south of France, there was a run on weapon stores. A not insignificant number of self-styled 'European' French citizens felt that they had to be capable of defending themselves against attacks which their Moslem neighbours in their apartment buildings might eventually have planned against them. Along the Cote d'Azur, fear spread that the area was within the range of Iraqi Scud missiles and was thus a potential target for Saddam Hussein. As a precautionary measure, in view of possible panic reactions and rumour-spreading, the test-sounding of the air raid sirens which had marked the noon hour on the first Monday of every month in Holland during the entire cold war was cancelled.

Rumours, once set in motion, are difficult to stop. This time, it was the electronic media themselves which had created the conditions for this oral exchange. The speed with which the image of the enemy had been created, the simultaneous blockage of information about the actual events and growing uncertainty about the scale of the conflict which was about to begin prompted the rise of frightening questions. The improbability of the rumours which had made the rounds is the least relevant thing. What gives food for thought is how a public which is informed about the technical qualities of weapons and naseam can become confused about the context in which those systems are applied. Only by participating oneself, by both word and deed, in some kind of comprehensible action, can one win back

one's self confidence, albeit, perhaps, at the cost of a potential pogrom.

During their sorties over Baghdad, the pilots of the Tornado bombers saw Bedouins with camels trekking through the desert; it was as if the progress of technology had left the world beneath them untouched. In an analogous way, the electronic media weren't able to stop the creation and spread of rumours. On the contrary, the information black-out restored the oldest medium in the world to honour and gave it every opportunity to function. The amazing thing is that so little is known about the rumours, which seem to have completely escaped the attention of the mass communication experts and media researchers. An exception to that rule is Jean-Noël Kapferer, the chairman of the French Association for the Advancement of the Study of Rumours. Among other things, this organisation has a telephone number with which people can report on rumours which are making the rounds. Through years of research, Kapferer has gathered an enormous amount of empirical material. Using this knowledge, he has written an introduction to the study of rumours.

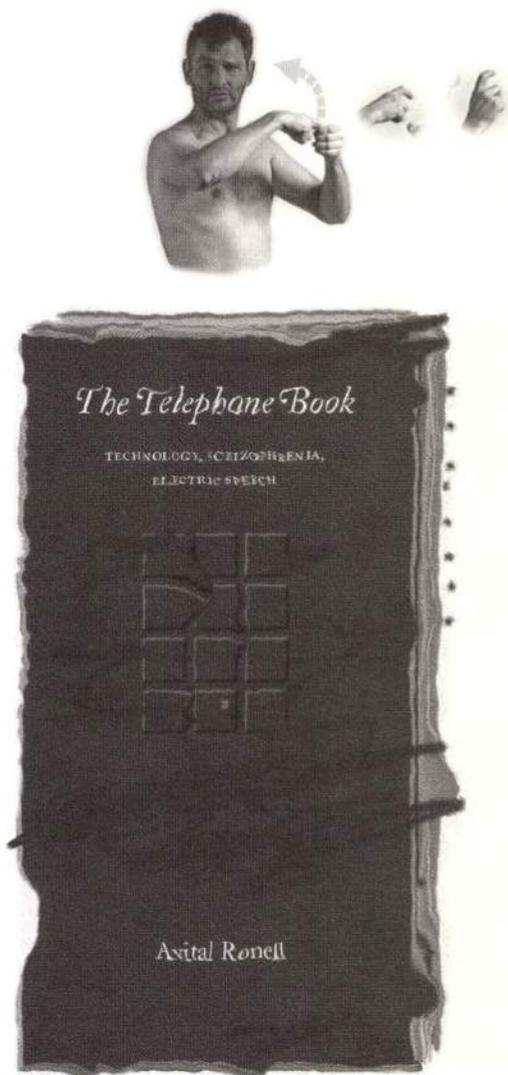
Kapferer's book begins with a theoretical exposé in which he demands that the rumour be accorded a full-fledged place as a medium. His stance is in opposition mainly to American authors who have studied rumour from the perspective of untruth and lies. In opposition to these researches, which are based on specific premises, Kapferer uses a naturalistic approach in which he attempts to answer the most elementary questions, as for example: Why do we believe a rumour? His hesitation to become lost in abstract analyses can be seen in the conciseness of the part of the book in which an interpretation is given of the meaning of rumours. One brief chapter bears the title: *The Hidden Message*. Kapferer is more at ease when dealing with the functioning of rumours with regard to crime, pop stars, the working environment, marketing, the stock market and politics. He refers to French examples, in the main. The fact that the book has already been translated into six languages shows that this does not form an obstacle for the reader who is not familiar with conditions in France.

The speed, unpredictability and intangibility of rumour are disturbing. This is the reason for doing research on rumour: in order to be able to control it. Initially, Kapferer resists this approach, because the desire for control deprives one of a view of the reality of the medium.

Kapferer is also unable to resist pressure to treat rumour from the perspective of social engineering. With the motto *Can one stop a rumour? (Eteindre)*, he treats upon methods such as the counter-rumour, denial, transformation of the image of a rumour. The effect of these techniques is precarious, however. Therefore, Kapferer ends with the recommendation: *prevention is best*. The sobriety with which he handles these practical questions makes *Rumeurs* an essential book for all who are employed in sectors for which rumour poses a threat.

For those who wish to oppose rumour in forming their own ideas, the book has an extensive bibliography. However: *Totally unfounded information can make the rounds in society just as easily as information with a basis in fact, and bring about the same effects. The moments of insight which emerge from studying rumour lead to an awareness of the fragility of the knowledge which we possess. A great deal of our knowledge may have no basis at all, without us being aware of it.*

translation JIM BOEKBINDER



The Telephone Book, Technology Schizophrenia Electric Speech

AVITAL RONELL University of Nebraska Press (pub), 1989, ISBN 0-8032-8938-3, English text, pp. 465

by Geert Lovink

Only the mentally disturbed pick up a telephone book as if it is a fascinating publication and begin to read. They undoubtedly manage to fish messages out of the streams of text. To them, the printed database is not a reference work, but a well of signals. Its functional use is reversed: the telephone book is no longer an aid in phoning someone up; we, intently reading, are phoned up ourselves. We do not disturb another, but get disturbed ourselves.

This twist, which is typical of any schizo-analysis, is the foundation of Avital Ronell's *Telephone Book*. Those who like to make connections can better put Ronell's book down. It provides scarcely a hard fact on the history of this technology. In contrast to German media theory à la Kassel, Ronell doesn't really contribute to the 'prehistory of technical media'. To her the telephone is not a communications weapon to be fired at the Other. *The Telephone Book* doesn't fit so well into the genre of narrative psychoanalysis on liaison officers who are merciless in their object choice (as described in Theweleit's *Buch der Könige* [Book of Kings]) or literati who experiment with new notation systems (as in Kittler). *The telephone resists any kind of smooth unfolding, interrupting as it does, screaming for immediate responses. It breaks up any hope for historical*

coherency or continuity because in a sense it has no history. To Ronell, the telephone is an *utterance we have to respond to*. She does not philosophize from the acting subject that picks up the handset and dials the desired number. In her ears telephoning is a *question of answerability*. Her question is, *what does it mean to answer the telephone?* She describes the *transcendental predicament of accepting a call*. By concerning herself with the passivity of the one who waits, who is taken by surprise from outside and comes into an unstable situation, she breaks with the myth of the exchange and dialogue which telecommunication claims to make possible. Attention can thus shift to the voices outside which come into contact with us against our will. We sharpen our ears and listen to the static on the line (that in the future, with ISDN-fiber optic technology, will probably disappear and be replaced by other random noise). *Static has this wonderful semantic range of meaning*, explains Ronell in an enlightening interview with the American magazine *Mondo* 2000. *Parasitic noise and random eruption has always been a constituent part of language but a part that's been kind of obliterated.*

Ronell's method is one of merciless deconstruction and disorientation. This goes back to the approach of Freud, who used

slips of the tongue and the ravings of hysterics as material to describe the 'normal' mental state. It is necessary to take a detour because we can never get the unconscious itself immediately on the line. The accidents generated by the machine of the unconscious are characteristic of the unconscious itself, in this logic. *The Telephone Book* offers no immediate way out and even strongly resists a simple, swift reading. The User's Manual warns. *The Telephone Book is going to resist you. Dealing with a logic and topos of the switchboard, it engages the destabilization of the addressee.* Building on Derrida's *Carte Postale* and the *Anti-Oedipus* of Deleuze/Guattari, Avital Ronell writes in a style that bears no resemblance to academic interpretations or rip-offs of French theory. To the mix of German quotes, statements with French sentence constructions and psychoanalytical terms, she adds a literary quality, which causes the reader to stumble over the final text. *There is no such thing as a free call.* Communication is a traumatic act — and readers of *The Telephone Book* will not soon forget it.

In the first section, philosopher/rector Heidegger gets a phone call in 1933 from the Storm Trooper Bureau, by which he is given to understand that he must give his (Jewish) teacher Husserl the push. Heidegger accepts the telephoned order and carries it out. Ronell takes this crucial moment in the history of philosophy as a starting point for her writing. Why did Heidegger accept this telephone conversation? Although the telephone is a black spot in his oeuvre, in *Being and Time* he does indeed write about the call: *If we analyze conscience more penetratingly, it is revealed as a call. Calling is a mode of discourse.* The conscience has a telephonic character for Heidegger. It is a voice that calls out of the blue.

In *What is Called Thinking?* Heidegger goes into this more deeply: *The call is precisely something which we ourselves have neither planned nor prepared for nor voluntarily performed, nor have we ever done so. 'It' calls, against our expectations and even against our will.* We are not so much required to see this 'outside' as a person who is calling to us: *The call undoubtedly does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes from me and yet from beyond me and over me.* Like the conscience, technology is swamping us: *man of himself cannot control it.* Seated at her switchboard Ronell sets up a conference call among the theorists S. Weber, Fynsk and Borch-Jacobsen in order to break open Heidegger's closed circuit. They bring the category of the Other into the game: *The relation to the Other is structured in terms of call and response.* The meeting with this Other is not noncommittal, but even violent in essence. It is accompanied by thrownness, fascination, vertigo, anxiety, guilt. The teleconference wonders how the Other undergoes this ('what' or 'who' undergoes this overwhelming, disappropriating experience of the Other as the source of its 'own' nullity?). Heidegger cannot switch over to the other side of the line, and thus cannot answer the question *In what sense is he/she/it the bearer of 'nullity'?*

As opposed to Heidegger's self-addressed envelope — *Dasein's collect call to itself* — Borch-Jacobsen sees the call as a gift that surpasses your initiative, *indebting and obliging you before you can undertake my decision.* Ronell does not present such different positions from Heidegger's in order to expose a fascist core in his thought. Like her tutor, Derrida, Ronell crawls into Heidegger's language and effortlessly interweaves his insights on the voice character of the conscience with quotes on the phony character of the other.

But then the connection gets broken, again and again. It is followed by a whole series of dots... long lines that look like morse code... white pages... inflated words... blocks of text torn down the

middle... The modernist typography asserts itself and ensures that the biophony (which Ronell wants to write) becomes audible. To make it perceptible that technology has 'being' in its grip, the *clausal sovereignty of the Book* must be cracked open. According to the manual, the idea is that *you will become sensitive to the switching on and off of interjected voices. Respond as you would to the telephone, for the call of the telephone is incessant and unremitting. When you hang up, it does not disappear but goes into remission. This constitutes its Dasein. There is no off switch to the technological.* The design of this book is decidedly unctemporary. It stays away from the fashion of the (esthetic) visual presentation of the text and the deformations which have become possible through modern digital manipulation techniques. The composition remains noticeably close to the text and, strictly speaking, functions to support the content. The reader who manages to keep his/her mind on the text is already making so many strange leaps into the dark, that the unconventional design, strangely enough, is not distracting. So fused together are content and form.

The *speculative telephonics* which Ronell practices *somewhere between science, poesy and thinking* does not view the telephone in a technical sense, as a network of wires and radio links. The linear lines which would suggest a chronology do not come close to approaching the phenomenon telephone. We can better call her writing pure media philosophy which has no object and seeks none. The telephone has no identity. *Is it an object? Is it an artwork? Is it a replicant or some sort of celestial monstrosity to a voice that's absent, a disembodied voice, a godlike intrusion?* Neither is it a machine, according to Ronell, *for it is at times 'live'.* Rather, it constitutes part of a *technosphere*, in which the objects are interchangeable interfaces that get eliminated in thought. *I'm less interested in the instrumentality or 'tool-ness' of mediatic incursions than in the relation to a hallucinated exteriority that these reflect, the place where the distinction between interiority and exteriority is radically suspended and where this phantasmic opposition is opened up.* Ronell explains in the *Mondo 2000* interview.¹

As *trophy for a forgotten instinct* the telephone affords us access to the *dark continent*. It flirts with the life/death opposition and receives the *voice of an absent person*. The most susceptible to this quality of telephoning is the schizo, the *demonic operator* who can connect with everything. Ronell rereads Freud, Jung and Laing for the telephonic content of their psychoanalyses and deals with the case of Miss St., who interpreted her voices as *invisible telephones*.

This black reading of the dark side of communication is in stark contrast to the white transparency which Baudrillard attributes to the slick, operational surface of the obscene media. *I only have to pick up the telephone, he writes in his Fatal Strategies, and there it is, the whole marginal net grabs onto me, beleaguers me. Finally I no longer know what I want, so saturated is space, so great is the pressure of everything which wants to make itself understood.* The 'ecstasy of communication' the media are now in has no dark side for Baudrillard. His emphasis on 'total connectivity' leads to totally different conclusions than Ronell's 'will to rupture' which pushes forward disconnection as a constituent property. We can descry no voices in Baudrillard's emptiness. Heidegger's *speaking is listening to the language which we speak*; Ronell embroiders on this and makes telephoning an introverted and repetitive activity (*we say again the saying we have heard*). One might rightly wonder to what degree the telephone can be counted as part of 'the media'. It is often not listed along with other media — and it is not only in Heidegger so. *The telephone surpasses the calculus of technological representations.* The babble-machine has such an a priori character that *as a part of the building site, the way cables have to be fitted and*



1 GARY WOLF, 'Avital Ronell on Hallucinogenes' in: *Mondo 2000* no.4, Berkeley CA 1991, p.63—69.

ditches dug prior to any construction, the telephone is inserted too deeply within the oeuvre to be laid on the surface lines.

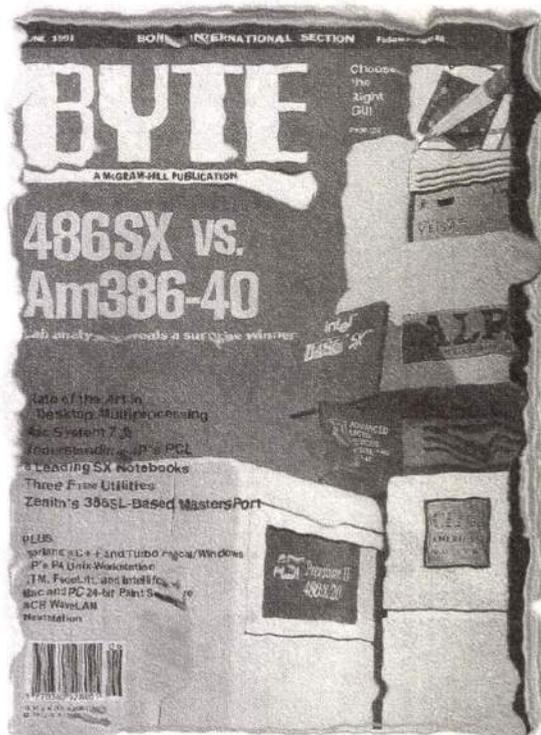
The second part of *The Telephone Book* deals with the birth of the telephone, without lapsing into historical writing. As in the case of the philosophy and psychoanalysis discussed, we are required to be informed in advance about Alexander Graham Bell's family perils and his painstaking preparations, and then let ourselves be carried along through Ronell's schizo-version of the first telephone sessions. The logistic male couple of Watson and Bell is exceptionally accommodating when it comes to an occult explanation of the telephonic phenomenon. The baby they bring into the world is in accordance with Ronell's introverted technical opinion, for them above all a private affair, which has nothing to do with secret commercial or military objectives. *Watson may have been the first convinced person actually to listen to noise.* The electric speech which they were the first to listen to was a natural continuation for both of the previous medium, the dancing table,

and hypnotized the public, which included many schizos who were called up by the telephone to come over (*The telephone calls the callers*).

It is in this segment on the 'invisible mouthpiece' that *The Telephone Book* really gets going; the typography goes crazy, blurs, shifts, sets down crooked blocks, prints sentences on top of each other, compresses and rips lines apart. *The art of telephony* (Watson) finally precipitates in a text which desires to reach no one, disturbed by noise and misunderstandings. Schizo-analysis has now definitively taken the place of philosophy — a statement which comes across in the beginning as theoretical, but towards the end is converted into truly random text and takes you along on a dizzying trip through the noise. Until you hang up the receiver. The first telephonists found it difficult to hang up. They often forgot to put down the phone. The same happens to the reader of Ronell's *Telephone Book*.

translation LAURA MARTZ

Vooruitgang / Progress



Byte

volume 16, no. 6, June 1991, FRED LANGA (ed) McGraw-Hill (pub), us 1991, subscription rate \$29.95 per year

by Paul Groot

The 486sx versus the Am386-40 lab analysis has revealed a surprise winner. In anticipation of the hot news planned for

August about the new, version 5.0 of MS DOS, Byte's June news this time gives us an exciting analysis of the Intel-cpu-486,

which — surprise! — delivers an inferior performance to the older and cheaper 40-MHZ AMD 386!

There is no more exciting reading than *Byte*, the slightly more elitist competitor to *PC Magazine*, consumer guide to the development of the latest things in PCs. A manual for all our secret wishes and never-to-be-fulfilled desires.

What could be more exciting than a first glance into an even more revolutionary *Windows* program, with an even more colourful and classical choice of letters, with sure enough a 4-dimensional spread sheet graphic program that connects *stepwise discriminant analysis* with *survival analysis* and *Taguchi experimental design*?

Can you really imagine ever having lived without the scanner and the printer, without the LAN and the WAN, without PASCAL and C++, without Notebooks and Palmtops, without the AIX Alternative? If anyone on the editorial staff of *Byte* can, it's Hugh Kenner. Kenner is the only one in this company of digital junkies who can give you the feeling, after reading the sometimes more than 500 pages-worth of monthly instalments, that the world of yesterday still exists. His column usually appears at the back of the magazine. It is a moment of sanity after the market of *project analyses*, *states of the arts*, features, reviews and others, vying for attention in a strange mixture of neophilia, curiosity, the drive to consume, and desperately scraped-

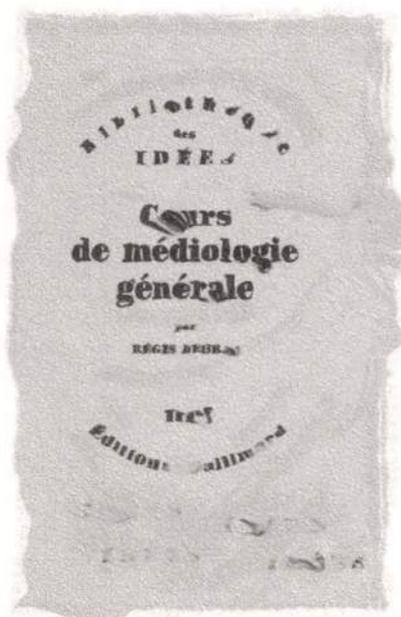
together technical innovations. Kenner is an old acquaintance of mine, an extremely unconventional literary theorist who brought Samuel Beckett and the bicycle onto one conceptual level and forged them into a new coalition. There is no one who better succeeds in tracing the Celtic influences in the work of the classical Irish writers.

What he does here in *Byte* hardly differs from his work in literary criticism. He now unleashes his skilful letter play on the numbermasters. In the July issue he talks about the dazzling life of the Indian autodidact Ramanujan, who by chance got his hands on G. S. Carr's *Synopsis of Elementary Results in Pure and Applied Mathematics* at the age of sixteen and understood its contents as if by intuition, wrote its writer a letter, suggested some additions and improvements, and was invited to England to expound on his ideas. A perfect moral tale for the not-so-bright guy who imagines himself something of a Ramanujan in his computer world. The master of free interpretation, of the literary *spielerei*, amidst the computer junkies who make up the audience for his narratives nowadays.

With Kenner as your guide, you can read *Byte* as an abandoned variant on the literary tradition of the avant-garde of the first half of our century, and the jargon of the computer world as bearer of a stray literary code.

translation LAURA MARTZ

Frankrijk / France

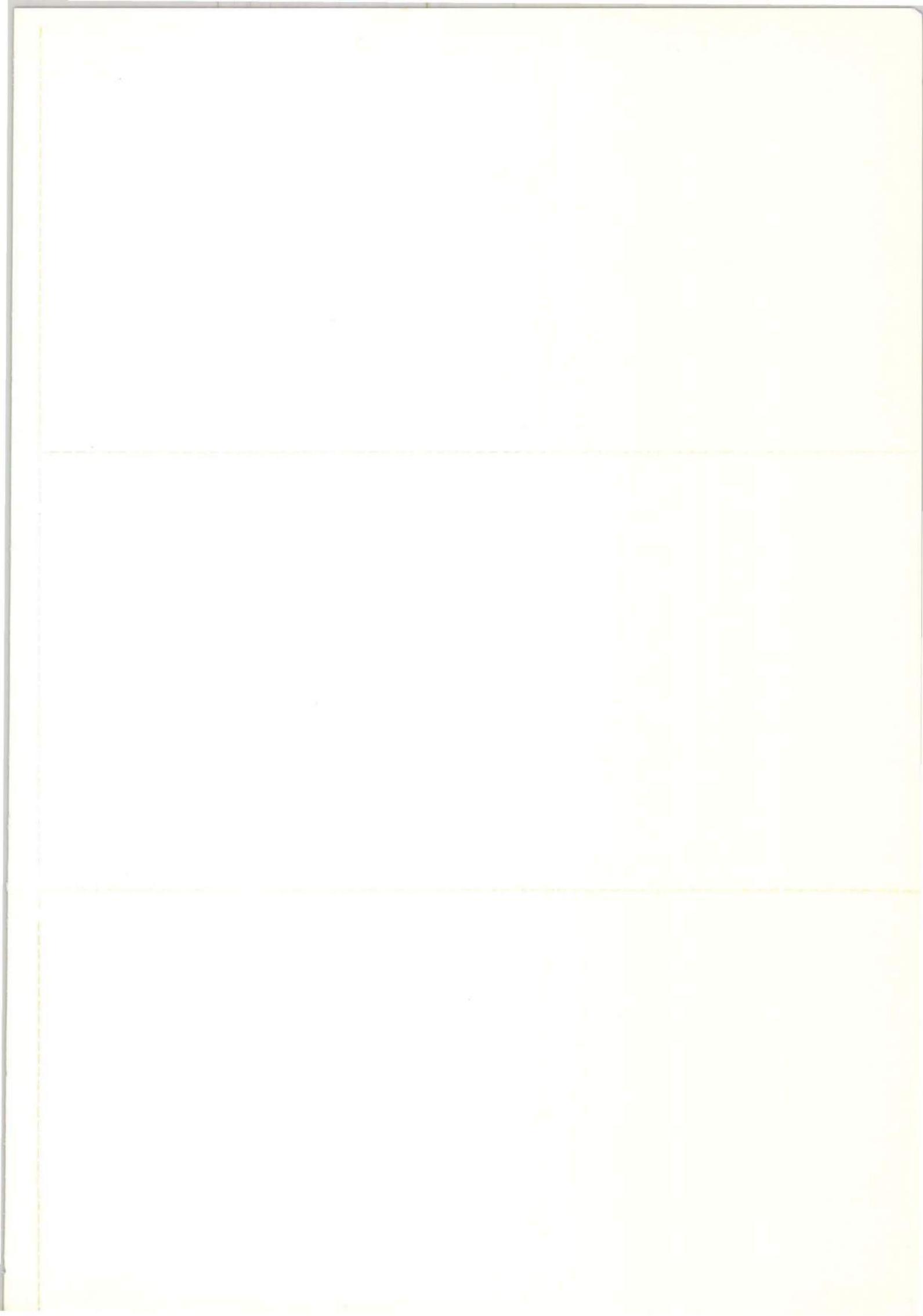


Cours de Médiologie Générale

RÉGIS DEBRAY Éditions Gallimard, Paris 1991, ISBN 2-07-072292-9, French text, pp. 395, FF120

by Lex Wouterloot





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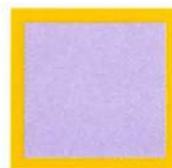
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STICHTING MEDIAMATIC

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The cost of re-inventing things which have already been invented is impossible to calculate. In the business world, where research is not repetitive and free of obligations, but, rather, lays the foundation for claims to future segments of the market, only the strictest standards of efficiency can be applied. On the other hand, chances for large numbers of people of personally inventing the wheel lay the foundation for scientific development which culminates in the race for patents. The difficulties which entrepreneurs occasionally have with the educational system being a refuge where one can be shamelessly mistaken about the evident and amaze with that which is already known has its origins partially in a narrow view of culture. For example, outside of the world of technology, Cervantes' *Don Quixote* proves that the greatest masterpiece of a decadent genre can come from the last of its followers.

This misunderstanding regarding the suffocating drive for originality was evident in the heading of the review of *Cours de Médiologie Générale* in *Le Monde*. Not without irony, the statement was made that Régis Debray had been understood by McLuhan. Understanding media is quite a job and without referring to the voluminous literature which has been written about this area, an intellectual doesn't get very far. Striking in this regard is the infrequency with which this series of lectures published in book form refers to American literature. Not to mention contemporary German theory. To put the whole thing more crassly: the French have the habit of considering the world an internal, national affair, and thus find French sources to be quite logically the most reliable source of information about it. Perhaps, thematically, Debray is secretly taken with McLuhan, but shows absolutely no signs of any aspirations to the role of media-scientific oracle. It would be more fitting to raise the name of Comte, because it is in the footsteps of the 'inventor' of sociology that Debray wishes to follow. And then certainly not in order to wind up as the nutty founder of a contemporary variation of the Positivistic Church with which Comte spoiled his biography.

While it may have already happened in other languages, it's for a French audience which Debray marks out the domain of a new scientific discipline: mediology. Mediological science stands in relation to ideology as ecology does to economy. Debray uses the inadequacy of four disciplines which are French par excellence, i.e., epistemology, semiology, archeology (as meant by Foucault) and the history of mentality, to defend the claim that a new science is necessary in order to study the material conditions necessary for ideology. Subsequently, he takes issue with four of what he calls misconceptions, which form a hindrance to thinking about media: dualism, spiritualism, humanism and individualism. The tour de force with which he attempts to validate his claims is an analysis of the success of the message of Christianity, namely, by showing through which mediations an idea becomes a force (*par quelles médiations une idée devient une force*).

Christianity has, in a certain sense, gotten ahead of its own success by having incorporated the driving force behind its expansion. It is this reflection of the medium in the message itself which makes Christianity the obligatory approach of our discipline. This careful pre-prepare of Christianity as the medial religion par excellence may be ingenious, but seems to me to be a refined form of ethnocentrism. The 'physics of social thought' becomes more convincing when it attempts to leave speculation behind and to demonstrate the revolution in social relationships which is a consequence of the gradual dematerialisation of the bearers of

media, from the clay tablet to CD-ROM. In order to make a periodising of the media possible he introduces the concept 'mediasphere', which is what the concept 'environment' is within ecology. Entirely in the spirit of Comte, Debray distinguishes three periods in the development of media, since the invention of writing: the logosphere, the graphosphere and the videosphere. Debray describes socialism as an aspect of the graphosphere: a medial ecosystem that is borne by typography, printers, books.

If we apply Debray's mediological three-phase system to his own book, we are forced to conclude that what is happening here actually amounts to a counter-revolution within the media revolution. The book is already a medium from a bygone epoch and the lecture can certainly be called that. Debray exhibits a certain preference for anachronism. In any case, a quote of Giuseppe Verdi's which he uses is applicable to his own medium: *Let's concentrate on the past, that will be a great step forward.* This fostering of an obsolete medium seems to take on ironic features as he mirrors himself in the example of sociology. In the French national tradition, this discipline was developed by Durkheim into a theoretical framework for the civic science taught by teachers in public schools. Debray attempts to follow in this tradition as he makes a subject out of *médiologie civique*.

Irony and pathos mingle in Debray's style. Sometimes that can irritate, when the language barrier forms an intellectual horizon as well and erudition refers mainly to the French tradition. This is even true of the clever media-interpretation of Christianity in which the reformation becomes a historical trifle in the light of the millennia-encompassing history of the Roman Catholic church. He hasn't understood very much about American protestantism, let alone the success of the TV evangelists. And one looks in vain for an answer to the question of how the multimedia-regime of Nazism should be interpreted. In this respect, it doesn't distinguish itself from the various sociological traditions.

We don't do justice to the quality of the *Cours de Médiologie Générale* by judging it only as the work of the founder of a new science. The book has the character of an introduction to the problems dealt with by mediology. The cycle of lectures was meant for an audience of students. This educational intent has been preserved and is felt clearly in the text. At the same time, each chapter is an intellectual tour de force: a monograph and a thought experiment at once. As Debray says himself, it's not necessary to follow the entire course. Only when placed outside the institutional relations of education and science can justice be done to the book's content. Only the countenance of a number of splendid essays on Christian theology and the medial power base of the Church of Rome is disfigured by its French imprint.

No less fascinating is the polemic against the political spirit of 'the imagination in power', under the motto: *Est-il vrai que les idées mènent le monde?* This is no tasteless post-communist conversion pitch. I sincerely recommend his lecture about socialism as a mediological ecosystem of the printed word to those who wish to legitimate a definitive break with the worker's movement. Equally to be recommended is the history of censorship which Debray writes without any shame for a materialistic approach, because *la médiologie voudrait étudier les rapports d'interaction unissant les faits symboliques et un milieu matériel technique*. His principally historical approach in which the dogma of dialectics is absent is also non-contemporary. Yet another reason to look forward with interest to the sequel to this cycle of lectures.

translation JIM BOEKBINDER



Zwart / Black



IF Comix Mental

GRAHAM HARWOOD, Working Press (pub) London 1991, English text, pp. 40 + record + A2 poster, £4.50

by Richard Wright

Presented as *Britain's first computer generated comic*, *IF Comix — Mental* announces its central theme on its inside page with the caption *This comic is based on the lack of an original idea...*

Appropriately enough, a magazine produced using a machine that spends most of its time rearranging information created by other means was made by Graham Harwood, one of the 'original' organizers of the *Festival of Plagiarism*, a huge series of 'anti-art' events held in and around London in early 1987.

This is the third issue of *IF Comix*, the previous two containing a similar polemical thrust. Post-Situ references, collaged imagery and varying degrees of digital post-processing. The first thing you notice about this latest issue, however, is its distinctive 'look'. It is a look that succeeds in breaking away from what was the increasingly predictable style of counter-culture work, with its wood-cut graphics and heavy, moody typefaces. In *Mental*, every picture appears to be cut out of sheets of anodized steel, with hard and crispy tones, simplified in some places but greatly detailed in others and frequently broken up by sharp horizontal bands that slice up the image. The metallic appearance is not like the usual look of pristine computer shaded geometries, but more as though the drawings have been etched or burnt into steel plates, leaving tarnishes and rivulets of molten metal.

These effects have been achieved with image processing software, developed by Graham himself, and applied to the images once they have been scanned or video-grabbed into his computer. Nearly all the artwork is culled from non-original sources, scanned in and processed into a single style — sharp and glistening, but also gritty and even dirty looking, just like the cyberpunk juxtaposition of high tech and low life.

It's about the Gulf War and technology and the metallic look suited that, says Graham. *Also, cyberpunk never really had an aesthetic of its own, and I wanted to produce a style for it that fit the present. I wanted it to look like the images were pressed out of steel, stark and hard.* The comic tells the story of a working class fighter pilot in a Gulf War-type scenario, but with the text mainly pieced together from documents like Marks & Spencer sales promotions, British Petroleum handouts and news broadcasts. Included with the comic is an A2 poster and a 45 record, composed by sampling and collaging sounds and dialogues from war and sci-fi films and CNN reports, *.. but it's still danceable*, says Graham.

Graham's approach is normally found under the category of 'cultural activist', and the anti-art component of his work has revolved around opposition to art-centred notions of genius,

Mental

originality and authenticity. *IF Comix* — *Mental* is printed as a 'limited edition' of 1500 copies, but each copy comes with its own license agreement containing such stipulations as prohibiting the licensee from showing their copy of *Mental* to anyone else without the prior agreement of Harwood himself. However, the only indication of each copy's uniqueness is a copy number printed on the license agreement itself, which is then posted back to the publishers. *The licensee is allowed to make 'back-up' copies of the comic, like it was a piece of software, but if they transfer the comic to anyone else they have to burn any copies they made as well.*

For most cultural activists working on the political margins of art and culture, magazines and pamphlets have always been an important channel of expression and opposition. Now the comic book form is proving itself a particularly flexible way for independent producers to make themselves seen and heard. Since the mid 1980s, commercial comics have made important advances in leaving their 'kids-only' reputation behind and finding new 'serious' readerships. With these new extended markets and the graphic possibilities of combining image and text, comics offer a medium able to operate as an individual means of 'art-like' expression, but also able to take advantage of its function as a reproduced commercial commodity.

Considering that Graham has had previous project work censored and confiscated from public art galleries, independently produced comics provide an artist with unparalleled freedom. The same commercial pressures that compel art curators to compromise can prove unexpectedly liberating in the commercial media sector where the only stipulation is to sell. *I can do whatever I like in comics,* says Graham, *it's an escape from art to a wider audience and I'm independent of publishers and distributors.* (Some years ago Graham helped set up the Working Press to support publications dealing with working class culture). *You know I see art as a class practice in the UK, but comics work in a wider cultural context.* Comics like *IF* sell from comic shops and bookshops as well as art gallery shops. Graham bases his production around an IBM PC, the PageMaker layout package and image processing software that he learnt to write while on a part-time arts course at City of London Polytechnic. *It's all done on cheap and accessible technology. The PC costs about £1,700 and it cost me about £2,500 to print 1500 copies of the comic.*

A lot of Graham's source imagery comes from the comic strips of his youth — the *Eagle* comic, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Dr. Who*. *It's partly an attempt to reclaim my boyhood culture. The aim is to rework my culture anew, for myself and for others.* He goes on to explain, *after the loss of Marxism, there's no alternative to capitalism. People say but now there's only capitalism, capitalism has won. So there's no resistance to the dominant culture.*

The battle for visibility in mass culture, for submerged forms to develop and reassert themselves, is an area in which new opportunities are emerging. The old forms of marginal and working class culture and the like will not survive unchanged, but new avenues into cultural production, many coming from non-art directions like new technologies or practices like scratch and plagiarism can by-pass the more class conscious side of arts training and the associated cultural and intellectual baggage. The challenge for these new 'cultural workers' now is not just to throw up new aesthetics and reappropriate cultural forms, but to evolve subject matter which is neither art based nor propagandist, but relevant and polemical, and at the same time accessible and even entertaining.





film festival

21st rotterdam

january 23 - february 2 1992

- het 21e film festival rotterdam
- 11 winterse dagen en nachten
- 200 films en video's
- uit 4 windstreken
- 500 gasten
- 100 talkshows
- the limits of liberty
- cinema narcissus
- alternative dimensions
- south



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telex 21378 filmf.nl
fax +31(0) - 4135132

Agenda / Diary



edited by ariane seydel

The next Mediamatic calendar will run from March till June 1992. Please send your info before 1 February 1992 to: Mediamatic, Postbus 17490, 1001 jl Amsterdam, the Netherlands, or fax to +31 (0)20 263 793. Thank you.

BELGIUM

Antwerpen 15 Sep - 15 Dec
marcel duchamp, retrospective.
galerie ronny van de velde,
IJzerenpoortkaai 3, tel.03 2163047

Antwerpen 19 Nov - 11 Jan
man ray, exhibition of
photographs of Marcel Duchamp
and his work. fnac, contact: ronny
van de velde, tel.03 2163047

Brussels 21 Nov - 11 Jan
hannah collins. xavier hefken,
Sint-Gillis kerkstraat 65,
tel.02 5370933

CANADA

Toronto 15 Nov- 5 Jan
colin campbell, media works 1972-
1990. the power plant, 231 Queen's
Quay West, tel.416 9734949

Toronto 15 Nov- 5 Jan
claudio philippe benoit, *interieur*,
jour, large format photography.
the power plant, 231 Queen's
Quay West, tel.416 9734949

Toronto 15 Nov- 5 Jan
ilya kabakov/john scott,
exhibition. the power plant,
231 Queen's Quay West,
tel.416 9734949

FINLAND

Helsinki 3 -26 April
MuuMedia Festival, film and video
screenings, installations,
deminard, workshops. contact: av-
arkki, Annankatu 13 b,
tel.3580 605191

FRANCE

Agen April
Video Creation Festival,
cinevision, Contact mr Lafitte
dominique, L'Hoste Estillac, 47
310 Laplume

Beaufortain 6 - 9 Jan
Olympiades de la création vidéo
télévision locale, video art
competition. association
d'animation du beaufortain, Place
de la Mairie, tel.33 79383390

Paris 27 Nov - 27 Jan
max ernst, retrospective. musee
national d'art moderne centre
georges pompidou.

Paris 10 Dec - 27 Jan
gisèle freund, *Itinéraires*. musee
national d'art moderne centre
georges pompidou.

GERMANY

Berlin 13 - 24 Feb 1992
5 Video Fest, international video
festival. medienoperative berlin
e.v., Potsdamerstr 96,
tel.030 2628714

Bremen 24 Nov - 14 Jan
From the museum of memory
towards the personal observatory,
installations by
Hooykaas/Stansfield. galerie katrin
rabus, Plantage 13, tel.0421 356568

Düsseldorf 28 Nov - 26 Feb
renato guttuso, exhibition.
kunstmuseum düsseldorf im
ehrenhof, tel.0211 8992460

Marl 24 Nov - 19 Jan
cork marcheschi, *energetische*
plastik. skulpturenmuseum
glaskasten, Creiler Platz, Rathaus,
tel.02365 105287

Oberhausen 30 April - 6 May
38. Internationalen Kurzfilmtage
Oberhausen, film and videofestival.
Christian-Stegerstraße 10,
tel.807008

GREAT BRITAIN

Bristol 30 Nov - 12 Jan
The circular dance, exhibition by
Asian woman artists working in
Britain. arnolfini gallery, 16 Narrow
Quay, tel.0272 299191



Bristol 18 Jan - 23 Feb
annette messenger, multi-media
work. arnolfini gallery, 16 Narrow
Quay, tel.0272 299191

Bristol 23 May - 28 June
Outer Space, photo-based
installations. arnolfini gallery, 16
Narrow Quay, tel.0272 299191

London 31 Jan - 7 Feb
BP Expo 92, international film and
videofestival. contact: riverside
studios, Crisp Road,
Hammersmith, tel.081 7412251

NETHERLANDS

Amsterdam 7 Nov - 9 Feb
In het licht van de fotografie, dutch
theatre photography till 1940,
nederlands theater instituut,
herengracht 168, tel.020 6235104

Amsterdam 15 Nov - 5 Jan
rini hurkmans, *Current Events*,
exhibition. stedelijk museum,
Paulus Potterstraat 13,
tel.020 5732911

Amsterdam 22 Nov - 18 Jan
Centrale IV, tim brennan. w139,
Warmoesstraat 139, tel.020 6229434

Amsterdam 23 Nov - 6 Jan
Parler Femme, elise tak, christer
hennix, lena tuzzolino, renée kool.
museum fodor, Keizersgracht 609,
tel.020 6249919

Amsterdam 30 Nov - 31 Dec
winifred evers, exhibition. torch,
contemporary pictures,
Prinsengracht 218, tel.020 6260284

Amsterdam December
Wim Liebrand. galerie rené coelho
- montevideo, Singel 137,
tel.020 6237101

Amsterdam 8 - 31 Dec
Jorge Luis Borges, exhibition.
institute of contemporary art.
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 16,
tel.020 6201260

Amsterdam 8 Dec - 9 Feb
Wanderlieder, exhibition of wall-
paintings and installations.
stedelijk museum, Paulus
Potterstraat 13, tel.020 5732911

Amsterdam 10 - 28 Dec
martin spanjaard, *Adelbrecht*.
galerie rené coelho - montevideo,
Singel 137, tel.020 6237101

Amsterdam January
sket, *caris*. galerie rené coelho -
montevideo, Singel 137,
tel.020 6237101

Amsterdam 18 Jan - 29 Feb
To be happy in Amsterdam,
exhibition by ben. reflex modern
art gallery, Weteringschans 83

Amsterdam 18 Jan - 16 Feb
Signalen I, exhibition with a.o.
manel esparbe gasca, rene daniels,
eric duyckaerts, joost van toorn.
institute of contemporary art.
Nieuwe Spiegelstraat 16,
tel.020 6201260

Amsterdam 18 Jan - 23 Feb
ulisses carrion *Other Books and So*,
books video works, media projects
museum fodor, Keizersgracht 609,
tel.020 6249919

Arnhem 24 Nov - 5 Jan
henck van dijck, exhibition.
gemeentemuseum,
Utrechtseweg 87, tel.085 512431

Delft 9 Nov - 26 Jan
Schräg/Tegendraads, group-
exhibition contemporary Dutch
Art. stedelijk museum het
prinsenhof, St Agathaplein 1,
tel.015 602358

Den Haag 26 Nov - 19 Jan
Rhizome, group-exhibition. haags
gemeente museum,
Stadhouderslaan 41, tel.070 3381111

Den Haag 29 Nov - 26 Jan
hamish fulton, installation. haags
gemeente museum,
Stadhouderslaan 41, tel.070 3381111



Museum FODOR 18 januari t/m 23 februari

ULISES CARRIÓN

Other Books and So

Artists' books, video works, media projects

publicatie: *Ulises Carrión, 'We have won! Haven't we?'*
edited by Guy Schraenen, information 020 - 6249919

Museum Fodor, Keizersgracht 609, 1017 DS Amsterdam, dagelijks van 11 tot 17 uur

Den Haag 30 Nov - 26 Jan

Ars Usu, group-exhibition. haags gemeente museum, Stadhouderslaan 41, tel.070 3381111

Den Haag 11 Dec - 19 Jan

maria vedder, video-installation. het kijkhuis, Noordeinde 140, tel.070 3644805

Den Haag 15 Dec - 19 Jan

rien monshouwer, installation. stichting archief, Huygenstraat 11, tel.070 3886082

Den Haag 7 - 12 April

World Wide Video Festival. het kijkhuis, Noordeinde 140, tel.070 3644805

Eindhoven 23 Nov - 12 Jan

juan muñoz, sculptures, installations, drawings. stedelijk van abbemuseum, Bilderdijklaan 10, tel.040 387319

Groningen 8 Dec - 9 Feb 1992

Africa Now, contemporary african art, scale models of architecture, paintings, drawings and sculptures. groningen museum, Praediniussingel 59, tel.050 183343

Rotterdam 16 Nov - 22 Dec

thomas lenden, installations. perspectief, Eendrachtsweg 21, Tel.010 4780655

Rotterdam 7 Dec - 26 Jan

john ahearn & rigoberto torres, *The South Bronx Hall of Fame*. witte de with, witte de withstraat 50, tel.010 4110144

Rotterdam Jan - Dec

antoni muntadas, *C.E.E.-Project*. witte de with, witte de withstraat 50, tel.010 4110144

Rotterdam 13 Jan

paul hosek and armand perrenet, film and video screenings. zaal de unie, Mauritsweg 34, contact: Rotterdamse Kunststichting, tel.010 4141666

Rotterdam 23 Jan - 2 Feb

film festival rotterdam with the limits of liberty, cinema narcissus, alternative dimensions, south p.o.box 21696 3001 ar rotterdam 010 - 4118080

Rotterdam 10 Feb

ineke smits, noud heerkens, film and video screenings. zaal de unie, Mauritsweg 34, contact: Rotterdamse Kunststichting, tel.010 4141666

POLAND

Wroclaw 4 - 8 Dec

3rd Sound Basis Visual Art Festival. contact: sound basis Visual art festival, 54- 136 Wroclaw 16, p.o.box 1385, tel. 48 241037549

SPAIN

Barcelona Nov - Feb

bruce nauman. espai pobleuou, Ptge. Sala Drigas 5-9, tel.4851909

Sevilla April 1991

Imago, Fin de siecle in Dutch contemporary Art. as part of the world exhibition EXPO'92.

Valencia 21 Nov - 6 Jan

john heartfield. ivam cedntre gulo gonzalez, Guillem de Castro 118, tel.3863000

SWITZERLAND

Zürich 1 Nov - 26 Jan

Visionäre Schweiz, utopian visions in art. kunsthaus zürich, Heimplats 1, tel.01 2516755

Zürich 22 Nov - Feb

Dada Global, exhibition. kunsthaus zürich, Heimplats 1, tel.01 2516755

Zürich 8 Dec - 5 Jan

Kunstszen Zürich, video installations, performances, symposium, exhibition. kunsthaus zürich, Heimplats 1, tel.01 2516755

UNITED STATES

Houston 7 March - 5 April

Fotofest'92, photography festival, focuses on Latin America and Europe. george r. brown convention center, contact:tel.713 8409711

Pittsburg 19 Oct - 15 Feb

Carnegie International. carnegie artmuseum, 4400 Forbes Avenue, Oakland

New York 15 - 26 January

From Object to Subject, documents and documentaries from the Woman's movement. whitney museum of american art, 945 Madison Avenue, tel.212 5700537

New York March

alexis smith, multimedia works. whitney museum of american art, 945 Madison Avenue, tel.212 5700537

New York 23 Jan - 19 April

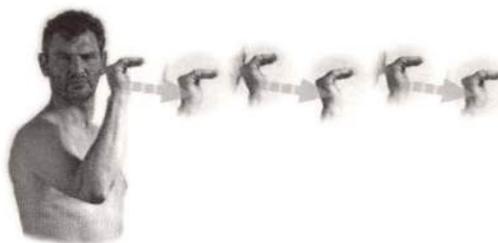
william wegman, retrospective, including videotapes, drawings, photographs and paintings. whitney museum of american art, 945 Madison Avenue, tel.212 5700537

Stamford 7 Feb - 8 April

Immaterial Objects, works by 14 artists who sought new definitions of the art object by experimenting with light, sound, video. whitney museum at champion of american art One Champion Plaza Atlantic Street and Tresser Blvd., tel.203 3587630



Informatie / Information



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ZETWERK/TYPE-SETTING

Letter & Lijn, Groningen.

DRUK/PRINTING

Drukkerij Giethoorn, Meppel.

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Great Britain: Central Books,

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Spain: NOA NOA Llibres d'Art,

Barcelona 93-258 8906

Germany: 235 Video,

Cologne 0221-523 828

Australia: Manic Ex-Poseur Melbourne,

Vic. 03-429 1915

USA: Bernhard DeBoer,

Nutley, New Jersey 201 667-9300

ABONNEMENTEN

4 nummers / issues:

Nederland/België:

particulieren f 50,- instellingen/bedrijven f
65,-

Maak dit bedrag over op giro 4412210 t.n.v.
Mediamatic Amsterdam.

Abonnementen kunnen elk nummer ingaan
en worden stilzwijgend verlengd tenzij is
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SUBSCRIPTIONS

individuals Dfl.68,-

institutions Dfl.83,-

Subscriptions can start at any issue and will
be tacitly renewed unless terminated before
publication of the last issue of the current
subscription.

DEZE UITGAVE

is mede mogelijk gemaakt door een financiële
ondersteuning van het Ministerie van WVC
en het Prins Bernhard Fonds.

THIS PUBLICATION

was also made possible by the financial
support of The Dutch Ministry of Culture
and the Prince Bernhard Fund.

DANK AAN/THANK YOU

John van Gelder & Mieke Juliën
O: Aya van Caspel & Inge Keppel
Birt Hindrix,
Raul Marroquin





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