

Reflections on a Technological Landscape

By Nathaniel Ancheta

INTRODUCTION:

There are parallels in art, society, and culture and we can find them by looking closely at our culture. We are living in a moment when there has been a great shift. The development of digital technologies is merging the built world and the virtual world. In effect these technologies have broken down the previous continuity and have caused the reorganization and reconstruction of the definition and implementation of space and time. Consequently, time, which was once a factor of space, is now privileged over the construction of space. The continuity of time is ruptured. In effect, technologies have created a rhythm of permanent transit—a never-ending passive flow from space to space/place to place, that oscillates between uploading and downloading and between giving and receiving. The resulting culture is defined by individual isolation, the fleeting, and the ephemeral. Thus, at this moment, there is a discursive practice in development in order to reveal the contradictions within technological progress that have come to influence our movement and actions within western society and culture. It has been in development for some time now. This discursive practice is founded on the insistence that discourse is action and not representation; it defines itself using a set of categories and tools appropriated from groups ranging from the Situationist International (SI) to Relational Aesthetics to Interactive Art. We can begin to paint a clearer picture of this discursive practice by reexamining the following epistemological categories: Relational Participation, An Antagonistic Frame and an Activists' Curation

Reflections on a Technological Landscape **Part 1 of 2: A Space of Potential**

Changes in art have always followed changes in culture. In a cultural landscape that is propelled by technological progress and an economy based on services rather than goods, art must be re-examined yet again. Art has moved away from embodying the transformative powers of the object and toward creating the experience of production in which a continuity in space in time was determined by distance. Irmgard Emmelhainz¹ best described this union of art and production when she stated:

With the advent of industrialized culture [...] mass society became interested in cultural values and began to monopolize culture for its own ends, transforming cultural values into exchangeable values, a fusion between art and politics occurred in the greater cultural sphere. (Emmelhainz, 2013)

From an inherent contradiction in technology, a space of potential has recently emerged—a promise of community through individual isolation, the fleeting and the ephemeral. The isolation of individuals in our ever more networked society has left scars in the human psyche. Longing for a meaningful and communal experience artists, theorists and creative thinkers are desperately attempting to fulfill and express these desires. Increasingly, today's artists focus on how their work will produce relationships. In turn, they have developed a shared *discursive practice* whereby art creates arenas that use the “dissemination of information” to connect people (Gillick, 2009). By using social models and exhibiting structures both within and outside the gallery context, it reframes relationships and creates social spaces, events, chance encounters and other kinds of social collaborations.

In order to identify the new space of potential, we must consider the construction of space and time in relation to communication technology in the information age, and its effect on social movement. Indeed the topic is general, thus this idea requires some initial clarification and elaboration. What do we mean by communication technology and the information age, and how has continuity ruptured in time effected the spaces of public, individual and social participation?

Space, Time and Technology

Space and time have been used as a way to define boundaries between inside and outside, internal and external, the privileged and the other. Enforced by architectural technologies, cities have been able to control the flow and rhythm of its people in relation to social reproduction. We can see this in the construction of roads, skyscrapers and bridges for example. In his essay *Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination*, David Harvey points out that “space and time operate in objective fact, for example clock time, and play a key role in the process of social reproduction” (Harvey, 1990). By tracing the construction of architectural technologies that enforce these boundaries we will arrive at a space of contradiction.

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In order to trace this construction, we must look back at the shift in modes of production and ask, what is important about modes of production in the conceptions of space and time? To answer this, one must first understand a little about capitalism. Capitalism is not only an economic system, but also a cultural system. Before the industrial revolution, many societies were shaped through mercantile capitalism, a form of capitalism structured primarily through agriculture; many of the commodities that were traded, bought and sold came from farmlands. Thus, farmers had to travel long distances to buy and sell goods. Therefore, in the construction of space and time, space governed time. The nineteenth century, however, saw the boom of the industrial revolution. There were massive shifts in production, which ultimately effected conceptions of space and time. The resulting form of capitalism is commonly referred to as industrial capitalism, which Joyce Appleby defines as, “An economic system that relies on investment in machines and technology that are used to increase production of marketable goods” (Appleby, 2010). As we can begin to see after this development, there is an acceleration of time creating new kinds of production and commodities. A fundamental cultural shift occurs in response to the compression of space and time. From a technological stand point you began to see the development of factories, heavy machinery, cars, planes, and skyscrapers. With all these technologies people began flocking to cities and leaving the farms causing a rupture in the continuity of space. At that moment, space was a factor of time and not yet vice versa.

This rupture is exemplified in Sigfried Giedion’s book *Space, Time and Architecture*, where he argues that architecture has evolved through an inevitable sequence of developments that he refers to as “space-time.” He points out that space by itself and time by itself would fade and that, to preserve an independent reality, the two must exist together (Giedion, 1941). In his view, this conception of space and time permeates the work of architects such as Le Corbusier, Gropius, and others. In effect this “space-time” is the “time geographical framework” described by Harvey J. Miller “a space in which we can analyze human behavior” in his essay *Modeling Accessibility Using SpaceTime Prism Concepts Within Geographical Information Systems* (Miller, 1991). As we can see from tracing the history of architectural technologies, “space-time” has aided the planning and location of particular activities and infrastructure around modes of production. What is important to take away from this is the psychological and phenomenological effects of architecture on everyday life. Georg Simmel writes in his essay *Bridge and Door*:

The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected, is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli (Simmel, 1997).

This shift that Simmel describes is “dependent on the experience of difference both internal (self) and external (everything outside the body)” (Simmel, 1997). An example of this in society would be the introduction of communication technologies like the television. The television allows an individual to jump from image to image and place to place outside of certain constraints. My point here is that architectural technologies were the first in technological advancement to shorten the distance between difference - shifts between internal and external stimuli. In effect, making difference more accessible through the physical body.

Since the industrial revolution and the rise of communication technologies like the Internet and the screen, another major shift has occurred and the speed has accelerated exponentially, causing a continuity ruptured in time. Consequently, space becomes a factor of time. Thus, a new kind of structure has been erected from the physical blueprint left by architecture.

Merging the Built World and the Virtual World

Simmel points out in his essay *Bridge and Door* that “the image of external things possesses for us a dimension that everything in external nature is connected and also separated” (Simmel, 1997). He argues that things must be separated from one another in order to be perceived as together. A bridge is the perfect construction of this concept. Simmel describes the bridge as “connecting two separate entities in nature in order to fulfill a practical need as well as to make that connection visible to the eye” (Simmel, 1997). Thus, it connects shores of the land together in the same way that the eye connects the body to nature. The unique quality that I want to point out here about the bridge is its ability to fit into the image of nature, becoming part of the landscape; Simmel describes it as a “picturesque’ element” (Simmel, 1997). In relation to the bridge, Simmel then introduces the concept of the door, which divides space in a very different manner. The door is a representation of how separating and connecting are just two sides of the same coin. The door is the “gateway of expression for an individual to determine how their space is constructed” (Simmel, 1997). The boundaries created, enforced and described by Simmel have now taken a drastic turn with developments in the field of communication and transportation technologies.

What we can begin to see is that architectural technologies have had a direct correlation with the virtual architectural blueprint. We are participating in an architectural blueprint that reflects the built world but can never duplicate it. It is an imitation that lacks certain physical attributes lost only to the virtual and maintains its self in the natural/physical. It creates a mimetic representation and has a theatrical quality that enacts a spectacle like that you might experience at a theater or by watching any movie. The governance of space over time has been interrupted. No longer are we restricted to the limits of physical architectural bridges and doors but rather we have access to a virtual architecture—an interface of screens and digital pathways, a space-time prism of sorts.

In his essay, *The Over Exposed City*, Paul Virilio describes how, with the advent of the Internet, the interface of the screen becomes a kind of “city square, ‘the crossroads of all mass media.” (Virilio, 1997) One could refer to this age of virtual representation as the age of cyberspace. The concept of boundaries described by Simmel has undergone various changes. Our understanding of inside and outside, internal and external, the privileged and the other is unraveling. As Virilio writes:

We are witnessing a paradoxical moment in which the opacity of building materials is reduced to zero [...] On the other hand, with the screen interface of computers, television and teleconferences, the surface of inscription, hitherto devoid of depth, becomes a kind of ‘distance’, a depth of field of a new kind of representation (Virilio, 1997).

From here on, we are deprived of objective boundaries, no longer separated by physical obstacles or confined to the real time. Here and there means nothing. Communication technologies have yet again shortened the distance to difference, making difference more accessible through the virtual body by allowing it to be experienced within the mind, rather than through the physical body. One might ask at this point where does architecture lie and how does this effect individual and social participation in our environment?

Rhythm of Passive Participation

We are constantly in movement, unable to pause, and no longer privileged residents. That is to say we are not confined to local rhythm but participants in a global rhythm, passively participating in the virtual representation enforced by algorithms—a continuity of place without time. Our environment is an inescapable spectacle that, like the bridge, has merged itself into the image of culture, where the feeling of the spectacle is numb to the body and invisible to the eye. In this spectacle, nothing is natural. It redefines and reorganizes space, time and the movement of societies composed of crowds, groups, bodies, and classes. Individuals are unaware of the fact that their actions are stored as data and are being reflected back to them, affecting not only them but others participating in the same space, engulfed in vague and confused representations. With this ever-expanded landscape of virtual representation, society is becoming unaware of the effect ones' participation has on the Capitalist Machine. We are now at the height of a postmodern capitalist society. The compression of time and the annihilation of space is of greater concern than ever before. Movement is no longer contemplative but rather accumulative. It is not what you understand but how much one consumes. It is no longer a world of here and there but rather where. We now live in a landscape of horizontal responsibility where our actions are tracked and traced for the purposes of city planning and targeted marketing, a space where consumers have become research subjects. This is the commodification of habit and everyday life.

Without our noticing, modern life has been taken over. There are systems and structures, from data mining to dating algorithms, working quietly behind the scenes, redefining the boundaries of space and time, effecting our everyday lives. It is understood that the psychological foundation on which a city is built intensifies life and drives the postmodern mentality through fast and continuous shifts between internal and external stimuli. The virtual landscape has accelerated the rate of experience of these differences. It has accelerated to the point that it passes the pace of thought. We no longer think about the effect and thus become passive participants of this invisible spectacle.

So how are types of participation changed? I believe that in the realm of public, social and individual participation in a now global landscape, the effects are larger and the risks are higher. The space of lived experience is ever more driven by the virtual, and the once-physically driven space is being pushed to the edges of perception. Here is what I mark as a space of potential: an invisible spectacle, in which space is a factor of time, where the space of difference is collapsing to create a world of imitation. In effect, a contradiction appears—a promise of community though individual isolation, the fleeting and the ephemeral.

Since roughly the 1990's there has been a dramatic shift in the art world that is dissolving autonomous art and moving towards more socially engaged work that brings art closer to life. This is not a new concept, but

drawing upon its older associations with interactive art, relational aesthetics and pedagogical practices it has been reintroduced into art conversation. I find that although the power of art comes partially from its autonomy, it relies on conversation with the world. Architecture is an obvious example here. Now that we can see that physical architecture has taken a back seat to virtual architecture, where does art lie? How can it continue to mirror or comment on society in the same way it once did?

Today, it is not enough to look at the structure, we must understand how we have reconciled the concepts of time and space. The two are now part and parcel of social and political issues as well as aesthetic and artistic concerns. Not only must art mirror the world, but as Gregory Batson has expressed, art is a privileged realm that can “explicitly communicate about communicating, turning communication back on itself” (Kaizen, 2008). We occupy a world that needs to be awakened from a nightmare, but to do so, we must reexamine existing key categories and tools, for reframing relationships.

Reflections on a Technological Landscape **Part 2 of 2:** The Discursive Practice

Entering this space, we can begin to reimagine the role of art. This is where new questions can arise and we can start to describe the *discursive practice* that has been in development in art since the 1990's. This discursive practice is grounded on three insights concerning discourse. First, social realities are discursive in that they are practically constructed. That is to say that social reality consists of the social beliefs or principles of a given community. Second, discourse is social action. Lastly, meaning is negotiated in interaction. This means that discursive practice is founded in action and not representation. In art, the discursive practice seeks to bracket out matters of reality and the truth about technological progress in relationship to interrelations, the inter- and intrapersonal, internal and external, inside and outside. Rather than focusing on proposing alternative models, the discursive practice examines reality and truth through negotiation, refusal, and compromise. These tools of participation, at the heart of the discursive practice, are also essential in communication. What tools and categories' do we select to retain? What qualities and criteria are used to select them in order to best begin to define this *discursive practice*?

A Relational Participation

If we can agree that art allows us to think about ways of living and engaging, we can begin to describe a *discursive practice* that sees the relations as a workable, artistic medium; and I do not mean having dinner in a gallery. By putting the viewer at center stage, the discursive practice can define an interaction that is rooted in traditional reflection, contemplation, and detached observation in relation to the frame/structure of that interaction. In doing so, it subverts and questions the structures and systems that influence/control human behavior.

It must be clearly stated that interaction is an action that is commonly mistaken for participation. In participatory art, participation becomes the main focus; it is not the relation between the art objects in the event, but the interactive moment that becomes the subject of aesthetic consideration. In effect, the "aesthetic experience is not transmitted via visual objects but via an act of inter-subjectivity." (Alice, 2013)

In 2006 a great debate occurred between art historians Claire Bishop and Grant Kester about the notion of participatory art. Kester and Bishop have come to embody two ends of the spectrum giving rise to two models:

(1) Pedagogical – Participation is defined as a kind of raw material that "is produced by the public's involvement in the production of meaning. The work is staged by the artist (single author) where the frame (and in some projects the result/outcome) is predetermined" (Bishop, 2004).

(2) Dialogical – Considers "participation as the end product, the very essence of the production of meaning is through a co-authorship and creative negotiation between artist and participant" (Matthew, 2009). In effect, the dialogical model gives more agency to the participant and allows for the unexpected. This direction considers the participants as co-producers of the work/event.

The difference between the two ends of this spectrum revolves around three key elements: the role of participants, authorship of the work and ethics of participation.

<i>Role of the participants</i>	<i>Authorship</i>	<i>Ethics of participation</i>
<i>Bishop</i> <i>Material for an artist's work</i>	<i>Single - authored</i>	<i>Informed consent</i>
<i>Kester</i> <i>Participants in a process of creativity enquiry, which they help to shape</i>	<i>Co - authored, between artist and participants</i>	<i>Informed consent, on-going negotiation about content and direction of the process</i>

By using the definitions put forth by Kester and Bishop, participation can be newly understood as an epistemological category that produces meaning in the work by focusing on how the co-authorship (by the artist and the participants) relates to the frame. Through participation artistic praxis empowers people to reflect on the cultures/ structures/ systems of which they form a part.

Let us begin with the role of the participant, where I find the definitions of both Kester and Bishop useful. It is true that the participation in the *discursive practice* that I am outlining becomes a kind of raw material, but it is not where the art lies. Participation can best be understood as an abstraction at the core of the work. The participants' roles begin as interactivity within the process of creativity within a frame (this is not to be mistaken for pedagogical practice). The residue of the interactivity then becomes material and manifests within the body as an idea rather than event. In effect, interactivity becomes an abstraction within the work.

This brings us to the second element: authorship. Again both Bishop and Kester are correct in their definitions of authorship but not in their conclusions. Within the discursive practice I am outlining there is a single artist whose role is to set up a frame within which interactivity can happen. In effect, the objects become a conduit for social experience that emphasizes the interaction of a multitude of autonomous individuals while, at the same time, producing an abstract form of interactivity. Therefore, the participation is democratic in the sense that each individual operates in relation to the frame and has a direct influence on the creation of meaning. But it is also non-democratic since frame is created by the artist. This brings us to the final element - the ethics of participation. Kester and Bishop are both correct in arguing that permission is granted for interaction with the knowledge of the possible consequences. They give informed consent. It is important to examine Kester's extended definition in which he states that there is an on-going negotiation about content and direction of the process. The negotiation occurs between the ethics of the participant (action) and the ethics of the artist (frame). In effect, this negotiation creates a friction in which the affect has a direct effect on the body. The ethics of participation understood in this way puts the body at stake within the this *discursive practice*.



(Fig. 1) Scott Snibbe, "Boundary Functions," 1998

Scott Snibbe's "Boundary Functions" is an interactive installation first shown in Linz, Austria at Ars Electronica in 1998, (Fig. 1). It involved a camera monitoring system and floor projection that was aimed directly onto a platform where lines were drawn around and between the individuals on the platform. According to Katja Kwastek:

The lines designate and visualize a participants' personal space; the spaces closer to them then to anyone else. As more participants walk onto the platform the spaces begin to form tiles that continue to change dynamically, but when people touch the line between them momentarily disappears. Through the creation of the tiles you can begin to produce a meaning that relates to phenomenon of nature on every scale. The participation within the work draws parallels between the physical and social sciences. (Kwastek, 2015).

One can quickly begin to see the raw material produced by the public's involvement in the production of meaning, staged by the artist. At the same time, the very idea of participation is transformed into an abstraction that produces that meaning. This is a cybernetic model of production: the creation of knowledge and production of affect. It is important to identify the tool used to achieve this re-understanding of participation, the interface.

The interface is by definition a point where two systems, subjects, etc. meet and interact. It is a tool that allows a participant to move freely within a space in order to create both passively and actively, by generating an interaction through dialogue with a frame. This interactive moment engages the viewer in traditions of reflection, contemplation, and detached observation. It offers him/her the opportunity to generate questions about elements of participation, specifically negotiation, refusal, and compromise.

If we can agree that we currently live and operate in a culture driven by interactive media and that “culture becomes something we ‘do’ then it’s the interface that defines how we do it and how the ‘doing’ feels” (Rokeby, 1998). The interface becomes the ideal tool for subverting the architecture of the digital landscape.

What is important to take away here is how the interface is used as a way to generate an interactive moment that produces a participation that places the viewer within the traditional associations I have listed. If then, participation becomes an abstraction at the core of the work, what do we do with this tool? In what framework does this tool allow for subversion?

An Algorithmic Frame

Framing has been characterized with “theoretical and empirical vagueness” (Dietram, 1999) and its definition is inconsistent across fields ranging from sociology to communication sciences. For example: Gregory Bateson and Erving Goffmans’ use the term frame to denote the natural, social, institutional or individual conditions within which an action occurs and is perceived (Oliver, 2000). More recently Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw argued that framing is in fact an extension of agenda setting or, the “ability to influence the salience of the topics on the public agenda” (McCombs, 2002). In other words, it is a kind of algorithmic frame, commonly known as a “ranking algorithm,” which means that, if an item is covered more frequently, it will be regarded as more important. Like an algorithm, “frames seem to be everywhere, but no one knows where exactly they begin and where they end” (Van Gorp, 2007) .

I call for a notion of framing that can be understood as an epistemological tool within this *discursive practice* for organizing and bringing culture in, as well as for framing participation of both the individual and the group. In these terms, it positions the *discursive practice* closer to life praxis by setting an agenda for participation. In order for this frame to work there must be an open interface that underscores the multitude of autonomous individuals in interaction. Thus, frames become the definition of the event. Frames are only recognizable and determinable through objects and are not located in the mind. They govern the participation by rendering the object as frame. In the digital landscape, where the object is merely an apparatus for navigating an invisible landscape through a haptic touch, visual signs and symbols can be appropriated and translated into a physical architecture. Through this kind of appropriation, a frame that mirrors the structure of an existing invisible structure can be erected.

This brings us to the second tool within framing. The *dérive*, best understood as “the drift,” is a technique used by the Situationist International (SI). The SI used it to describe people wandering through cities, being simply pulled by attractions or repulsed by things that are ugly or hateful. In other words, the specific effects of the geographical environment on the emotions and behaviors of individuals. Within *discursive practice*, it is understood as a way to allow the frame to guide the viewer to see a structure in an utterly new way. In effect, it produces a space for discovery or for something to emerge (Debord, 1956).

In 2000, an exhibition titled *What if: Art on the verge of Architecture and Design* was held at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm. It addressed how art practice has been influenced by two related fields running parallel to art: design and architecture. Curator Maria Lind wrote in the catalog:

Artists cannibalize these kindred disciplines for formalistic purposes and in order to reflect and question the concrete, designed reality that surround us (Hoffman, 2014).

30 artists were involved in the project, which was arranged so that artworks, furniture, designed objects and models were shown in different sections. In some areas of the exhibition, objects were close in proximity, while in others, objects were spread out. The layout curated participants' physical movements through the exhibition. The space was a direct homage to the modernist grid, or, in this case, the cityscape. Viewers were supplied with a map that aided their navigation of the exhibition space, which enhanced the notion of traveling. This added a level of participation invited the viewers to reflect on the aesthetics of as well as on their participation with the objects and architectural elements. The effect produced was described by Ina Blom as "bringing out the 'fantastic' and 'surreal' aspects of design and architecture" (Hoffman, 2014). In conjunction with the exhibition, there was a publication and a series of lectures called *listen-ins*. In the lectures, viewers could listen to artists, architects, designers and city planners discuss various projects related to the exhibition (Fig.2.)



(Fig.2) Installation View "*What If: Art on the Verge of Architecture and Design*"

I want to call particular attention to the objects in the show, including the map for guiding the viewers movement. They function as documentary objects that frame a particular kind of participation. Within the

exhibition space, they remain autonomous in that they are there to serve a meta-purpose beyond display and casual contemplation. Although, in my opinion, the exhibition lacks passive participation, what is important to my argument, is that the curation of the objects exemplifies the placing of the viewer in a space of contemplation and reflection and those objects must be antagonistic.



(Fig. 3) Richard Serra, "Tilted Arc" 1981

In 1981, Richard Serra installed *Tilted Arc* in New York City at the Federal Plaza (Fig.3). The installation was a curving wall of raw steel, 120 feet long and twelve feet high. The installation cut the Federal Plaza in half, forcing those working in the surrounding buildings to circumnavigate its enormous bulk as they walked through the plaza. According to Serra, his was the point of the work,.

The viewer becomes aware of himself and of his movement through the plaza. As he moves, the sculpture changes. Contraction and expansion of the sculpture result from the viewer's movement. Step by step the perception not only of the sculpture but of the entire environment changes (Richard, 1981)

What is important to take away from this work is its framing of a particular kind of participation. The structure stood parallel to the existing commuter structure already in place at Federal Plaza. The work underscored the structure and preceeded to disrupt it. People were forced to change their route, to break their momentum. It created an antagonistic frame that enraged its participants and immediately caused a political uproar. It was quickly decommissioned. We can clearly see the bodily and political consequences this sculpture had as an autonomous object. Its transformative and subversive powers do not come from its autonomy alone but rather they emerge through its relation to the structures and people around it, causing a ripple effect of relations.

Let us return to Claire Bishops' critique of *Relational Aesthetics*, where she argues that antagonism and discomfort are crucial to any artworks' social impact. It must be acknowledged that the hands-on-utopias that have been created lack significance in social relations. Rather than addressing the problems of a capitalist society, they create a friction between what their goals and the reasons to exist. In effect, they expose a friction fundamentally present in participatory work. We can clearly see this at play in *Tilted Arc*. What is important to take away here is the visceral experience one has when engaging with the work. Antagonism and discomfort do not come from the mind but are triggered within the body through effect. I agree strongly here with Bishops analysis; a more antagonistic form of audience integration would allow an open door for critical thought to emerge.

The Activist's Curation

How does the notion of framing and the re-conception of participation function within this *discursive practice*? The *curatorial*³ is a key strategy here. The curatorial is a way of inserting an artist's subjectivity into the underlying ideas the art presents. In other words, the ethics of the artist are inserted into and embodied by the objects that create the frame for participation, allowing a viewer to question the very essence of participation so that a new kind of understanding can emerge. We can begin to ask the questions: why participate and who are we participating for? Thus, the curatorial becomes a cybernetic model of production: the production of knowledge and production of effect. The notion of framing within the context of the curatorial is not only a model but also a lens to recognize the parameters that have been mapped out for participatory engagement in order to build a structure to critique or comment on those parameters. It is the "practical contact with and observation of facts or event/s creating a total artwork or *gesamkunstwerk*⁴ in the production of meaning" (Groys).

Detour le monde is another technique used by (SI). It is the belief that everything that needed to be said was already there waiting to be picked up and put together in new ways (Debord, 1956). This allows for a kind of ethics to be embodied by the frame. The *curatorial* allows the artist to turn non-art objects into art through acts of display, a way of art making that has been understood as installation. In this way, it allows the *Dérive* (participation) to rub against the *Detour Le Monde* (curatorial). In effect, that friction creates a space for thinking about ways of living and engaging.

The conventional understanding of an installation is to consider it the framework for the purpose of narrating a certain project or action (Groys, 2013).

I call for a reexamination of the term installation and consider it here as an artistic medium rather than a framework within the discursive practice that takes the *Detour Le Monde* (curatorial) methodology, to arrange objects in order to create a frame for action. In effect, it creates a semi-autonomous structure within

³ The curatorial as a concept since the 1990's is considered part of the attempt to define the field of curatorial-cultural praxis. My interest in the term lies in the expanded definition described by Jans Hoffmann and the use of notion of the curatorial within discursive practice practices.

⁴ *Gesamkunstwerk* is a term first used by Richard Wagner in his essay "The Art Work of the future." The term is translated as total work of art, ideal work of art, universal artwork, synthesis of the arts, comprehensive artwork, all-embracing art form or total artwork) is a work of art that makes use of all or many art forms.

which the objects regain their autonomous status. Thus, the installation still remains an accepted form of art. The installation allows for the production of *semi-autonomous* work, while avoiding the didactic and maintaining a mutable role. By using the methodology of both *Dérive* (participation) and *Detour Le Monde* (curatorial) as described in this essay, the autonomy of an artwork is still possible.

Jens Hoffman is one of the critics that advocates for the *curatorial* in *discursive practice* rather than exhibition making. Hoffman coined the term *paracuratorial*⁵ in which “all the activities which are outside of the exhibition making, and yet positioned as part of the outcome of the *curatorial*” (Hoffmann & McDowell, 2011). Hoffman describes these supplemental activities as:

[...] exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects without ever producing anything that could be exhibited (Hoffmann & Lind, 2011).

The ethical interjection within the *curatorial* is exemplified in Liisa Roberts' *Whats the Time in Vyborg?* (2000-). A longterm project staged in the city of Vyborg along the Russian-Finnish border, this multi-part event was comprised of a series of workshops, performances, exhibitions, films and events around the restoration of the city library which Alvar Aalto designed in 1935. Roberts project is an effort to “restore the library and encourage recognition of its original physical design, as well as changes made by a Soviet renovation in the 1960s” (Roberts, 2004). Critic Reinaldo Laddaga describes what's most difficult about this project:

The objective of Roberts and the core group of What's the Time in Vyborg? Wasn't simply to offer as aesthetic or intellectual experience to an outside public but to facilitate the creation of a temporary community engaged in the process of solving a series of practical problems. The project aspired to have a real efficacy in the site in which it came to happen. Accordingly, any valuation of it should be at the same time artistic and ethical, practical and political (Bishop, 2012).

This short quotation immediately reveals a way to create a work that breaks down hierarchies of authority but also allows for the creation of *semi-autonomous*⁶ work within this *discursive practice*. It is also worth noting the division between participants and audience, artistic goals and problem solving, and the problem of comparison between aesthetic experience and the social component of the project. The social component

⁵ “The Exhibitionist 4: La Critique” The paracuratorial defines curating as encompassing, and making primary, a range of activities that have traditionally been supplementary to an exhibition. *Para-* is derived from Gérard Genette's *paratext* which are all the elements beyond the body text of a book (blurb, cover text, typography, layout, etc.)

⁶ Gillick, Liam “The Wood Way” Whitechapel Art Gallery 2002 The term semi-autonomous is defined here to describe a free zone which is already coded with various meanings, histories, and understandings on the part of the spectator. These zones are often referred to but not limited to galleries and institutions. In this way Gillick is able to de-code the “semiotics of the built world” – the adding and subtracting from existing structures.

within this project suggests that participatory art has an inclination to problem solving/concrete goals (Matthew, 2015). This inclination and division reveal an activist attitude by artistic means.



(Fig. 4) Liam Gillick, “A diagram of the factory once the former workers had cut extra windows in the walls” 2005



(Fig. 5) Liam Gillick, “The view constructed by the factory after it stopped producing cars” 2005

In two works by Liam Gillicks—“A Short Text on the Possibilities of Creating an Economy of Equivalence” held at Palais de Tokyo in 2005 (*Fig.4 and Fig.5*) and “Mirrored Image: A ‘Volvo’ Bar” performed at Kunstverein Munich in 2008 (*Fig.6*)—you can clearly see that the *curatorial* strategy frames the question of participation through the experience of production.

In Palais de Tokyo Gillick included powder coated steel structures, red glitter and acrylic signage. The exhibition was organized around a book that was to be written in conjunction titled "construccion de uno" but was never completed. The book began as a commission for the town square of Kalmar in Sweden in collaboration with Jeppe Aagard Andersen. The book and the exhibition structure pose the question around the factory model of production and how to behave once a factory has closed and conditions of labor have transferred into a post-productive situation. The scenario in the project is that the former producers choose to return to their place of work and re-start the construction of ideas rather than car parts. The desire to turn the focus upon the question of how to reorganize the way things are put together, in the hopes, will have a lasting influence on others even while they eventually dissipate and dissolve into their former, now unrecognizable workplace (Roberts, 2013).

In "Mirrored Image: A 'Volvo' Bar" (Fig.6), Gillick worked with a group of young actors from Munich. The actors within a structure designed by Gillick gave a series of performances. The structure in this exhibition functioned as kind of backdrop or setting for a didactical play, which Gillick described in an interview as:

[...] A play that would describe everything [...] all the relationships over the past 20 years in this space (Gillick, 2009).

The panels in the room were derived from acoustic panels lining stages for the performance of classical music. Here the panels are not used for their acoustic properties but rather their potential to create spaces.



(Fig. 6) Liam Gillick, "Mirrored Image, A 'volvo' bar" 2008

The exhibition described above capitalizes not on actual participation, but rather on the framing of participation. Participation in this exhibition invites the viewer to question modes of production. The framing

of the question in the work is of importance here. Though the exhibition remains autonomous, it still engages with life praxis in that the work operates as a *functional parallel* to contemporary working dilemmas. Gillick often describes his work as “engaging with both the *out of reach* and the *too close* simultaneously” (Gillick, 2009). This model of framing leads to a questioning of participation through participation. In effect, participation becomes an abstraction at the core of the work.

What is important to take away here is the interaction. It opens up the potential to frame the gap created between the participant’s actions and the abstract participation represented by the actions. Thus, it creates an opening, a space of amplified consciousness of ones’ body in relation to the objects that set the backdrop/frame for participation and interaction. In effect, the *discursive practice* can set the stage for the activation of critical self-consciousness. There is now a parallel to be drawn between public behavior and *spectacle*. The *spectacle* being a kind of producer of public behavior; *participation* within this *discursive practice* becomes a *functional parallel*⁷ alongside the production of structures for participation. In turn, we can begin to recognize the subversive potential of the *discursive practice*.

Conclusion

From railroads and trains to undersea cables, a global rhythm is being created. It is connecting the world and bringing difference to ones’ front door. It uses the built worlds landscape as a blueprint for a virtual landscape—an imitation, a theatrical moment. Thus, propelling a culture of movement like traveling on a subway from station to station. Underground not noticed by the city above, passing hundreds of people on the way but never noticing them, where individual isolation, the fleeting and the ephemeral are understood as community and something meaningful. A space of contradiction and misdirection in culture has reared its head. Art must stand against the evolution of the invisible spectacle that we once understood. It must be subversive in its strategy and reflective in its delivery. An artistically functional discursive practice positioned adjacent to the cultures/ structures/ and systems, it comments/ critiques in order to find ways to plan, proceed and maneuver our built world.

It is now clear that we are moving ever faster to a world driven by the virtual. By tracing the conceptions of time and space through architectural technologies, both physical and virtual, we can clearly see a merging occurring. It is creating a culture of constant movement, no longer confined to a local rhythm but rather a global symphony, a culture of participants passively participating in a continuity of place without time. Thus, they unknowingly give birth to another evolution of the capitalist machine.

Art has a responsibility to reflect back to the world that which it has done. Through the reexamining of the epistemological categories of participation, framing and curation, art now has a function that allows us to see ourselves and reexamine the systems and structures that enforce a routine of behaviors that become almost

⁷ Gillick, Liam “Maybe it would be better if we worked in groups of three? Part 1 of 2: The Discursive practice” The term is functional Parallels is used to describe modes of generating ideas that are part of the same cultural territory that emerge from collaborative, collective, or negotiated positions. These positions function in parallel to the situation, specifically in situations of production in Gillicks case. It is also referred to as Free Zones of real production. This can be best understood in the context of Jans Hoffmans definition of the *paracuratorial* – all work that is outside of the exhibition-making.

invisible. It operates as a *discursive practice* that de-familiarizes and de-natures our experience of ourselves.

I want to be clear that this discursive practice is not motivated by an intention to change the world, advocate for social reform or come up with alternative models of production or communication. The *discursive practice* is a way to open up a space for thought and the potential for thinking about the effect of the digital landscape that we occupy has on the body and the mind.

It is not meant to accelerate, but rather to slow down. The culture we live in is already moving at an accelerated pace and we as a society are struggling to keep up, consequently destroying any opportunity for collaboration and participation through technological progress. Like the Avant Gardists before me I have an affinity for the technological world and the effect it has on social issues, but also ultimately irritated by the lack of direction and ultimate purpose of technology.

I find that the discursive practice will serve as a continued tool for shaping, analyzing and understanding the life of cultures/ systems/ and structures created by technological progress. These things are becoming more and more localized within the current culture. The works and theories presented in this essay are jumping off points for describing this *discursive practice* that is flexible and multifaceted. Through the analysis of the notion of participation, the *curatorial* and the idea of framing in the works discussed, a clearer picture can thus be formed of this *discursive practice*.

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