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Staging Mobile Spectatorship in the Moving Image Installations of Amanda Beech, Philippe Parreno, and Ryan Trecartin/Lizzie Fitch

Introduction: Modes of Mobility

The mobile spectator is a familiar figure in theorisations of moving image installation, recurring in various accounts of the differences and continuities between the cinema and the museum as spaces of exhibition and reception. Some of these accounts are concerned with the role of mobility in enhancing, or undermining, critical reflection. Jeffrey Skoller, for example, rejects the notion (advanced by several curators) that the mobile viewer's "critical awareness is heightened by choosing his or her own degree of attentiveness", claiming instead that transience undermines the modes of reflective engagement potentially enabled by cinema.[1] Others envisage mobile spectatorship in the gallery or museum as a point of connection with historical or contemporary modes of spatio-temporal experience. Giuliana Bruno, for example, argues that the forms of mobile recollection elicited by moving image installations in the museum are crucial to understanding the historical, cultural and architectural linkages between the museum, cinema, and many other sites of public intimacy, ranging from the memory theatre of the Renaissance era to the picturesque landscape, panoramic and dioramic stages, window displays and painting.[2] John Osborne, meanwhile, emphasises the importance of exhibitions that, instead of seeking to block out distraction, actually engage with new configurations of attention and distraction through the exploration of spatio-temporal rhythms, including those associated with the prevalence of the computer screen.[3]

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[1] Jeffrey Skoller: *Shadows, Specters, Shards. Making History in Avant-Garde Film*, Minneapolis 2005, p. 177.

[2] Giuliana Bruno: "Collection and Recollection. On Film Itineraries and Film Walks", *Public Intimacy. Architecture and the Visual Arts*, Cambridge Mass. 2007, pp. 3–42.

[3] Peter Osborne: "Distracted Reception. Time, Art and Technology", in: Jessica Morgan/Gregory Muir (eds.), *Time Zones: Recent Film and Video*, London 2004, pp. 66-83, p. 67.

Hito Steyerl's research offers a somewhat different perspective on mobile spectatorship, as it emphasises the *labour* of moving image consumption. Noting that several former factories (as well as churches, train stations etc.) have been repurposed as art museums, Steyerl highlights the work performed in these spaces by "crowds" of people "bending and crouching in order to catch glimpses of political cinema and video art".[4] Defining this crowd as "multitude"[5], Steyerl differentiates it from the "mass" of the factory but proposes that both multitude and mass perform a kind of labour that is publicly invisible. In addition, she rejects the notion that the contemporary art museum might operate as a bourgeois public sphere, or a replacement for cinema in this role. This is because, she argues, the conditions of gallery exhibition tend to work against the production of shared discourse around moving images, posing a particular problem for what "the spectator-as-sovereign".[6] Steyerl coins this term to describe a mode of spectatorship motivated by the need to "master the show [...] to pronounce a verdict, and to assign value"[7], and she categorises this desire for mastery as an "attempt to assume the compromised sovereignty of the traditional bourgeois subject".[8] Yet the presence of cinema (or works of cinematic duration) in the museum makes the adoption of this idealised sovereign vantage point impossible, underscoring the museum's limitations as a public sphere.[9] Steyerl suggests that this impossibility was articulated in *documenta 11,* because it included too many lengthy moving image works to be viewed in full by any one visitor. Noting that *documenta 11* drew attention to the *absence* of a multiple subject, conceived as "no longer collective, but

[4] Hito Steyerl, "Is a Museum a Factory?", in: dies., *The Wretched of the Screen*, Berlin 2012, p. 61.
[5] Steyerl draws upon Paul Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*, New York/Los Angeles 2004, which she frames as a "sober description of the generally quite idealized condition of multitude", note. 16, p. 76. While Michael Hardt and Antoni Negri understand the multitude (in *Empire*) in terms of a new social class, which can challenge the supranational economic and political order that has replaced sovereign nation states, Virno frames the multitude more ambiguously, as a force defined by its potential to produce not simply an end product but also *itself*. For a discussion of Virno's position in relation to that of Hardt and Negri, see Sylvère Lotringer, "Foreword: We, the multitude", in Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, pp. 7-21.
[6] Steyerl (2012), p. 71.
[7] Ibid., p. 71.
[8] Ibid., p. 71. Steyerl does not specify when this "traditional" bourgeois subject was formed, but she is clearly interested in the persistence and decline of the bourgeois public sphere in contemporary society, citing as a reference Thomas Elsaesser's paper "The Cinema in the Museum: Our Last Bourgeois Public Sphere", presented at the International Film Studies conference, "Perspectives on the Public Sphere: Cinematic Configurations of 'I' and 'We'", Berlin, April 23-25, 2009.
[9] Ibid., p. 71.

common",[10] she imagines a scenario in which the night guards and spectators might have worked together in order to view, discuss and make sense of the exhibition as a whole.

In Steyerl's formulation, art museums are important not because they can function as a public sphere, modelled after some earlier formation, but because they can "conserve the absence of the public sphere" and display "the *desire* for something to be realized in its place".[11] Her account of the museum as factory offers a starting point from which to consider three recent exhibitions, all much smaller in scale than *documenta 11*, which share a formal concern with mobile spectatorship and suggest disparate responses to contested sovereignty of the subject, and the dissolution of the bourgeois public sphere. *Amanda Beech – Sanity Assassin* at Spike Island in Bristol (January 23 - April 11, 2010) featured a single eponymous work, *Sanity Assassin* (2010), encompassing a three channel video projection, a sculptural display of power tools and an artists' publication. *Philippe Parreno* at the Serpentine Gallery (November 25, 2010 – February 13, 2011) presented four moving image works, spanning several decades of Parreno's practice: *No More Reality* (1991), *The Boy from Mars* (2003), *June 8, 1968* (2009) and *InvisibleBoy* (2010). *Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch, Any Ever*, at Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (October 18, 2011 – January 8, 2012), included a selection of sculptures and seven projected videos from the series *Trill-ogy Comp* (2009) and *Re'Search Wait'S* (2009–10), with each element of the series presented in its own viewing environment.

I argue that in these exhibitions the staging of mobile spectatorship provides a common element in disparate artistic responses to the problems posed by the lost sovereignty of the bourgeois subject. In Parreno's Serpentine show, visitors are offered the full picture denied by *documenta 11* but also drawn into a spatio-temporal journey that encompasses the social and physical architecture of the gallery. In contrast, Trecartin and Fitch seem to reinstate the museum as a site for the exercise of judgement through the presentation of environments for self-exhibition. Finally, Amanda Beech presents the visitor with a viscerally articulated composite subject, offering no secure point of orientation. I use the term 'staging' to describe the cohesive management of all formal elements of these exhibitions, including the choreography of visitor movements into and through the gallery spaces. Ordinarily, the organisation of visitor flows through group exhibitions is shaped by a complex of forces that include the objectives and agendas of curators and institutions, but in these three exhibitions the artists take responsibility

[10] Ibid., p. 73.
[11] Ibid., p. 72 [Emphasis in original].

for scripting or shaping movement in the gallery through suggestion, didactic instruction or automated cues. In addition, these strategies of staging serve to highlight continuities between the museum and other settings organised around practices of self-display and consumption, ranging from the pleasure garden and fairground to the shopping mall and retail showroom, in which bourgeois subjectivity has been formed and reconfigured.[12]

Significantly, all three exhibitions were presented by publicly-funded art institutions housed in buildings that once served a somewhat different function. Spike Island is an arts centre with a gallery, studios and workshop facilities, located in a former tea-packing factory in the Docklands area of Bristol. The Serpentine Gallery, which is known for its temporary architectural projects as well as its exhibition and event programmes, is housed in a converted tea pavilion (built in 1934), located in Kensington Gardens, Hyde Park. The park has been a popular setting for urban recreation since the eighteenth century and was also the site of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris, meanwhile, is located in a building that was originally designed for the International Exhibition of Arts and Technology of 1937. So although Spike Island is the only one of the three institutions to be directly shaped by late-twentieth century based urban regeneration initiatives, the other exhibition venues retain a material and symbolic association with earlier moments in the reorganisation of urban leisure around the arts. All three exhibitions could be said to mobilise these associations, albeit somewhat indirectly. So, for example, Beech uses the vast height of the former factory space to intensify the sensory impact of her projected multi-channel video, Parreno integrates the parkland setting of the Serpentine into the dramaturgy of the exhibition and Trecartin and Fitch allude to historical connections and institutional parallels between the museum and the commercial exposition, through their quasi-anthropological staging of display environments.

[12] Tony Bennett identifies parallels between the public museum and department store in the second half of the nineteenth century, as spaces for the display of objects and for the modelling and emulation of bourgeois taste and behaviour. He notes that during the same time period, expositions, fairs and amusement parks functioned as spaces in which more unruly forms of behaviour could be contained and managed. See Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum*, *History, Theory, Politics,* Oxon/New York 1995. While shopping malls and retail showrooms are also spaces of display and emulation, they did not evolve as self-consciously public sites of leisure, and are routinely associated with the privatisation and demographic segmentation of public life. Nonetheless, malls in the US have been theorised (in conjunction with television) as part of a distribution and feedback system, that anticipates and reinforces "a national culture presented not only as desirable but as already realized somewhere else". See Margaret Morse, "An Ontology of Everyday Distraction: The Freeway, the Mall, and Television" in: Patricia Mellencamp (ed) *Logics of Television*, London and Bloomington 1990, pp.193-221, p. 210.

Spectators, Showrooms and Social Spaces

Before discussing these three exhibitions in more detail it seems important to briefly note a number of earlier works that stage spectatorship as part of an exploration of spaces and practices of consumption. Gerhard Richter and Konrad Lueg's 1963 event *Living with Pop— A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism*, was presented in a retail environment, rather than a gallery: the Berges Möbelhaus, Düsseldorf. In this work, the artists placed themselves on view in the manner of living sculptures, posed among an array of consumer objects, including television. Writing about the politics of memory in this project, Andrew Weiner emphasises that it was timed to coincide with the broadcast of a German television show about the achievements of Konrad Adenauer, who had recently announced his resignation.[13] The event required visitors to follow a specific route, hinting at connections between the disparate forms of attention elicited by the gallery, retail showroom, and state bureaucracy. They were first ushered into a waiting area where they were assigned numbers and given newspapers (with articles on Adenauer's resignation), and only then called into the showroom to view the display. Around this time, Claes Oldenburg was developing a somewhat different approach to the showroom as display space in *Bedroom Ensemble*, which was constructed in Los Angeles in 1963 but first exhibited at the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York the following year.

Dan Graham describes Oldenburg's work as "a kitschy modern-home-furnishing suite", which emphasised the "oddness and ambiguity of the modern art gallery interior – half showroom and half business office."[14] Graham situates *Bedroom Ensemble* in relation to a broader convergence of art and design, articulated across disparate institutional contexts, from corporate-sponsored art spaces to commercial galleries, public museums, offices and lifestyle magazines. He also highlights two sculptural installations by John Chamberlain, which seem to have informed his own exploration of intermediary spaces of viewing, waiting and relaxing. One is a large foam-rubber couch with scooped-out seating, placed in the ground floor lobby of the Guggenheim museum during Chamberlain's 1971 retrospective. The second was devised for the lobby area of

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[13] Andrew S. Weiner, "Memory under Reconstruction: Politics and Event in Wirtschaftswunder West Germany", *Grey Room* 37, 2009, pp. 94-124, p. 98. See also Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Readymade, Photography, and Painting in the Painting of Gerhard Richter", *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975*, Cambridge 2000, pp. 365–404.

[14] Dan Graham, "Art as Design/Design as Art", in: *Dan Graham: Beyond*, ed. by Bennett Simpson/Chrissie Iles, exhib.-cat. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Cambridge Mass. 2009, pp. 267-276, p. 267.

the *Westkunst* exhibition organised by Kasper König in Cologne in 1981, and it included small monitors intended to resemble the pay TV-sets then found in waiting areas of many US bus terminals and airports. These monitors were used to display commercials, which on closer inspection were revealed as a succession of flawed out-takes, never actually broadcast.[15] By the mid-1980s, Graham was also beginning to explore lobby or foyer-type environments for the display of video, informed by a reconceptualisation of the museum:

> I realized that a museum could be a social space and I fell in love with the empty lobbies, the gift shop, coffee shop, areas where people could relax. So I did work like *Three Linked Cubes/Interior Design for Space Showing Videos* [...] where teenagers could lie on the floor. I think what I did was to discover the tradition of the museum instead of pursuing the stupid idea of Institutional Critique.[16]

Yet despite Graham's embrace of the museum as site of leisure, *Three Linked Cubes* (1986) does not necessarily articulate the lack of a public sphere, in this sense theorised by Hito Steyerl. Instead, it reinstates the museum as a setting for the display or staging of practices of consumption, in a manner that both elucidates its historical role in the formation of bourgeois subjectivity and asserts its continued significance as a site of self-production (and reflection).

Evidence of this can be found in Roberta Smith's response to the 1997 Guggenheim Soho Museum show *Rooms with a View – Environments for Video*, which included *Three Linked Cubes* alongside custom-designed viewing spaces by Angela Bulloch, Vito Acconci, Tobias Rehberger and Jorge Pardo. Smith dismisses much of the show, claiming that the "individual [video] tapes are lost within a whole that is more about entertainment than art", and she suggests that in much of the exhibition the gallery is reduced to "an image-zapped lobby through which visitors pass on their way to quieter surroundings". Yet she is broadly supportive of Graham's work, primarily because its glass walls, "alternately clear and mirrored [...] multiply the images of monitors and viewers alike while creating a slight suggestion of surveillance". Through these effects, she argues, *Three Linked Cubes* "emphasises the omnipotence – or as the Situationists put

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[15] Ibid., p. 272.

[16] Dan Graham, interviewed by Benjamin H.D.. Buchloh, "Four Conversations: December 1999–May 2000", in: *Dan Graham, Works 1965–2000*, ed. by Marianne Brouwer, Düsseldorf 2001, pp. 69-84, p. 78.

it, the spectacle – of television."[17] So even though Graham actually seeks to evoke the relaxed ambience of the museum lobby, Smith endorses his work because it makes viewers aware of themselves and each other as consumers of "spectacle". Her analysis reaffirms the museum's disciplinary role, countering the fragmented subject envisaged by Graham and asserting a much more traditional model, which seems premised upon the sovereignty critiqued by Steyerl.

Beyond the Performative Exhibition

By the 1990s, an emphasis on spatial and temporal fragmentation had become more pervasive within art and curatorial practice, as evidenced by Claire Bishop's account of "performative" exhibition-making, characterised by "open-endedness", "authorial renunciation", collaboration and incompletion.[18] She identifies these qualities in *No Man's Time* (1991), curated by Eric Troncy at the Villa Arson in Nice. Consisting of projects created or performed specifically for this context, many developed by the exhibiting artists during a month-long residency in advance of the opening, this exhibition marked the first presentation of Parreno's *No More Reality,* a staged demonstration by children holding banners.[19] Bishop also notes that *No Man's Time* marked the emergence of the "exhibition as a film", a concept that was to prove important in theorisations of relational art.[20] In order to illustrate this point, Bishop states that artworks in the exhibition were conceived as actors, with major or minor roles, and that the "cinematic reference was pursued in a billboard by Parreno, emblazoned with the slogan 'Welcome to Twin Peaks', in reference to David Lynch's popular TV series".[21]

The notion of the "exhibition as a film" is not, however, well defined in Bishop's account and she seems to conflate the categories of the filmic, cinematic and televisual in her discussion of *No Man's Time*. If this show functioned "as a film", it certainly did not involve the integration of disparate artworks into a cohesive spatio-temporal order. In fact, as Bishop seems to suggest, the show lacked a sense of cohesion. Significantly, she also observes that the deliberate

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[17] Roberta Smith, "A Channel-Surfing Experience With Beanbag Chairs and Gym", in: *New York Times*, April 25, 1997, p. C22.

[18] Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*, London 2012, p. 207.

[19] *No Man's Time* also made reference to *Twin Peaks,* a self-consciously cinematic television show, in the form of a billboard work by Parreno. See Bishop (2012), note 14, p. 208.

[20] Ibid., p. 208. Nicolas Bourriaud has emphasised the importance of the exhibition as film set (or as a "film without a camera") in the work of artists such as Liam Gillick, Philippe Parreno and Rirkrit Tiravanija. See Bourriaud, "Berlin Letter about Relational Aesthetics", in: *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation*, ed. by Claire Doherty, London 2004, pp. 43-49, p. 45 et seq.

[21] Ibid., p. 208.

incompleteness of performative exhibitions such as *No Man's Time* rendered them *ineffective* as places of "assembly" in which viewers might be compelled to "reflect upon their own positions and perspectives".[22] This observation suggests that (unlike Steyerl) Bishop does not envisage the address toward a fragmented subject as a means of conserving the absence of a public sphere in the museum.[23] In fact she concludes her discussion of performative exhibitions by noting that the curatorial emphasis on "an open space for participants [...] is frequently experienced by the viewing public as a loss, since the process [of interaction between artists and curators] that forms the central meaning of this work is rarely made visible and explicit".[24]

While Bishop does not address the subsequent development of the "exhibition as a film" in Parreno's practice, he has continued to engage with this concept, as evidenced by the Serpentine show. This exhibition was explicitly publicised as a "scripted space", in which the visitor would be "guided through the galleries by the orchestration of sound and image, which heightens their sensory experience."[25] Arriving at the gallery, visitors were encouraged (by signage) to enter the gallery at the start of a seventeen minute sequence, and the first work encountered was *No More Reality.* As this work ended, visitors were enticed into an adjoining gallery space on the left by the fleeting appearance of (artificial) snowflakes visible through the floor to ceiling windows along the left wall, followed by the automated descent of window blinds. Those who reached the windows before the blinds had descended could see small circular marks etched onto the surface of the glass panes, suggesting "ghostly breath."[26]

With the gallery space now in darkness, a projection of the 11 minute work *The Boy from Mars* commenced, depicting a landscape in Thailand with an illuminated structure entitled the Battery House, powered through the movements of water-buffalo. When this screening ended, the gallery lights returned and music could be heard in the distance, prompting visitors to turn away from the screen and progress into the central gallery space, where the next work – *June 8, 1968* – was beginning. This eight minute film (shot on 70mm) reconstructs aspects of the train journey

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[22] Ibid., p. 217. Bishop draws the term 'assembly' from Boris Groys, *Art Power*, Cambridge Mass. 2008, p. 182.
[23] Bishop (2012), note 14, p. 209.
[24] Ibid., p. 271.
[25] Press release, Philippe Parreno, Serpentine Gallery, 25 November 2010 - 13 February 2011, http://www.serpentinegallery.org/2010/11/philippe_parreno_25_november_1_1.html (last view 2013.03.20).
[26] Adrian Searle, "Philippe Parreno at the Serpentine: The installation that won't sit still", in: *The Guardian*, December 1, 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/artanddesign/2010/dec/01/philippe-parreno-serpentine-installation (last view 2013.03.20).

transporting the body of Robert Kennedy from New York to Washington D.C. and specifically references the photographs taken by Paul Fusco of the individuals and groups gathered along the tracks to observe its passing. Filmed from the vantage point of the moving train, it is somewhat reminiscent of the phantom rides of early cinema in its use of subjective camera. At the close of this screening, visitors were again directed by sound cues to enter the final space (continuing to move in a clockwise direction around the pavilion) in order to view *InvisibleBoy*, a film that explores the relationship between a young boy and an imaginary figure – an ambiguous and yet vaguely monstrous animated creature moving through city streets. When this work ended, the window blinds were automatically raised and the sounds of children could be heard emanating from *No More Reality*, marking the beginning of a new cycle.

Unlike the general exploration of mediatic form and temporality noted by Bishop in relation to *No Man's Time,* which offered only a partial glimpse into an ongoing process, Parreno's Serpentine show presented visitors with a highly cohesive spatio-temporal sequence, and it is in this specific sense that the exhibition can be defined "as a film". As already indicated, Parreno proposed a specific route through the gallery, structuring it as a filmic journey in time and space, developing the theme of 'no more reality' introduced at the outset. But the exhibition did not frame the four works as spatially distributed episodes or chapters of a single "film". Instead, the scripting of the gallery space seemed intended to generate a series of environments or atmospheres that were appropriate to each projected work, and also to heighten awareness of atmospheric shifts from one work to the next. So, for example, dramaturgical strategies such as the artificial snowflakes and mechanised window blinds were used to create a sense of quiet expectation in advance of the screening of *The Boy From Mars*, a work that at one point features the ascent of spectral lights into the sky (produced through special effects) suggesting an otherworldly consciousness. Although Parreno's exhibition drew attention to already existing aspects of the social and physical architecture of the Serpentine building, in the form of a clockwise progression – moving from the entrance to the left, onward to the centre, and ending in the gallery space to the right – a strong disciplinary dynamic was nonetheless apparent in this scripted space. A visitor choosing to move counter-clockwise through the gallery spaces, for example, would miss all or part of the screenings, the falling 'snowflakes', and the movement of mechanised window blinds.

Returning to Steyerl's critique of the "spectator-as-sovereign", I would argue that even though it did not feature exceptionally long works of what she terms "cinematic duration", Parreno's exhibition withheld from the visitor a secure vantage point from which to assign judgement. This

is because any visitor seeking to "master the show"[27] needed to submit themselves to Parreno's dramaturgy, simply in order to view and hear all elements of the exhibition. The scripting of the gallery space, as a circuit of 'attractions'[28] to be encountered in sequence, also had the effect of highlighting the filmic exploration of motion, involving human and non-human subjects, linking several works in the show. Here I am referring to the luminous beings that ascend into the sky above the slowly circling buffalo in *The Boy from Mars*, the forward motion of the train bearing the coffin of Kennedy in *June 8, 1968*, and the continually shifting form of the fantastical creature moving through the city in *InvisibleBoy*. The movements of the buffalo that power the Battery House in *The Boy From Mars* are perhaps especially interesting as they offer a literal representation of energy production, forming part of a broader exploration of biopower in Parreno's practice.[29] In the Serpentine show, this exploration is developed further through the apparent synchronisation between visitor and gallery environment, making it possible to read the labour expended in the circular progression of the choreographed crowd not just as a response to a series of cues (mechanised window blinds, timed screenings and snow flurries) but also as a source of energy that 'powers' the gallery.

Sculptural Theatres and the Social Function of the Museum

Commenting upon an earlier configuration of the Parreno show (presented at the Centre Pompidou), in which visitors remained in one space but were temporarily removed from the world outside through the darkening of windows, Dorothea von Hantelmann emphasises the importance of the exhibition as "flexible" format. She notes that, historically, public museums struggled to replicate the "aesthetics of conversation and sociability" that had once marked the princely collection, because these aesthetics were "now too time-consuming for a social class that worked, and whose life was more and more subject to a strict management of time."[30] Elsewhere von Hantelmann has drawn upon the work of Tony Bennett to emphasise the importance of

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[27] Steyerl, p. 71.

[28] I am using this term to recall Tom Gunning's seminal analysis, "The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-garde", *Wide Angle* 8.3-4 (1986), pp. 63–70, but an in-depth analysis of Parreno's 'exhibition as film' in relation to the early cinema of 'attractions' is beyond the scope of my discussion here.

[29] For a discussion of biopower in relation to Parreno's work, see Ina Blom, *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality and Media Culture*, Berlin/New York 2007, pp. 91–92.

[30] Dorothea von Hantelmann, "30 July 2010 – 22 October 2010", in: *Philippe Parreno: Films 1987-2010*, exhib.-cat. Serpentine Gallery, London/Cologne 2010, pp. 85-92, p. 87.

walking in the operation of the museum as a "machine of progress"[31] – a spatial and discursive structure to be realised through imitation. Parreno's show at Pompidou did not, however, set the viewer in motion through the spaces of the museum; instead it relied upon dramaturgical strategies that, according to von Hantelmann, created "moments of tying" by involving the viewer in the time of the exhibition. As an example of such a moment, she cites the strategy of "closing and darkening a space" – the glass walled gallery of the Centre Pompidou – that "had previously been so emphatically open towards an outside."[32] Rather than being bound together through conversation, the exhibition visitors were instead addressed as a physical body temporarily contained within the space of the gallery, alternately connected to and dislocated from the broader urban environment in which this space is situated. So instead of considering museums as spaces in which the absence of a public sphere might become palpable, von Hantelmann frames the exhibition as a mutable form that can (and must) change in order to ensure that art in the museum continues to fulfil its traditional social function of binding subjects together in space and time.

If Parreno's Serpentine exhibition gestures beyond the sovereign subject through its staging of the gallery as spatio-temporal environment, then Ryan Trecartin and Lizzie Fitch's *Any Ever* seems to emphasise continuities between long-established methods of museological display and newer forms of self-display and cultural consumption. Trecartin's videos borrow heavily from social media and daytime talk shows and *Trill-ogy Comp* and *Re'Search Wait'S* are filled with characters absurdly costumed as office workers, life coaches, interns or executives, who are continually engaged in either hyperbolic self-promotion or confessional disclosure. In *Any Ever*, Trecartin and Fitch adopt a relatively conventional approach to moving image exhibition in the gallery, by presenting a spatialised sequence of video installations, running continuously rather than temporally sequenced. The installation environments (described as "Unique Sculptural Theatres") are, however, dimly-lit rather than fully darkened and audio is presented on headphones attached to selected seats rather than via speakers. Most significantly, each installation space is furnished with objects suggesting various forms of quasi-social domestic activity and explicitly devised "to be inhabited like a theatre stage."[33] So, for example, some

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[31] Tony Bennett, cited by Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things With Art: What Performativity Means in Art*, Zurich/Dijon 2010, p. 98. The Bennett text referenced by von Hantelmann is *The Birth of the Museum*.
[32] Dorothea von Hantelmann (2010), p. 91.
[33] Press release, "Ryan Trecartin/Lizzie Fitch: Any Ever", Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris/ARC, Paris. 18 October 2011 – 8 January 2012, http://www.mam.paris.fr/en/node/534 (last view 2013.03.20).

resemble home offices while others seem evoke entertainment zones, gyms or other settings for structured leisure.

These claustrophobic environments are different from the lobbies, foyers and other intermediary spaces evoked by the sculptural installations of John Chamberlain and the video viewing environments of Dan Graham, because they are designed to amplify the sensory overload produced in Trecartin's videos through the conjunction of visual effects, screens within screens, wide-angle cinematography and spatially constricted locations. Many of the videos are shot in domestic spaces that seem to barely contain the performers and when non-domestic spaces do appear on screen, they are sometimes forms of transport that are furnished to resemble domestic interiors – such as the camper van or the mock-up of an airplane featured in *K-Corea INC.K* (2009). This work, like many of Trecartin's videos, is characterised by affective excess, articulated in the form of rapidly-edited images and abrasive sounds that assault the senses of viewers and in the highly emotive tone and content of the interactions between characters, and the diatribes delivered to camera.

Yet the design and mediation of the exhibition spaces make it possible for visitors to take up a position at a remove from this affective excess. In my view, *Any Ever* is actually a relatively traditional exhibition in the sense that it is addressed toward a subject engaged in exercise of judgement and critique. Visitors are presented with a printed guide detailing the content of the videos and including a gallery plan outlining the circuit to be followed through the sculptural theatres. This didactic material might be read as a pastiche of the informatics sometimes displayed in furniture showrooms such as IKEA, to assist with orientation. But it also serves a mediating function that is wholly in synch with the discursive and spatial architecture of the museum. So although the artists are directly concerned with the labour of self-formation, and its pervasiveness across an array of interconnected contexts and media, *Any Ever's* quasi-anthropological approach to dramaturgy and choreography clearly communicates a distance from this culture of consumption. Consequently it might be possible to read these environments as spaces of assembly, in which visitors are invited to both exhibit themselves and (following Bishop's terminology) "reflect upon their own positions and perspectives".[34]

Architectures of Individuality

[34] Bishop, p. 217.

Amanda Beech's *Sanity Assassin* (2010) also confronts the visitor with a showroom-like space, but withholds the mediating framework offered by *Any Ever*. Arriving at Spike Island, visitors were requested to enter the gallery at the start of a twenty-minute cycle, first encountering a floodlit display of large yellow chainsaws, similar in appearance but all subtly different, presented on a large mirrored plinth. As the floodlights dimmed in this space, the soundtrack of the video work became audible, emanating from a three-channel projection visible behind a partition, with large screens of various sizes suspended at different heights and angles. This space was dimly-lit and simply furnished, emphasising the large scale of the former factory building and offering a sensory counterpoint to the visually and acoustically forceful video. Rapidly edited, it oscillates unpredictably between glimpses of seductive real-world settings (shot in LA) and digitally-realised architectural structures, rotating on various axes in virtual space. The camera moves fluidly through a luxurious interior with an ornately patterned wooden ceiling, which is furnished with a grand piano, floor-to-ceiling bookshelves filled with leather bound volumes, and masses of white flowers. Images of this interior also occasionally shudder and glitch, as though they too might be an unreliable simulation.

Although no human presence is visible, the low angle shots and the mobile camera suggest impending danger or horror, an impression intensified by repeated cuts to shots of falling rain, digitally-generated and harshly lit to suggest night-time streets, in accordance with the conventions of *film noir*. Even the occasional shots of a secluded garden filled with flowers, overlooking the city of LA, fail to dispel the sense of enclosure created by the camerawork, in part because these images are overlaid with emotive textual statements. Some of these texts (for example: "Shamanistic sorcery guides our future to new scientific dimensions in a dirge of miasmic illusion – we are sick with object fixation") are presented as quotations from Arnold Rottweiler in 1962. A character of Beech's invention, Rottweiler's perspective is constructed in part from a reworking of Adorno's *Dream Notes*, written in LA. Other texts are presented as fragments, superimposed upon the image one word at a time and using the language of pulp literature to articulate fear and disgust; "MY BRAIN IS HOT MAN BURSTING IN THIS MESSED UP CULTURAL HELL"; "ROTTWEILER IT STINX HERE".

Sanity Assassin is intimately concerned with LA's production as both an emblematic site of consumption and an object of critique within cultural theory and philosophy, and these ideas are explored further in publication that forms part of the project. In addition to commissioned essays addressing (amongst other issues), Adorno's critique of enlightenment and Foucaultian

notions of biopower and governmentality,[35] the book features interviews in which Beech discloses an array of research sources and cultural reference points. Lavishly produced, with a clothbound hardback cover, the book also functions as a materially seductive object in its own right and in the exhibition at Spike Island it was prominently displayed in the reception area where it would be encountered by visitors prior to entering the gallery space. The texts and interviews gathered in the publication introduce a wealth of reference points, including popular cultural figures such as the TV detective *Columbo*, the New York cop transposed to LA, who uncovers the corruption and decay lurking behind the gates of Hollywood mansions.

Beech also explores the aesthetics of withdrawal articulated in LA modernist architecture, rendered iconic by the photographer Julius Shulman, known for his celebrated images of modernist 'case study' houses. Shulman, whose 1957 shot of a retail showroom entitled *McCulloch Motors, Office & Showroom, LA* provides the main reference point for the chainsaw display, was interviewed by Beech shortly before his death. Both he and Adorno serve as sources for an imaginary configuration of two philosophical positions that appear to be at odds with each other yet merge to produce a nihilistic polemic, creating a composite worldview, that is visceral and wholly unstable. Through these strategies, Beech dramatises a process in which critique seems to determine and reproduce its object. In the process, she draws attention to the limits of artistic agency, and the "contradictions [...] produced as a consequence of theorising how to act when there is no absolute power to target and no centre from which to operate."[36]

Conclusion: Staging Spectatorship

As I have noted, it is the duration of 'cinema' in the gallery that serves – for Steyerl – to confirm the unavailability of a ideal subject position that was once integral to the formation of the museum as bourgeois public sphere. In her analysis, the presence of cinema contributes to the articulation of a desire for other positions, configured around commonality rather than collectivity, which are marked by absence. Steyerl's ideal (yet absent) multiple subject[37] is imagined through reference to the image of workers and visitors sharing the task of viewing *documenta 11*, but it may also be signalled in other ways – perhaps finding expression in the

[35] See Suhail Malik, "Civil Society Must Be, Like, Totally Destroyed" and , Ray Brassier, 'The Thanatosis of Enlightenment', both *Amanda Beech: Sanity Assassin*, Falmouth, 2010, pp. 19–32 and 49–64.
[36] Amanda Beech/Jaspar Joseph-Lester, "Reason without Reason', in: *Amanda Beech: Sanity Assassin*, Falmouth 2010, pp. 89-96, p. 92.
[37] Steyerl, p. 73.

incompleteness that Claire Bishop defines (somewhat negatively) as a characteristic of performative exhibitions in the 1990s.

The moving image installations of Parreno, Trecartin/Fitch, and Beech are not marked by the excess of cinematic duration attributed to *documenta 11*. But, as I have sought to argue, they nonetheless engage – albeit in quite different ways – with the dissolution of the bourgeois public sphere. In Parreno's Serpentine Gallery show, the public museum's potential to function as a machine of progress, through its organisation of narratives of progression, takes on a more explicitly biopolitical dimension, manifest in the synchronisation of visitor movements with the mechanisation of the gallery environment. By contrast, Trecartin and Fitch's *Any Ever* attempts to reassert the museum's traditional function as a space of reflection, premised upon notions of mastery and sovereignty, through the quasi-anthropological exploration of practices of self-exhibition and consumption. This space of reflection is primarily produced through the management of sound (via headphones) and the production of a navigable graphic representation of the sculptural theatres (in the form of the exhibition plan). Of the three installations discussed here, Beech's *Sanity Assassin* is the most explicit in its rejection of a subject whose imagined sovereignty is founded upon the exercise of judgement. The multi-screen installation is explicitly designed around the figure of the mobile spectator whose critical awareness is imagined to be heightened by the capacity to move between mediatic environments and objects. According to Beech, the "space for the video work is choreographed [...] in terms of the dynamics of public space, where the architectural framework of the screens and their supports establish a space where the viewer can move around, change angles, and see the work from different spatial perspectives. In fact the video instructs this as part of its operation."[38] Through this interplay between quasi-public architecture and instruction, *Sanity Assassin* both elicits the attention of a self-consciously critical subject and demonstrates the impossibility of this position.

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[38] Ibid., p. 93.