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Poetics of the Interface

Creating Works of Art That Engage in Self-Reflection

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the value of employing noise in the formulation of interfaces that engage in self-reflection. The articulation of the interfaces' formalist devices (message and noise) can generate paradoxical patterns that when enacted by the observer promote experiences of alterity in the formation of the work of art. This project is transdisciplinary and parasitic (following Michel Serres) in the sense that it is located in the relation of the artistic practice and the other sources; it resembles a foreigner (following Julia Kristeva) whose presence disrupts and invites its host to greet its own foreigner, and moves like a snake (following Aby Warburg) with maximum mobility and minimum target to disclose contradictions and formulate hypotheses.

The first chapter, 'Focusing Attention', covers a wide range of disciplines in order to find points of convergence with the artistic practice and proposes a theorisation of the interface – an object or situation where a subject or system meet and interact, which is defined by its elements (message, noise and interference). Attention is proposed as a selective and active process that allows for an embodied subject to engage with ontological contradictions, without representing them, and to evolve in reciprocity with the world.

Chapter two, 'Scripting Journeys', addresses the work of Bruce Nauman in light of the previous considerations (interface and attention) while proposing a methodological practice that focuses on a notion of travelling to a place in-between. Nauman's practice is proposed as topographic explorations primarily concerned with the 'mechanics of attention', which are formulated in the production of interfaces (as scripts for new journeys to places in-between) to be engaged by an observer.

Chapter three, 'On the Go', addresses the production of new works of art as a formulation of the methodology identified in Nauman's practice. The chapter covers the production process and its underlying concerns when travelling to places proposed as in-between. The proposed notion of the interface is addressed in a direct relation with the new works of art to further understand the value of employing noise in the formation of experiences of alterity. This chapter should be considered in relation to the works of art previously exhibited, which are documented in the thesis and proposed as *formulations* of knowledge and not as *representations* of knowledge.

This project will conclude by proposing three contributions to knowledge, which should be understood as hypotheses: first, the proposition of the notion of interface and its formalist devices (message, noise and interference), secondly, the re-interpretation of Bruce Nauman's practice, and thirdly, a new body of work articulating the interface's formalist devices across different mediums, which can be attended to by other artists when considering any concept of the interface.

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This project grew from my interest in technology and new media art. I found that my interest gradually shifted from the possibilities suggested by the technological advances to the technical difficulties that were implicit in the technologies of new media art. The technical difficulties often resulted in technical constraints, which prevented the observer from interacting with the work of art, and further, appeared to lead to a failure in constructing or interpreting the work of art as proposed by the artist, in terms of intentionality and experience: the equipment breaks down, it needs to be switched on, it is highly visible or, if concealed, is nonetheless remarked, its fragility prevents the observer's frequent use, and so on.[1] For each technological innovation there are a variety of accidents contingent to that same technology, as Paul Virilio writes:

> to invent the sailing ship or steamer is *to invent the shipwreck*. To invent the train is *to invent the rail accident* or derailment. To invent the family automobile is to produce the *pile-up* on the highway.[2]

There is an instability contingent to the novelty of a new technology, which might be understood as the early steps in an evolutionary process that ultimately culminates in the mastery of its elements, thus shifting the emphasis from the ability to master its possibilities to the uses that are implicit in those technologies. In short, there is a direct relation between the mastery of a technology and its invisibility. In his historical analysis of spaces of illusion, Oliver Grau writes:

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[1] This observation was significant while visiting the Center for Media and Art (ZKM) in Karlsruhe, Germany, where I found that a good part of the work being displayed was switched-off or having technical problems, preventing my interaction with it.

[2] Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident (L'Accident originel* [2005]), trans. Julie Rose, Malden, MA; Cambridge: Polity, 2007, p. 10.

Immersion techniques, such as the vanishing interface, or the so-called natural interface, affect the institution of the observer and how, on the other hand, strongly accentuated, visible interfaces make the observer acutely aware of the immersive experience and are particularly conductive to reflection.[3]

Grau proposes that the interface's visibility affects the experience of the observer. Highly visible interfaces promote the observer's reflection while invisible interfaces promote an experience of immersion and illusion. Grau's analysis focuses on spaces of immersion as the final stage in a process of mastering a technology, which ultimately aims at making that technology invisible while focusing the observer's attention in the proposed illusion. In short, a 'good' technology is a technology that makes itself invisible. Grau's proposition identifies a fundamental variable in the equation that formulates the relation between the interface (as produced by an artist) and the work of art (as constructed by an observer), that of the (in)visibility of the interface. That variable raises a particular question that is independent of the technology being employed: what is the value of artists intentionally employing noise (I will explain what I mean by this in what follows) in the construction of the interface (independently of its technological (un)stability) and its implications for the observer's reflection when constructing the work of art?

A parallel can be established between the interface's (in)visibility and the enaction of meaning by the observer. The proposed move places the observer's perception, which implies action and understanding, as a biological feature that allows for a subject (the observer) to evolve in a world while articulating the world's contradictions. Perception should be understood as an adaptive and mutable biological technology that enables a subject to evolve in a world rather than a passive and stable biological feature to represent a world. Consequently, if the interface is understood as the enaction of

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[3] Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, Cambridge, MA: London: MIT Press, 2003, p. 10.

meaning by the observer then the reflection that results from the interface's visibility will be directed towards the observer's enaction of meaning rather than to the object or situation proposed by the artist. The objects or situations proposed by the artist should be understood as devices that allow for an interaction with an observer. They do not represent an interaction to be *decoded* by an observer.

This project is not about representing a set of ideas or propositions; rather, it is about the formulation of ideas and propositions that are hypotheses for further investigation. It formulates hypotheses while accessing a variety of disciplines, which can be understood as continents of knowledge, but I am interested in them as lighthouses rather than in the tales of those lands. This project is situated in the oceans between those continents of knowledge. Occasionally it will be possible to juxtapose maps (some will be ancient while others will be contemporary), but the fundamental task of this project is the development of tools that will contribute to sustain and acknowledge an implicit mobility rather than to discover a promised land to be colonised. The question that this project addresses, raised by Grau's proposition, is to understand the value of making visible the relations that are established between an observer and the artist's propositions – interfaces – and implicit in the process of constructing meaning from an object or situation while formulating the work of art. The aim of this project is to better comprehend how an interface might promote experiences of self-reflection in an observer. Its objective is to understand the value of intentionally employing noise in the production of the interface through an increase in its visibility and the ways in which this in consequence promotes experiences of reflection in the observer. The methodological rationale for this project is similar to the proposed notion of perception, which implies action, understandings and its implicit mobility; that is, the artistic practice takes the role of a subject while the subject's perception (the ability to access the world where that subject is evolving) is replaced by the relation established between the

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various disciplines of knowledge acknowledged in this project. Thus, it is important to note that those disciplines will be *accessed* rather than represented while allowing for an investigation rooted in the artistic practice to develop and to formulate hypotheses (works of art and written elements) for further considerations.

Chapter description:

The first chapter, 'Focusing Attention', considers the implications of recent research in the cognitive sciences, which suggest that a subject's perception does not imply a representation of the world in the subject's brain but instead a subject perception is the ability to access a readily available world, which functions as a model for itself. These propositions are phenomenological and imply that a subject is always embodied. Perception is a biological feature that allows a subject to articulate the world's ontological contradictions while evolving in a world that remains a mind-independent reality.

'Focusing Attention' considers the idea of the interface as being distinct from that of the work of art. An interface is an object(s) or situation(s) where two or more subjects or systems meet and interact. The interface is the product of an artist's work. The work of art is the result of the spectator's engagement with that interface. An interface is the product of an artist's work and does not take in consideration the observer's interpretation. The presence of the observer in the development of the interface is restricted to the artist (as observer of her/his own work) or to an idea of a hypothetical observer. The proposed distinction allows the rethinking and return to the artist as an author of the interface while at the same time accepting and co-existing with structuralism, deconstruction and post-structuralism thought in relation to the work of art. This distinction suggests that a research located in the context of the artistic practice

should be primarily concerned with a notion of the interface rather than with a notion of the work of art. However, this should not be understood as a suggestion to ignore the work of art but rather a suggestion to focus the attention of a practice-based research in a notion of the interface while allowing for the notion of the work of art to remain present but not as its primary concern.

I describe two earlier projects in the field of the fine arts and their contribution to my project. The first project considers artists as researchers and the importance of first-person methodologies to investigate consciousness through the collaboration between Robert Irwin, James Turrell (artists) and Dr. Ed Wortz (scientist) during the Art and Technology programme of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1968. This particular collaboration suggests a convergent point between the artistic practice and scientific methodologies, which is the value of sensory deprivation experiences when investigating perception and attention. The second project considers the distinction between works of art that address the mechanics of consciousness and those that do not as proposed by the exhibition 'Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium'. That is, *consciousness art* is about the mechanics of consciousness and not about the representation of states of consciousness (real or illusory).[4]

The following chapter considers Bruce Nauman's practice as a case study for an investigation in the mechanics of attention. Nauman's practice is suggested as being a journey to a place in-between where it is possible to map the mechanics of attention. Nauman explores formalist devices in the production of interfaces that script journeys to places in-between to promote a second journey in an observer – an experience of alterity, which will create the conditions for self-reflection. The diversity of Nauman's

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[4] Lawrence Rinder and George Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', in Rinder (ed.), *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, pp. 31–33.

practice is particularly relevant because it is medium independent, thus suggesting that the proposed model of an interface that engages in self-reflection is also independent of the devices used in the production of an interface; they should be understood as formalist devices – tools – and promoters of paradoxes, which are the engine for Nauman's journeys in the studio – a first journey to a place in-between, and resulting journeys for an observer – second journeys to a place in-between.

The last chapter, 'On the go', addresses the production of new works of art as a formulation of the methodology identified in Nauman's practice. The chapter covers the production process and its underlying concerns when travelling to places proposed as in-between. The proposed notion of the interface is addressed in a direct relation with the new works of art to further understand the value of employing noise in the formation of experiences of alterity. This chapter should be considered in relation to the works of art previously exhibited, which are documented in the thesis. The new works of art produced through this project should be understood as *formulations* of knowledge and not as *representations* of knowledge.

The contextual overview that follows reflects the transdisciplinary nature of this project, which ranges from philosophy, anthropology, neurosciences, human geography, aesthetics, critical theory and psychoanalysis, to propose new bridges between those disciplines and artistic practice. An obvious implication of the breadth of territory covered is that the overview of the different positions is undeniably superficial; each discipline deserves a specific address, a dedicated work. Nevertheless, the rational behind this approach is that the likelihood of diverse and convergent evidence increases the prospect of a claim. Thus, the journey that follows covers a wide range of material to identify three operational concepts – interface, attention, and travelling – in order to address the underlying research question of how to engage an observer in a self-reflective experience.

First, I will clarify an important distinction for this research project, that of interface – the first operational concept.[1] The interface is an object or situation where two or more subjects or systems meet and interact. The interface is the product of an artist's work and the work of art is the product of an observer's enaction of the interface. Secondly, I will describe two earlier projects in the field of the fine arts and their contribution to my project: one, artists as researchers and the importance of first-person methodologies to investigate consciousness and experiential questions (in the collaboration between Robert Irwin, James Turrell, and Dr. Ed Wortz); and two, the distinction between works of art that address the mechanics of consciousness and those that do not (proposed by the exhibition 'Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium'). Thirdly, I will address two entwined ontological ideas: that a subject is always an embodied

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[1] The term interface is commonly used in new media art contexts to refer to the technology used in the production of the work of art.

subject, requiring the ability to articulate contradictions to evolve in the world. Lastly, I will address the mechanics of attention – the second operational concept – and examine its importance for the production of interfaces that may engage in self-reflection. Travelling – the third operational concept – is implicit here and although theories of journeys will not be addressed directly various journeys and encounters will be narrated.

1.1 Interface

This research is characterised by a small but important and pressing distinction: the product of the artist's work is an interface and not a work of art. The work of art is the result of the spectator's engagement with that interface. An interface is the product of the artist's work while the work of art is the product of the observer's enaction of the interface. An interface is an object or a situation produced by an artist and can be materialised as a painting, sculpture, photograph, text, performance, film, and so on. An interface is the product of an artist's work and does not take in consideration the observer's interpretation. The presence of the observer in the development of the interface is restricted to the artist (as observer of its own work) or to an idea of a hypothetical observer. The proposed distinction allows the rethinking and return to the artist as an author of the interface while at the same time accepting and co-existing with structuralism, deconstruction and post-structuralism thought in relation to the work of art. This distinction has several implications:

– What is valid for a work of art is not necessarily valid for an interface and *vice-versa.*

– The first and sole spectator of an interface is the artist.

– The work of art can have an number of infinite spectators but the interface can only have one, the artist.

– The spectator is a crucial element in the creation of a work of art but is non-existent in the creation of an interface.

– A critique or linguistic proposition concerning an interface should be made by the producer of the interface or through his/her articulation of the interface, if not the work of art rather that the interface will be addressed.

Nevertheless, any discursive consideration referring to an interface will contribute to the definition of the corresponding work of art and conceptual framing: a work of art implies an interface but an interface does not imply a work of art. The artist reclaims his or her role through the interface while acknowledging his or her limitations in the subsequent interpretation of the interface by an observer that will generate the work of art.

Paul Crowther does not make a linguistic distinction between interface and work of art; nonetheless, there is an implicit conceptual distinction. Crowther suggests that an interface presents the artist's personal vision or 'sensuous material and semantic content in a *stylized reciprocity*: that is to say, one wherein objective features of experience are represented on the basis of individual interests'.[2] If I continue to examine the distinction between interface and work of art in Crowther's work then other significant possibilities may be addressed as follows: for the interface to become a work of art it is required that the interface is articulated in publicly accessible mediums; the public articulation of the interface allows the observer to develop a relation of aesthetic empathy with the maker's view of things; the work of art reflects the experience or aesthetic empathy at the level of the observer's perception and not as a mere representation of an artist's view.[3]

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[2] Professor of Art and Philosophy at the International University of Bremen.
Paul Crowther, *Art and Embodiment: From Aesthetics to Self-Consciousness*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1993, p. 173.
[3] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, p. 173.

The artist provides an interface, which is a combination of a message, noise, and interference (their differences will be addressed later). The observer addresses the message, the noise, and the interference, materialised in the form of the interface, to enact a new system, which might be similar to the system created by the artist or may be entirely other. The function of the message, the noise, or the interference is not yet established in the new system; the observer will develop those notions based on his or her actions and comprehension in relation to the interface's contact points. The message is not the noise, the noise is not the interface; the noise outlines the message. The noise defines the limits, not as a line but as a flexible arena, as Michel Serres writes: There is no need to move away from the system for the fluctuating couple of message and noise to appear. Maybe I understand the message only because of the noise.'[4]

A message should be understood as an atomisation – or reduction – of an idea, object, or situation. Noise, on the other hand, should be understood as an expansion towards the complexity of an idea. While the latter tries to expand and make use of unknown relations, *speculative* in its (*noise*) nature, the former tries to reduce and make use of known characteristics, *normative* in its (*message*) nature. Message and noise are not opposites; message and noise are not sequential; they are similar, recurrent, and cumulative. Serres refers to noise and interference as being the same but I will make a distinction in referring to noise as the intentional interference produced by the artist through the use of the interface's idiosyncrasies, and interference as a consequence of the interface's idiosyncrasies – noise as option and interference as consequence. Although it can be argued that if noise is intentional, it is part of the message, it is only so if the observer

[4] Michel Serres, *The Parasite (Posthumanities)* [*Le Parasite* (1980)], trans. by Lawrence R. Schehr, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 70.

enacts it in that way.[5] Any representation will fall short of its object, or more precisely, it will be different from its object. The emulation of an experience, of an object or situation, might require intentional noise, which is not the message, although it redefines the message. The distinction tries to emphasise *option* over *consequence* – the option of the artist while developing noise in an interface and the possibility of the observer's enaction in relation to that same noise –interference. Interference should be understood as *a consequence* of the interface's formalist devices (message and noise) and as contingent to the observer's interpretation of the interface. For example, if an observer enacts an element of the interface as noise, which was not accounted for by the artist, then the observer is enacting interference in the interface, as-noise in the work of art, rather than as noise in the interface. Interference muddles the interpretation of the message and the noise by the observer – creating a tension between the authoring of the interface and the formation of the work of art – while, at the same time, reinforcing the message and noise for the artist. Interference is *unaccounted for* or *ignored by* the artist during the production of the interface and the consequence of the observer's interpretation of the interface. Serres writes, 'we see only because we see badly. It works only because it works badly.'[6]

The importance of things going (apparently) badly, or noise, is of significant importance as Stephen Crocker suggests: [7] the presence of noise in the interface contributes to self-reflection.[8] Crocker addresses noise through the work of Serres and the idea of the parasite as something that is part of the *hôte* (host and guest) and not external but present

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[5] My use of the word 'enact', is similar to 'perception', implying actions and understandings to access the world– neither passive nor representational. For an in-depth discussion on this issue, see: Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 2004.

[6] Serres, *The Parasite*, p. 70.

[7] Associated Professor of Sociology at the Memorial University, Canada.

[8] Stephen Crocker, 'Noises and Exceptions: Pure Mediality in Serres and Agamben' (online), in *Ctheory: 1000 Days of Theory*, 2007, last accessed 20/11/2010, at: http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=574.

in the relations.[9] The proposition is important; if noise in the interface — an object or situation where two subjects or systems meet and interact — is part of the interface, then it must be regarded as part of the contribution that an interface will make in its relation with the observer. Consequently, it must be acknowledged, if not addressed, by the artist as the agency responsible for that interface. There are producers of interfaces (artists) and users of interfaces (audience) but there are only interfaces if there are users for the interfaces (audiences) and there are only users for interfaces if there are producers of those interfaces (artists). One might say that are only hosts if there are guests and *vice-versa*.[10] The relation is ontological, recurrent and tautological, and the roles of an artist and audience are a function of their variable position in that relation, at a given moment. The roles — host and guest — are interchangeable; time changes or to be more precise, the relation changes: 'The sound [phone ringing] opens up a new system. It depends no longer on the observer but on time. The noise is the end of a system and the formation of a new one.'[11] Time contributes to define our position in the system, and our understanding of what should be called noise is directly related to our position in the system either by attempting to maintain the old system or by embarking in the development of a new system.[12] In *The Vision Machine*, Paul Virilio associates the high definition of the advertising image with an incredible virtual reality and the low definition of homemade videos with a credible reality, which — if related to Serres' work

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[9] Serres addresses the parasite as the foundation for human relations. He develops his line of argument with reference to fables and around the three different meanings of the French word 'parasite': biological parasite, noise or static, and social parasite. The guest is part of the host, and they are bound in that relation, which is constantly subject to change, either by expelling the parasite or by incorporating the parasite, but in either case there is an inevitable change or reinvention of the host and guest. Serres, *The Parasite*.

[10] The French word *hôte* as a double meaning (host and guest) and both Serres and Jacques Derrida explore that double meaning. Also, Jacques Rancière calls it the paradox of the spectator: 'there is no theatre without spectators'. Jacques Rancière, 'The Emancipated Spectator', *ArtForum*, March 2007, pp. 271–280.

[11] Serres, *The Parasite (Posthumanities)*, p. 67.

[12] Serres, *The Parasite (Posthumanities)*, p. 68.

– suggests that noise when used as a representation of low definition can be a promoter of credible reality. In Virilio's logic of the accident (noise), 'The accident is positive. Why? Because it reveals something important that we would not otherwise be able to perceive.'[13] Also, Lisa Le Feuvre suggests: 'rather than being a space of mediocrity, failure [noise] is required in order to keep a system open and to raise questions rather than answers'.[14] Finally, according to Julian Yates, smoother interfaces are less visible than those that employ noise.[15] In short, noise makes the interface visible, gives it credibility and keeps it open but what can be understood as noise is not definable prior to its existence.[16]

Yi-Fu Tuan[17] suggests that 'we have a sense of space because we can move and of time because, as biological beings, we undergo recurrent phases of tension and ease. The movement that gives us a sense of space is itself the resolution of tension.'[18] Change dissolves the paradox that created the tensions, which then gives us a sense of space. Time, or the perception of change,[19] is as divisible as any relation can be. Put

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[13] Sylère Lotringer and Paul Virilio, *The Accident of Art*, trans. by Michael Taormina, New York, Los Angeles: *Semiotext(e)*, 2005, p. 63.

[14] Lisa Le Feuvre, 'Art Failure', *Art Monthly*, 313 (2), 2008, pp. 5 –8. See also, Lisa Le Feuvre, 'If at First you Don't Succeed...', *Tate etc* (18, Spring 2010), pp. 30–37; Lisa Le Feuvre (ed.), *Failure*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2010.

[15] Julian Yates, *Error, Misuse, Failure: Object Lessons From The English Renaissance*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. xix.

[16] 'Claude Shannon recognized that whether or not a certain effect is considered noise depends on one's position in the listening chain. Noise is interference only from the sender's point of view. From the point of view of the receiver it may be considered a part of the information packet that is transmitted along a channel.' in Crocker, 'Noises and Exceptions, Pure Mediality in Serres and Agamben'.

[17] Professor Emeritus in Geography, University of Wisconsin-Madison),

[18] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001, p. 118.

[19] Julian Barbour, a theoretical physicist, argues that time does not exist and that changes operate a notion of time in opposition to time defining change. Julian B. Barbour, *The End of Time: The Next Revolution in Our Understanding of the Universe*, London: Phoenix, 2000, p. 2.

differently, it is indivisible. Memories require expectations and expectations require memories. A past requires a future and a future requires a past, as is said in Jean-Luc Godard's *Eloge de l'amour*: 'It's strange, in fact, how things take on meaning when the story ends. It's because History is coming in.'[20] Crowther explains it clearly: 'the relation between past, present, future and possibility is, for the embodied subject, reciprocal in the most complex way. Each element modifies and is modified by that whole of experience of which the present is the immediate surface.'[21] Maurice Blanchot addresses the interdependence between past, present, and future, which suggest time as the relations established in the definition of the present and the recurrent nature of the experience of time:

> Metamorphosis of time, it first transforms the present in which it seems to be produced, drawing it into the undefined profundity where 'present' starts the 'past' anew, but where the past opens up onto the future that it repeats, so that what comes always comes again, and again, and again.[22]

The present attempts to resolve the paradox, even if it is not successful or not acknowledged as such, but Gilles Deleuze suggests: 'what the image "represents" is in the present, but not the image itself'.[23] That is, any attempt at representation will never be in the present even if it represents the present; while the encounter with the work of art is in the present, the relations that can be established with the interface are always in

[20] Jean-Luc Godard. *Eloge de l'amour* (DVD, Optimum, 2001). The various quotes from Jean-Luc Godard's movies made in this thesis should be understood as Godard's *own* thought and not the representation of Godard's thought.

[21] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, pp. 171–172.

[22] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come* (*Le Livre a venir* [1959]), trans. by Charlotte Mandell, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003, p. 17.

[23] Gilles Deleuze, 'The Brain is the Screen: An interview with Gilles Deuleze', in Gregory Flaxman (ed.), *The Brain is the Screen: Philosophy of Cinema*, Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, pp. 365–373.

the interdependence of the past, the present, and the future. The work of art is the result of the interface's metamorphosis.

According to Carl Einstein, art historian and critic: 'Repetition served a lie that humanity told itself about the Real; repetition generated "the illusion of the immortality of things" and endowed them with a semblance of stability and durability, when in truth all was in continual flux.'[24] There is a distinction between recurrence of relations and repetition of events. For the purpose of this text *recurrence* should be understood as the *illusion of repetition*. Blanchot refers to the importance of the continual flux or the impossibility of repetition through a notion of an infinite wandering, which in French also relates to error:[25]

> The error, the fact of being on the go without ever being able to stop, changes the finite into infinity. And to it these singular characteristics are added: from the finite, which is still closed, one can always hope to escape, while the infinite vastness is a prison, being without an exit, just as any place absolutely without exit becomes infinite. The place of wandering knows no straight line; one never goes from one point to another in it; one does not leave here to go there; there is no point of departure and no beginning to the walk. Before having begun, already one begins again; before having finished, one broods, and this sort of absurdity (consisting of returning without ever having left, or of beginning again) is the secret 'evil' eternity, corresponding to 'evil' infinity, both of which perhaps contain the meaning of becoming.[26]

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[24] Charles W. Haxthausen, 'Reproduction/Repetition: Walter Benjamin/Carl Einstein', in *October*, 107 (Winter 2004), 2004, pp. 47–74.

[25] '*Erreur* is related to *errer*, 'to wander', Translator's note in Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 257.

[26] Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, pp. 93–94.

The importance of Blanchot's comments lies in his acknowledgement of the impossibility of the lack of movement and the relation between error, which is the result of an attempt to solve a paradox, and continual fluxes, even if there is an illusion of repetition and fixity. That is, an understanding of the interface implies not only a reference to the past but also a reference to movement and space, how and where the interface was created.

Marc Augé describes anthropological places as having at least 'three characteristics in common: they want to be – people want them to be – places of identity, of relations and of history'.[27] Augé proposes that geographical and social layouts define places of possibilities, restrictions, and relations to a subject, and that an idea of stability derives from time, from history. Nevertheless, anthropological places are symbolic constructions of space, which do not lend themselves to the vicissitudes and contradictions of social life because anthropological places are places of stability, constructed structures.[28] According to Augé, non-places are a consequence of travelling and supermodernity,[29] and can be characterised by instructions of use ('Stand on the right', 'No-Smoking', 'Departures', 'Arrivals', 'Exit', etc.) and a silent dialogue (showing the passport, using the credit card). That is, 'the space of non-place creates neither singular identity nor relations; only solitude, and similitude'.[30] One of the most emblematic non-places that Augé refers is the airport but as suggested by Tim Cresswell's case study on the Schiphol Airport,[31] a non-place can also be an anthropological place. Cresswell raises our attention to other airport users, described as 'ghosts in the mobility machine': the

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[27] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity (Non-Lieux, Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité* [1992]), trans. John Howe, London; New York: Verso, 1995, p. 52.

[28] Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 51.

[29] Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 94.

[30] Augé, *Non-Places*, p. 103.

[31] Tim Cresswell, *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*, New York; Oxon: Routledge, 2006, pp. 219–258.

homeless and taxi-drivers.[32] As noted by Cresswell, 'the homeless experience of Schiphol as a place would be entirely different from the members of the kinetic elite the airport was designed to serve'.[33] In short, what is a *non-place* for some people is a *place* for other people, but the airport itself remains the same.[34]

It is appropriate to recall a recent visit to Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, in the Great Salt Lake, Salt Lake City. The departure was from Los Angeles, in late November 2010, and the journey to the Spiral Jetty meant crossing Death Valley and the State of Nevada, which has been described as a line separating the legal from the illegal.[35] I will shorten this account of my journey by starting at Death Valley; from then onwards there was approximately a thousand miles to drive diagonally across Nevada. The journey seemed at the time fairly easy for after all I was used to long distance driving. The landscape can be characterised as valley after valley, with the road in the middle of surrounding mountains, which when reached lead to another valley and then the mountains again. After eight hours dealing with this endless lack of change, the desert seemed to have ended and 'green matter' started to grow. It was time to rest, and a local motel seemed advisable, particularly after being stopped by a police officer because I was not driving in a straight line, which is difficult to sustain when one has a police car on one's tail for twenty minutes. Nevertheless, a rest in a motel was in order and I was

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[32]Cresswell, *On the Move*, pp. 256–257. Cresswell recalls a conversation with one of the homeless persons (James): 'He told me the airport is a good place for him. Security guards don't bother him. He has friends to keep him company. There is plenty of food, warmth, shelter, and reading material left by people in a hurry. He said he felt free with no one telling him what to do or playing loud music.' Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 250.

The other ghosts are the snorders (illegal taxi-drivers) that work in Schiphol. The legal taxi-drivers have to pay the airport authorities a monthly fee of 400 euros for a license and have at least a Mercedes 200E as their car. Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 254.

[33] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 249.

[34] For different uses of airports in film, see: Steven Spielberg's *The Terminal* and *Catch Me If You Can*, and Renny Harlin's *Die Hard 2.*

[35] Norman Klein, conversation, Los Angeles, November 2010.

pointed to one of the rooms in the back (the smoking wing). The next-door neighbours were probably in character from an obscure movie being shot in town, or at least, their argument lasted into the early hours, culminating with a loud bang of the door and the shouting of obscenities.

The following day, I was three hundred miles away from my objective. Around 2 p.m., I finally arrived at the Golden Spike National Park and had thirty miles on unpaved road still to travel. From then on, I saw cows, and a cowboy, who waved from the distance. The last three miles were done on foot, as the road become impassable, and I had to hurry up because the sun was setting at 4.30 p.m.. I walked and after thirty minutes the Great Salt Lake with its whiteness appeared. I kept on walking and there it was, the Spiral Jetty. It seemed much smaller then I expected. I approach it carefully and with respect, as if the Spiral Jetty was a bull ready to attack me. The time was 3.20 p.m. and the sun started to move downwards in front of the spiral. I walked to the lakeshore and kept on the side of the spiral, walking slowly and keeping my eyes on the centre/end/beginning. Arriving was a special moment and I sat there in the cold afternoon looking outwards to the sunset. After a few cigarettes it was time to walk back to the car. The sun was going down fast and there was no other light available by which to find the car. Moving out proved to be as intense an experience as moving in. This time there was a need to always look outward and never to look back to the centre. I eventually left the spiral and contemplated the sunset from the distance. It was pitch black when I arrived at the car, still miles away from civilisation and in a state of exhilaration.

Looking back a few months later, the importance of the Spiral Jetty is more then the pile of rocks that define it: there was the endless journey across the desert, the couple in the motel, the walk, the sun, my expectations, and the memories of seeing an old friend for

the first time. This was *my* journey and *my* relation to the work of art, however. Robert Smithson's journey, as the producer of that interface, was obviously different from mine in terms of both time and space. Nevertheless, there is a strong relation between the journey and the production of the interface. The journey is part of the work and the spiral is not a circle; recurrence is not repetition. That journey catapulted me to the beginning of another journey. As argued by Kevin Scharp any solved paradox creates a revenge paradox.[36]

A paradox is an 'unacceptable conclusion or set of conclusions reachable by apparently valid arguments from apparently true premises'.[37] The importance of the paradox for this research starts in the concept of self-consciousness itself. According to José L. Bermudez:

> The paradox of self-consciousness arises because mastery of the semantics of the first-person pronoun is available only to creatures capable of thinking first-person thoughts whose contents involve reflexive self-reference and thus seem to presuppose mastery of the first-pronoun.[38]

A paradox is the illusion of contradiction(s); looking at different arguments we can understand them as opposites that suppress each other and create the illusion of a contradiction, but that does not imply that they are contradictory or even that they cannot co-exist.[39] We enact contradictions as paradoxes by means of our actions and

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[36] Kevin Scharp is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Ohio State University. Kevin Scharp, 'Alethic Vengeance', in JC Beall (ed.), *Revenge of the Liar: New Essays on the Paradox*, Oxford; New York; Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 272–319.

[37] José L. Bermudez, *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge, MA.; London: MIT Press, 1998, p. 24.

[38] Bermudez, *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness*, p. 27.

[39] The law of non-contradictions argues that there are not contradictions while dialetheism argues there are. See: Graham Priest, JC Beall and Bradley Armour-Garb (eds), *The Law of Non-Contradictions: New*

our understandings, we perceive them as such, but a paradox is a generating force that needs to be re-enacted as something else.[40] As Godard's *Eloge de l'amour* tells me, when I am thinking about something, 'I am thinking about something else.'[41]

An interface that engages in self-reflectivity is one that acknowledges the idea of paradox; it places the paradoxical nature of being in the interface. In that context, the interface's visibility is a condition of its invisibility and self-reflection is a condition of the interface's enaction and not of the interface. Also, following Martin Heidegger's *Time and Being*,[42] and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible*,[43] visibility in the interface requires invisibility,[44] which at first reading can be regarded as a paradox but as noted through the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Serres, a paradox is the nature of being. The combination of Heidegger's and Blanchot's works suggests the interface as the non-interface or possibility as impossibility, and impossibility as possibility, a mutable unity. Blanchot shows that we cannot represent the possibility of death because a mortal can never experience death and remain a mortal; it is an impossible possibility. Heidegger tells us that death allows us to enter a space of

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Philosophical Essays, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006. This research is concerned with the enaction of contradictions and consequently it is not important to expand on the possibility of contradictions being real or not.

[40] Uriel Orlow suggests that the critical power of a work of art is contingent upon the inclusion of paradoxes in the interface, which have the potential to infiltrate theoretical debates in the form of contradictions. In Orlow's thesis, a paradox is understood as a '*sustainable source of criticality*' while a contradiction is a '*sustainable means of criticality*'. Uriel Orlow, *Time+Again: Critical Contradictions In Chris Marker's La Jetée*, unpublished PhD Thesis, London Institute and Open University, 2002.

[41] Godard, *Eloge de l'amour*.

[42] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time: a Translation of Sein und Zeit (Sein und Zeit*[1953]), trans. by Joan Stambaugh, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996.

[43] Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Claude Lefort, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Le Visible et l'invisible [1964]), trans. by Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1975.

[44] The German word 'Sein' – being – has two opposite meanings according to Heidegger: the intelligible and the unintelligible.

impossibilities (infinite possibilities),[45] which if transposed to the interface can be understood as an interface allowing for the possibility of infinite enactions by an audience,[46] but most important is the idea that an interface cannot be represented or that representation will never be accurate due to the infinite possibilities that a particular interface creates.

If applied to the idea of the interface, the audience's enaction of the interface or the possibility of the work of art cannot be defined or represented until that possibility takes place and even then, any possible definition of the work of art will be constructed in relation to that individual enaction (relation) of the interface and not towards the work of art, which is not fixed. It is the possibility of the impossibility of the possibility (of the impossibility, and so on ...) that defines the work of art as a mutable unity that cannot be fixed or commodified without losing its value as the (im)possibility of the (im)possibility. Again Godard can help: 'Every problem defiles a mystery. In turn, the problem is defiled by its solutions.'[47]

1.2 Digging the foundations

Two important projects made significant and different contribution for this research:

– The collaboration between Robert Irwin, James Turrell and Dr. Ed Wortz, which proposed artists as researchers and the importance of first-person methodologies to investigate consciousness and experiential questions.

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[45] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 242.

[46] Also addressed by: Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni, London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989. Marcel Duchamp, 'The Creative Act', in Kristine Stiles and Peter Selz (eds), *Theories and Documents of Contemporary Art*, Los Angeles; Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1996, pp. 818–819.

[47] Godard, *Eloge de l'amour*.

– The exhibition *'Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium'*, which established one of the operational concepts for this research, specifically by making a distinction between works of art that address the mechanics of consciousness and those that do not.

The ghost of this research (which has been haunting me for a few years without me ever realising why, until recently) is the collaboration between the artists James Turrell and Robert Irwin and scientist Dr. Ed Wortz during the *Art & Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art from 1967 to 1971*. Unfortunately, that collaborative research project was never intended to possess academic rigour and it was characterised by a lack of concern with its outputs but perhaps that is why it was so important and is visible still in Irwin's and Turrell's work after the investigation ended.

In 1966, two years after Maurice Tuchman had moved to Southern California, an idea developed: 'I [Tuchman] became intrigued by the thought of having artists brought into these industries [aerospace, scientific research, TV and cinema] to make works of art, moving about in them as they might in their own studios.'[48] Jane Livingstone described the Wortz/Turrell/Iwrin's collaboration as 'marked by a participatory, informational aesthetic without primary regard for object-making'.[49] It was the only one in which two artists were involved and right from the start there was a feeling of rightness and excitement about it for all the people involved in the project. The collaboration was peculiar in the sense that Wortz was trained in formal research, Turrell had some understanding of research methodologies in experimental psychology,

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[48] Maurice Tuchman (ed), *Art and Technology: A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1967–1971*, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1971, p. 9.

[49] Jane Livingston, 'Thoughts on Art and Technology', in *Art and Technology*, p. 44.

and Irwin had spend some years investigating sensory deprivation in his studio.[50] As noted by Wortz, the methodologies were very different: Irwin would keep information at a distance while Wortz and Turrell would absorb all sorts of information available to reach similar conclusions. Nevertheless, they merged, and retrospectively, one year later, no one could remember who had had a specific idea because they were functioning as one.[51]

The Wortz/Turrell/Irwin's collaboration started from investigations about sensory deprivation techniques exploring anechoic chambers and homogenous visual field (*Ganzfeld*), while at a later stage it came to focus on alpha waves, namely the effects of alpha conditioning in perception. Its importance was essentially methodological, the researchers were submitting themselves to their devised tests and only then they would invite other people to participate and answer questionnaires. [52] Although there is not a significant reflection on this research collaboration, apart from the report made at the time, there are some ideas that are important to retain and visible in Irwin's and Turrell's future work:

– The use of space to affect notions of time.

– Non-object situations place the emphasis on the experience.

– Experience as the object.

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[50] Robert Irwin described that process in a conversation with Lawrence Weschler: ' I started spending the time just sitting there looking. I would look for about fifteen minutes and just nod off, go to sleep. I'd wake up after about five minutes, and I'd concentrate and look, just sort of mesmerize myself, and I'd conk off again. It was a strange period. I'd go through days on end during which I'd be taking these little half-hour, fifteen-, twenty-minutes catnaps about every half hour – I mean all day long. I'd look for half an hour, sleep for half an hour, look for half an hour. It was a pretty hilarious activity.' See, Lawrence Weschler, *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: Over Thirty Years of Conversations with Robert Irwin*, Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2008, pp. 76–77.

[51] Dr Ed Wortz quoted in Jane Livingston, 'Robert Irwin and James Turrell', in *Art and Technology*, p. 139.

[52] Jane Livingston, 'Robert Irwin and James Turrell', in *Art and Technology*, p. 137.

– First-person methodological perspectives.

In 1999 Lawrence Rinder curated the exhibition 'Searchlight – Consciousness at the Millennium', held at the Institute of the California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco, which was a 'concerted exploration of the theme of consciousness in art, bringing together a wide variety of contemporary works that engender a visceral sensation of conscious experience.'[53] In the accompanying catalogue Rinder and George Lakoff write that *consciousness art* 'not only reveals the sensations and mechanisms of consciousness itself but also allows us to experience first hand conscious sensations'.[54] Alva Noë uses the term *experiential art* in a similar way to Rinder and Lakoff's use of *consciousness art*.[55] Noë explains that experientialist works of art can provide 'opportunities for first-person phenomenological investigation'.[56] Naturally it can be argued that any *interface* can create the conditions to reflect on what it means to reflect on it, but as Noë clearly writes:

> *Experiential art* is art that finds its home in this self-reflective moment. While just about anything can be made the occasion of such a self-reflective act, it is important to notice that not all forms of art and not all artists undertake their activity in this vicinity.[57]

According to Rinder and Lakoff, 'consciousness has a structure and consciousness art makes use of that structure,'[58] which they define as having nine main aspects. These are:

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[53] Lawrence Rinder (ed.), *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 19.

[54][54] Lawrence Rinder and George Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', in *Searchlight: Consciousness at the Millennium*, pp. 25–60.

[55] Alva Noë, 'Experience and Experiment in Art', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7 (8-9), 2000, pp. 123–135.

[56] Noë, 'Experience and Experiment in Art', pp. 123–135.

[57] Noë, 'Experience and Experiment in Art', pp. 123–135.

awareness, attention, *qualia*, unity, memory, first-person perspective, self-awareness, conceptual framing and metaphor, and empathy. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that these general aspects of consciousness are the subjects of much debate but also 'provide the rudimentary framework for an understanding of *consciousness art*.'[59] Rinder's and Lakoff's work is concerned with showing the various aspects of *consciousness art* which consequently 'can allow us to perceive the works in a new way, more deeply and with a richer experience'.[60] According to Rinder and Lakoff,[61] following Jonathan Crary,[62] the roots for *consciousness art* can be found in the first half of the nineteenth century.[63] In *Techniques of the Observer,* Crary proposes that from 1840 the primary subject of vision was perception itself,[64] exemplified in the work of Goethe, Schopenhauer, Ruskin, and Turner.[65] Crary believes that Turner's work (*Light and Colour [Goethe's Theory] − The morning After the Deluge*) reveals the importance of the body in the perceptual process:

> If the circular structure of this painting and others of the same period mimic the shape of the sun, they also correspond with the pupil of the eye and the retinal field on which the temporal experience of an afterimage unfolds. Through the afterimage the sun is made to belong to the body, and the body in fact takes over as the source of its effects.[66]

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[58] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', pp. 25–60.

[59] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', pp. 25–60.

[60] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', pp. 25–60.

[61] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', pp. 25–60.

[62] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1990.

[63] Diego Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) is an earlier example but is not mentioned by Rinder and Lakoff or Jonathan Crary. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Les mots et les choses [1966]), London; New York: Routledge, 2002, pp. 3–18.

[64] Rosalind Krauss also makes reference to this moment in addressing Marcel Duchamp's Precision Optics, see: Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1998, pp. 124–137.

[65] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 138.

[66] Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 139–141.

The importance of an embodied mind that moves in space can be traced to earlier times but it was during the nineteenth century that those changes were widespread and accessible to a wider part of the population. The steam engine, the panorama, and the stereoscope were technological advances that contributed to significant changes in individual experiences through the rethinking of the importance of space-time and the body as constituting elements in the perceptual process. The invention of the panorama, and other forms of collective experiences, in the eighteenth century[67] (curiously at the same time of the construction of the first arcades in Paris, which were addressed one hundred and fifty years later by Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project*) were developed, according to Anne Friedberg, to transport and free observers from spatial temporal constrains through the representation of a virtual reality[68] or illusion.[69] Nevertheless, Oliver Grau traces the roots of the panorama, as a space of illusion and the ancestor of virtual reality, in much earlier times:

> Found mainly in private country villas and town houses, like the cult frescoes of the Villa dei Misteri in Pompeii, the garden frescoes in the Villa Livia near Primaporta (ca. 20 B.C.), the Gothic frescos room, the chamber du Gerf, and the many examples of Renaissance illusion spaces, such as the Sala delle Prospettive. Illusion spaces also gained in importance in the public domain, as evidenced by the Sacri Monti movement and the ceiling panoramas of Baroque churches.[70]

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[67] Robert Barker has been credited with the panorama's patent in 1787 and with the first completely circular panorama in 1792 in London. See Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1993, p. 21. Olivier Grau marks the year of 1789 for the patent and Paul Sandby's landscape room at Drakelowe Hall, 1793, as a direct response to it. See Oliver Grau, *Virtual Art: From Illusion to Immersion*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2003, p. 5.

[68] Friedberg, *Window Shopping*, p. 22.

[69] According to Grau, a virtual reality or immersive environment is a form of illusion. Grau, *Virtual Art*, pp. 3–5.

[70] Grau, *Virtual Art*, p. 5.

Of most importance is the distinction made by Rinder and Lakoff between what should be understood as *consciousness art* and what should not. That is, *consciousness art* is about the mechanics of consciousness and not about the representation of states of consciousness (real or illusory).[71] Impressionism and Post-Impressionism were probably the first explicit attempts to convey embodied perception and interpretation in the construction of the work of art and according to Rinder and Lakoff the resulting attempts can be divided in two perspectives:[72]

> – Perceptual theories are the focus of the work: Monet and Cézanne.[73]
>
> – Perceptual theories are used to produce a more accurate representation of the world: Renoir, Degas.

Again, but this time referring to Surrealism, Rinder and Lakoff make the distinction clear: 'fantasy may or may not be about that mechanism [consciousness]. This distinction is what separates illustrational surrealists like Salvador Dali from experiential Surrealists like René Magritte.'[74] The proposed distinction is of most importance for this research and it points to a direction to follow: the mechanics of attention, one of the nine aspects of consciousness suggested Rinder and Lakoff, which I will address later in more detail.

1.3 Embodiment and contradictions

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[71] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', pp. 31–33.

[72] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', p. 31.

[73] For the importance of Edouard Manet, Georges Seurat and Paul Cézanne on the instability of attention and its relevance to the study of perception, see: Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture.* Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999. Marcel Duchamp refers to Georges Seurat and Piet Mondrian as non- retinalists, in Rosalind Krauss, *The Optical Unconscious*, p. 123.

[74] Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art', p. 33.

Paul Crowther calls my attention to the fact that no subject can occupy the same space at the same time as other subjects, meaning that 'in terms of perception, activity, and self-understanding, we will always occupy a world in a way that is different from other beings'.[75] Crowther is pointing to the fact that the body is a definitive element in the definition of a subject; that is, a subject is always embodied. Crowther follows a long phenomenological tradition that acknowledges the embodied subject as ontological. I will not address those concerns directly but I will accept and apply those propositions to contemporary debates in the arts to understand the impact that those propositions might have on contemporary debates in the arts; namely, the value of considering a notion of interface and *not only* the work of art. That is, in considering the observer's embodiment as an ontological feature rather than an epistemological feature, there is a consequent reconsideration of the value of the interface and its producer; the artist is the first (and only) observer of the interface. This implies that the interface is contingent to the artist's embodiment.

Claire Bishop proposes that installation art has a significant difference to traditional mediums, in the way it addresses the viewer through his/her presence in the space:

> Installation art therefore differs from traditional media (sculpture, painting, photography, video) in that addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space. Rather then imagining the viewer as a pair of disembodied eyes that survey the work from a distance, installation art presupposes an embodied viewer whose sense of touch, smell and sound are as heightened as their sense of vision. This insistence on the literal presence of the viewer is arguably the key characteristic of installation art.[76]

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[75] Paul Crowther, *Defining Art, Creating the Canon: Artistic Value in an Era of Doubt*, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 6.

[76] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History*, London: Tate, 2005, p. 6.

Although I agree with the core of Bishop's argument – the importance of the presence of the observer in the construction of the work of art – it seems that Bishop is still fighting the proposition of the 'pair of disembodied eyes'. Bishop acknowledges a change in perceptual models in the nineteenth century while still using the model of the camera obscura as a conceptual framework for her argument, that installation art requires the physical presence of the observer but the same applies to any art form. [77] A work of art, either an installation or traditional mediums, *always* requires the presence of an embodied observer to exist, even if it is mediated by a telephone line, a computer or newspaper and there is always some form of mediation that cannot be ignored. An embodied observer is a condition of being (ontological) for the observer and if he/she cannot have some form of contact with an interface than the work of art cannot exist for that observer.

In his review of Julie H. Reiss's book, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art,*[78] Peter Osborne writes:

> Reiss fails to register the sense in which installation is a distinctively post-conceptual, as well as a post-minimalist form, because she fails to register the sense in which installation art poses ontological, rather than merely classificatory, problems for art history and theory.[79]

Curiously Osborne's argument regarding Reiss's book can be questioned because of Bishop's work. Osborne continues:

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[77] For a better understanding of the camera obscura's implications in the definition of disembodied observers, see: Crary, *Techniques of the Observer.*

[78] Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art,* Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999.

[79] Peter Osborne, 'Installation, Performance or What', in *Oxford Art Journal,* Vol.24, (2, 2001), pp. 147–154.

Reiss's [...] thesis that 'the essence of installation art is spectator participation'[...] is a consequence of taking Allan Kaprow's Environments as both historical starting point and orienting form. This is a result, in turn, of the restriction of the scope of the history to the New York art world.[80]

However, Bishop's work starts fifty years earlier (than Allan Kaprow's) and explores a much wider and international context (than simply that of New York) to reach a similar conclusion: that the presence of the observer is a defining element for installation art.[81]

This is what Maaike Bleeker[82] calls the *here and now* – the relation between work and viewer in which the work of art comes into being, [83] that is more than the time and place in which -viewers may experience the interface.[84] Bleeker's proposition follows Michael Fried's reflections on Denis Diderot's accounts of experiencing the landscape paintings of Joseph Vernet.[85] Fried explores those reflections to develop his critique of Minimalism (or literalist art) by emphasising the presence of the observer in the space. Minimalism created a theatrical situation that would not allow for an *expanded here-and-now experience* (I am borrowing Blekeer's expression) while Bleeker suggests that Diderot becomes so absorbed 'with the landscape represented in the painting that he forgets that

[80] Peter Osborne, 'Installation, Performance or What', pp. 147–154.

[81] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art*, p. 6.

[82] Professor of Theatre and Dance at Universiteit Utrecht.

[83] Maaike Bleeker's use of a notion of relations is highly different from Nicholas Bourriaud, who developed a particular notion of relational aesthetics. In Bleeker's case it refers to a condition of being. See: Maaike Bleeker, 'Make the Most of Now: Bodies, Mayflies and the Fear of Representation', in Margriet Schavemaker and Mischa Rakier (eds), *Right About Now*, Amsterdam, Valiz Publishers, 2007, pp. 27–40.

[84] Bleeker, 'Make the Most of Now', pp. 27–40.

[85] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, Chicago; London: Chicago University Press, 1980, pp. 123-127.

he is actually looking at a work of art'.[86] What Bleeker proposes, following Fried, is that for an illusion to take place, that is, the *expanded here-and-now experience* or suspension of disbelief, the observer must forget about the real, the here-and-now experience of the interface.

Bleeker's point when arguing for the presence, and consequent participation as an ontological requirement for the work of art coming into being, has a significant implication, that installation art is the recognition of an ontological nature of embodiment and not the cause of embodied experiences. Similarly, Grau refers to *expanded here-and-now*, as immersion when addressing the visibility of the interface:

> I show how immersion techniques, such as the vanishing interface, or the so-called natural interface, affect the institution of the observer and how, on the other hand, strongly accentuated, visible interfaces make the observer acutely aware of the immersive experience and are particular conductive to reflection.[87]

Grau's immersion is similar to Martin Jay's ocularcentric discourses,[88] but the important notion to bring forward is that when Jay addresses antiocularcentric discourses he returns to ocularcentric discourses. It is a dialectic discourse, defining the subject by otherness. If Jay's work proposes a diachronic notion of antiocularcentric discourse that has been recurrent over the years, then the same can be argued in relation to ocularcentric discourses. Consequently it can be argued that immersive and visible interfaces are a function of each other and concurrent, independently of the period of

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[86] Bleeker, 'Make the Most of Now', pp. 27–40.

[87] Grau, *Virtual Art*, p. 10.

[88] Ocularcentric discourses can be equated to: Fried's antitheatricality, Marcel Duchamp's retinal, Anne Friedberg's virtual illusion, Jean Baudrillard's hyperreality, Maaike Bleeker's expanded here and now and Guy Debord's spectacle.

time, when they were made and the medium employed to make them. As Serres indicates, in order to address the parasite a reference to the *hôte* (host and guest) is imperative. Thus, the parasite and the *hôte* are always joined and while the host and parasite define each other they also define the third, which is the relation between the two (host or guest), with the relation defined by the focus of attention.

Bishop takes up Rancière's ideas of aesthetics (the ability to think contradictions) to address notions of socially engaged and participatory art. However, if we draw a parallel with the argument used by Bleeker and Osborne about installation art, it might be possible that what Rancière is proposing is ontological, rather than an aesthetic regime. Rancière proposes three major regimes of identification of Western art (ethical, poetic, and aesthetic regimes), and claims that the aesthetic regime is a nineteenth-century revolution that started in literature with the work of Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, and Gustave Flaubert. [89] Rancière's propositions are highly relevant, as they call my attention to the possibility that aesthetic is linked to the ability of thinking contradictions, and consequently that there is a relation between politics and aesthetics.[90] However, it is also important to consider the following possibility, that what Rancière calls the major regimes of identification of Western art (ethical regime, poetic regime and aesthetic regimes) have always been concurrent and juxtaposed, rather than linear as proposed by Rancière. That is, the three regimes proposed by Rancière are ontological and present since ancient times and not consecutive while the change associated with those regimes is most likely associated with a shift of attention. That is,

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[89] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (*La Partage du sensible: esthétique et politique*[2002]), trans. by Gabriel Rockhill, London; New York: Continuum, 2004, p. 32.

[90] The link, proposed by Rancière, that aesthetics can be political and consequently have the ability to think contradictions can also be understood as aesthetics and politics having similarities (ability to think contradictions) and differences (aesthetics being private and politics being public).

the importance that each regime had is directly related to where attention was most required while the conditions for any of the three regimes were always present.

According to Philippe-Alain Michaud,[91] Aby Warburg's first published text (*Sandro Botticelli's Birth of the Venus and Spring: An examination of Concepts of Antiquity in the Italian Early Renaissance*) offers a reading that explores the representational mechanics of Renaissance painting:

> Warburg tackled the age-old question of the Renaissance artist's return to and interpretation of Antiquity [...] He argued that it was not the motionless, well-balanced body that served as the model for the imitation of Antiquity, ... but rather the body caught up in a play of overwhelming forces, limbs twisting in struggle or grasp of pain, hair flowing, and garments blown back through exertion or by the wind.[92]

That is, in opposition to Rancière and most art historical views of the Renaissance and according to Michaud's reading of Warburg's work, it can be argued that what Rancière calls the aesthetic regime (the ability to think contradictions) of art is the key for understanding Renaissance painting and it is present in the *trecento* and *quattrocento* (and earlier). Michaud argues:

> According to Warburg, what Renaissance artists derived from ancient forms was not an association between substance and immobility, a privilege granted the being over the becoming; on the contrary, they recognized in these forms a tension, a questioning of the ideal appearance of bodies in the visible world. Their works bear the stamp of a force that is not harmonious but contradictory, a force destabilizing the figure more

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[91] Film Curator at the Musée National d'art moderne - Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris

[92] Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion (Aby Warburg et l'Image en mouvement* [1998]), trans. by Sophie Hawkes, New York: Zone Books, 2004, pp. 27–28.

than pulling it together. In the light of Warburg's interpretation of Renaissance artist, the divine serenity that served as model of ideal beauty was transformed into bacchantes with convulsive gestures and violent outburst.[93]

The proposed reading of Warburg's first work situates Rancière's aesthetic regime of art – through the work of Botticelli – in the *trecento* and *quattrocento* and not in the nineteenth century as Rancière proposes, meaning that either modernism started six hundred years earlier or, most likely, there were other periods that might have a modernist nature (i.e. Renaissance). In a later lecture,[94] and twenty-seven years after Warburg's journey in Arizona and New Mexico to study the Pueblo Indian tribes,[95] where he expected to find the perfect conditions to investigate the origins of symbolic art in the link between pagan religious ideas and artistic activity in the Pueblo Indian culture,[96] Warburg expanded on the snake rituals,[97] specifically, the snake as a metaphor to think unstable contradictions

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[93] Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, p. 28.

[94] The lecture was delivered in German to a non-professional audience on 25th April 1923, and was not intended for publication. Its original title was: 'Reminiscences from a Journey to the Pueblo Indians'. See: Aby Warburg, 'A Lecture in Serpent Ritual', *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (April 1939), pp. 277–292.

[95] For a brief overview of Pueblo culture, see: Armin W. Geertz, 'Pueblo Cultural History', in Benedetta Cestelli Guidi and Nicholas Mann (eds.), *Photographs at the Frontier – Aby Warburg in America 1895–1896*, London; Merrell Holberton and The Warburg Institute, 1998, pp. 9–19.
For a detail account of Hopi culture see: Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi: The First Revelation of the Hopi's Historical and Religious Worldview of Life*, London; New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

[96] Ulrich Raulff, ' The Seven Skins of the Snake - Oraibi, Kreuzlingen and back: Stations in a Journey into Light', in *Photographs at the Frontier*, pp. 64–74.

[97] ' Chu'tiva [ch'a, snake; tiva, dance], the Snake-Antelope ceremony has gained worldwide fame as a public spectacle. Indians dancing with live rattlesnakes in their mouths! – a "loathsome practice". The United States Indian Bureau once threatened to stop it. Still it goes on year after year, and from the four corners of the earth people come to see it. Undoubtedly it is both fascinating and repulsive. Certainly it is the least understood of all Hopi ceremonies. Embodying two dances, two races, and rituals in two kvas, the full ceremony has been more meticulously reported in detail by professional observers than any other. Yet its deepest meaning lies hidden within a dark and primeval mystery peharps unfathomable now even to its modern participants.' Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi*, p. 218.

– the snake can represent ambivalence, progression, lighting, healing, and killing.[98]

Nevertheless, Warburg's journey was one to revisit a distant past as Ulrich Rauff writes : 'The trip to the desert of New Mexico can be perceived as a journey into the past, to ancient Greece. Or to Mount Sinai.'[99] Warburg's journey to the past in the present (1890s) allowed him to trace the importance of the 'snake' to ancient Greece.

Another example that might situate Rancière's aesthetic regime of art in earlier times is the one offered by Grau in relation to the Sacri Monti of Varallo, Italy.[100] The significance of the Sacri Monti space is, according to Grau, a mode of illusion:

> That uses all the available means and devices to create the deception of real presence: The Franciscans who conducted the pilgrims around the complex were constantly obliged to remind the visitors that this was not the real Jerusalem.[101]

The extension of this deception is a good example of what Rancière refers as the aesthetic revolution: 'the aesthetic revolution drastically disrupts things: testimony and fiction come under the same regime of meaning.'[102] The importance of situating recent

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[98] Raulff, ' The Seven Skins of the Snake', pp. 64–74.

[99] Raulff, ' The Seven Skins of the Snake', pp. 64–74.

[100] An immersive environment built in the sixteenth century that combines frescos and sculptures while allowing for the observers (pilgrims) to move around a representation of Jerusalem and the sacred moments of Christ's life. The Italian architect Aldo Rossi writes: 'Sacri Monti are constructions of a world that distance themselves from an utilitarian architecture. They create meaning from their particular sequence and order. Regardless of whether there is a sacred story in them, usually scenes of Christ's life, their principal characteristic is the construction of a place. A place that aims at reaching Nature (the mountain). In that natural wholeness, the Sacri Monti are defined as a path for a journey; an ascending path, to the top of the mountain, but also a personal and singular path –every journey is analogue. A story can only be understood when it enters History.' My translation from the Italian, in Aldo Rossi, *I Quaderni Azzurri*, Francesco Dal Co. (ed.) Milan: Electa, 1999, (QA 6. Architettura, 7 febbraio 1971 / maggio 1971).

[101] Grau, *Virtual Art*, p. 45.

[102] Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, p. 37.

discourses on the previous mentioned examples is that the cause-effect relations established, based on technological, social, or linguistic contexts, are inevitably questioned. That is, what has been recently named as the consequences (the aesthetic regime) of a particular context (modernism) can be questioned for the simple reason that the aesthetic regime (consequences) arrived before modernism (context), and as noted by Warburg, the snake is not a modernist development, it has been around for a much longer time. As noted by the artist Robert Irwin,[103] or Bruno Latour,[104] defining Modernism based on its differences to past movements can be a signal that Modernism still has to mature and although those differences are important there are also equally important similarities, at least at an ontological level. Warburg, as well as Benjamin but in a different way,[105] explored Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of Apollonian and Dionysian interdependence, which in itself is an articulation of ancient classic thinking (Apollo and Dionysius; reason and emotions), to activate a notion of the present through the past, which in Warburg's particular case is both the consequence of a re-interpretation of Renaissance painting and his own traveling in Arizona and New

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[103] Weschler, *Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees*, p. 258.

[104] 'Seen as networks, however, the modern world, like revolutions, permits scarcely anything more than small extensions of practices, slight accelerations in the circulation of knowledge, a tiny extension of societies, minuscule increases in the number of actors, small modifications of old beliefs. When we see them as networks, Western innovations remain recognizable and important, but they no longer suffice as the stuff of saga, a vast saga of radical rupture, fatal destiny, irreversible good or bad fortune.' See: Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, [*Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: essais d'antropologie syméttrique*, 1991], trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge, MA; Harvard Press, 1993, p. 48.

[105] Mathew Rampley in his comparative analysis of Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin, noted that while both Warburg and Benjamin agreed with the contrasting relation between collective mimetic experience with the birth of the modern individual. A significant difference between Warburg and Benjamin remained: (1)- for Warburg it is the individual artist that can carry out the task of cultural advancement. (2)- while for Benjamin it is the collective experience of the viewers that can contribute to a cultural development, and yet, both Warburg and Benjamin claimed a resistance by a return to an auratic experience. See: Mathew Rampley, *The Remembrance of Things Past: On Aby M. Warburg and Walter Benjamin*, Wiesbaden; Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000, pp. 88–91.

Mexico, to address a notion of representation.[106] Warburg's methodology is of significant interest, as Warburg explored introspection and travelling as techniques for activating relation between the familiar and otherness, as Michaud suggests:

> Warburg understood in 1923 that the experience of otherness is necessary to interpret the familiar, that geographical distance is a metaphor of the past – one that is intimate and personal as much as historical and collective – and that travelling is a technique of anamnesis. [107]

Again, the focus of attention might change but the interface remains the same. Although I will address this is more detail later in this project, I would like to point at the idea of travelling as technique of anamnesis, as suggested above by Michaud in relation to Warburg's journeys.

1.4 'Please/Pay/ Attention/Please'[108]

The mind requires a brain and a body but also requires a world. If any of those are excluded we have problems. An interface is unique in its condition of having traces of an artistic process but as everything else it requires a *world* to come into being; it evolves in a world. The crucial element to address is an understanding of attention as something which is not static but flexible, unstable, conflicting and enhancing of our sense of being with a brain and a body but always in the world. We are required to focus attention somewhere to be able to evolve and being (in the world). Attention is an ontological requirement for an evolvement in the world, and exposing the mechanics of attention

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[106] Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Montion*, pp. 27–35. See also: Guidi and Mann, *Photographs at the Frontier*.

[107] Michaud, Aby Warburg and the Image in Montion, p. 35.

[108] Bruce Nauman, *Please/Pay/Attention/Please*, 1973.

can contribute to present attention as itself: as a requirement for cognition and for everything to which attention is not being paid. As Warburg noted, in Botticelli's paintings there is a focus of attention on the static structure of the represented image but at the edges of that structure there are disturbing elements (the traces of movement), which question any stable structure.

Noë suggests that the difficulty in explaining visual perceptual experiences is because there is not a direct contact between the subject and object of the perceptual experience. For example: there is no direct contact between the subject and object of the perceptual experience; there is an electromagnetic meditation (light); the eye is in nearly constant motion; the spatial and chromatic resolving power of the retina is limited and inconsistent; the passage to the retina is blocked by blood vessels and nerve fibres; there is a blind spot on the retina where there are no photoreceptors and there are two retinal images, each of which is upside down.[109]

In Noë's and Evan Thompson's account of the different perspectives on the philosophy of perception there is a split: the orthodox and the others. In the orthodox view, which has dominated the field for over fifty years, 'the brain or a functionally dedicated subsystem of the brain, builds up representations of relevant features of the environment on the basis of information encoded by the sensory receptors'.[110] The orthodox view is both functionalist[111] and representational[112] implying that perception is a process of

[109] Alva Noë and Evan Thompson (eds), *Vision and Mind: Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2002, p. 2.

[110] Noë and Thompson, *Vision and Mind*, p. 2.

[111] 'A mind is a device capable of performing particular sorts of operations. States of mind resemble computational states.' John Heil, *Philosophy of Mind: A Contemporary Introduction*, London; New York: Routledge, 2003, p. 91.

[112] 'The Representational Theory of Mind requires the postulation of a system of symbols that function as "mental representation".' Heil, *Philosophy of Mind*, p. 105.

inductive inference[113] or an information-processing task,[114] and it is similar to predictive hypotheses in science.[115] The heterodox views are rooted in the work of Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty[116] and have been named as:

– The Ecological Approach proposed by James J. Gibson in 1966;

– The Enactive Approach proposed by Humberto Maturama and Francisco Varela in 1980;

– The Animate Vision proposed by Dana H. Ballard in 1991;

– The Sensorimotor Contingency Theory put forward by J. Kevin O'Regan and Alva Noë in 1992 and 2001.[117]

The heterodox views, in all of their perspectives, are characterised by their reaction to the orthodox view through the emphasis that perception implies action and consequently intentions, as opposed to the possibility of perception being a passive representational process executed by a functional brain. I am interested in the heterodox view, which proposes a reciprocal and ontological role for a subject and otherness that cannot be addressed separately, as they evolved in complete interdependence in the world. Jonathan Crary argues that the problem is when ideas of *visuality*:

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[113] Noë and Thompson, *Vision and Mind*, p. 2.

[114] David Marr, 'Perceptions as Hypotheses', in *Vision and Mind*, pp. 111–133.

[115] Richard L. Gregory, 'Selections from Vision', in *Vision and Mind*, pp. 229–265.

[116] Andy Clark, *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1997, p. 148.

[117] For a brief overview of embodied cognition see: Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 2004, p. 17; *Vision and Mind: Selected Readings in the Philosophy of Perception*, pp. 3–6. For detailed reviews, see: Clark, *Being There*; Andy Clark, 'An Embodied Cognitive Science?', *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* (3), 1999, pp. 345–351; Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch (eds), *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 1991.

veer into a model of perception and subjectivity that is cut off from historical determined notions of "embodiment," in which an embodied subject is both the location of operations of power and the potential for resistance.[118]

One may see embodied models of subjectivity cut off from historical and social notions in the work of neuroscientists V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein, who proposed a theory of human artistic experience and the neural mechanisms that mediate it.[119] In that account, Ramachandran and Hirstein propose eight laws that underlie all human artistic experience, from a biological perspective: peak shift effect, grouping, isolation of a single module, contrast extraction, symmetry, perceptual problem solving, generic viewpoint principle, metaphors.[120] The study starts by defining a purpose for art, which is 'not merely to depict or represent reality – for that can be accomplished very easily with a camera – but to enhance, transcend, or indeed even to *distort* reality'[121] and is exemplified with the discovery of non-representational art by Picasso in relation to the images offered to the first English colonisers when they arrived in India:

> Yet when Picasso did it, the Western art critics heralded his attempts to 'transcend perspective' as a profound new discovery – even though both Indian and African art had anticipated this style by several centuries![122]

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[118] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture.* Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999, p. 3.

[119] V.S. Ramachandran and William Hirstein 'The Science of Art: A Neurological Theory of Aesthetic Experience', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6 (6–7), 1999, pp. 15–51.

[120] The eight principles are proposed from a biological perspective. Nevertheless, some of those principles implicitly acknowledge a context-dependency, for example: the peak shift effect is based on the idea that if a rat is to be rewarded by distinguishing between a square and a rectangular shape, the rat will start making that distinction more frequently, even if there is no difference. But the rewarding system had to be defined by something or someone external to the rat. That is, the context defining the rewarding process and the rat evolved with that rewarding scheme.

[121] Ramachandran and Hirstein, 'The Science of Art', pp. 15–51.

[122] Ramachandran and Hirstein, 'The Science of Art', pp.16–17.

I will not discuss the proposed definition of art, it is not the object of Ramachandran's and Hirstein's paper, which is rather the acknowledgement of a social-cultural context in the production and reception of art to justify the need to write the paper while ignoring those same contexts from that point onwards. Ramachandran and Hirstein's eight laws of universal artistic experience are presented as being exclusively biological, consequently separated from social and cultural contexts. The study was highly controversial and allowed for a diverse range of criticism, among which is 'Against the Reduction of Art to Galvanic Skin Response',[123] which is illuminating: the response is from a 'hard scientist' following a feminist, postmodern, text-analytic approach and it was publish under the pseudonym Donnya Wheelwell due to a fear of discrimination by the author's peers and resulted in a heated debate between scientific methodologies in sciences and humanities. [124] Among the various problems identified in Ramachandran and Hirstein's work, there is: the reductive approach,[125] the exclusion of cultural complexities in the definition of the eight universal laws, the possibility of confusing arousal with beauty,[126] and the unaccounted artists perspective.[127]

Another example of embodied models of subjectivity cut off from historical and social notions, or neurobiological approaches,[128] is Semir Zeki's theory of art, which states that

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[123] Donnya Wheelwell, 'Against the Reduction of Art to Galvanic Skin Response', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7 (8-9, 2000), pp. 37–42.

[124] 'Editorial', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 8 (1, 2001), pp. 3–8.

[125] Erich Harth, 'Art and Reductionism', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 11 (3–4, 2004), pp. 111–116.

[126] Wheelwell, 'Against the Reduction of Art to Galvanic Skin Response', pp. 37–42.

[127] Amy Ione, 'Connecting the Cerebral Cortex with the Artist's Eyes, Mind and Culture', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 7 (8-9, 2000), pp. 21–28.

[128] Norman Bryson refers to these approaches as the neural turn – cortical or neural models of subjectivity. See: Norman Bryson, 'Introduction', in Warren Neidich, *Blow Up: Photography, Cinema and the Brain*, New York: D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2003, p. 14.

there can only be a theory of art or aesthetics that is neurologically based, which suffers from similar problems being both reductive and lacking convincing data and results.[129] Norman Bryson has recently acknowledged that reductive perspectives can arrive from the natural sciences and from humanities:

> by concentrating on the signifier as the basic unit of description [...][Poststructuralism] commits itself to an intensely cognitive point of view. Feeling, emotion, sensation – the creatural life of the body and of embodied experience – tend to fade away, their place taken by an essentially clerical outlook that centers on the written text. The signifier rules over a set of terms whose functions are primarily textual in scope: the analysis of ordinary language (Wittgenstein); of the circulation of meaning within the literary text (deconstructive criticism); of the disruptions in the symbolic order that indicate the advent of the unconscious fear and desire in the analysand's speech or in the discourse of the work of art (psychoanalysis). While the family of terms that owe their allegiance to the signifier – text, discourse, code, meaning – is brilliantly adept at dealing with questions of signification, it encounters a notable limit when the area that it seeks to understand exceeds the sphere of textual meaning.[130]

As noted by John Onians[131] Bryson is not dismissing the importance of those contributions; rather, he is implying that those practices were using inappropriate tools. Onians goes one step further by claiming:

> Subjectivity is an even more real phenomenon than he [Bryson] and others had realised, being formed less by ideologies and discourses than by cerebral and visceral experiences. Experiences are indeed 'mediated', and the extend to which they are

[129] Amy Ione, 'Examining Semir Zeki's "Neural Concept Formation and Art: Dante, Michelangelo, Wagner" ', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 10 (2), 2003, pp. 58–66.

[130] Bryson, 'Introduction', in Neidich, *Blow Up*, p. 14, quoted in John Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007, p. 1.

[131] Professor Emeritus of World Art at the University of East Anglia

mediated by words, images and other forms of discourse can continue to be studied using semiotics, but primarily they are mediated by neurons, so it is on neurons that anyone interested in mediation should really concentrate. Only those of a 'clerical' turn of mind, he [Bryson] suggests, would continue to credit words and symbolic systems with the primacy they had been accorded for a quarter of a century. [132]

Although I am sympathetic to Onians' comments, that there might be a 'neural' deficit in an overall theory of subjectivity, I also feel that he might have gone one step further by claiming a primacy for the neurons.[133] As noted by the neuroscientist, António Damasio, feelings and emotions are as important as cognition, and splitting them or giving primacy to one of them will result in the continuation of dualist thinking:

> Feelings, along with the emotions they come from, are not a luxury. They serve as internal guides, and they help us communicate to others signals that can also guide them. And feelings are neither intangible nor elusive. Contrary to the traditional scientific opinion, feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts. They are the result of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body's captive audience.[134]

Returning to Rancière's aesthetic propositions, the ability to think contradictions and to the possibility that Rancière's major regimes of identification of Western art (ethical regime, poetic regime, and aesthetic regimes) are concurrent and juxtaposed, and making a parallel with the *neural/linguistic turns*. What we are presented with is that neither the *neural* nor the *linguistic* turns are sufficient by themselves to develop a theory

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[132] John Onians, *Neuroarthistory*, p. 2.

[133] Neural turn in opposition to linguistic turn.

[134] Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, London: Vintage, 2006, p. xxv.

of subjectivity.[135] In short, the focus of attention might change (between a neural or linguistic perspective) but the interface (subjectivity) remains the same.

Crowther's *Ontological Reciprocity* is more appropriate than any neural or linguistic turn for it acknowledges the importance of both turning possibilities and consequently moves forward:

> our relation to Otherness is determined fundamentally not simply by 'mental' acts of cognitive discrimination, but by our sensory-motor capacities (of which language is the highest function) in operation as a unified field. The unity of this field, and the consciousness of self-emergent from it, is both stimulated by, and enables us to organize, the spatio-temporal diversity of Otherness. We give it contour, direction, and meaning; thus constituting it as a *world*. On these terms, the structures of embodied subjectivity and of the world are directly correlated. Each brings forth and defines essential characteristics of the other. Their reciprocity is ontological as well as casual.[136]

Crowther's proposition avoids the differentiation based on value or primacy between biological or social-cultural perspectives but still retains the differentiation based on its function; that is, the parts are recognised and differentiated but can never be removed from the whole without changing the experience of the whole. As Crowther writes: 'In even the simplest experience, rational, sensory, affective, and socio-historical factors are

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[135] W.J.T. Mitchell's 'Pictorial Turn' can be understood as being part of the linguistic turn due to its emphasis on representation. Nevertheless, it points to important considerations in the relations between image and text; the space in-between. 'The power of the meta-picture is to make visible the impossibility of separating theory from practice, to give theory a body and visible shape that it often wants to deny, to reveal theory as representation. The power of the image/text is to reveal the inescapable heterogencity of representation, to show that what we give to theory is an assemblage of prostheses and artificial supplements, not a natural or organic form.' See: W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*, Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 418.

[136] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, p. 2.

interwoven in a inseparable unity.'[137] Crowther proposition is also similar to Andy

Clark's *extended mind* and Alva Noë's proposition that 'we are out of our heads', which

argue that a mind is more than a brain and body, and requires a world to evolve. [138]

A further parallel between Crowther's, Noë's and Clark's propositions can be made with

Lacanian psychoanalysis,[139] in particular what Bruce Fink calls the 'original' real,[140]

while the emergence of a 'second-order' real belongs to the realm of the enaction, or

perception and cognition. The original real lacks the symbolic while the second-order

real is generated by the symbolic. Nevertheless it is important to note that

psychoanalysis focus is in the articulation of trauma by the analysand through the

symbolic order, which will generate a second-order real and only a hypothesis of what

might be the original real.[141] Lorenzo Chiesa refers to the 'original real' as the 'pure

Real' and to the 'second-order real' as the 'Real-of-language'.[142] Chiesa writes that the

'pure Real is what stands outside the *universal* symbolic Other: despite the fact that

psychotics are never in a pure Real, there is a pure Real which should be located

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[137] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, p. 2.

[138] Crowther's Ontological Reciprocity and Manuel DeLanda's notion of assemblage are similar: 'relations of exteriority also imply that the properties of the component parts can never explain relations which constitute the whole'. See: Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, London; New York: Continuum, 2006, p. 11.

[139] Crowther recognises the importance of Jacques Lacan's thought: ' it gives a proper due to the role of signification, contingency and Otherness in human experience'. Paul Crowther, *Philosophy After Postmodernism: Civilized Values and the Scope of Knowledge*, Oxford; Routledge, 2003, p. 172. Nevertheless, Crowther also suggests that 'there are (...) much better philosophical models than Lacan's for articulating the general nature of our embodied relation to the world' in *Philosophy After Postmodernism*, p. 171.

[140] Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 26–27.

[141] W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of representation falls in the second-order real and not in the original real. As argued by Mitchell 'what lies "beyond" representation would thus be found "within" it or a long its margins'. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory*, p. 419.

[142] Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness; a Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2007, pp. 109–112.

beyond the universal dimension of the Law/Name-of-the-Father,'[143] which is what Crowther, Clark, and Noë refer as the *world*. To conclude this parallel it can be argued that the real (original or pure real) is a mind-independent reality, or the world; the imaginary is embodied perception (our ability to access the real) and cognition (our ability to complete perception with memories and social factors); and the symbolic the ability to represent and articulate the real-of-language (or second-order real), which is also a function of the imaginary. In short, we need a brain, a body and world to evolve in the world, in what Crowther calls *ontological reciprocity*.

In a recent article in *October* magazine about George Brecht's Events, Julia Robinsion contends 'that the *conceptual turn* [Minimalism and Conceptual art] of the 1960s actually started in 1959, with Brecht's first text-based score, and not, as most accounts would have it, almost a decade later'.[144] The aim of Brecht's Events[145] according to Robinson 'was to take momentary hold of the kind of attention we give to a work of art and to turn that attention to the details of everyday perceptual experience',[146] but what is the important part to retain is attention itself or the mechanics of directing attention through the interface's invitation: in the real, in the fiction, in the discourse of the interface or in the discourse of the work of art, or in all of those elements as an ontological propositions. Crary defines a notion of attention as:

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[143] Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, p. 111.

[144] Julia Robinson, 'From Abstraction to Model: George Brecht's Events and the Conceptual Turn in Art of the 1960s', *October*, 127 (Winter 2009), pp. 77–108.

[145] 'Between 1959 and 1962, George Brecht developed a model of artistic practice called the Event Score. A simple white card with a few lines of text, it was a linguistic proposition presented in lieu of the art object, designated to mediate a moment of the spectator experience.' See: Robinson, 'From Abstraction to Model', pp. 77–108.

[146] Robinson, 'From Abstraction to Model', pp. 77–108.

the means by which an individual observer can transcend those subjective limitations and make perception *its own,* and attention is at the same time a means by which a perceiver becomes open to control and annexation by external agencies.[147]

Recent empirical studies on change blindness[148] and inattention blindness[149] support the claim that we can only see what we are attending to and that 'marginal interests changes are hard to detect',[150] even if those changes are occurring in front of one's eyes as Noë experienced:

> In one study, perceivers are asked to watch a video tape of a basketball game and they are asked to count the number of times one team takes possession of the ball. During the film clip, which lasts a few minutes, a person in a gorilla suit strolls onto the centre of the court, turns and faces the audience and does a little jig. The gorilla then slowly walks of the court. The remarkable fact is that perceivers (including the author [Noë]) do not notice the gorilla.[151]

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[147] Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, p. 5.

[148] See: J. Kevin O'Regan, Heiner Deubel, James J. Clark and Ronald A. Rensink, 'Picture Changes During Blinks: Looking Without Seeing and Seeing Without Looking', in *Visual Cognition*, 7 (1/2/3), 2000, pp. 191–211; Daniel T. Levin, Daniel J. Simons, Bonnie L. Angelone and Christopher F. Chabris, 'Memory for centrally attended changing objects in an incidental real-world change detection paradigm', in *British Journal of Psychology*, (93), 2002, pp. 289–302; Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*; Alva Noë (ed), *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*, Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2002; Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2009.

[149] See Arien Mack and Irvin Rock, *Inattentional Blindness,* Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 1998. Alva Noë, *Action in Perception*. Alva Noë (ed), *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*. Alva Noë, *Out of Our Heads*.

[150] O'Regan, Deubel, Clark and Rensink, 'Picture Changes During Blinks', pp. 191–211. See also, Bruce Mangan, following William James, on the existence of a non-sensory fringe, which consists of very real but indistinct feelings of many kinds, surrounding a nucleus in consciousness. Bruce Mangan, *Meaning and the Structure if Consciousness; An Essay in Psycho-Aesthetics*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1991. William James, *Principles of Psychology* [1890], Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 219–278.

[151] Noë, *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*, p. 5.

In short, change blindness and inattention blindness suggest that perception is attention-dependent, gist-dependent, and there is no such thing as an internal representation of what is being perceived.[152] The idea is that instead of constantly representing the world in our mind, which we perceived in much less detail than our experience of it, and even if we cognitively enhance that lack of detail, and retain elements of those representations, we use the world as a model for itself. That is, perception is the ability to access the detail of the world to attain a rich experience and neglect that which is not being attended to (i.e. the gorilla). In short, perception is the ability to access the world and not to represent it.

If there is not a representation of the world but an access to the world then we are left with the mechanics of how we access it rather than how we represent it. Understanding the mechanics of attention, why and where attention is placed is the key to address the idea of subjectivity and otherness. Where we focus our attention defines how we access the world, emphasising either a relation of interiority or exteriority but always one conditioning the other. In the particular case of the development and production of interfaces, the relations can be predominantly of interiority or exteriority depending on where the artists focus their attention but both elements will always be present. Nevertheless, in order for a work of art to facilitate experiences of self-reflection that process must start in an interface that focuses its attention predominantly in relations of interiority while allowing for a later rendering and transposition of those relations by an observer and in the form of a work of art. As such, an interface that addresses the *mechanics of attention* to explore *relations of interiority* is an interface that will facilitate *experiences of self-reflection* by an observer in relation to the resulting work of art.

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[152] Noë, *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*, pp. 5–6.

Bruce Nauman's work directly addresses the observer's attention and forces the observer to catch himself in the mechanics of attention; Robert Storr writes that 'he intends above all that they heed their own evolving and perhaps conflicting responses to the varied stimuli that he provides'. Nauman intentionally explores the mechanics of attention in the interface. Further, the interfaces created by Nauman are facilitators of self-reflective experiences by the observer, as Storr claims, 'before one can "get" Nauman, one must first consciously register all the unconscious or semiconscious resonances of the images and effects he creates. The best access to his thoughts, therefore, is through a close examination of one's own feelings.'[153] Bruce Nauman's work will be addressed in the following chapter.

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[153] Robert Storr, 'Flashing the Light in the Shadow of Doubt', in Robert C. Morgan (ed.), *Bruce Nauman*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 159.

Conclusions

The discussion above can be summarised in three operational concepts: 1) interface; 2) attention; and 3) travelling. Those three operational concepts are convergent, that is, they point to the importance of exploring the mechanics of attention while addressing a notion of the interface and exploring travelling as a methodological practice, which can question a notion of otherness and consequently of a subject.

1) The interface, as an operational concept, allows for an articulation of the artistic practice. That is, the conceptual split between what an artist does and what an observer does is determinant for a better understanding of how such practice evolves. An interface, as the product of the artistic practice results from the artist alone, or at best from a hypothetical formulation of who an observer might be or react to the interface. An interface is condemned to death in order to fulfil its purpose, that of becoming a work of art. The death of the interface is the birth of the work of art and a consequence of the observer's engagement with that interface. Nevertheless the death of the interface and birth of the work of art are closer to a metamorphosis since the change that takes place is at the level of attention and not at a material (physical) level; who (artist or observer) pays attention to what? As such, a research concerned with the artistic practice needs to engage with the concept of the interface and not so much with the work of art. It is useful to define a notion of an interface that facilitates experiences of self-reflection, even if such a definition is characterised by a disparity between the concept and the object of that conceptualisation, or what Crowther refers to as an abyss.[154] As such, I propose the following operational concept: An interface, which promotes self-reflective

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[154] 'Between our most fundamental reciprocity with the world qua embodied subjects, and our attempts to express it explicitly in philosophical or other kinds of theoretical concepts, there is an abyss. Abstract concepts alone cannot fully recapture the concreteness of ontological reciprocity. We can offer an analysis and description of it, but the act of analysis and description is at best a kind of looking on from above.' Paul Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, pp. 3-4.

experiences in its audience, is an object(s) or situation(s) that is defined by paradoxical (illusion of contradiction) patterns which are recurrently (illusion of repetition) visible creating the illusion of (im)possibility and repetition. Those patterns are relations between the interface's contact points, and promote a permanent mutation of the interface's meaning, which is the work of art. The contact points are part of the interface but not the interface, and are in a constant flux, even if the interface seems stable. The work of art is not the interface, neither its message, neither its noise, neither its interference, neither its context, neither its points of contact. The work of art is the relation(s) that a subject or a system establishes with all the intrinsic and extrinsic contact points of the interface, including the interface's representations and appropriations, while there are traces of the interface's existence, and even if the nature of that relation is one of absence.

2) The importance of addressing attention results from an ontological position that argues that a subject (brain and body) requires a world to evolve. Perception is not the ability to represent the world but the ability to access the world and attention is a requirement for how we access the world, determining how we evolve in that world. The world and its social renderings are not stable structures; they are full of contradictions and the ability to articulate those contradictions is also an ontological requirement. A subject requires the ability to articulate contradictions to evolve in the world and unveiling the mechanics of attention allows for a better understanding of how we (subjects) evolve in the world and how artists can use the mechanics of attention in the production of interfaces, namely interfaces that engage an observer in a self-reflective experience.

3) As we have seen before, we (subjects) require a world to evolve. The third operational concept – travelling – allows us to change the attention to the surrounding world (with its assimilated structures) to rethink our evolvement and contribute to a better understanding of the mechanics of attention. The change operated in the artist, as the agency that produces interfaces, and resulting from travelling allows a rethinking of the mechanics of attention and the interface. Contextual changes, such as the ones resulting from travelling, contribute to a redefinition of an idea of Otherness, which is a requirement to define a subject and consequently result in a rethinking of the subject and the producer of the interfaces, the artist. This research is particularly interested in interfaces that engage in self-reflection, and travelling forces the artist to address a notion of self-reflection in a first-person methodology in a constantly changing otherness and to investigate self-reflection, which can be characterised by the ability to articulate apparent contradictions and unveil the mechanics of paying attention with a view to generate data for the development of interfaces that engage in self-reflection.

The work that follows addresses the proposed notion of an interface that engages in self-reflection by exploring two different approaches to travelling. I will take up Bruce Nauman's artistic practice as a case study for intrinsic travelling (a phenomenological journey in the studio) and my own artistic practice as extrinsic travelling (a phenomenological journey outside the studio).

2. 1 Chasing Nauman, an introductory note.

Over the years I have had many encounters with Bruce Nauman's work but recently – and armed with an excellent excuse (this research)– I decided to attempt an interview. This story starts around the time of the opening of the Venice Biennale in 2009 when in writing a previous chapter I decided that an interview with Bruce Nauman would be of significant importance. A few minutes later an email was on the way to his gallery and around four weeks later a reply arrived from Nauman's assistant, Juliet Meyers: 'Mr Nauman is very busy and it is very rare for him to give an interview but we [Nauman and Meyers] wish you [me] all the best of luck for your research project'. Dead end.

Four months later while in Los Angeles, I found another reason to try again: I met Mary Livingstone Beebe, Director of the Stuart Collection, who suggested that I should contact Juliet Meyers with a new proposition. So another email headed to New Mexico. This time, I proposed to talk with Juliet Meyers, who has been Nauman's assistant for the last twenty-eight years, rather than with Nauman. After a few promising telephone conversations with Juliet Meyers, I could hear a clown inside my head shouting 'No! No! No! Yes!Yes! Yes!' I was trying to establish links between key moments in Nauman's life and how those moments were translated to the interfaces produced by Nauman. The reason for that is that Nauman is the only person who can authenticate any remark about the interfaces he developed. I can talk about the works of art but not about the interfaces. My request was an impossible one. Maybe it was an unconscious proposition to assure that an interview would not happen. Dead end.

I was left with the Getty Research Institute. I knew there were letters in various boxes archived at the top of the hill (the Getty), and I tried my luck. I found the letters but I was not prepared for their content. Indeed Nauman had key moments in his life, as

everyone else, and those moments could be identified and translated to the work. There I was in a research institute's aseptic environment, wearing white gloves and reading the personal letters that Bruce Nauman's ex-wife had written in confidence to a friend almost forty years earlier. In retrospect I am not sure if the gloves were there to protect the documents or to protect me.[1] In the end I become upset with my line of enquiry and with the Getty for allowing me access to the letters and I decided to destroy the photographs and notes of those letters. Well, not all. I kept one. It was representative of the issues I was trying to identify. From 1970, it reads: 'Bruce is trying to buy a new car. He hates it and loves it.'[2]

Two months later, *Four Corner Piece* (1971) was being exhibited as part of MoCA's (The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) permanent collection. There I was strolling by familiar works and others less familiar when I was confronted with a Nauman's work that I had never seen before. The work is simple, four corridors around a central space forming four corners with a monitor and a camera in each of those corners (four cameras and four monitors). I walked in and looked at the first monitor; I knew from previous research that the piece was a closed-circuit installation but also knew that with Nauman nothing is straightforward. The cameras do not match the monitors. Sometimes one sees the person who entered the space after one, other times one sees the person that walked before one, and other times one sees oneself. Past, present, and future merge through a singular embodied experience. Typical Nauman, I thought. After a while it was possible to identify which camera was filming what and I kept walking back and forward, smiling and cursing the simplicity of the work and its efficiency. It become impossible to see anything else after that encounter and a reflective

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[1] I did not wear white gloves, it is not a requirement but it is useful for this story.

[2] Judice Nauman, *Letter to Marcia Tucker, in* Marcia Tucker documents, Box N, Getty Institute Research Institute, 1971. See, figure 1.

cigarette was required. Immediately after, an imaginary cat from another of his works started to scratch my arm, *Mapping The Studio*. In that work there are mice and a cat, which occasionally drop in and out of the video frame and the observer is left trying to spot them. The level of my cursing immediately increased! How did I miss it?! During the two brief but important telephone conversations with Juliet Meyers, who was very understanding and helpful, told me, if my memory is correct, that the key to Nauman's work was attention. At the time I thought that I knew that Nauman's work addresses attention, after all, that was the reason why I wanted an interview but I was missing the obvious, that is, allowing myself to experience the importance of the mechanics of attention. That sunny winter afternoon I felt that Nauman had replied to my request for an interview almost forty years earlier when he created the *Four Corner Piece (1971)*. An understanding of the implications of the mechanics of attention and the movement that is contingent upon it are subjective experiences that although they can be discussed, can never replace the real thing. Janet Krayank writes that avoidance is a consequence of Nauman's work: 'Perhaps if language is understood through the terms of the speech-act, we can apprehend why Nauman chooses so often *not* to speak.'[3] In an interview with Joan Simon, Bruce Nauman describes his thoughts while producing art; he hopes that the observer feels like 'getting hit in the face by a baseball bat. Or better, like getting hit in the back of the neck. You never see it coming; just knocks you down. (…)the kind of intensity that does not give you any trace of whether *you are going to like it or not.*'[4] Nauman was referring to the experience of the observer while being exposed to an interface and to the intensity of constructing a work of art based on that exposure. Nauman seeks the confrontation between the observer's expectations and the interface to develop an intensely disorienting work of art, a work of art that leaves the observer questioning

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[3] Janet Kraynak (ed.), *Please Pay Attention Please: Bruce Nauman's Words*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT, 2005, p. 26.

[4] Joan Simon, 'Breaking the Silence: An Interview with Bruce Nauman, 1998 (January 1987)' in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 320. [My emphasis].

himself/herself. This is also, according to Robert C. Morgan, one consequence of Nauman's exile in the New Mexico desert, a forced exile that allows 'him to think about art as a phenomenon of the self'.[5] Nauman's methodological practice explores intrinsic travel or a phenomenological journey in the studio to develop interfaces that engage in self-reflection, from his early pacing days in a San Francisco studio to the Pasadena Studio, and a later reclusion in his New Mexico ranch; Marcia Tucker calls it PheNAUMANology.[6]

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[5] Robert C. Morgan (ed.), *Bruce Nauman*, Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 14.

[6] Marcia Tucker, 'PheNAUMANology' in *Bruce Nauman*, pp. 21–27.

trying to buy a new car. He hates it and loves it.

Judy
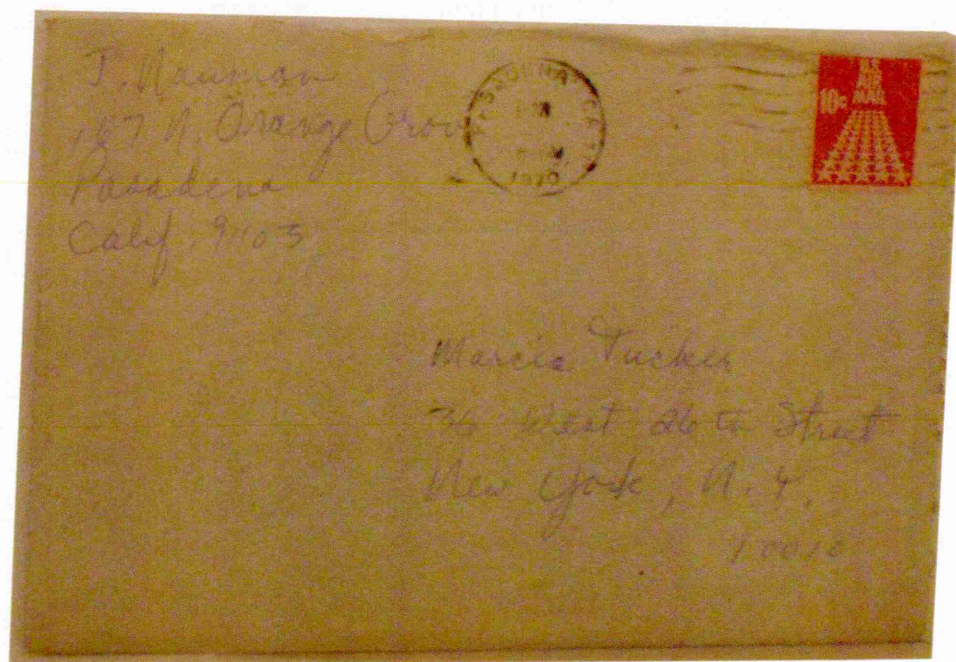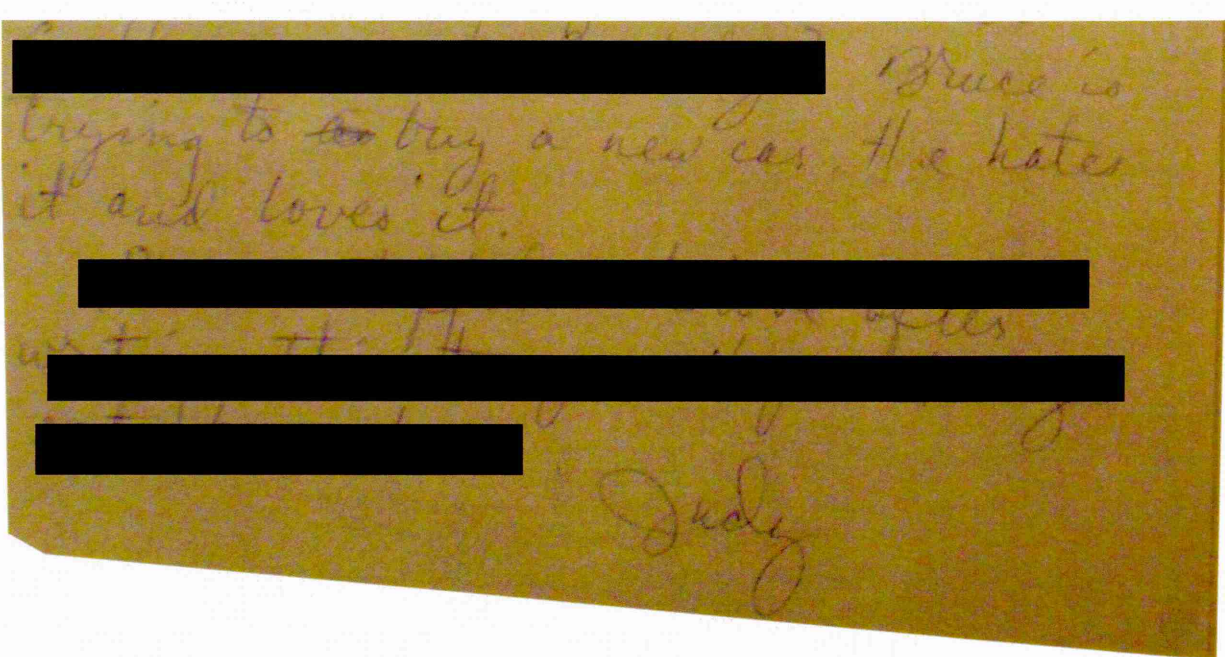
Figure 1 – Judice Nauman, *Letter to Marcia Tucker, in* Macia Tucker documents, Box N, Getty Institute Research Institute, 1971.

2.2 - Early journeys – mapping the territory

In 1966, Nauman left university to take a part-time job at the San Francisco Art Institute, hardly knowing anyone, with a small studio in the San Francisco's Mission district, not much money for materials and many questions about what it meant to be an artist.[1] The work produced was the result of how Nauman spent his time: pacing around in the studio (*Studio Films*);[2] reassessing why is anyone is an artist and what artists do as in the early neon pieces;[3] and performing a variety of activities in the portfolios of photographs.[4] During that year Nauman produced a neon piece *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths* (1966), which hung in front of the window of his studio. When faced with the question if he believed in his own proposition, Nauman replied: 'I don't know; I think we should leave that open.'[5] What is worth considering is the mechanics of the proposition, including its subjective implications (not only its structure), rather than the proposition itself. During this period, Nauman was reading Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*: 'which I [Nauman] think doesn't provide you with anything except a way to question things. You can have an argument and follow it until you find out that it makes sense or doesn't make sense, but it was still useful to me to find out that it did go to anywhere or it was wrong.'[6] That process of going anywhere

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[1] Michele De Angelus, 'Interview With Bruce Nauman, May 27 and 30, 1980', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 197–295.

[2] Among others *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeter of a Square; Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square; Bouncing Two Balls Between Floor and Ceiling with Changing Rhythms; Playing a Note on the Violin while I Walk Around the Studio.*

[3] *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (Window or Wall Sign); The True Artist is an Amazing Luminous Fountain (Window or Wall Shade).*

[4] *Eleven Color Photographs; Flour Arrangements; Composite Photo of Two Messes on the Studio Floor.*

[5] Joe Raffaele and Elizabeth Baker, 'The Way Out West: Interviews with Four San Francisco Artists, 1967 (Fall 1966)' in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 100–109. The interview took place in 1966 (Fall) and it was first published in ARTnews 66 (Summer 1967).

[6] Michele De Angelus, 'Interview With Bruce Nauman, May 27 and 30, 1980', p. 197–295.

(or being wrong) is a crucial element in Nauman's work, as Morgan suggests: 'Nauman's work began to develop along parallel, sometimes intersecting trajectories that emphasized the inability of rational solutions to define art.'[7]

The inability of rational solutions (to define art) is important in Nauman's work and in line with the proposed notion of an interface that takes in to account paradoxes and illusions of contradictions. Nevertheless, I would like to draw attention to Nauman's reference to Wittgenstein's importance to his work – the process of going anywhere – travelling. According to Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska, both of whom lecture in Visual Culture: 'travelling implies a journey of metamorphosis and transformation, in which the self is changed by the experience of alterity encountered in a dialectic of difference'.[8]

Although Nauman's journeys in the studio are limited to the studio space, Nauman is creating an experience of alterity for himself through the process of going anywhere. There are the obvious spatial connotations with the pacing around the studio – movement is highly important for those performances or the length of the film reel to define a departure and arrival point – but the journey that Nauman underwent in the studio is much more than a spatial or temporal movement. Nauman is forcing himself to perform a specific task that he knows he cannot control (bouncing a ball or playing the violin) and consequently he exposes himself to a dialectic of difference – the possibility to reach the limits of the self – to achieve an experience of alterity.[9]

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[7] Robert C. Morgan, 'An Introductory Survey' in *Bruce Nauman*, p. 1.

[8] Barry Curtis and Claire Pajaczkowska, 'Getting There: Travel, Time and Narrative' in George Robertson et al. (eds), *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, London; New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 206.

[9] Bruce Mangan suggests that experiences of alterity are fringe experiences (of consciousness) and proposes that to achieve these kinds of experiences: ' we only need to repeat an experiment (…): saying

Narratives of travelling have long been an allegory for inner vision and can be traced to Egypt a thousand year before Homer's *Odyssey*, which will set the standard for the epic journey: 'the inner traveller who may serve as the paradigm of the pilgrim in the later Christian medieval tradition',[10] along with the Biblical writings that 'provide a corpus of reference and intertext for modern writers'.[11] I will not dwell on the history of travelling or travel writing; it is not the object of this research project.[12] Nevertheless a parallel between the changes operated in Nauman's earlier and later work compared with early and late travel narratives can bring some insight to understand Nauman's work. Early narratives can be characterised by a fascination for the newly discovered world and 'the narrator's purpose was to record the details of this often exciting journey'.[13] Nauman's earlier work can be described as a documentation or mapping of an inner territory: mapping the limits of the body, mapping the limits of language, mapping the role of the artist. Thus these investigations are detailed accounts of early journeys: *Studio Films* and the portfolios of photographs are documentation of a journey to meet a *foreigner* that appears in the process of those journeys (i.e. mistakes in the performances, the confrontation with the unknown).

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the same word over and over again rapidly. After 10 or 20 repetitions, *something* in the experience of the word definitely begins to change.' Bruce Mangan, 'The conscious "Fringe": Bringing William James Up to Date', Bernard Baars, William Banks and James B. Newman (eds), *Essential Sources in the Scientific Study of Consciousness*, Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 2003, pp. 741–759.

[10] Ja´s Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Introduction', in Ja´s Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés (eds.), *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, p. 9.

[11] Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, 'Introduction', in Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge Company to Travel Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 2.

[12] For detailed accounts on the history of travel and travel writing, see: Ja´s Elsner and Joan-Pau Rubiés, (eds), *Voyages and Visions*. Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, London; New York: Routledge, 2002. Hulme and Youngs (eds), *The Cambridge Company to Travel Writing*. See also, David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring The Road Movie*, Austin, TX; University of Texas Press, 2002, pp. 7–13. For an overview of the Romantic period see: Carl Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination*, Oxford: New York; Oxford University Press, 2007.

[13] Blanton, *Travel Writing*, p. 6.

Later accounts of travel literature position the narrator/traveller and his/her first-person methodologies at a forefront of the narratives. The source of the narration is no longer restricted to the newly discovered world but also encompasses the traveller as the interpretative source of that world. Nauman's practice evolves in a similar perspective, even if that is not obvious. After the corridor series, Nauman withdrew from the work in order to allow for the observers to bring their own subjectivity to the interpretation of the interface rather than to avoid subjectivity. As Casey Blanton argues: 'The new travel books are not our guides to places remote; nowhere is anymore. They are instead metaphors of a quest for ground zero – a place where values are discovered along the way, not imported; a place where our cultures can have their say; a place where self and other can explore each other's fictions.'[14] Nevertheless, and in a similar fashion with travel writing, the methodological process – travelling – that Nauman explores replicates his earlier and late work (an experience of alterity is represented in the earlier work while in the later work it is proposed), even if the outcomes of that process are different. It is a journey to meet a foreigner in a place in-between. In *Strangers to Ourselves* Julia Kristeva underlies the importance of the foreigner:[15]

> Foreigner: a choked up range deep down in my throat, a black angel clouding transparency, opaque, unfathomable spur. The image of hatred and of the other, a foreigner is neither the romantic victim of our clannish indolence nor the intruder

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[14] Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World*, p. 29.

[15] Michel Serres refers to the parasite in a similar way: 'the parasite invents something new. Since he does not eat like everyone else, he builds a new logic. He crosses the exchange, makes it into a diagonal. He does not barter; he exchanges money. He wants to give his voice for matter, (hot) hair for solid, superstructure for infrastructure. People laugh, the parasite is expelled, he is made fun of, he is beaten, he cheats us; but he invents anew. This novelty must be analyzed. This sound, this aroma, passing for money or roast.' in Serres, *The Parasite (Posthumanities)*, p. 35.

responsible for al the ills of the polis. Neither the apocalypse on the move nor the instant adversary to be eliminated for the sake of appeasing the group. Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder. By recognizing him within ourselves, we are spared detesting him in himself. A symptom that precisely turns 'we' into a problem, perhaps makes it impossible. The foreigner comes in when the consciousness of my difference arises, and he disappears when we all acknowledge ourselves as foreigners, unnameable to bonds and communities.[16]

Kristeva suggests that an encounter with a foreigner reveals itself as an experience of *Unheimlich*: 'that which *is* strangely uncanny would be that which *was* (the past tense is important) familiar and, under certain conditions (...) emerges. (...) The other is my ("own and proper") unconscious.' [17] That is, the foreigner is an exterior (other) that is also intimate and present in the unconscious, mirroring the self's unconscious. Malden Dollar suggests the similarities between Jacques Lacan's concept of *extimité* and Freud's *Unheimlich*, Dollar describes Lacan's extimité:

> It points neither to the interior and neither to the exterior, but it is located there where the most intimate interiority coincides with the exterior and becomes threatening, provoking horror and anxiety. The extimate is simultaneously the intimate kernel and the foreigner body; in a word, it is *Unheimlich.*[18]

The importance of these contributions for this project is the recognition of an implicit relation between a Self and Other that reveals itself in the other (*Unheimlich, extimité*),

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[16] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (*Étrangers à nous-mêmes* [1988]), trans. Leon S. Roudiez, New York: London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991, p. 1.

[17] Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 183.

[18] Mladen Dolar, ' "I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night": Lacan and the Uncanny', *October*, 58 (Autumn 1991), pp. 5–23.

which is situated in the Self's unconscious. However, an experience of other is not necessarily situated in the unconscious. According Bruce Mangan, expanding on William James, there is an equivalent that situates it in consciousness, in *the fringe of consciousness*. In chapter IX (The Stream of Thought) of *The Principles of Psychology*,[19] James proposes a nucleus and fringe of consciousness that can be understood as the focus and the margins of attention, but in *consciousness* rather than in the unconscious as proposed by Freud. James clarifies what he means by the fringe when replying to one of his peers (Prof. Thomas Marguire of Dublin):

> The fringe as I [James] use the word (...) is part of the *object cognized* – substantive *qualities* and *things* appearing to the mind in a *fringe of relations*. Some parts – the transitive parts – of our stream of though cognize the relations rather than the things; but both the transitive and the substantive parts form one continuous stream, with no discrete 'sensations' in it.[20]

Bruce Mangan suggests that the *'fringe represents in consciousness*, the *nonconscious context of its nucleus,'* and its function is to free resources for the focus of attention by condensing, information in an indistinct form. Mangan describes the fringe of consciousness as follow:

> A single definitive experience is said to form a 'nucleus' in consciousness, and its relations are felt in a 'fringe' ('halo', or 'penumbra') which envelops the 'nucleus'. The fringe is said to provide the nucleus with its background or context. Among other things the fringe anticipates dimly information about nuclei which have yet to come, and echoes dimly information about nuclei which have passed. In this way the current

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[19] William James, *Principles of Psychology* [1890], Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 219–278.

[20] Footnote 19 in James, *Principles of Psychology*, p. 249.

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moment is connected with information about the past and expectations about the future; it is by virtue of transitive or fringe experience that the seamless transition from one tangible experience to the next is accomplished without a break, and that both past experiences and expectations of the future are represented in the present moment.[21]

Mangan identifies a cognitive control system (experiences) in consciousness that allows for monitoring and evaluating without obstructing the flow of vague and dim information that constitute the fringe and 'Meaningfulness' as the most important of those control experiences. Meaningfulness is a signal of positive evaluation in consciousness that monitors, summarises and directs the flow of information between the nucleus and the fringe of consciousness. One last remark in this brief overview of the two part structure of consciousness (nucleus and fringe) is the importance of aesthetic experience, which accordingly to Mangan can be recognised as a pattern traceable to ancient Greece, which he calls 'Alpha Cluster' and articulates through its four components (ineffable, unistic, noetic and transcendent), but of significant importance is that aesthetic experiences *can intensify an experience of Meaninfulness*.[22]

Now, if I juxtapose the concept of *Meaningfulness* and *Unheimlich* I am confronted with the strong possibility that *Meaningfulness* represents the positive signal of evaluation while *Unheimlich* represents the negative signal of evaluation of the same flow of information circulating between the conscious and the unconscious. That is, *Meaningfulness* and *Unheimlich* are contradictory but compatible control devices for the same vague and indistinct information that circulates between consciousness (fringe) and the unconscious (preconscious) but presented from different perspectives, which according to Serres is

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[21] Bruce Mangan, *Meaning and the Structure of Consciousness; An Essay in Psycho-Aesthetics*, unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1991, p. 66.

[22] Mangan, *Meaning and the Structure of Consciousness*, pp. 10–27.

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the place of the parasite: 'the meaning of the prefix *para* in the word *parasite*: it is on the side, next to, shifted; it is not on the thing, but on the relation'.[23] Consequently when I am referring to places in-between they should be understood as being neither located in consciousness nor in the unconscious but in a 'no man's land' that is defined by the *movement* of the relations between conscious and unconscious experiences, which can be evaluated through feelings of *Meaningfulness* or *Unheimlich* according to the relation being established towards the conscious or the unconscious, respectively.

In this context, Nauman's journeys are attempts to activate a foreigner within himself; a foreigner who cannot be grasped and who cannot be ignored, a parasite.[24] Thus travelling can be understood as a methodological practice that is both reflective and infinite in the possibilities of dialogue with the foreigner in ourselves. It is a journey beyond the edges of language, a process of metamorphosis and discovery.[25] The foreigner lives across the border, on the other side, but before another border; in a no man's land.[26] Nauman described that process:

> Standing outside and looking at how something gets done, or doesn't get done, is really
> fascinating and curious. If I can manage to get outside of a problem a little bit and

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[23] Michel Serres, *Parasite*, p. 38.

[24] I am using Kristeva's foreigner and Serres' parasite in a similar way. However, a notion of movement is much clear in Kristeva's foreigner while in Serres's use of the parasite there are wider sets of possible roles for the parasite (biological parasite, social parasite, static).

[25] Kristeva writes that 'Psychoanalysis is then experienced as a journey into the strangeness of the other and of oneself, towards an ethics of respect for the irreconcilable.' See, Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, p. 182. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a journey into the strangeness of the other is not necessarily a psychoanalytic process.

[26] A curios link can be established with Danis Tanovic's film, *No Man's Land* (2001) when in the Balkans' war two enemies (Bosnian and Serbian) are trapped in the no man's land – a place in-between, which is clearly beyond the jurisdiction of both sides of the border, from the French sergeant of the United Nations Protection Force and from the English reporter and international media. It is a place in itself, apart, next to, not belonging anywhere else but always accessed through the perspective of somewhere.

watch myself having a hard time, then I can see what I'm going to do it makes it possible. It works.[27]

Travelling implies a visit to that place in-between,[28] which in this case is a Nauman's land. The outcome of that journey, which takes place in the studio, is then materialised in the interface as an articulation of harmonic and conflicting formalist devices to promote a similar relationship between the observer and his/her foreigner and the formation of the work of art, and the beginning of a new journey to the observer's land. The extreme example of my argument is that Nauman plays the role of the tour operator, who started by travelling and now organises similar journeys that can be experienced by observers. Nauman is scripting journeys.[29]

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[27] Joan Simon, 'Breaking the Silence: An Interview with Bruce Nauman, 1998 (January 1987)' in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 323.

[28] Places in-between can be traced back to the Old Testament through Erich Auerbach's work on representations of reality (mimesis) where he identifies two styles of literary representation: the Homeric and the Old Testament: 'The two styles, in their opposition, represent basic types: on the one hand [Odyssey] fully externalized description, uniform illumination, uninterrupted connection, free expression, all events in the foreground, displaying unmistakable meanings, few elements of historical development and of psychological perspective; on the other hand [Old Testament], certain parts brought into high relief, others left obscure, abruptness, suggestive influence of the unexpressed, "background" quality, multiplicity of meanings and the need for interpretation, universal-historical claims, development of the concept of the historically becoming, and preoccupation with the problematic.' See, Eric Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature (Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in Der Abendländischen Literatur* [1946]), trans. Willard Ropes Trask, Princeton, NJ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003, p. 23.

[29] I am using *scripted journeys* in a similar way to Norman Klein's scripted spaces: 'scripted spaces are a walk-through or click-through environment (a mall, a church, a casino, a theme park, a computer game). They are designed to *emphasise* the viewer's journey – the space between –rather than the gimmicks on the wall. The audience walks into the story.' Norman M. Klein, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects*, New York; London: The New Press, 2004, pp. 10–12. Although the principle is similar (the use of special effects, which I refer to as formalist devices, to script an experience) there is a small distinction in that *scripted spaces* are designed to reaffirm a notion of a self while *scripted journeys* are designed to disrupt a notion of a self.

Flour Arrangements (1966)[30] is of significant importance in understanding Nauman's early journeys and the use of travelling in the development of the interfaces, as he says: 'I suppose it was a way of testing yourself to find out if you are really a professional artist. That's something I was thinking about at the time.'[31] The interface is materialised in seven colour photographs but I am more interested in Nauman's journey than in the resulting photographs. Nauman was testing himself in his studio for a month, as he describes:

> I did those to see what would happen in an unfamiliar situation. I took everything out of my studio so that *Flour Arrangements* became an activity which I could do every day, and it was all I would allow myself to do for about a month. Sometimes it got pretty hard to think of different things to do every day.[32]

The pacing or performance of tasks in the studio implies an experience of physical movement but of most importance is the resulting experience of alterity derived from the self-imposed constrains that can be understood as formalist devices, as noted by the artist Bridget Riley: 'My own work is so different from Nauman's that any form of recognition was a surprise, and yet in many pieces he was using formalist devices which were familiar to me.'[33] Nauman's activities in the studio revolved around a confrontation between a self and the crossing of the frontiers to reach a foreigner, but

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[30] 'Over the course of a month, Nauman intermittently modelled a large pile of flour into different shapes. Besides carrying the precariousness of the sculptures in fibreglass and other materials to a new extreme, the work involved a refusal to construct static objects, replacing them with the more abstract, residual possibility of documenting the various phases of the work in photographs.' in Marco De Michelis, 'Spaces', Basualdo, Carlos, Nauman, Bruce and Taylor, Michael R. (eds), *Bruce Nauman: Topological Gardens*, Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2009, pp. 65–84.

[31] Willoughby Sharp, 'Nauman interview, 1970', *Please Pay Attention Please*, pp. 111–130.

[32] Sharp, 'Nauman interview, 1970', pp. 111–130.

[33] Bridget Riley and Robert Kudielka, *The Eye's Mind: Bridget Riley Collected Writings 1965–1999*, London; Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 212.

that is a methodological approach. That is, the stranger is activated, as a consequence of a practice that promotes the illusion of contradictions and the illusion of repetition, which should be understood as formalist devices, and again Riley's words are useful:

> This led me to a deeper involvement with the structure of contradiction and paradox in my more recent work. These relationships in visual terms concern such things as fast and slow movements, warm and cold colour, focal and open space, repetition *opposed* to 'event', repetition as 'event', increase and decrease, static and active, black opposed to white, greys as sequences harmonising these polarities.[34]

The similarities between the *Studio Films* and the *Flour Arrangements* are strong even if in the latter the interface is materialised as film and in the former as photographs. In *Studio Films* the use of the body as a mechanism for travelling is more evident and further explored as both the subject and object of the work. That is, Nauman uses his body in the performance of specific routines (i.e. bouncing a ball or pacing around) to achieve an awareness of himself. Nauman says:

> The first time I really talked about body awareness to anyone was in the summer of 1968. Meredith Monk was in San Francisco. She had though about or seen some of my works and recognized it. An awareness of yourself comes from a certain amount of activity and you can't get it from just thinking about yourself. You do exercises, you have certain kinds of awareness that you don't have if you read books. So the films and some of the pieces that I did after that for videotapes were specifically about doing exercises in balance. I thought of them as dance problems without being a dancer, being interested in the kinds of tension that arise when you try to balance and can't. Or do something for a long time and get tired. In one of those first films, the violin film, I played the violin as long as I could. I don't know how to play the violin, so it was hard,

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[34] Riley and Kudielka, *The Eye's Mind*, p. 79.

playing on all four strings as fast as I could for as long as I could. I had ten minutes of film and ran about seven minutes of it before I got tired and had to stop and rest a little bit and then finish it.[35]

In a journal entry dated from 1970, Meredith Monk hints at the convergence between Riley's, Nauman's, and her own practice: 'Sometimes inconsistency is actually consistency. The product seems inconsistent but the approach is consistent. It is the conscious effort at inconsistency which is its consistency.'[36] That is, inconsistency is at the foundations of their practices; an experience of alterity or travelling to a place of inconsistency, which is a place in-between where a self and its foreigner meet and a dialectic of difference emerges.

In *Studio Films* the length of the film defines the duration of Nauman's journeys. Those journeys are an attempt at confronting and creating a sense of body awareness by reaching the limits of the knowledge (Nauman did not know how to play the violin) or the limits of concentration (pacing around). Those initial journeys can be defined as an attempt by Nauman to map alterity when compared with his later journeys where the observer is asked to have a different role in the development of the work of art. In the earlier works, the observer follows Nauman's journeys through his presence on the works of art. Nauman structures his first-person experience and presents it as third-person experience for the observer who will construct the work of art. In later works Nauman accepts and delivers a much stronger personal account of his journeys by not being present in the work, while revisiting his initial maps. Nauman's withdrawal from the work is a demand for the observer to take that role in the construction of the work,

[35] Sharp, 'Nauman interview, 1970', pp. 111–130.

[36] Meredith Monk, 'Journal Entry, January 1970', in Deborah Jowitt (ed.), *Meredith Monk*, Baltimore; London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997, p. 30.

which is a first-person methodology for the observer. As such, the earlier works (first journeys) were topographic investigations that will at a later stage be used by Nauman in the development and construction of second journeys, which are scripted journeys for the observers.[37]

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[37] My use of first-journey and second-journey reflect the propositions made by Maria Lindgren's PhD dissertation, in which a second journey designates 'a journey that uses a previous travel narrative as a "map" to follow'. Maria Lindgren, *The Second Journey: Travelling in Literary Footsteps*, published PhD Dissertation, University of Umea, 2000, p. 5.
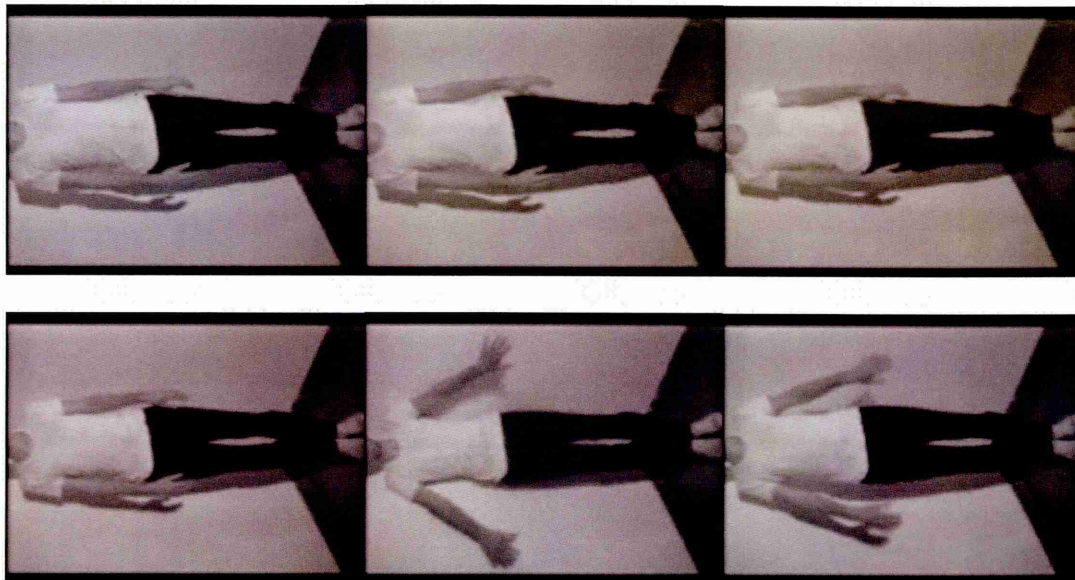
Figure 2 – Bruce Nauman, *Bouncing in the corner (Studio Films)*, 1968
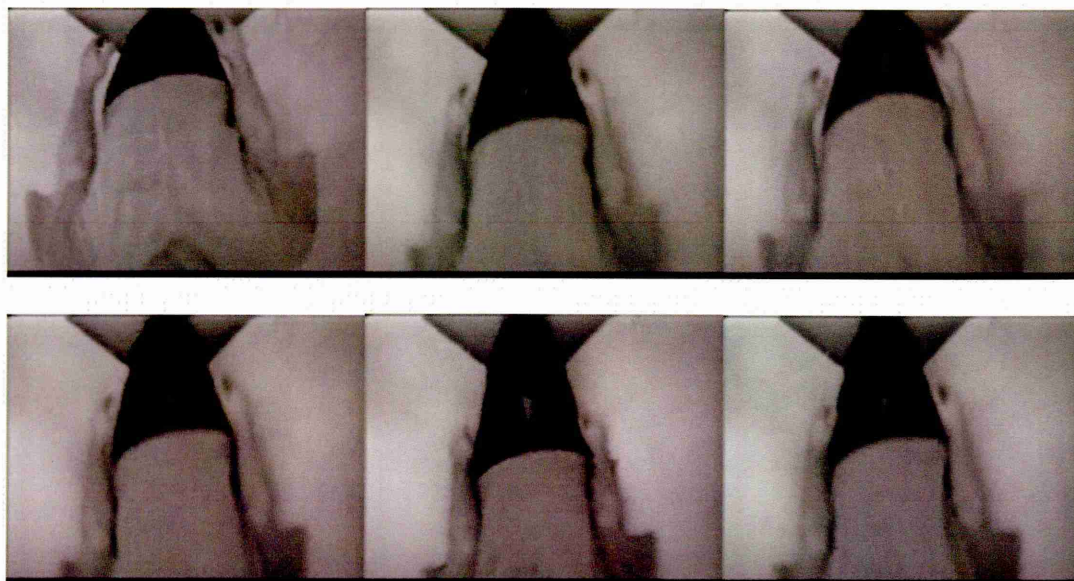
Figure 3 – Bruce Nauman, *Bouncing in the Corner #2 (Studio Films)*, 1968
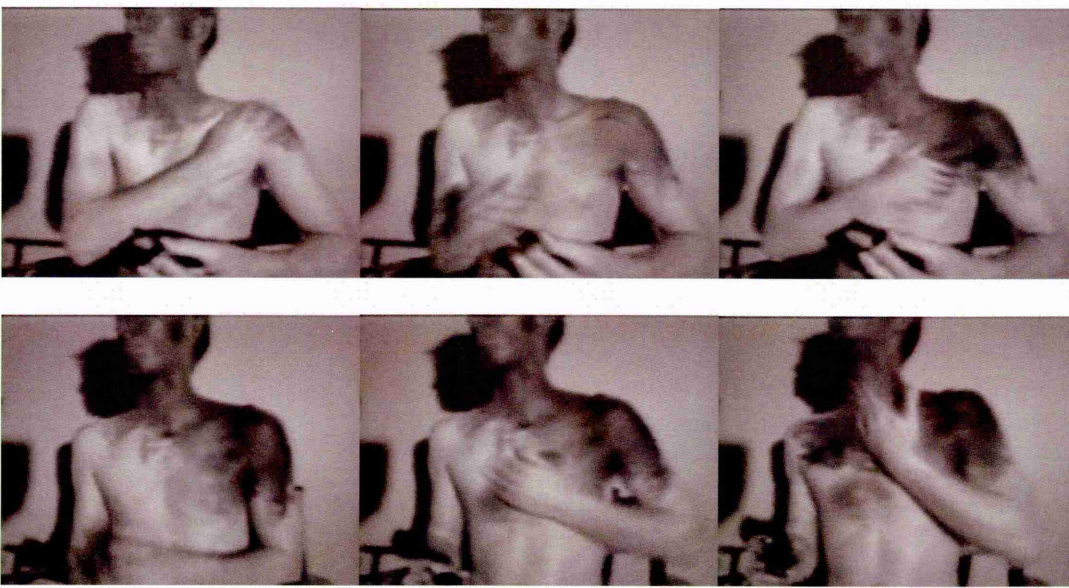
Figure 4 - Bruce Nauman, *Flesh to White to Black to Flesh (Studio Films)*, 1968
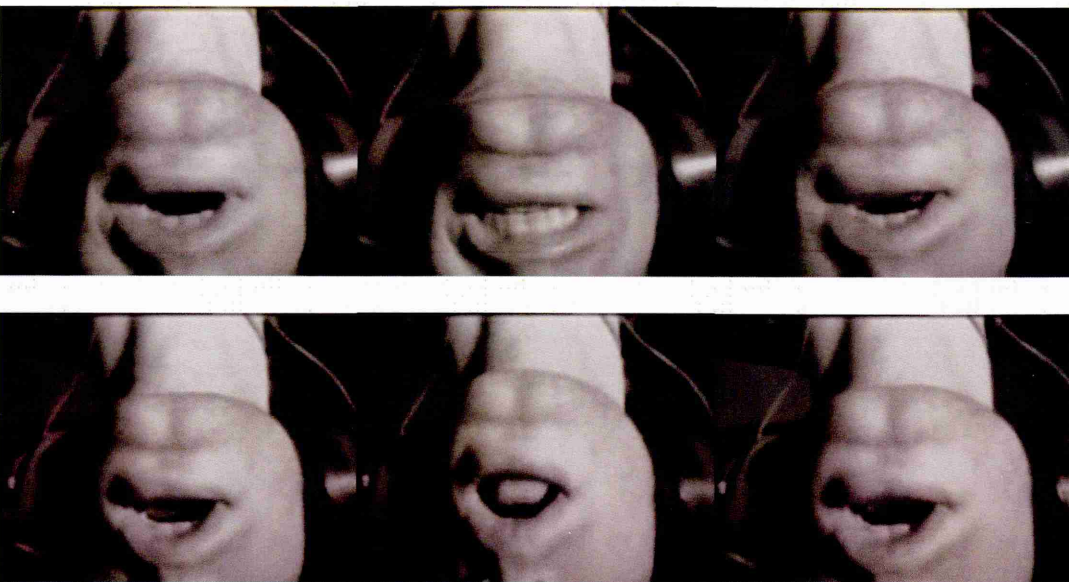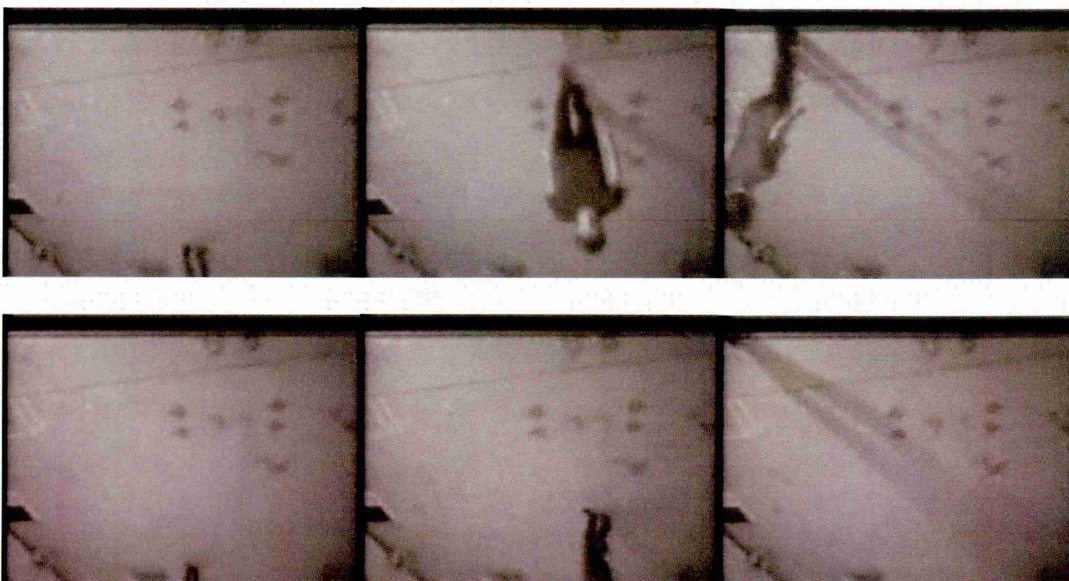

Figure 5 – Bruce Nauman, *Lip Sync (Studio Films)*, 1968

Figure 6 – Bruce Nauman, *Revolving upside down (Studio Films)*, 1968

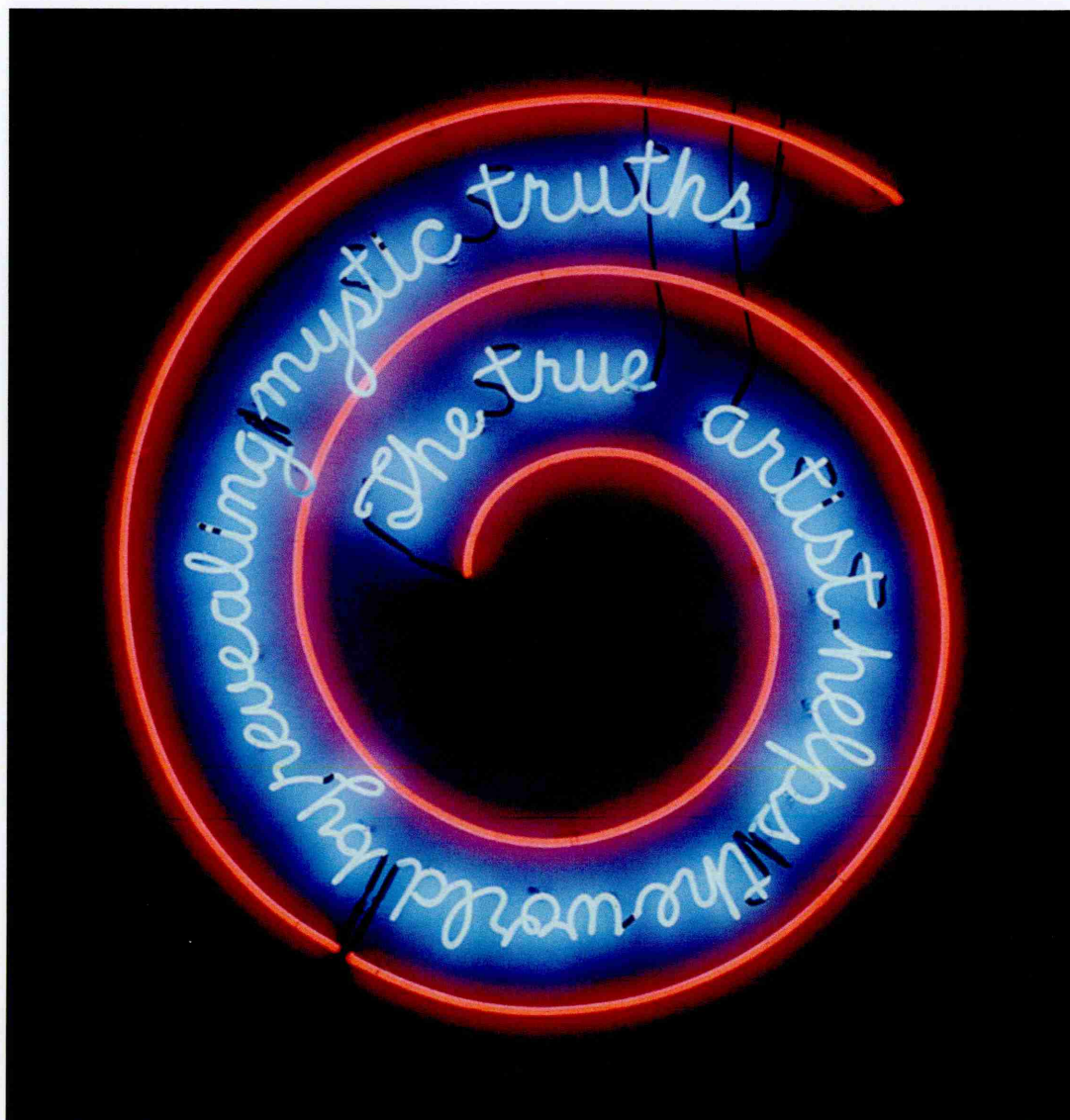**Figure 7** – Bruce Nauman, *Stamping in the studio (Studio Films)*, 1968

Figure 8 – Bruce Nauman, *Violin tuned D.E.A.D (Studio Films)*, 1968

Figure 9 – Bruce Nauman, *Wall / Floor Positions (Studio Films)*, 1968

Figure 10 – Bruce Nauman, *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths*,
1966.

2.3 Nauman's interfaces

In *Wax Mold of the Knees of Five Famous Artists* (1966), Bruce Nauman used fibreglass (not wax) and his own knees (not famous artists' knees) to have a large rectangular solid with marks on it.[1] Nauman recalls that when he was developing that work: 'I [Nauman] was interested in the idea of lying, or not telling the truth.'[2] In the last chapter I have addressed the concept of the interface – an object or situation where two or more subjects or systems meet and interact – and I also proposed that an interface is a juxtaposition of a message, noise, and interference. The message and the noise are the direct consequence of the artistic production but interference is an indirect consequence of the artist's production and as such I will not address it, even if it is a direct consequence of the relations between message, noise, context, and observer. *Wax Mold of the Knees of Five Famous Artists* deliberately proposes a contradiction between the title and the material employed, fibreglass is being used rather than wax as suggested in the title. The creation of a tension through the proposition of conflicting elements in the interface demonstrates noise in the interface. In this particular case, *Wax Mold of the Knees of Five Famous Artists*, the message is announced in the title while the noise rests in the fact that fibreglass and not wax was used and that the marks made from the knees are from Nauman and not famous artists. The importance of noise, as a constituting element of the interface and its deliberated and functional inclusion in the development of an interface is directly related to the creation of paradoxes. The title (message) tells me one thing while the object (noise) tells me another and I am left with a paradox: illusion of contradictions. The noise has a clear function in the development of the interface, which

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[1] Joe Raffaele and Elizabeth Baker, 'The Way Out West: Interviews with Four San Francisco Artists, 1967 (Fall 1966), in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 100–109. The interview took place in 1966 (Fall) and it was first published in ARTnews 66 (Summer 1967).

[2] Michele De Angelus, 'Interview With Bruce Nauman, May 27 and 30, 1980', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 197–250.

is to emphasise the paradox. Noise cannot be eliminated but it can be played down and disguised or it can be promoted and explored, which in turn results in a visible presence and recognition of paradoxes in the interface. Paradoxes are a requirement for interfaces that engage in self-reflection; thus, the use and exploration of noise in the interface is a requirement for such interfaces. Also, it can be argued that the function of noise in the interface is to humanise the interface through the creation of contradictory patterns that consequently will allow for a higher level of empathy by an observer.

As I have argued, contradictions are an ontological requirement even when we are not paying attention to them. Nauman's work focuses my attention on that ontological fact by presenting various possibilities for the experience of contradictions, exploring what Mikhail Bakhtin refers as polyphony.[3] Nevertheless, and of most importance, Nauman's work does more than just presenting various perspectives, it draws attention to the process of dealing with those contradictory patterns and to the mechanics of attention that an observer develops while engaging with an interface. Attention to the mechanics of an interface is something that can only be developed by an observer and in relation to his/her own process of paying attention. That is, the mechanics of attention is deeply rooted in the observer's subjectivity. The interface functions as a prop for an observer to catch him–herself in the process of paying attention. In the same way as Nauman's early performances required a formalist device in the form of tasks or corridors that allowed Nauman's travelling. Now, Nauman presents his work as the prop itself and steps aside to allow the observer to take his place in that relation with the interface. Marcia Tucker writes:

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[3] For the relation between Mikhail Bhaktin and Bruce Nauman work, see: Janet Kraynak, 'Bruce Nauman's words', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, pp. 1–45.

Nauman carefully constructs his pieces to create a specific physical situation. Although he is no longer interested in ways of making art nor in the 'interpretation' of a made object, he feels it is still important that a piece be neither over- nor under-refined. In this way focus can be directed to the experience and our response to it, rather than to the object itself.[4]

In 1968 Nauman's work underwent a transformation. While working on one of his performance pieces, Nauman started to emphasise the experience of the observer as consistently opposed to his own experience, which was the focus of his early work when he was performing (either live or for the camera). The transformation develops from these early investigations where Nauman's first-person methodologies were crucial for an understanding of the questions that he was addressing (what it means to be an artist) to a new position where Nauman establishes the conditions for the observer's engagement and experiences. Nauman gives up the role of a performer that is represented in the interface to promote an experiential construction of the works of art by the observers. Nauman, acknowledges the importance of his role as an artist when constructing an interface and the role of the observer when constructing the work of art.

The transformation articulated in Nauman's work allows me to present an interesting parallel between his practice and the domain of literature. According to Blanton 'travel books are "about" the interplay between observer and observed, between a travellers own philosophical biases and preconceptions and the test of those ideas and prejudices as a result of a journey'.[5] The proposition is that Nauman can be understood as a traveller recounting his journeys. In the earlier works he recounts things from the point of view of a traveller involved in the journey while realising that he no longer will be

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[4] Tucker, 'PheNAUMANology' in *Bruce Nauman*, p. 22.

[5] Blanton, *Travel Writing*, p. 5.

allowed to repeat that same journey. In the works after the corridor series Nauman starts to embrace his condition of a traveller writer, of someone that experienced alterity and it is creating the conditions in the form of an interface for other people to experience a similar journey. The shift that occurred is a move from Nauman's phenomenological experience to the process of experiencing; it is a move from an epistemological perspective to an ontological investigation. Nauman is no longer interested in the importance of paying attention but he is highly interested in the process of paying attention. In the early works Nauman was narrating journeys while after the transformation and developing with the corridors he is scripting journeys for experiences to emerge in whoever engages with the new work. The use of a first-person methodology is still present in the development of the interfaces but while before Nauman documented his journey, now, he his exploring his journey to script places in-between for the observers.

While working on *Walk with Contrapposto* (1968) Nauman constructed a long white corridor that was used as a formalist device, a prop.[6] The structure was left in the studio up to the point of the exhibition curated by Marcia Tucker in the Whitney Museum (Anti-illusion: Procedures and Materials)[7] and as Nauman recalls: 'I remember that it wasn't very big – I can remember some bigger ones. I finally just decided it was fine the way it was, it didn't need the performance.'[8] The transformation that took place can be

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[6] Bruce Nauman, *Walk with Contrapposto*, 1968. Videotape, black and white, sound. 60 minutes to be repeated continuously. 'Nauman focuses his video camera down the length of a long, twenty-inch-wide corridor, which he built in his Southampton studio expressly as a prop for this videotape. With his hands clasped behind his neck and swinging his hips, he animates a classic contrapposto pose as he walks up and down the length of the corridor.' Joan Simon (ed.) *Bruce Nauman: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné*, Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1994, p. 230.

[7] A group exhibition curated by Marcia Tucker and James Monte, held at the Whitney Museum in 1969.

[8] De Angelus, 'Interview With Bruce Nauman, May 27 and 30, 1980', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, pp. 197–295.

explained through Nauman's assimilation of his experiences of alterity. That is, the journeys to which Nauman previously submitted himself became the raw material for the work that will follow, the corridor series. The new work removes the emphasis from the artist's experiencing alterity to emphasize the observer's experience of alterity, which can be understood as the outcome of Nauman's assimilation of his own experience while making the performance pieces. The new interfaces are constructed to engineer the possibility of alterity during the formation of work of art. Nauman says:

> I began to think about how you relate to a particular place, which I was doing by pacing around. That was an activity which took place in the studio, and then I began thinking about how to present this without making a performance, so that somebody else would have the same experience, instead of just having to watch me have the experience.[9]

In an article from 1970, Marcia Tucker writes of Nauman's work as an evolution 'from the making of objects and recording activities, to his present concern with manipulation of phenomena'.[10] Noë's proposition is anticipated: 'the artist, then, is a kind of *experience engineer*'.[11] As Tucker writes in that article, Nauman's work went through an evolution from when he was placing his body in the role of the observer (i.e. casting his body or filming himself) to his later work (corridors) where the embodied presence of the observer is a crucial requirement to realise the work of art. Bruce Nauman's work intent 'is realised only through the physical involvement of the spectator',[12] that is to say that an interface created by Nauman can only be realised as the work of art through the observer's engagement with the interface or, as described by Kraynak:

[9] Lorraine Sciarra, 'Bruce Nauman, January, 1972', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, pp. 155–171.

[10] Marcia Tucker, 'PheNAUMANology' in *Bruce Nauman*, Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, p. 22.

[11] Alva Noë, *Art as Enaction*, Interdiscipline Online Symposium on Art and Cognition. Online, 28/05/2009, http://www.interdisciplines.org/artcog/papers/8

[12] Tucker, 'Phenaumannology' in *Bruce Nauman*, p. 22.

Get Out of My Mind Get Out of This Room is one of a series of hybrid architectural works Nauman produced in the late sixties and early seventies. In these environmental sculptures, sound, light, and video imagery are variously incorporated, yielding mediated spaces in which the viewer is made to perform a range of sensory tasks: moving, viewing, listening, and so on. In so doing, processes of perception – visual, physiological, and physical – are heightened, and the distinction between seeing with the eyes and experienced with the body is collapsed. As such, Get Out might aptly be described an experiential sculpture, one which furthers the minimalist engagement with the operations of sense perception.[13]

Although it is possible to trace elements in Nauman's earlier work the corridors series is the first materialisation and acknowledgement of the importance of spaces in-between. The corridors are formed of two sides that enclose while at the same time promote movement between its walls. A corridor is a place of passage between one side and another. In Nauman's corridors there is normally an entrance, which also functions as an exit from that space in-between. One enters to be able to leave after one encounters the stranger.[14]

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[13] Janet Kraynak, 'Bruce Nauman's words', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 1. For an articulation of this particular work in relation to Lacan's *extimité*, see: Charles Stankievech, 'Headphones, *Epoche*, and *L'extimité*: a Phenomenology of Interiority', *Offscreen*, 11, (8-9, 2007), pp. 1–11.

[14] 'The various restrictions on the spectators' interpretive frameworks must be weight against the space of freedom in the spectators' conscious engagement that enables them to subvert the ideological framework by liberating, what Bergson called, the spiritual dimension. In this sense, the spectators are situated in a special condition, where the conscious engagement with their "perceptual apparatus" evokes, provokes and facilitates an engagement with the dimension of "spirit" – which for Bergson comprised the entirety of all conscious states, including the virtual realm of past memories with the potential to actualise in the present. Consequently the cinema in this way can be re-interpreted not merely as an epistemological interface of an establishment of meaning creation, but also as a vehicle that facilitates an amplification of "spiritual" (mental) experiences, which in a Bergsonian sense need to be understood in a rather political sense as means for action.' Martha Blassingg, *Time, Memory, Consciousness and the Cinema Experience;Rrevised Ideas on Matter and Spirit*, Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009, p. 204.

Double Steel Cage Piece (1974) is the most straightforward materialisation of spaces in-between in Nauman's work: the piece comprises a steel cage inside another steel cage with a door. I entered through the door in the first cage and suddenly I found myself trapped between cages. That is, although I had entered the cage there was an overwhelming feeling of knowing and feeling another cage beyond that, which reinforced the feeling of being trapped between two cages, instead of being trapped in one or two cages. The interface built by Nauman proposes a clear space in-between that is defined by its borders (the two cages) but that is a space that only comes alive when an observer enters it, experiences its borders and feels that space with his/her expectations to create a *place in-between*. The only thing to experience in such a place (besides the borders or limits that Nauman proposes) is an experience of ourselves; a self-reflective experience. Nauman creates a paradox, which in this case is defined by the movement generated by the conflicting cages, but a paradox is a space of negotiation, a space of awareness and reflection that in turn creates something else.[15] The force and power of the paradox exists in the process that culminates in the understanding that what was being experienced is an illusion of contradictions. What I experienced is a consequence of understanding otherness as being multiple and not singular. The self is then defined by two (or more) borders, and not by one border (cage), which contributes to a sense of displacement that results from a continuous rebound between frontiers. Thus time is included in the equation, to define the self, and the effect created by a border (experience of otherness or frontier) sends me to the other border, which in turn sends me to the first one. Curiously, the time spent bouncing between frontiers is longer than

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[15] '[Henri] Bergson, [Étienne-Jules] Marey and [Aby] Warburg all identified the perception of movement at the fringes of the spectrum of the capacities of the human sensory perception. This is particularly evident in their preoccupation with time and space, especially the (smallest) intervals, (greatest) intensities and the significance of the dimensions beyond the directly perceivable by the sensory apparatus.' Blassingg, *Time, Memory, Consciousness and the Cinema Experience*, p. 25.

the encounter with those extreme limits, which is the effect and power of a place in-between: a reflective place between encounters. In those places, I am either experiencing bouncing between its limits or acknowledging that bouncing is a state of being, which will dismiss the effect that a new encounter can have because it transforms the limits (otherness) in a requirement to be able to bounce back to the process of constructing meaning and accept the self as a bouncing agency.

The experience of centrality is always a memory and an expectation but never a state of being when understood in relation to its limits. An experience of centrality can only be obtained through an acknowledgement that bouncing between extremes is part of that centrality. That is, paying attention to the centre contributes to emphasise a notion of otherness as opposing and contrasting elements in the definition of a self. On the other hand, paying attention to bouncing between extremes brings the frontiers to the centre; it expands the notion of self to the whole space between those borders because it acknowledges *movement* rather than diluting or decentring a notion of a self. A place in-between allows for that mobility but it is dependent on the observer and on the interface as a prop to generate movement.

A distinction between spaces in-between and times in-between is required, although they tend to come together and there is an inevitable complementary and conflicting relation between both spaces and times in-between. That relation is defined by the experience of space and/or time, whichever is the stronger. In time-based mediums the emphasis is on time while in two-dimensional mediums the emphasis is on space, and in three-dimensional work they are juxtaposed. The experience of conflicting borders in *spaces in-between* can be experienced and identified more clearly in two-dimensional works while *times in-between* tend to be revealed in the illusions of repetition that time-based work and three-dimensional work can provide. If spaces in-between can be

understood as the place generated by conflicting semiotic signs than times in-between can be understood as a place generated by the repetition of the encounters with conflicting signs, which in turn result in the creation of such places of reflection.

In *Vices and Virtues,* which is described in detail below, there are fourteen neon words (Lust/Faith, Envy/Hope, Sloth/Charity, Pride/Prudence, Avarice/Justice, Gluttony/Temperance, Anger/Fortitude) that are turned on and off according to a script that emphasises either the *Vices* or the *Virtues* and a relation. It becomes impossible to attend to one without attending to the others. The relation between the contradictory elements is emphasised alongside the poles themselves, allowing for the co-existence of the vices and the virtues and the relations between them.

Figure 12 – Bruce Nauman, *Walk with Contrapposto*, 1968.
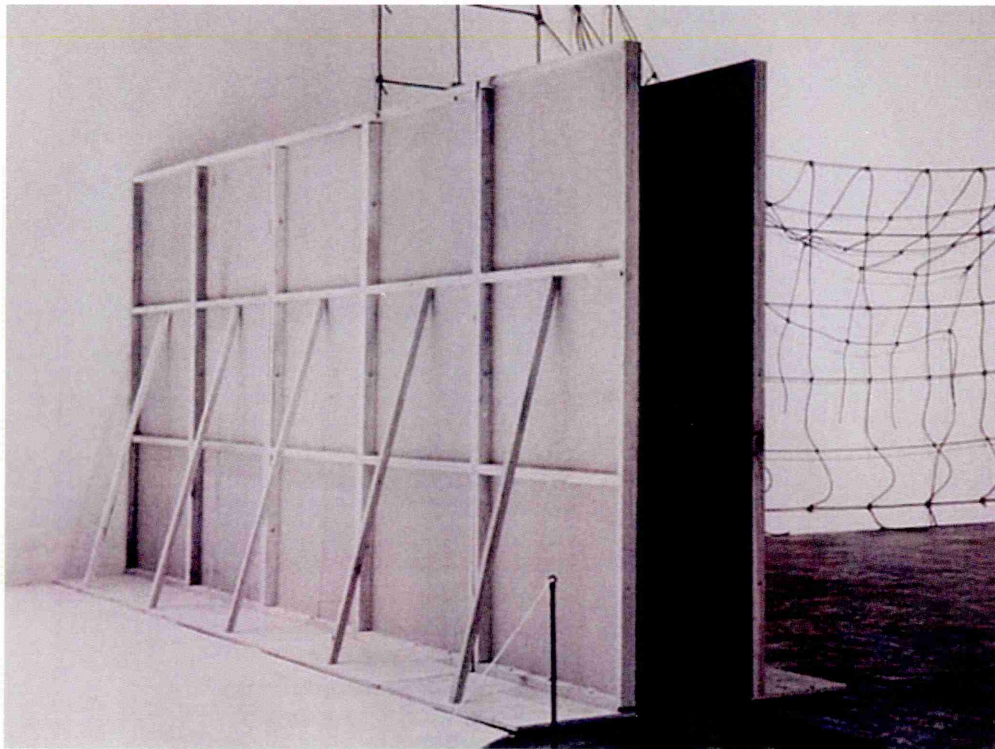
Figure 13 – Bruce Nauman, *Performance Corridor*, installation view at the Whitney Museum, 1969.

Figure 14 – Bruce Nauman, *Double Steel Cage Piece*, 1974.

Figure 15 – Bruce Nauman, *Green Light Corridor*, 1970.

Figure 16 – Bruce Nauman, *Corridor Installation*, 1970.

2.4 Travelling with attention

A visit to Bruce Nauman's *Vices and Virtues* in San Diego was a particular exciting moment for my research. The visit was preceded by a tour of the University of California, San Diego, where the work is on display on the top of the Charles Lee Powell Structural Systems Laboratory,[1] and it is part of the Stuart Collection.[2] In Nauman's catalogue *raisonné*, the work is referenced as entry 395 and described as follows:

> Commissioned in 1983 and completed in October 1988, this work presents on a monumental scale the superimpositions of seven virtues and seven deadly sins that were explored in earlier neon and granite version (318 and 326, respectively, made between the project's inception and completion with the approval of the Stuart Collection). Nearly a mile of neon tubing creates the seven sets of seven-foot-high words that are mounted around the upper perimeter of the Charles Lee Powell Structural Systems Laboratory at the University of California, San Diego. The letters are mounted over the windows on an aluminium support grid that fastens onto the existing mullions and can

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[1] *Vices and Virtues* was initially proposed for the Mandel Weiss Theatre located in the UCSD campus but after various problems it was installed in the Charles Lee Powell Structural Systems Laboratory building, see: Mary Livingston Beebe, et al., *Landmarks: Sculptural Commissions for the Stuart Collection at the University of California, San Diego*, New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2001, pp. 130-135. Bruce Nauman in an interview with Joan Simon explained it: '[The reason for it being on the theatre?] It was about human attributes that actors would have to deal with. It had a kind of theatrical function. But it didn't have a reason to be on the lab building, other than the fact that it was the only building where anybody wanted it and it could fit. There were a lot of politics that went on, and the thing about Mary [Livingston Beebe] was – at a certain point, in my experience with anybody else they would have given up. But she just kept going. Once she wants to do something it's hard to stop her', in Beebe, et al., *Landmarks*, p. 137.

[2] The Stuart collections aims at offering artists the possibility of choosing a site that would inspire their work while providing the conditions for its realization and maintenance. The artists in the collection are: Niki de Saint Phalle, Robert Irwin, Richard Fleischner, Terry Allen, Nam June Paik, Ian Hamilton Finlay, Bruce Nauman, William Wegman, Jackie Ferrara, Michael Asher, Alexis Smith, Jenny Holzer, Elizabeth Murray, Kiki Smith, John Baldessari. See: James Stuart Desilva, *Founder's Statement*, in Beebe, et al., *Landmarks*, pp. 8-11.

thus be seen from the inside as well as the outside of the building. The seven vices (in italic) layered over seven virtues (roman) – LUST/FAITH, ENVY/HOPE, SLOTH/CHARITY, AVARICE/PRUDENCE, GLUTTONY/TEMPERANCE, PRIDE/PRUDENCE, ANGER/FORTITUDE – are each composed of two colors of neon (emerald, turquoise, pink, peach, coral, yellow, red, sky blue, fuchsia, orange, and light green). A computerized sequencing scheme that illuminates the virtues sequentially in one direction around the building and the vices sequentially in the other direction results in a dense pattern of overlapping flashes. (The virtues flash clockwise for three seconds each, with the cycle beginning again every seven seconds, while the vices flash counter-clockwise for two-and-a-half seconds each, with a new cycle beginning again every six seconds.) At two-and-a-half-minute intervals all seven virtues – or all seven vices- flash simultaneously for ten seconds. The is illuminated from dusk until 11 pm daily. (...) Nauman had the idea of wrapping a neon band of words around a building in 1972, when he proposed that the text of 218 [*La Brea/ Art Tips/ Rat Tips/ Tar Pits* (1972)] be mounted on the exterior of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. See also 299 [*Violins Violence Silence (Exterior Version)* (1981-1982)].[3]

The work identifies and proposes two opposite and contradictory poles (vices and virtues) to establish a duality but that duality is confined to the title of the work.[4] The

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[3] Neal David Benezra, Kathy Halbreich and Joan Simon, *Bruce Nauman: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné,* Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1994, p. 312.

[4] Bruce Nauman in an interview with Joan Simon explains the process of choosing the vices and virtues: 'We got a graduate student to do research, because when I started thinking about the seven vices and seven virtues, I thought, it's got to be written down somewhere exactly what they are, probably in the Bible. But it's not, at least not in that form. There are places where you can find a list of vices and virtues, but they're not even called that. They're all kind of different. The earliest written stuff is probably Jewish, at least the ones we could find. So there are lists like that, but they don't necessarily follow the ones that we think of. [How did you finally pick the ones for your project?] Well, we kind of did what seemed to be the more modern amalgamation. Maybe Mary [Livingston Beebe] still has some files that show how we finally got a list. The other thing we tried to find – because I thought, well, green is envy, everybody knows that one – was that maybe someplace, maybe during the Middle Ages, there would have been some kind of codification of the colors with the various vices and virtues. There didn't seem to be any list

work itself presents much more; *Vices and Virtues* suggest a polyphony of complex synthesis between the elements of the conceptual and linguistic duality proposed in the title, which are the result of an acknowledgement of spaces in-between. Nauman's title proposes a duality between vices and virtues. There is no explanation or specification of what the vices or the virtues are, and there is no specification as to whom those vices or virtues belong. I suggest that Nauman is assuming the role of the true artist who is helping university students by revealing a mystic truth through the presentation of the places in-between created by the extremes of a moral code (vices and virtues), shining on the top of a building in the middle of campus.[5] Please pay attention.

Now, an interesting thing is that while Nauman emphasises a duality in the title that duality is non-existent in the interface. It is impossible to read the two words of a pair (one vice and one virtue) at the same time. It is possible to see both words at the same time but they are juxtaposed, which denies the duality proposed in the title. Nauman has told me many times to pay attention and in this case I paid attention to the fact that the duality is only present in the title, in language. In the interface it is non-existence, only spaces in-between. The vices give place to virtues and occasionally they come together as an indecipherable whole. Every two-and-half minutes Nauman focuses my attention on the juxtaposition of vices and virtues, in the spaces in-between a vice and a virtue, in the relation that language cannot provide but only allude to. The existing spaces in-between each of the polarities (vices and virtues) is acknowledged while revealing its extremities but towards a centre, which is proposed through a co-existence of the opposing forces. Nauman's propositions point to the juxtaposition of a thesis and antithesis to define the synthesis but not as the limits of that synthesis. The spaces in-

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of those things either, except for a couple; I thought that's got to be there, that sort of medieval iconography, but it's not. I used associations where I could find them, but otherwise they're kind of arbitrary.' in Beebe, et al., *Landmarks*, p. 138.

[5] *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths (Window or Wall Sign)*, 1966.

between that Nauman creates are unstable spaces for self-reflection and the construction of meaning, not dictators of meaning. The decisions are not represented or hinted at; the decision-making process is forced upon the observer. The observer is pushed to a *no man's land,* which is always beyond a border and behind another border and conditioned by where attention is being focused, and the movement contingent to the mechanics of that process emerges as fundamental. The notion of recurrence in the experience of *Vices and Virtues* is highly relevant and in a similar fashion as in spaces in-between, created by the illusion of a duality (dialectic between the meaning of vices and virtues), it is possible to talk about a notion of a time in-between. A space and a time in-between define a *place in-between*, which is a place where observers may catch themselves paying attention and consequently engage with the mechanics of attention.
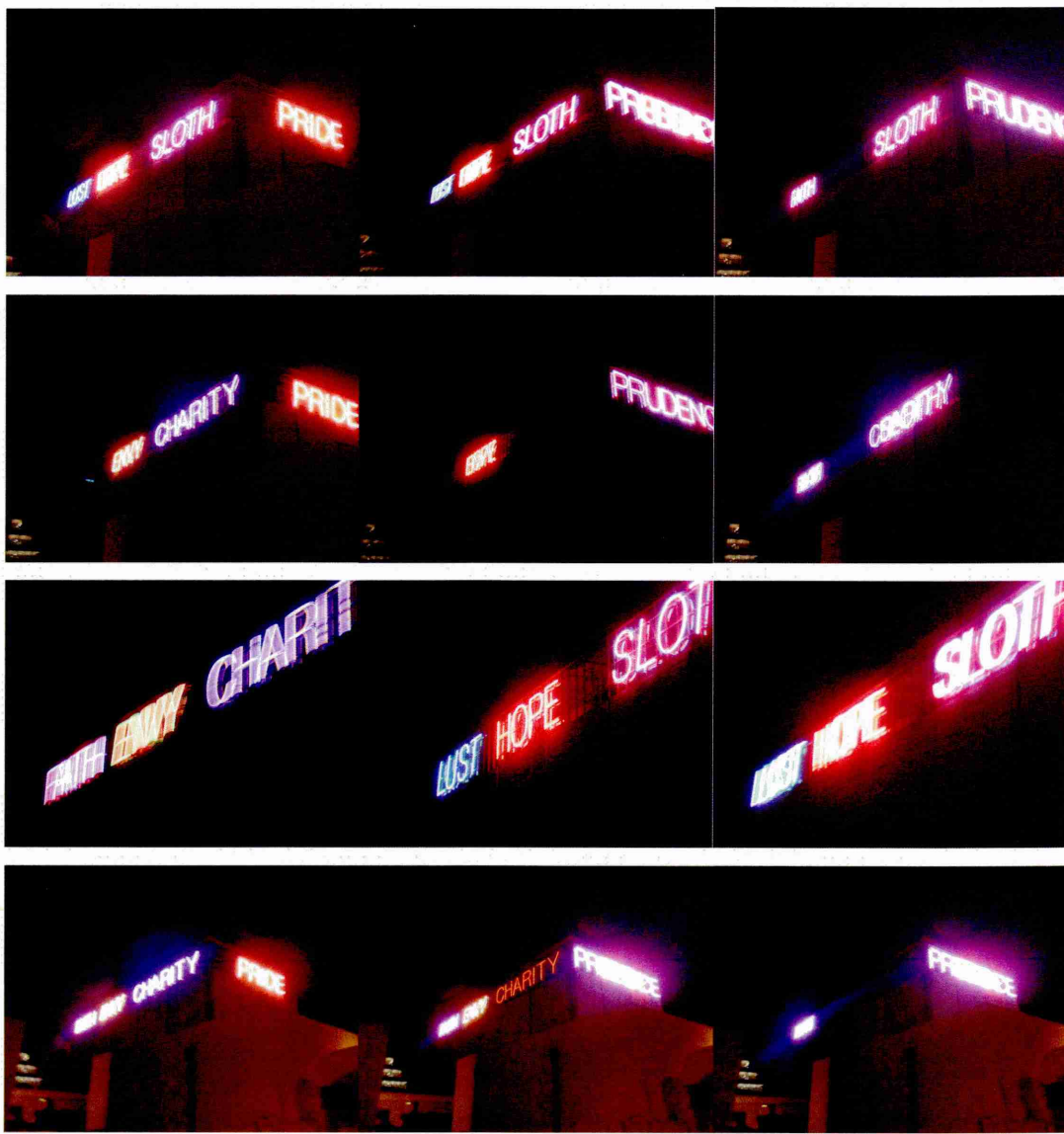
Figure 17 – Bruce Nauman, *Vices and Virtues*, 1988.

2.5 Conclusions

I have proposed a particular articulation of Bruce Nauman's practice, which may understood as: Nauman explores formalist devices in the scripting of journeys to places in-between to promote a second journey in an observer – an experience of alterity, which will create the conditions for self-reflection. The diversity of Nauman's practice is particular relevant because it is medium independent, thus suggesting that the proposed model of an interface that engages in self-reflection is also independent of the devices used in the production of an interface; they should be understood as formalist devices – tools – and promoters of paradoxes, which are the engine for Nauman's journeys in the studio – first journey to a place in-between, and the resulting journeys to an observer – second journeys to a place in-between. Nevertheless, there is one particular thing that Nauman taught me while I was chasing him for an interview, the mechanics of attention can easily be confused with attention itself. Consequently that proposition should be considered as a symptom of something else; movement. Nauman is creating movement in the interface through the exploration of a dialectic of difference to promote the observer's movement in the construction of the work of art and a new experience of alterity. In the chapter that follows I will address this consideration in more detail through my own practice and the movement implicit in it.

3.1 Noise

In July 2007 a smoking ban came to effect in the UK and I left for Berlin, and for whatever reason I recovered an old habit from my undergraduate days in London, that of visiting DIY warehouses as one would visit a gallery or a museum. I get excited with the possibilities that an object on a shelf combined with other objects on other shelves allow, particularly because those objects incorporate a universal language that is not significantly dependent on their locations, allowing for a cultural identity that ignores that I do not speak German. According to Hamid Naficy there is a particular kind of cinema that he calls 'Accented Cinema', which proposes that these kind of films share two main features: authorship and the autobiographic presence of their filmmakers (in the films) and a particular style that is conditioned by the modes of production associated with the displacement of the filmmakers.[1] Accented cinema pays attention to the lives of their filmmakers and is contingent upon their production modes and cultural displacement in an embodied relation with the world,[2] which might also be called a

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[1] 'Accented filmmakers are not just textual structures or fictions within their films; they also are empirical subjects, situated in the interstices of cultures and film practices, who exist outside and prior to their films.' See: Hamid Naficy, *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 4. The style of accented cinema is characterised as being: 'open-form and closed-form visual style; fragmented, multilingual, epistolary, self-reflexive, and critically juxtaposed narrative structure; amphibolic, doubled, crossed, and lost characters; subject matters and themes that involve journeying, historicity, identity, and displacement; dysphoric, euphoric, nostalgic, synaesthetic, liminal, and politicized structures of feeling; interstitial and collective modes of production; and inscription of the biographical, social, and cinematic (dis)location of the filmmakers.'

[2] Peter Osborne suggests that the transmutation of exile in art can be a valuable source of cultural form but Osborne does it through a particular view on the facts of exile that I strongly disagree: 'the negation and hunger of exile'; from my experience in Berlin, the majority of artists are voluntary in exile and enjoy conditions to live that, unfortunately, the majority of economic exiles can only dream about, which is similar to what Peter Wollen calls the *Cosmopolitan Ideal* (see: Peter Wollen, 'The Cosmopolitan Ideal in the

cinema of mobility, if following Tim Cresswell's notion of mobility that results from socially produced motion and dependent on three relational moments that should not be addressed independently: an empirical reality; representation of that empirical reality and resulting meanings; an ontological embodied experience with the world.[3]

[Jump cut and point of view of a spectator in a tennis match and a voice over]

I love to watch tennis matches but after a while my neck starts hurting but those are the contingencies of the game. The ball needs to move from one side of the court to the other while crossing the net or the game will be over. The game seems to be contingent to the movement of the ball.[4]

[Cut back to your point of view][5]

The *movement* (of the tennis ball) implicit and contingent to the existence of the game is, at least, as important as the players, the ball, the referee, the audience, the commentators, the means of mimesis of that game, and the statistics of that game. The features of accented cinema and the displacement implicit in exile and diaspora are a materialisation of mobility (making it visible by giving it a *corpus*) but ontological to the game; subjectivity will not exist without an implicit movement or change. Mobility

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Arts', in George Robertson et al. (eds), *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement*, London; New York: Routledge, 1994, pp. 187–196). See: Peter Osborne, *Travelling Light: Photography, Travel and Visual Culture*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp. 156–157.

[3] Cresswell, *On the Move*, p. 3.

[4] Michel Serres uses a basketball to explain the notion of a quasi-objects but the tennis ball is also a good example, even if Serres does not explicitly considers the movement of the quasi-object: 'This quasi-object that is a marker of the subject is an astonishing constructer of intersubjectivity. We know, through it, how and when we are subjects, when and how we are no longer subjects.' Serres, *The Parasite*, p. 227.

[5] The proposed jump cut was intentionally included as a demonstration of noise. The same point regarding the movement of the tennis ball can be argued in relation to the movement of the fluorescent lights malfunctioning. Various other jump cuts will take place during this chapter but without warning.

should not be ignored; if the ball does not move there is no game and without the game there are no players, no audience, no referee, no ball and no statistics nor commentators.[6] That is, the importance of the accented cinema for this project is that it gives a *corpus* to *mobility*,[7] making it visible and difficult to ignore in an understanding of a being in the world.

My long-term interest in fluorescent lights is primarily visual but also economic; I take pleasure in the bright light and sizes of fluorescent lights but also appreciate that they are widely available at a reasonable price. So I enjoy fluorescent lights, which I have bought in many different countries, but this time I was interested in making them malfunction. This time I was interested in giving a body to the movement of the lights. Before my arrival in Berlin, while in Sheffield, I was interested in the importance of featuring noise in the production of an interface, deliberately incorporating disturbances in its production and addressing its value in the creation of self-reflective experiences, but while in Berlin, and even more because I do not speak German, I experienced a particular form of noise – the inability to enact meaning from the speech act. I mastered German to the point of eliminating the accent while answering one question: 'Do you speak German?' and I would reply 'Nein' in such a convincing and assertive way that it would be understood as being affirmative and a very strange conversation would follow, but I never understood it. The condition of an artist with an accent – a culturally displaced person – implies an experience of alterity, which is also implicit in a notion of travelling to a place in-between and a requirement for the production of interfaces that engage in self-reflection. Although I cannot argue that the motif of this project is a

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[6] If I ignore the movement of the ball then I am left with its metanarratives. See note 228 and 241.

[7] My use of *mobility* derives from Tim Cresswell's work and should not be confused with the metanarratives of mobility; sedentarist metaphysics, which are rooted in language and social practice; or nomadic metaphysics, which can be understood as a form of imaginative neo-colonialism. See: Cresswell, *On the Move*, pp. 25–56.

precondition or a condition of my cultural displacement because they evolved together in an ontological reciprocity, I can argue that the conditions of a culturally displaced artist can be transmuted to the interface thus scripting journeys to a place in-between, which in turn can promote self-reflexivity. However an important point to retain is the requirement of movement in the process of scripting a journey to a place in-between, as Kristeva writes:

> Those who have never lost the slightest root seem to you unable to understand any word liable to temper their point of view. So, when one is oneself uprooted, what is the point of talking to those who think they have their own feet on their own soil? The ear is receptive to conflicts only if the body loses its footing.[8]

As suggest by Kristeva, *movement* is more visible in an uprooted experience but nevertheless ontological and an idiosyncrasy of being, and often ignored or made invisible by its symptoms (i.e. the accent, cultural displacement), which suggest its relevance for the creation of a dialetic of difference – travelling – through the acknowledgment of its importance in an empirical and embodied investigation, by moving and in movement.[9] That is, a first-person methodology should be used in the construction of the interface and understood as a script for a first-person methodology in the construction of the work of art.[10]

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[8] Kristeva, Strangers to Ourselves, p. 17.

[9] In her process notes on *Portable*, which curiously starts with a cross-country bus trip, Meredith Monk refers to it as transition; the process of making the transitions visible. ' I was thinking about material and ways of getting from piece of material to a piece of material. I called it transition, but I realized that getting from one movement to another is usually taken for granted or considered another movement ... I was interested in making the idea of transition a visual element, concretely.' Meredith Monk, ' Process notes on *Portable*, May 10, 1966', in Deborah Jowitt (ed.), *Meredith Monk*, Baltimore, MD; London: ohn Hopkins University Press, 1977, p. 18.

[10] For a discussion on the value of first-person methodologies in the study of consciousness, see: Francisco Varela and Jonathan Shear (eds.), *The View From Within; First-person Approaches to the Study of Consciousness,*

In Berlin there are all sorts of accents and I was one more. I was based in a flat that twenty years ago would have been on the other side of the wall but nowadays there is only one side and no wall.[11] My car looked at home; it was old and dirty, like many others. I spent my days walking, experimenting with fluorescent lights and writing; it was a lonely place. Late one night I went for a walk, on my way back just before crossing the river, I saw some people violently kicking a door. Normally I would have avoided them before they even spotted me but that time I was not paying much attention to the environment that surrounded me and I felt that my only option was to continue to walk past them. In a bad location and with a poor timing, I was walking in their direction and they were still kicking the door down but I continued to walk in their direction. They stopped and looked at me, and I looked at them. This lasted a few seconds, not long but it felt like a few minutes. During those few seconds each tried to understand who was the most unpredictable person but the doubt prevailed and we all continued on, arriving at a mutual and silent understanding between three foreigners and unpredictability, which in my case was the result of an inability to construct meaning from the situation, threatening or friendly; I did not enact noise from the interface and my message of walking home safely was not disturbed. Nevertheless, I reflected on the open question generated by the encounter; the possibility of a threatening situation was sufficient to enact noise.

Bowling Green, Ohio; Thorverton: Imprint Academic, 2000. This methodological approach can also be argued in relation to what Paul Crowther suggests as the three basic conditions of self-consciousness: attention, comprehension and projection. That is, attention to movement, comprehension of movement and projection of movement. See Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, p. 150.

[11] Mark Thompson's *House Divided* (1989) comes to mind, an installation with bees and prior to the fall of the wall when 'he used flower scavenging behaviours of bees as a method for inspecting the artificiality of human borders and political demarcations. The bees went into East Berlin and West Berlin freely in their search.' See Stephen Wilson, *Information Arts: Intersections of Art, Science, and Technology*, Cambridge, MA; MIT Press, 2002, p. 118.

During a visit to a DIY warehouse in Berlin, I come across a promotion of fluorescent lights and bought thirty in total. At the time, I had a strong interest in new technologies but when I started to think about preparing fluorescent lights to malfunction I had to undertake an intense period of research on electricity and lights. My knowledge was restricted to changing bulbs and turning on the light switch, and the information I could find was concerned with how to make the lights function properly and the process of finding the fluorescent lights' movement proved to be challenging. I started by thinking about using computers to control the lights – and consequently their behaviour – but after a few months it become clear that I would have to build special equipment and software to attain the desired behaviour. My intentions were to make the lights behave errantly,[12] giving a *corpus* to movement and destroying the duality of the normal behaviour (lights on or off). The erratic behaviour is similar to the behaviour caused by the exhaustion of the various elements that compose a fluorescent light.[13] These are lights that have served their purpose, waiting to be repaired or replaced, but even when they stop giving light they continue to hum away; refusing to die and holding to life. I wanted to recreate that holding to life without having to wait for the materials to get exhausted and after some considerable experimentation I found a way to make the lights malfunction by controlling the electric current that each light would receive by using dimmers, but it became clear that they were not reliable enough to sustain two to three weeks of continuous use without breaking down. So I contacted a specialist company to build an industrial dimmer but before it was completed I had to travel and I could not test it. I packed the car with the thirty fluorescent lights and drove south to Lisbon.

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[12] I would like to call your attention to the double meaning of erratic, which relates to error and to wander.

[13] An exhausted fluorescent light has a constant and unpredictable flicker (visual and sound), which I find considerably difficult to ignore and annoying.

Two days later, at the Swiss border all the cars went through but mine. I was told to step out of the car and sit on a bench while they searched everything (including the thirty fluorescent lights), opening every bag and every pocket. The glove compartment was locked and I was asked to open it and I explained that it was broken while suggesting that if they found a way to open it, I would be very grateful. Cognitive dissonance was written all over their faces.[14] Eventually they opened a small pocket in my camera bag and they looked at me with big smiles on their faces, which was not a good sign. One of them took a small piece of folded paper and asks me 'What is this?' I did not knew what it was and stared at it while he unfolded the paper. Eventually I remembered, the piece of paper had been in that bag for ten years and it contained four small pieces of dry fruit that were given to me by a gipsy woman in Chile for good luck after reading my palm. They looked confused but let me go; the noise in the interface was sufficient to create a paradox (their confusion) but the message remained visible and I was able to continue without further disruptions.

The first public presentation of the lights series was an interface called *Floating Souls* addressing the remaining memories of lost people in one's life. My particular proposition was that a light malfunctioning could suggest an experience of loss in a subject and the behaviour of the lights malfunctioning could articulate the experience of those memories (behaving errantly while fading). The proposal was for a site-specific installation in an old grain factory-turned-community centre in Barcelona. The remains

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[14] A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance was proposed in 1957 by Leon Festinger and its core can be summarised thus: '(1) There may exist dissonant or "nonfiting" relations among cognitive elements. (2) The existence of dissonance gives rise to pressures to reduce the dissonance and to avoid increases in dissonance. (3) Manifestations of the operation of these pressures include behaviour changes, changes of cognition, and circumspect exposure to new information and new opinions.' Leon Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957, p. 31.

of the old factory were still visible in the presence of the original machines, which in some cases could not be dissociated from the building itself; they were part of its structure. The area that I was allocated was a basement covered with black marble and with a wood machine running from the ceiling to the floor, which I had to work around. I noticed that the cables that I had previously used to wire the lights were too long and I had only a few hours left to complete the installation. The marble and the machine were off limits but no one said anything about wrapping the wood machine with the cables that led from the lights. I was pleased with my ability to work around the various problems but not with the work itself. The room overwhelmed the work and the message in the interface was annihilated by its noise. A few weeks later, I loaded the car with the lights leaving Barcelona for Sheffield where I would be presenting the second version of the light series: *Twenty Mistakes Make Me Wonder.*

Five hours after leaving Barcelona, while driving across the Basque country, I was stopped and searched twice in the same night by the Spanish police who held a gun to the windshield. They were waiting near a roundabout in a small village, then followed and stopped me. One hour later there was a second attempt by other police officers but with a similar *modus operandi,* I still had the documents in the passenger seat and immediately handed them over while complaining that it was the second time that I was stopped in that night. They loved it when I complained and they checked everything twice. The fact that I had already been stopped meant that I was guilty of something and it was up to them to accomplish what their colleagues had not managed. I complained harder and told them to radio central (film memories) to confirm my story but that was understood as a confession. Unloading the car twice in the same night is exasperating and I gave them the key and told them to have fun. It was three in the morning in the middle of the Pyrenees, there was a long drive ahead and I had a police officer unloading my car while the other was on the radio checking my story. Four

cigarettes later they loaded the car and apologised for the inconvenience. My story checked, I was good to go but before I did so, I asked them to radio their colleagues to let them know what was inside the car, in case someone else decided to stop me again. They seemed disturbed by the mismatch between their enaction of the situation (I was guilty) and the reality of the situation (I was innocent) that the noise created.

Twenty Mistakes Make Me Wonder was presented in the End Gallery, Sheffield Hallam University, in the form of twenty fluorescent lights, prepared to malfunction, vertically installed in twenty aluminium structures and displayed in a grid of four by five (each comprising a light and an aluminium structure).[15] At this time I was particularly interested in what Michel Serres writes about the importance of featuring noise in the interface, which suggests that a message cannot exist without noise and noise is determined in the production of an interface. This work had that in consideration but there was a lesson that I learned with the work *Floating Souls*: the message in the interface had to be visible for the noise to be valued. The use of fluorescent lights in a grid has an undeniable relation to the minimalist proposition and particularly with Dan Flavin's work and can be understood as the message in this interface while the noise is present in the malfunctioning lights and in the noticeable production traces in the aluminium structures. The light series proposed twenty fluorescent lights that malfunction individually but when brought together, the behaviour of the lights was understood (by the observers) as choreographed (by the artist) patterns of behaviour, therefore it can be argued that they were no longer malfunctioning (individually). I did not have any control on the behaviour of the lights, it was random movement defined by the materials but various observers insisted that there were identifiable patterns. The lights needed to malfunction individually in order for the interface to which they belong to be

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[15] See DVD, which accompanies this thesis, for video documentation of this work.

understood as a whole; one foreigner might have an accent but many foreigners speaking with the same accent are an ethnic group whose accent is one of its features. The lights were fighting themselves and moving in that process; they were not on and neither off but were trying to be on while unable to be off. The replacement of one component in their mechanisms prevented them from being invisible and silent; they were being individually manipulated and presented in a grid, which sustained and transformed in a place in-between. A paradox is the illusion of a contradiction(s): the encounter – and the unravelling of that illusion, which can be real – is the process of constructing meaning and not the meaning itself. Lights are meant to be on or off, and when that cannot occur, something else is created: a movement to a place in-between.[16]

The first works of the light series were produced while I was thinking about the importance of featuring noise in the interface, constructing a place in-between, having encounters with the police across Europe, and working on a conceptual model for an interface that engages in self-reflection.[17] The proposed conceptual model is an articulation of all those situations but also a map for the production of future interfaces. That initial map was suggesting that the creation of juxtaposed contradictions in the interface led to the enaction, by an audience, of those contradictions as a paradox that needed to be articulated. Contradictions are ontological and depend on attention; there is, probably, an argument for almost everything but the articulation of those arguments is depended on the attention paid to them, which implies that there is something else out of that focus of attention, William James's fringe of consciousness. Thus a paradox can

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[16] I am referring to something different from Martin Creed's *Work No 227: Lights Going On and Off* (2000), which emphasised the difference of lights' existence (on or off) but in this case they are neither. The focus of my propositions is on movement, in a notion of mobility and not on a notion of place as proposed by Creed.

[17] There are two more works from the light series that are not mentioned in this thesis but are documented at the end of this section.

be understood as an articulation of contradictions, which are ontological and generators of movement; as with the movement of Aby Warburg's 'snake', as noted by Ulrich Raulff: 'the snake, Warburg noted in Kreuzlingen [lecture], had at its disposal "maximum mobility" while providing "minimum target" '.[18]

It might be time to depart with a map: an interface that engages in self-reflexivity, is an object(s) or situation(s) defined by paradoxical (illusion of contradiction) patterns which are recurrently (illusion of repetition) visible creating the illusion of (im)possibility and repetition. Those patterns result from the permanently disrupting influence of noise in the interface's message but there is a requirement, after an initial lack of a clear message, for a clear and visible message that values the noise in the interface, as suggested by the use of a grid and minimalist structures in the light series.

The noise in the interface gives a *corpus* to movement but it needs a message to be visible, it needs a background to disrupt. The resulting movement from that disruptive relation between the noise and the message creates a *vortex* that defines a place in-between where self-reflection can take place. In the next section I will concentrate on

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[18] Ulrich Raulff, ' The Seven Skins of the Snake - Oraibi, Kreuzlingen and back: Stations in a Journey into Light', in *Photographs at the Frontier*, pp. 64-74. In footnote 26 of Raulff's article, he notes a list of the snake's attributes which Warburg sketched in preparation for the Serpent Lecture: "1- it experiences through the course of a year the full life cycle from deepest, deathlike sleep to the utmost vitality. 2- it changes its slough and remains the same. 3- it is not capable of walking on feet and remains capable nonetheless of propelling itself with great speed, armed with the absolutely deadly weapon of its poisonous tooth. 4- It is minimally visible to the eye, especially when its colours act according to the desert's law of mimicry, or when it shoots out from its secret holes in the earth. 5 – Phallus. These are qualities which render the serpent unforgettable as a displacement symbol of the ambivalent in nature: death and life, visible and invisible, without prior warning and deadly on sight. Everything which is mysterious and fast. A complex of maximum mobility with minimum target. At the same time, periodically undergoing near-death sleep and subject to the metamorphosis of its skin. Therefore it is the paradigm for the one which, whilst displacing, compares events in which man experiences or sees causality inexplicable, organic or haphazard change."

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Figure 17 – *Floating Souls* (installation view), 2007.
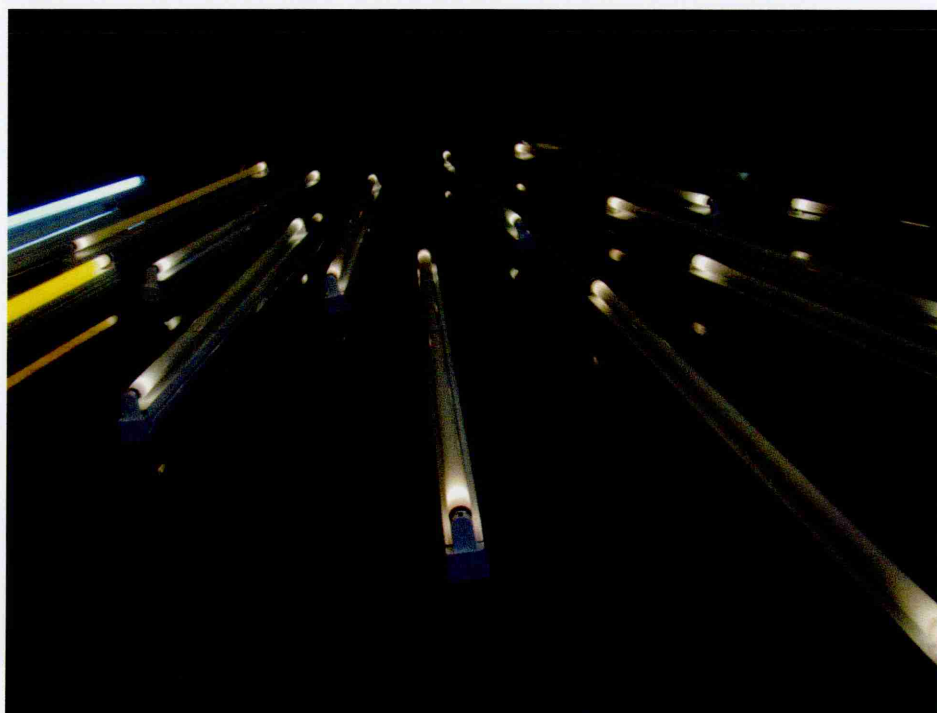
Figure 18 – *Floating Souls* (installation view), 2007.
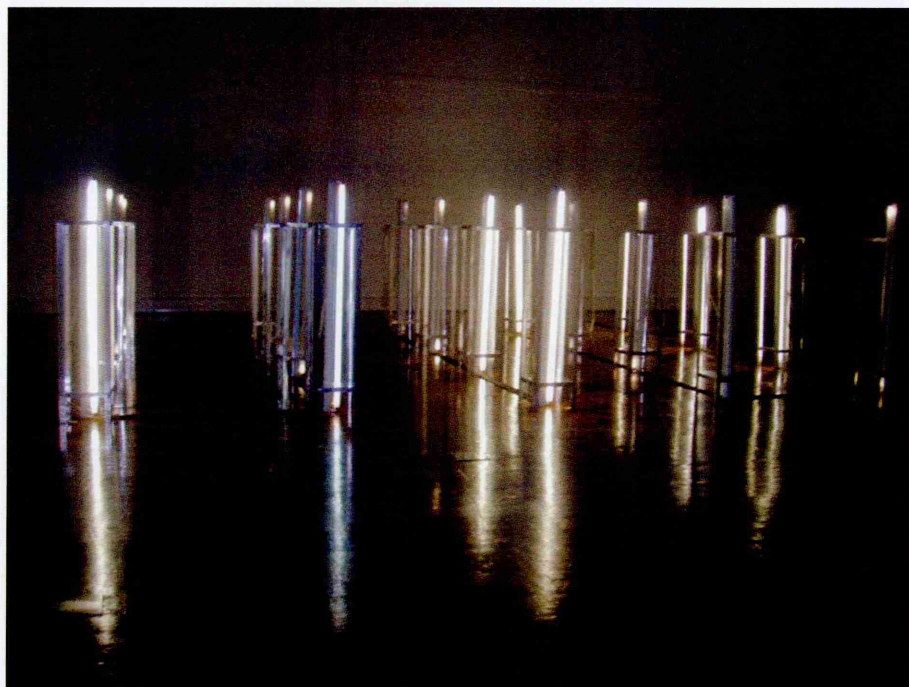
Figure 19 – *20 Mistakes Make Me Wonder* (installation view), 2007.

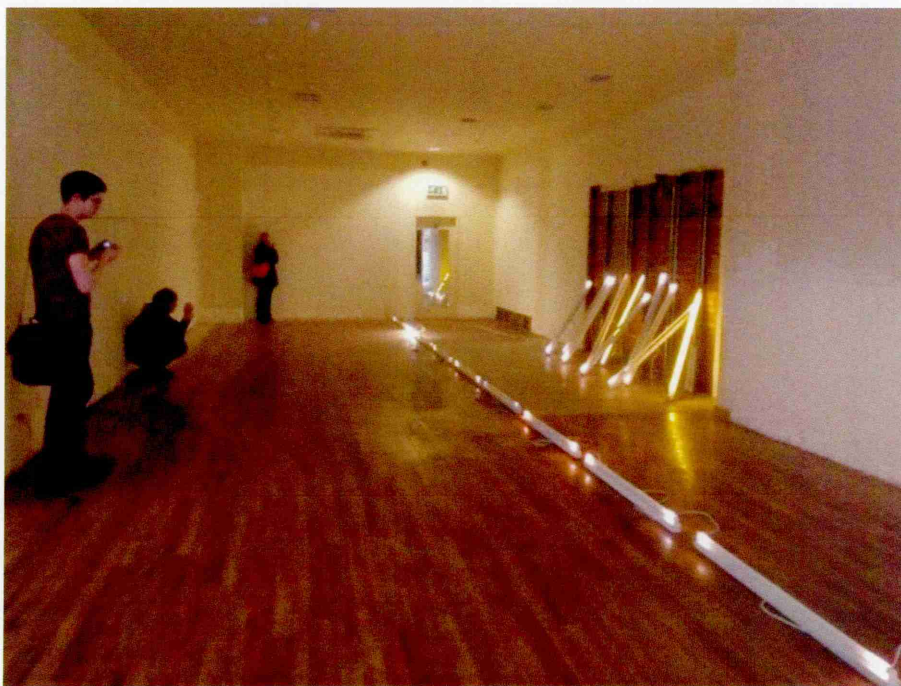**Figure 20** – *20 Mistakes Make Me Wonder* (installation view), 2007.

Other works from the light series:

– **10 overdrafts and 10 lights (Oxford, 2009)**

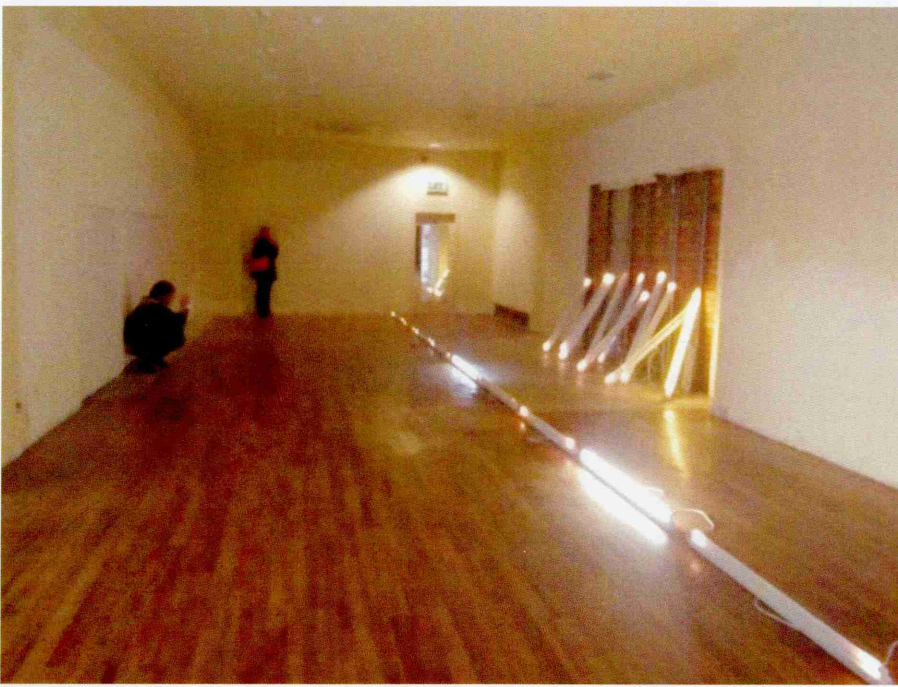– **25 mosquitoes flying inside my head but 5 are missing (Sheffield, 2008)**

Figure 21 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.

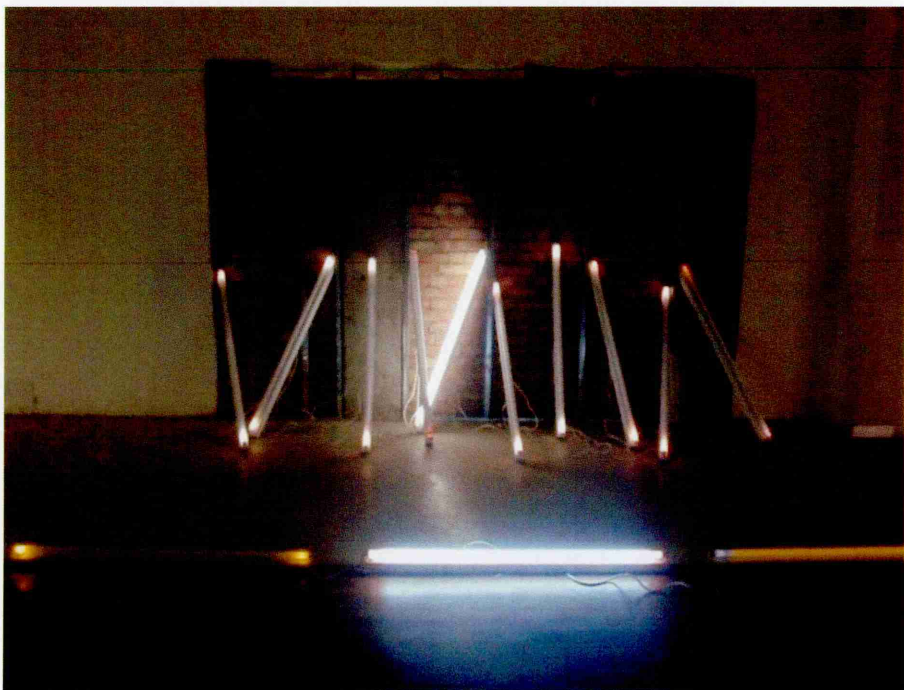**Figure 22** – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.
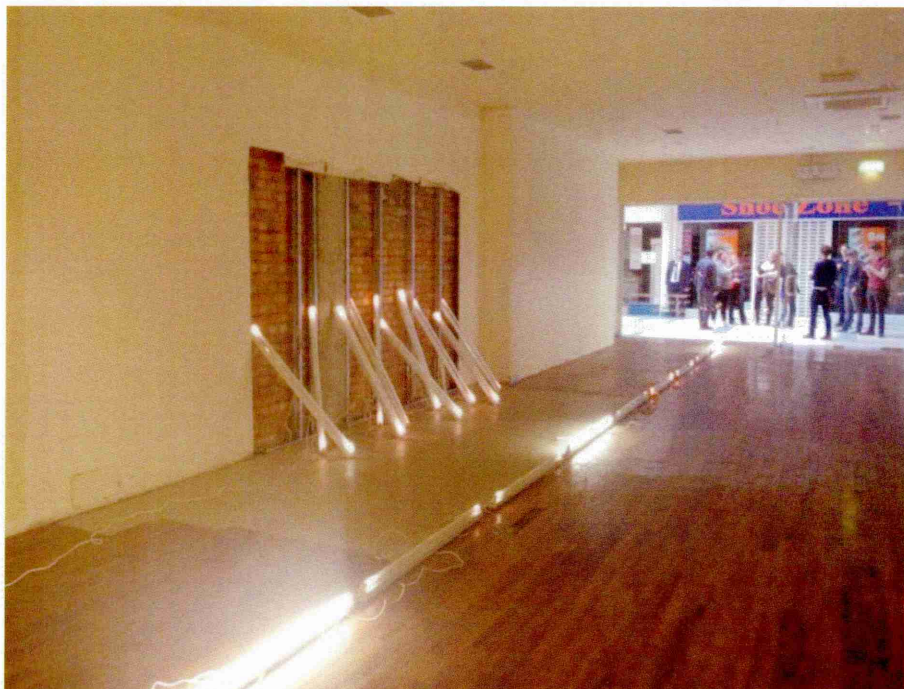
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Figure 23 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.
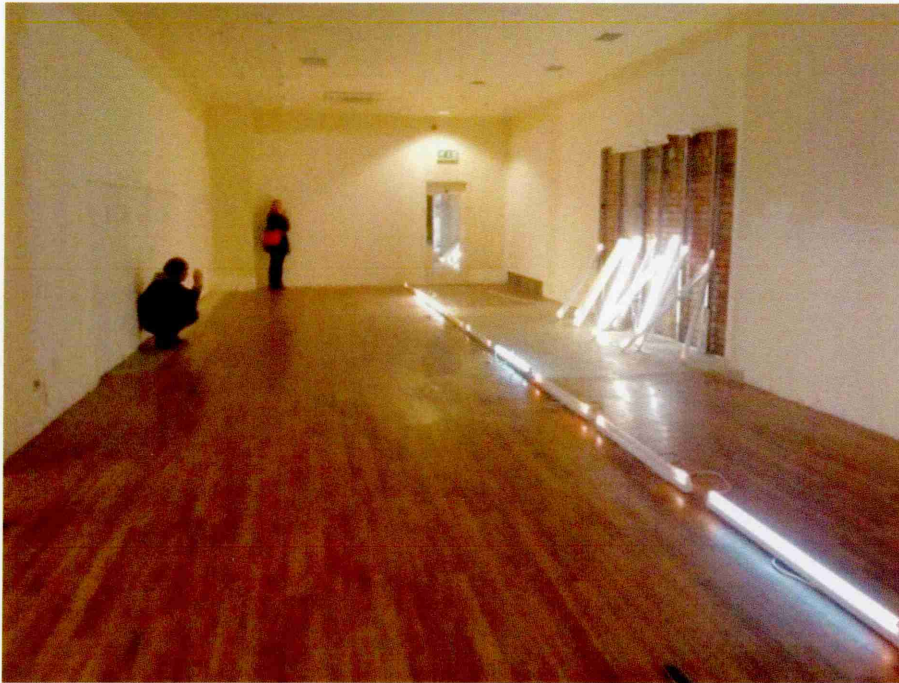
Figure 24 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.
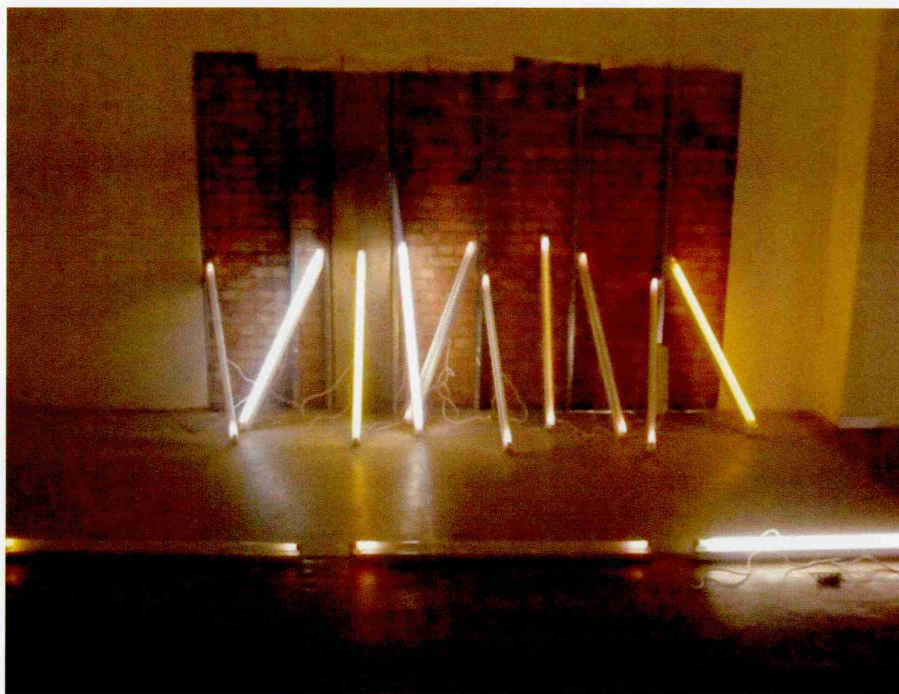
Figure 25 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.
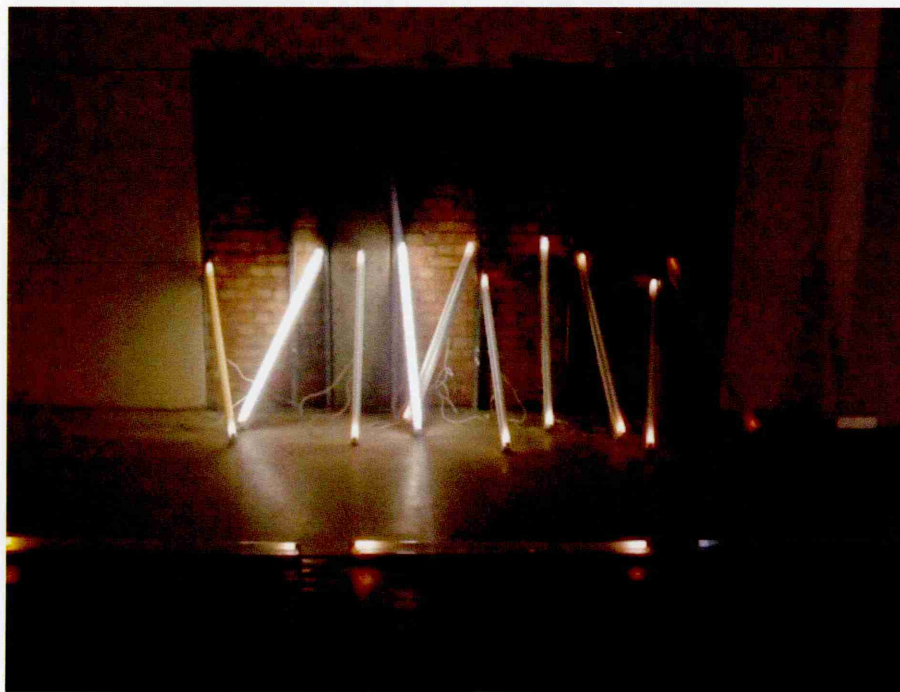
Figure 26 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.

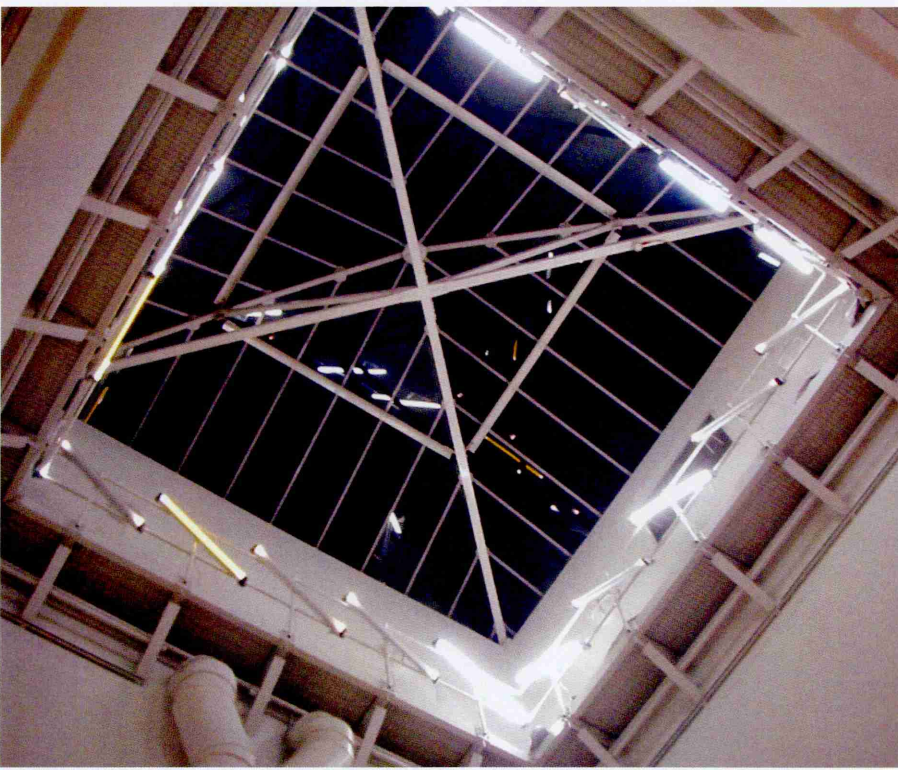**Figure 27** – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights (installation view)*, 2009.

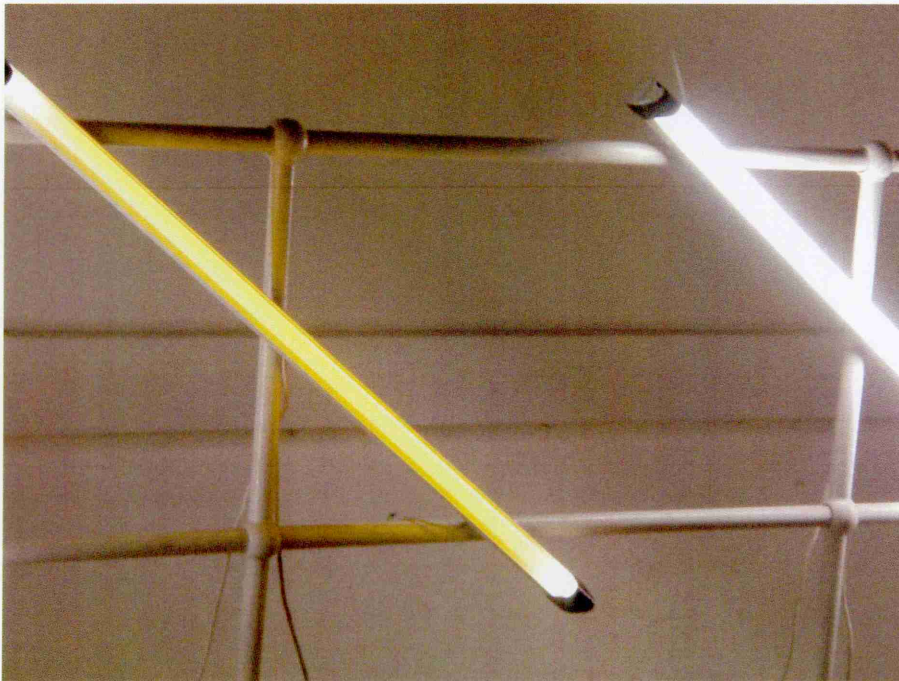**Figure 28** – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.

Figure 29 – *10 overdrafts and 10 lights* (installation view), 2009.

Figure 30 – *25 mosquitoes flying inside my head but 5 are missing* (installation view), 2008.

Figure 31 – *25 mosquitoes flying inside my head but 5 are missing* (installation view), 2008.

3.2 Message

When I moved to Berlin, I also initiated a process that would mean driving across Europe, resulting in approximately 60,000 km over three years. I wanted to move – to drive – not to do tourism or visit interesting sites. There were no signs of melancholy; I was where I wanted to be – moving on the road. I would spend most of the time on back roads, avoiding the motorways, often driving during the night when there was less traffic and a surrounding stillness. Soon after departure, the purpose of the journey would dilute itself and the prospect of arrival would dissipate and, as time went by, the body and the mind (re)acquired the knowledge required to perform the activity of driving for long periods and through unfamiliar roads while adjusting to a new concept of time, which was measurable in kilometres, and to a concept of place that was defined by the car. After spending some considerable time in the car I started to take photographs, initially to stop boredom but quickly it turned in something else: a photographic project (*Love Forbids Us to Love*) and a film project (*The Spiral Drive*). I would hold the camera in one hand and the wheel in the other but sometimes the camera would fly away because I had to avoid an incoming lorry or a hard turn. Other times, I would spend an hour trying to maintain the road's central line in a precise diagonal alignment in the camera's frame.

The purpose of those drives should be understood as a sensory deprivation experience, in a similar fashion to James Turrell and Robert Irwin experiences during the Art & Technology research and to Bruce Nauman's studio practice, in an underlying principle of wearing meaning off before anything else can develop.[1] I was driving through the night, which annihilated the landscape; I was driving alone, which meant that no

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[1] Bruce Nauman recognises his interest in Robert Irwin's practice. De Angelus, 'Interview With Bruce Nauman', in *Please Pay Attention Please*, p. 275.

conversations were possible; I would not stop to visit museums or landmarks, which denied a possible dialogue with a context; the radio was loudly playing the same CD for over two years, Sonic Youth's *Daydream Nation,* which with time became white noise engulfing the surrounding sound. I was in a car on the road determined to exhaust meaning. Those drives can be understood as a reduction in the detail (resolution) of available meaning and its purpose is to facilitate an understanding of the underlying dynamics of self-reflection and attention, which are independent of the specificities of the meanings enacted by a subject. I doubt that there is much difference between crashing in a lorry made by Renault or Volvo, driven by a man or a woman. Ultimately rich and complex meanings are reduced to shapes and colours permanently moving between a binary taxonomy of life and death, driving or crashing.

The simplification of rich and complex contexts to colours and shapes is reductive and an inevitable expansion should be considered but the primary concern of this project is the production of a map, which is reductive, and I will not address the expansion here but I can suggest possible directions to understand the interface in more complex situations. A message can be understood as a statement, an ideology, a discourse, a representation or even a metaphor of them; [2] the message asserts. The noise should be understood as everything created to disrupt the message, subverting or raising doubt on the meaning asserted by the message; the noise disrupts. But, both the message and the noise have intentionality, authorship, derived from an agency that is *responsible* for the production of the interface in a relation with the world: i.e. the artist, the critic, the activist, the priest or the politician. The interference does not have agency and results from the relation between the message and noise, and cannot be produced, at the risk of

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[2] Tim Cresswell refers to it as 'metanarratives of mobility that inform more specific, more local, more contextual attitudes to mobility in a range of arenas from photography to architecture, law to transportation planning'. Cresswell, *On the Move,* p. 55

being confused with noise; interference is an unaccounted consequence of the production of an interface and not an option in its construction (i.e. an unintentional spelling mistake in a text). Those three elements are always present in the interface, even if as a residue, and their articulation defines the various types of interfaces. The critical power of an interface is conditioned by the amount of noise that the producer of an interface incorporates in its production thus generating a subsequent paradox.[3] For example, it can be argued that a notion of avant-garde is linked to high amounts of noise, but in relation to its message, while an interface produced by a politician will most likely reduce and make the noise invisible while increasing the message in the interface.

I was where I wanted to be – moving on the road – thinking about the value of incorporating noise in the production of an interface and soon thinking about driving as an interface. The activity of driving safely can be understood as the message in the interface (driving) and everything that disrupts that activity of driving safely as noise: (tires blowing up, drunk drivers, tiredness, the weather and so on). Although it is impossible to represent every danger associated with driving, it is viable to consider some alterations to normal driving conditions and possible reactions to be performed by a driver. For example, if the weather becomes too adverse it might be useful to reduce the speed or even stop but there is no need to represent every form of adverse weather prior to that moment. As such to be able to drive I have to pay attention to the possibility of disruptions on the normal condition of driving but I do not need to represent what is out there and available to be accessed whenever needed, as proposed by Noë – perception is the ability to access the detail of the world to attain a rich experience and neglect that which is not being attended.[4] All those elements contribute to my experience of driving but one thing about driving that should not be forgotten is

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[3] The disruption caused by noise in relation to a message in the interface generates paradoxes.

[4] Noë, Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?, p. 5. Noë, Out of our Heads, pp. 140–142.

that the car moves. Driving implies moving from one place to another place, which in turn implies that every element previously mentioned will change (ie: the phone might ring or the fuel price might increase at any moment). Thus, I reflect on driving when there is an enaction of a potential change in the elements previously mentioned, when the noise in the interface – driving – is recognised as being potentially important to be attended, for example: a tire blows, the fuel prices increase or decrease considerably, it is too cold and the heating does not work or it is too hot and the car is about to melt, I can not see the road because the windshield or my glasses are too dirty, the GPS is malfunctioning and I do not have a map, I am too tired to continue driving or too energised to stop driving, an incoming car is driving on my lane or I am driving in an incoming car's lane. That is, my ability to reflect on driving is a consequence of my ability to recognise noise – the changeable conditions implicit in that drive (internal or external to the car), while sustaining a message of driving safely, but driving is, also, contingent on the ability of the driver to reflect on the activity of driving and to the movement implicit in that activity – ontological reciprocity. Michel Serres explains that the higher the level of affinity with a system (interface) the lower will be the ability to perceive its noise, which in this particular case can be translated as: the message of the system – driving safely – can not be the focus of attention or there is a significant risk of noise not being perceived, and crashing. But neither can I ignore that message at the risk of not driving safely. The constant movement and change in the various elements that characterise the interface (driving) imply a conflict between a stable message (driving safely) and an unstable noise (everything that disrupts driving safely), for example: if a tire blows every minute I will not be driving, instead I will be changing tires, or if the fuel prices continuously decrease, I most likely will be stopped in a traffic jam created by the amount of drivers taking advantege of the low prices and not driving. As such and moving to the interface, the incorporation of noise in the interface promotes self-reflection but, for the noise to be valued as noise, the interface also

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requires a message, which needs to be *stable* but moving,[5] and present or the noise might swap roles with the message.

The car implies a driver while the camera implies a photographer but during my drives I was both at the same time. Nevertheless, the camera's point of view is not the driver's point of view; it is the camera's point of view. But, the driver and the photographer were the same during a fragile performance in which the driver was inevitably more important than the photographer, or I would have crashed. Thus there was a movement between photographing and driving but it was a movement that could not deny either of the conditions. Those two different activities required an embodied presence and their relation is similar to the relation between message and noise in the interface. That is, the driver can be understood as the message while the photographer can be understood as noise but the balance between the two needs to be sustainable. If not, the *place in-between* where it is taking place, which in this case is associated with the car, might crash. I was the driver and the message; I was the photographer and the noise; but the interface implies the *presence* of both to remain alive, and to mutate to the work of art.[6]

Tim Cresswell suggests that a notion of citizenship is closely tied to the notion of mobility, he describes how the politics of mobility changed in the United States, through a review of cases submitted to the United States of America's Supreme Court, and its implications to a notion of a citizenship: the higher the mobility the higher the level of

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[5] If the message is not stable it is likely to be confused with noise and consequently denying the possibility of noise to fulfil its role.

[6] Richard Brody refers to the presence of the filmmaker in Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless*, which is also one of the features of accented cinema: 'the result was a fist-person documentary of a distinctive, indeed a unique, sort: this first-person cinema invoked not the director's experience but his presence'. See Richard Brody, *Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard*, London: Faber and Faber, 2008, p. 71.

citizenship, which, curiously, is still not acknowledged in the Constitution.[7] Travelling in Europe by car is conditioned by the reality of various national borders and driving across countries is a cultural experience in itself:[8] in Britain when you signal a car with the headlights you are saying 'please, go right ahead' but when driving in southern Europe (France included) you are saying 'get out of the way!'; in Germany using your headlights is considered unnecessary and disruptive; in Morocco you are saying that you have lights. Wittgenstein said that the meaning of something is dependent of its use and I agree.[9] I was suspicious; I was travelling alone, the car had a southern European license plate, it was eighteen-years-old, I mostly drove through the night avoiding the main roads. Actually, I would have to consider myself to be suspicious. In France the police controls are never at the border. The gendarmes entertain themselves in the middle of the country, waiting where not expected, praising their omnipresence that functions as a self-regulatory mechanism for a driver who can be transformed into a criminal, at any turn. One night travelling across France with the nearest border six hundred kilometres away, I was stopped by one police officer and suddenly had five gendarmes searching the car while the first one gave me a hard time but it was not difficult to confuse them, and I enjoy doing it: finding a relation between thirty fluorescent lights, a significant amount of books, various cases of wine and cigarettes, twenty kilos of sea rock salt (essential to cook fish in a salt crust) and a small bag of clothes in an old Portuguese car (France was a strong destination of Portuguese

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[7] Cresswell, *On the Move*, pp 147–174.

[8] 'with smaller countries sharing more national borders, the European road movie explores different national identities in intimate topographical proximity. Therefore, these non-American road movies tend toward the quest more than the flight, and imbue the quest with navigations of national identity and community navigations that often take on sophisticated philosophical and political dimensions.' David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring The Road Movie.* Austin, TX; University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 248.

[9] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations'* (1958), Oxford: Blackwell, 1969. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968.

emigration during the 60s and 70s and there is still a prevailing stigma) in the middle of nowhere in the early hours is definitely not an easy task. The noise (being suspicious) is so intense that it swaps roles with the message (being innocent) and the message is in transmutation with the noise, and the continuous swapping movement is transformed in the interface.[10]

This might be the setting for European road movies,[11] as argued by David Laderman 'the European road movie associates road travel with introspection rather than [the American road movie] violence and danger',[12] but I was taking photographs, even photographic sequences, or rather, stills of a road movie that was yet to be made. The introspective journey associated with European road movies remains in the car, while the landscape associated with the American road movie is present as a backdrop for that journey,[13] which in my case was often being ignored or simply unattainable. The

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[10] Jean-Luc Godard refers to it through Maurice Blanchot (the image is well-being) but as Godard explains: 'it's hard to think that image is gaze, because we still think image is gaze but through the lens…' and ' When Blanchot says image is well-being, people talk to you about well-being too, they want to be happy. If it's too literary it gets forgotten. When it's said that image is well-being, no one except me [I might disagree] immediately envisages someone laughing or crying, but I do.' Jean-Luc Godard and Youssef Ishaghpour, *Cinema: The Archeology of Film and the Memory of a Century* (*Archéologie du cinema et mémoire d'une siècle* [2000]), trans. John Howe, Oxford; New York: Berg, 2005, p. 106.

[11] For overviews of European road movies, see: David Laderman, *Driving Visions: Exploring The Road Movie.* Austin, TX; University of Texas Press, 2002, p. 247-80; Ewa Mazierska and Laura Rascaroli, *Crossing New Europe; Postmodern Travel and the European Road Movie,* London: New York; Wallflower Press, 2006.

[12] Laderman, *Driving Visions*, p. 248.

Monte Hellman's *Two-Lane Blacktop* is an excellent example of an American road movie that is essentially European. '*Two-Lane Blacktop* wears the thin guise of a racing film. But this relatively superficial narrative context quickly evaporates, revealing an exploration of the meaning(lessness) of road travel…notably influenced by the wandering, digressive narrative of European modernist cinema … *Two-Lane Blacktop* empties itself of any narrative-drive or character development. Moreover, the film treats the theme of rebellion in a highly formalistic, depoliticized fashion … the rebellion here seems to levelled against meaning and coherence itself.' See: Laderman, *Driving Visions*, p. 95-104. Worth noting are the characters' names and the inclusion of the cars in the end credits: 'the Driver', 'the Mechanic', 'the Girl', 'GTO', '1955 Chevy', '1970 Pontiac'.

[13] Laderman, *Driving Visions*, p. 248.

succession of the various stills, in the photographs or in the film, assert one thing, which is the stability of the message that is conditioned by the car's windshield, which is barely visible but that stability is a reference point to be disturbed, even if only through the apparent repetition of itself (the windshield). Time and movement exist either side of the windscreen but the outside is pitch black during the night or rendered in an absurd place during the daytime (eg the windscreen's wipers dysfunctional dance or the maniac choir of birds). The car can be considered as a place within the framed image – a place in-between, first for the driver and later for the observer when assuming the role of the driver, and a double gazing process emerges through a triangulation between the landscape, the car's presence and camera's point of view; respectively, a triangulation between past, present, and future. Following Deleuze's work on cinema it is possible to argue that we have a movement-image and a time-image concurring only separated by the car's windscreen. The movement-image remains outside the car, in the landscape while the time-image is inside the car. The two images promote a dialogue that is neither a representation nor a constructed illusion; the two different perspectives question and reaffirm each other through a constant change that can also be understood as an inconsistency, but an inconsistency perhaps as a requirement for the understanding of change.[14] Inconsistency (revealed as the foreigner, the parasite or the snake) contributes to an understanding of a self. The landscape existed long before the drive, it continued to exist during the drive, and it will continue to exist after the drive, even if in a considerably different way. The landscape is the past. The car, and the driver, is the present; born after the landscape but before the photographs. The camera, and the photographer, is the future; they create a relation with a past but in the car, which is the present, that might (eventually) be future memories but only for the driver

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[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (*Cinéma I: L'Image-Mouvement* [1983]), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, London; New York: Continuum, 2005; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image* (*Cinema 2, L'Image-Temps* [1985]), trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, London; New York: Continuum, 2005.

and the photographer, for the observer they will be a present that merges past, present and future. Laura Mulvey suggests that photography is inherently linked with death, or lacking movement: 'the still, inanimate, image is drained of movement, the commonly accepted sign of life'.[15] Mulvey refers to movement being a sign of life but when thinking about the interface, it is important to note that movement is always present in the action of the photographer (filmmaker) and in the observer's enaction of the interface. Nevertheless, the point is well taken when addressing a work of art – the still image can be understood as a sign of death, but this project is concerned with the interface, and not the work of art. As such, when Mulvey proposes, without discarding Godard proposition, that film is death twenty-four times a second she is referring to the work of art and when Godard proposes that film is truth twenty-four times a second he is referring to the interface.[16]

In *Love Forbids Us to Love* (the photographic project, see DVD A for visual documentation), which was presented at Pente 10 Gallery, Lisbon, the thirty-two photographs resemble the windscreen due to their size (160x90cms) and the cinematic screen due to their proportions (16:9), yet they are photographs. By the same technique used in the light series, the phrases materialised in the malfunctioning red or blue light–boxes with white text, try to be on and off at the same time ('Paradox, the illusion of contradiction' etc), while the proposition ("The only possible dialogue is the monologue') is materialised in the white neon lights. Two of the light-boxes are hanging in the gallery window shop, eight photographs in a first room and another three in a second area displayed side-by-side, and two more light-boxes in a transition room. The final room presents the remaining twenty-one photographs as an amalgam of images from the floor to the ceiling in columns of three photographs with two photographs

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[15] Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, London: Reaktion Books, 2006, p. 22.

[16] Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second*, p. 15.

independently on the sides. In the middle of that room there is a black room with the white neon. The presence of the pixel (the photographs are enlarged to the point of making the pixel visible but only when one is close enough) emphasises the materiality of the delusion (noise) consequently denouncing the illusion and the possibility of representation (message). The reality of the photographs is not the reality of the object of the photographs but neither is it a fiction in its own right. In *Love Forbids Us To Love*, the images are the message;[17] they ground the journey barely changing (the windscreen is always present) but their content is not relevant, they are formalist devices to create stability. But, the paradox needs to take place and for that noise is required: in *Love Forbids Us to Love*, it is materialised in the form of the light-boxes malfunctioning, in the white neon light and in the visible presence of the digital image, which are all different forms of exploring the interface's noise in relation to the amalgam of images (message) and, most importantly, to the stability of the message.

The Spiral Drive was started at the early stages of this project but was the last to be concluded, the most complex and challenging; it can be understood as a non-linear layering of the various works and ideas addressed in this project and it was present in different stages throughout its production; it cannibalised while feeding the other works. In that fashion, I can argue that incorporates the movement of the *Light Series*, the

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[17] According to Richard Brody, an example of images being used as noise can be seen in Jean-Luc Godard films: 'Through this decision [deliberately filming from disorienting angles], Godard removed the scrim of convention by which the cinema transmits time and space to the viewer; however, by flouting the principles on which the classical cinema is based, he in fact ended up emphasizing them. In appearing amateurish, the film calls attention to the codes of professionalism, and in the end highlights the fact that they are merely conventions: it denaturalizes them. *Breathless* presents standard aspects of the classic cinema, but mediated, or quoted. Paradoxically, this interpolation of Godard's directorial authority between the viewer and the action does not render the film arch, distant, or calculated, but rather produces the impression of immediacy, spontaneity, and vulnerability. Godard's presence is invoked as a sort of live-action narrator who calls the shots as they unfold, with as much potential for accident and error as any live performance'[17] See Brody, *Everything is Cinema*, p. 69.

stability of *Love Forbids Us to Love* and the interference of the *Arctic Drawings* in an organic multiplication of *One for the Mind, Two For the Eye and Seven (Plus or Minus Two) For the World.*

The articulation of the message and noise in *The Spiral Drive* can only be understood through the accumulation and intertwining of various layers of messages and noises in a complex, fluid and non-linear relation that changes over time and defines the interface. Thus enunciating every pattern of contradiction in *The Spiral Drive*, seems to me an impossible task, but for example: the exclusive use of photographs in the production of a (road) movie implies a strong level of contradictions:[18] the blinding white sequences after a tunnel that are significantly different from the previous dark sequences; the movement between being a driver and being a photographer; the sound that syncs and represents elements of the images but also distress them; the sound of the rain(water) that was constructed with sounds of fire and electric cracks. The list is endless but the key point to retain is the movement of an endless and apparently contradictory amalgam of elements (production modes, places of production, formal elements, autobiographic and authorship considerations, and so on) behaving erratically that when brought together mutate in a whole that transcends their individuality in their relation with a world, without denying that same individuality because they reveal themselves in movement and through movement; embodied thought and emotions working together in a world at large.

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[18] Uriel Orlow, PhD thesis, addresses the critical power of a work of art. Orlow suggests 'this critical power is seen to produce paradoxes which are particular to it and which have the potential to infiltrate theoretical debates in the form of contradictions'. Orlow identifies two paradoxes in his case study (Chris Marker's *La Jetée*): one in the narrative (a double death) while the other rests in the decision of using photographs to produce a film. Uriel Orlow, *Time+Again: Critical Contradictions In Chris Marker's La Jetée*, unpublished PhD Thesis, London Institute and Open University, 2002.

Val Kuklowsky constructed the sound approximately two years after the first images were produced and the result was a parallel scripted journey, which is complementary and concurrent to the journey scripted by the images, and when brought together (images and sound) created an even more complex system (interface). The relation between the images and the sound reaffirms and questions itself in order to create movement, and while the later remains reasonably stable the former mutates in a more obvious way.[19] Nevertheless, the journey scripted by Kuklowsky should be understood in line with the proposed notion of the interface that engages in self-reflection, which was a guiding map in the production of the sound composition up to the final version of *The Spiral Drive*.

A revised version of the map of an interface that engages in self-reflexivity can be understood as:

an object(s) or situation(s) that is defined by paradoxical patterns which are recurrently visible creating an illusion of (im)possibility and repetition. Those patterns result from the permanent disrupting influence of noise in the interface's message. The message should be *clear, stable, assertive, visible* but subtly *moving* in and out of the focus of attention (present but not attended to) while allowing for the noise in the interface to emerge in relation to the movement of the message. The balance between the message and the noise is fragile but crucial and it should remain present even when it seems out of balance (the driver and the photographer; the pixel in the photographic image that is only visible at proximity; the blinding whiteness sustained by sound). The resulting movement from the combinations of the various patterns creates a *vortex* that defines a *place in-between*, where self-reflection can emerge.
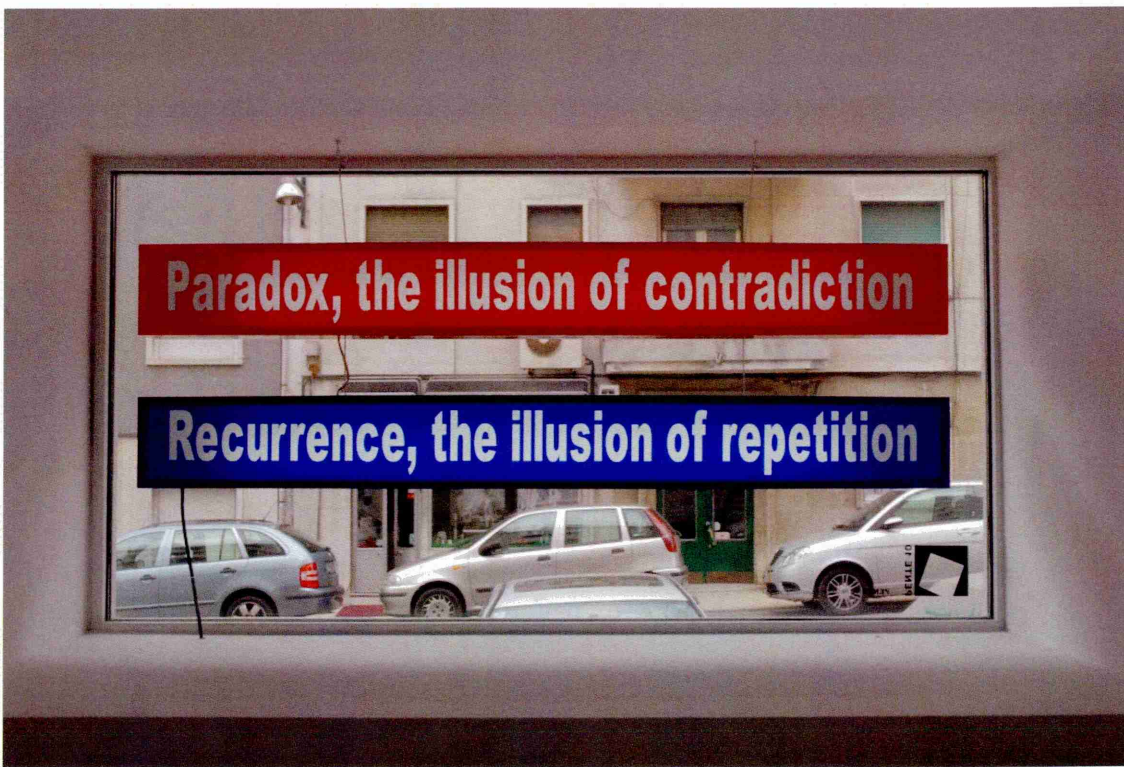
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[19] Orson Welles in an interview with Peter Bogdanovich suggest a direct relation between images and thought, and sound and emotions. See: Peter Bogdanovich, Orson Welles and Jonathan Rosenbaum (eds), *This is Orson Welles*, London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992, pp. 17–18.
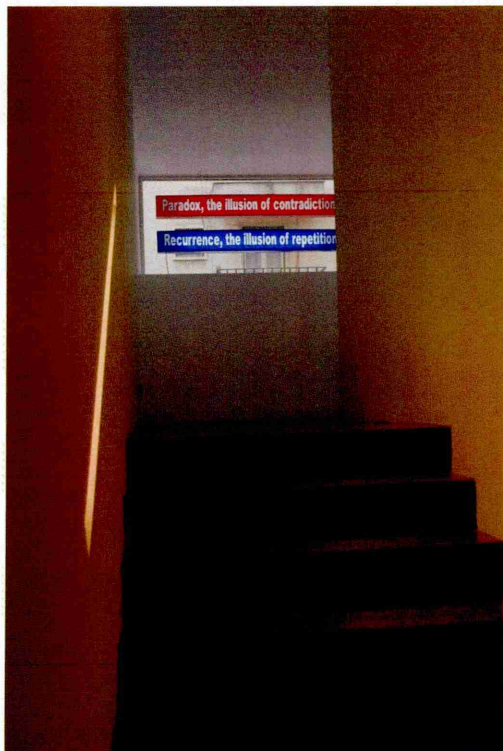
Love Forbids us to Love, 2008

Exhibition view and images

Pente 10 Gallery, Lisbon

Figure 32 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 33 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

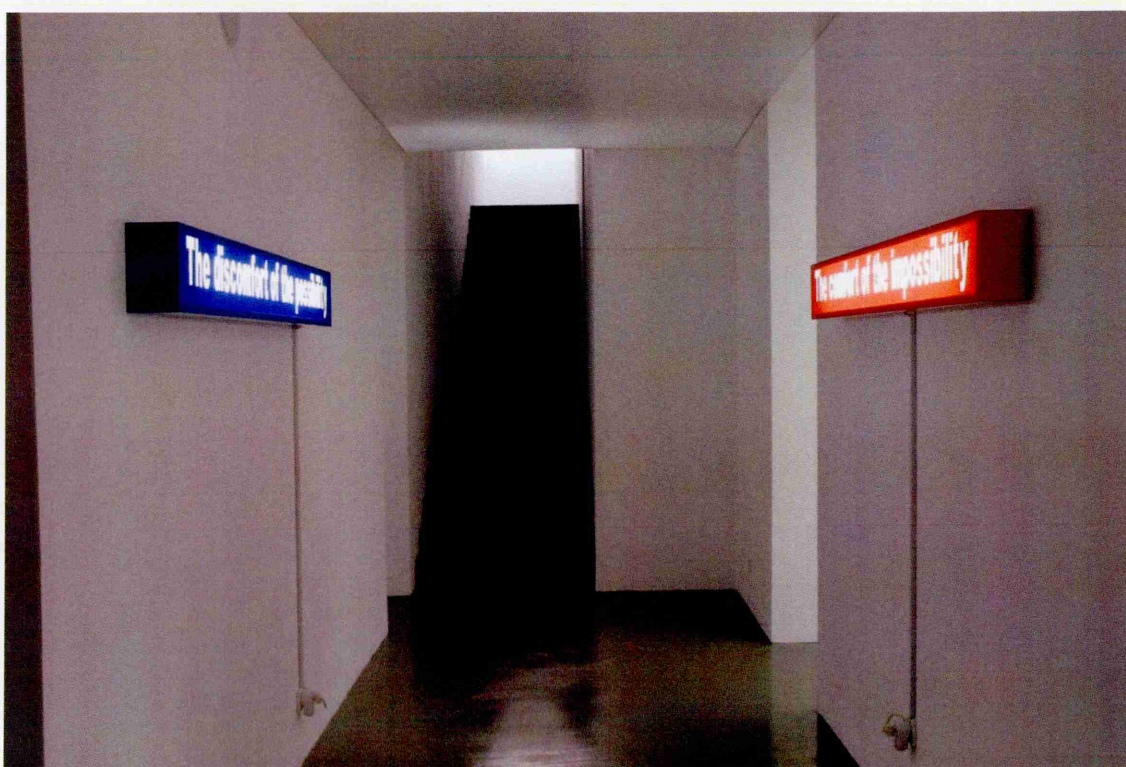**Figure 34** – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

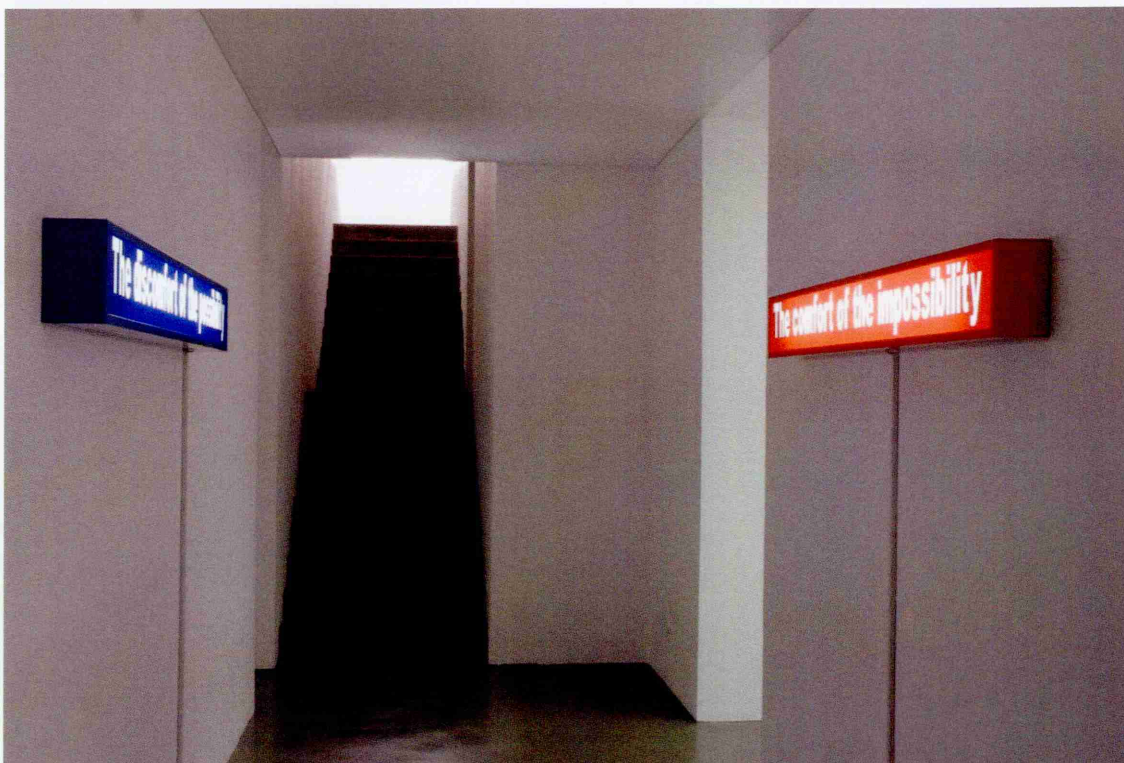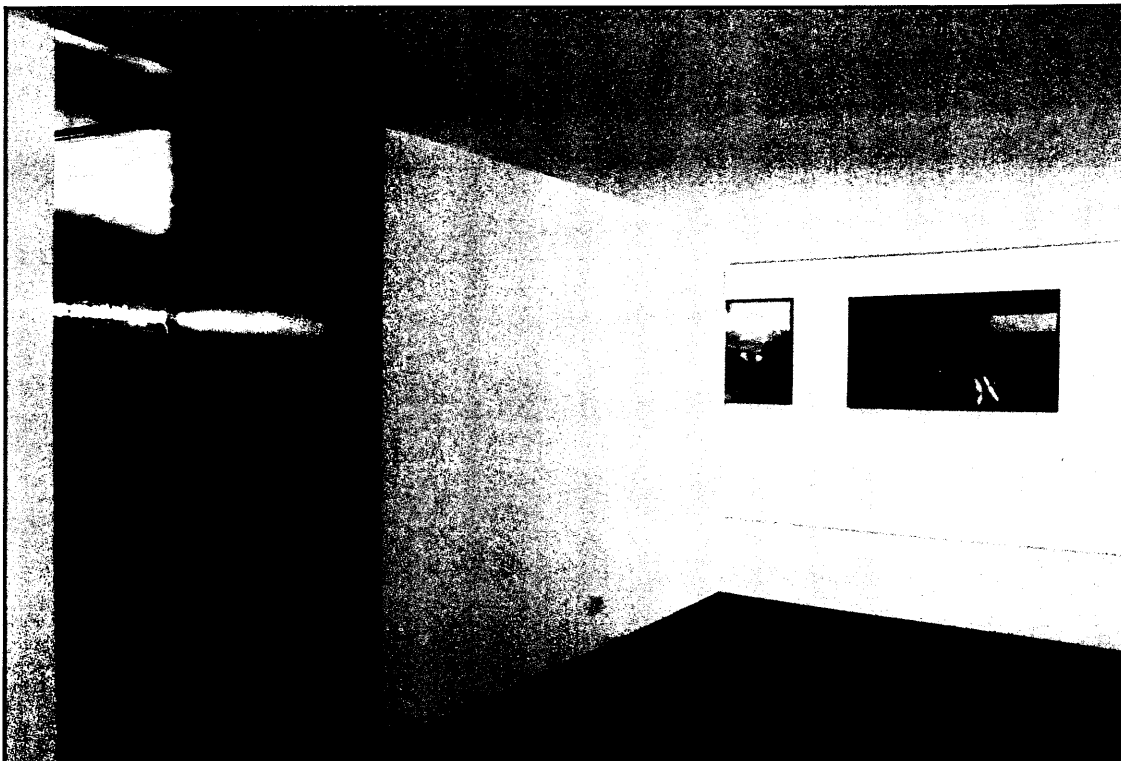**Figure 35** – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 36 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 37 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.
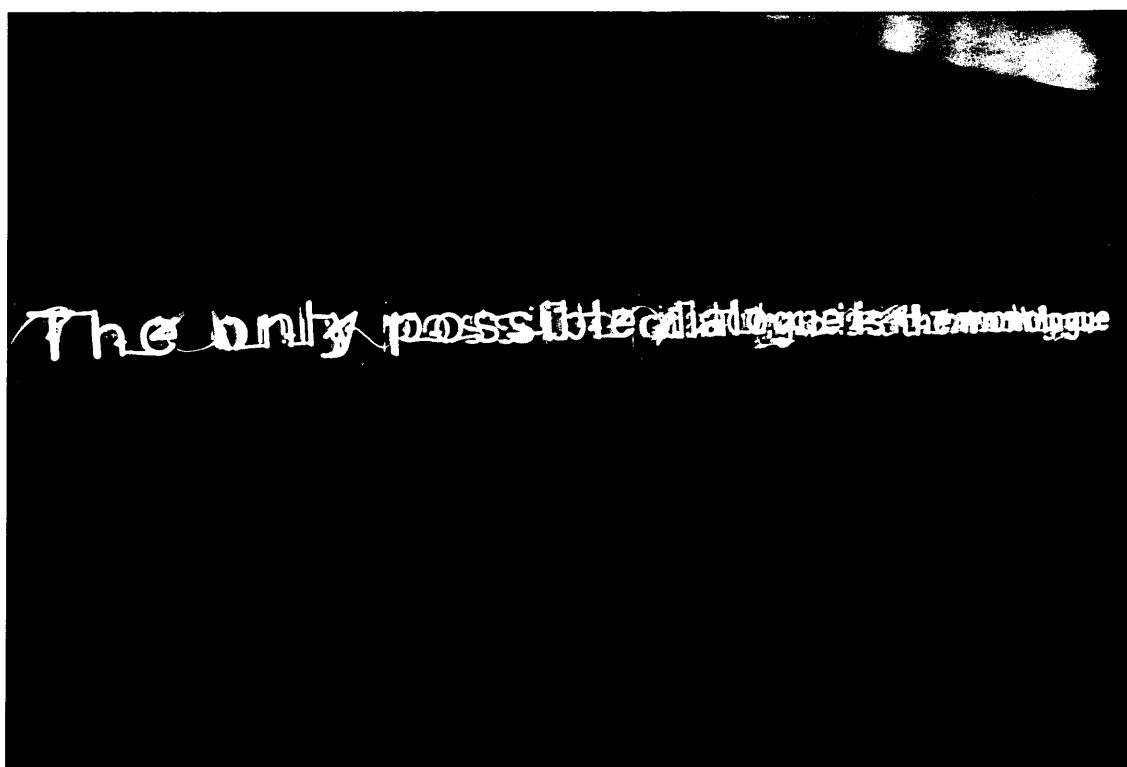
Figure 38 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 39 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

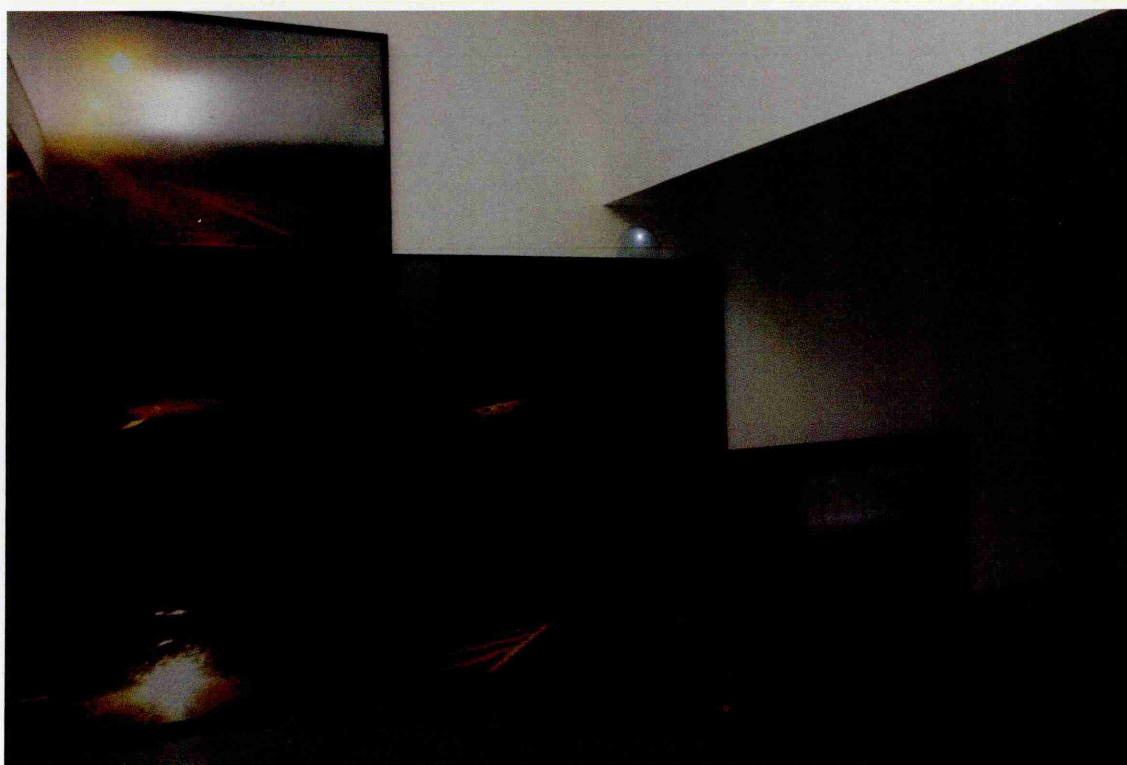**Figure 40** – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 41 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 42 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 43 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 44 – Love Forbids Us to Love (installation view), 2008.

Figure 45 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 46 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 47 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 48 − Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

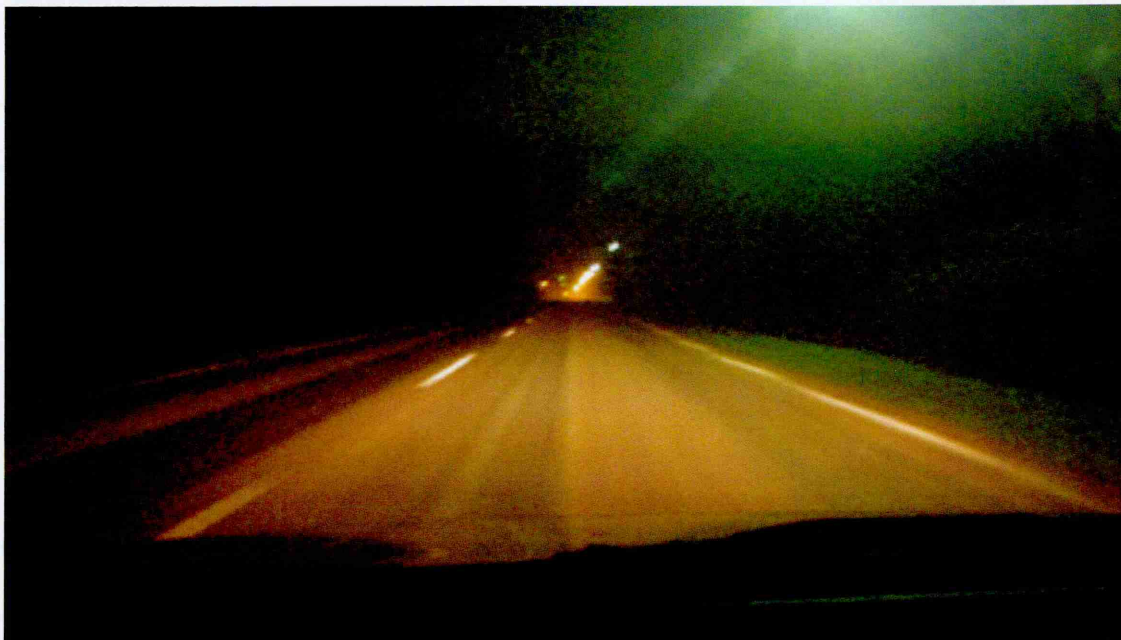**Figure 49** − Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 50 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 51 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 52 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 53 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 54 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

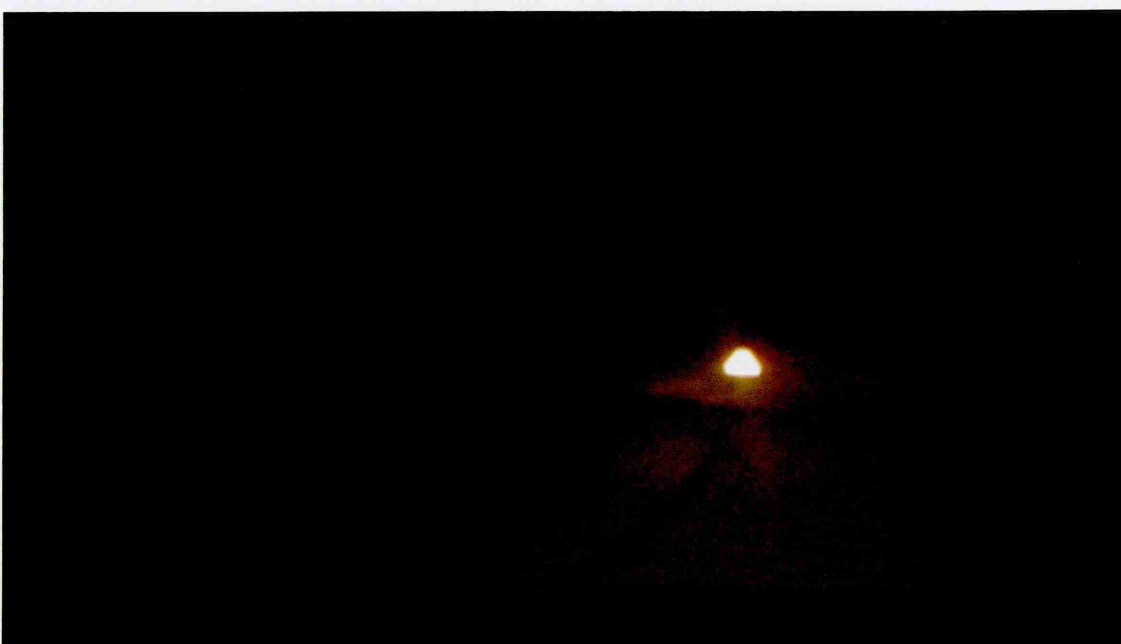**Figure 55** – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 56 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 57 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 58 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008

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Figure 59 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 60 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
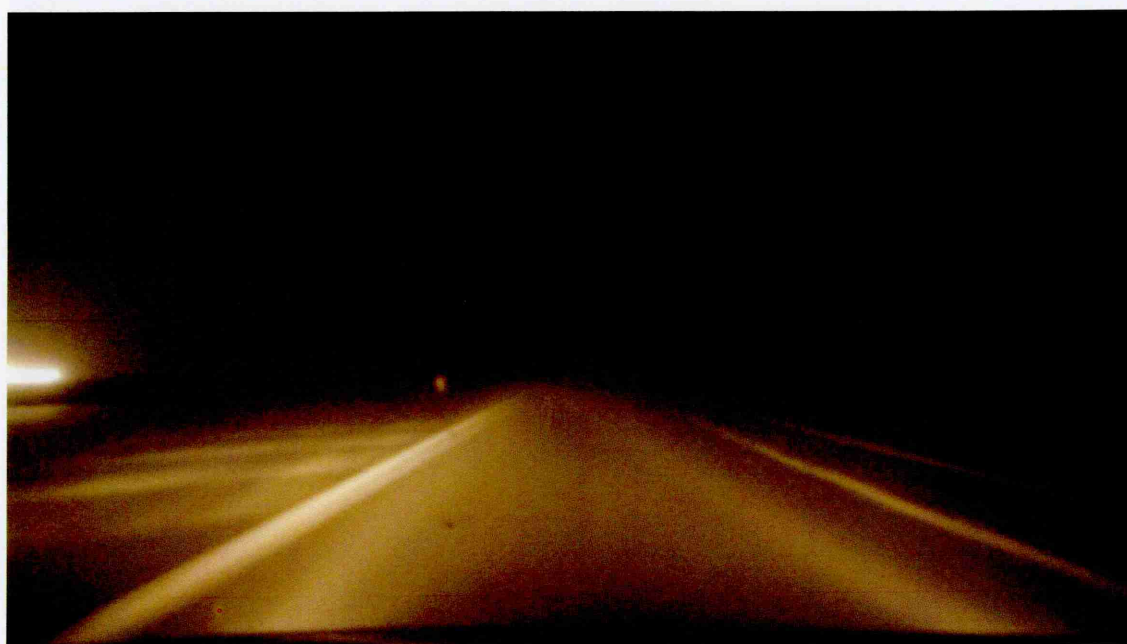
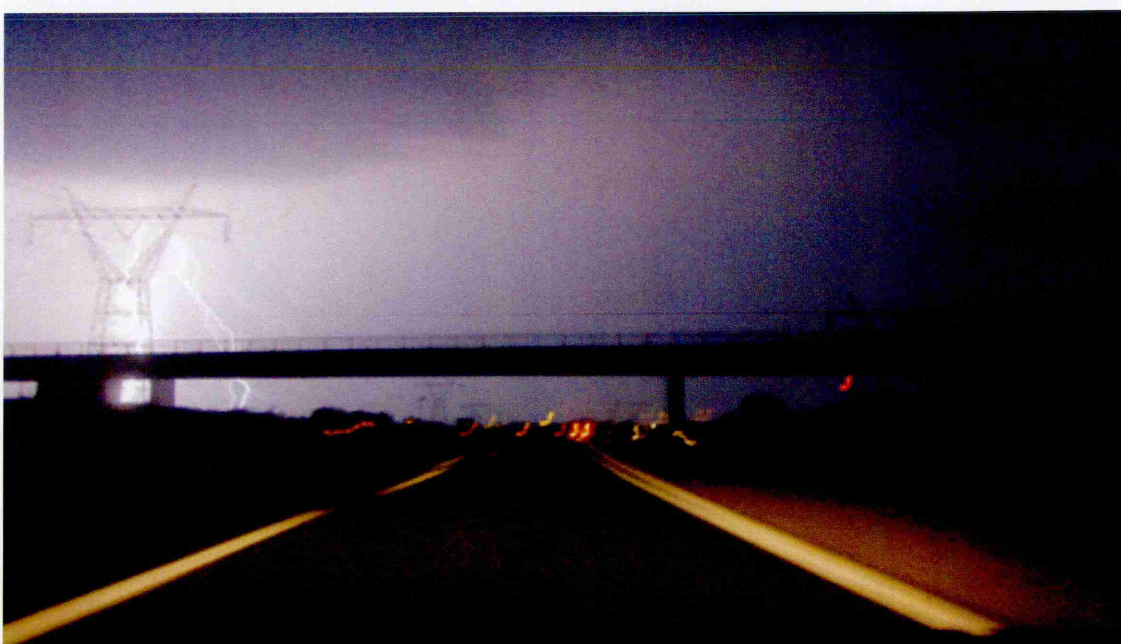**Figure 61** – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

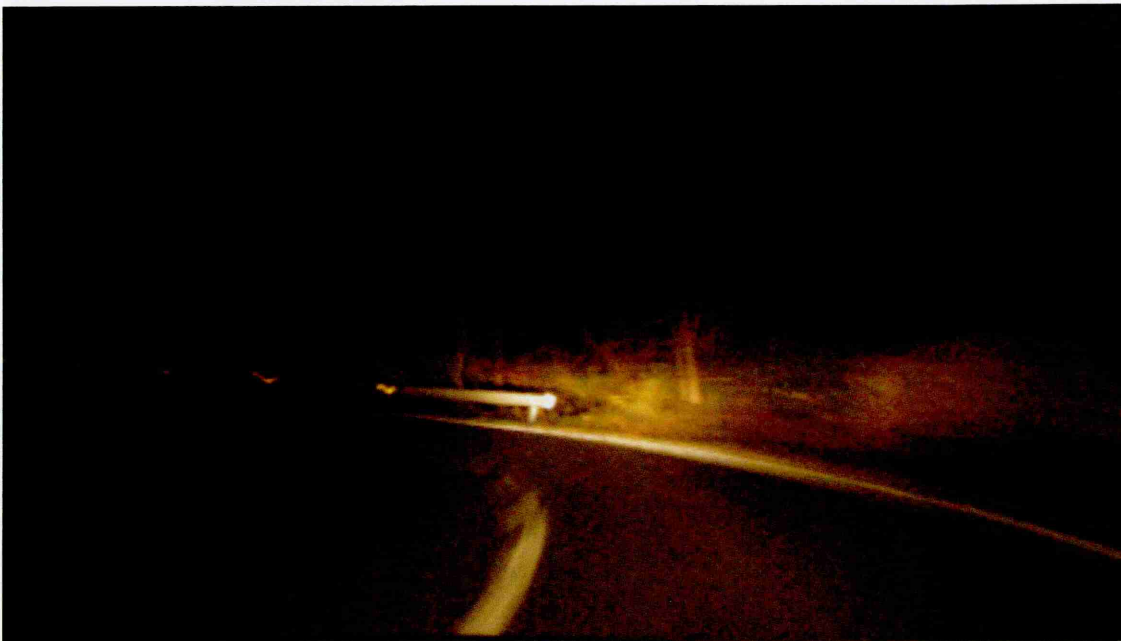**Figure 62** – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
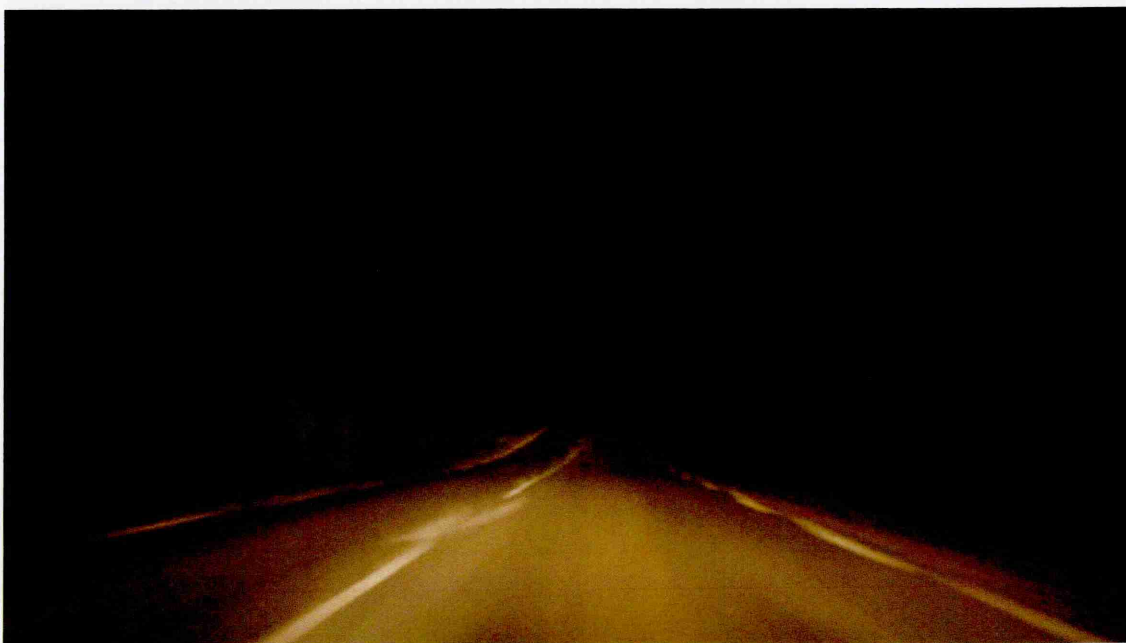
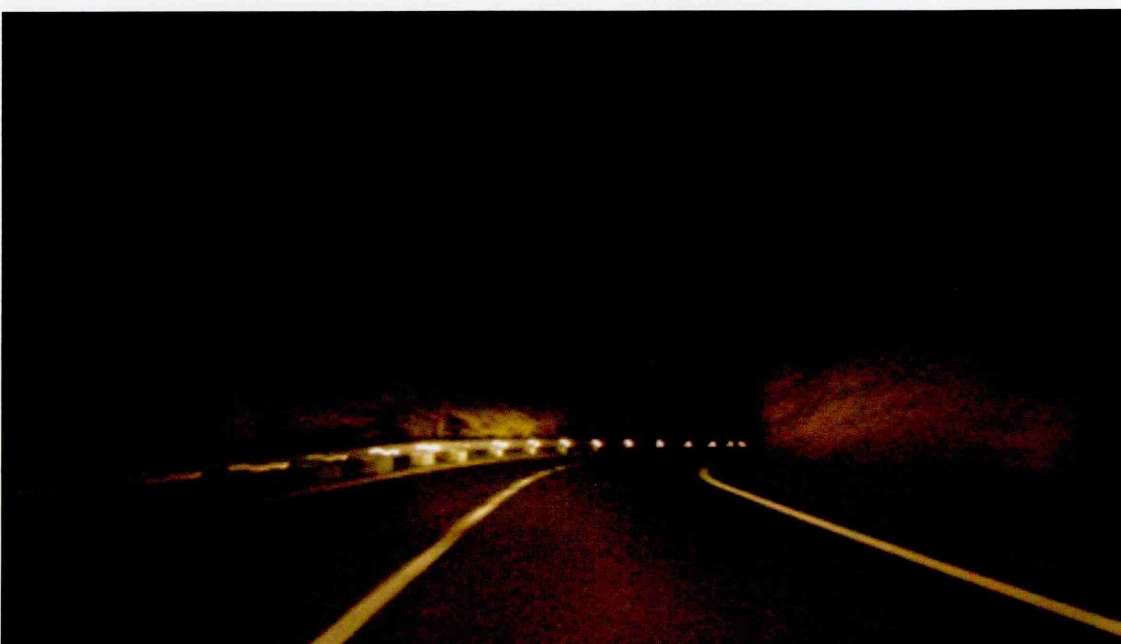**Figure 63** – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
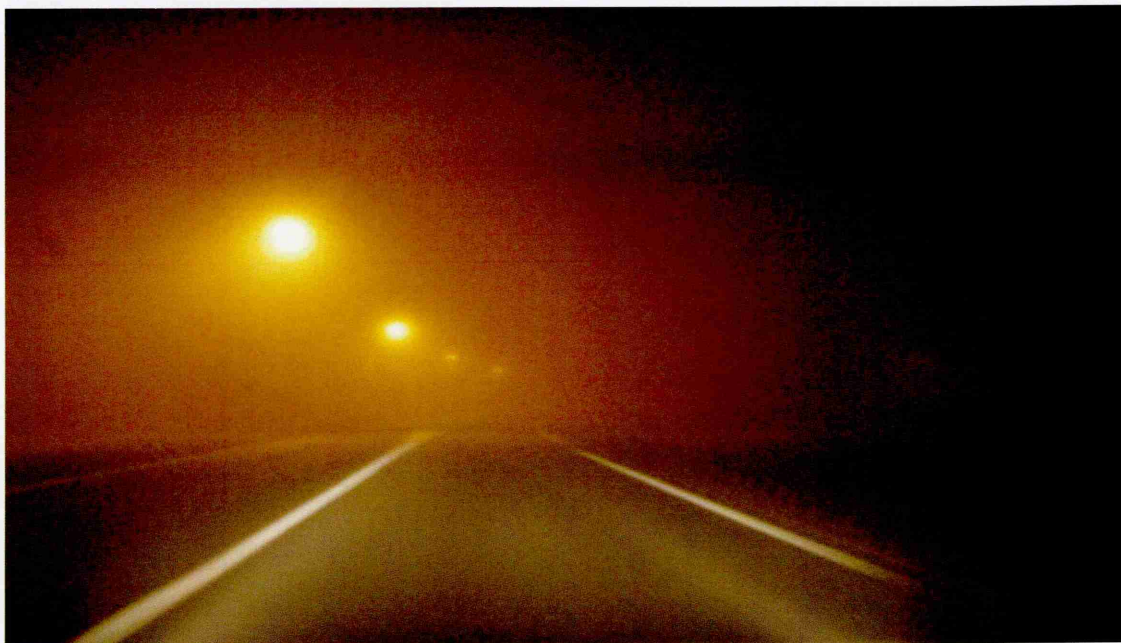
Figure 64 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 65 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
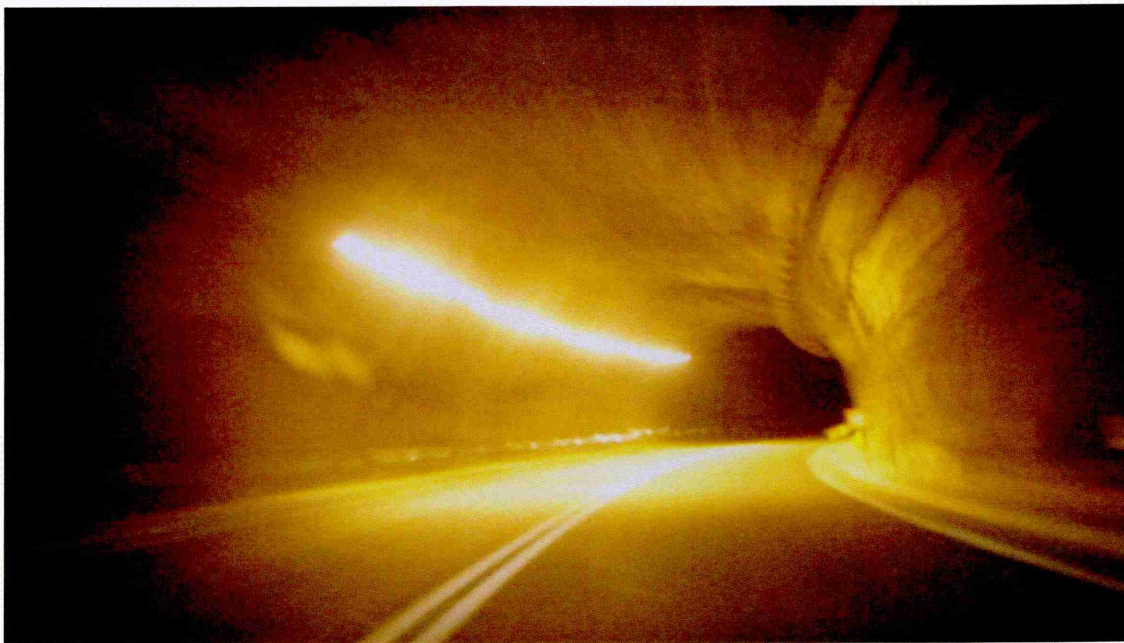
Figure 66 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 67 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 68 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 69 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
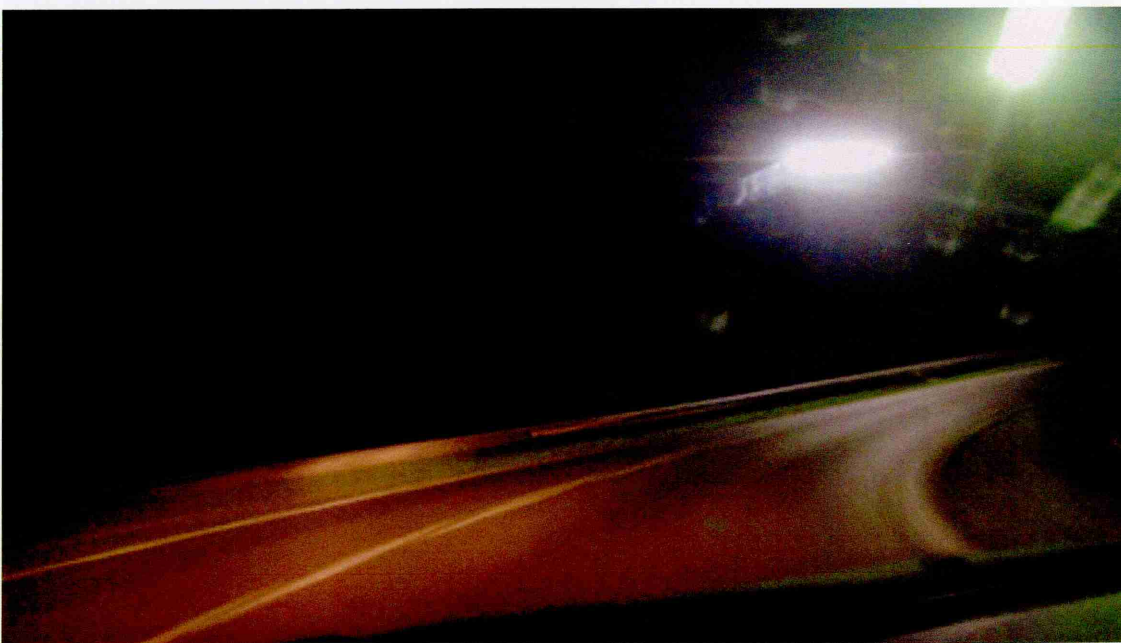
Figure 70 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 71 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 72 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 73 – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

Figure 74 − Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
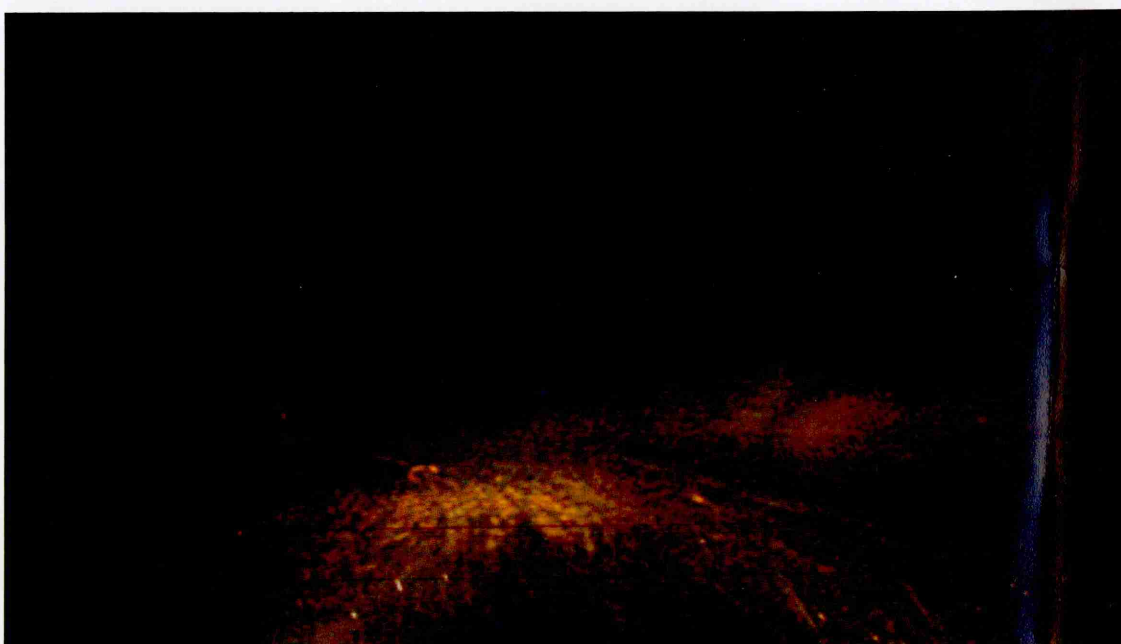
Figure 75 − Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.

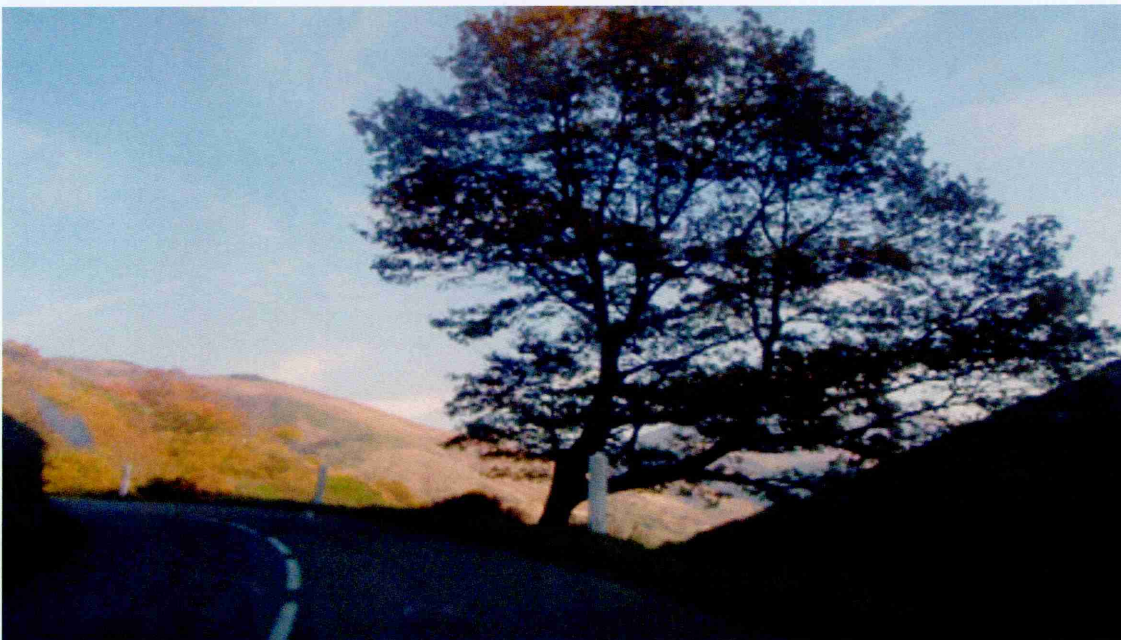**Figure 76** – Love Forbids Us to Love (photographs), 2008.
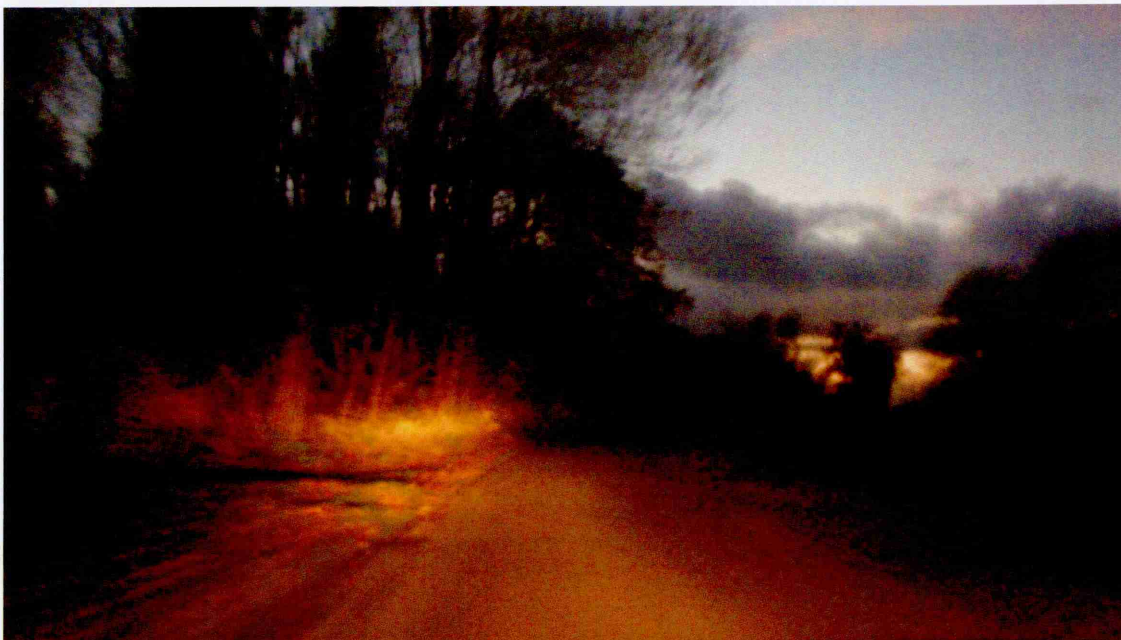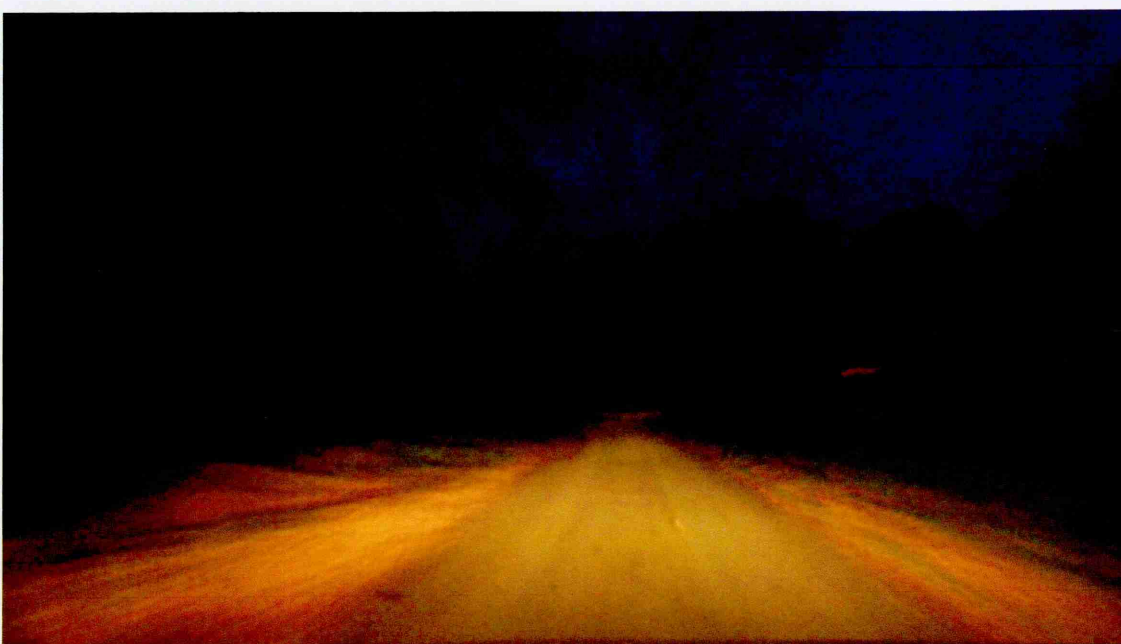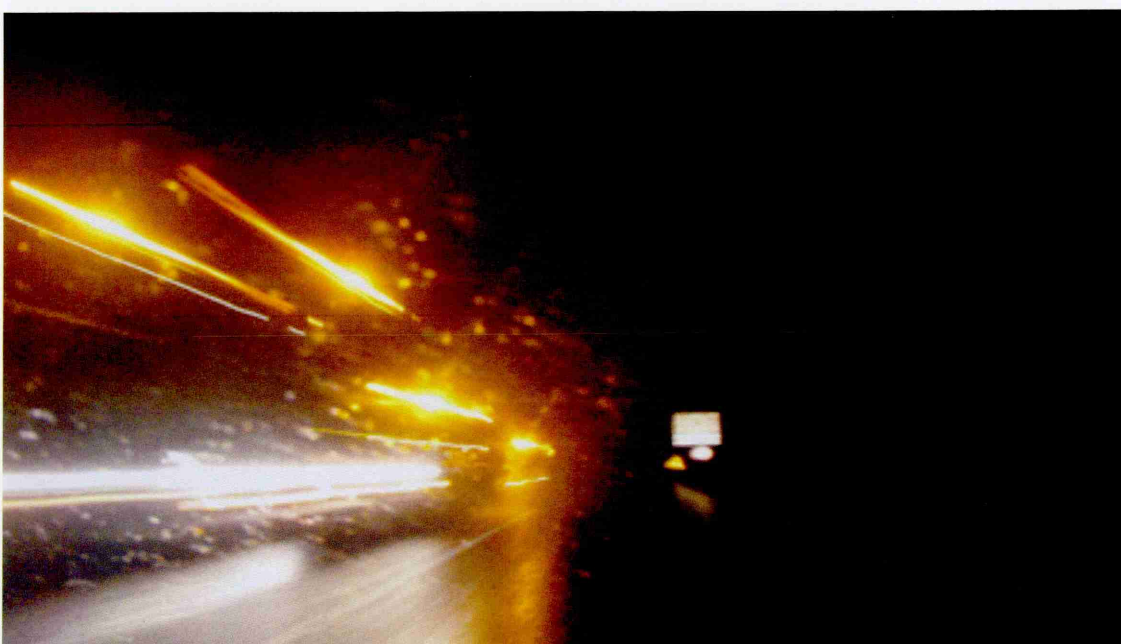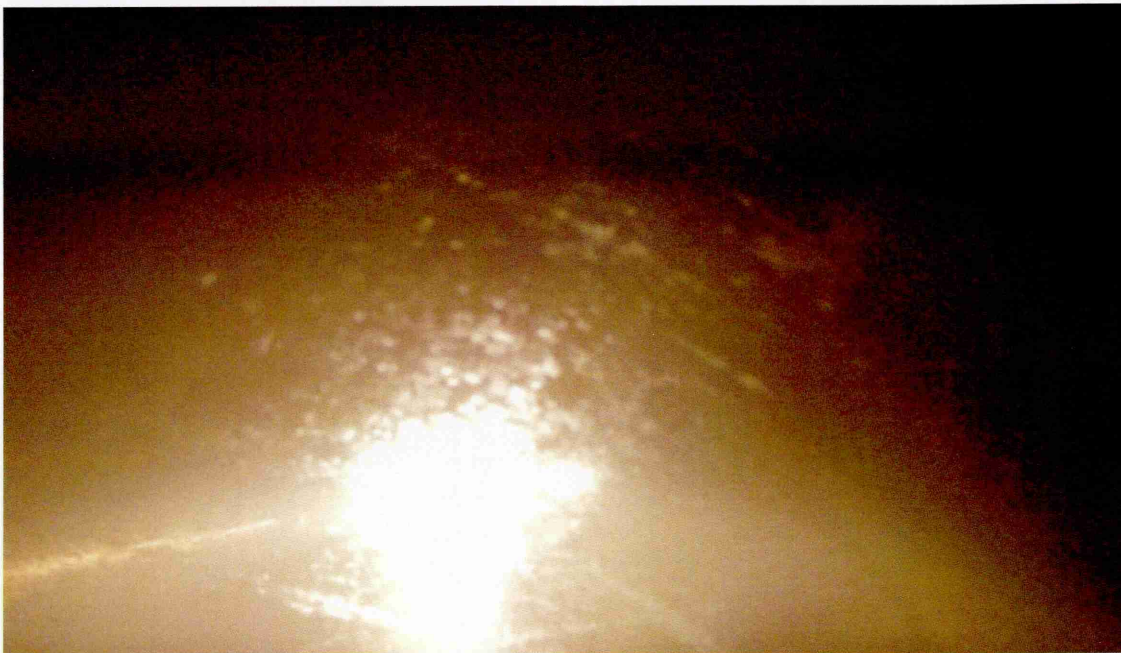
3.3- Interference

The journey to Longyearbyen is a long one. After a flight to Oslo, there is the connection flight to Tromson followed by a six hours wait and another flight to the Svalbard archipelago. Nowadays, waiting in an airport and smoking means getting to know the security personal, as when I pass the security control I am in a non-smoking country. The solution is to cross that border and return to civilisation but the problem with being a smoker is that you tend to need a cigarette more often than recommended, forcing inevitable commuting between the smoking and non-smoking land that can be translated as being constantly going through security and getting to test your mobility, again and again. The journey begins without have yet begun.

Late February, three in the morning, in the Artic Circle but that doesn't make much of the difference; the day was night and the night was still night. The plane touched down safely at Longyearbyen airport in the middle of a snowstorm. I have seen countries paralysed for less. It is freezing cold. The boots, packed after a rainy night somewhere else, were frozen and the shoestrings resembled frozen spaghetti. Twelve days to go but first I needed to get to the artist's flat, which was unlocked with the key in the door; the Arctic is a safe place.

The nearest and only supermarket was two miles down the road but it was a good day for a walk: it was only minus fifteen degrees. Five minutes later, the heating system that I had carefully designed broke down: the gloves were only preventing me from getting my hands dirty, the wind ignored the various types of layers that snowboard websites advised and the various socks were only stopping the blood from reaching my feet. I expected to be unprepared but it never occurred to me to be that unprepared. The solution was to walk faster to warm-up and find a clothes shop, fast. An hour later I

emerged from the shop feeling like a Longyearbyen born and bred and a hole on my bank account. I was ready! The supermarket proved to be another challenge: barely anything to buy and over priced supplies or maybe not, because everything needs to be shipped from the continent, which in turn receives coal and dead people (the permafrost prevents burials in the Svalbard). Nevertheless for the first time I did not have to worry about food defrosting on the way home. I walked back, cooked and ate.

Longyearbyen's road system is simple. A road leads from the airport bifurcating in two: one to the artist's flat and the hills, and the other to the hills. The town (houses, church, restaurants, shops, schools, university, hotels) emerged from that bifurcation. Moving in the Svalbard was not an easy task: you cannot leave town without a gun or a guide. I could have rented a gun but even if I managed to through the gun to the Polar Bear's head (I would not know how to aim and shoot), I would still have to deal with the frequent snowstorms and lack of visibility. Slowly I started exploring, walking to the edges of town, also known as the entrance to the autobahn of snowmobiles, there were no speed limits out of town. The way out of town is through organised tours. There was no other option I was told. Well, I inevitably disagreed but did not mention it. The hills were just there and I was going for a walk with a strategic rule that allowed me to feel safe, which meant that at least one rooftop had to be visible at all times. Visual culture, I guess. I walked and reached a small structure in the middle of the hills that reminded me of Bruce Nauman's *Double Steel Cage*. I kept walking but around me I could only see snow and more snow and the occasional rock. There were a few structures that emerged from the snow and traces of what might be a road during the summer, but I did not wait.

While getting back to the centre of town I was surprised by the nuances that I started to notice; constantly rescanning the city, each time there was something different to pay

attention to. Once, I noticed a cable leading away from all the parked cars. Upon closer inspection it become clear that the cable ran from the engine to a power plug installed in front of every parking bay. I thought to myself that it could be useful in case the battery in the camera ran out. That thought was the consequence of, a few months earlier, having spent an hour trying to hack into a roadwork sign in the middle of nowhere while crossing the Italian alps in an attempt to charge the camera. Later, I was told that the engines have an electric blanket that prevents them from freezing and I was not to plug anything in it. After a few days in that routine, claustrophobia started to set in. I was on an island inside another island, I could not move. Nauman's *Double Steel Cage* was more present then ever. Night walks started to be part of a daily schedule but that is when the snowstorms were at their high and everything seemed unreal. The wind used the snow to create moving drawings; the snow was choreographed by the wind. The snow movements repeated themselves resting between blows. A woman walked her dog at three in the morning with winds of fifty miles an hour and minus 25 degrees. Life seemed normal again.

The day to visit the Russian ghost town arrived. Pyraminden *(Пирамида)* is an abandoned mining town, 50 miles from Longyearbyen, with a population of three where previously there were a few thousands. This is my opportunity to leave Longyearbyen, ride a snowmobile, visit a Russian town, and return. The day starts early with the various participators gathering at the tour operator offices. We were ten visitors and two guides, it is a rule: for every six persons you need a guide and a gun. The diversity of the characters was good enough material to write a short story but I will leave it out.[1] We got our snowmobile suits, boots, masks and helmets, and gather around the snowmobiles. Apparently I was the only person who had never driven one of

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[1] The Swedish snowmobile freaks, the Norwegian honeymoon couple, the Finnish stag weekend group, and the artist from Portugal.

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those machines. So, I received a crash course in snowmobiles: 'you see this switch? When you press it you are accelerating and when you release it, you are breaking. Let's go! You go in the front.' I was on a skateboard in front of ten Formula One cars but maybe it is called Arctic hospitality; to let the inexperienced lead the way. I pressed the accelerator while recounting the life insurances subscribed to under the southern European sun.

Ahead of us were eight hours of driving (four each way) across frozen lakes, frozen mountains, and frozen valleys. My right foot was frozen because the boots were two sizes too big and the right boot does not lock. According to Bruce Nauman a sense of self implies an awareness of the body and I was aware of my right foot as never before. Ten minutes later, after crossing the first lake, we stopped to make sure everyone was feeling comfortable. I had found a way to defrost the foot using the heat from the engine but that implied going flat out, which was the idea anyway. Time passed and driving the snowmobile became easier and enjoyable. The surroundings were white, which was one of the objectives of this journey, photographing whiteness, but there was an obvious problem that I had not accounted for, which is the difficulty of photographing whiteness. A few days earlier an idea emerged, that of being inside a drawing. The snow would take the place of the white paper and I would be a moving drawing in the whiteness of the snow.

On the way back from Pyraminden, we were hit by a snowstorm. A big snowstorm and two guides and two GPSs were not enough to find the way. Some of the race drivers could not help themselves from overturning their machines when attacking the wrong hill. We were in a whiteout and we stopped. The surroundings were whiter than ever and there was only a tonality in 360 degrees, everywhere a uniform whiteness. There was no horizon line, there were no rocks, nothing to hold the eyes. Nothing but one

tone of whiteness wherever you would look. I am in a blank page. [2] An hour later and back on track, we crossed routes with two skiers each pulling a sledge in the middle of the blizzard. Life was normal again.

The title for the work is, *Arctic Drawings – a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*. A series of photographs that invest in the possibility of snow taking the function of the white paper while rethinking (after Nauman) the role of the artist. The photographic medium hosts the representation of drawings (guest) mediated by the proposition of an artist helping the world by revealing mystical truths (parasite), but agreeing with Nauman, I refrain from making more comments about the work, leaving it open. Nevertheless, this subchapter addresses I refrain from making more comments about the work, leaving it open. Nevertheless, this subchapter addresses the interface's third notion: interference, which cannot be articulated during the formulation of the interface. Interference is what the artist did not account for when articulating the message and the noise but always present in the interface. Interference reveals itself – it is activated – by the observer's enaction of the interface while constructing the work of art. Interference muddles the interpretation by the observers of the message and the noise while at the same time reinforces the message and noise for the artist. There is always an implicit tension and incommensurability between what is first formulated in

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[2] Robert Rauschenberg's *The White Paintings* (1951) and John Cage's *4'33"* (1952) come to mind. Also, Robert Irwin and James Turrell experiences, during the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum, with Ganzfelds, which can be recreated by placing half ping-pong balls in each eye and often used to explain experiential blindness. For further considerations on experiential blindness see , Noë, *Action in Perception*, p. 4-6.

See also: Yvonne Rand account on Agnes Martin painting *Untitled #3*, 1993, where she points to the differences between *seeing* and *looking*; Yvonne Rand, ' On seeing *Untitled # 3:* Bands of white and graphite', in Rinder (ed.), *Searchlight*, pp. 109–116. Or, Jean-Luc Nancy suggests that to hear the philosopher, one needs to neutralise one's ability to listening; see: Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening [À l'écoute (2002)]*, trans. Charlote Mandell, New York: Fordham University Press, 2007.

the interface (as message and noise) by the artist and what the observer will enact during the formation of the work of art. For example, when considering this subchapter as an interface: the message should be understood as the explanation of a notion of interference; the noise is materialized in the travel narrative and the work *Pyramendein*, which is significantly different from the other works mentioned in this project and consequently provokes a disturbance in previous understandings; finally, interference is activated during the experience of the journey (first-journey for the artist and second-journey for the observer).[3]

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[3] My use of first-journey and second-journey reflect the propositions made by Maria Lindgren's PhD dissertation, in which a second journey designates 'a journey that uses a previous travel narrative as a "map" to follow'. Maria Lindgren, *The Second Journey: Travelling in Literary Footsteps*, published PhD Dissertation, University of Umea, 2000, p. 5.
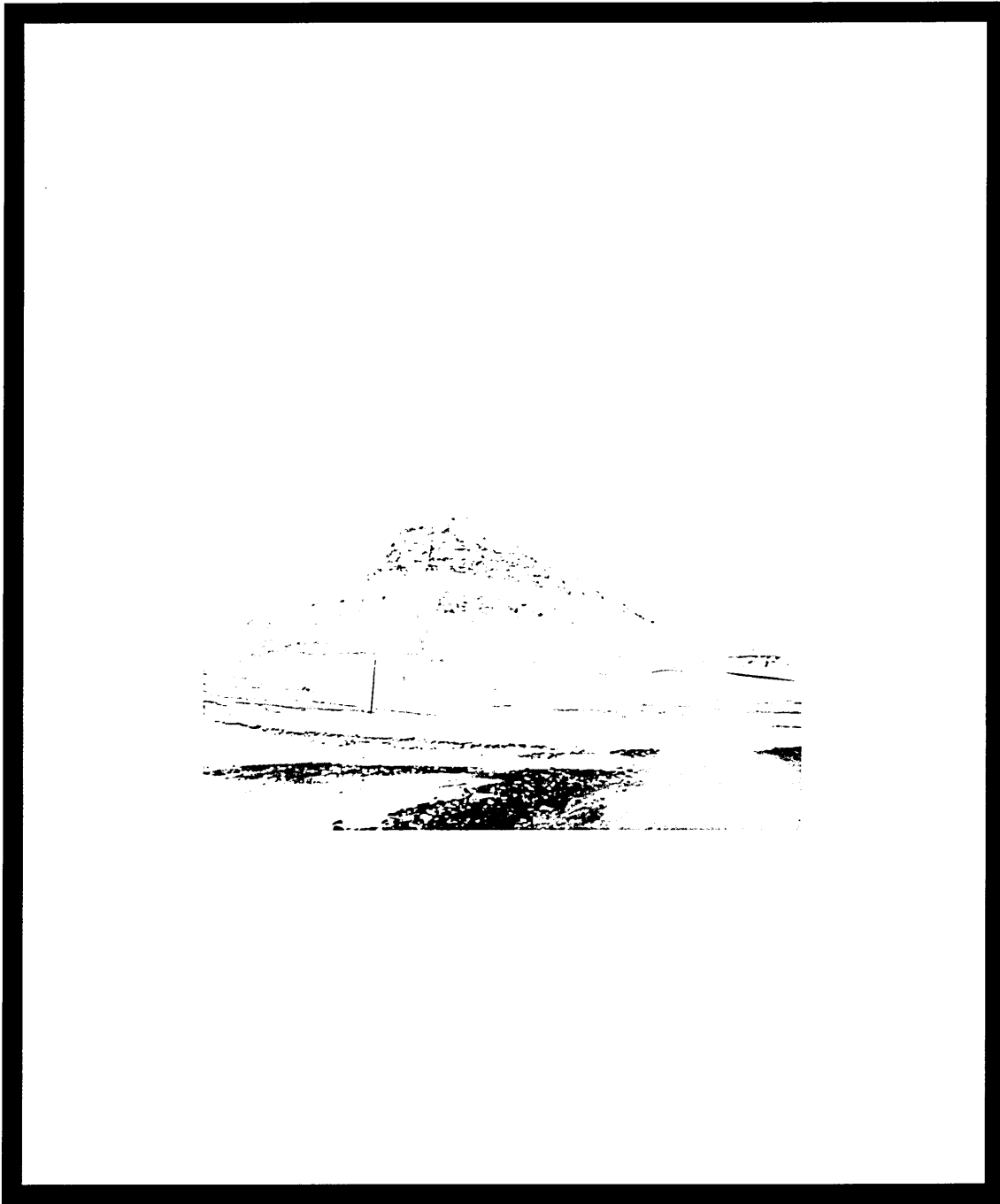
Figure 77 — *Arctic Drawings — a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.
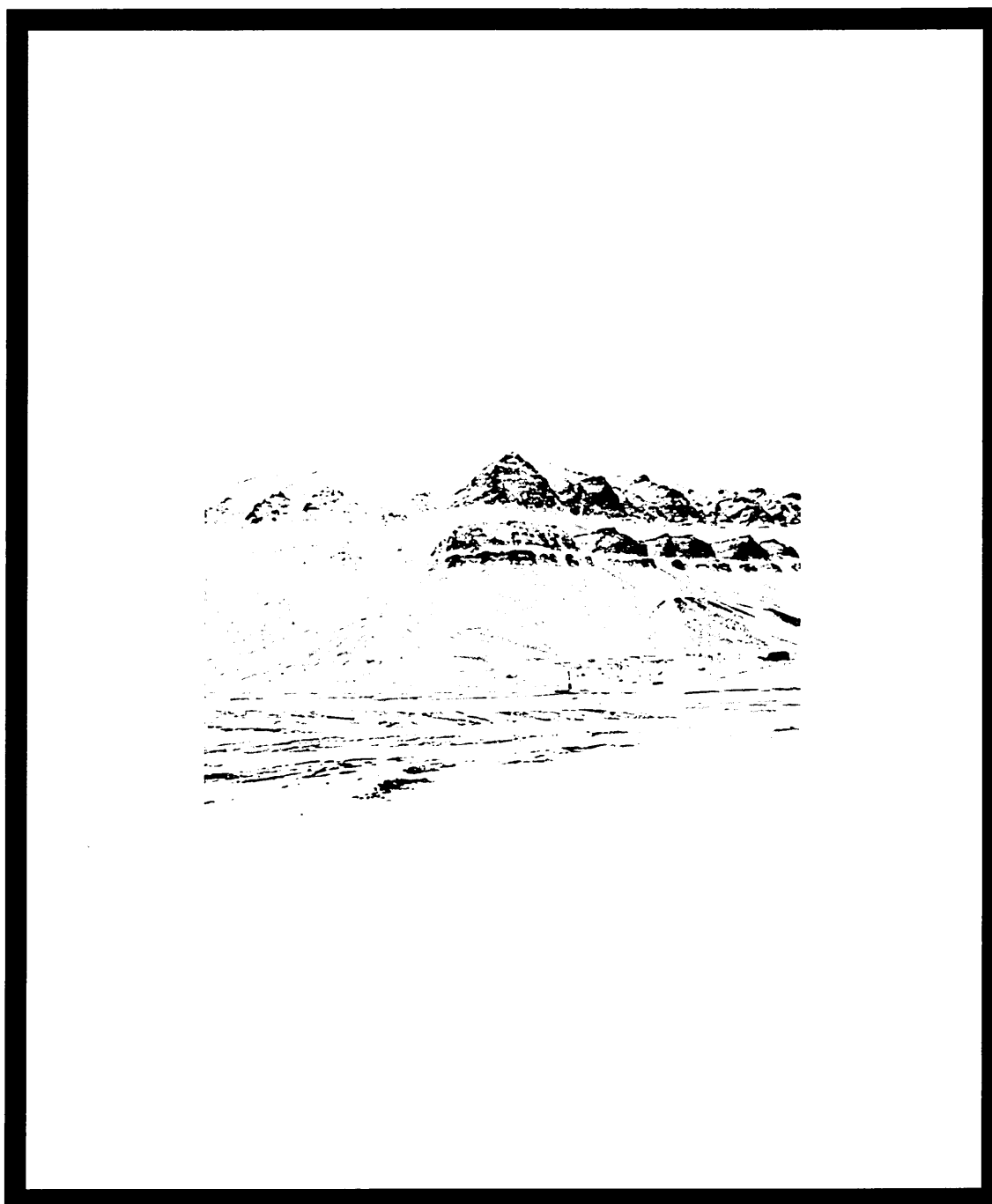
Figure 78 – *Arctic Drawings* – *a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.

Figure 79 – *Arctic Drawings* – *a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.

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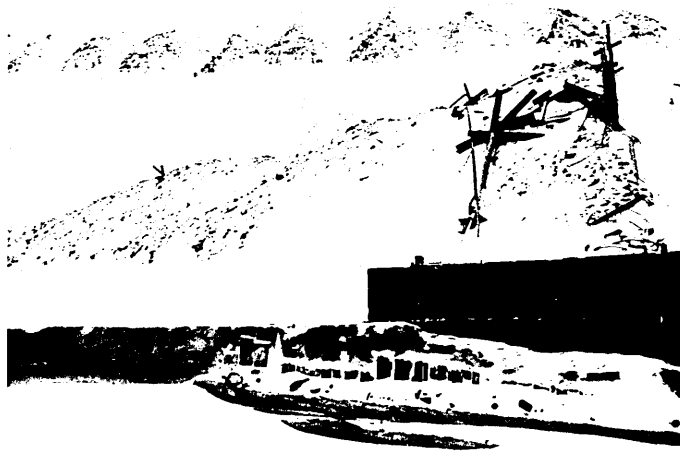
Figure 80 — *Arctic Drawings* — *a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.

Figure 81 – *Arctic Drawings – a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.
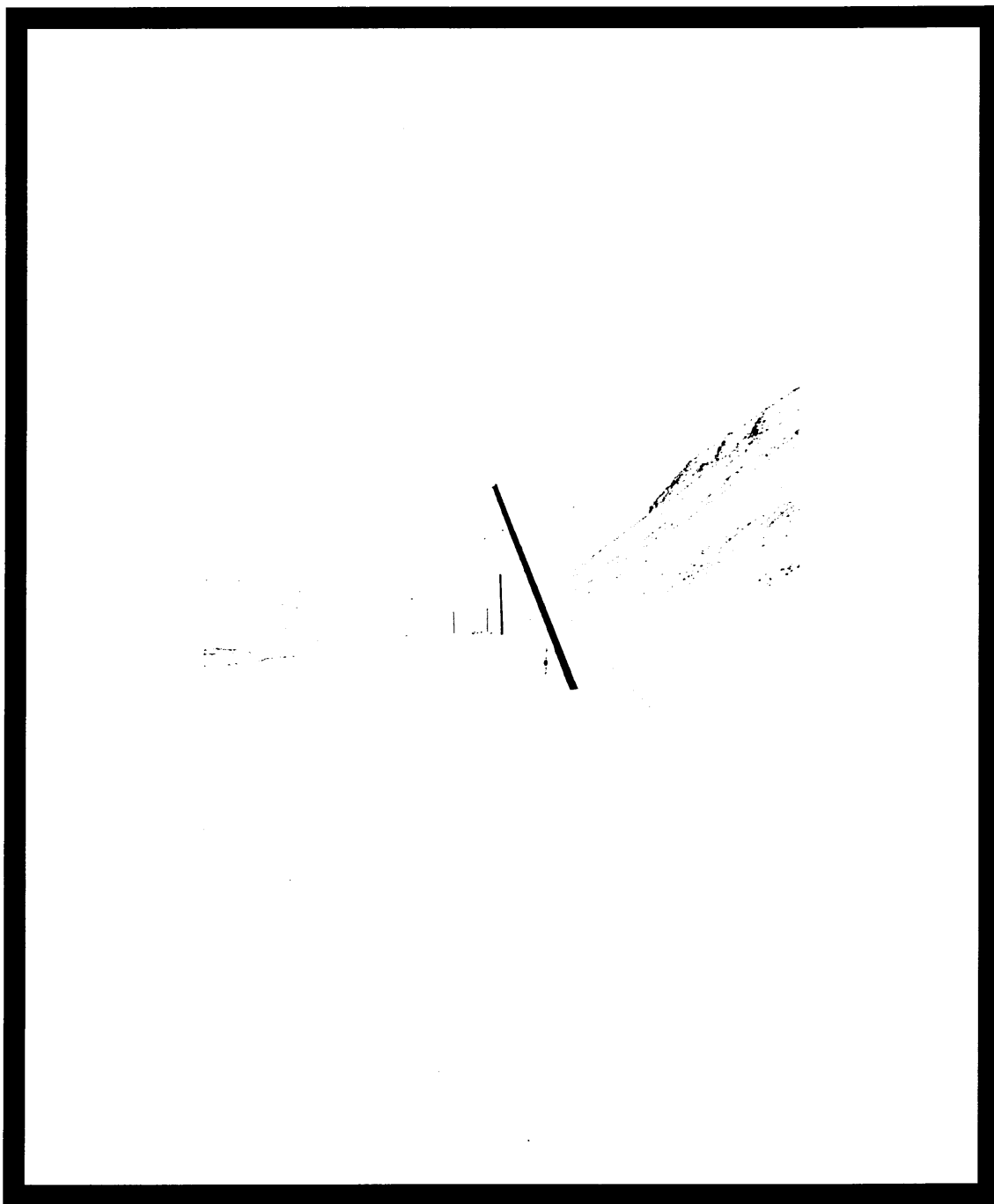
Figure 82 – *Arctic Drawings* – *a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.

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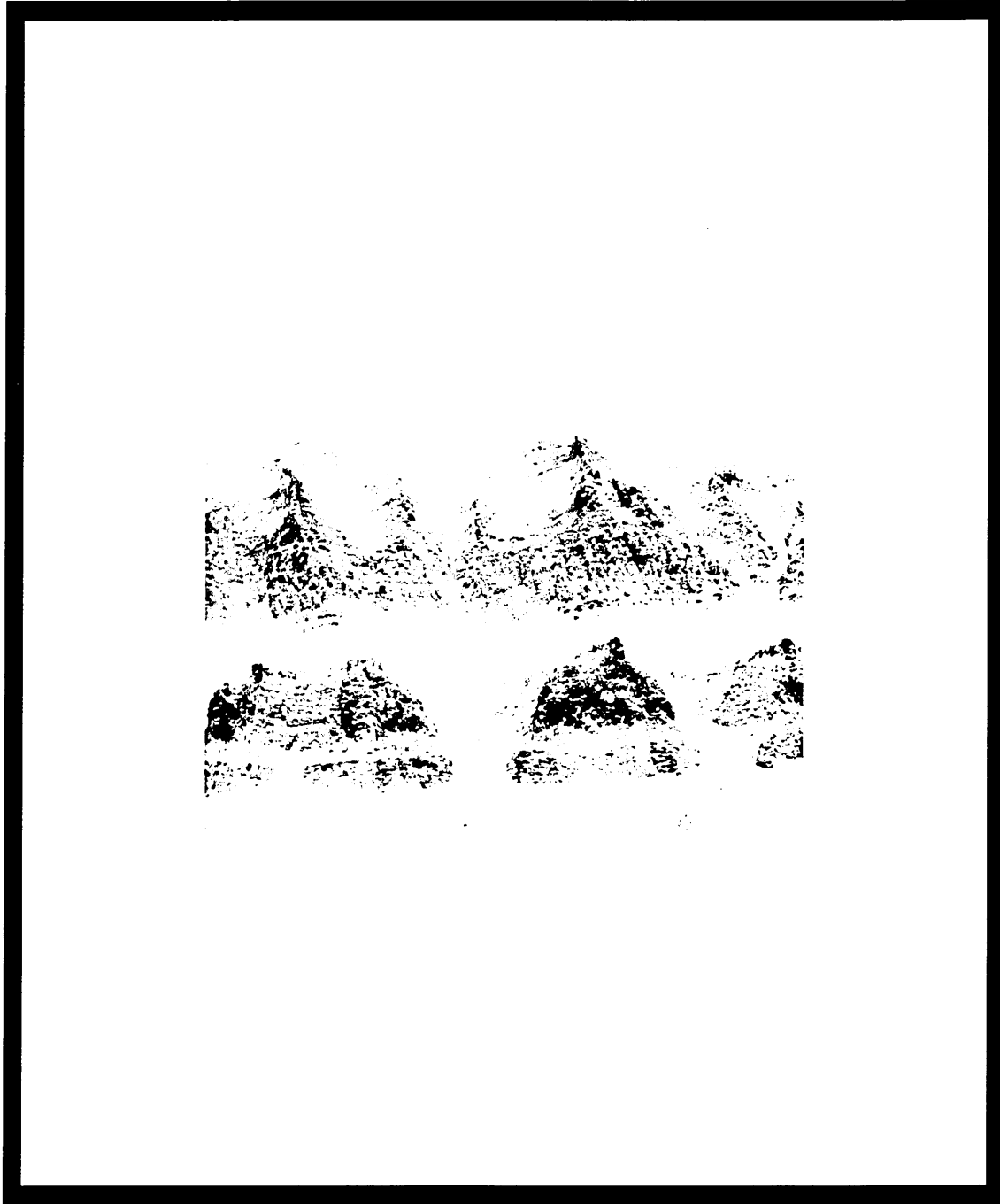
Figure 83 – *Arctic Drawings – a.k.a. The True Artist Reveals Mystic Truths to The World (After Nauman)*, 2009.

Figure 84 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.
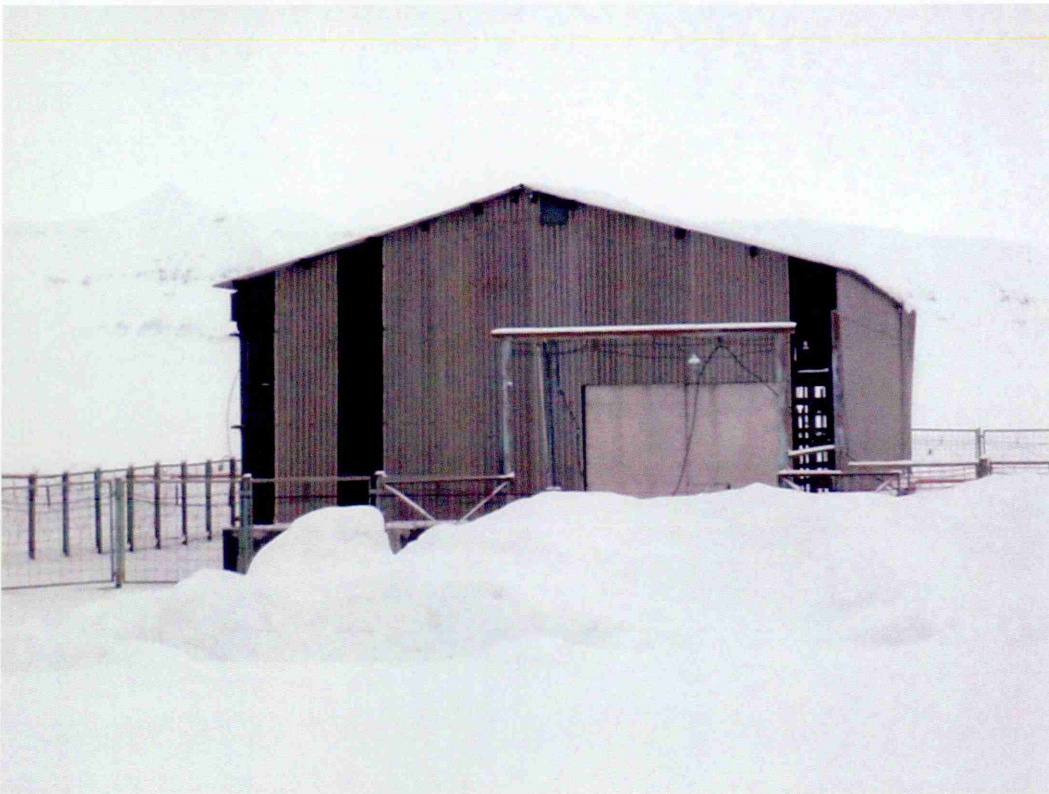
Figure 85 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 86 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.
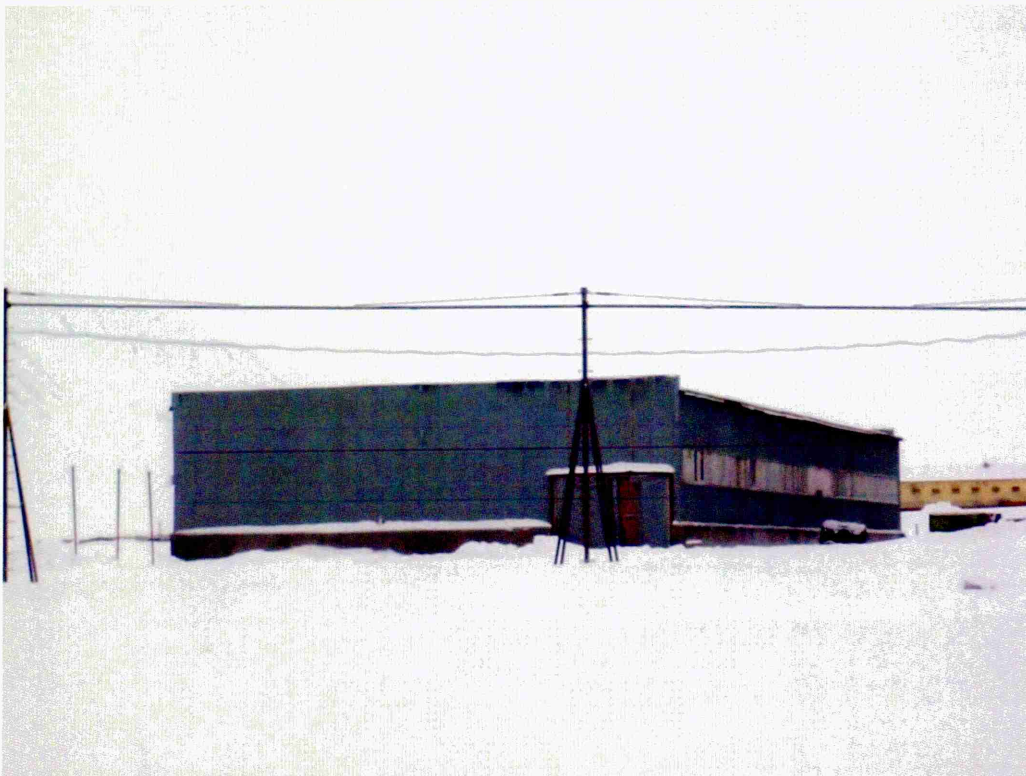
Figure 3.3.1 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 87 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 88 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 89 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 90 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

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Figure 91 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 92 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 93 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 94 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.
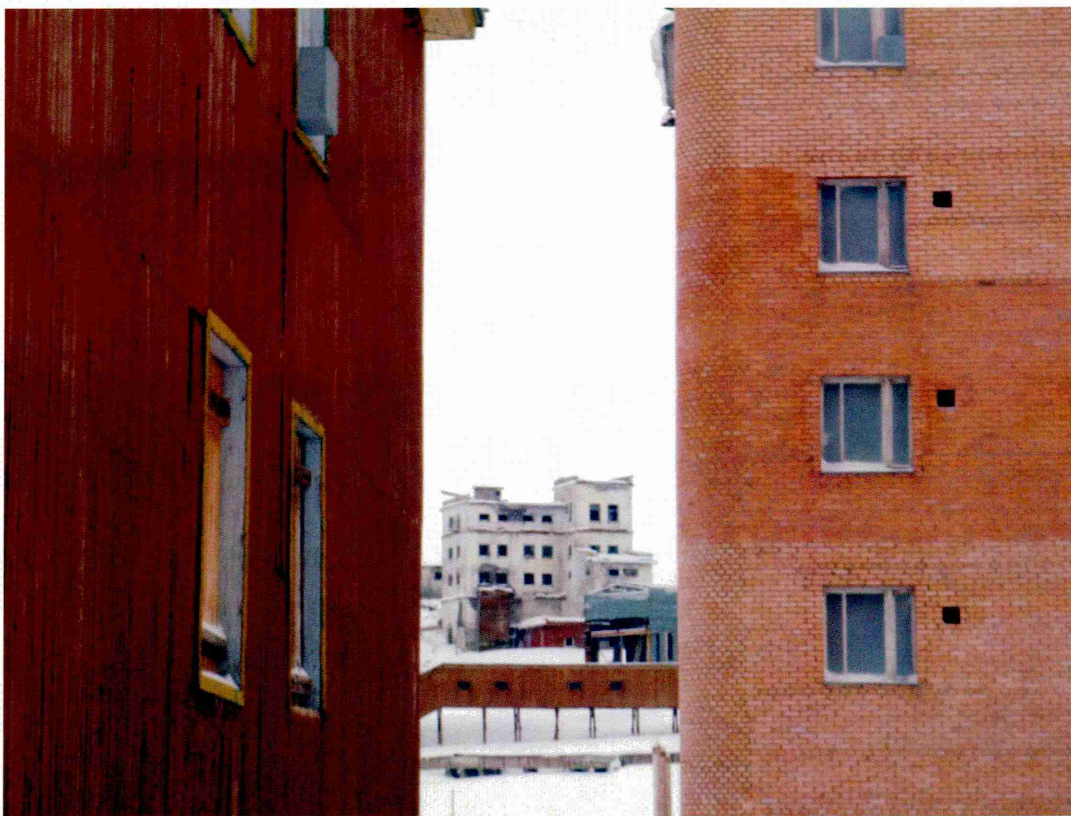
Figure 95 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 96 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 97 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 98 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 99 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 100 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 101 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 102 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 103 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 104 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 105 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 106 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 107 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 108 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 109 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 110 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 111 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 112 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

Figure 113 – *Pyramendein*, 2009.

3.4 The frame's revenge

Lisbon, early February and a plan: drive to the desert, take pictures and drive back.[1] The drive went across mountains and vales and somehow I could not stop thinking that the Moroccan landscape reminded me of my own experience of the Portuguese landscape in the early 1980s. 1500 kms and a ferry later, the camels were ready but travelling on a camel is a very unnecessary thing to do unless you are a tourist. I embarked on a scripted journey to the desert. The so-called desert experience is composed by two painful hours on top of a camel, a dinner in a Berber tent and a night in the dunes, which have been transformed into a Moroccan theme park; on the way back in the morning, that is clear from the number of camels and tourists emerging from the dunes, and the closer we get to the village the more crowed the dunes seem to be. The "desert" is more populated than some towns seen on the way to the desert, and this was during the low season. Nowadays a visit to that part of the Moroccan desert (Merzouga Dunes) is a touristic journey. A scripted journey to confirm the expectations of a particular western construction of what a visit to the desert might be, and any experience of alterity is restricted to the journey to the desert and not the desert. The purpose of such journeys is to solidify an experience of itself and the spatial dislocation associated with such visits functions as a proof and confirmation of a visit that was initiated much earlier through catalogues, photographs, tour guides; the aim of the visit is to solidify an experience of the self and its relation with an environment, previously

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[1] 'There is no teleology in the desert, they say. Blowing sand effaces markers, erasing time and memory. A landscape preexist us, outlives us, and, unlike other landscapes forgets us, the desert makes us aware of the limitations of human perception and memory. The desert is not empty, but it can only be navigated by close attention to the wind, the dunes, the oases, and plant life. The desert is not chaotic, but it is best understood locally; it asks for embodied presence, not abstract order.' Laura U. Marks, 'Asphalt Nomadism: The Desert in Arab Independent Cinema', in Martin Lefebvre (ed.), *Landscape and Film*, pp. 125-126.

formulated, independently of the place that will be visited. The American family with whom I spend the night in the desert embodied those convictions, they wanted a commodified experience of the desert and they got it. I was a driver in search of a particular landscape to photograph, which I had (also) previously identified.

One For the Mind, Two For the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World started on the road while working on *The Spiral Drive* and *Love Forbids Us to Love*. The title makes a direct reference to George Miller's paper from 1956,[2] in which the limits of working memory are addressed and the number seven is proposed as a reference number for the amount of elements that an individual can pay attention to. The departure point was to combine the contradictory images in one image using a diptych, which was an obvious choice to explore the idea of a whole that allowed for a proposition (message) and its disruption (noise) to co-exist, but with time it proved to be a simplistic reading of my own map. Nevertheless it was a point of departure and the decision was to combine images from the desert and snow.

Some weeks later I would embark in a visit to the Arctic, which you probably just read, but the visual opposition between the two places was less relevant than anticipated and the binary opposition needed to develop, contaminating itself and diluting the meaning of the proposed landscapes while creating a *corpus* for movement. Initially I try to merge the two different images but it proved problematic because the images of the snow would simply disappear. There was too much whiteness in the snow and I decided that I needed mountains with snow and not just snow. Better, I needed a horizon line with snow around it. The images of the desert were colonising the images of snow; the

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[2] George Miller, 'The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two: Some Limits on Our Capacity for Processing Information', *The Psychological Review*, 1956, vol. 63, pp. 81-97.

experiential blindness – the inability to associate meaning to the visual stimulation – that I experienced in the Arctic whiteout was present and the desert was absorbing the whiteness and annihilating any possibility of a dialectic between the images. The next step was to balance the images to achieve a balanced dialectic of difference and I drove to the Picos de Europa (northern Spain) where I frequently made a stop on my way to, or from, Lisbon. The Funte Dé cable car departs from a small village up to the mountains and to the snow with a horizon line. It was late April but there was still snow and I ventured to the mountains. At the top there was snow everywhere but nothing like in the Svalbard, which was good, and I used every bit of horizon line and rock to help me leave the blank page that I had found myself in the Arctic. Spring was on the way and the sound of the snow melting and collapsing was impressive; I remained still and paid attention to it.

A few months later, while in Los Angeles, the problems persisted: a balanced duality needed erasure remaining as a ruin of itself, something to be painted over, something that might disappear when the interface is completed.[3] On the way to the *Spiral Jetty*, I got trapped in a loop of successive and endlessness Nevada's valleys that prompted me to think about places in-between. Although my experience was one of being trapped inside a car in the desert, I was moving and thinking about Warburg's snakes.[4] The importance of Warburg's 'snake' as a metaphor to address contradictions become more relevant than ever, or more precisely the consequences of contradictions, which can be

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[3] 'In *America*, Jean Baudrillard produces a postmodern discourse of displacement that relies upon a host of Euro-American modernist tropes: exile, solitude, distance, emptiness, nostalgia, and loss.' See: Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement*. Durham; London; Duke Universtity Press, 1996, p. 69.

[4] Warburg's use of the snake has strong resemblances with Bergson's zig-zag, as noted by Martha Blassingg: 'Bergson's philosophy in which the zig-zag features as a metaphor for the improbabilities and contingencies of the mechanistic cause-and-effect principle when applied to the dimensions of life.' Blassingg, *Time, Memory, Consciousness and the Cinema Experience*, p. 26.

understood as movement.[5] A journey can be explained in relation to a departure and to an arrival, which can be understood as a duality (lights on or off) but that does not explains much about what happened in-between, which is what I was interested in. The landscapes, I thought, had to follow a similar pattern; an image needs to expand and contaminate the other image while fading away and creating a place in-between where neither of the two images is stronger but conflicting and harmonic at the same time. The memories and expectation conflicting and reaffirming themselves while past, present and future merge in a singular embodied experience.

On the way back from Arizona, I contemplated the experience of breaking the car in the middle of the United Colonies of America (also known as, USA),[6] a movie-like experience that Oliver Stone's *U-Turn* represents fairly well. The car broke down on a Sunday in Tuba City, Arizona, which is in the middle of the Navajo reservation. I had encounters with Indian teenagers, a starving horse barely standing up, three Indians on their horses trotting and shouting, and every person related to the automobile industry, who were offended by my request for synthetic oil.[7] Thanksgiving was a few days away and a sympathetic mechanic suggested that it was almost impossible to have the car ready before the holiday, meaning that I would have to wait another week in town. I eventually found the only bottle of synthetic oil in town while gaining some notoriety as

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[5] 'The movement of an ever changing fluid whole [as proposed by Bergson]... resituates what Warburg called "motion" as a persistence of intermediary states in the displacement of the figure revealing the underlying Dionysian principle – the creative disorder of organic life– within the perceptual processes of the beholder.' Blassingg, *Time, Memory, Consciousness and the Cinema Experience*, p.199.

[6] My experience of travelling across the United Sates of America, during the public discussion on health care, suggested me a country colonised by itself.

[7] Tim Cresswell addresses the politics of mobility through a closer look at the implications of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans: 'New Orleans ... is but a metonym for an entire world on the move. In this world it is important to understand that mobility is more than about just getting from A to B. It is about the contested world of meaning and power. It is about mobilities rubbing up against each other and causing friction. It is about a new hierarchy based on the ways we move and the meanings these movements have been given.' Tim Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 259–265.

the synthetic oil's foreigner, and drove to Flagstaff, eighty miles away, stopping every fifteen minutes to top the engine with oil, which was dripping badly.

As proposed by José Luiz Bermudez,[8] the paradox of self-reflection requires movement between a notion of a self and the articulation of that self by its own foreigner. The movement is contingent upon a perception of contradictory perspectives between a self and its foreigner (or between a message and its noise) but implicit in a condition of being. That movement is an unchoreographed dance between a self and its foreigner in a place in-between, led by a message disrupted by its own noise and allowing the dance to continue; the roles between the message and noise are interchangeable and fluid, and act as promoters of movement, harmony and conflict. The diptychs propose an implicit movement by embodying the various mutations and retaining the traces of those mutations. They are not static and they embody a question while disrupting or comforting themselves but always creating movement from that process, which acknowledges itself by retaining the ruins of previous movements and demanding future movements from an observer. For a place in-between to exist someone needs to be there and at least one subject is required in that process of establishing a relation with movement. The union of frames in the diptychs, or the time spent in a motel while waiting for the car to be repaired, was the missing element;[9] departing from a duality of meanings and driving across the relations between those contradictory elements, I was

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[8] 'The paradox of self-consciousness arises because mastery of the semantics of the first-person pronoun is available only to creatures capable of thinking first-person thoughts whose contents involve reflexive self-reference and thus seem to presuppose mastery of the first-pronoun.' See Bermudez, *The Paradox of Self-Consciousness*, p. 40.

[9] This can be understood as an apparent inertia, as explained by Paul Virilio in relation to the Balkan Wars: ' the Serbs forces have countered this capability for total monitoring of *any significant element moving on the surface of the earth* by scattering and remaining static – that is to say, by apparent inertia – as they await a frontal assault which the Allies seem unable to resolve to undertake'. Paul Virilio, *Strategy of Deception* (*Stratégie de la déception* [1999]), trans. Chris Turner, London; New York: Verso, 2007, p. 19.

now in a situation that questioned everything else – I could not move (I was not able to depart but neither I could stay) but was surrounded by movement;[10] the situation acknowledged the presence of the traveller and the lack of movement and allowed a place in-between to emerge. The central frame is a place in-between that provides a safe heaven between the two different images while at the same time disrupting them. Meeting the foreigner is feeding the self; they are one, as in the relation between the two frames that create the diptych. Two eyes and a brain rendering two images in one that does not match and is conditioned by the presence of the nose [it is not a typo mistake it is the organ between the eyes] between the two images. We, in our embodiment, access the world instead of representing it, and accessing the world is the movement to allow the articulation of contradictions in a world that is also in movement.

The various steps in the production of the diptychs can be articulated in a variety of forms but with a common denominator, which is the movement between those steps. Thus, each individual image was produced in order to be viable by itself, as an exquisite and picturesque landscape of the desert. Then I would select another image that was incompatible with the first one and would place them side by side to create a new image with both landscapes. Then, the images were distorted to contaminate while fading into the other image. Finally, the composed image is cut into two new images, which are individually framed and brought together. But the work can also be articulated as: from initial picturesque and romanticist landscape that requires its opposite to create a modernist dialectic, there is a progression to a post-modernist dilution of meaning operated through a fading and stretching of each landscape while allowing for the ruins of the picturesque landscapes and their dialectic to remain present. Then, there is a deconstruction cutting the diluted meanings with traces of the previous mutations.

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[10] The motel front desk had a sign stating that they were not liable for the frequent super–long freight trains that run non-stop through the night.

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Lastly, there is a confirmation of the existence of the individual initial propositions but with traces of the previous steps, an accretive process.[11] The central frame allows for the spiral to grow by demanding a conscious decision to the observer: moving away from the central frame and reach the remaining interface, while pulling the observer to itself. The central frame is the question mark that transforms the two images and their relations in a question that can only be answered by an observer, where the observer places attention and how that implies the observer's movement.

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[11] 'Of particular interest is the notation Warburg made from his readings of the latter's [Franz Boas] *The Growth of Indian Mythologies* published in *The Journal of American Folklore* between January and March of 1896. On it he copied this citation from the article: "I draw the conclusion that the mythologies of the various tribes as we find them now are not organic growths, but have gradually developed and obtained their present form by accretion of foreign material.' Pamela Kort, 'The Unmastered Past of the Indians Murder', in Pamela Kort and Max Hollein (eds), *I Like America: Fictions from the Wild West.* Munich; London; New York: Presten, 2007, pp. 44–68.

Figure 114 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.

Figure 115 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.
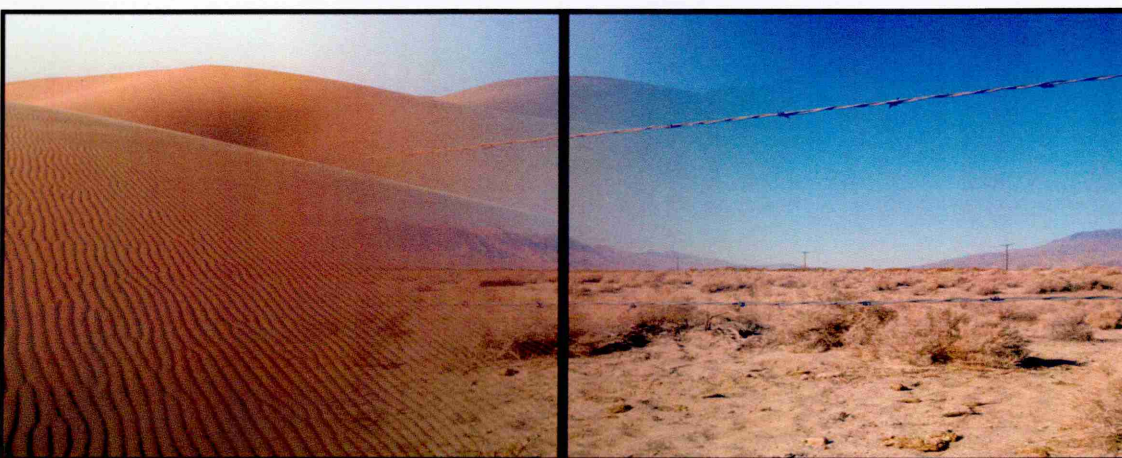
Figure 116 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.
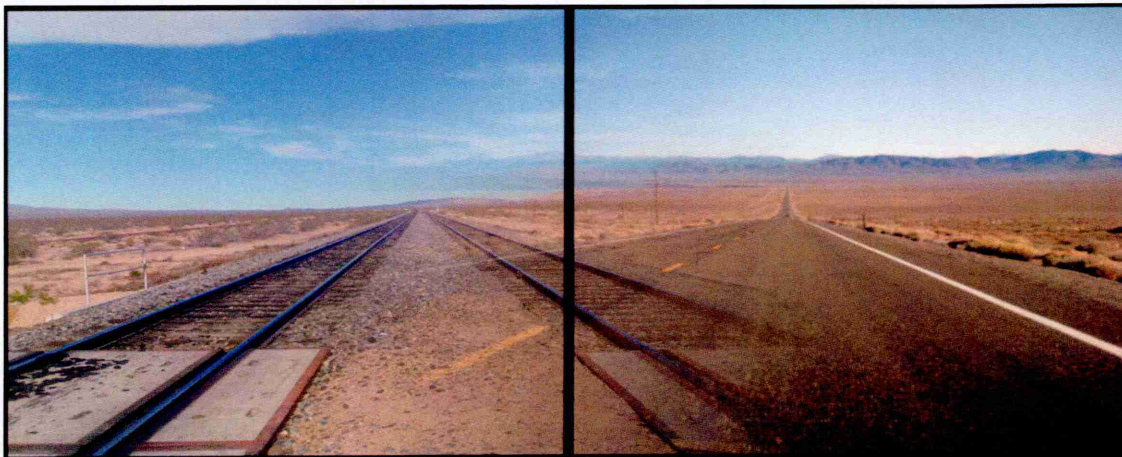
Figure 117 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.

Figure 118 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.
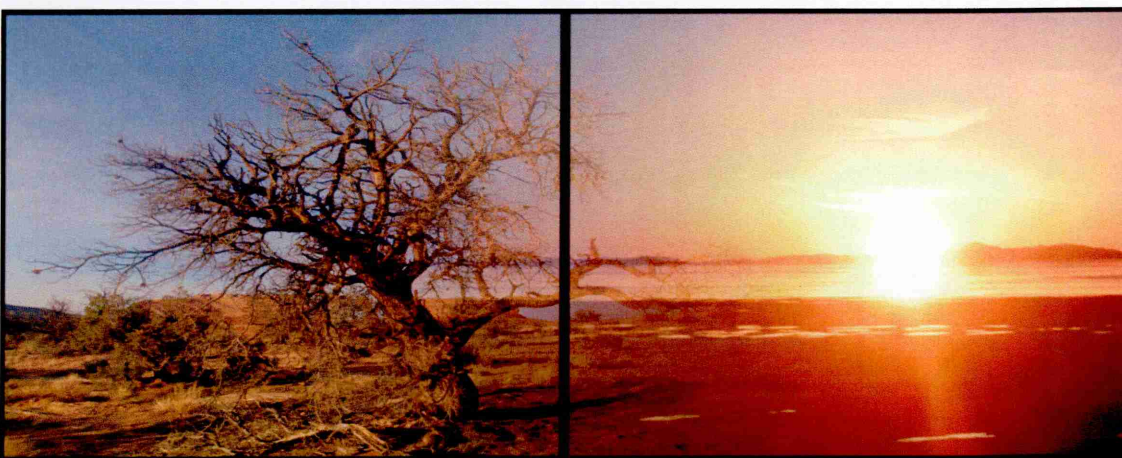
Figure 119 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,* 2010.

Figure 120 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,*
2010.
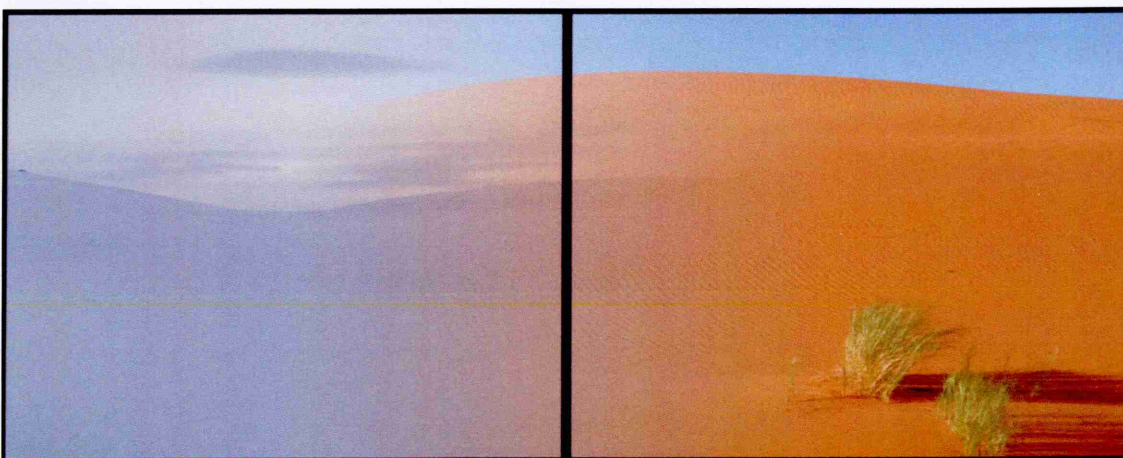
Figure 121 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,*
2010.
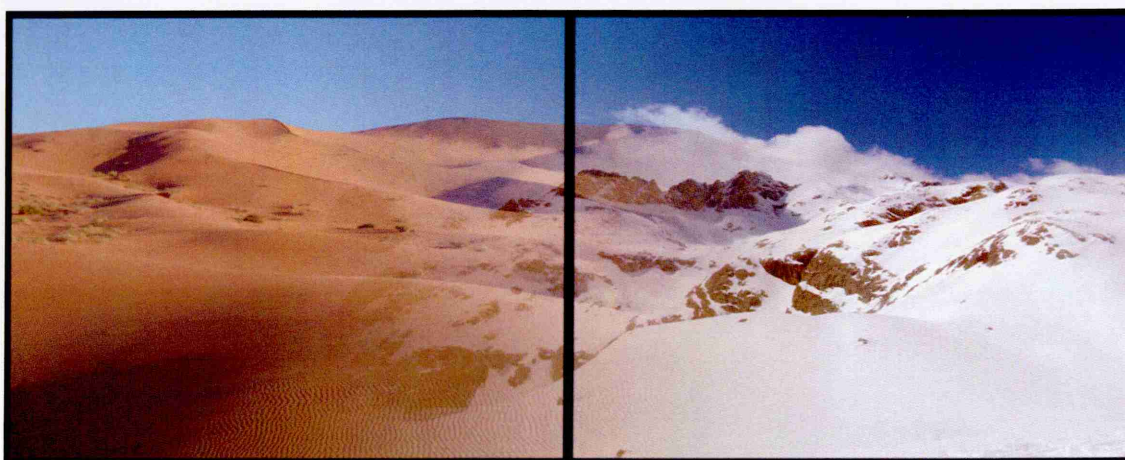
Figure 122 – *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the World,*
2010.

4

Conclusions:

The ParaSite, the Foriegner[1] and the Snake.

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[1] The word 'foreigner' is intentionally misspelled.

Untitled #0

This project is transdisciplinary and engages with a wide range of disciplines to establish relations with the artistic practice – where this thesis should be located. A natural implication of the amount of territory covered is that the overview of the different positions is undeniably superficial; each discipline deserves a specific address, a dedicated work. Nevertheless, the rational behind this approach is that the likelihood of diverse and convergent evidences increases the prospect of a hypothesis, as proposed by Charles Sanders Peirce's idea of abductive reasoning.[2]

The transdisciplinary nature of this project is parasitic; as suggested by Serres, the role of the parasite is to play the relation or the position between its host and guest, and not their content:

> to play the position or to play the location is to dominate the relation. It is to have a relation only with the relation itself. Never with the stations from which it comes, to which it goes, and by which it passes (…) that is the meaning of the prefix *para* – in the word *parasite*: it is on the side, next to, shifted; it is not on the thing, but on the relation.[3]

This project feeds itself on what it finds available in the various disciplines that it touches, disrupting and invading while moving like Warburg's snake – with maximum mobility and minimum target – to articulate contradictions while formulating

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[2] I am referring to abductive reasoning as proposed by C.S. Peirce: 'this step of adopting a hypothesis as being suggested by the facts, is what I call *abduction*.' (…) 'Now, that the matter of no new truth can come from induction or from deduction, we have seen. It can only come from abduction; and abduction is, after all, nothing but guessing.' Charles Sanders Pierce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Pierce, Volume VII*, Arthur W. Burks (ed.), Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1958, p. 122 p. 137.

[3] Serres, *Parasite*, p. 38.

hypotheses. This project is, also, a foriegner (Kristeva's foreigner) who disrupts by being present – mirroring unexpected traits of its hosts while inviting them to reconsider themselves, to greet their own foreigner. Throughout this project my primary and underlying aim has been the proposition of a hypothesis which may be considered by artists while developing interfaces; specifically, those that facilitate experiences of self-reflection in an observer. Thus, I have addressed the need to better understand the value of employing *noise* in the construction of those interfaces.

I have identified the most appropriated models to investigate subjective experiences as those proposed by Paul Crowther (ontological reciprocity), Andy Clark (extended mind) and Alva Noë (enactive approach), which are fundamentally phenomenological and recognise an embodied presence in the world. However similar, they are also different; Crowther extends the mind from the brain to the body, Clark extends it from the body to the world, and Noë, in an even more radical proposition, argues that the mind *is* in the world. Although there is a differentiation based on the limits of the mind those models have a similar structure, which is that subjectivity is contingent while conditioning the enaction by an embodied subject of a *mind-independent reality*, which is *selectively accessed* – rather than represented or constructed – with the subject's sensory-motor capacities (language being one of those capacities), attention and cognition, *in an ontological, non-linear and causal relation with the world and all of its components*. These are holistic approaches that avoid differentiations based on value, or primacy between biological, social-cultural perspectives, and notions of place (Cresswell's metanarratives of mobility) while retaining the differentiation based on their functions. The parts are

recognised and differentiated without being removed from the whole at the risk of changing the experience of the whole and its parts.[4]

Although I am concerned with subjective experiences I am not attempting to solve what David Chalmers refers to as the hard problem of consciousness – subjective experience rather than its functional characteristics, which is the easy problem. However, my concerns acknowledge and are contingent to Chalmers' 'hard problem'.[5] The models mentioned above, and in particular, Noe's proposition, suggest that subjectivity is both contingent and a condition but not sufficient *per see* to access a readily available world rather that representing the world in a brain or constructing the world with the brain, or even being constructed by the world – we evolve in the world. This proposition holds an important implication for the artistic practice: an observer accesses an interface (to render the work of art) rather than constructing it or being constructed by it. For example, an observer might focus his/her attention on a particular element of the interface (i.e. a formal element or a socially constructed interpretation), but that does not determine the interface, only the work of art. The interface is there readily available to be accessed by the observer, independently of how and what will be accessed. Consequently, this distinction implies that a notion of authorship and its implicit ethics, or what Paul Crowther refers to as an articulation of the artist's personal vision in a

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[4] Crowther, *Art and Embodiment*, p. 2. Also noted by Manuel deLanda, expanding Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's notion of assemblages: 'relations of exteriority also imply that the properties of the component parts can never explain relations which constitute the whole'. See: De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society:* p. 11.

[5] 'The really hard problem of consciousness is the problem of *experience*. When we think and perceive, there is a whir of information-processing, but there is also a subjective aspect. (...) This subjective aspect is experience.' See David J. Chalmers, 'Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness', in *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 2(3), 1995, pp. 200–219.

stylised reciprocity,[6] should not be ignored when addressing the interface or the work of art. That is, a notion of authorship is not sufficient but it is a condition in the creation of the interface without denying the possibility of subsequent interpretations of the work of art. That is to say, for a work of art to exist (including its relations with an observer, context and implicit language), *first* and foremost, an artist needs to produce the interface.[7]

A subject evolves in a relation of ontological reciprocity with the world while accessing it. Accessing the world is contingent upon the subject's attention as showed by the empirical studies on change blindness[8] and inattention blindness,[9] which support the claim that *we can only see what we are attending to* and that '*marginal interest changes are hard to detect*',[10] even if those changes are occurring in front of one's eyes, as suggested by O'Regan *et al*: 'It seems that looking at something does not guarantee you "see" it.'[11] In

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[6] Crowther *Art and Embodiment*, p. 173

[7] A loose parallel can be invoked in relation to Jean-Paul Sartre, that existence precedes essence. That is, the existence of the interface precedes the essence of the work of art. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* [L'Etre et Le Néant (1943)], trans. Hazel E. Barnes, London: Routledge, 1972.

[8] See: O'Regan, Deubel, Clark and Rensink, 'Picture Changes During Blinks: Looking Without Seeing and Seeing Without Looking', in *Visual Cognition*, 7 (1/2/3), 2000, pp. 191–211; Daniel T. Levin, Daniel J. Simons, Bonnie L. Angelone and Christopher F. Chabris, 'Memory for centrally attended changing objects in an incidental real-world change detection paradigm', in *British Journal of Psychology*, (93), 2002, pp. 289–302; Noë, *Action in Perception*; Noë (ed), *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*; Noë, *Out of Our Heads*.

[9] See: Mack and Rock, *Inattentional Blindness*; Noë, *Action in Perception*; Noë (ed), *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion?*; Noë, *Out of Our Heads*.

[10] O'Regan *et al*, 'Picture Changes During Blinks', pp. 191–211. Also: Bruce Mangan, following William James, on the existence of a non-sensory fringe, which consists of very real but indistinct feelings of many kinds, surrounding a nucleus in consciousness. See: Bruce Mangan, *Meaning and the Structure of Consciousness; An Essay in Psycho-Aesthetics*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1991. William James, *Principles of Psychology [1890]*, Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1983, pp. 219–278.

[11] O'Regan *et al*,'Picture Changes During Blinks:', pp. 191–211; Rand, ' On seeing *Untitled # 3:* Bands of white and graphite', in Rinder (ed.), *Searchlight*, pp. 109–116.; Nancy, *Listening*, p. 6.

short, attention is a condition to access the world but is not determinant. Aby Warburg identified the importance of addressing attention in Renaissance painting, in the *trecento* and *quattrocento*,[12] which he recognised as the enaction of motion; that is, a stable and central figure, which is the focus of attention that is disrupted by its surrounding elements (as in the wind in Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*), which are in the margins of attention.[13] Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche, who in *The Birth of Tragedy*, formulates a similar principle as a Dionysian's disruption in an Apollonian's stability. Seen from this perspective, the suggested line of enquiring places the beginning of *consciousness art* in ancient Greece and not only in modern times.[14] That is, the importance of addressing perception as an (en)action contingent upon a body and in a relation of ontological reciprocity with the world is a longstanding line of enquiry in artistic practice.

In parallel and similar to the relation-between the interface and work of art, this project is mainly concerned with the ethics implicit in the production of the interface rather than with the politics implicit in the formation of the work of art. This, nevertheless, should not be confused with the lack of a political project in the production of the interface but rather suggests that any political projects that might be enacted (by the observer) during the formation of the work of art are contingent to the ethical project formulated during the production of the interface. Thus, I am proposing the interface as a formulation of ethical considerations between the interface's formalist devices

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[12] '[T]he seeker's detachment is replaced with a form of active intervention in the process of understanding and interpreting works.' Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, p. 84.

[13] Bruce Mangan calls it the fringe of attention, which is located in conscious but not being attended to (as in the Gorilla that Alva Noë did not see; note 154, chapter 2).

[14] *Consciousness art* is about the mechanics of consciousness and not about the representation of states of consciousness (real or illusory). Rinder and Lakoff, 'Consciousness Art: Attending to the Quality of Experience', in *Searchlight*, pp. 31–33.

(message and noise, which have a contradictory relation) that, when balanced, propose the enaction of paradoxes in the work of art and infiltrate theoretical debates. This has evident political implications, [15] as may be seen, for example, in Jean-Luc Godard's *The Camera–Eye* (1967), which was produced for the collective and political project *Loin du Viêt-Nam*,[16] and is described as follows by Richard Brody:

> Godard himself, seen at the eyepiece of a massive 35mm Mitchell camera, meditates on the title of the film and on his situation – namely, that of a Frenchman wanting to do something for the Vietnamese people despite being 'far from Vietnam' [*Loin du Viêt-Nam*]. (…) He intercuts his own image with documentary news images from Vietnam, of battlefields and urban defences. Most of all, the sequence is a twin self-portrait of Godard and a professional movie camera, a double identity that suggested a double identity crisis. *Camera-Eye*, a film of wit and agony, promised political cinema that would be both aesthetically sophisticated and intensely personal.[17]

Godard's double identity and meditation can be understood as the tension between an ethical and a political project, as Godard suggests in *The Camera-Eye*: 'we can apply it

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[15] Uriel Orlow suggests that the critical power of a work of art is contingent upon the inclusion of paradoxes in the interface, which have the potential to infiltrate theoretical debates in the form of contradictions. In Orlow's thesis, a paradox is understood as a *'sustainable source of criticality'* while a contradiction is a *'sustainable means of criticality'*. Uriel Orlow, *Time+Again: Critical Contradictions In Chris Marker's La Jetée*, unpublished PhD Thesis, London Institute and Open University, 2002.

[16] 'Largely an initiative of the Left Bank group of filmmakers (Godard in his film mentions Agnès Varda and Chris Marker as the people who had asked him to participate), *Loin du Viêt-Nam* had contributions from a broad political and aesthetic range, from the politically committed documentary maker Joris Ivens to Claude Lelouch, who had just won the Foreign Language Oscar for the box-office hit, *A Man and a Woman.' In* , Colin MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70*, London: Bloombury, 2003, p. 181.

[17] Richard Brody, *Everything is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard*, London: Faber and Faber, 2008, pp. 311–12.

[political project] to ourselves, it means creating a Vietnam within us [ethical project]'.[18] As Colin MacCabe suggests, Bertolt Brecht's influence on Godard's work is best understood in terms of a modernist line of enquiry:

> it is usual to talk of modernism in terms of the 'laying bare of the device' (to use the language of the Russian formalists), to talk of that moment when traditional arts, be it in literature (Mallarmé and Joyce), painting (Picasso and Matisse) or music (Stravinsky and Webern) begins to foreground its own processes and practices.[19]

However, when related to *consciousness art*, the foreground of the processes and practices associated with modernism can be understood as the foreground of the mechanics of attention, which, as noted before, is an older project. In this context *consciousness art* is suggested as an ancient project that is fundamentally modernist but not strictly modern. This project follows and acknowledges that line of investigation while making a new contribution through the proposition of a notion of the interface and its formalist devices (message, noise and interference) (hypothesis #1).

Untitled #1

The previous considerations allow for a reinterpretation of Bruce Nauman's work, which is here proposed as the second new contribution to knowledge (hypothesis #2). Nauman's practice is proposed as a first-journey – a journey to map a territory, a topographic journey – exploring a first-person methodology (introspection) to articulate paradoxes, which are contingent to a notion of self. The resulting map or topographic explorations are primarily concerned with the mechanics of attention and its influence

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[18] Jean-Luc Godard, *The Camera-Eye*, 1967.

[19] MacCabe, *Godard*, p. 158.

in Nauman's subjectivity. Subsequently to that first-journey, there is a formulation during the production of new interfaces, which are made to script second-journeys (a journey that is made after a territory has been mapped). Those scripts create the conditions for the observer's second-journey and are contingent upon how the observer will access and enact Nauman's script, and will result in the production of the work of art.

The proposed methodology – mapping first-journeys to collect data that can be employed in the production of second-journeys – implies that before Nauman could formulate his own first-journeys (i.e. *Studio Films*), he had to travel. That is, the suggested relation between Nauman's first- journeys and the observer's second-journey is a replica of the process that Nauman himself undertook. Nauman's early works should be understood as a collection of data, for example: in the *Studio Films* (i.e. *Bouncing the Ball*, 1968), Nauman is repeating tasks to the point of breaking down their meaning, exhausting the attention that he could place in the repetition of a task to unravel its limits, which is when things start to go wrong. The emphasis is placed in the reduction of the focus of attention resulting in the expansion of its own margins of attention, which is similar to a sensory deprivation experience or meditation. The early works documented Nauman's first-journeys, while Nauman's later works (after the corridor series) are a formulation of those first-journeys as scripts for the observer's second-journeys. That is, when Nauman is performing a repetitive task (i.e. *Studio Films)*, he is primarily exhausting the meaning of those activities by reducing its focus of attention in an attempt to expand the area covered by the margins of attention, which is what William James and Bruce Mangan call the fringe of attention (consciousness) – constituted by vague, dimly, dynamic and transitive feelings not to be confused with the

unconscious. It is then, upon entering the fringe of consciousness, that Nauman can begin the process of mapping in own mechanics of attention. However, I suggest in a highly speculative fashion that, the process of mapping one's own mechanics of attention happens neither in the conscious nor in the unconscious, but rather in a place in-between, which is located between a conscious and an unconscious experience but in neither of them.

A place in-between is the land of Serres' parasite or Kristeva's foreigner, or the noise in the interface and where its citizens (parasite, foreigner, noise) move like a Warburg's snake with maximum mobility and minimum target. They do not belong to their *hôte* (host or guest; home or receiving country, consciousness or unconsciousness; message or interference), the noise is apart, next to the message (host, consciousness) and next to the interference (guest, unconsciousness). They are *in* the relation but they are not the relation; the relation *has* traces of the host and the guest but is *located* in *neither*). The relation is formulated as a snake, touching (extending to) various contradictory propositions at the same time while continuing to move forward to the next contradictory proposition. For example, in Nauman's *Vices and Virtues* and although the vices and the virtues are independently visible, it is in their juxtaposition that the work allows for the emergence of a place in-between where an observer can experience its own mechanics of attention. Further, it is in the movement enacted by the observer that the juxtaposition is created rather than the juxtaposition of the vices and the virtues creating the movement. That is, the juxtaposition is necessary but not sufficient, or the relation is important but not sufficient; they come together as the movement enacted by the observer. The experience of movement suggests an experience of alterity but it is not an experience of alterity – it is a meta-narrative of an experience of alterity. The

parasite needs its host and guest *to establish a relation between them* while the host and the guest need the parasite *to relate them*. Thus, in Nauman's work the observer is invited to play the role of the parasite by following the script formulated by Nauman, and to embark on a second-journey based on that script, which is in itself a formulation of Nauman's journeys.

Untitled #2

The original works of art developed during this project should be understood as formulations of an interface that engages in self-reflective experiences rather than representations of the proposed model of an interface. The third contribution to knowledge (hypothesis #3) that I claim is the formulation of different but complementary propositions − the various interfaces, and different mediums explored throughout this project − rather than one specific articulation of a model of an interface (and medium) that promotes experiences of self-reflection for an observer.

The creation of paradoxes in an interface results from a careful implementation of a message and noise − formalist devices − in an attempt to create ontological contradictions, which will emphasise an experience of alterity for an observer and contribute to the emergence of the observer's mechanics of attention. The content of the formalist devices (message and noise) are not relevant; indeed, I am even convinced that addressing the particular details of the various interfaces would be counter-productive as it would easily focus attention on the details of those contents, which could generate excessive interference) rather than in their relation, which is essential to any understanding of this model. Although the particular details of those formalist devices

are not relevant, the contradictory nature of their relation is highly relevant. That is, the formalist devices should suggest a relation (similarity) while retaining an independent position (difference). The message should always be clear, better-defined or easily available and requiring less space, less presence or less visibility than the noise, which consequently requires more space, more presence or more visibility than the message. The message and the noise are bound in such a formal and (im)balanced relation. The important point to retain is the necessity of a sustainable balance, achieved by counterbalancing their differences with similarities (or *vice versa*), or the paradox will not emerge. This balance should not be confused with stasis or at least should be understood in relation to Paul Virilio's concept of polar inertia – moving so quickly that the message and the noise seem to be static [i.e. *Arctic Drawings – a.k.a. The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystical Truths (After Nauman)*].[20] The interface should facilitate conditions (paradoxes) for the observer to enact movement (contradictions) from the interface while allowing for an experience of mobility to emerge rather than only (re)presenting movement (i.e. the use of still images in *The Spiral Drive* instead of moving images).[21] Ultimately and ideally, the enaction of movement, firstly, by an artist while constructing the interface and, later, by an observer while constructing the work of art, will generate further paradoxes, which in turn will generate more experiences of mobility.[22] Thus, an interface that engages in self-reflection can be understood as the creation of paradoxical

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[20] 'Let's not forget: too much light and you get blindness; too much justice and you get injustice; too much speed, the speed of light, and you get inertia, polar inertia.' Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident (L'Accident originel* [2005]), trans. Julie Rose, Malden, MA; Cambridge: Polity, 2007, p. 100.

[21] An experience of alterity is implicit in a notion of mobility, which includes both a point of departure and arrival related through the journey's encounters disrupting the points of departure and arrival, which are *hôte* to the parasite (movement). An example of such misunderstanding – representing movement in the interface – can be seen in Carsten Höller's *Test Site*, which is about the spectacle of movement and not about an experience of mobility.

[22] Every solved paradox creates a revenge paradox. See note 40.

patterns that create the conditions for an observer to embody his/her own mobility; paying attention to attention, or an experience of alterity.

The difficulty in formulating these particular kinds of interfaces, which create an unbalanced and sustainable equilibrium, rests in the articulation of the interface's message and noise (first-tension). Interference, although present in the interface, cannot be accounted for by the artist when formulating the interface because it is dependent on the observer's interpretation to be activated (enacted). However, interference makes an important contribution to the notion of the interface by creating a second-tension, which is a consequence of interference in the interface. This second-tension results from the discrepancy between the authoring of the interface (as proposed by the artist) and the formation of the work of art (as interpreted by the observer). This is fundamental to allow the work of art's permanent flux and continuous change, which nevertheless is independent of from the interface; the formation of the work of art might change but the interface remains the same. Thus, when faced with the circumstances of an unbalanced articulation of the interface's message and noise, which are accountable for by the artist, I have identified three specific situations:

• Noise being highly visible (i.e. in *Floating Souls*): The noise of the malfunctioning lights was too present and I had to increase the visibility and consistency of the message by displaying them in a grid with identical aluminium structures (in *Twenty Mistakes Make me Wonder);* in two sets of ten lights: one set aligned in the floor-space while the other was randomly organized against a destroyed wall *(*in *Ten Overdrafts and Ten Lights*); or the systematic display in the handrail at the top of the skyline (in *Twenty-five Mosquitoes Flying Inside my Head but Five are Missing*). The interference in the light series has been associated with the enaction by the observers of patterns in the behaviour of the lights; I did not

consider or identify any patterns during the production of those interfaces and the lights' behaviour is randomly produced and not intended to be controlled.

• Message being highly visible (i.e. *Love Forbids Us to Love* and *The Spiral Drive*): the movement represented in images was highly visible, through the use of the driver's point of view, and it was necessary to disrupt that message by increasing its noise (i.e. making the pixel of the images visible, the light-boxes malfunctioning, the use of still images in the production of a road movie, the soundtrack emphasizing and disrupting what was being represented by the images). In both works, interference has been fundamentally identified with the interpretation of those works as a documentary or representation of a specific and continuous journey that the artist/filmmaker undertook (an epistemological proposition), rather than an existential proposition that was composed by different journeys through various countries and spanning over a three years period (an ontological proposition).

• The relation between the message and the noise is not relevant in and by itself (i.e. *One for the Mind, Two for the Eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the world*): the initial contradictory images (snow and desert) were not sufficient for an enaction of movement. Thus, I had to consider the initial interface (message and noise) as a new message (or noise) and consequently create its corresponding new noise (or message) and continue to repeat this process until I could experience my own mobility.

Untitled #3

The value of this project is the proposition of hypothesises to be further investigated, which I have identified as three possible lines of enquiry: first, focusing on the various disciplines that feed this project while engaging directly with them, from their own

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perspectives; secondly, focusing on the meta-narratives of the artistic practice (particularly, art history) to address the works of other artist in line with what has been proposed in relation to Bruce Nauman; and lastly, continuing to develop the present methodology – maximum mobility and minimum target – while addressing new sources or by deepening the sources already addressed to generate new and more precise interfaces.

The first possibility implies a direct collaboration with the sources addressed throughout this thesis, of particular interest would be in an investigation in the field of anthropology to further address notions of mobility through the artistic practice. This could be achieved through a close examination of the model of the interface previously proposed in relation to particular communities exploring methodological practices from anthropology and the artistic practice. Also of significant interest would be the cross-examination of the models formulated by the works of art in relation to the models explored in the neurosciences (particularly in studies of attention and visual perception). Specifically, a translation of the three difficulties identified in the formulation of the interface (highly visible message, highly visible noise, or a lack of a relevant and sustainable relation between them) to establish parallels and reveal possible complementarities.

The second possible direction to extend this project should consider the reinterpretation proposed for Bruce Nauman's work in relation to other artist's work, namely through the work of artists that were identified as having characteristics of those identified in relation to Nauman's work: Jean-Luc Godard (the production of films that have contradictory formalist devices), Pablo Picasso (the enaction of movement by the

observer as a symptom to be further analysed), Robert Irwin and James Turrell (the use of sensory deprivation methodologies to develop first-journeys), Marcel Duchamp (the enaction of movement by an observer as a symptom and the conceptual propositions as a generator of paradoxes), Jasper Johns (the use of contradictory formal devices in the production of paintings). Although these are my starting points, there are certainly other artists whom I have not identified and who could make particular contributions.

Lastly, this study can be further developed through the production of original works of art that will continue to test the ideas present in this study through their formulation in different contexts. A project that I am considering is to explore the use of the diptychs as used in *One for the mind, Two for the eye and Seven (plus or minus two) for the world* to address public spaces, particularly the building of the European Union in Brussels, as place where political decisions are generated and fundamental in the articulations of the European differences. The project will focus on the corridors as a place in-between in the institution, connecting various political views and 'countries' while making them accessible and functional. This future project addresses a particular question, which is the need to understand if there is value in the (re)presentation of the users in a public space, or rather, if there is more value in focusing on the building and in the traces of its users. This specific question is raised as the original works of art produced as part of this research have only included traces of a human presence (cars, telephone posts, roads) without ever representing a human figure in the images. This raises the question of how the human presence may be considered when articulating the proposed notion of an interface and its formal devices (message and noise).

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