

Ubiquity and Fluidity of Art, Science, Performance and Technology

25 years of critical and creative
curatorial practice 1979-2004

Supporting Documentation submitted for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy

by

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Abstract

In this practice-based supporting documentation, I utilise what I nominate as twin axes, or vectors, fluidity and ubiquity, to describe the art practice I have engaged with over 25 years. Ubiquity to describe the way that art spreads into the areas of science, technology and real-life situations including political issues; fluidity to describe the artist's ability to adapt quickly to circumstances. To do this I use various case studies emerging from my professional trajectory - firstly as founder and editor of Performance Magazine from 1979 and secondly as a creative curator working internationally since 1987.

In the introduction I list the activities I have undertaken that inform this research, which, along with the list of materials, illustrates my practice-based research.

I have selected the projects here because of their resonance and ability to reflect the above axes and these are presented as active field notes emerging from critical and curatorial practice. I also reflect on the artist's critical engagement with science and technology and the artist's ability to manipulate contestable data, both from a subjective and objective point of view. I also provide an historical snapshot of artistic activity which is widely drawn, yet maps various strata of artistic practices that might accompany an archive of an era. In doing this I describe unusual environments such as microgravity and other areas where the artist's frontiers are expanded in a fluid and ubiquitous manner, and list some strategies for artistic survival.

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1) Introduction

There have been many ways to describe artists' movement across disciplines in the last century and the beginning of this one. In this supporting documentation of my practice-based work I am using two vectors, ubiquity, in the sense of the tendency to spread out across various frontiers, to be everywhere at once; and fluidity, in the sense of rapid and almost seamless flow across disciplinary localities. The source material contains non-sequential selected case studies from a period of 25 years of work and some texts authored by myself. In this way, I aim to map the various strata of art practice that I have either originally initiated or taken a significant part in. In doing this, I will argue that a coherent, relevant practice can be constructed across various axes of different fields – principally art, science, and technology – using various media ranging from publishing to performance and moving and static visual representation and extending outside the art sphere into both 'real' life and scientific endeavour.

What is the breadth of this relevant practice? In 1979, motivated by a perceived gap in publications reflecting the movement across disciplines between visual performance art, installation, experimental theatre, music, film and video emerging in Britain and Europe, I founded and started to edit the journal *Performance Magazine*. It soon also became a significant cultural journal 'interrogating reality' as illustrated here in the chapter of the same name. Guest editors included Lynne McRitchie, Tracey Warr, Claire McDonald and Steve Rogers who took over the editorship in 1987 until his untimely and tragic death as a result of AIDS in 1989. The editorship was then taken over by Gray Watson until 1992, when the magazine decided to make way for new blood in the form of *Hybrid Magazine*.

In 1987, I visited Documenta and various other European exhibitions and festivals to produce a special issue for *Performance Magazine* on Europe and became a freelance curator, producing the exhibition on art and the media 'Confrontations' for the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle Upon Tyne as well as a series of performances and installations for the AIR Gallery in London. I then founded and became the director of the Edge Biennale Trust which presented the major performance and installation festivals Edge 88 in

London, Edge 90 in Newcastle Upon Tyne and Edge 92 in London and Madrid, as part of the European Capital of Culture. Tracey Warr joined me as co-director for Edge 92. Jon Bewley co-curated part of Edge 88 and Edge 90 as a member of Projects UK and was for a period of time co-director of Edge 92. During this period over 50 newly-commissioned major works by artists were presented in a site-specific context.

In 1992, with the Edge Biennale concluded, I became a freelance curator working with Tracey Warr on projects such as Earthwire (1994) and James Turrells' Northern Skyspace (later to become the Kielder Skyspace). In 1995 I became the artistic director of the Belluard-Bollwerk International Festival in Fribourg, Switzerland and produced a significant event and conference about art and consciousness entitled 'The Incident' (See chapter 7 on Art, Science and subjective Reality). This was later repeated at London's ICA as a major season.

In 1999 I joined Nicola Triscott, founder and director of the Arts Catalyst, the science-art agency, as curator and remain there today. At the same time I became a part-time Phd student at Brunel University and started my practice-based research which informed my work with the Arts Catalyst on the following projects: Eye of the Storm (2000, Royal Institution), a conference on science and controversy, Atomic (2001, Imperial College) an exhibition about nuclear power and idealism, Clean Rooms (2003-2004, Gallery Oldham, Natural History Museum) an exhibition about artists engaging with biotech industries, Working With Wetware (2004, Darwin Centre, Natural History Museum), a symposium on the ethics of artists working with genetics and a series of parabolic flight campaigns in Russia and France leading to the exhibition MIR - documentation of microgravity interdisciplinary research (2004/2005, Cornerhouse, Manchester, Stills, Edinburgh). In 2005 I curated the first 'Artist's Airshow', about artists engaging with concepts of flight at the former Royal Aeronautical Engineering Workshops at Farnborough. Finally in 2005 I worked with Nicola Triscott on developing a cultural policy for the International Space Station under a contract awarded to the Arts Catalyst by the European Space Agency (to be published).

How have the case studies been selected? Firstly, where I have the opinion that they represent a significant creative advance in their field. This is a qualitative judgement, which I sum up in both their factual and intuitive aspects. Secondly, where I feel a significant historical position has been established. This has been done from the point of view of the critic/curator (I am both) as accidental person in history. This refers not only to the Artist Placement Group's definition of the artists as 'incidental person' in the sixties (Latham/Steveni, 1966) but also to the literary and popular cultural notion of the 'eminence grise' (the spy, clothed in grey, who appeared unexpectedly in various parts of Europe, reporting the political mood of the populace to Cardinal Richeleu). (i) In other words, being in a certain place at a certain significant time, writing about and curating projects that admittedly show only part of the picture, but which are linked to other kinds of movements in art.

I use this concept then to chart a personal history which is intertwined with other personal histories, and serves as a structural device rather than a biography or an attempt to provide a whole art historical picture. I was there, I saw this, I did that. I hope this is interesting to you. To try and sum up the various webs of activity, to draw together all the threads – as Steven Wilson attempted in his vast-ranging tome 'Information Arts' (Wilson, 2002) – would be to attempt the impossible.

Instead, this set of descriptions could be compared to an anthropologist's field notes. In fact, an active description of a contemporary creative curator's work has rarely been attempted in the history of recent research. Normally, this would be done from the point of view of an art historian, or the artist him/herself. So, while not a complete study of the field in which I have worked, this represents a partially subjective view, interspersed with other, pertinent viewpoints. Another analogy is that of a geological survey of a timeline of activity, with various layers being exposed at different times.

Each set of case studies represents a vector, chosen by the above methodologies that brings together various correspondences I consider to be co-related over a 25-year period. So for example, Brion Gysin's dream machine experiments with Ian Somerfield (La Frenais, 1981: 13-16), are followed by Guillermo Gomez Pena's illegal radio transmissions in Newcastle (Bennett, 1990: 228) and lead to

Simon Faithfull's transmitted live TV glimpses of the edge of space from a weather balloon launched by the audience (Arts Catalyst, Artist's Airshow, web ref.) Ulrike Rosenbach's site-specific performances at the 1987 Documenta takes us through Black Market's performance for 5 random Glasgow taxicabs (Bennett, 1990: 225), to Neal White's penetration of a Class 3 Clean Room environment at a Marseille space laboratory (Clean Rooms Catalogue 2002, 7-12).

In this thesis, I aim to convey a series of moving foci which cross disciplines, bringing in new concepts such as 'performative science', the artist as remote sensing device, the artist as nuclear sculptor, the artist as cosmonaut. I also show that the job description of the critic and the curator are both subject to change. What happens to the critic when he or she must undergo a three-week bike ride to review a performance? What happens to the curator when he must work undercover with hunt saboteurs to prevent the artist being arrested and deported, float in midair on a diving aircraft, or is simply reduced to the one who comes and empties the toilets in a three-month remote habitation experiment? (Chapters 3.4.10).

Finally, it is necessary to point out that these case studies have a simple theoretical framework, which I eventually decided would be the most appropriate to capture the commonality of the work: the use of the vectors of ubiquity and fluidity. In some cases they touch on ground covered by other writers about the 'object of performance', the limits of the artists' body, the breakdown of the gap between the perceiver and the perceived, placelessness, the territory of the liminal. Furthermore, I have deliberately preferred not to filter these case studies through relevant models of cultural theory such as those formulated by, for example, Deleuze. While I acknowledge that in some circumstances these can be a useful tool – a sharp instrument for closer analysis – I see myself as a 'field curator' noting down evidence for further examination, which I hope will move the reader towards useful eventual conclusions about the wider movements between and beyond disciplines. To my knowledge, this supporting documentation is the first instance of an active record of curating in the form of research.

What follows in the various chapters are descriptions of artworks and projects I have been directly involved in producing. It is an attempt to structure a complex story of curating and criticism and to draw some common threads together. Some of the work described was undertaken during my period of research and has been joined with this 25-year body of work to be considered together as a practice-based thesis. In other words, I hope to present the projects as, in a sense, being authored by me, in that I have organised and been intimately involved in them – although as a curator I am reliant of course on the artists to come up with the creative ideas and push them through. In addition to this documentation, catalogues and a video have been provided as examples of work undertaken during, or recent to, this period of research. As documentation, this should be taken as contributing to the total picture of my research and informing its conclusions.

A technical note about the writing of some of these chapters. They are a mixture of text written contemporaneously and re-writing of texts written in the past 25 years for various purposes. The earlier texts form the minority of the thesis, but I have deliberately inserted them, indented, within the chapters. This is to provide an accurate record of my work as well as retain the freshness of the original. I have however partially reworked them and in some cases altered them to remove any historical inconsistencies. References are given in case the reader wants to consult the original.

i) François Leclerc du Tremblay (better known as "*Père Joseph*" or "Father Joseph"), a Capuchin monk, who would later become a close confidant (of Cardinal Richelieu) Because of his closeness to Richelieu (*éminence*), and the grey colour of his robes, Father Joseph was also nicknamed *l'Éminence grise* ("the Grey Eminence"). Later, Richelieu often used Father Joseph as an agent during diplomatic negotiations.

2) Interrogating Reality

When I founded Performance Magazine in 1979, it was clear there was a gap in the documentation of new forms of art that veered away from the object and away from theatre. Yet Performance Magazine, though regularly featuring profiles of 'classical' performance art figures – for example the British performance art duo The Kipper Kids appeared in its first issue (La Frenais, 1979:3-6) before going on to feature interviews with artists such as John Cage and Joseph Beuys – was also inspired by the Nicolas Roeg/Donald Cammell movie by the same name, Performance (Dir. Roeg/Cammell 1970) and continued to reflect themes from that movie through its 13 year life. That film, in its interaction and reality exchange between the rock star fop, Jagger and the gangster Turner, based on the Borges theme of the doppelganger from the story 'Tlon Iqbar, Orbis Tertius' (Borges, 1962: 27-43), set a theme of interrogating reality that was soon to become the magazine's hallmark.

The gauntlet was thrown down early by the director of the theatre group The Phantom Captain (1970), Neil Hornick, in his cover interview with the iconic comedian Charlie Drake. (Hornick, 1981:13-16) It continued with a 'refocussing' of West End theatre, reaching its ultimate provocation in an interview with Fiona Richmond who was at that time appearing in the bedroom farce of the period: 'Wot, No Pyjamas?' (Hornick, 1981:19-22).

In 'State Performance', the 'fairytale' Royal Wedding for Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer was given the full Performance treatment with articles by Lynn McRitchie comparing the wedding to that of the Yorkshire Ripper, by myself on the performative power of heraldry, and with a specially commissioned performance for the cover by performance duo Marty St James and Anne Wilson, who conducted a mock wedding on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral. (McRitchie, 1981 6-9) Of course life always outperforms art, so had we known when planning our special issue that the Prince and his long-time mistress had been part of a larger, cynical plot to find a nineteen year old virgin commoner to renew

a flagging inbred monarchy (and then, according to popular myth, to assassinate), we might have revised our analysis more along the lines of conspiracy theory.

Long before Tracey Emin started her artistic practice, we were re-interpreting bedding as art, and when the late Steve Rogers joined the team, there would always be a feature on events such as Crufts Dog show, the Ideal Home exhibition and the Earls Court Boat Show. (Rogers, 1984:12-13, Blazwick, Rodley, 1984:8-10, Stalin, 1984:14-16) There would sometimes be a more serious thematic to this, and the idea of performance as a fluid gesture started to emerge as we engaged more and more in performance as process, proceeding to land art and journeys by horse and cart. A special issue on performance journeys for example, was inspired by a project by artist Johannes Cornellison in which he circumnavigated the world, documenting points at which the equator was marked. 'Art on the Run' was another issue where to review a single performance by Bath's Natural Theatre company over a period of three weeks during the Lands End to John O' Groats bike ride, I, as editor, rode a bicycle all the way, taking notes (La Frenais, 1982: pp 14-20).

Natural Theatre, still in operation today, are an interesting case in point given the historically cyclical waves of interest in art that interrogates reality. What Natural Theatre did was try to be ordinary people. Although they would occasionally use absurdist devices to frame their real-life activities, such as portraying a group of VIPs arriving with slightly mannered activities, their methodology was one of the hoax, which used elements of what they would find. So for example, as most of their captive audience consisted of cyclists – in the early eighties a somewhat endangered and in some cases, militant minority – a typical tactic was to mount a demonstration of angry motorists demanding more rights for Vauxhall drivers. Or on a particularly demanding hill, an emergency medical station with Crimean-war style nurses. For days they might not appear, then the audience would be treated to a site-specific performance of 'The Sound of Music' on some picturesque hill. Natural Theatre are located in the long tradition therefore of the hoax, starting with the inspection of a naval dockyard at the turn of the century by Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey and the Bloomsbury group, in the 'Dreadnought Hoax' (i) and

culminating in today's infiltration of corporate life by activists such as the Yes Men (Natural Theatre, Yes Men: web refs).

Art interrogating reality became seriously analysed in a special issue we did on artists becoming totally immersed in other professions or activities such as ballroom dancing and deep sea diving. The late Steve Cripps, who took performance pyrotechnics to their ultimate conclusion, was interviewed about his membership of the Fire Brigade. 'For Cripps, the Fire Brigade was of all the straight jobs you can get, one of the things that takes you to your fullest capacities'.

After having the Fire Brigade called out to several of his performances, this was the ultimate ironic choice. For Cripps it was also a chance to learn more - to pick up something about the field he worked in: smoke, fire, bangs and flashes. But something like the Fire Brigade is bound to change you; it is not something you could just slip in and out of, as Cripps stated, 'They wanted to know I wasn't just going to just stay a few months and write a book about it'. An everyday experience of the great show that occurs when a fire engine comes tearing round the streets with firemen hanging off the sides suggests that in their own way, firemen are no strangers to performance.

Writing in 1983, I go on to ask, 'what is the actual difference between an artist who becomes a fireman and a fireman who, say, potters round a bit with paints in his spare time?' In the chapter 'Big Science, Big Ideas', this question is posed about the artists who want to become astronauts or nuclear engineers and the astronauts and nuclear engineers who want to become artists. For Cripps, his life as an artist had already changed: 'At first he "just wanted to know if you could do it" but now the practice of stretching himself to the limits, fighting fires and actually saving lives seems to have become more important. And the future? "I'm waiting to be called out to an art gallery"' (La Frenais, 1983: 24-26).

This fluid transaction between art and human activity was therefore clearly established in the lifetime of Performance Magazine, and became apparent in the art projects I started to organize, starting with the exhibition 'Confrontations' at the Laing Art gallery, Newcastle (Iles, 1987:3), continuing with 'At the Edge'

and 'Last Sweat of Youth' at the Air Gallery, London and developing further with the Edge Biennale, a concentrated exhibition/festival of experimental work which continued for six years

For example, in 1990 Edge 90 set out with a clear mission to interrogate life. The most significant work in the exhibition was that of two Belgian artists from Antwerp, Guillaume Bijl and Ria Paquee. The work of these artists has, in my opinion influenced the post-Duchamp view of reality that imbued many UK artists in the late 90s, including the self and media-styled YBA grouping. Bijl had made his name in the late eighties by taking environments and objects and literally attempting to erase the art from them. He would create an entire gymnasium, or a lighting shop and present these as artworks. His pieces have names like Driving School, Shoe Shop, Travel Agency, Launderette, Army Information Centre, Chalet and Front Room Window. All these 'subtly assault our conceptions about the exact location of the boundaries of art' (Edge 90 programme). However, trying to remove the 'art' from these constructions actually had the effect of configuring them even more as artworks, in that removed from their context, they were made luminously absurd by their lack of meaning.

When we brought Bijl to Newcastle, he proposed a complicated and wide-ranging construct. On a previous site visit, he had noticed in the local newspapers a regional obsession for record-breaking achievements and attempts to be listed in the Guinness Book of Records, so he proposed to stage such an attempt - the world record for counting in the dark. This was to be done by a local man called Larry Clark. It was unsure whether this was a reference to the American realist photographer and film-maker, but anyway, Clark was actually a tailor's dummy with a simple animatronic mouth-movement, placed in a glass booth, facing backwards to the public. In the semi-darkness, he looked exactly like a real person counting steadily day in, day out.

This was just the start of the construction. A real life story was constructed for Clark, and an imitation display of the other records he had beaten was assembled. The local TV station and newspapers were successfully hoaxed, and the clippings and video added to the display, adding to the sense of drama. A security guard was hired to guard the booth. The voice of 'Larry' was recorded over a period of days by

the co-curator of the exhibition, Jon Bewley. As the exhibition closed every night, it was easy to simply extrapolate the numbers as if it was happening on a 24-hour basis. Everyone was fooled except the small number of organisers in on the event. The record was sent into the Guinness book of records, but not verified or accepted. This project was never repeated (Bennett, 1990: 224).

Ria Paquee works under long-term deep cover with a character she calls 'Madame'. Paquee: 'I wanted to illustrate the loneliness of an ordinary person. As a result of her uncertain social situation and her unconscious way of living, Madame is simply filling in her time. She is a personification of part of the mass'. Paquee uses Madame as a disguise to take bus tours anonymously, trailed by a highly discreet cameraman, Wim Claus. Aiming for the look of a relatively well-dressed middle-aged lady, Paquee attempts, like Bijl, to erase herself as a object/person, throwing the situations she finds herself into high sculptural relief.

In 'Madame visiting the National Garden festival hoping to see the Princess' (Paquee, 1990), we organised for her to visit the official opening of the Gateshead Garden festival, itself a site for a number of works of public art. Her aim was to get as close as possible to royalty, in the form of Princess Anne, and infiltrate a group of visitors to the festival. The final shot in the sequence shows Madame caught in the frame with Anne. However, cultural differences may have partly exposed her, as the photo shows her surrounded by increasingly nervous people not unlike plain-clothed police officers.

The use of disguise, hoax and infiltration can be used as increasingly effective tools by artists, although it raises ethical questions if not thought through correctly. The final case study of interrogating reality comes with the US artist/activist group Critical Art Ensemble, who have used various constructions to surround their events, while adding a significant dose of 'real' reality to the masquerade. As the 'Cult of the New Eve', for example, they posed as Extropian-style science positivists, to make a comment on the PR surrounding the decoding of DNA promoted by Celera and government science bodies. Staged in Les Abbatoirs, Toulouse and other venues in Europe they handed out real beer brewed from the artists' own DNA (Critical Art Ensemble, web ref.).

Working with The Arts Catalyst, Critical Art Ensemble produced 'Genterra', which I curated in a new museum in Oldham, Lancs in 2002 and the Darwin Centre at the Natural History Museum London in 2003. (Arts Catalyst, Biotech projects, web ref) Dressed in white coats, they unfurled their faux corporate banner for the Genterra Corporation 'Tomorrow's Science Today'. In this case the hoax ended with the white coats, as the members of CAE show members of the public how easy it is to genetically modify the e.coli bacteria, allowing them to undertake the procedure (safely) themselves and even take the results home. Their aim is to make a process some may see as 'scary' transparent, so that people can make informed decisions about issues such as genetic modification and cloning without mediation by the 'experts'. Of course this brings with it contradictions, as they are wearing the uniform of 'experts' in order to do this.

In many ways, the artists' project of interrogating reality is over, as ordinary people are encouraged to question real life in all its forms through films such as 'The Truman Show' and countless reality TV shows. Perhaps giving people the ability to alter their own realities through social and political action, or picking up the tools that affect reality, such as access to biotechnology, or on a more basic level, energy production, is another.

For the curator, this kind of practice needs to be interpreted as a tactic to get ideas across, to break through expectations. A parallel could be drawn with historical re-enactment. Critical Art Ensemble are now currently making a film about the secret testing of biological warfare organisms in Britain and the US: 'Marching Plague', a project I am currently curating. (Arts Catalyst Biotech Projects, web ref.) This will involve the actual restaging of experiments that were done in the open air using analogue material (i.e. biological materials that transmit themselves through populations in the same way as anthrax). The aim of this is to allow the public to engage with the hidden 'scary' elements of science that are not part of the public image of science. This theme will be expanded later in the chapter, Big Science Questioned.

i From 1907-1912 Dreadnought served as flagship of the Royal Navy's Home Fleet, as famous in its days as the Concorde supersonic airliner sixty years later. In 1910 it attracted the attention of notorious hoaxer Horace de Vere Cole, who persuaded the Royal Navy to arrange for a party of Abyssinian royals to be given a tour of a ship. In reality, the "Abyssinian royals" were some of Cole's friends in blackface and disguise, including a young Virginia Woolf and her Bloomsbury Group friends; it became known as the Dreadnought hoax. Cole had picked Dreadnought because she was the most prominent and visible symbol of Britain's naval might; but even by 1910 she was obsolete.

3) Subversive Transmissions

To meet and interview the poet, cult figure, and associate of William Burroughs, the elusive Brion Gysin in 1981 for Performance Magazine (La Frenais, 1981: 11-15), was to unknowingly herald the start of a recurring obsession with the poetic uses of technology in work I later curated. Along with Burroughs' *The Soft Machine* and *Nova Express* (Burroughs 1961, 1964) Gysin's *'The Process'* (Gysin 1961) – based loosely on and satirising some of the founder figures of Scientology – along with his early experiments with tape-recorded sound and his *'Dream Machine'* created with Ian Sommerville, made him a strong influence on my work as a video artist before I became a writer and curator. In the introduction to the interview I wrote:

No one contemporary artform could possibly stake a claim to the work of Brion Gysin. Since the thirties he has been a visual artist, composer, musician, inventor, restaurateur, popular novelist, poet and performance artist. His collaborations with Burroughs and others have inspired innovative activities in film, pop music, performance, and a seemingly endless stream of academic dissections and underground literary ephemera. They were pioneers in using tapes and slides in the late 50s and early 60's at the Dover St ICA and other such venues. Along with mathematician Ian Sommerville they regarded their work as a genuine scientific experiment in the use of time and the effects of cut-up images on the human psyche...His most widely read book, *'The Process'*, is centred around a sound poem *'Rub Out The Word'* which when played as a sound loop could destroy whole segments of history.

Could this sort of thing really happen? 'Well William (Burroughs) has a great story about closing down the Maple Leaf Cafe, or something or the other, Dean St or some such place as that. He hexed it out of existence, but I've forgotten the name of the place...he was poorly dealt with, or poorly served there, so he vowed vengeance on them and recorded all sorts of noises of breaking glass and fights and things like that and went around playing them up and down in front of that place until somebody did smash their window and then the whole place went out of business, which was what he intended.'

Gysin broadcast some of his sound poems with the BBC in 1960 including 'I am That I Am', 'Junk is No Good Baby' and 'Kick That Habit Man', working in the 'Footsteps' studio, 'where they make sounds for haunted houses, and wind and waves and birds and creaking doors and things like that.' Rob La Frenais: 'I imagined myself in 1960, listening to the home service, or was it the Third Programme? And hearing that come out I imagine myself being quite startled by it'. Brion Gysin: 'Well the sort of people who were not startled were ladies who had worked in textile factories and found it very like the sort of thing they were used to with the warp and the weft and they wrote a lot of charming letters about how...they realised...they realised semi-unconsciously that this was sound being used as material, so they compared it to their work with material' (La Frenais, 1981: 9-16).

This is an early example of ubiquity of art and technology, with sound experiments unconsciously being transmitted through mainstream radio. Brion Gysin died in Paris in 1986.

Performance Magazine also had a habit of picking up on subversive examples of misuse of technology. Here, in 1980 is my description of slow-scan:

a way of transmitting a video signal down a phone line, bouncing off a disused satellite, or simply throwing it out into the short-wave ether. In fact radio hams have been doing this for years, as John Hopkins (the video pioneer known as Hoppy) discovered when he tuned his robot transceiver (the basic device for decoding slow-scan signals) to those frequencies... On his collection of slow scan tapes is included a striking but naive decoded image of someone's cat, sent out from eastern Europe (during the Communist era) along with friendly greetings scrawled out in various languages. To watch it feels rather like being the recipient of a first message from an alien planet...the intense personal reaction to the opening of a new form of communication which can become an art form in itself...

Hopkins has also conducted this type of slow scan experiment using the Peacesat link in Western Australia and the Pacific (an abandoned satellite donated by NASA for peaceful 'non-political' purposes) to transmit some of his taped material...The image looks the same as a normal TV image, except that it consists of a series of still frames which are replaced about every eight seconds as a slow wipe - "one picture succeeds the next at about the speed that waves hit the shore"... Nowadays technology is moving so fast it is easy to miss the by-ways, to leave behind the little eccentricities, the offshoots that don't seem so practical. With slow scan video, artists are stopping to pick up the pieces (La Frenais, 1980:6).

In 1990 as curator and director of 'Edge 90', I was driving a van equipped with a powerful radio transmitter around the streets of Newcastle upon Tyne with Guillermo Gomez-Pena, performing a version of his 'Border Brujo', a genuine 'subversive' transmission in 'Spanglish', designed for transmissions around the contested border between the US and Mexico. Here was an example where form became more dominant than content, because pirate radio, while becoming acceptable in urban areas in Southern England, was experiencing a crackdown in the North of England. Moreover, Border Brujo would actually 'hack' into commercial radio channels, so unsuspecting listeners would be confronted with Gomez-Pena's work. At another level, Pena's work deals with the notion of 'illegal' as in 'illegal alien', and Pena himself, while prepared to work illegally, did not wish to take the risk of being deported from the UK, thus endangering his status as a Mexican artist working in the US.

In this project we were assisted by Ben Ponton, founder of the experimental music Zoviet France. Ponton was connected to a group of hunt saboteurs, who were able to provide back-up in the form of lookouts with walkie-talkies and getaway vehicles. Generally, it is better to do these difficult projects within the bounds of legality, but in this case the 'illegality' was the subject of the work, so as curator, I operated the equipment – with a lawyer standing by – ready to take technical responsibility for the illegal transmission while Gomez-Pena was whisked away. Each transmission lasted around twenty minutes until it was judged wise to move to another location.

Gomez-Pena's technique of 'reverse anthropology' – inverting dominant culture, wearing a large Mexican cowboy hat and speaking in a low, conspiratorial tone – calls on listeners to question their expectations. An early example of 'culture-jamming', we interrupted the pseudo-American mix of DJ and commercial on Tyne Metro Radio throughout the day. I can say that this was one example of a truly 'liminal' performance in which I participated, operating in the grey areas between legality and illegality, yet occupying the unconscious radio-listening majority's mental territory. Finally, at the top of a tower block in a council estate we heard a number of on-coming police sirens and exited quickly, going on foot into the city streets (I advised Gomez-Pena to now take off his hat...).

In 1994 this project continued in the United States using the medium of TV. In *EI Naftaztec: Cyber TV for 2000 AD*,

'Gomez Pena created a spoof in which it seemed (S. American) Indian 'pirates' had seized the airwaves to talk about Mayan innovations in cyber culture. The event was also broadcast on the internet Mbone and viewers were encouraged to send messages back' (Gomez-Pena web ref.).

In 1993 two events concerning subversive transmissions took place during 'Earthwire', an event curated by myself and Tracey Warr:

A group of sleepers lie half-embedded in a shale-heap in the English countryside. They are attached to neurosynchronisers tuned to delta rhythms. They have inverted their sleep patterns so that day becomes night, night becomes day. An attendant occasionally sends signals to them via a transcutaneous electrical stimulator (TENS unit). They have learned codes in their waking moments so that there is a direct interface between waking and sleeping. Like communicating with the dead, another human boundary is transgressed. The TENS unit also stimulates awareness of lucid dreaming at moments of high REM activity. Later, they may set themselves special group activities, tasks to complete, destinations to visit, to be undertaken collectively in

the 'dream' landscape. They are observed by the inhabitants of a town through a telescope (Gilchrist, web ref.).

It is the middle of the night above a deserted mineshaft in a dark valley. Four mediums are gathered in an open circle. They slowly, gently, enter, leave and re-enter trance states, trying to communicate with the dead. One of the mediums is wired up to a heartbeat monitor. The rhythm of the heartbeat reverberates and echoes around the mineshaft. The circle, dark, subdued, candle-lit, is surrounded by shadowed figures, some crouching, operating an array of high-technology equipment. The mediums' body heat is recorded by a highly heat-sensitive thermographic TV camera. There is high quality video and sound recording. A microwave transmitter sends the thermographic images via a hired BBC outside broadcast unit across the valley, where a group of witnesses and curious members of the public are gathered in a tent situated by a floodlit 16th century decommissioned chapel. One medium enters an intensive trance and his heartbeat, incredibly, speeds up to a continuous hum. All the recording equipment goes dead. (Rogers, Psi-Net, web ref), (La Frenais 1994, P1-2).

I argue that in relation to these projects,

...the use of technology in art and the imagination, where it meets "real" phenomena is an area of practice meriting extremely serious attention. I also infer that art provides a coherent belief system and structure that can positively be used as an alternative to science and religion (without attempting to masquerade as either). The above descriptions are not scientific experiments nor are they aesthetic artworks or installations. Rather they could be seen as personal enquiries presented as artworks...They can be viewed by the public but at least 2/3 of the work is essentially hidden and takes place within the consciousness of the individual humans participating. The data collected is not scientific evidence as such but is rather poetic debris which can be analysed and structured at will (La Frenais, 1994: P.1-2).

Today I question the assertion I made in 1994, that art provides a coherent belief system and structure as an alternative to science and religion, preferring to replace it with the concept of fluidity between art, science and religion. I do not think that art should provide a coherent belief system or structure; this is one of the things that sets it apart from religion, or science, (which unlike religion, benefits from having a fluid belief system as new discoveries hopefully replace old certainties).

The next example of subversive transmission comes at the Festival de Belluard, of which I was artistic director in 1995 (described further in the section - Subjective Reality - Science and Art). Marko Peljhan of Projekt Atol arrived with his project, 'Second Surface - We Were Expecting you!' which mixes CIA transmissions received around the area of the Bosnian conflict, which was flaring up at the time of the festival. Although it was forbidden to transmit radio signals from Switzerland, Peljhan set up equipment that could clearly both receive and transmit to the war zone, in a durational performance that ended with him spending the night sleeping in the Belluard fortress, while the radio signals continue. Over the years, Peljhan has continued to be obsessed with secretive forms of transmission. (Peljhan, web ref.) This was one use of his major project, Makrolab (described in further in 'Altering the Site') and it is continuing in his projects currently under development for radio-controlled and anonymous UAVs for use in contested areas such as border crossing. (Makrolab UAV, web ref.). A recent example was a project he undertook near Tarifa in the Straits of Gibraltar in 2005 as part of the FADAIAT (the Crossing) conference and festival on the subject of European migration. (Fadaiat, web ref.)

Finally, in 2004, during the 'Artists Airshow', which I curated for The Arts Catalyst, Simon Faithfull used advanced amateur television technology in his flying project 'Escape Vehicle'. This project, while entirely legal and safe, played with fluid notions of subversive transmission in several ways. The project consisted of a flying sculpture hoisted to 30 km by a helium weather balloon with a video camera suspended on a pendulum with the object, a household chair. At the height of the flight, the live audience watching on a screen below could see the chair, glinting in sunlight, silhouetted against the blackness of space and the curvature of the earth, until the balloon exploded, due to the altitude, and the chair descended to the earth with a parachute.

Various expectations were made fluid and subversive here. One was that the chair was in fact only a sculpture of a chair, made from balsa wood and foam and painted to look like a chair - itself weighing only a few pounds (the maximum weight allowed for a payload to fly through a potential flightpath) Secondly, that when we applied for a Civil Aviation Authority licence to fly the object we stated simply that it was 'a sculpture'. We did not mention that this was in the shape of a chair on the grounds that this was irrelevant for safety reasons and also of course that the notion of the flying chair might attract unnecessary negative attention on the grounds of frivolity. However, this did not prevent a pilot who was flying in the vicinity radioing in to ask 'what the hell was that?'

The audience, which had to collectively help the launch due to high winds, were intensely captivated by the one and a half hour flight, watching the screen with its vertiginous transmission of the chair flying through clouds to the edge of space with a near-devotional attention. The chair and transmitter, blown by the jet stream around 70 miles to the Kent coast was never recovered (Arts Catalyst, Artists Airshow, web ref).

This chapter, starting with the notion of subversive transmission, ends with an emphasis on the concept of negotiation. What once seemed subversive can be opened out in the long term through engagement with structures designed to make our society safe. It is also necessary to take a responsible attitude to the concept of risk, while separating out real from imagined risks. The foam chair appeared to be dangerous, but it was not. The aviation authority accepted the idea of the sculpture, but once the notion of 'chairness' was introduced, the idea somehow becomes less acceptable. The idea of a chair floating thousands of feet high gives both a real and imagined sense of fear, of extreme vertigo. These are concepts that are relevant for the curator and artist to play with, while minimising any risk to the public.

Risk, then, is an appropriate material to work with, but a sense of ethics and common sense apply when dealing with it. This is an increasing factor, for example in the curating of performance art, where potentially harmful practices may be employed within an atmosphere of trust, such as when blood is let

out of the body, as in the work of Kira O'Reilly and Franko B. The atmospheric enjoyment of subversion must eventually be framed by the notion of responsibility, when the curator, following the path of ubiquity and fluidity, is entrusted with the safety of others.

4) Altering the Site

'What interests me is the artist's ability to respond to an unusual space or situation and to appropriate it for one's own obsessions' (Interview with Rob La Frenais by Sarah Kent, Time Out 1988).

One of the significant movements towards the ubiquity of art in the last few decades has been the redefinition of the site, in the production of works specific to the site in which they find themselves. Edge 88 expanded the notion of site into the 'hidden village', working in the then undeveloped area of Clerkenwell, London. Deanna Petherbridge, writing in the Financial Times at the time, talked of :

'wandering through Clerkenwell, the inner city village with its secret squares, unexpected alleys, bosky churchyards (being) pleasurable enough on a mild autumn evening. To also discover curious installations and obsessive activities along the way makes for a rich and very metropolitan experience. As well as gallery venues...artists have chosen swimming pools, churches and disused offices for their 'laboratory' pieces. The installations, using videos, lasers, live performance, props and written material, are works on the edge of fine art practice: on the edge too, of politics and emotions. Sometimes a cutting edge...sometimes a cutting instrument' (Petherbridge, 1988 p.5).

In researching and developing Edge 88, I spent a year travelling around Europe in 1987, and had also produced a special 'European' issue of Performance Magazine. Particularly significant for me was the performance art section of Documenta of that year, curated by Elizabeth Jappe. As well as being highly impressed and moved by performance from Poland (see chapter 'The Pit and the Pendulum'), and meeting the artist Boris Neislony, who went on to found the 'Black Market' group, I was most impressed by the site-based work I saw, such as the performance at dusk by the 'classical' performance artist Ulrike Rosenbach, in the bower of the Templehof, with a dervish-like 'turning piece'. It was possible to find a

'hidden' garden in Clerkenwell for this work in the grounds of a museum, appropriately owned by the Knights of the Order of St John, the respectable remnant of a pan-European secret society, the Knights Templar. (Knights Templar, web ref.)

But the most resonant site discovery in this exhibition was the finding of the site for the late Helen Chadwick's 'Blood Hyphen' in the Clerkenwell Medical mission. Wandering around the streets, looking for a site with Chadwick, we happened on a queue of elderly people outside a door. It turned out, anomalously in this now prosperous area that an almost Victorian institution existed here. Even since the founding of the NHS, the local clients of the mission came here for medical treatment in exchange for taking part in a prayer meeting. Helen Chadwick insisted we try to get a meeting with the doctor/priests who ran this place, and it turned out they were a unique small fundamentalist Christian sect dating back to the last century. We asked to see the adjoining chapel, and were astonished to find an interior where the pulpit seemed to extend right up to a sixties-style false roof. We asked to climb into the pulpit and discovered that by removing a panel, you could put your head into the top part of the artificially divided chapel and see the gallery above, complete with traditional pipe-organ with an extraordinary, melancholic light coming in, giving the roof interior an almost gothic air.

Helen Chadwick had had the idea for the staging of an artificial 'miracle' and to our amazement - over a series of tense meetings (including prayers), over a period of months - persuaded the doctor/priests to consent. The result was a major installation of immense power, that commented both on the artist's concerns and the extraordinary resonance and history of the site.

Oliver Bennett described it in the 'New Art Examiner':

Blood Hyphen explored this artist's relationship to religion and femininity... A red laser beam, representing the link (or 'hyphen') between the blood of Christ and procreation, shone from a crescent in the wall, cutting through the top bit of the chapel, to land in a photograph of cells, referring to high-tech healing processes for cervical cancer. In the darkened interior of the chapel,

it had a similar beatific radiance to stained glass and a feeling of erotic abstraction that would have delighted St Teresa of Avila (Bennett 1989 62-65).

Interestingly, this installation was recreated perfectly as part of the Barbican's posthumous retrospective of Helen Chadwick's work in 2004. The recreation was part-financed by the Wellcome Trust and reframed as a 'sci-art' project (Chadwick, 2005, web ref.).

The very careful groundwork laid for this highly layered work was a key factor in helping us to successfully put on what could be interpreted as a thematically problematic work, in a highly sensitive site. Four years later, working with Helen Chadwick again, this time for Edge 92 in Madrid as part of the European Capital of Culture, a similar, even more ambitious undertaking was attempted, which, although visually stunning, could be said to have failed on several levels. 'Fruit Rage 1 and 11 A project for 2 Fountains,' theoretically drew correlations between Hieronymous Bosch's 'The Garden of Earthly Delights and a medical text on AIDS.

In practice, two inactive fountains in a quiet residential area of Madrid, separated by a short hill and a narrow alleyway, were 'miraculously' reactivated, with the higher one running red from above, like blood, and the other running purple bubbling up from below, creating a rather noxious-looking chemical pond. The back-story of this site, discovered after we had started work, was that these had been execution sites, and the alley way had been used to force victims of the Spanish Inquisition to run the gauntlet of blows or worse, after they had been tried on the site of the higher fountain, before being taken below to be burnt or hanged.

The fact that these fountains had been replumbed by a previously slothful town council and were associated with the Capital of Culture, already publicly derided as a waste of taxpayers money, coupled with immense technical problems and the already bloody history of the site meant these installations could probably be said to be actually, in some sense, 'cursed'. The purple fountain was regularly vandalised by local youths, so was finally closed down. The blood-red fountain was marginally more

popular, and continued to flow during the exhibition, but was then the subject of a campaign by an ecological group who maintained it was killing the local bird population (it was in fact edible dye, carefully selected to be safe even for humans – on several occasions I had to publicly drink from the fountain to prove it was safe). Helen Chadwick was a great artist, and this was one of her most ambitious pieces of work, but as organiser, it could probably be said that the lessons of making site-specific work were not yet fully learnt and that we should have engaged in a long period of consultation before embarking on such a project.

The challenges to find sites that represent the ubiquity of art posed to organisers by artists like this are always interesting to meet, however. When Cornelia Parker, in 1989 asked for a mainline station and an entire train, we found her St Pancras station and a modest 3 unit diesel train for her piece 'Left Luggage'. Working for 24 hours with a team of volunteers, we tied down the train in the manner of the Lilliputians tying down Gulliver. The work referred to Cornelia's past as the child of market gardeners and the obsessive tying of plants in the nurseries where she had to help out. What was interesting was that I had asked Parker, already by then a well-known sculptor, to devise a performance. She chose as the performance object the inanimate but human-controlled object of a train. The work also became extraordinarily site-specific, with the staff of St Pancras station joining in the ritual, making announcements, raising a flag and blowing a whistle as the train pulled out with the artist in it. The system of the railway (pre-nationalisation) became performative in the service of art for the day. As the train left the station, the thousands of lengths of string pulled handkerchiefs from suitcases on the platform - the 'left luggage'. (Parker, video, 1989)

A similar strategy was employed when I asked filmmaker Isaac Julien to recreate his film 'Looking for Langston' in a site-specific performance in the area of derelict gasometers behind Kings Cross station, awaiting transformation into a massive new Eurostar terminal over the following 10 years.

Isaac Julien: 'The Langston performance was first staged in the Kings Cross area of London which has a reputation for sex and sleaze. Listen to the Pet Shop Boys singing. Because of the

railway station, Kings Cross is also a gateway into England, a doorway between north and south. The performance used Camley Street in particular, a street that is notorious as a cruising ground for straights - it has a special geography. The proposed redevelopment of the area also means there are certain political ramifications to the location. The whole place is going to be knocked down and renovated into a kind of Covent Garden yuppie village. It's barbaric. I enjoyed the idea of putting my audience into these different and difficult spaces where they might not normally go and certainly might not feel safe at that time of night...talking to people after the performance, women in particular, it's clear that they took a certain kind of pleasure from just walking through those spaces at night and seeing some different things located there'.

'Some people also felt they were being constructed by that performance into the role of voyeurs. Some of them embraced this new vantage point; some were uncomfortable with it... It's so different from the cinema! The audience are manoeuvred out of their passive position. They can also participate. Black vernacular cultures have their own tradition of breaking down the European division between art and life. It's not that I'm anti the performance crowd, but I enjoyed bringing some of their high-cultural assumptions down to the ground.'

'The idea really came together in Camley Street in the shadow of the gasometers. There we had these two men walking towards each other, both circled by a bright light. The audience sees this encounter from the opposite side of the street and traffic flows between the two groups - performers and spectators. A police car stopped and spontaneously involved itself in the action. It was perfect. Even when other people drove past, it introduced a kind of tension. My audience had to engage with the occasional intrusive presence of other types of spectators. That was exciting. I liked that.' (Gilroy, 1990: 189-197)

Radically shifting the notion of site was probably most effectively achieved with the multi-national performance group Black Market. Founded by artist Boris Neislony, and including at various points

Thomas Rulle, Nigel Rolfe, Zbigniew Warpechowski, Alastair McLennan, Piotrowski, Roi Varra, Norbert Klassen, Jurgen Fritz, Jacques Van Poppel, the idea was that each artist should arrive at a meeting point somewhere in the world, bringing only themselves. Based on the earlier political and geographical difficulties of bringing the group together, as some of the artists came from countries where, pre-1989, it was difficult to leave, the structure was informed by a sense of pilgrimage with the intention of thumbing its nose at the old Iron Curtain. It is often forgotten in these days of dissolving and dissolved borders that artists have long since forged underground networks, forming a conduit of artistic energy flowing between official harassment. Fluidity again.

Because of the need to travel lightly and with guile across borders, the Black Market artists, having made the pilgrimages, only used materials found at the place of meeting. In the section of Edge 90 taking place in Glasgow, the condition was made that each artist had to hail a black cab somewhere in the city and arrive at the place of performance, the yard of an old school, to be placed in formation where the cabs themselves became the principal environment and performance material, their meters running for the duration. Unwarned, nevertheless each randomly-hailed driver agreed to take part in the work, sitting in the driver's seats while the black-clad figures of the group moved silently from cab to cab. The work could be realised in Goethe's famous saying from Faust 'Stay, moment, you are beautiful!'

Marko Peljhan, before working with me in 1995, had a vision of a new working and living space for artists, the Makrolab – an autonomous and self-sufficient module which, while insulated against the environment, in an extremely isolated spot, would be sited in the world as seen in maps and flows of information. I raised the money and helped him build it in Scotland in 2002 before going on to 'curate' it and its teams of artists and scientists. This is how his vision went, on the Croatian island of Krk while the Bosnian war was raging, starting with an attempt to describe a new form of theatre, inspired by the cosmicist philosopher Velimir Klebnikov, author of the influential text 'Ladimir'. (Klebnikov, 1916,1922)

'I see stages move and walk by themselves, armoured and autonomous...People wrapped in survival cocoons, sleeping. Other people visiting them. They are silently talking to each other. A

stage appears on the horizon and walks slowly forth. On it the sailors of Ladomir work the spinnaker of thought. Large sails propel it forward, a complex mechanism allows its legs to lift and twist. There are no metal noises. The materials are new and unknown. It does have legs and looks like an insect. It has the functionality and energy balance of a bee and the armour of Armageddon cockroaches... What would the people do?... Understand and survive... Operate and keep the legged drifter working, function. They will connect themselves to the satellites, they will roam the globe. They will discover its deep laws. They will be creators from all directions, brought on the platform by different winds. Scientists and artists. Discovering the laws of time. Of communication. Of the electromagnetic flux. Of the navigation of whales, birds and people. They will measure and calculate the dynamics of thunder and cells. They will equate and understand The final equation and law. They will sail far away. At incredible speeds. And the world will become their stage'. (Peljhan, 2004: 46-48)

'Architecturally speaking, Makrolab Mark 11 is a 14 metre octagonal tube, draped in a shining silver skin, built co-incidentally to the same volume and length as the core module of the now destroyed MIR station and the Russian base module of the International Space Station. Think of it then, not only as a machine for producing a stylised life but as a space module that never left Earth. A micro-gravity, minimum-existence habitat deployed for normal G load that moves across the planetary surface. Detachable, mobile, perching lightly on its six silver struts...Peljhan call it 'a beautiful instant house you can really live in'. (Eshun, 2004: 6-14)

'For me, working in Scotland on Makrolab, curating was never so like caretaking. For three months I was ferrying people, objects, supplies, electronic components, wastewater, portable toilets (full), local children and dogs up and down the umbilical track between the lab and the highland Bothy where I also acted as gatekeeper for visitors and press. The traditional role of the curator was in an odd way turned full circle, from the keeper of dusty preserved objects in glass vitrines to what were essentially preserved living human microcultures in a tubular habitat. And a sense of peering in from outside to view the specimens.

One day, for example, I arrived at the Makrolab at the end of the 5-mile dirt track after not having checked on the inhabitants for 24 hours. I arrived dripping wet from the hill and entered the hydraulic hatch, to find the lab's inhabitant all staring at screens, whether at desks or in bed, a complete silence punctuated only by the odd muffled giggle. "Hi everybody, how's it going" I ask. Dead silence. No answer. After being ignored for a while I walk up and check the nearest screen, where there are lines of text "Rob just came in, he's dripping wet". Next line: "I wonder if he'll make coffee?" There is an animated electronic conversation, replacing the spoken word, between 6 people no more than a metre away from each other. The lab had finally become an electronic hive. Then I realised there were more than six people in the conversation. In fact there are people out on a base in Antarctica, all wondering if I'm going to make coffee. I am simply tending only one node of a global organism. I unloaded and made coffee' (La Frenais, 2004: 55).

I tell this story to show that the role of the curator in the field is itself fluid, while in the isolated node of the Makrolab, the site for art and science has truly become ubiquitous, stretching out into networks around the world, but with a small autonomous community of artist/operators, fed power from their own windmill, water coming from the river. In future versions (one intended for Antarctica, another intended for India) the aim will be hydroponic systems and water recycling, hooked up to Earth observation satellites, while Peljhan is now experimenting with an autonomous UAV for surveying the immediate terrain, an outrider for the Makrolab project (Makrolab, web ref.).

As with existing utopian communities, habitation then becomes an interesting field for the curator interested in the axes of ubiquity and fluidity. At present, I am working on two habitation projects. One, with the artist/architect group N55 and artist Neal White, who are working to design an artist-built planetary habitat based on the Mars analogue environments in remote places, where scientists live in enclosed biospheres practicing for life on Mars. (see web reference) I am also working with the emerging Australian artist Sarah Jane Pell, who is planning to live underwater with other biological organisms for eight continuous days (Biosphere 2, web refs.).

5) Shifting Territories

By 1992, I had begun to seriously question the notion of 'interrogating' reality as an artistic strategy, and started to ask what it is that artists can really do. In the context of the exhibition I was curating, in London and Madrid, it predicted a perhaps more grandiose vision of site-specific work that would later go on to test the limits of the organisers. The following is an adaptation of the introductory essay to the catalogue of Edge 92, rewritten for this research:

Territories shift, barriers give way, frontiers dissolve. Thus does the map of Europe echo the essential momentum of artist's projects in the last decade (the 80's) - the power to grasp the realities in modern 'life' and annex them as art. But the ability of the artist to perform superhuman feats, to leap continents, natural laws and ethical restrictions in seven-league boots has more than ever provoked questions challenging the unbridled myth-making, the paper heroism, the contemporary arrogance of the colonist venturing from the studio to the street, the gymnasium, the bank, the office block, the open landscape.

Despite everything, despite few resources, despite marginalisation, the artist is in the hard business of metaphysical power-broking. Whether by the grand geography-jerking gesture, harnessing the power to move mountains (Christo, Abamovic/Ulay, De Maria) or by the moment of pure relinquishment to the mundane (Duchamp, Bijl, various Italian, Swiss and Dutch artists who have set up fake corporations), by the manipulation of destiny (Calle) or the reversal of history (Hans Haacke, Guillermo Gomez-Pena) fingers point accusingly at the artist's luxurious modernist endgame privilege of imagined seizure of power.

It won't change anything, ordinary people won't understand it, it's only fit for the history book and the glossy catalogue, there's no relevance in a world with issues like homelessness, AIDS, the

racist spectre returning to Europe, the deepening recession, the anger of the developing world. So stands the challenge.

In response, some artists, following Beuys, see their personal transformations as, however minor, reflecting world transformation. Some, nihilistic, throw the truth in our faces. Others question. But doubt, in an artist is a perilous emotion. Doubt never prompted Christo to try to wrap up the Reichstag. (Christo, web ref.)

Like that artist's working method, our project method relies on the maxim 'it's not what you do it's the way that you do it'. [This exhibition] sees itself as a mould, or mattress for these grand passions. So, the apparent 'folies de grandeur' of leading-edge art, always vulnerable when isolated on the precipice of a crass newspaper headline, can in fact be placed or positioned with sensitivity and the correct environment...one that faces outward to the immediate world, even though that world may be being mirrored, shredded, positioned or parodied. The artists' projects exist where people work, live, play, gossip, walk the dog, dance. Natural curiosity leads the public to discover the artist's dreams made real in a dark entrance, a ruined church, an abandoned pool, a railway station, a row of shops or an office mall.

As an external reality we mirror the new territory the artist has (however rudely) staked out. We are the diplomats, perhaps, of the shifting sands of the new, artist-dreamt, nation state. Mixing the romantic with the real...we gently motion the public into the arena of the artist-generated economy with its own laws, currencies and realities. [The sites] are microcosms of the city, with their variety of architectural styles, influences from populations gone by and with diverse identities. They exist themselves as worlds within worlds. For a month, artists will build their worlds in this habitat. We think they will thrive, in conspiratorial *jouissance* with the public, on an everyday and intimate basis, while the grand post-modern battle between relevance and absurdity, between 'art' and 'life' rages emptily overhead. (La Frenais, 1992: 8)

So, following the lead of Christo, artists started to engage in practical world-building. In Edge 92, 22 large scale projects were mounted in the cities of Madrid and London ranging from David Cerny (who had achieved fame in 1991 by constantly repainting the 'pink tank' in Prague, proposing a series of giant guns which would appear provocatively on the sides of buildings, to Guillermo Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco, who convinced thousands of shoppers that they were a captive Aztec mutoid tribe, caged in the Plaza de Colon (Columbus Square) of Madrid. Cesare Pietrouisti commissioned a city-wide market research campaign which culminated in an exhibition of clothing from hundreds of ordinary citizens, while the Indian artist Nek Chand filled public places with thousands of marching creatures constructed from recycled materials. While site-specific art is now commonplace, in 1992 it had hardly been seen in the Spanish capital. (Edge 92 Catalogue, 1992)

The serious logistical difficulties of organising an exhibition and event of this size in two cities (before the era of cheap flights) caused me and others to seriously question entering into this mode of 'heroic' curating. It was perhaps time to look back inwards, towards a redefinition of the 'artist's body', coincidentally the title of a book co-edited by Tracey Warr, who had worked with me on these ambitious and exhausting 'grand projects'. (Warr, Jones, 2000)

6) The Pit and the Pendulum

Around the early nineties, I made an effort to redefine what I thought performance was actually about, thinking back to my experiences of performance from former communist countries at Documenta in 1987. The following, first authored in 1993 and re-written for this research, affected my approaches to curating in the following decade, once again introducing a notion of fluidity to my definitions:

There have been many attempts to approximate a form that can be defined as 'real' performance. I have in my personal memory a small number of performances I have attended in which a 'moment' has occurred, where I am conscious of a mixture of fear, pleasure, excitement, questioning, displacement which appears to have no causal basis, but is instead the effect of the artists acting as a kind of 'transmitter' of energy, the human acting as material for elemental forces. This may explain why performance has occupied in recent times an end point, one of the final notes of Modernism, where the tricks of arranging paint and material are replaced by pure meat. But why do performances happen as they do? Why are some 'actions' mere rituals, relying on art history, techniques of theatre, or simply a desire for a celebration, but others strike through to the essence, requiring an emotional and spiritual safety net?

I'd like first to look more closely at the linked questions of myth and personal experience. There is a turning point where private performance becomes public performance and that is powered by myth, which has many facets. The principal observation to be made from the era of happenings, Fluxus, 'queer theatre' (Brecht, 1978), merry pranks, acid awakenings, sex, blood and flesh rituals, formation of early cults, pre-celebrity pop-bonding escapades, poetry reading, encounter groups and orgies (to cast a deliberately wide net around the worldwide formation of art-based mythological culture during 1960-75) is that only the survivors exist to tell the tale, which soon becomes the basis for a vast academic, commercial and journalistic industry.

The question of myth leads to an unstable definition of the nature of a 'real' performance moment. The apparent relationship to the spirit of the age can be heightened by the presence of celebrities, critics or TV crews. Perceptions can be altered by the artists themselves, by introducing the format of a journey, a kidnap, the possibility of danger, heat, light and overcrowding. What is most reliable is the quality of the

recollection of the 'witness' and that is a role I have often played. The only way to effectively 'witness' a performance is to somehow move in a direction to meet the subjectivity of the unstable forces which are being witnessed. This is a dilemma which has been thoroughly exhausted by contemporary anthropologists. However, I suppose that my view is no better or worse than the average art-accustomed person and it will have to suffice.

To look at the mechanics of myth and personal experience, I'd like to take as a particular example the work of Zbigniew Warpechowski, a performance artist whose work developed from the early 1960s poetry movement in Poland and continued throughout the years of the Cold War and martial law, physically in isolation, yet umbilically connected to performance movements in the West. Shamanistic and animistic in form, it both uses and rejects Catholic imagery... (In) Warpechowski's performance a 15-cm (6-in) nail is hammered by the artist through his own hand. To put a sharp object through the hand in itself, while shocking to the squeamish and sensitive, is in effect no more than a stunt. As Warpechowski himself put it to me once, 'I have done it several times and I am used to it. This hand is like an old potato.' What was to later puzzle me was the explosive effect this could have on the psyche of certain members of the audience – as if there had been some kind of shamanistic energy release. Would a religious background affect the perceiver of the piece, with its clear simulacrum of crucifixion?

Let us look at the theatre for a moment and go briefly over that well-trodden distance between performance art and theatre. Many of the effects sought after in a work of performance art – or indeed a work of static art – can be replicated or codified in the theatre. Much of what passed was simply theatre adapting to the economies of scale or the particular environment – the club scene, for example. That does not mean to say that theatre and performance art do not in some way share some of the strategies – surprise, alienation, distortion of time and space, visual aesthetics. The only tangible way to compare the two is via repeatability and formula. This does not just mean scripting – it is just simply that in the theatre the team providing the performance sets out with a given formula which is more or less designed to achieve certain effects at the end of the day, that this can be done again and again (with varying success, admittedly) and that generally the distance from point A to B is covered.

I think it is important to state that while I believe it is possible to isolate moments of 'real' performance, the conditions are never truly stable or formulaic. I've tried to point out that there are numerous 'rogue inputs', connected with myth, expectancy, state of mind of the audience, reminiscent of the popular perception of the results of 'cold fusion' breakthrough in physics that was apparently discredited a few years back. (Cold Fusion, Wired, web ref.). However, it could be said that the drawbacks of these rogue inputs are, by definition, more active and influential when 'real' performance is taking place. In a sense this kind of work allows a clear zone for entropy to seep in and thrive. Theatre, however, while recognizing entropy (as for example in the Wooster Group's use of LSD during rehearsal), tends by nature to need to crystallize, formalize it, to turn it into a sub-routine that can be reliably called upon (Wooster Group. web ref.).

Until now, I have spoken from the point of view of witness, in that I have spoken of performances I have seen. As I have stated, the role of witness in performance is a peculiar one, and should perhaps be separated from the role of critic. In order to play this role a certain amount of distance must be removed between subject and object, just as a work of art can only usually be appreciated when the viewer puts in a certain amount of spadework. Also, by nature, this form is not practically available to large numbers of people. Artists may, as Laurie Anderson or Jan Fabre did, experiment with works for large crowds, but the forms of entropy to be admitted are of a different nature. Otherwise the riot would be the formal structure.

Mapping out an anatomy of a 'real' performance, then – avoiding the surrounding impostors – leaves us with a web of myth, surrounding a calculated unreliability of witnesses, with a central point – a moment of shamanic release – highlighting at the same time the precise nature of the performative action. The unparalleled technician of all of these was, of course Joseph Beuys, although whether the forces of entropy could break through his iconic status, alive or dead, is now a matter for history.

What I do believe the thirty years of 'real' performance practice could have achieved is the ability to conduct 'thought experiments' with the nature of life itself, as I think Warpechowski, for example, has achieved. The recent acceleration of contact between artists, scientists and technologists has led to the exposure of an enormous thirst on behalf of artists for the techniques and discoveries of science. In particular, the question of the simulation of forms of life on an algorithmic basis has been a debate to which artists have been recently admitted. However, I'm not convinced that artists have given back to science

anything more than a taste for the exotic, a notion that science has something to do with aesthetics, or at best the sense of a target audience, a mirror from which to reflect science's internecine theoretical disputes. By looking at the gap between life-actions and the imitation of life, by taking a non-mystical angle on the workings of magic, by wrestling with forces of life and death before witnesses, 'real' performance artists are laying down the groundwork using only the technology they find between the soles of their feet and the tops of their heads. They are starting the journey before the body has died. (La Frenais, 1993:11-15)

7) Subjective Reality, Science and Art

'In the summer of 1995, a flying machine set me down in Zurich, Switzerland, where I took a train to a small medieval town with high stone walls and story-book architecture known as Fribourg, Switzerland. Here was the site of "The Incident: A symposium on Art, Technology and Phenomena" The gathering was convened by the art curator Rob La Frenais in the ancient fortress known as the Belluard...(i)

The theme of the conference was the collaboration of art and technology in exploring the unknown. Art embraces things we can sense but do not know. The artist feels at home where intuition outruns reason. Painting, music and movies can expose the unconscious life of the mind, the sources of common fears and terrors, and the hopes that glow over the horizon of daily routine. In this sense art is always extrasensory perception, because art exposes what lies behind our everyday mental manoeuvres'. (Heim, 1998:175-176)

In 1995, at the event which Michael Heim attended I was returning to a theme that had been bothering me since the early days of Performance Magazine. How do artists look at anomalous behaviours and phenomena that challenge a worldview of objective reality when they themselves are purveyors of a discrete form of subjective reality? In 1982, in a special issue of Performance Magazine, I first tried to investigate artists' interest in the way that perceived reality interfaces with the known, and how performance might look at earlier examples of how this could be investigated, after reading a number of works published in the semi-underground world of 'occult literature', specifically David Conway's 'Ritual Magic-An Occult Primer'. (Conway, 1978) To my amazement, I found formulas that seemed to describe the growing field of performance art in the early 80's. I have rewritten what I said then for this research:

What is magic? What is it that magicians exactly do? To borrow the occultist's own phrase, magic is 'effecting changes in conformity with the will'. For the purposes of comparing magic to

performance art the vast field of occult activity will be condensed to a single aspect, which happens to be native to Europe, western ceremonial magic. This originates in its present form in the writings of Paracelsus, John Dee and Eliphas Levi, culminated in the occult revivals of the nineteen-twenties and has been enjoying sporadic surges of interest since. Although the traditions were originally brought from the east by wandering Jewish tribes, there is also a link with the 'old religion' of pre-Christian Europe sharing a background with Wicca (witchcraft) whose adherents hold an uneasy peace with magicians.

To undertake a magical ritual in its simplest form, three basic steps are taken. First, some sort of non-visual entity must be visualised, that is, be made to take shape by the exercise of the imagination. It must secondly be allowed by some means to possess the magician. Thirdly, it must be expelled in the direction of the magician's intention.

These three steps hold interesting parallels with the creative process that goes into a performance. The 'visualisation' represents the artist's training of her or his imaginative faculties combined with skill using materials to pursue a coherent live action, comparable to a painter's 'inspiration' or an actor's 'character'. The 'possession' is the creative climax, the point at which the artist's vision is consummated. The 'intention' is what the public walks away with at the end. There can also be more mundane artistic intentions, such as recognition or financial gain, as with the lower-grade magical ritual.

Looking at these steps in detail, what exactly are the things to be visualised and how does the magician do it? The various entities come in a whole variety of categories and subgroups. They start at elementals (nature spirits) and go up through a scale of angels, archangels, demons, gods and goddesses. Where do they come from? They are all dredged from a common mythology of symbol, superstition and early interpretation of things not then understood by science. They are our own creation in a sense, but none the less powerful for that, recorded as they are throughout the ages in parts of the collective unconscious. But particular entities, or

subconscious impressions of entities have been reinforced since mediaeval times, occultists say, by the simple matter of western tradition magicians consorting with them as a matter of regularity in an unbroken chain of occult tradition.

Although many occultists would deny this, the number of demons out there according to the literature seems largely due to the occultist's insatiable curiosity in raising them. But whatever the entity, this unbroken chain of magical activity has had the effect of appearing to strengthen the current that powers their existence.

How do magicians say they summon these entities up? They claim to use deliberate techniques of visualisation, long before attempting a ritual, literally systematically training the mind to imagine first simple shapes, then colours, then sounds, then animals, landscapes etc. until any image can be summoned at will. They stress that these images should never be allowed to appear by chance, unasked, as control when dealing with these areas of the mind is paramount. As with artists who cease to draw a line somewhere between their lives and their work, there appear to be risks that need to be guarded against.

Once able to visualise, the magician then uses one of the systems of keys or codes that have been worked out over the ages to make magical life easier, and which are generally based on the Kabbala, or tree of life, ostensibly a diagram which acts as a kind of ordnance survey map of the magical planes. Using these maps in combination with the power of visualisation and ritual words the magician is able to guide himself and confront the erstwhile inhabitants of the magical world (This is all pre-computer age!).

The systems for doing this, along with the actual ritual terms, are all freely available in occult literature. They basically involve finding an appropriate place to do the ritual, using astrological tables to find the right time to do it, and make sure everything used (sword, wand, robes, incense, unguents etc) is consecrated for magical use. Surrounded by the appropriate accoutrements, a

carefully prescribed ritual is performed. This involves the drawing and magical sealing of a circle, the marking of the various points of the compass as 'stations' and the ritual invoking of various entities belonging to those stations using the combination of visualisation, preparation like fasting and the 'taking of wine and strange drugs' the using of 'words of power'. If we take the testimony of numerous ritual magicians at their word, the celebrant will be sharing the circle with a full-blown entity of the correct kind...Does all this start to sound a little familiar to the expert in performance art?

Magic and art seem to have this in common: they are both concerned with the dynamic linking of the artist or magical adept's physical functions with a deep-rooted consciousness of will. Both disciplines have various systems for doing this, both involve a certain amount of risk. The practice of ritual magic brings the participants up against a number of social taboos...Artists, especially performance artists, run the risk of their lifestyles being used as a public symbol of the avant-garde by both the art establishment and the press and have to endure being a scapegoat in any anti-art backlash. Magicians raise and bind demons from the recesses of their own consciousness; artists raise and bind them from the collective madness of the public. The problem is, magical entities don't hang well in galleries or sit still in theatre but manifest themselves as lingering doubts about the true nature of experience and perception. (La Frenais 1982: 7-13)

From the above account of how ritual magic interfaces with performance art, I found myself in Switzerland, bringing together artists such as James Turrell, (Turrell, web ref.) the late Amazonian drug visionary Terence McKenna, (McKenna, web ref.) the UFO 'expert' Jacques Vallée - consultant on 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' (Vallee, web.ref) and crop-circle hoaxer Rod Dickinson (Dickinson, web ref.) In this small mediaeval Swiss town, we found ourselves re-examining art, perception and consciousness, rather like in the chapter 'Interrogating Reality'. Also present was the anthropologist Jeremy Narby, whose work focussed on the intellectual properties of Amazon plants, the knowledge of which could only be gained by the ingestion of them. (Narby, web ref.) In this way, 'The Incident' in

Switzerland, later travelling to the ICA, began a long discussion about the way artists could participate in the 'refocusing' of scientific debate.

Attending critic Tracey Warr described The Incident as a place where:

'our accepted notions of reality were being severely questioned from all angles. Overall The Incident asked what contribution artists might make to the debates around non-explicable phenomena and raised the notion, as organiser Rob La Frenais commented that "artists might be better equipped to deal positively with the ambiguous subjectivity that such extensions of perceptivity bring"

As artist James Turrell commented, the brain has capacities for which we have not yet invented a vocabulary. Whatever interpretation you put upon them (military conspiracy - benign or evil-intentioned aliens - god) there seems to be an overwhelming mass of evidence of physical phenomena that is neither adequately measured or explained by our current sciences. Consciousness, perception and phenomena are now the research subjects of reputable academic institutions around the world including the Universities of Edinburgh, Duke in North Carolina, and Austin in Texas.

La Frenais' contention was that at the point at which science breaks down, at which results are anomalous or evidence appears to point at non-provable conclusions, artists can take over where rationality stops.' (Warr 1996:8)

Research into the unconscious, evolution and genetics have radically altered our understanding of ourselves during this last century. The Incident seemed to be laying the ground for the next stage of research into what constitutes the self and consciousness within a universal context. New technologies are extending the body and perception. To some extent our relationship with developing technologies, with cyberspace, is merely contesting old ideologies in a new space, but is there also something

evolutionary emerging from our interface with technology and should we, as David Porush suggested at the Virtual Futures conference in Warwick University (Virtual Futures, web ref.) be 'treating the history of communications technology evolution as lying on the vector of evolving telepathy?' I attempt to address some of these points in the next chapter.

(i) Historical note: Announcement of The Incident 1995, from the Journal of the Inter-Society for Electronic Arts: The Incident is a new international event, taking place in the mediaeval city of Fribourg, Switzerland in which major figures from the worlds of art and technology will sit down for the first time with researchers into phenomena, covering areas such as UFO research, parapsychology, dreams and other subjects that concern exploration of human consciousness.. Speakers so far are Jacques Vallee, astrophysicist and UFO researcher, James Turrell, light and earth artist currently creating an artwork from an extinct volcano in the Arizona desert, Terence McKenna, ethnobotanist, explorer and millennialist commentator on the politics of consciousness, Ulrike Rosenbach, performance artist and former associate of Beuys who will be discussing her work on angels, Roy Ascott, electronic networking pioneer and philosopher, Michael Lindemann, political researcher into military cover-ups, Kathleen Rogers, virtual reality artist who proposes a synthesis of psi phenomena and telepresence technology, Jim Schnabel, author of 'Dark White' and 'Round In Circles' which examines the sociology of the UFO research community and the crop circle phenomena respectively, Keiko Sei, who will present her research on telepaths in Eastern Europe, Kristine Stiles, art historian, Budd Hopkins, researcher in UFO abductions, H-R Giger, sculptor and creator of the sets and creatures in 'Alien' and the Residents, legendary anonymous music group who will present a live CD Rom demo of 'Freakshow' and 'The Gingerbread Man'. The symposium will be part of a larger artistic programme which includes exhibitions, performances, video, film and music and which takes place as part of the Belluard-Bollwerk International 95, the arts festival of Fribourg, Switzerland.

8) State of the Human

In 1993, I attempted to sum up, in an issue of Hybrid, the eclectic but short-lived replacement for Performance Magazine, the new relationship that artists were developing with AI, robotics and other related technologies. I have rewritten it for this research:

The humans had come to discuss their future. The Out of Control seminar in Linz, part of that techno-cultural landmark, Ars Electronica, (Ars Electronica web ref) had cautiously mapped its way through the pre-history of Duchampian bachelor-machines, the gender of the android and auto-destructive art, when the moment came to be delivered of the Right Stuff. Hans Moravec, artificial intelligence researcher and roboticist, sometime employee of NASA, rumoured to have the ear of top brass in the US military and author of 'Mind Children' (Moravec, 1988) took the audience painstakingly through the history of artificial intelligence development and drew graphs to demonstrate the exact point, 50 years hence, at which, as things go, give or take a few setbacks here or there, we would all be as good as extinct.

Obsolete. Replaced by machines, or more properly, entities, whether silicon or carbon-based, that would be not just equal to humans, but infinitely superior. We would, in a very rapid space of time, have fulfilled our evolutionary function. We would be a fond memory of a new species, all our consciousness having been programmed into a greater agenda.

The Emperor's New Mind by Roger Penrose (Penrose, 1989) painstakingly sets out to refute this. He refers to the set of AI believers to which Moravec belongs as 'operationalists'. His findings don't seem just to say that what Moravec and others propose is technologically impossible, he shows that creating the equivalent of human consciousness from an algorithmic basis is fundamentally flawed. His conclusions have a metaphysical basis. He is saying that a fundamental breakthrough is needed in thinking about the origins of life - beyond the already

wild-seeming conclusions of contemporary quantum physicists - before consciousness can be replicated in this way. A creationist backlash to AI research.

In the coming wars between pure science and religion, the existing skirmishes around the policing of the body - the prosecutions in the UK in 1993 on consensual S and M practices in 'Operation Spanner' (Operation Spanner, web.ref) and the attempt to impose territorial limits on technology in the crackdown on hackers - the artist will be right there on the front line. In an arena of new 'attitude', a new function for artists may be to mediate, to explain, to keep their head (or energy field) while all around others are losing theirs. The days of contorting over the modernist endgame are over as artists face the new, urgent realities of telepresence and virtual reality, ecology and the future of the species, the future social practices of robots, the myths and desires of the new flesh. The representation of both the imagery and related politics of this area is likely to be the most important feature of art practice in the decade to come.

(Depending on your view of the recent history of media art - I think I was partially right about this in 1992.)

In the seminar room the Darwinist Moravec is repelling all borders with tenacity. The technical argument, built up with a careful exposition of AI's top-down, bottom-up research efforts in which state of the art AI techniques, such as advanced simulations and pleasure/pain circuits at the top, crash down to meet massive exponential growth in computer power and miniaturisation coming up from the bottom, appears seamless. Chillingly seamless, in fact, so that when Moravec starts taking his arguments via their logical conclusions, from the development of the '*volksrobot*' to the starting-point of the replacement of the human race in around 2050 - that is, once you get robot factories run by robot managers you are essentially breeding robots - the mad scientist rhetoric becomes all the more shocking for being uttered by a sane scientist.

Two years later, at the Mediale in Hamburg, conference organiser Gottfried Hattinger is commenting on Moravec's contribution: 'I think Moravec has a vision which is more a statement of an artist. We need those visions. We cannot be sure that you could transfer the contents of your brain onto a diskette. This is more a statement by an artist'. Surely Moravec was sure about this, from a scientific point of view. Was Moravec conducting a *gedankenexperiment*, a thought experiment, at the seminar in Linz? "He is a very straight, cool, scientist, constructing machines for NASA that will go to Mars, machines with self-referential systems. But he is thinking ahead, out of this professional role. I think it is a part of art, this thinking ahead."

In Linz, the extraordinary aspect of Moravec's presentation was that in presenting machines as a new species, created and predated by humans, his vision seemed almost impeachable. Once programmed with all human knowledge and experience and with the ability to reproduce, everything would be possible. Human-type relationships? Infinitely complex but possible. Sex? They'll find a way. Wars? Possible, the fittest will survive. Dissident robots? They'll be sent out to space the same way humans transported convicts. The only chinks in this casuistic and essentially materialistic vision emerge when terms like intuition, premonition and other non-measurable phenomena are brought into play, which invokes the problem of 'spirituality'. What happens to the 'soul' after death? Is that programmable? Hattinger: "Life in heaven is also a form of virtual reality".

Looking back on Moravec's final comments to an evidently moved and to some extent, shocked, audience, Hattinger's comments about Moravec being some sort of artist ring more true. He was asked how he would feel, personally, were he alive to see it happen, to be replaced by robots? He would like, he said, to be granted a vision of understanding the infinitely more complex thought process of advanced robots. For this, he would expect his brain, or seat of consciousness, to have to be removed from the body and linked up in some way with the machine consciousness. This way, he would consider himself a further part of the evolutionary process - he would be the machine's equal. In one way, this could be regarded as the final,

demented thought process of a white male north American; the repressed, controlled, sterile military-industrial materialistic monster in extremis. This was certainly the overall opinion at the seminar. But actually, it pointed to a third way that is being taken very seriously by some artists, the concept, existing on a mythological level of the cyborg.

Donna Haraway laid down the ground with 'A Cyborg Manifesto' (Haraway 1991) which posited the human/machine interface as a fertile ground for transgressive feminist mythologies. This was a call to arms (possibly ironic) for women to reject the natural state of their own bodies in favour of seizing the male-dominated technocracy by cybernetically implanting and modifying themselves. A theoretical position initially, this form of empowerment is becoming a practical possibility. In everyday life, machines are becoming surrogates, the cyborg extends the process further. Perhaps one of the reasons that cyberpunk novels gained fast and furious popularity in the 80s is that they centred on the breaching of one of the last taboos, the limits of the body. The Viennese actionists also, acting as border scouts, breached these boundaries, while artists such as Stelarc (in his first UK performance in 1992, which I presented) have literally followed the path of the cyborg. Kathleen Rogers, following in the wake of Haraway, thoroughly explored the myth of the feminist cyborg starting where Mary Shelley left off with Frankenstein. (Shelley, 1817) Real or thought experiment, this is a highly active growth area for artistic adventures.

The article continued with a description of the work of the artists Kathleen Rogers, (Rogers, web ref.) Stelarc, the late Just Merit, (Merit, web ref.) and the Biosphere 2 project (Biosphere 2, web ref).

If humans (the products of the earth) are destroying the earth, and the world is, as Gaians maintain, a conscious being, why then is it destroying itself? One answer, from the realms of speculation or science fictions (now established as theories of Panspermia) is that humans are implanted, spores from elsewhere, waiting to rejoin some vast alien civilisation that propagated them, when the earth rejects them. The other view is that the Earth can look after itself quite well;

it will just stop being hospitable to humans after a while. This also falls in with Moravec's projection about robots being the next species.

The artist with an enquiring mind, probing into forbidden places, is one of the more enduring roles in history. Trained to visualise, to express, whether it be the purity of a drawn line or the complexity of an idea, their power is often lost when put strictly to the discipline of maintaining a rigid belief system. This is not confined to artists working in western traditions, though the relationship is different, perhaps. In the Islamic situation, the Sufis for example, trod a thin line between heresy and acceptance. It is usually possible for artists to look at areas of metaphysical or transcendent concern without signing up to a faith. A strength, or perhaps a fatal weakness, is that an artist (and this goes for actors and novelists) can go to the brink, but never become completely involved (La Frenais, 1993a).

9) Big Science Questioned

Perhaps it is now time then, for artists to stop talking about the big ideas in big science and start getting their hands dirty with them. What happens when artists go into the lab and work with scientists working with genetic material, or indeed become engaged with the processes involved in splitting of the atom?

When I started curating projects with The Arts Catalyst (Arts Catalyst, web ref.) – moving away from the subjective realities described earlier, to an interest in the here and now of hard science – one of the things I was particularly interested in was looking at the fifties era of optimism in technological solutions. I grew up in this atmosphere, but felt drawn to artistic practice in the late sixties, being forced, like many others, to choose between the 'two cultures'. In early discussions with Nicola Triscott, with whom I was now working – a physicist turned theatre director – we discussed rumours we had heard about an artist who was trying to work with nuclear materials. Through a series of phone calls, we managed to locate this artist in Seattle, and the idea for an exhibition called simply 'Atomic' was born. (Arts Catalyst, Atomic, web ref.) We flew to Seattle to meet the artist, James L Acord, and with him visited Hanford, an extraordinary 'nuclear city' in Washington State, where Acord had a studio. We discovered that Acord was the first individual to have a licence to handle nuclear materials and was in possession of 12 breeder blanket assemblies (nuclear fuel rods) with which he proposed to build a 'nuclear sculpture', a kind of marker to signify the contamination of the land.

We invited him to the UK, firstly to speak at the conference 'Eye of The Storm' (Eye of the Storm, web ref.) and then to set up a residency at the Blackett Physics laboratory at Imperial College, London. The way he came to working with these materials, and to conspire with a group of retired nuclear engineers at Hanford, was made into a novel, 'The Book of Ash' by Jim Flint. Here, Acord, speaking as 'Jack', Flint's fictional doppelganger, is speaking through the medium of 'Cathy', a character also based on a Hanford nuclear engineer we met, Wanda Munn:

He told me on several occasions that he wanted his art to rise above the clichéd terms of polarised political debate, and I remember this because it was one of the things that first convinced me that what he had to say was worth listening to and...he'd come to realise that many forms of so-called protest action are quite pointless and often actively counterproductive. With such a complex issue as nuclear energy, an issue which transcends the political and the physical, which in so many ways pushes at the edge of what we as a collectivity of human beings can be said to know, what Jack had come to realise was that much protest is deconstructive, when what the situation required was people - and not just scientists and politicians...but lay people, artists- to be constructive, to bring something new to the debate rather than rehearse the same old paradigms...Jack was trying to conceive of an artform that would do justice to the problem of trans-uranic storage in all its difficulty and complexity. It was a subject that no other artist of our era has even dared approach... (Flint, 2004: 281-282)

In the Atomic exhibition we displayed three 'nuclear' monuments displayed in the style of Russian icons in a touring exhibition of Acord's work that also contained photographs made in Russia's Star City (Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre, web ref.) and a film by Mark Waller made inside a nuclear power station. But the exhibition was just one part of the whole process, which involved a public debate, chaired by the artist and featuring representatives from Greenpeace on one hand, and British Nuclear Fuels on the other hand. We also organised tours by the artist of various fuel reprocessing facilities in North-west England, to try and help Acord pursue his long-held dream, of getting access to a reactor to transmute nuclear materials, the artist's own vision of a modern form of alchemy. (Arts Catalyst, Atomic, web ref.)

When scientists require a high degree of atmospheric control to conduct an experiment, examine a specimen, or build some specialised piece of equipment, they use what are called 'Clean Rooms'. Cleanliness, in this respect, extends well beyond what we habitually mean when we say that a room is clean, which is to say that a space is tidy, and there are no visible signs of dirt. Surfaces in a clean room are, of course, thoroughly decontaminated, but the cleanliness of a

clean room specifically relates to the purity of its atmosphere, measured by the number of particles in the air on a sliding scale from 100,000 particles, 10,000 particles, to just 100 particles per cubic metre.

When Neal White was given access to a Class 1000 clean room at the French Space Agency (CNES, web ref.) what surprised him most was the presence of an individual he hadn't been introduced to, who was 'bagged' like everyone else but was seemingly not doing any science. On entering the clean room she began speaking almost straight away, yet her utterances were limited to describing everything anyone proceeded to do. Occasionally this human echo would interrupt her flow of narration with a rebuke aimed at someone who had just done something incompatible with the environment of the clean room (had a quick scratch, or moved too suddenly) Her *raison d'etre*, as White worked out, was to provide a recorded document of the session in the clean room so that it might be later determined what might have caused any change in the atmospheric quality of the room. (Farquharson, 2002: 6-13)

In the Clean Rooms exhibition that I curated at the Jerwood Space at the Natural History Museum at the Darwin Centre, a real-life clean room like this was constructed, sponsored by a clean room manufacturer. Members of the public had to be completely enclosed in disposable sterile suits before being allowed to enter, the air being filtered by hepafilters. The public were, in this sense, taking part in 'performative science'. There also took place a performance by Critical Art Ensemble, 'Genterra' (see chapter 2 - 'Interrogating Reality'), as well as a forum, chaired by Kodwo Eshun and myself, entitled 'Working With Wetware' (Arts Catalyst, Working With Wetware, web ref.). This began to chip away at some of the ethical areas in which artists have become embroiled – that of artists 'playing god' by creating their own genetically modified life forms, and manipulating them to make art. These ethical areas are well explored by the Australian group SymbioticA. (SymbioticA, web ref.)

There is of course, another kind of debate here about the public's perception of and access to areas of science shrouded in secrecy. This has been triggered recently by events at the time of writing connected

with the detention and charging of Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble by the FBI in the United States (Critical Art Ensemble, web ref.). More can be read about this case on the CAE's website, but in essence, it can be said that Critical Art Ensemble use hands-on methods to inform the public of decision-making processes going on in science that they might otherwise be unaware of, with a political agenda that maintains that information can lead to activism. This dual aim has triggered the US authorities to use the excuse of the personal tragedy of Kurtz, the death of his wife and the discovery by the authorities of his private lab, to crack down on both the group's activities, but also in my opinion, a kind of academic freedom that runs counter to current neo-conservative trends in the US exacerbated by the threat of terrorism. (Critical Art Ensemble Case, web ref.)

So the ubiquity of art, in this case, has led to worrying developments in the public sphere. CAE are not against scientific progress per se, as some artists may be, and nor do they wholeheartedly embrace it, but they aim for a kind of public dissidence about the commercial values behind decision-making in science. The fluidity of their position therefore leads to a political outcome.

10) An Introduction to Vertigo

In a sense, then, the artist is returning to the great themes, first of alchemy, then biological creation, and finally socio-political awareness and activism while armed with the new weapons of conceptual refocusing and appropriation of suitable technologies, as well as engaging with the knowledge-production industry of science. Where better to return, than the area of astronautics, itself subject to a new revival of interest after decades of failed idealism. In this chapter, I describe the world of microgravity, the space resource that has been somewhat overlooked by the space industry until recently, but is made of the stuff of our dreams:

It's often been said that it is difficult to argue with the laws of physics at 30,000 feet. It is even more difficult to argue with them if the plane that you are in describes a perfect parabola, allowing you to experience 30 seconds of microgravity, sandwiched between two sections of double gravity, and then does it again and again, creating a notion of what it could be like if your body could, actually, fly. This experience, which has been undertaken by more and more non-astronauts, including recently, artists, over the past 40 years - in fact before the flight of Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space - is the ultimate intersection between hard scientific reality and humanity's age-old fantasy, the dream of flight. The out-of-body experience, the flying carpet, the flying broomstick, shamanic journey and yogic flying all collide with a metaphorical impact with the purely visceral flesh and blood experience of the human body, organs and all, being lifted out of the bonds of gravity.

To be levitated in this way is in fact the pure definition of placelessness, as you cease to experience all the familiar reference points that position your body as an earth-dwelling creature. Moreover your social position with regards to other people in the flight is dramatically equalised and democratised, the subject/object relation is subverted and the breakdown between audience and artist is complete as in an effective piece of performance art.

To imagine actually leaving gravity behind it is necessary to do a little visualisation exercise. You are sitting in your chair reading this. You can not only feel the reassuring push of the chair against your bottom, your feet on the ground, but also in the way your arm rests on the table, your stomach positioned above the pelvis, the blood flowing in your veins and arteries gently weighing down on you, this book resting in your grasp. Now imagine all that departing in an instant. What a catastrophe it would be if gravity suddenly were to be cancelled out on Earth!

But it is possible to adapt? Long-staying cosmonauts and astronauts use little tricks to maintain their gravity-dependent selves, like strapping themselves into their sleeping bags so they can sleep with the sensation of the covers pressing down on them. They are constantly having to tie things down, using Velcro and other products. They have ingenious uses for all three dimensions. They also learn that you can leave objects floating mid-air, but only for specific lengths of time. They swim around their space stations, MIR and now the ISS, but when they sit down for meals they all face each other the right way up to squirt food and liquids into their mouths. After only a week in microgravity the re-adaptation to Earth gravity becomes a major problem. They have to work out continuously. The trip to Mars may be a one-way ticket unless we take gravity with us. All this is known.

The problem is that there is also a fundamental reality gap between the experiences of the community of 600 or so astronauts and cosmonauts, members of the exclusive club who have travelled into space, and the general public who live in normal gravity conditions. Some people even imagine that somewhere in NASA, or a similar space training facility, there exists an anti-gravity room, where gravity can be switched off and people float around.

This doesn't exist, although in recent years, experiments in diamagnetism now do allow organic matter, even animals, though not yet humans, to be floated using a combination of strong magnets and the weak magnetic force existing in everything – the 'floating frog' being the best-known example. The Dutch Experiment Support Centre in Nimegen (Diamagnetism, web ref) now offers this technique to scientists wishing to investigate the effects of varying gravity on living materials, in some cases in combination with

the parabolic flight facilities offered by ESA (European Space Agency- see web reference). This is as close to an anti-gravity chamber we have got, so, devoid of actual experience, the public only has mythology and literary metaphor to work with.

How different is the first zero gravity experience from a typical literary description? An evocative and intelligent recent example is to be found in Paul Auster's 'Mr Vertigo', where the young hero, Walter Rawley, is put through a number of depredations by the Hungarian showman Master Yehudi until:

There were no more tears to be gotten out of me - only a dry choked heaving, an aftermath of hiccups and scorched, airless breaths. Presently I grew still. almost tranquil, and bit by bit a sense of calm spread through me, radiating out among my muscles and oozing toward the tips of my fingers and toes. There were no more thoughts in my head, no more feelings in my heart. I was weightless inside my own body, floating on a placid wave of nothingness, utterly detached and indifferent to the world around me. And that's when I did it for the first time - without warning, without the least notion that it was about to happen. Very slowly I felt my body rise off the floor. The movement was so natural, so exquisite in its gentleness; it wasn't until I opened my eyes that I understood my limbs were touching only air. I was not far off the ground - no more than an inch or two - but I hung there without effort, suspended like the moon in the night sky, motionless and aloft, conscious only of the air fluttering in and out of my lungs. (Auster 1994: 58)

An earlier example, significantly from Russian culture, both geographically the homeland of nomadic tribes legendarily harbouring reindeer-powered trance-induced flying shamen, and the actual birthplace of human spaceflight, is this description of 'flying cream' from Mikhail Bulgakov's classic 'The Master and Margarita' :

...Margarita jumped out of her bathrobe with a single leap, dipped freely into the light, rich cream, and with vigorous strokes began rubbing it into the skin of her body. It at once turned pink and tingly. That instant, as if a needle had been snatched from her brain, the ache she had felt all

evening in her temple subsided...her leg and arm muscles grew stronger and then Margarita's body became weightless. She sprang up and hung in the air just above the rug, then was slowly pulled down and descended. What a dream! What a dream! cried Margarita, throwing herself into an armchair. (Bulgakov, 1966: 231)

Interestingly there is little difference between these two descriptions, although the latter is written before many years before the first spaceflight and the former written after.

What are the other analogies to the zero gravity experience? Skydiving, circus acts and deep-sea diving all produce experiences that modify gravity in different ways, and all these have been used by artists approaching reduced gravity at different times. It is significant that the first person to approach space agencies with a view to turning the flying dream into reality was the determined and highly motivated choreographer and dancer, Kitsou Dubois (Dubois, web ref.).

Influenced by Gaston Bachelard's statements in 'Air and Dreams' (Bachelard, 1943) among other texts and inspired by a meeting with distinguished French astronaut Claudie Deshayes, Dubois set off on a one-woman mission to storm the defences of the carefully-guarded space establishment. Arriving at NASA's Goddard Space Centre, (see web reference) armed with an introduction, Dubois was nevertheless given short shrift by NASA. 'I was French, I was a dancer, I was a woman'. Undaunted, Dubois managed to get a foot in the door with the French Space agency, CNRS and in 1993 boarded the Caravelle Zero Gravity plane to become the first professional artist to intentionally experience zero gravity.

Watching those first video records of Dubois' first 'birth' into microgravity is both haunting and instructive, as you see her initial joy at flying for the first time being slowly replaced by her putting into action her dance training in this new environment. The first moments of the zero G experience in a parabolic flight can for some, be both traumatic and revelatory. Putting aside the well-known side-effect of nausea, usually experienced after four or five parabolic sequences of weightlessness, there is an aspect of

disorientation, in which all the senses are discombobulated, the inner ear loses control and you are forced, as the Russian instructors in Star City put it, to 'test your emotional stability'.

Kitsou Dubois, in her numerous flights first with CNES, then with the Yuri Gagarin Training Centre (Gagarin Cosmonaut training Centre, web ref.) and the European Space Agency through the science-art agency The Arts Catalyst, has pioneered the use of groups of dancers unashamedly using body contact in Zero G. Dubois, an early exponent of the contact improvisation dance technique, herself noted that in her earlier flights the astronauts and instructors were quite tense about touching in zero gravity situations. Space and microgravity is indeed quite a sensualised zone and is famously a place where sex is officially never supposed to have happened (despite a famous allegedly hoaxed erotic movie –The Uranus Experiment - Dir. Millerman). So the notion of dance techniques in the semi-industrialised environment of space agency research, while to most people in the arts would seem obvious, was in fact a considerable threat to the space establishment.

But Dubois went further in her dance experiments, theorising that a dancer's intentionality in visualising their body movements in advance of the movements themselves could actually make a trained dancer highly capable of manoeuvring in a zero G environment. In the course of her experiments with Imperial College's Biomechanics department she was initially able to show that her dance training meant her movements could operate independently of her brain's motor cortex. Moreover, she began to establish protocols that could, she theorised, assist practical use of movement and ultimately, survival through adaptation during long-term space exploration.

My own, rather unexpected, first experience of flying in the Russia Ilyushin MDK 76 craft back in 1999, six years after Dubois' first flight was not helped by a complete state of unpreparedness and a mild problem of vertigo. I had been called to Star City, the former secret cosmonaut training base, near Moscow with three days notice (Get visa! Get medical!) by Marko Peljhan, a friend and long-time collaborator, who had put together the project in a last minute firefight for the explosive and charismatic Slovenian theatre director Dragan Zhivadinov. Zhivadinov, who was later to mount the first full-scale

theatre performance, complete with audience, on the Ilyushin, had earlier made a solo flight as part of a cigarette company-sponsored 'space training' competition the previous year in the new free-for all Russia, and Peljhan had had previous contact with the Russian space agency through the organisation of a live video conference with the Kristall mission on the MIR space station (Zhivadinov, web ref.)

Arriving after a whirlwind of last-minute preparations we found ourselves at the gate of Star City in an aged 'cosmonaut bus'. We were clearly in unknown territory, waiting for over 3 hours to find someone in charge. A variety of officers in greatcoats and the characteristic Russian military big hats came back and forth with contradictory messages, but the Slovenian team, all Russian space buffs, kept spotting space legends entering and leaving. There's Leonov! And Krikalev!

I remember feeling a mixture of anxiety and disbelief that we would ever be allowed to actually take off, but in what seemed no time at all we were lined up like military recruits with parachutes, and after an apparently cursory medical exam were taking off in a rather creaky but enormous jet plane, smelling of oil and jet fuel and feeling as if I hadn't missed the second world war and conscription in my lifetime after all. To my bemusement and even further disbelief my trainer for the flight was none other than Yuri Gidzenko, another legendary long-duration MIR cosmonaut and later to command the mission to build the International Space Station. Sergei Krikalev (pictured in the film 'Out Of The Present' as the Last Soviet Citizen, stranded on MIR during the fall of communism) also joined us for the ride. (Udjica (dir) 1996, web ref.)

The first moment of zero gravity is one of those 'wake-up' moments where you feel like you have been dreaming for the rest of your life. Nothing quite computes, you feel as if you are somehow a character in a strange movie. I felt a sharp tingling of the blood around my extremities, followed by a massive panic attack. Time to test my emotional stability. In one direction to the left of my field of vision flew one of the Slovenian actors, stage-diving, hair flying, laughing. Gidzenko hovered solicitously upside down near me - 'Are you OK?'. I nodded, stiff upper lip operational, as he flew off diagonally to play a game of 3-dimensional tag with Krikalev.

'It's the most expensive drug in the world' Zhivadinov said later, and seeing the cosmonauts get their fix, I could see why. Coming to terms with the effects of the drug myself, I began to see the disadvantages of my lack of preparedness. I could, for example have taken part in one of the training courses in movement in microgravity Kitsou Dubois now gives in warm swimming pools. Instead, I controlled myself with deep breathing and performed an approximate yogic flying posture for two parabolas. Later I even tried to fly. Peljhan said afterwards it looked like the first attempt by anyone to crawl in zero gravity.

Coming to the ground, despite feeling as if I had either overdosed or escaped a fatal road accident, and having survived the traditional post-flight vodka toast, it became apparent however that this was a procedure most healthy people could undertake. My colleague in the Arts Catalyst, Nicola Triscott, for example, took to zero gravity like a duck to water in the first flight we organised on realising it was possible to work in Star City. This marked the start of the first sustained zero gravity programme for artists in the world. Since then, in the last 5 years the Arts Catalyst has enabled over 50 people to experience microgravity, undertaken over 8 artists projects, 4 scientific projects, a radio broadcast, a short science-fiction film and flown a robot. (Arts Catalyst microgravity projects, web ref.)

It is difficult to describe the atmosphere at Star City, a sixties Soviet time capsule, haunted by the ghost of Gagarin and blown by the winds of Russian cosmicist philosophy. We too haunted this place for three years, discovering its peculiarities and difficulties to allow the largest group of artistically-minded civilians ever to penetrate the secret world of cosmonaut training.

As a result of the Arts Catalyst expeditions, the reality gap between the public perception of flying the human body and the private world of the astronauts and cosmonauts has been closed a little. There are however whole areas of space flight training that remain closed to artists, or anyone else for that matter. The next step is to get the European Space agency, for example, to take seriously the idea of involving artists and writers in operational scenarios, in training and eventually into space, if the commercial sector does not get there first. Indeed, SpaceshipOne has at the time of writing (2004) won the Ansari X Prize

for the first repeatable space flight, allowing 4-6 minutes in zero gravity, inevitably followed by the spectre of Richard Branson offering holidays in zero gravity. (X Prize, web ref.)

In the area of artist's use of variable gravity the next area of interest could be Mars gravity, partial gravity, or even double gravity. The use of the centrifuge as a space flight simulator has yet to be explored, although a non-human art project, the crushing of a sculpture by the artist Stefan Gec was organised in the Star City programme. Again, artists are also getting interested in diamagnetism. If you can float a frog, what else can you float?

We may not have 'flying cream' or antigravity chambers yet, but the chance of exploring different gravities, with a view to exploring open space, is now a reality for artists who might be inclined to follow that path. But first there are some hurdles to cross.

11) Hidden Paths and Way Stations

How do correspondences occur when groups of creative people form alliances, unencumbered by geographic limitations? In his 1963 novel 'Cat's Cradle', Kurt Vonnegut talks about the 'Karass' - an almost unconscious social unit inspired by chance -

If you find your life tangled up with somebody else's life for not entirely logical reasons that person may be a member of your Karass'. He theorised that the Karass system existed as an unconscious mapping, a psychogeography entirely opposed to what he called the 'Grammfallon' - political parties, religious groups, scout groups, etc. (Vonnegut 1963)

This idea continues in the historical analysis of the communities of outsiders living with the often cited Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ), the zone named by web philosopher Hakim Bey, (Bey 1985) in which the social organism becomes the band of nomads, the pirate republics, the sub-cultural manifestations such as raves or large-scale squatting movements. This neo-romantic, extreme bohemian notion rejects the nuclear family and other social political constants, it is against the European Project in favour of the doomed ship of fools. While a useful construct, it describes a waveform of creation and destruction, of momentary community spirit - the more permanent social organism is, if it exists hidden among communities made dissident by their predilections. (Bey, web ref.)

While these recent two utopian social-historical points of view represent useful vectors they contain hidden flaws. One of these flaws is connected with the ways in which alliances form without any social imperatives.

Paul Auster, the novelist who continues, for me, to come up with useful moral narratives for these issues, in his recent novel 'Oracle Night' describes the formation of the 'Blue Team', a secret organisation who represented:

"a human ideal, a tight-knit association of tolerant and sympathetic individuals, the dream of a perfect society...members didn't conform to a particular type and each one was a distinct and individual person. But no one was allowed in who didn't have a good sense of humour... a taste for the ironies of life and an appreciation of the absurd. If you're on the Blue team, you don't have to explain your principles. They're immediately understood by how you act."

Another version of Vonnegut's *Karass* then. The model is blasted to pieces by the narrator's partner:

"You're talking about people who've decided they're better than other people, who feel morally superior to the rest of us common folk. I'll bet you and your friends had a secret handshake, didn't you? To set you apart from the riffraff and the dumbbells, right? To make you think you had some special knowledge no one else was smart enough to have"

(Auster, 2003: P 116)

So the principal problem of informal networks is the dynamic of inclusion and exclusion. Artists in informal networks have to balance the fragility and fluidity of their networks with the need to be open to other influences. Indeed one worldwide network of women media artists calls itself ironically the 'Old Boys Network' (Old Boys Network, web ref.).

This dynamic is also linked to the problem of creative curating and can become critical when faced with the question of choice, particularly in artist-run groups. The curatorial world has only just recently freed itself of the legacy of 'connoisseurship', the notion of an elitist group of experts who determine which artist is valid and which is not. Indeed many maintain that this old-boy system is still rigidly in place in the international biennale system, in a scenario where an elite group of 'chosen' curators and artists appear to rub shoulders with museum directors, gallery dealers and Ministry of Culture functionaries.

Before looking at the next case study and the connections between a particular group of artists and creatives in the process of forming networks, let's have a brief look at the geology of the substrata of the new movement of individuals, in this case around Europe. Traditionally, hidden paths around Europe have been followed for two reasons, firstly pilgrimage, religious or spontaneous and secondly as routes of escape from persecution or economic disadvantage.

Both pathways may provide a model for new artist's models. The ancient pilgrimage routes across Europe, followed on foot or with a donkey to places like Santiago de Compostela have been echoed in the late twentieth century by a new nomadism starting in the 60s and 70s of people, usually from prosperous Northern countries making their way across Europe to the South, North Africa and India, then returning and making their homes in far-flung communities around the edges of Europe. This has been reflected in the beginning of the 21st century in the wider social fabric by individuals or groups of individuals downsizing, homeworking and attempting to become self-sufficient in communities around Europe who have conveniently emptied their villages to seek their fortunes in larger cities. This movement has coincided with the growth of the internet and home computer ownership.

On another level are the routes of escape, the border territories, the 'zones' that exist around points of conflict. Artist Heath Bunting has produced a useful guide to collecting plants growing in areas which, strangely enough, coincide with the entry points to 'Fortress Europe.' (Bunting, web ref.) Many border regions, particularly those between France and Spain are resonant with memories of Jews and other minorities escaping persecution from the Nazis, the original 'European project'. Recently the FADIAT project tried to bring together groups from both sides of the barrier at the edge of Fortress Europe in Tarifa, Spain, to remap the new migrations, both legal and illegal, across the straits of Gibraltar. It also commented on the dysfunctionality of the remapping of the Costa Del Sol and of water misuse through massive building of golf courses along that stretch of coastline. (Fadiat, web ref.)

So, bearing in mind the social and political conditions, the traps and perils that await the informal networker, let us look at the case study of a project in Northumberland, England, Allenheads

Contemporary Arts. which recently set out on nomadic mission to contact other like-minded individuals in Europe. After a successful career in galleries in New York, Alan Smith and Helen Ratcliffe moved to Northumberland to set up the remote arts project, operating as a way station for both like-minded artists and passing cyclists travelling from sea to sea. (Allenheads Contemporary Art, web ref.)

In a way, they brought back with them their own version of the American Dream, not the corrupt, neo-colonial version of Bush's USA but one of the group of dissidents 'lighting out for the territories'. This is also a favourite metaphor of the Quaker artist James Turrell, who sees the nomadic art world as a 'pirate ship full of whores, thieves and blasphemers' (record of private conversation) and who co-incidentally was the catalyst for the meeting between myself, Tracey Warr and Smith and Ratcliff, in the advanced research project for Turrell's Northern Skyspace. (Keilder Skyspace, web ref.) In Allenheads, they found the correct combination of isolation and independence, with moments of temporary luminosity, similar to Beuys' temporary autonomous zones. Indeed, after struggling to convert their school into a living, breathing home for artistic nomads, Smith and Ratcliffe still 'walk down the hill to the village and look back and see all the lights and know it's reality, it's really being used'

But the Allenheads project meant connections with other isolated nomadic way stations. As Smith says, 'we didn't want to disappear into a rural retreat and become hillbillies'. In a journey across Europe this summer they set out, 'like a version of Allenheads on tour' criss-crossing around, following the paths of coincidence, of connection. Through Tracey Warr they made contact with groups around the Pyrenees, and found particular contextual resonance with Catalan artists Guash and Ansuncion, who are working on an artistic intervention project called 'Vulnerables' in the small town of Comella de Llobregat. They 'unravel the visual creativity within more popular social sectors, far from the artistic elite or the usual cultural customers'. Resonances abound here with the work done by Marcus Coates, in a social context with the villagers in Allenheads. (Coates, web ref.)

I introduced them to ANPQ, which stands for Arte N'importe Quoi (art, it doesn't matter what) which welcomes artists, designers, writers, performers, scientists and all those who share a common belief in

the creative act – and the curiosity to follow their own creative pathway – ‘n'importe ou’ in the small Languedoc village of Peret. ANPQ is just finding its feet and was set up by Gabby Campbell, who escaped from organising arts projects at London’s Natural History Museum and Richard Johnson, veteran of Europe’s theatre touring circuit. Ostensibly a workspace/residential unit and gallery similar to ACA, this is another way station on the pilgrim’s path or escape route across Europe. Smith says, ‘we are interested in new geographies and see a direct line across a map of Europe that does not respect boundaries’.

But how do you filter the nomads who pass through these way stations so that they harmonise with the objectives without being exclusive? Smith and Ratcliffe: ‘these people are coming into our home - they are lurking around and in our hair all the time.’ Smith: ‘the worst type of nomads are the cyclists!’ (ACA also offers accommodation to passing travellers.) Unlike the artists, it seems they really just see the way station as nothing more than that, a pathway for their obsessive voyaging. So they have to be like-minded individuals, they have to be the ones who get the most out of the environment in which they find themselves. They have to be, as Smith says, ‘like us, somehow off-tilt’. In these fragile environments, we still come up against the problem of Paul Auster’s ‘Blue Team’. Possibilities of secret handshakes still remain.

So let me try and define a way in which people could make art in these nomadic way stations that are also people’s homes. They have to be artists and individuals with the drive and obsession to make their project happen, but with the sensitivity to balance their obsession, to realise there is more to their immediate surroundings. They have to be able to be part of what Bey cites in his TAZ internet rant the ‘Dinner Party’ – borrowing from Steven Pearl Andrew’s ‘Science of Society’, in which

‘The Individuality of each is fully admitted. Intercourse, therefore, is perfectly free. Conversation is continuous, brilliant, and varied. Groups are formed according to attraction. They are continuously broken up, and re-formed through the operation of the same subtle and all-pervading influence’. (Andrews, 1852).

In other words, according to Alan Smith: 'If you put us all around the table we'll all have a fucking good night.'

The social metaphor is increasingly being used in the solution of the problem of how artists relate to the communities in which they find themselves. The notion of ubiquity and fluidity is increasingly shown in the work of artists like Ella Gibbs and Anna Best, with whom I worked for the SHAVE international artist's workshop. (Shave, web ref.) They work from an artist's point view yet de-materialising (rather like Ria Paquee, or Cesare Pietrouisti) the art in a series of street parties, fêtes, intimate hand-held documentaries, job centres for hobbyists, guided walks and cake sales.

These phenomena are based in a way, on Bey's TAZ. They are by no means related to the idea of 'community art' but are instead based in real relations between real people. They are also the media for setting off the sparks of debate about the nature of art. They celebrate ubiquity and fluidity for its own sake. One often wonders how they manage not to get absorbed in the dominion of the social, but somehow they don't. They are way stations in movement, domestic pirate republics. So perhaps we need to create a new set of personal ethics about the new networks of alliances, that stand firm in the face of authoritarian, top-down pressures, but do not allow the creation of a new elitism. New networks that allow like-minded individuals to join forces on the basis of personal preference but remain open to difference, with in-built safeguards against conservatism, forming new sorts of histories that run counter to market-driven forms of art and embracing a certain kind of activist approach. It is difficult to imagine how these histories will finally get written and this concern forms part of my conclusion.

12) Conclusion - Archiving the Impossible

I have constructed this summary of documentation by selecting case studies from my curating and writing practice that have particular resonance for me and which seem to reflect the twin axes of fluidity and ubiquity. The research benefits for the reader will be, I hope, to understand some real-life methodologies of considering and curating artists work. As I hope I have shown, the way in which a particular artwork can evolve is affected by some specific circumstances. These include site, social context, method of transmission, collaboration and networks.

Historically, the period covered also mirrors the growth of the term 'curator' which now has a very different meaning than it did 15 years ago. The curator of contemporary art, as opposed to the conservator of objects, is now the subject of debate, as is the distance between the work of the artists and that of the curator. There are now training courses for curators, a movements of freelance curators around Europe and a lively debate about the extent of intervention by the curator into the artistic process - creative curating.

This summary allows an early insight into the development of a creative curating approach in terms of the way in which projects have developed with artists where they they have not simply been selected but developed through a series of interleaving relationships involving both idea and site as well as an interdisciplinary approach in terms of art form.

As the terms curating and curator have developed over the decade, so have the different art form terms such as 'performance' changed during the period of this survey. Relational aspects between 'art' and 'life' have developed and it is interesting to compare the relational aspect of, for example, the writers and artists involved in Performance Magazine's 'State Performance' issue in the eighties (see chapter 'Interrogating Reality) with current relational practice such as the works of Jeremy Deller's recreations of the Battle of Orgreave (Artangel, web ref) and Rod Dickinson's recreation of contemporary

historical/scientific landmarks such as the Jonestown Massacre and the Millgram Experiment. (Dickinson, web ref). (Rod Dickinson provides an actual link, as he was a participant in 'the Incident', described in *Subjective Reality, Science and Art*). There are many such circularities and historical correspondences contained in this summary, which in my opinion aptly reflects the cyclical nature of post-war contemporary art and culture.

The situation facing artists engaging with science and technology allows other problems to emerge, and some of these are affected by the way artists and curators can no longer operate in complete ignorance of political, ecological and ethical issues, again a process tracked by this summary in a number of incidences cited. Towards the end of the documentation, for example, I describe the ultimate techno-scientific environment, that of space exploration. Once one has gone beyond the immediate innovation of artists breaking through into this territory, powered by the axis of ubiquity, one is faced with some of the essential problems facing artists engaging with modernity in the last century.

The experience of microgravity, for example, which I describe in 'An Introduction to Vertigo', is perhaps an suitable analogy to this problem. It is here, in the enclosed world of microgravity, that the forces of gravity collide together with those of dreams and realities. You cannot argue with the forces of gravity, but you can make dreams come true, making carpets fly and liquids form impossible shapes.

But all this is achieved with an immense amount of resources, burning tanks of jet fuel in an age when global warming is now finally becoming indubitable, despite previously contested data. Some artists are naturally disposed to critique the utopian fantasy of human spaceflight in the face of global warming and the problems of extreme poverty in the world. Others, combining the ready-made vision of the artist as fluid lifestyle adopter – the firemen, deep sea divers and nuclear artists described in the chapters 'Interrogating Reality' and 'Big Science Questioned' see engagement in the life of the astronaut or cosmonaut as a natural artistic choice.

The creative curator's role in this juxtaposition is a complex one and has to do with assessing the effectiveness of the artist as generator of ideas and obsessions against a wider picture, albeit from a stance which veers between the intuitive and the pragmatic.

Then there is the question of interpretation of data. In my attempts to construct a view of the way interdisciplinary work has expanded toward various historically changing frontiers - many defined by the interpretation and exploitation of techno-science with, towards the end some comments on the machinery of knowledge production itself - arriving at pure science itself. Art is however not in itself science, it has various tools at its disposal not available to scientists, the ability for not only poetic reflection, but also for manipulating and playing with subjective reality, as I outlined in 'Subjective Reality, Science and Art'.

Artists can literally create their own data - this they have in common with shamanic practitioners, magicians, tricksters and hoaxers. Of course this can also bring its own problematic symptoms, that of artistic hubris and solipsism. At what point does an artist with an interesting obsession become a psychotic fantasist? This question has an uneasy relationship with the mechanisms of endorsement which function in the gallery world.

I propose one potential answer in the chapter 'Hidden Paths and Way Stations' This shows that artists have also developed their own means of survival which interface with the whole creative community, of which I am a member. The geography of networks becomes a template for focussing on the different histories represented here.

But how to store and access these histories? Perhaps a third vector needs to be introduced, the movement towards stability of information. In the past, particularly in performance practice, the emphasis used to be on the unrepeatable moment captured by the live artist, once only, in an unwritten temporal contract with the spectators. Now, as the history of performance, for example, matures, ways have to be devised to store these moments for future scholars. For example, the whole pages of the 89

issues of Performance Magazine are being captured and stored by and placed on a website so that students and researchers can access them in decades to come. (Performance Magazine archive web ref.) But this is just one way data can be stored. Perhaps there is the need for an artistic equivalent of the oral tradition used by storytellers in many cultures, where the moment comes alive as if it is being re-enacted there and then. Perhaps data itself needs to come with its own built-in ubiquity and fluidity to be equal to the challenge of re-telling. Science fiction tells us of potential technologies where the human consciousness interfaces with machines in order for memories to become apparently real. Perhaps the problem of archiving experience in art is waiting for those technologies.

In the meantime it is all down to the personal. This is why the describability and indescribability of the performance experience, for example in my description of Warpechowski's work in the chapter 'The Pit and the Pendulum', remains such a fascinating enigma, showing how the penetration of the artist's flesh during a performance situation leads also to the breaching of the boundary between the live artist and the audience.

Recent work by artists, tracking the minutiae of their lives, like Paul Perry (Perry, web ref.) and Heath Bunting (Bunting, web ref.) show the process of moving an identity through a map of life-choices (in the case of Perry, death-choices also, the artist specialises in investigating near-death experiences). In doing this, they follow the oppositional tradition of Fluxus in a technological society where one's every individual movement can be tracked by credit card numbers and surveillance cameras.

So the fluidity and ubiquity which I refer to throughout, is finally motivated by the artist's choices in a world that is open to interpretation. As a creative curator one can set down challenges, even tasks, (asking a sculptor or film-maker to create a site-specific performance in the chapter 'Altering the Site') but in the end the only way through is to follow the art. Carl Andre once said: 'My art springs from my desire to have things in the world which would otherwise never be there'. As a curator and writer, I tend to live by that maxim and I hope that this research into my practice shows this.

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