Aura in the post-digital: a diffraction of the curatorial archive

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1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

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5. The word count of the thesis is 43,155 (including gutter).

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Abstract

This study questions the role of aura, authenticity and the artefact in exhibitions in the post-digital context and aims to explore this subject by a diffraction of curatorial strategies from the past. The research explores how curation can influence our understanding of the auratic in the post-digital by using methodologies of anamnesis (a 'working through' of elements from the curatorial archive) and diffraction (Haraway/ Barad) to rework curatorial strategies from a past exhibition.

The research takes as starting point 'Les Immatériaux', curated by Thierry Chaput and Jean-François Lyotard at the Pompidou Centre in 1985. This exhibition was, in part, a curatorial exploration of the relationship between the artefact and its technological reproduction (Benjamin's auratic object and Steyerl's 'poor image'). The aim is to explore whether an anamnesis and diffraction of strategies from this exhibition might offer insight into contemporary notions of the relationship between aura and the artwork in the post-digital, by putting them in conjunction, superimposed and diffracted through one another. This involves curating 'diffraction apparatuses' which revisited and reworked curatorial strategies from 'Les Immatériaux', including three iterations of a physical exhibition, an online glossary and a virtual reality walk-round of the exhibition.

The research investigates the affordances of a diffractive curatorial frame, rather than an interpretative one and theorises a diffractive curatorial approach through practice. It adds to curatorial discourse which has not significantly engaged with diffraction as a practice-based methodology. The study offers insights into the impact of technology (accelerated by a global pandemic) on curatorial thinking and notions of the auratic now. It also explores how the now prevalent virtual reality walk-throughs of exhibitions affect our experience of aura and the production of 'exhibitionary knowledge'. By drawing together Benjamin's later conception of aura and Barad's diffractive approach, ultimately it makes a claim for aura as intra-action and the exhibition as an auratic medium, in its performative superposition of artworks and subjects.

Figure 1. Photographs of materials from 'Cybernetic Serendipity' from ICA archive at Tate Britain, with the shadow of my arm on them

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Introduction

i. Context of the research

My research asks what the role of aura, authenticity and the artefact, is in exhibitions in the post-digital context and aims to explore this question by reworking and 'diffracting' curatorial strategies from the past. The first part of the title is essentially the subject of the research, the second part is my methodology. At a time when a global pandemic has accelerated the digitisation of everyday life and art alike, this research has become more relevant to concerns around art viewing and to curatorial practice.

Bas-relief égyptien — déesse offrant le signe de vie au roi Nectanébo II, dernier pharaon indépendant d'Égypte — présenté dans un lieu sombre.
A la bande-son, du souffle. Suit un long couloir au bout duquel, dans un miroir, se reflète l'espace auquel il introduit. Un son de Doppler (de la carotide) sur ce passage.

Fragment de paroi du temple de Karnak-Nord. Déesse offrant le signe de vie au roi Nectanébo II.

Figure 2. Pages from the catalogue of 'Les Immatériaux', documenting "Fragment of temple wall from North Karnac: Egyptian bas relief – goddess offering the sign of life to King Nectenebo II, the last independent pharaoh of Egypt."

Fragment de paroi du
temple de Karnak-Nord.
Montage de M. Peltzer
d'après un procédé de Jiri
Kolar.

Même bas-relief que dans le vestibule d'entrée,
mais projeté en image tremblée. L'effet-matière
s'absente. A la bande-son, silence.
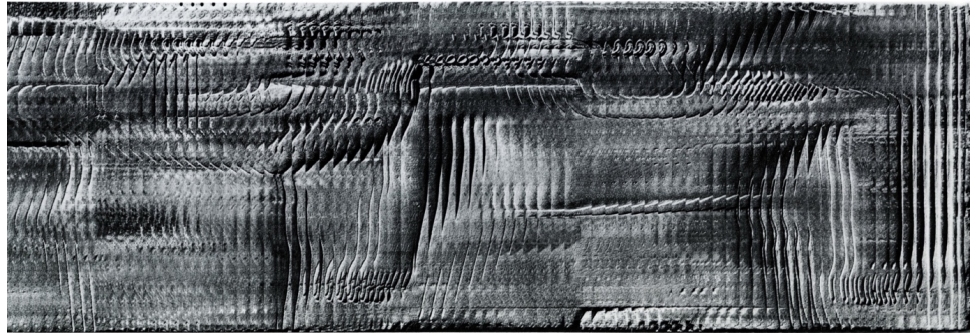
Figure 3. From the catalogue of 'Les Immatériaux', documenting "Same bas relief as in the entrance hall but projected as a shaky image. The material effect is absent." Created by M Peltzer after a process by Jiri Kolar.

However, my starting point is not in the current moment but in 1985. At the Pompidou Centre philosopher Jean-François Lyotard's influential exhibition on our relationship with technology 'Les Immatériaux'[1] opened with an artefact – an Egyptian bas relief – and ended, at the end of a labyrinthine exhibition design, with images of this same artefact, refracted, dematerialised and projected. This curatorial conceit of the trajectory between the auratic, (Walter Benjamin's term for the authentic, original artefact, singular in space and time which has 'cult value') and the technologically reproduced, dispersed and viewed art object (with 'exhibition value') seems ever more relevant in our current period. Our current time is similar to Benjamin's in its swift acceleration of technological reproduction and dissemination, though now by digital rather than mechanical means.[2]

By means of this curatorial conceit, the exhibition heralded the

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1. Co-curated with Thierry Chaput. The title of this exhibition, which translates somewhere between 'immaterials' and 'non-materials', was intended to convey an uncertainty and an undermining of the hierarchy between humans and materials who are now 'cousins in the family of immaterials'. 'The term 'immaterial' which in its contradiction denotes a material which is not matter for a project, is proposed to carry this uncertainty', Jean-Franois Lyotard 'Les Immatériaux', in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, ed. By Bruce W. Ferguson, Reesa Greenberg, Sandy Nairne (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 159–173,160.
2. As McKenzie Wark notes, Benjamin thought that there were 'moments when a fragment from the past could speak directly to the present', when there was an alignment of the cultural or political that brought them into resonance. 'Benjamedia', 27.8.2015, para 2 of 67, <http://publicseminar.org/2015/08/benjamedia/>, [accessed 1 October 2021].

immateriality of the digital circulation of what artist/theorist Hito Steyerl terms the 'poor image'[3]: a digitally degraded dissemination, which extends Benjamin's concerns around cult and exhibition value. 'The poor image is a copy in motion. Its quality is bad, its resolution substandard. As it accelerates, it deteriorates. It is a ghost of an image. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and re-edited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction.'[4] The poor image is also, however, seen to have acceded to itself a new form of aura by means of the political potency of this immaterial, mutable distributability (as Steyerl suggests) and the fact that, according to Boris Groys, the digital file is actualized anew on each desktop, creating a new form of auratic original, distinct in time and place.

Yet in this post-digital moment of immaterial circulation of reproduced images, there has, over the last decade, been a resurgence of interest in curating involving 'the authentic' or auratic material object in international exhibition projects.[5] Critic Erika Balsom suggests that set 'against the promiscuous circulation of proliferating copies the singular event of performance or the uniqueness of the handmade object'.[6] become important again. Like Steyerl she uses Benjamininan terms to describe this: 'Objects inscribed by time, as far away from free-floating signifiers as one can get. To put it in Benjamin's terms: they privilege cult value over exhibition value. They are singular objects, inextricable from their respective material histories, absolutely incompatible with the compress and copy life of a jpeg.' And she suggests: 'A desire for

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3. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *E Flux Journal #10*, November 2009, para 1 of 32, <http://www.e flux.com/journal/10/61362/in defense of the poor image/ >, [accessed 6 November 2017].
4. In fact, I think Steyerl mixes up cult and exhibition value here. Actually the poor image transforms auratic cult value into disseminable exhibition value.
5. Erika Balsom cites specifically 'Documenta 13', 2012, curated by Carolyn Christov Barkagiev, and 'The Encyclopaedic Palace', Venice Biennale, 2013, curated by Massimiliano Gioni.
6. Erika Balsom, 'Against the Novelty of New Media: The Resuscitation of the Authentic', in *You are Here: Art after the Internet*, ed. by Omar Kholeif, Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2013, pp. 66–77, 72, <https://www.are.na/block/11352896>, [accessed 4 January 2021].

authenticity has emerged as a reaction to shifts with new media technologies at their core.'[7] I am interested in exploring whether the persistence of this desire and the concern for the 'authentic' in curating represents Balsom's fear of a conservative withdrawal from the current post-digital moment or whether this juxtaposition is able to create new thinking.

ii.   Research questions

I have a series of nested research questions which intersect and overlap with each other, extrapolating from this core question about the auratic in the post-digital. What does it mean now to curate artefactual objects in a physical space when so much art viewing happens online and galleries are now even set up with lighting and architecture optimised primarily for web documentation on websites like Artsy and Contemporary Art Daily? This practice has only burgeoned during the pandemic-related closure of galleries worldwide, where much exhibitionary content has migrated online. What is the specific experience of an emplaced exhibition on the viewer – a 'sensory matrix of haptic, visual and auditory stimulus'[8] – that might differ from the now prevalent virtual reality walkthroughs of exhibitions and how might this impact on our experience of aura and the production of 'exhibitionary knowledge', that knowledge which is created in and by the exhibition?[9] What is the specific experience of the auratic artefact and conversely can aura be created by digital artworks, reproductions

7. Ibid.
8. Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures,* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012, p. 90–. He goes on to reference *Les Immatériaux* as exemplifying this potential, as 'a key moment in consolidating the group exhibition as a spatial medium for thought and experimentation [..] [Lyotard] distinguished the exhibition as the manifestation of a philosophy and tested the concept of the exhibition as a sensorial experience with its own qualities and properties that collectively produce its own genre of art in which ideas, artworks, objects and zones of interpretation intersect sensorially, philosophically and spatially.'
9. Exhibitionary knowledge is a term used by Terry Smith for the knowledge which is only actualised in exhibition – see footnote 395.

and copies and indeed by curating exhibitions in a particular space and time? And, indeed, what are the qualities of aura which make it of abiding interest in curating?

These questions seem very pertinent in our current post-digital context, which is defined as a having a lack of 'distinction between digital and analogue materiality',[10] the intertwined condition of art and digital media. I explore whether there is a kinship between the entangled nature of the post-digital and a methodology of diffraction. Diffraction, a theory developed by Donna Haraway and expanded by Karen Barad, posits an undermining of dichotomies and a focus on intra-relationships or 'entanglement' between phenomena rather than things/subjects as singular entities and is explored in more detail in Chapter Two. I propose the creation of curatorial diffraction apparatuses to give some insight on curating the artefactual and the digital in conjunction. Diffraction apparatus are defined as tools 'for producing an 'alternative understanding of materiality, discursivity, and performativity'[11], three qualities that are key to the knowledge produced through curating. The apparatus offers a means to put phenomena in conjunction to create a new composite phenomenon which may shed light on these three criteria which are each so relevant to what curatorial practice produces. The study also looks at how curation can influence our understanding of the auratic in the post-digital by using strategies of diffraction. It elucidates how the diffraction offers insights on the auratic – if diffraction undoes the original and the copy dichotomy as Donna Haraway suggests, does this open up a new space for the auratic around materiality and intra-action, whether it be analogue or digital, 'authentic' or reproduced?

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10. James Charlton, 'On Remembering a Post-Digital Future', in *A Peer Reviewed Journal About… Post-Digital Research*, 3,1, 2014), 145–155, p. 147, <https://aprja.net//article/view/116094>, [accessed 3 December 2021].
11. Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, p. 191. These qualities are key as exhibitions deal in the bringing together of materialities to create a performative moment that adds to the discourse around artworks. Exhibitions are potentially able to provide new knowledge on all three criteria.

The use of diffraction therefore allows a particular way to interrogate contemporary notions of aura. In historic terms the reproduction or copy is associated with specific material processes, with an era which believed in material truths and an image-object which was tethered to an original. In the current post-digital era, we don't assume such certainties or binaries; in this the digital and the diffractive are aligned and diffraction naturally came to the fore as a methodology for understanding this context better.

I examine the impact technology is having on curatorial thinking and notions of the auratic now, by revisiting and diffracting certain strategies from an older exhibition, enabling me to read one iteration through another, across time. I explore whether curatorial practice can offer a particular space to do this – 'a place to think, to produce thought'[12] that is different from the written, the discursive 'curatorial' or online spaces, a specifically 'exhibitionary knowledge'.

iii.   Research method & methodology

I use the terms method and methodology in linked but differentiated ways in which 'methods refer to practical 'tools' […] and methodology refers to the wider package of both tools and a philosophical and political commitment that come with a particular research 'approach'.[13] My method to investigate these questions is to curate exhibitions and events, using a diffractive methodology in relation to a curatorial antecedent.

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12. A phrase used by Philippe Parreno: 'And one exhibition changed my life, *Les Immatériaux* by Lyotard. I am still haunted by that show, by the way it was made, the way it was produced, the fact that it was an exhibition not as a display of objects but a place to think, to produce thought.' See Ben Luke, 'The Art Machine: The Centre Pompidou at 40', *The Art Newspaper*, 1 February 2017, < The art machine: the Centre Pompidou at 40 (theartnewspaper.com)>. See also footnote 9
13. Paula Saukko, *Doing Research in Cultural Studies: An Introduction to Classical and New Methodological Approaches*, London andThousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), p.8.

My practice, and therefore my method, is curating, not in the traditional sense (from 'curare') of caring for a collection of artefacts or artworks but the bringing of contemporary artworks into temporary spatial and cognitive conjunction to open up dialogues around particular forms or subjects. In this way curating might 'find things out' by creating new constellations of artworks which, by creating new relationships and resonances, offer insight into both individual works and broader questions. I'm interested in using theories of diffraction to articulate and analyse what happens in the curating of exhibition projects and also to develop a specific diffractive approach (described in chapter 2). Diffraction is a methodology which allows a rationale for a material intertwining of different times in curatorial history, of the analogue and the digital, and the original and the replication, all of which may offer insight into my research questions, by creating new conjunctions, intra-actions and entanglements of meaning. I use this methodology of diffraction as a way to both articulate and analyse tacit processes within my curating and to experiment with and expand my curatorial process by using new diffractive apparatuses.

This methodology, with its undermining of the distinctions between past, present and future, also allows for an entangled approach to the curatorial archive and asks what affordances there are from revisiting and 'diffracting' previous curatorial strategies, through new iterations (eg revisiting display and interpretation strategies in new exhibitions). This approach proposes to look back at a time when we were in a particular relationship between art and technology to illuminate more about that relationship in our current time. If the 1980s were the time when technology heralded immaterality, the post-digital is again interested in the materiality of media and art so it seems pertinent to overlay these two times with the idea that using similar curatorial strategies might point out these distinctions and confluences in our relationship to the auratic/authentic object in exhibition. This

'parallax'[14] view might allow us to see where the shifts have happened and with what effects and affects.

Diffraction as methodology is looked at in detail Chapter Two and is applied with specific regard to curating in relation to the analogue and digital, the artefact and the reproduction, the IRL and the virtual, and the present and the past. It is ironic that this is a list of binary oppositions because this is precisely the kind of dichotomous taxonomy the theory of diffraction refutes. In fact, it offers a means of recognising the entanglement of these elements in the post-digital moment and a technique for using this entanglement in specific diffraction apparatuses to test out the impact of a diffractive approach to curating. Diffraction also offers a means with which to view the structure of this study. Diffraction is what happens when you view things 'through' rather than 'against' each other, as entangled together rather than separate entities, able to be compared. It implies the merging of theory and practice and the situated position of the researcher not objectively positioned outside the subject of study, so sets itself against reflection and reflexivity, the standard practice of research.

Diffraction patterns in physics are described as what happens when multiple waves overlap and superimpose, like the ripples in a pond, forming a composite wave – a 'constructive interference',[15] a new thing. In this thesis there are multiple waves, which intra-act to produce new knowledge. One wave is the methodology of an anamnesis of the curatorial archive – exploring what can be learnt by a deferred revisiting and 'working through' of past exhibition practice, by attending closely to antecedents and 'speaking with ghosts' in a way that undermines and entangles the time gaps between them. Another

14. A term used by Anthony Gardner in relation to revisiting past exhibitions: 'the restaging of exhibitions as means of undertaking research through practice and through parallax between the original mounting of an exhibition and its restaging many years later'. Gardner, 'Documents of Experience: Exhibitions, Archives and Undisciplining Histories', in *Of(f) Our Times: Curatorial Anachronics,* ed. by Rike Frank and Beatrice von Bismark, Berlin: Sternberg, 2019, pp. 52–68, p. 59.
15. Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p.78.

wave is formed by the subject of aura and the role of the artefact in the post-digital, and in relation to the ghostly, dispersed 'poor image', how this is represented in curatorial practice and how curating might approach the auratic by convoking a specific ritual 'here and now'. This intersects with a further wave representing the practice of curating three individual iterations of an exhibition which are in conversation with an archival exhibition and which contain 'diffraction apparatuses' through which to explore the 'materiality performativity and discursivity' of the exhibition and which bring all the binaries at the start of the last paragraph into entangled conjunction. These three curatorial iterations themselves form a cumulative set of waves which can be read through each other to draw out insight.
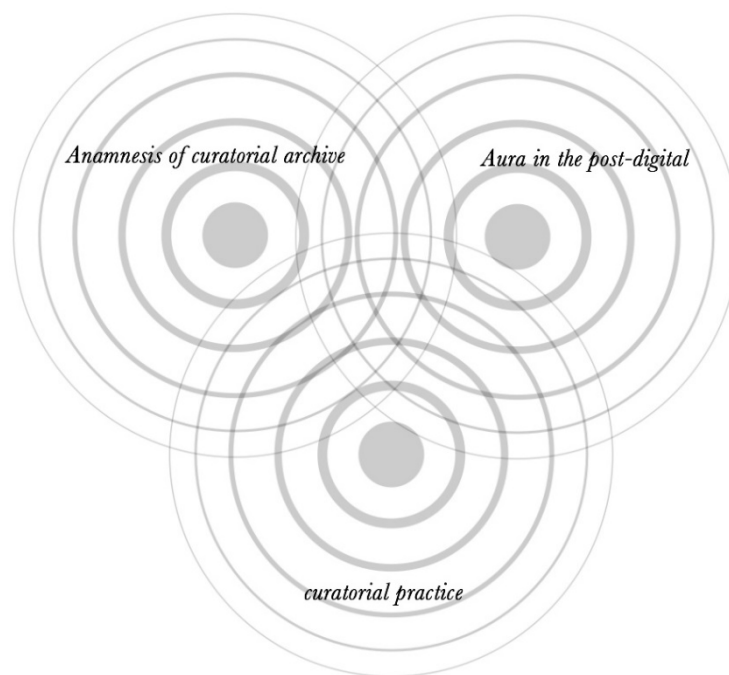
Figure 4. Diffractive diagram of the thesis

The place where these waves of context, methodology and practice (method) intersect and superimpose and create this 'constructive interference', is the space where I can identify 'exhibitionary knowledge', gleaned through curatorial practice and where my contribution to knowledge lies.

The aim of this study is to see whether by using diffractive methodologies curating can generate new understandings about the auratic in the post digital by overlaying strategies from different timeframes in curatorial history and diffracting the curatorial framing structures of the exhibition.

To fully analyse how diffraction and diffraction apparatuses are able to offer new insight to curating, I also invited audiences to engage with the exhibitions and the *Writing Tests* glossary and to both diagram their diffractive readings of the exhibition and to note on these diagrams if and where insights on any of the terminology in the glossary started to instantiate in the exhibition - ie. where the diffraction patterns set in play by certain conjunctions of works, started to catalyse new thinking about the ideas behind the exhibition, around ideas of aura in the post-digital.

Responses were also gathered verbally as to the impact of the diffractive apparatuses of the sound and the glossary on the experience of the exhibition. In this way audience response was analysed to see if there were similarities of response, or a groundswell of opinion which supported the idea that a diffractive rather than a univocal interpretative approach could offer something different to audiences and create a more active space for engagement. However, this was not seen as a formal data gathering mechanism, a qualitative survey of any kind, but a mapping of cumulative waves of affect around the exhibition, as seemed appropriate to the diffractive approach.

iv.   Trajectory of the thesis

The thesis structure follows my research trajectory, organically from the starting point of the given title of the research: 'The Hand-made and the Digital: New Technologies and the Role of the Gallery', which was chosen by the university in collaboration with Site Gallery. This initial title and my interest in the curatorial archive combined with my career history with Site Gallery meant that I started with their archive

and in the revisiting of a key exhibition involving art and new technology – 'star dot star' (1998) which referred back to 'Cybernetic Serendipity' (1968 – further discussed in Chapter One), which led me to 'Les Immateriaux'; a similarly iconic art/technology exhibition although with a vastly different approach. This methodology of an anamnesis, or working through previous exhibitions became important but was then developed in practice by a growing interest in a methodology of diffraction which is then explored in relation to its kinship with the post-digital and its usefulness for curating in this post-digital moment. It did not seem possible, though, to excise anamnesis from the trajectory of the research as this was and remains a key part of the process, to place the past and present of curating in diffractive conjunction.   I therefore had three areas of literature review which became the first three chapters: on curating and the affordances of an anamnesis of the curatorial archive, on the post-digital and diffraction in kinship and on thinking on aura since Benjamin. The validity of anamnesis and diffraction as methodologies is also explored the first two chapters, as a means to gain insight on the third: aura in the post-digital. This methodology is then put into action and reported on, at the end of Chapter Three and in Chapters Four and Five. At the end of Chapter Three the practice is still just working with anamnesis, from Chapter Four, this merges with the methodology of diffraction, which becomes more of a focus and a driver for the distinct contribution of the research. The thesis structure therefore follows the temporal journey of the research, unfolding from a given starting point with key pivot points of insight developing as new methodologies began to be tested and analysed.

v.   Chapter summary

In Chapter One, I discuss the different modes and discourses of curating and how curating temporary exhibitions can be seen within a research paradigm. I discuss the way curatorial discourse has moved from considering 'the curator' to 'curating' to 'the curatorial' to

something I would posit as curatorial practice as research. With reference to the curatorial theories of Maria Lind, Irit Rogoff, Jens Hoffman, Paul O'Neill, Simon Sheikh and Raqs Media Collective.

I investigate the affordances allowed by an anamnesis of the curatorial archive and discuss my experience looking askance at the archive on 'Les Immatériaux', the idea of anamorphosis making visible what cannot be viewed straight on, elucidating the gaps in and shadows on the archive. Like Benjamin's approach of 'squinting' at the past to gain insight, or creating a new tangential and generative relationship to an original through translation, I discuss the insight gained by curating an event on speaking with curatorial ghosts, particularly exhibitions which are seen as iconic in terms of curating art and technology.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the notion of entanglement, both as a characteristic of the post-digital moment we are now in and in Karen Barad's thinking. I reference François Laruelle's undermining of a Cartesian dualist position to argue against a polarising of the analogue and the digital. I discuss the post-digital as intrinsically based in an undermining of binaries and an intertwining of digital and analogue and therefore in kinship with Barad's ideas on diffraction. I discuss the development of diffraction as an approach from Donna Haraway to Barad via Erin Manning and Brian Masumi and propose diffraction as an appropriate methodology for curating which might fill a gap left in curatorial discourse.

In Chapter Three, I review the literature on aura and how it might relate to the post-digital, exploring Benjamin's conflicted and mutating notion of aura, current discourse on aura, and how this might be pertinent to curating. I discuss artist Mark Leckey's curatorial projects 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' and 'UniAddumThs' as curatorial case studies and interlocutors to 'Les Immatériaux'. I place this research in the broader context of the resurgence of the authentic artefact in curating and discuss the possibilities for the

exhibition as auratic in and of itself. As an action of curatorial research on these questions, I explore 'Project for an Exhibition', which I instigated at Bloc Projects, Sheffield, 1 July 2018.

In Chapter Four, I report on the way I created curatorial diffraction apparatuses to explore the contemporary status of aura in the exhibition 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' at Site Gallery, Sheffield, July 2019. As part of this consideration, I explore the idea of the exhibition as diffraction apparatus, merging ideas from Bruno Latour and Karen Barad to see the exhibition as a formal structure which enables knowledge production. I extend this idea by eschewing the traditional support structures of the exhibition such as interpretative text and catalogue, in favour of creating diffractive apparatuses which have the potential to create more generative interpretations of exhibitions. These include a sound piece on an audio headset and a collectively written glossary of terms related to the exhibition. Both of these apparatuses are repurposed strategies drawn from 'Les Immatériaux' and their effects in this context, 35 years later are reported on. This chapter is an articulation of the contribution of a diffractive curatorial apparatus to discourses on curating and in how a diffractive curatorial apparatus delivers insight on the auratic in the post digital.

In Chapter Five, I investigate questions around the exhibition as spatial form in relation to the prevalent VR viewing of exhibitions by means of a further iteration of the 'Strange Weave of Time and Place' exhibition in Project Space Plus in Lincoln, November 2019, which included a VR walkround of the first iteration from Site Gallery. This includes a consideration of: VR as version of Benjamin's 'exhibition value'; the entwined relationship between virtual and real; the exhibition as performative and unreproducible and productive of 'exhibitionary knowledge'; and a diffractive reading through of Lyotard's ideas in *Discourse/Figure* and how the figural might develop ideas around the relationship of affect to aura.

In the conclusion, making reference to Lyotard's exhibition starting and ending with the same image, treated differently, and in kinship with Barad's notion of the intertwined-ness of past, present and future, I circle round to address the questions I had at the start and elucidate what the investigation of them has gleaned. I also investigate further an ambiguous image which had fascinated me from the beginning of my archival anamnesis.

vi.   How to read this thesis in relation to documentation of practice

The 'Record of Practice' contains a curatorial journal recording the processes of curating 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space', transcripts of three feedback seminars and the website astrangeweave.com which contains VR documentation of the exhibition and the online version of the *Writing Tests* glossary. I suggest that this important documentation of practice is accessed by the reader in intra-action with the thesis, as a composite, so theory is diffracted through practice and vice versa. To make this intra-action easier, I will note links to the Record of Practice at appropriate points throughout the thesis, by means of notes in the gutter, noting the relationship to the practice and the places where the 'work' of the research can be seen.

The final section of Chapter Three on 'Project for an Exhibition' contains documentation as figures within the text, and Chapter Four similarly contains installation images of the exhibition 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space'. I suggest also accessing the VR walk-round and *Writing Tests* glossary (at www.astrangeweave.org) before reading Chapter Four. Insight about key terminology around the exhibition coheres in *Writing Tests* in ways which inflect back upon the practice and this is also pointed out in the gutter notes. I also suggest listening to both sound pieces which were part of this exhibition, accessible from within

the VR walkthrough. *Writing Tests* is available both as the original online portal and as a printed publication and I suggest leaving the book to the end. The online portal is, in principle, ever mutable, able to be continued but the printed artefact is finite and static, throwing into relief the relationship between the artefact and the digital context which runs through this study. Also, at the start of each chapter is a 'word cloud', which lists key words which will be addressed during the chapter and many of these are also addressed in a glossary of terms in the appendices.[16] This acts as another way to inter-relate practice and the creation of new thinking on specific terms, and as a precursor to the *Writing Tests* cumulative glossary.

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16. An idea which was inspired by Esther Leslie's use of this kind of chapter summary in *Liquid Crystals: The Science and Art of a Fluid Form,* London: Reaktion, 2016.

Chapter One: The affordances for curating of an anamnesis of the curatorial archive

i.   Curator – curating – the curatorial – curatorial practice as research

> In this sense the task of completing a visual arts literature review is similar to the curatorial effort required to mount a challenging thematic art exhibition. As such, the exhibition not only comprises a selection of artworks that are placed within a particular context, but also offers an original interpretation that brings new insights into the field.[17]

In my past practice I have curated numerous group exhibitions, drawing together works in a temporary conjunction, within or without the gallery, to create an open narrative or investigate a question. Often the question they investigated related to the digital, so pertinent projects for the Ph.D. are *Haunted Media* and *Everything is Number*, exhibitions I curated at Site Gallery or Raqs Media Collective's commission instantiating in sculpture the work of the mathematician who invented the Boolean logic that drives google searches. The relationship of the digital to the space of the gallery and to the artefactual artwork started to raise interesting questions for me and this thread of research persisted over a number of years. The process of the Ph.D. research is also perhaps about moving from being a one-off exhibition-maker to thinking about ways to instantiate ongoing curatorial research in different material iterations (exhibitions, events) over a longer research period.

My past practice is documented at jeaninegriffin.com

It's important to note that I entered into this study at a point when the original definition of curator as a carer for objects and indeed our notion of what an object is – an inanimate, stable carrier of meaning as distinct from a viewing subject – had changed drastically and become

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17. Graeme Sullivan, *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, London: Sage Publications, 2005, p. 214.

contested and entangled as part of a broader curatorial apparatus comprised of multiple actants.[18] This entanglement is, of necessity, reflected in contemporary notions of curatorial practice and specifically in the diffractive approach which I propose.

Curator – Curating

The role of the curator has moved on significantly from the original meaning (from *curare*, to care for) of the keeper or 'care-taker' of a fixed and finite collection of objects, which originally only existed as a noun, not a verb. In fact, until recently Microsoft Word highlighted 'curating' in its spellcheck, suggesting more viable alternatives. The verb was popularised to describe the activity done by a peripatetic, independent exhibition-maker of temporary exhibitions.[19] The fact that this new practice emerges alongside conceptualism is not accidental, as the emancipation of both artist and curator from traditional forms of production, allowed new roles to emerge.[20] Current discourse circles around the 'curatorial' as defined by visual theorists such as Irit Rogoff, Jean-Paul Martinon, Alfredo Cramerotti, and curator Maria Lind as a research process to catalyse new knowledge, not just the creation of a fixed, coherent visual presentation around a phenomenon.[21] The curatorial aims to 'enact', rather than 'illustrate' knowledge. This trajectory from curator to curating to the curatorial isn't necessarily linear (roles are both interwoven and continue to exist independently),

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18. As noted in the introduction to *Curatorial Things*, ed by Beatrice von Bismarck and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019, pp. 8–13.
19. A prevalent example is Harald Szeemann, operating from the 1960s onwards who nonetheless called himself an '*austellungsmacher*' (exhibition-maker), not a curator, embedding the practice in the exhibitionary moment.
20. See Jan Verwoert, 'This is Not an Exhibition', in *Art and its Institutions – Current Conflicts, Critique and Collaborations*, ed. by Nina Möntmann, London, Black Dog Publishing, 2006, pp. 132–140, p. 133.
21. The curatorial is 'A new set of relations that would not drive home the point of an argument, as in much academic work and would not produce a documented and visualised cohesion around a phenomenon, as in much of curating.' Instead it entails 'attempting to enact the event of knowledge rather than illustrate those knowledges'. Irit Rogoff , 'The Expanding Field', in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by Jean-Paul Martinon, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 46.

but it indicates the degree to which curating as a method is now inscribed within a research paradigm.

Curatorial practice is now an expanded field and the job description is multifaceted: mediator, producer, organiser, interface, critic, medium, interlocutor. Some of these roles might position themselves as transparent, neutral facilitator to art and artists, some as translator or 'middleman'[22] and some adopt a more 'auteur'[23] position with opaque structures of mediation. Yet curating exhibitions is still often seen as a communicative activity, the selection and juxtaposition of artworks to extrapolate or investigate an idea or area of practice. Once formalised in space and enveloped by an interpretative framework, this can become fixed, demonstrative and difficult to re-frame. This is a hangover from the enlightenment model of curating within the museum, one which Lyotard was at pains to counter.[24] In this model the authority is with the curator and the institution to devolve knowledge and insight to a receptive viewer, through didactic displays or illustrative combinations and selective textual contextualisation. Despite periods of experimentation with this hegemony, new pressures are incumbent on institutions to develop audience and sponsor friendly exhibitions, which means experiments with curating are not a priority and self-reflexive curating like Lyotard's is less prevalent in large institutions.[25] Traditional curating often offers a fixed, textual model of engagement, what Raqs Media Collective describe as simply 'the marrying of exhibited art to extant discourses, or the deepening of the

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22. 'The curator is a middleman as such, characterized by unstable and ever-changing representations of his or her agency.'See 'Curator as Middleman. Søren Andreasen and Lars Bang Larsen Interviewed by Zsuzsa László', <http://tranzit.org/freeschool/interju/curator-as-middleman-soren-andreasen-and-lars-bang-larsen-interviewed-by-zsuzsa-laszlo/?lang=en>, [accessed 11 February 2020].
23. The auteur is explored by Natalie Heinich and Michael Pollak in the essay 'From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur – inventing a singular position', in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, pp. 231–250.
24. See footnotes 72–74.
25. See Andrew Hunt, 'Curator, Curating, Curationism', *Art Monthly*, October 2015, p. 13: 'With fundraising the chief focus for senior management, debates at artistic-director and senior-curator level in the UK about testing the limits of 'curating' and 'the curatorial' have taken a back seat.'

appreciation of the lay viewer through informed intervention and translation'.[26] whereas it might be possible to curatorially create a more inclusive space for an active viewer and for the creation of new knowledge by means of multi-modal forms of discursivity around the exhibition, rather than a more traditional univocal authorship.[27] This is something this study seeks to explore.

The curatorial

As a means of disrupting the 'business as usual' models of curating as neoliberal entertainment modes, the curatorial is seen as 'a breaking of rhythm. A disruption of order, that is what causes worry in the exhibition.'[28] This echoes Lyotard's stated aims for 'Les Immatériaux': to create 'inquietude' by means of the exhibition[29] by eschewing traditional forms, display methodologies and uses of space within institutions.

Rogoff, along with Martinon, delineates this 'philosophy' of the curatorial as an ongoing platform for developing ideas, a mode of

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26. Raqs Media Collective, 'To Culture: Curation as an Active Verb', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. By Beatrice von Bismarck, Jorn Schafaff, Tjomas Weski, Berlin: Sternberg, 2012, p. 107.
27. This multimodal interpretative approach is appreciated by audiences according to this report commissioned by Engage Scotland: Dr Heather Lynch , 'Mapping Interpretation Practices in Contemporary Art' by, May 2006, <https://engage.org/resources/mapping-interpretation-practices-in-contemporary-art/>, [accessed 2 February 2019].
28. Jean-Paul Martinon, 'On the Curatorial', in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, ed. by Jean-Paul Martinon, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 18– 30, 2829).
29. 'We were very meticulous with regard to mise-en-espace, mise-en-scène because it was very important to us to break with the traditional concept of space within institutions. An exhibition is a sort of institution which belongs to the tradition of modernity: its aim is to inform people, to make them able to understand, to receive and to have the sensibility corresponding to the state of knowledge in the arts, technologies and even the politics of the period. We tried to give this sense without any idea of teaching or didacticism, in order to touch the sensibility of people so as to awaken something like a repressed […] not anxiety but 'inquietude', because in general this uncertainty about finality is repressed by ourselves and by the media. That is a real problem, why? We tried to produce a feeling of soft uncertainty.' *Jean-François Lyotard discusses the exhibition* 'Les Immatériaux' *with Judy Annear and Robert Owen, Paris 28 March 1985*, p. 23. Typescript of (unpublished) interview in English in Pompidou Centre Archive box 940330/233. See also footnote 73.

knowledge or meaning production with instances of curated events and moments, rhythms and pauses within it. The curatorial would be a project that spans time and need not be limited to a fixed place or space, a 'trajectory of ongoing, active work not an isolated end product but a blip along the line of an ongoing project'.[30] Any tangible, material form of this project is seen as not the end product, but a 'waystation, a 'milestone in a process'.[31] The curatorial, then, is a durational project with high points of actualized intensity, a platform for the development, rather than the statement, of an argument. As such it meshes usefully with curating as a mode of research, fulfilling academic and institutional research criteria around knowledge production but potentially achieving this at the expense of more material or sensorial affect.[32]

Rogoff opposes curating (a professional practice, exhibition-making, a set of techniques leading to a finished project in the world) to the curatorial (an ongoing enquiry) whilst allowing, when pressed in interview,[33] that one exists in a constellation with the other, not in a hierarchical relation. She acknowledges that even with a more traditional notion of curating: 'If you work out a thematic and then assemble things that are seemingly engaged with that thematic, those objects don't simply sit there and illustrate, possibly they start to instantiate and embody and draw out the thematic with different meanings than it might have had originally.'[34] She also acknowledges that a gap can open up between any stated aim of an exhibition and its actualisation and it is in this gap, this productive friction, where audiences and the exhibition itself as a participant or intermediary can have agency to create meaning. She also allows for the auratic

30. 'Curating/Curatorial: A conversation between Beatrice von Bismarck and Irit Rogoff', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, pp.21–40, p. 23.
31. Ibid., p. 28.
32. Indeed it developed out of a curatorial Ph.D. programme: Curatorial/Knowledge at Goldsmiths: <https://www.gold.ac.uk/pg/mphil-phd-curatorial-knowledge/>, [accessed 11 February 2020]
33. Ibid., p. 22.
34. Ibid.

specificity of the exhibition and its potential to create a 'singularity': 'under the aegis of an exhibition project, through the same objects and the same materials, a completely new meaning is elicited […] the relations between them produce knowledge. A singularity gets produced and these objects re-singularise themselves in relation to other new objects.'[35] This aligns particularly well with Barad's suggestion that, phenomena come into being only in intra-action and do not pre-exist their relations with other entities. In this way artworks create a new composite form in exhibition, rather than the exhibition being purely a drawing together of pre-existing objects.

Nevertheless, this opposition between curating and the curatorial inevitably creates an intellectual hierarchy, a 'strange binary'[36] of the materiality of the 'making public' of art and its conceptualisation as a long-form research project. Curator Jens Hoffman is opposed to what he terms the 'paracuratorial' – all the activities which are outside of exhibition-making yet presented as the main body of the curatorial: 'lectures, screenings, exhibitions without art, working with artists on projects without ever producing anything that could be exhibited'.[37] A second line of critique, running from Daniel Buren's 'Exhibiting Exhibitions' in 1972 ('The subject of exhibitions tends more and more to be not so much the exhibition of works of art, as the exhibition of

35. Ibid.
36. Andrew Hunt, 'Curator, Curating, Curationism' p. 15.
37. Jens Hoffmann and Maria Lind, *Mousse 31*, : Jens Hoffmann: 'Curating, to me, is fundamentally linked to exhibition making. I feel some frustration with how the term "curating" has been adopted by all sorts of fields to describe any process that involves making a selection of something. DJs curate the music lineup at a party, cooks curate the menu at a restaurant, decorators curate the living rooms of clients, and so on. For me curating is about formulating a certain theory or argument, based upon which one makes a selection of artworks or other objects with the aim of creating an exhibition in which those objects and artworks are displayed to the public.' vs Maria Lind: 'Curating is "business as usual" in terms of putting together an exhibition, organizing a commission, programming a screening series, et cetera. "The curatorial" goes further, implying a methodology that takes art as its starting point but then situates it in relation to specific contexts, times, and questions in order to challenge the status quo… For me there is a qualitative difference between curating and the curatorial.' <http://moussemagazine.it/jens-hoffmann-maria-lind-2011/>, [accessed 2 April 2018].

the exhibition as a work of art.'[38]) to Anton Vidokle's 2010 essay 'Art without Artists',[39] is that the curatorial prioritises the curator and reduces the agency of the artist, and instrumentalises artwork, as the 'protagonistic'[40] curator gazumps the artist with their own *gesamptkunstwerk*. It suggests that art has become 'a subgenre of the curatorial'[41] reducing artists and artworks to a subsidiary role of illustrating curatorial concepts.

Perhaps Raqs Media Collective , who work both as artists and curators, can help bridge this divide between curating and the curatorial, and move towards the notion of curatorial practice as research and the 'research exhibition'. They note that what is at stake is more than the decoding and articulation of exhibitions in relation to existing knowledge (described above) and suggest that: 'What curation can begin to mean instead is the actual production of knowledge with artworks as catalyst and provocations rather than as codices within which formulas lie waiting to be read by deserving readers through the good offices of skilled translators.'[42] Like Rogoff and the advocates of the curatorial, they talk in terms of 'knowledge production' and they too utilise Derrida's idea of the 'send off' as opposed to the destination – the exhibition as 'a point of departure not a port of arrival',[43] but they also allow that the exhibition itself as a spatial form can be a speculative approach, an interlocution, which can 'expand the horizons of an artwork way beyond the formal and conceptual footprint of its

38. 'Exposition d'une exposition' (Exhibiting Exhibitions) in the catalogue for Documenta V, Kassel: Documenta Verlag, 1972, p. 27.
39. Anton Vidokle, 'Art without Artists?', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, pp. 217 218, and also *E-flux Journal* 16, May 2010, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/16/61285/art-without-artists/>, [accessed 1 October 2019].
40. A pejorative term for 'the excessive role of the curator at the beginning of the twenty-first century' which had emerged since the 1960s, used by Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in a 2002 discussion with Liam Gilick: 'Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev and Liam Gillick in Conversation', in *The Producers : Contemporary Curators in Conversation (4)*, Newcastle Upon Tyne: Baltic & University of Newcastle, 2002, ed. by S. Hiller and S. Martin, pp. 9–52, p. 16.
41. Anton Vidokle, 'Art without Artists?', p. 217.
42. Raqs Media Collective, 'To Culture: Curation as an Active Verb', in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, p. 107.
43. Ibid.

original presence'.[44] This opens up the space for an emplaced exhibition to be a site for active research.

Curatorial Practice as research

Closely aligned with, yet also critical of the curatorial, a form of curating which I would term 'curatorial practice as research' also re-engages with the form of the exhibition, which can be seen as having been relegated in favour of more discursive and motile modes of curating; Hoffman's paracuratorial - forms which go 'beyond display'.

In *Curating as Research*, Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson include several essays which aim to view the exhibition as more than simply 'a unitary system of unequivocal "utterance" or finalized display', rather as a mode of research in its own right. Undermining the binary of curating/the curatorial, they state 'a refusal to reduce the essential idea of curating to the crafting of display practices for autonomous art works; on the other hand a refusal to faddishly cast the question of curatorial practice in terms of the fantasmatic idea of 'knowledge production' or a fetishised cliché of academic/professional expertise'.[45] O'Neill and Wilson consider that the notion of curatorial practice as research and as having an epistemic potential has been widely accepted in a way that is still contested for art practice.[46] They list a variety of projects from the 1980s onwards which suggest that curatorial projects have developed as 'active forms of knowledge production and as research actions and epistemic practices in their own right'.[47]   Indeed, curating could also be accommodated within some descriptions of

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44. Ibid.
45. *Curating Research*, ed. by Paul O'Neill and Mick Wilson, London: Open Editions, 2015, p. 18. This critique could apply to Terry Smith's 'exhibitionary knowledge' were it not for the fact that this is a more experiential, affective form of knowledge instantiated in the physical space of the exhibition.
46. '[C]urating has an accepted, relatively uncontested epistemic dimension, while the making of art appears deeply contested as a research domain that might claim intrinsic epistemic content.' Ibid., p. 15.
47. Ibid., p. 17.

artistic practice as research such as Graeme Sullivan's conception of a braided research model where visual art practice sits at the centre of an overlapping venn with interpretative practices, empiricist practices and critical practices. However, it also has its own specific ways of 'finding things out' which might be about the intersection of the making public of specific constellations of artworks with specific audiences in specific locations and times, and allowing 'work'[48] to happen in the gaps between these specificities, in the singularities that are produced.

Simon Sheikh similarly conceives of the 'research exhibition' which combines two notions of research - the French term '*récherche*', for factual research and the German term '*forschung*' which implies the presentation of a proposition. He suggests that while the former is indispensable to a curatorial process, it is the latter that is key to what he terms the 'research exhibition'. The research exhibition is 'not only a vehicle for the presentation of research results [...] but also a site for ongoing research around the format and thematic concerns of the exhibition. Research here is not only that which comes before realisation but that which is realised through actualisation.'[49] Like Terry Smith's notion of 'exhibitionary knowledge'[50] created in the space-time of the exhibition, this sense of research through actualisation recalls Rogoff's notion of the exhibition as an 'event of

48. Irit Rogoff, "I don't want to divide the world into the historical blockbusters put on by Tate Modern, Neue Nationalgalerei or the Metropolitan Museum of Art and small quirky, process-driven artistic experiments – but rather to think about why some quite progressive projects produced work while others do not. It could be that a lot of work has gone into them but they don't necessarily produce work. To make something 'work' probably has to do with questions that are left open and are not preempted or perhaps with the absence of a moral or ethical high ground on the part of the curator – what I call 'seriousness' – which I think of as the ability to actually deal with a non-embodied heterogeneity.'
Beatrice von Bismarck: 'There is no clear methodology apart from the ability to produce not only a difference but even friction within the event. A friction that becomes visible and that can be defined in a variety of relational ways, be they oriented towards objects actors or institutions or towards modes conditions and conventions.' 'Curating/Curatorial A conversation between Beatrice von Bismarck and Irit Rogoff' in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. by Beatrice von Bismarck, Jorn Schafaff, Thomas Weski, pp. 21– 40, p. 34.
49. Simon Sheikh, 'Towards the Exhibition as Research' in *Curating Research*, p. 46.
50. Terry Smith, 'Talking Contemporary Curating', in *ICI perspectives in Curating*, ed. by Kate Fowles, New York: Independent Curators International, 2015), p. 283. Expanded upon in Chapter 5.

knowledge'[51] but specifically suggests the importance of a material instantiation of the exhibition – a performative arena – rather than an ever-deferrable discourse.

Via revisiting archival curatorial methods using diffractive methodologies, I aimed to create this mode of 'research exhibition' which realises research through practice and in which the curatorial frame produces 'work' or a productive friction generative of new thinking. This mode of curatorial practice is aware of its own apparatus, structures, conventions, histories, hierarchies and the orchestration of spatial and temporal relations.[52] Indeed it rehabilitates, in some ways, the potential of the exhibition, rather than purely the para-curatorial, to create meaning, and explores what this convocation of a constellation of artworks in a physical space with a proximate viewer, can achieve in the prevalent post-digital context of the online viewing of artworks and exhibitions.

As opposed to the position of the auteur curator, disaggregating work from artists or the position of the paracuratorial, privileging discourse over materiality, I want to propose a mode of curating which uses a diffractive approach to create a physical phenomenon of intra-acting artworks which can combine to create a constructive interference. The intention is to create exhibitionary knowledge without imposing a

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51. Irit Rogoff: 'It is a series of existing knowledges that come together momentarily to produce what we are calling the event of knowledge; a moment in which different knowledges interacting with one another produce something that transcends their position as knowledge. The performative element enters in [...] the curatorial seems to be an ability to think everything that goes into the event of knowledge in relation to one another[...]. Nevertheless, the question at the level of practice is how to instantiate this as a process, how to actually not allow things to harden and how to create a public platform that allows people to take part in these processes.' *Cultures of the Curatorial*, p. 23.
52. As Boris Groys suggests: 'This is where the exhibition begins to be understood not as a pure act of presenting, but as the presentation of presenting, a revelation of its own strategy of framing. In other words, the exhibition does not only present certain images to our gaze, but also demonstrates the technology of presenting, the apparatus and structure of framing, and the mode in which our gaze is determined, oriented, and manipulated by this technology. [...] The exhibition exhibits itself before it exhibits anything else.' 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', in *eFlux Journal #94*, October 2018, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219462/curating-in-the-post-internet-age/, [accessed 17 December 2018]

unifying authorial voice, and by means of offering an alternate, more active mode of polyvocal interpretation to audiences. By doing so I intend to test a diffractive method as an approach to examining the dynamics of the post digital, troubling dichotomies such as analogue/digital or original/reproduction or past/present and investigating a contemporary notion of the aura of the artwork. I started this process however, by looking to the curatorial archive of past exhibitions which had employed curatorial practice as research, to create exhibitionary knowledge.

ii.   Looking askance at the curatorial archive – 'Les Immatériaux'

In arguing against 'the amnesia of curatorial history', curator Hans Ulrich Obrist suggests we need to develop our understanding of experimental exhibition history in order to develop 'innovative curatorial practice'.[53] He advocates revisiting the 'repressed history'[54] of such experimental exhibitions. This impetus has evolved into the nascent discipline of exhibition histories, best represented by Afterall's *Exhibition Histories* research and publishing programme.[55] Methodologically, I have been using a similar process of 'anamnesis' of the curatorial archive. Anamnesis is a term used by Lyotard in relation to curating the exhibition 'Les Immatériaux',[56] for a looking back and

53. Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'Panel Statements', in *Curating Now: Imaginative Practice/Public Responsibility*, ed. by Paula Marincola, Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2001, p. 31,
<https://www.pewcenterarts.org/sites/default/files/curating_now_pdf.pdf>,
[accessed 12 October 2018].
54. Hans Ulrich Obrist, 'Kraftwerk, Time Storage, Laboratory', in *Curating in the 21st Century*, ed. by Gavin Wade, Walsall and Wolverhampton: New Art Gallery Walsall/University of Wolverhampton, 2000, p. 53.
55. <https://www.afterall.org/exhibition-histories/>, [accessed 2 March 2020]
56. Hudek notes, in 'From Over- to Sub-Exposure: The Anamnesis of Les Immatériaux', *Tate Papers*, no. 12, Autumn 2009, that Lyotard described his curatorial experience as having prompted an anamnesis, in Jean-François Lyotard, '"D'un travail", Les Immatériaux (Au Centre Georges Pompidou en 1985): Étude de l'événement exposition et de son public', p. 147–148. Anne Elisabeth Sijten also suggests that the exhibition was an attempt to perform an anamnesis of Lyotard's ideas on the postmodern, in 'Exhibiting and Thinking: An Anamnesis of the

a 'working through' past, repressed or forgotten events in order to keep open a productive passage to the future. Anamnesis, for Lyotard is a 'temporal reactivation',[57] it explores the present by means of Freud's free association and Benjamin's aura, 'drawing stuff from all periods into the current context'.[58] Like post-modernism it is not a process of repetition, of 'flash back or feedback' but 'an "ana-" process' like analysis and anamorphosis.[59] It is interesting that Lyotard links anamnesis to anamorphosis, which is a distorted perspective requiring the viewer to occupy a specific vantage point, off to one side, to reconstitute the image (like the skull in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*), creating an impediment to the smooth flow of representation.[60] This idea of looking askance at the archive from a subjective position feels like a productive and generative methodology to create the new.

Walter Benjamin agrees that objects must be looked at askance to be seen afresh. Esther Leslie suggests that Benjamin 'cannot see without squinting. The squint is crucial in providing the askant view that makes

Postmodern', in *30 years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, ed. by Yuk Hui and Andreas Broekman, Luneburg: Meson Press, 2015, pp. 159–178 <https://meson.press/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/9783957960313-30-Years-Les-Immateriaux.pdf>, [accessed 1 February 2018]. Lyotard notes that new technologies make anamnesis less easy: 'The whole question is this: is the passage (anamnesis) possible, will it be possible with, or allowed by, the new mode of inscription and memoration [*mémoration*] that characterizes the new technologies? Do they not impose syntheses and syntheses conceived still more intimately in the soul than any earlier technology has done?', 'Logos and Techne, or Telegraphy', in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991, p. 57.

57. A phrase used by Kiff Bamford, in relation to Lyotard's use of anamnesis, in *Lyotard and the Figural in Performance, Art and Writing*, London: Continuum Books, 2012, p. 94.

58 'Anamnesis […] explores the meanings of a given 'present', of an expression of the here and now, without immediate concern for (referential) reality, and it does this by means of associations which are said to be 'free' (Freud; and perhaps Benjamin's notion of aura) […] This is not about researching the past to establish its truth. Stuff gets drawn from all periods into the current context without worrying about argumentation, nor how it is going to work for the writing.' Jean-François Lyotard, ' Anamnesis of the Visible', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21, 1, 2004, 107–119, p. 108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404040483>, [accessed 1 April 2018]

59. 'Understood in this way, the 'post-' of 'postmodern' does not mean a movement of come back, of flash back, of feedback, that is of repetition, but an 'ana-' process, an analytical process, a process of anamnesis, of anagogy and anamorphosis, which works through [*élabore*] an 'initial forgetting.' Jean-François Lyotard, 'Note sur le sens de "post"', *Le Postmoderne expliqué aux enfants*, Paris: Galilée, 1979, p.119.

60. This aligns with his ideas on the figural discussed in Chapter 5, as something embodied which disrupts clear communication.

the object new. The squint rescues matter from the fatal circuit [….] Matter is renewed in representation, in play and in memory…. The squint and the distorting lens produce the world anew'.[61] The squint also recalls Benjamin's 'tangent' which happens when translating: 'Just as a tangent touches a circle lightly and at but one point, […], a translation touches the original lightly and only at the infinitely small point of the sense, thereupon pursuing its own course'.[62] The 'distorting lens' calls to mind Barad's description of diffraction drawing from an optical metaphor, in which light behaves in unexpected ways, not simply reflecting an image back as we would expect. Starting from a working through or anamnesis, I therefore attempted a diffraction, a constructive interference with rather than a reflection of or 'flash back' to the curatorial archive.

I squinted at the curatorial archive – in particular at landmark international exhibitions involving technology – in order to make something new in relation to them, going off at a tangent utilising temporal reactivation. I started with the archive closest to me, Site Gallery, where I worked for many years, staged 'star dot star' in 1998 which was a revisiting of the iconic 1968 ICA exhibition 'Cybernetic Serendipity', one of the first exhibitions integrating art and new technology.[63] This led me to 'Les Immatériaux' at the Pompidou Centre in 1985, curated by Lyotard and Thierry Chaput, which, like 'star dot star', mixed artefacts, art and information technology, but also incorporated the idea of hand-made material and set this within an innovative exhibition structure and a philosophical framework.[64]

61. Esther Leslie, 'Spectacles and Signs', in *The Benjamin Papers*, para 18 of 25, referring to Bloßfeldt and close-up imaging technologies, which made the everyday strange, <https://www.militantesthetix.co.uk/waltbenj/LIAM.html>, [accessed 2 March 2019]..
62. Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's 'Tableaux Parisien'', in *Walter Benjamin: Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans Harry Zohn, pp. 69–82, 80,(London: Fontana/Collins, 1973[1923]), <https://aaaaarg.fail/thing/51c584176c3a0ed90b8f0700>, [accessed 4 June 2019]
63. The original advertised starting point for my bursaried Ph.D. was: 'The Digital & the Hand-Made: New Technologies and the Role of the Gallery'.
64. The space of the exhibition was divided into five possible paths or zones, each path inspired by a word containing the Sanskrit root 'mat', to make by hand,

Visiting the archives for these exhibitions (at Tate and at The Pompidou Centre), I was interested in the paradoxical tense of the archive as being not just retrospective or nostalgic, but a record of the past that is also a vector to the future. Boris Groyz refers to the archive as 'a machine for transporting the present to the future'[65] and Carolyn Steedman suggests that its tense is the 'future perfect',[66] and that by looking back it is possible to posit something for the future – 'the paradoxical sense of the future that a deliberatively retrospective gaze opens up' according to art historian Thierry de Duve.[67]

Part of my interest is in investigating what an anamnesis of an exhibition such as this can afford the contemporary curator. What affordances working through the past offers as strategies for curating now. What this looking askance at the archive, and selecting from it subjectively, diffractively, can do. Looking to the archive of exhibitions allows us to see the ghostly lineage of curatorial influence and how this extends to the current day and beyond. My research investigates how the historical avant-garde of curating in relation to technology might continue to influence the ongoing archive. Hal Foster suggests the avant-garde event has to be recoded in deferred action (*Nachtraglichkeit*) as it cannot be immediately accepted or registered in its own time, so is reconstituted by 'a complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts - in short in a deferred action that throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, original and

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measure, or build, included artefacts and artworks, but was keenly concerned with techno-science.
65. 'Archives are often interpreted as merely a way of conserving the past – of displaying the past in the present time. But in fact archives are at the same time and even primarily machines for transporting the present into the future.' Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, London & New York: Verso, 2016, p. 186.
66. Carolyn Steedman, *Dust*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001, p.7. See also Lyotard's linking of this tense to the postmodern: 'The artists and writer thus work without rules, in order to establish the rules of *what will have been done* […] Post modernity would have to be understood according to the paradox of the future (post) perfect (modo)-' Jean François Lyotard, *Le postmodern expliqué aux enfants* Paris: Galilée, 1979, p.323.
67. Thierry de Duve, *Kant after Duchamp*, Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1996, p. 8.

repetition'.[68]   This entanglement of before and after and of original and repetition, also recalls the theory of diffraction, and supports my intention to work with this exhibition in diffracted, deferred action to elucidate ideas around the contemporary auratic – something which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.
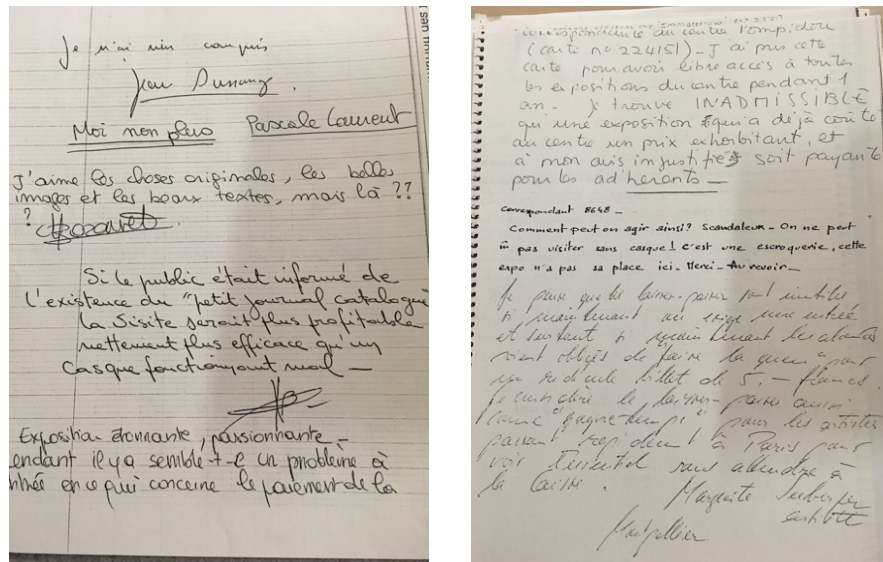
Figure 5. Images of 'Les Immatériaux' comments book, from Pompidou Centre archive

Foster's *Nachtraglichkeit* (which recalls Lyotard's use of the similarly Freudian term 'anamnesis' in relation to curating[69]) may also explain the extremely bad reception the exhibition 'Les Immatériaux' had from exhibition visitors and some critics. It was 'a hole in the symbolic order of its time that was not prepared for it'.[70] The exhibition was

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68. Foster notes 'the avant-garde work is never 'historically effective or fully significant in its initial moments. It cannot be because it is traumatic – a hole in the symbolic order of its time that is not prepared for it, that cannot receive it.' He goes on: 'One event is only registered through another that recodes it; [...] in deferred action (*Nachtraglichkeit*).' Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* , Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,1996, p. 29.
69. This connection of anamnesis and *Nachtraglichkeit* has also been made by Kiff Bamford in *Lyotard and the Figural in Performance, Art and Writing*, London: Continuum Books, 2012, p. 99. Yuk Hui also has a section in his essay 'Anamnesis and Re-orientation: A Discourse on Matter and Time' on 'The Nachtraglichkeit of 'Les Immatériaux', in *30 Years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, p.195.
70. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, p.29. Perhaps it was 'contemporary' in the sense that Georgio Agamben suggests, having 'a singular relationship with one's own time, which adheres to it and at the same time, keeps a distance from it. More precisely it is that relationship with time that adheres to it, through a disjunction and an anachronism.' Agamben goes on to suggest that the contemporary agent 'breaks the

darkly lit, 'decked in demanding grey',[71] labyrinthine, had no walls or traditional salon or white cube-style display structures[72] and no interpretation for the audience other than an audio headset playing excerpts of philosophical and literary texts. Lyotard overtly states that one of his intentions was to counter the modernist or enlightenment model of exhibition-making, to eschew didacticism and instead to create a mise-en-scène which awoke repressed 'disquiet' and 'incertitude'[73] in the viewer regarding their relationship to new technology and the immaterial. He aimed to make us 'unlearn what is "familiar" to us'[74] by removing standard exhibition conventions (like exhibition text in favour of an interaction with sounds via headset) and provoking a rhizomatic drift-like engagement in the exhibition, which prefigured the experience of web browsing. The viewer was invited to

vertebrae of his time (or at any rate has perceived in it a fault line or breaking point), then makes of this fracture a meeting place or encounter between times and generations.' Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary' from *What is an Apparatus and other Essays,* trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 83. Perhaps anamnesis enables this sense of the anachronistic and this meeting point. This sense of anachronic time (literally against ('ana', again), (chronos) time rather than 'con'temporary – with time) and the potentially insightful nature of this anachronism – that it enables one to be more capable of 'perceiving and grasping' (ibid.) one's own time – will be returned to in a consideration of the re-curation, or temporal reactivation of exhibitions later in this chapter.

71. Thierry Chaput, 'Entrée en matière', *Petit Journal,* 28 March–15 July 1985, Paris, p. 1.

72. Instead it had grey mesh hangings delineating 5 'zones', relating to a complicated schematic each inspired by a word containing the Sanskrit root 'mat', and a communication model designed by Harold Lasswell, "And here we appealed to two principles: no fancy mouldings and no pedestals. We didn't want still another re evocation of a gallery or a salon, by which I mean an arrangement of rooms in a royal palace as designed by the king. We wanted to avoid this way of squarely defining things and we had to discover a more fluid and *immaterial system for the organization of space." Jean-François Lyotard: After Six Months of Work... (1984),* in *30 years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, pp. 29–71, (p. 60). The layout of the exhibition was modular rather than linear, the viewer could choose between one of five strands through the exhibition, each corresponding to one of the five *mat* strands. Each *mat* strand in turn would incorporate a number of 'zones', with each 'zone' unified by a common soundtrack, available on headphones. Then each 'zone' subdivided into various 'sites', or installations which related (closely or not) to the relevant *mat* strand.

73. 'incertitude about the finalities of these developments and incertitude about the identity of the human individual in his condition of such improbable immateriality'. ''Les Immatériaux": A Conversation with Jean François Lyotard and Bernard Blistène', http://www.art agenda.com/reviews/les immateriaux a conversation with jean francois lyotard and bernard blistene/[accessed 1.3.20]. See also footnote 29 re 'inquietude'.

74. Jean François Lyotard, 'Qui a peur des "Immatériaux"?', *Le Monde*, 3 May 1985, pp. 3– 5, Pompidou Archive Box (PCA 94033/233).

create their own exhibitionary knowledge through the intra-action of different non-linear zones of works with differing ontological status, put in relationship to a disjunctive soundtrack.

O' Neill notes that a prominent understanding of curating is that of storytelling, where ideas are articulated in terms of narrative. He quotes Groys: 'Every exhibition tells a story by directing the viewer through the exhibition space in a particular order; the exhibition space is always a narrative space.'[75] It is perhaps appropriate that Lyotard, whose concept of postmodernism, which had been conceived just prior to 'Les Immatériaux',[76] is about the fracturing of grand narratives, should curate an exhibition where any such uber narrative is resolutely dismantled and micro-narratives and tangents proliferate. O'Neill continues: 'Focussing on the exhibition's labyrinthine quality, Lyotard declared it a phenomenological and spatial form. In this he distinguished the exhibition as a manifestation of a philosophy and tested the concept of the exhibition as a sensorial experience.'[77] Lyotard makes this intention explicit when he says: 'the visitor himself will have no overall view, and that she will circulate immanently in this space, without being able to grasp, at least not immediately, it's overall economy'.[78] This partial, non-linear approach slows and complicates any teleology – Robin Mackay suggests Lyotard used anamnesis as the 'other of acceleration'[79] a way to slow the purely celebratory acceptance of developments in new technology. This is similar to how Erika Balsom discusses the curatorial use of the artefactual and authentic – as a way to resist the 'vista of acceleration'[80] which the

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75. 'On the curatorship' in *Art Power* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008), p. 44/45.
76. Lyotard talks about 'an attitude of incredulity towards metanarratives' in *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* (1979), Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984, p. xxiv, <https://monoskop.org/images/e/e0/Lyotard_JeanFrancois_The_Postmodern_Condition_A_Report_on_Knowledge.pdf>, [accessed 8 January 2018] he.
77. Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, p. 91.
78. Jean-François Lyotard, 'After Six Months of work..', (1984), in *30 years After 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, pp. 29–66, 61.
79. Robin Mackay, 'Immaterials, Exhibition, Acceleration', in *30 years After 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, pp. 215–244, 2367. (The relationship between acceleration and anamnesis aligns with 'jubilation' and 'chagrin' in Lyotard's terms.)
80. Ibid.

promiscuous digital dissemination of the poor image opens up.[81]

As noted in the introduction, the exhibition began with an artefact – an Egyptian bas relief[82] and ended with the same image, cut up into vertical strips and projected, dematerialized as if ready to be sampled and re-appropriated, having become the precursor of Steyerl's 'poor image'. In between the viewer would encounter a range of objects with different ontological status – miniature theatre sets of Beckett plays, prostheses, artificial skin, industrial robots, interactive sound works, industrially produced scents and holograms alongside artwork by Duchamp, Sonia Delaunay, Kasimir Malevitch, Dan Graham, Joseph Kosuth, Jannis Kounellis, Piero Manzoni, Paul Monory, Catherine Ikam, Robert Barry, Annegret Soltau, and Andy Warhol in a dark, non-linear exhibition architecture demarcated by large grey mesh hangings.

Antony Hudek, who has also performed a written anamnesis of 'Les Immatériaux'[83], notes[84] that the exhibition is part of a genealogy of alternative exhibition design which can be traced back from its controversial mesh space dividers and anti-white cube-style hang in 1985, to: Lina Bo Bardi's glass panel hanging systems for artwork (1968); display structures in Andre Malraux's post-war art institutions, lesMaisons de la Culture; Duchamp's interventionist curatorial strategies;[85] and to other display strategies from post-war commerce

81. It is the oscillation between accelerationism and anamnesis which is set out in 'Les Immatériaux', and which, I would argue, corresponds to the relationship between the authentic artefact and the poor image in the post-digital.
82. Lyotard referred to the bas relief as an 'irreplaceable witness for us of what "we" are in the process of finally losing' in letter to Pierre Gaudibert, dated 3 September 1984, in the Pompidou Centre Archive, (PCA 94033/669), referenced by Antony Hudek in 'From Over- to Sub-Exposure: The Anamnesis of Les Immatériaux', *Tate Papers*, no. 12, Autumn 2009, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate papers/12/from over to sub exposure the anamnesis of les immateriaux#footnote15_oubu063>, [accessed 4 February 2020].
83. Ibid..
84. In the event *Exorcising the Ghosts of Our Immediate Future*, which I curated on 9 December 2017 at Site Gallery, Sheffield.
85. Indeed the darkness of 'Les Immatériaux' recalls that of the 'International Surrealist Exhibition', Galerie des Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938, curated by Duchamp, in which viewers were given torches to navigate the space.

and advertising. All of these circumvented the white wall so fundamental to 20th century curating. By being an exhibition without walls, 'Les Immatériaux' also played a part in developing from Malraux's ideas for a *Museum without Walls*[86], originally envisioned as a super museum in the form of a book of reproductions of artworks. This endeavour seems now to be being taken forward by digital means, online platforms and VR walk-throughs of exhibitions, which offer different forms of evolving technological archives or exhibition sites without walls.

For all these reasons I am taking 'Les Immatériaux' as a degree zero of experimental curation of art in relation to the digital – one of the first 'research exhibitions'[87] which is a site for actively creating rather than subsequently displaying research. Lyotard corroborates this, saying: 'we will not plan out this exhibition and then carry out the planned project, but rather set out from these questions'.[88] Indeed it was described at the time as 'the first time a philosophical discourse-was presented [...] through images and artefacts'. [89]

86. André Malraux's notion of a *musée imaginaire*, is translated variously as 'Imaginary Museum' or 'museum without walls', *Le Musée imaginaire,* Geneva: Skira, 1947.
87. The 'research exhibition' as coined by Simon Sheikh in 'Towards the Exhibition as Research', in *Curating Research,* p. 46.
88. Jean-François Lyotard, 'After Six Months of Work...' (1984), in *30 years After 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, pp. 29–71, p. 60.
89. Nathalie Heinich, 'Les Immatériaux Revisited: Innovation in Innovations', *Tate Papers*, no.12, Autumn 2009, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/12/les- Immatériaux-revisited-innovation-in-innovations>, [accessed 23 March 2017]

Figure 6. Exhibition design for 'Les Immatériaux', Pompidou Centre, 1985

Contrary to its initial negative reception, more than thirty-five years
later, the exhibition is seen as an innovative model of curatorial
practice, lauded by artists like Philippe Parreno,[90] and curators like
Daniel Birnbaum[91] and Hans Ulrich Obrist.[92] But there was a
significant time lapse before this positive evaluation surfaced. Curator
Charles Esche writes about the need for a retrospective analysis of
exhibitions to determine their 'critical surplus'. He sees this as the
'measurement and validation of the curatorial as a productive, critical
activity'[93] as opposed to being an entertainment for the neo-liberal

90. Philippe Parreno cites this exhibition as hugely influential to his practice:
''Another important moment for me was [Jean-François] Lyotard's exhibition 'Les
Immatériaux' [1985]. 'Les Immatériaux' proposed a new way of articulating concepts
and intuitions – a new way to understand the ubiquity of 'immaterials'. 'Philippe
Parreno Interview with Tom Eccles', *Art Review*, October 2015,
<https://artreview.com/features/october_2015_feature_philippe_parreno/>,
[accessed 1 March 2018]
91. Daniel Birnbaum and Sven Olov Wallenstein, 'Spatial Thought',,
<http://www.eflux.com/architecture/superhumanity/66879/spatial thought/>
[accessed 24 January 2018]
92. 'Lyotard made his philosophical ideas into a labyrinth in the exhibition. It's
difficult to describe because he was producing the idea rather than illustrating it, but
it influenced me and lots of other artists – like Philippe Parreno, who I worked with
later.', *The Guardian*, 23 March 2014,
<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-
art-curator>, [accessed 24 September 2019]
93. Charles Esche, 'Coda: the Curatorial', in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, p.
243.

system, and suggests this can only be done by revisiting exhibitions. This aligns with Foster's 'recoding' of the avant-garde in 'deferred action' which undermines any sense of before and after, original and repetition.

This anamnestic approach on revisiting exhibitions, is echoed by Benjamin scholar, Samuel Weber when he talks about another function of aura emerging when an exhibition is exposed to new technologies and new settings which contribute to what Benjamin called the 'afterlife' of the original. 'Such histories can thus expose what could never have been apprehended by visitors to the actual exhibition, namely it's past imperfect, by reformulating it perhaps as a present participle looking to the future.'[94] I hoped that an anamnesis of this exhibition combined with a revisiting of some of its strategies now, might create knowledge by means of this anachronic curatorial superposition. I aimed to explore whether this might offer insight into our contemporary notions of the relationship between aura and the artwork in the post-digital, by putting them in conjunction with earlier ones, by speaking with ghosts.

iii.   Speaking with Ghosts

To explore the affordances of an anamnesis of the curatorial archive, I curated a discursive event, working outwards from Site Gallery's archive.[95] 2018 was a twenty-year loop from the exhibition 'star dot star 'at Site which was a reimagining of the exhibition 'Cybernetic Serendipity' thirty years before that at the ICA. On the cusp of Site's fortieth year and a planned curatorial reinvestigation of their archive,

94. Samuel Weber, 'Pictures After an Exhibition', paper presented at Afterall event 'Art's Exhibition Histories Online', 16.11.17, < https://www.afterall.org/events/art s exhibition histories online > [accessed 16 November 2021]
95. Site Gallery was a partner for the Ph.D. and location of many of my past curatorial projects, so I was part of this archive, as is this event now: <https://www.sitegallery.org/event/discussion-exorcising-the-present-ghosts-of-our-immediate-future/> [accessed 16 December 2021]

this event – *Exorcising the Present Ghosts of our Immediate Future*[96] – looked back at the archive of curatorial history (particularly in relation to technology), to the ghosts of exhibitions that haunt us, to see how this process impacts on contemporary curating. Barad suggests that: 'to address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future)'.[97] The aims of this event were similar in that it did not seek to nostalgically reconstruct past exhibitions or recirculate cultural forms in a hauntological loop[98] but to respond to the 'entangled relationalities of inheritance'[99] in terms of curating, that is: speaking with ghosts to move discourse forwards. Artist Philippe Parreno also suggests that ghosts come from archives: 'It's the book you read and that you remember; ideas you thought you had forgotten. The ghost is the re-read, the re-seen, the forgotten. Knowledge haunts you.[100] I sought to add to this the idea that the revenant could be an exhibition that I could be in conversation with.[101] The discussion questioned how we can perform anamnesis on the curatorial archive, what is achieved by revisiting or reprising past

96. A quote from a review of 'Les Immatériaux' by Pierre Restany: 'Let us be leavened with Lyotard. That is the best way of exorcising the present ghosts of our immediate future. Pierre Restany, '*Les Immatériaux*: let us be leavened with Lyotard',*Domus*, 662, June 1985, p. 60–63.
97. Karen Barad, 'Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, Space-Time Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come', in *Derrida Today*, 3:2, 2010, 240–268, (p. 264). Also quoted in 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', *Parallax*, Volume 20, Issue 3, 2014, 'Diffracted Worlds – Diffractive Readings: Onto-Epistemologies and the Critical Humanities', 168–187,<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/tpar20/current>, [accessed 3 April 2018].
98. With reference to Mark Fisher's approach to the notion of hauntology as set out in *Ghosts of My Life, Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures*, Alresford: Zero Books, 2014.
99. Barad, 'Quantum Entanglements', p. 264.
100. From an interview in *Frieze* by Jennifer Higgie, 23 October 2013, <https://frieze.com/article/philippe-parreno-my-influences?language=en> [accessed 24 March 2018].
101. Indeed Parreno is also on record as being haunted by 'Les Immatériaux', 'And one exhibition changed my life, 'Les Immatériaux' by Lyotard. I am still haunted by that show, by the way it was made, the way it was produced, the fact that it was an exhibition not as a display of objects but a place to think, to produce thought.' in Ben Luke, 'The Art Machine: The Centre Pompidou at 40', *The Art Newspaper*, 1 February 2017, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/the-art-machine-the-centre-pompidou-at-40>, [accessed 24 March 2018].

exhibitions and what affordances this process offers contemporary curating. I was interested in how it might be possible to develop insight into my research questions by overlaying strategies from different timeframes in curatorial history, how this palimpsest might allow us to read both differently.

The growing discourse around exhibition histories also explores these potentialities and where reconstructions, physical or digital, can effect more than a further rigid canonisation or self-aggrandisement for institutions, and help in developing new material thinking. These practices are so multifarious, that more granular analysis is needed; for example, Reesa Greenberg delineates the different versions of these practices into 'the replica, the riff and the reprise'[102] all of which have different potentialities for creating new insights.

Much has been written on the practice of reconstructing/ remaking exhibitions, most notably around the remake of the 1969 exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, curated by Harald Szeeman in Kunsthalle Bern, which was remade in 2013 by curator Germano Celant, in dialogue with artist Thomas Demand and architect Rem Koolhaas. This took place in a Venetian palazzo into which the original absent gallery architecture was mapped or superimposed, almost like the tape marking the position of corpses at murder sites, and populated with the original works. This grafting or superposition of one exhibition onto another, differentiated by time, seemed to create a productive anachronism, offering insight on the present as well as the past.

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102. In 'Remembering Exhibitions': From Point to Line to Web', *Tate Papers*, Issue 12, 2009, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/12/remembering-exhibitions-from-point-to-line-to-web> [accessed 3 March 2018].

It has been noted[103] that these discourses and practices of re-making and reconstructing came to prominence post 1989, the period associated with the end of history[104] and a failure (as Jameson notes[105]) to re-imagine the future. This, as well as a concern to act as a mnemonic to prevent curatorial amnesia, resulted in a refocusing of attention on the archive. As Derrida warned, however, rather than marking the end of history it is really 'a question of repetition: a spectre is always a revenant' and that that this is not necessarily atavistic: 'at bottom the spectre is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back'.[106] We are perhaps always looking back to exorcise the ghosts of our immediate future.

In the case of remakes of exhibitions – do these function as copies or new things in the world? Is their value in their ability to memorialise and recall, or to highlight intervening changes, allowing us to critically understand our present time more fully, allowing new analysis to emerge?[107] Can this 'recuration', as Terry Smith terms it, allow us to think 'in and through' exhibitions in a different way to the rethinking that art history allows?[108] Charles Esche suggests that the physically immediate 'enveloping' experience of the recurated exhibition, as well as potentially serving nostalgia and commerce, allows for a new analysis to happen through the anachronistic time overlay they produce.[109] These practices also serve to undermine modernist notions of originality and authenticity, and the aura of artworks and exhibitions. Claire Bishop recognises the oppositional pull between

103. Deter Roelstraete, 'Make it Re: The Eternally Returning Object', in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, Milan: Progetto Prada Arte, 2013, pp. 423–428.
104. According to Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History', in *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, 3–18.
105. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, London: Verso, 2005.
106. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (1993), trans Peggy Kamuf, London: Routledge 1994, p. 48.
107. Questions addressed by Francesco Stocchi in the essay 'Every Critical Act is a Creative Act', in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, pp.443–450.
108. In 'Artists as Curator/Curators as Artists: Exhibitionary Form since 1969', in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, pp. 519 –530.
109. Charles Esche, 'A Different Setting Changes Everything', in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, pp. 469–476.

reconstruction and remaking and notions of authenticity and materiality, but suggests that when done sensitively 'two authorships and two temporalities can co-exist in one anachronic object: an archival representation of the past, and a voice that speaks to the concerns of today'.[110]

Groys also suggests that aura and reconstruction are not necessarily oppositional and that it hinges on this notion of anachronism: 'The aura emerges when we become involved with an anachronistic text that suggests its own "here and now" […] this attitude leads to a break, to a distancing from its historical context and finds its own form, its own artificial context.'[111] This sense of anachronism in time, aligns for me with anamnesis and *nachtraglichkeit*. The revisiting and reworking of what has come before, the layering of a new iteration on an original with an acknowledgement of the anachronism of this process acts as a driver to insight and potentially allows for the production of aura in this new 'here and now'.

Can we examine the impacts technology is having on artwork production, curatorial thinking and notions of the auratic now, not by remaking in the senses discussed above but by re-positioning, overlaying and diffracting certain strategies from an older exhibition which might yield insight on my research questions now? The discussion at *Exorcising the Present Ghosts of Our Immediate Future* started to lay out the potentialities of creating new curatorial iterations in an entangled, hauntological relation to another past exhibition.

At the event, David Morris, of the Afterall research project Exhibition Histories, spoke about how both 'Cybernetic Serendipity' and 'Les Immatériaux' have been revisited in some form — 'Cybernetic

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110. In 'Reconstruction Era: The Anachronic Time of Installation Art', in *When Attitudes Become Form Bern: 1969/Venice 2013*, pp. 429–436.
111. Boris Groys, 'Art Topology: The Reproduction of Aura', in *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, pp. 451–456.

Serendipity' in 'star dot star' at Site and 'Les Immatériaux' in 'Les Immatériaux, For Instance' at Kunstverein, Dusseldorf in 2014.[112] Neither were verbatim remakings, a practice which was discussed as not necessarily offering any new insight other than satisfying a documentary curiosity to experience something physically. Nevertheless, looking to the archive of exhibitions allows us to see the ghostly lineage of curatorial influence and how this extends to the current day and beyond.

Figure 7. *Octave au pays Des Immatériaux*, video, 35 min 58 sec, Daniel Soutif, Paule Zajdermann

Antony Hudek spoke about 'Les Immatériaux' and returning to this now semi-mythic exhibition, which, he suggested, was never intended to be remembered in the first place, it was intended to be 'memoryless', forgettable. Hudek suggested that Lyotard wanted to it to be like a dream sequence, a psychoanalytical fiction, experienced in a childlike way. The child who is pictured rollerskating through the exhibition at speed in a commissioned film for the exhibition, echoes the acceleration of technology represented through the exhibition, and was

its ideal visitor.[113] Despite 'Les Immatériaux' being intended as an untethered experiential affect which would fade, the exhibition has increasingly come to be an object of study and just such a hauntological moment when the past, present and future seem visibly interlocked. The exhibition aimed, according to one commentator, to 'exorcise the ghosts of our immediate future',[114] to evacuate the coming technological immaterials by proximity and physical engagement, also the death knell to aura. In fact, it feels more appropriate, and closer to Lyotard's intention to say that it aimed to engage with these ghosts and retain the phenomenological unease they engendered, by utilising the figure of the immaterial phantom, which is there but not there, to undermine distinctions and unpick the subject/object opposition. Could I use strategies from this out of time, avant-garde exhibition, then to similarly engage with the ghosts of our current immediate future by means of being in conversation with this older revenant? 'Les Immatériaux' predicted the metamorphoses of form which would be created by new technology within a curatorial dramaturgy aimed at creating uneasy entanglement between human and technology rather than secure separation. This, along with its lack of distinction between artwork and technological or manufactured objects, functioned, as artist Simon Biggs notes, to draw attention to the status of the auratic in technoculture and to 'dematerialise or deconstruct one of Lyotard's primary targets in the show which was Benjamin's notion of aura'.[115]

So, if we imagine the archival material on 'Les Immatériaux' as the

113. *Octave au pays des immatériaux*, video**,** 35 min 58 sec, dir. Paule Zajdermann, scenario Daniel Soutif and Paule Zajdermann, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Pompidou Centre, or viewable as part of a lecture by Yuk Hui 5 min 20 seconds into the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=13EdYtfmJ0A>, [accessed 25 November 2019], and excerpted here: <https://vimeo.com/313798265>, [accessed 15 November 2021].
114. 'Pierre Restany, '"Les Immatériaux": let us be leavened with Lyotard', pp.60–63.
115. 'Immaterial Semiotics', New Media Curating email forum, 13.6.2001, archived at: <https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A2=ind01&L=NEW-MEDIA-CURATING&O=D&P=221344>, [accessed 20 January 2020]

past imperfect, my interest was in what would it take to use this material to create a present participle looking to the future? I was interested in the affordances of a diffracted, tangential, intra-active approach rather than a straight remake. I was interested in how some of the key curatorial strategies employed by Lyotard could be repositioned for today's post-digital landscape. Of particular interest to me for their diffractive potential were the foregrounding of sound over text and the strategies of the interweaving of artefacts alongside the technologically reproduced to undermine binary notions of aura. In the next chapter I propose that this kind of diffractive curatorial methodology – entangling past and present, analogue and digital, subject and object – is appropriate to our current post-digital moment and affords an important addition to the curatorial discourse described so far.

Chapter Two: Entanglement – The post-digital and diffraction as curatorial methodology

i.   Defining the post-digital

Contrary to the notion that the digital revolution has swept away all that came before it, the post-digital undermines the opposition between the analogue and the digital, the artefact and the reproduction. Brian Massumi argues that much of what we term digital is actually a hybrid: 'digital is sandwiched between analogue functions [eg. perception] allowing it to appear',[116] meaning that the digital must always be actualised in the analogue and has not superseded it: 'The analogue and the digital must be thought together, asymmetrically.'[117].This notion of hybridity is echoed by Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan who suggests any analogue/digital distinction is an 'after-the-fact illusion'.[118] In electronic terms, analogue is infinite and continuous (a waveform) whereas digital is finite and discrete (a point) but digital circuits will have analogue elements to allow them to interface and translate, and digital signals must be interpreted by our analogue perception; so, it is necessarily interconnected, not oppositional. The opposition between waves and points is also undermined by the theory of diffraction as we will see later.

Hans Ulrich Obrist is also clear that 'the celebration of the physical'[119] is not a rejection of the digital; it's an integral part of the new digital moment'[120] which he relates to Edouard Glissant's idea of 'mondialite'

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116. Brian Massumi, 'On the Superiority of the Analog', in *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham & London: Duke, 2002, p. 135.
117. Ibid., p. 143.
118. Alexander R. Galloway and Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, 'Shaky Distinctions: A Dialogue on the Digital and the Analog', *e-flux Journal,* Issue#121, October 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/121/423015/shaky-distinctions-a-dialogue-on-the-digital-and-the-analog/>, [accessed 1 November 2021].
119. As demonstrated in his Instagram project on handwriting and '89 plus' project exploring the potential impact of digital technologies on the experience of the material world.
120. 'Curation in the Postdigital Age: Interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist', in *Postdigital Artisans: Craftsmanship with a New Aesthetic in Fashion, Art, Design and Architecture*, ed. By Jonathan Openshaw, Amsterdam: Frame, 2015, pp. 10–13, 12.

and the idea of the analogue and digital as 'archipelagos that blur into one another'.[121]This entanglement between digital and physical is also evinced, in different ways, by ideas around 'The New Aesthetic', a term coined by writer James Bridle in 2011 which looks for the 'breakdown of distinctions between the digital and the physical'.[122] This approach 'strives for "seeing the grain of computation" and "an eruption of the digital into the physical"'.[123] As Bridle states: 'I set out to look for the physical instantiations of that effect, of the digital and the physical starting to coexist and the divisions between them breaking down.' That the new aesthetic mostly draws attention to the visual glitches or 'artefacts' (where artefact is a data anomaly) in culture, seems limited view of this complex inter-relation, however.[124] This dual meaning of artefact as both auratic object and data anomaly is interesting for this study, however, as it hints at the collapsing of the analogue/digital divide.

Many artists also eschew the binary between analogue and digital. For example, Oliver Laric's work, (which will be further discussed later) is emblematic of post-internet art's entangling of analogue and digital, authenticity and reproduction.[125] Artie Vierkant, an early artist-articulator of post-internet art, suggested that the offline tangible artefact is equally valorised as the online documentation or reformulated copy, any artwork can be transcoded into another:

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121. Ibid.
122. Scott Contreras Koterbay and Łukasz Mirocha, *The New Aesthetic and Art: Constellations of the Postdigital*, Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam, 2016, p. 11, <http://networkcultures.org/wp content/uploads/2016/07/TOD20 final.pdf>, [accessed 10 February 2017].
123. Ibid.
124. Some limitations of The New Aesthetic are noted by JJ Charlesworth in 'We are the droids we're looking for: the New Aesthetic and its Friendly Critics', 7 May 2012 at <http://jjcharlesworth.com/we-are-the-droids-were-looking-for-the-new-aesthetic-and-its-friendly-critics>, [accessed 19 March 2021].
125. See interview: 'Hijacking classical sculptures in Vienna: Artist Oliver Laric Open-Sources Museum Sculptures and Shows How Technology Has Changed Authenticity', <https://www.ssense.com/en-gb/editorial/art/hijacking-classical-sculptures-in-vienna>, [accessed 16 October 2020], where Laric notes in interview: 'Q: The digital and analog are very much intertwined in your work. A: Yeah, I don't view it as such a binary opposition. Q: Do you think of the digital as an extension of the analog? A: Yes, it's just one thing to me.'

'everything is everything else'.[126] The original and the reproduction collapse into each other in his 'Image-Objects'.

Figure 8. Evan Roth, *Web Portal*, 2015, Embossed paper

Perhaps emblematic of this tendency is Evan Roth's work *Web Portals* which purport to be rubbings of manhole covers in Cornwall near to the points where the transatlantic fibre-optic internet cables emerge, which transmit most of Europe's internet signal. Seemingly an indexical, material, artefactual rendering of the infrastructure of the internet which is usually conceived of as immaterial, in fact (like much of Laric's work) they were produced from a laser cut relief made from composite photos, in the artist's studio in New York. As in Vierkant's thinking, the work therefore conflates immateriality and materiality, proximity and distance, the haptic affect of the indexical relationship to an original artefact and the distanced reproduction of a facsimile.[127]

126. Artie Vierkant, 'The Image Object Post-Internet',
<http://jstchillin.org/artie/pdf/The_Image_Object_Post-Internet_us.pdf>,
[accessed 13 March 2017], para 12 of 40.
127. This example is noted by Michael Day in 'Artistic Research into Distraction, Agency and the Internet', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2018), p. 61–3 as emblematic of Post Internet Art's concern with the materiality of

Similarly Margarita Gluzberg's work (discussed in more detail in later chapters) proposes that we are constantly meshing the analogue and the digital and that the translation of the 'real' into data and back to the analogue though perception is constantly occurring in art.[128]

Alexander Galloway in his book *Laruelle: Against the Digital* also undermines this binary distinction. Although a digital artist and critic, Galloway is interested in the analogue as a mean to return to 'one-ness' (Laruelle's terminology) as opposed to the 'rivenness' seen as essential to metaphysics since Descartes's cleaving of mind and body, of things in the world and their essence; an approach which appears in art as representation. He notes the binary distinctions (literally ones and zeros) endemic to the digital: 'The digital requires the division of things; it has to separate something that is undivided and make it divided. As Laruelle has suggested, traditional metaphysics does the same thing. That's why artists and metaphysicians both talk about representation […] So if traditional art is moving into a digital space, that might be the most natural thing it could do.' [129] An alternative approach is to dissolve the dichotomy between digital and analogue, by means, as Galloway explains toward the end of his book[130], of Laruelle's 'new concept of relation that is neither dialectical nor differential; a relation that is not digital'.[131] This approach of undermining binary oppositions and recognising entanglement rather than rivenness, is something also endemic to the methodology of

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the infrastructure of the internet. Available at:
<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/27488/1/Day_2018_PhD_ArtisticResearchInto_Edited.pd f>, [accessed 19 March 2021].
128. This argument was articulated in a presentation at *The Digital Draw*, at The Drawing Room 18 April 2016, recorded
at <https://drawingroom.org.uk/events/what-is-the-digital-draw>, [accessed 16 February 2019].
129. 'The Philosophical Origins of Digitality: Alexander Galloway interviewed by Manuel Correa', 9 February 2015, <http://tripleampersand.org/the philosophical origins of digitality/>, [accessed 27 November 2017].
130. Alexander Galloway, *Laruelle: Against the Digital*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
131. Cited in 'Galloway's Non Digital: Introduction to Laruelle', book review by John O. Maoilearca, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/galloways-non-digital-introduction-to-laruelle/#!> [accessed 31 January 2018].

diffraction which I will discuss in the second part of this chapter.[132]

Interestingly, this approach is also presaged by Lyotard in discussion around the exhibition 'Les Immatériaux' in which he seeks to disable the dualities of philosophy in particular the Cartesian mind/matter distinction: 'In the tradition of modernity, the relationship between human beings and materials is fixed by the Cartesian program of mastering and possessing nature […] The ambition of the exhibition entitled 'Les Immatériaux' is to make the visitor realise how far this relationship is altered by the existence of 'new materials' […] 'the relationship between mind and matter is no longer between an intelligent subject with free will of its own and an inert object. They are now cousins in the family of 'immaterials'.'[133] In this Lyotard could be seen as prefiguring the flat ontology of new materialisms,[134] such as Barad's with the levelling of the subject/object distinction, albeit, in Barad's case, in favour of an entangled family of matter rather than immaterials. Indeed, Bruno Latour, whose actor-network theory is also an antecedent of new materialism, was involved in 'Les Immatériaux' and is extremely negative about it, feeling that Lyotard took the wrong approach: dematerialising what should have been materialised.[135]

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132. Although interestingly Galloway, has more recently made a claim for 'a digital definition of digitality' – on its own terms – rational, discrete, numerical, not 'shaky' or hybrid. This is in opposition to the approach favoured by his interlocutor Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan who suggests digital and analogue are always entangled, hybrid, mixed and uses the development of radar as example (merging of analogue CRT and pixel-based screen technology) stating that the analogue/digital distinction itself is an 'after-the-fact illusion that doesn't actually obtain in digital media'. See 'Shaky Distinctions: A Dialogue on the Digital and the Analog', Alexander R. Galloway and Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan, *e-flux Journal*, Issue#121, October 2021, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/121/423015/shaky-distinctions-a-dialogue-on-the-digital-and-the-analog/>, [accessed1 November 2021].
133 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Les Immatériaux', *Art and Text*, 17, April 1985, pp. 47–57.
134. 'While Lyotard's attempt to convey the profoundly destabilizing experience of contemporary life via an exhibition may now seem as outmoded as the clunky IBMs he included, our current interest in new materialisms and attendant critiques of the relations between objects and humans, exhibition histories and their dramaturgies, and a spate of publications theorizing the contemporary all converge at the Beaubourg in 1985.' Tara McDowell, *Art Agenda*, 27 May 2014, <http://www.art agenda.com/reviews/les immateriaux a conversation with jean francois lyotard and bernard blistene/>, [accessed 18 January 2018].
135. In a video interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist at <https://vimeo.com/154038015>, [accessed 31 January 2018].

Lyotard continues to unpick Cartesian oppositions: 'the term immaterial refers to a somewhat daring neologism. It merely expresses that today – and this has been carried though in all areas – material can't be seen as something that – like an object, is set against a subject.'[136] And in a conversation with Derrida he added that 'Les Immatériaux' 'designate[s] a structure, in which there is not room anymore for the traditional difference between intellect and matter'.[137] Ironically he still states this as a series of binaries: 'material versus spiritual, material versus personnel (in the administration, the army), hardware versus software (in the computer), matter versus form (in the analysis of a manufacturing object, a natural object or a work of art), matter versus mind (in philosophy and theology), matter versus energy (in classic physics), matter versus state (in modern physics), matrix versus product (in anatomy, printing, minting and casting), the problem of reproduction and, in art, of multiples)'.[138]

This last coupling recalls the issue of reproduction in art, so associated with Walter Benjamin. In fact a similar critique of Benjamin's 'Work of Art' essay suggests that in the third (and first published) version, there is also an over reliance on a rhetoric of binary oppositions. It is suggested that although concepts are seldom self-identical in Benjamin, this essay relies on a set of dichotomies ('distance versus nearness, uniqueness versus multiplicity and repeatability, image versus copy, cult versus exhibition value, individual versus simultaneous collective reception, contemplation versus distraction').[139] Latour echoes this critique: 'a

136. From the reprint of the press release in Lyotard et al, *Imaterialitat und Postmoderne*, Berlin: Merve, 1985, p. 22, translated and quoted by Tilman Baumgartel in 'Immaterial Material: Physicality, corporeality and dematerialisation in telecommunication artworks', in *At a Distance: Precursors to Art and Activism on the Internet*, ed. by Annmarie Chandler and Norie Neumark, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005.
137. Ibid., p 23–24.
138. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Les Immatériaux', *Art and Text*, 17, April 1985, pp. 47–57.
139. Miriam Bratu Hansen, 'Room for Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema', in *October*, Vol. 109, Summer 2004, pp. 3–45, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3397658, [Accessed: 15 January 2018]. 'This strategy arrests the dynamic of Benjamin's distinctive and distinctively productive mode of thinking in which concepts are hardly ever stable or self-identical; rather, they tend to overlap, blend, and interact with

repetitive dichotomy organises the whole argument: singularity, contemplation, concentration and aura, on the one side; masses distraction, immersion and loss of the aura on the other. But the status of aura is the most ambivalent.' [140] In fact many writers have suggested that these dichotomies are complicated by Benjamin's ambivalent approach to aura: ostensibly a reactionary, elistist, bourgeois construct to be superceded by more progressive, technologically reproduced, accessible forms, but one which he seems to be still in Romantic thrall to.[141] This will be explored in more detail in the next chapter.

So, in common with Lyotard, a post-digital position 'neither recognizes the distinction between "old" and "new" media, nor ideological affirmation of the one or the other'[142]. The situation of the post-digital evinces this entanglement and undermining of binaries, the 'post' here stating the fact that there is no going back on the developments of technology which are now inherent in our subjectivities. It is therefore necessary to proceed with a cognisance that the distinctions between

other concepts, just as their meanings oscillate depending on the particular constellations in which they are deployed. In the Artwork essay, however, Benjamin establishes the terms "aura" and "masses" as unequivocally defined opposites that correspond to related dichotomies throughout the essay: distance versus nearness, uniqueness versus multiplicity and repeatability, image versus copy, cult versus exhibition value, individual versus simultaneous collective reception, contemplation versus distraction (significantly, the only term that eludes this dichotomous structure is the concept of the optical unconscious).'
140. Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour in 'How to make mistakes on so many things at once – and become famous for it', in *The Work of Art in the Digital Age: Mapping Benjamin,* ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Michael Marrinan, Stanford, CA: Standford University Press, 2003, p. 92.
141. A second version, published after the first and better-known iteration of the essay, complicates the binary opposition of aura and masses and allows that a loss in aura is set against an increase in '*Spielraum'* or 'room for play' and the potential of technological reproducability for political reformulation and remaking, before the mythologizing, ideological spectacle sets in. 'The object, detached from the fields of tradition and of conventional, operational use, can be recombined in new ways. *Life is politicised in becoming a set of fragments which can be rearranged by an active user.* This is Benjamin's response to the aestheticisation of politics. Art is to be reconstructed as something to be used, recomposed, combined rhizomatically, as a montage. This style of art is radically counterposed to the integrity and wholeness of the artistic spectacle.' Andrew Robinson, 'Walter Benjamin: Art, Aura and Authenticity', *Ceasefire Magazine*, 14 June 2013, <https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/walter-benjamin-art-aura-authenticity/>, [accessed 4 March 2020].
142. Part of a definition created in a workshop and published in *A Peer Reviewed Journal About.. "Post Digital Research"* (Volume 3, Issue 1), (2014), p.5, <https://aprja.net//issue/view/8400>, [accessed 24 September 2018].

the handmade and the digital, the original artefact and the reproduction, and indeed between the underpinning philosophical constructs of mind and matter, material and subject, have broken down and that our current situation of the subject enmeshed in digital data and image viewing further complicates this situation.

The various approaches discussed above, of undermining binaries and a Cartesian, representational philosophical approach chime with Barad's theory of 'diffraction' as a way to divest ourselves of dichotomies. Dichotomy literally means 'cutting in two', from which she derives the alternative 'cutting together apart' as a generative way to make distinctions. She posits an 'entangled' intra-active approach where 'old and new [...] are diffractively threaded through and inseparable from one another.'[143] Because of this kinship between diffraction and the post-digital (and indeed Lyotard), I propose to use this diffractive methodology as a means to explore these intra-actions which might undermine previously opposed notions of old and new, analogue and digital, artefact and reproduction in the process of curating an exhibition.

    ii.   Diffraction as curatorial methodology

As part of her theory of diffraction Karen Barad (a writer who has brought insights from quantum physics to bear on cultural theory) suggests that 'past' and 'future' are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world's ongoing intra activity'.[144] She also advocates starting 'out in the middle by going forward to the past – not in order to recount what once was, but by way of re-turning, turning it over and

143. Karen Barad, 'Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness: Re-turning, Re-membering, and Facing the Incalculable', *New Formations* , Issue 92, 2017, 56–86, p. 69.
144. Karen Barad, 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together Apart', p. 182. She also says: 'There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then. There is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new.' p.168.

over again'.[145] In this way an anamnesis and 'diffraction' of curatorial

strategies from past exhibitions with new iterations, could map the

intervening 'interference', the changes wrought through time rather

than create simple re-enactments, as is suggested by Donna Haraway,

in her earlier conception of the term[146]: 'Diffraction does not produce

'the same' displaced, as reflection and refraction do. Diffraction is a

mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or

reproduction.'[147] I set out to use this methodology of diffraction as a

way to articulate a tacit curatorial process, a way to analyse it differently

and also by using specific diffraction 'apparatuses' to test out a different

mode of curating.

Diffraction as a methodology was proposed by Haraway, and

subsequently expanded by Barad. It derives from scientific

phenomenon and describes the way waves (of any kind: water, sound,

light) combine when they encounter an obstacle – overlapping and

forming a composite wave. When the individual waves interfere with

each other they produce a diffraction pattern. We see diffraction

patterns in daily life in the rainbow effect in an oily puddle or in the

interacting ripples of two stones dropped in water. Barad takes this

further to its use in quantum physics and its undermining of a

Cartesian metaphysics of separation. In diffraction experiments or

apparatus, waves are shown to behave like particles and vice versa,

The intra-action of two
waves is _diffraction_, *what*
causes this is a _diffraction_
apparatus, *the resulting*
pattern is a _diffraction_
pattern *and the new*
cumulative waves produced
which occupy the same space
and time are in _superposition_
or _entangled._
¹

145. Ibid., p. 182.
146. The notion of 'diffraction' first appears in terms of critical practice in Haraway's 'The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others', in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, New York, NY: Routledge, 1992, p. 300, and subsequently in *The Haraway Reader*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 63–124, using an optical metaphor to suggest engaged diffraction rather than objective reflection as a way to undo dichotomies. Karen Barad's quantum physics-inflected understanding, (influenced by quantum entanglement – referred to disparagingly by Einstein as 'spooky action at a distance' but subsequently proved – where two atoms can be the same albeit separated by time or space) suggests that diffraction is entangled and intimately involved in all material 'intra-actions', as are researcher and researched. Her theory of 'cutting together apart' aims at undoing dichotomies: 'the quantum understanding of diffraction troubles the very notion of dicho-tomy – cutting into two – as a singular act of absolute differentiation, fracturing this from that, now from then'. 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', p. 168.
147. Ibid.

undermining the separateness and self-identity of objects and implying their entanglement.
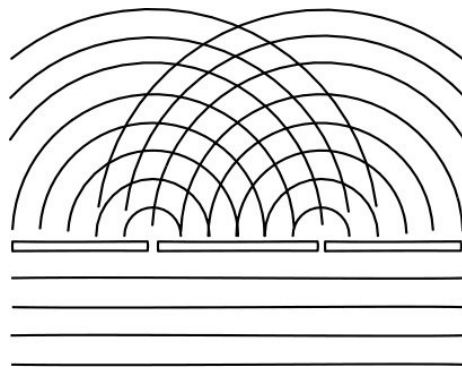
Figure 9. John D. Norton, Diffraction Diagram, published in *The Quantum Theory of Waves and Particles*, Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001

Without using the term diffraction, theorists Erin Manning and Brian Massumi describe this process as part of their thinking around 'research – creation': 'A stone dropped into a pond produces a ripple pattern. Two stones dropped in the same pond produce two ripple patterns. Where the ripples intersect, a new and complex pattern emerges, reducible to neither one nor the other.'[148] This also describes the process of a classic diffraction diagram. Manning & Massumi also call this process a 'conceptual interference pattern' and Barad refers to it as 'constructive interference'[149] which I think is an accurate way to describe what happens in curating an exhibition – creating a concatenation of visual and conceptual ideas, entangled materially in a specific space and time, which in their 'interference' create a new thing – new knowledge, new affects, potentially new aura.

In the context of a group show of multiple artists and artwork, this diagram would be amplified with multiple ripple-emitting works in the mix, multiple voices, each creating new interventions with others in their vicinity. New narratives form where the waves of influence touch and intermingle and a subject moving through this space of interaction brings its own resonances and complexities. So, the representation

148. Erin Manning & Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, p.2. <https://doi.org/10.5749/minnesota/9780816679669.001.0001>, [accessed 3 March 2021].
149. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p.78.

might be more like this photo of ripples in water with multiple points of diffraction and intersection.
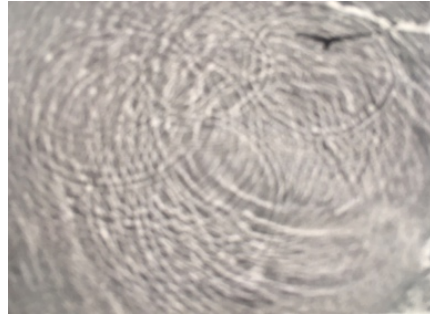
Figure 10. Image of multiple diffraction patterns created by water waves, in Karen Barad, 'Meeting the Universe Halfway', p. 77

Several aspects of the theory of diffraction make it a really useful way of articulating what tacitly happens in curating, particularly curating which brings different times (past/present), voices and artworks into physical conjunction in a group show. In curating, the selection and counter-posing of art objects in space with subjects can set up an often disjunctive, spatial, non-linear narrative and potentially a productive friction between works – 'a constructive interference' whereby different works intervene on and inflect others by means of generative intra-actions. So rather than elucidating or demonstrating a thesis, the juxtaposition of works can proliferate meanings which might not have been foreseen before that specific spatio-temporal conjunction. The 'strange weave' of a particular constellation of art works in a curatorial moment creates something like the composite wave of diffraction – more than the sum of parts, which is not simply accretive or cumulative, but creates something additional, singular and distinct.

Diffraction is about 'reading insights through rather than against each other to make evident the always-already entanglement of specific ideas in their materiality'.[150] This again is very much how ideas and artworks might be read in an exhibition – as distinct but constituent elements of a whole, read through rather than in contrast to each other, whilst entangled and superimposed (both with each other and with the viewer). By being entangled in a curated constellation, the

150. Karen Barad, 'Troubling Time/s and Ecologies of Nothingness: Re-Turning, Re-membering, and Facing the Incalculable', p. 69.

works will necessarily be read differently than if they were considered separately (or even in a different spatial relationship to each other), creating new insights. In this way the exhibition also functions as a mode of analysis – a way to see individual works, and the broader discourses they sit within, differently through their intra-action with other works. Diffraction attends to intra-action, to relationships rather than the interaction of pre-existing entities. Intra-action in exhibition is about dynamic, entangled relationships enacted across human and non-human matter with no privileged status for the former and no sense of fixed identity pre-existing these relations. Crucially, studying the diffraction pattern, Barad suggests[151], allows one to understand more about the apparatus that caused it. Analysing the ripples allows more insight into the dropping of the stones. This allows for an analysis of an exhibition to elucidate more about the apparatus of curating.

It is therefore an appropriate methodology to explain why curating can create new knowledge and specifically for curating in the post-digital which is defined as having a lack of 'distinction between digital and analogue materiality'.[152] The fact that in optical diffraction experiments, waves behave like particles and particles behave like waves,[153] undermining the distinctions between them, is also relevant to the interwoven condition of analogue (wave) and digital (points) in the current post-digital period.

Diffraction is also, importantly, a useful methodology for undermining

Diffraction as methodology opposed to binary logic of original/reproduction makes it useful tool for exploring a contemporary understanding of aura.

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151. In *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p.83, as noted by Gregory Hollin, Forsyth, I, Giraud, G, et al, '(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics', *Social Studies of Science*, 47 (6), 918–941, p. 12,<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/120047/1/Disentangling%20Barad%20-%20version%20for%20repositories.pdf>, [accessed 4 February 2020]. 'Studying the effects of a mirror is much harder and, thus, focusing on diffraction is seen as a much more useful way of bringing the method, the apparatus, into focus.'
152. James Charlton, 'On Remembering a Post-Digital Future', in *A Peer Reviewed Journal About… Post-Digital Research*, 145–151, p.147.
153. 'When two particles encounter each other they are not able to occupy the same space; they retain their own distinct properties and bounce off in different directions, as in a game of snooker. Waves, however, are quite different. When two waves encounter one another they *are* able to occupy the same point in space and time – this is called superposition – and the new emergent wave has properties that result from the combination of the two.' *(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics*, pp. 11–12.

dichotomies between original and copy, auratic object and reproduction and as such vital to the subject of the research. Diffraction (patterns of difference) is set against reflexivity and reflection (mirroring, sameness) as a mode of analysis by Donna Haraway: 'Reflexivity has been recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real […] diffraction is an optical metaphor […] diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history, not about originals.'[154] Barad follows up on this: 'Reflexivity, like reflection, still holds the world at a distance. […] Mirrors upon mirrors, reflexivity entails the same old geometrical optics of reflections.' [155] Diffraction's inherent undermining of a logic of opposition between original and reproduction, proximity and distance makes it a vital tool with which to view a contemporary understanding of aura.

Reflexivity, Barad and Haraway suggest, seeks to represent objectively or analyse comparatively, at a remove from the objects of study, the researcher reflects at a distance from outside the data. Diffraction undermines reflexivity as it claims such separation does not pertain – researcher and researched, subject and object are materially entangled through intra-action. For example, in education research by Vivienne Bozalek and Michalinos Zembylas [156] it has been suggested that the

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154. Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium: FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* New York, NY: Routledge, 1997, p. 16.
155. 'Reflexivity, like reflection, still holds the world at a distance. It cannot provide a way across the social constructivist's allegedly unbridgeable epistemological gap between knower and known, for reflexivity is nothing more than iterative mimesis: even in its attempts to put the investigative subject back in the picture, reflexivity does nothing more than mirror mirroring. Representation raised to the nth power does not disrupt the geometry that holds object and subject at a distance as the very condition for knowledge's possibility. Mirrors upon mirrors, reflexivity entails the same old geometrical optics of reflections.' In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, p. 87–88.
156. 'It would be interesting to engage in how to refashion the reflexive journal into a dialogical intra-active diffractive journal where ideas, bodies and texts encounter each other, forming interferences which matter and which build on each other, creating new productive visions.' Vivienne Bozalek & Michalinos Zembylas,

idea of the reflective journal should be supplanted or augmented with a diffractive approach of multiple voices, texts and materials encountering each other rather than a singular process of objectively assessing and analysing action and data. A reflective journal is self-referential, it looks back in hindsight on ones' individual practices. This is contrasted with an online and in person reading group which documented its interactions on a Google Drive, as an intra-active relational approach. They note that it would be interesting to 'refashion the reflexive journal into a dialogical intra-active diffractive journal where ideas, bodies and texts encounter each other, forming interferences which matter and which build on each other creating new productive visions'.[157] Other researchers have replicated this approach also using online intra-active spaces for learning sharing and 'circulation of affect', rather than individual reflective journals.[158]

*This diffractive journal is available in the **Record of Practice** and discussed further in Chapter Four*

 I therefore decided to produce a diffractive rather than a reflective journal of my curatorial process. This includes notes, email exchanges, images of artwork under consideration, a rationale for inclusion and consideration of relationships to other works (conceptual and spatial), material samples, installation considerations, artist's writings, emails and notes from studio visits, and layout plans of the space of the exhibition all evolving as selection and placement decisions happened. In fact, it documents all the elements usually missing from a curatorial archive and in doing so makes overt and transparent all the decisions usually made intuitively and tacitly in my practice hitherto.[159] This

'Diffraction or reflection? Sketching the contours of two methodologies in Educational Research', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30:2, 2017, 111‒127.
157. Ibid., p 125.
158. For example in the field of obstetric education: Veronica Mitchell, 'Diffracting Reflection: A Move beyond Reflective Practice', *Education as Change,* Volume 21, Number 2, 2017, pp. 165‒186, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/03b8/aa171d98aef4ccda09beff131054e0fe00c1.pdf>, [accessed 7 July 2021].
159. As Anthony Gardner notes: 'The problem is working out when and where curatorship begins and ends. […] How do we account for the scores, perhaps hundreds, of different layouts and even different contents that the exhibition could have had were it not for those decisions and exclusions along the way (what we might call the *non-exhibitions* lurking unrealised within the final exhibition)? And can the research that underpins curating, from studio visits to rummaging in the archive, only

document is therefore important as it fills a gap usually absent in the curatorial archive. This journal attempted to follow through the diffractive methodology also to the analysis of process and practice.

This approach was a testing ground for one of the diffraction experiments I conducted as part of the curatorial practice. *Writing Tests* is a diffractive online glossary which brought multiple voices together to collectively create an entangled, cumulative understanding of twenty one terms linked to the exhibition.

The use of diffraction in current literature on curating

Although relatively little used in relation to curating, diffraction is being used as a methodology of undermining dichotomies and providing an alternative or an adjunct to a reflective analysis approach in practices from fashion to education[160]. The addition of a theory of diffractive curating is where this study hopes to contribute to knowledge.

In curatorial terms it is mostly being used to articulate a posthuman notion of curating in relation to technology. Magdalena Tyżlik-Carver in her unpublished PhD thesis *Curating in/as Commons: Posthuman Curating and Computational Cultures[161]* uses Barad's theories as a way of

be documented through written text or can those processes still invite visual form?' and proposes 'inventive methods for thinking through our research' including 'the diaristic ways we undertake and document our research.' 'Documents of Experience: Exhibitions, Archives and Undisciplining Histories', in *Of(f) Our Times: Curatorial Anachronics,* ed. by Rike Frank and Beatrice von Bismark, Berlin: Sternberg, 2019, pp. 52–68, 63, 65.

160. In fact the authors of *(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics* suggest that ' a fine game of 'Barad Bingo' can be had far and wide across the humanities and social sciences: from conferences on ruins, animal ethics and informational infrastructures to journal articles on lifelong learning (Edwards, 2010), bullying in schools (Sōndergaarda, 2012) and feminist theories of fashion (Parkins, 2008)'.

161. 'It is through diffraction that I explore the entanglement of curating and commons through a very specific configuration of people, software, texts, machines and others. Like Barad, I am interested in building diffraction apparatuses in order to study the entangled effects differences make.' Magdalena Tyżlik-Carver, *Curating in/as Common/s: Posthuman Curating and Computational Cultures,*

articulating a posthuman curating interwoven with computation and networks and a diffractive approach to human/ non-human curatorial interventions. A similar posthuman approach integrating subjects and algorithms is evinced by Josia Krysa in 'Distributed Curating and Immateriality'[162]and critiqued by Omar Kholeif in 'The Curator's New Medium': 'These platforms do not thoughtfully articulate any part of the accustomed curatorial process, such as caring, selecting, articulating, researching, writing, theorizing, unifying, mediating, preserving, protecting, narrativising and so on.' [163]

The 'accustomed curatorial process' is set against the 'Posthuman Performativity of the Curating-Curatorial'[164], by Jussi Koitela who argues that both curating and 'the curatorial' need to move away from a human-centric and representation model in favour of one influenced by Barad's agential realism, but positions this move in purely theoretical terms, without reference to how this might be effected in practice.

Jane Prophet and Helen Pritchard use diffraction as a way of drawing attention to the patterns of difference between what they term 'Mainstream Contemporary Art' and 'New Media Art', which they see in terms of 'engaging with material-discursive context of auratic MCA [mainstream contemporary art]' in relation to 'the copyability of digital media' and suggest the two are entangled rather than opposed.[165] In

p.19, <https://www.academia.edu/29844696/Curating_in_as_Common_s_Posthu man_Curating_and_Computational_Cultures> [accessed 3 April 2019]
162. In *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond* , ed. by Christiana Paul, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008, pp. 87–105, 97.
163. In *You are Here: Art after the Internet,* ed. By Omar Kholeif, Manchester: Cornerhouse and London: Space, 2014, p. 84.
164. Jussi Koitela, 'Posthuman Performativity of the Curating-Curatorial', <https://www.academia.edu/36479379/POSTHUMAN_PERFORMATIVITY_ OF_THE_CURATING-_CURATORIAL>, [accessed 3 February 2020].
165. They suggest: 'Artworks made using computation but instantiated in less copyable forms, like, for example, Julian Opie's continuous digital animations on LCD screens are often sold in limited editions. Engaging with the material-discursive context of auratic MCA, limiting the number of copies available exploits and counters the copyability of digital media. Therefore it could be said that Julian Opie's work emerges *neither* because of, *nor* despite the boundary between MCA and NMA but as part of an interference pattern between MCA and NMA [...] MCA has

doing so they make a similar case to this thesis but situated in an earlier time in relation to differentiated terminologies which have long been subsumed into each other.

In terms of applying diffractive methodologies to curating spatial exhibitions, the literature is sparse, with one text – 'Exhibition Intra-Actions: Experiences, Identities, and Texts in the Making'[166] using Barad's conception of intra-action as a way of 'understanding the complex processes that exhibitions are as phenomena', with reference to three distinct projects involving post-internet art, trans-border identities and intra-active writing within a processual exhibition. The breadth of this study suggests an almost universal applicability of diffractive methods, which mitigates against insight.

Heidi Aishman explicitly uses a 'Diffractive Curatorial Practice'[167], which is also the title of her unpublished thesis, which contrasts a traditional, reflective, curatorial approach for which she uses Deleuze and Guattaris's notion of the assemblage and a diffractive, 'onto-ethical-curology', following Barad, and explores whether this latter approach could offer participants 'increased capacity to act outside of ideological limitations'. Ultimately, she posits a mixture of reflective (which she aligns with ideological) and diffractive curating with the aim of expanding the roles and agencies of all participants in an exhibition (which is tested only by asking them). If it does so, the conclusion is that

excluded computation-based works from the MCA cannon precisely because they engage with, perpetuate and depend upon unstable processes (Bosma, 2011) that are seen as being at odds with MCA's preferences for fixed and stable objects, they do not easily fit in '[an art] market that prefers and privileges auratic forms' (Bishop, 2013). [...] Differences matter in relation to issues (such as, but not limited to) built-in obsolescence and its impact on conservation and stability; the on-going value of auratic art and rarity values in the art market; the lower value assigned to art works that are copiable.' 'Diffractive Art Practices: Computation and the Messy Entanglements between Mainstream Contemporary Art, and New Media Art', *Artnodes* · June 2015, 5–14, p. 8, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281692653, [accessed 20 July 2021].
166. Katve-Kaisa Kontturi, Helena Grande and Zuzana Štefková, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/369606/369607>, [accessed 4 January 2020].
167. 'Diffractive Curatorial Practice: Ripples, Gaps and the Space In-between', unpublished doctoral thesis, The University of Reading, 2020.

the exhibition is successful by means of being ethical. This contrasts with my study which aims to create diffractive apparatus within exhibition and by means of the intra-actions between works and apparatus, to create new insight into the subject matter of the exhibitions.

Amber Sayal-Bennett, in her Ph.D. and in extrapolated papers, articulates a diffractive and new materialist approach to studio practice and writing, which perhaps comes closest to my approach here as it also utilises sound as a means of diffracting and superimposing two texts (for example she plays sound from extracts from the Mahabharata and the Metro newspaper concurrently and writes down the composite of what she hears).[168] But again this approach applies to an artist's material studio practice and to writing experiments, and not to curatorial practice. Also, the superposition is of two entities of the same order (text), not sound put in intra-action with material artefacts, as with my research.

In more mainstream curatorial discourse, whilst Paul O'Neill employs a dialogic description of curating as 'agonistic co-production,'[169] he does not go so far as to imply the entanglement suggested by a diffractive approach. Likewise, Hans-Ulrich Obrist describes exhibitions as 'complex, dynamic learning systems with feedback loops' which 'express connective possibilities'[170] but doesn't engage with diffraction explicitly as an approach to curating. Irit Rogoff, Alfredo

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168. In 'Diffractive Analysis: Embodied Encounters in Contemporary Artistic Video Practice',*Tate Papers*, 29, Spring
2018, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate papers/29/diffractive-analysis>, [accessed 15 July 2020], and 'Diffractive Writing: An Experiment in Three Parts', in *Off_Centre Journal, Draft 1* as yet unpublished, supplied by publisher Pink Manchester, 10 September 2020.
169. He notes, 'The curatorial is always dialogical, with the resultant exhibition form being a condensed moment of presentation exposing to varying degrees the processes of co-operation, exchange and agonistic co-production that have made it possible.' O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT, 2012, p. 95.
170. Hans-Ulrich Obrist, 'Panel Statement', in *Curating Now: Imaginative Practice/Public Responsibility,* ed. by Paula Marincola, Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Exhibitions Initiative, 2001, p. 23–24.

Cramerotti and Paul Martinon articulate 'the curatorial' as an ongoing research method and a way of enacting rather than illustrating knowledge production,[171] but again not in specifically diffractive terms.

Graeme Sullivan discusses the exhibition as a form of enacted research practice in curiously diffractive terms, as breaking down subject/object and space-time distinctions although without referring to diffraction directly, and indeed preceding publication of Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. He notes that in the exhibition 'meaning can be seen to take place though enactment and action. In addition, the learning space disrupts distinctions among artist-objects, viewer-audience and time-space such that the encounter is direct and engaging.'[172]

In summary, I am not aware of any published research specifically using diffractive methods and apparatus in relation to the materialities of curatorial practice in a gallery context. This is potentially the space this study can fill and the contribution to knowledge that it can make. This study uses a diffractive methodology to allow for putting into entangled conjunction the present, past and future, as Barad suggests[173], to allow a rationale for an anamnesis or working through and reworking of historic curatorial strategies, a diffraction, rather than a replication, using Haraway's conception of diffraction as 'a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.' Overlaying, translating and diffracting curatorial strategies from an

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171. The curatorial challenges 'the very protocols and formats that define it: collecting, conserving, visualising, discoursing, contextualising, criticising, publicising, spectacularising etc,' adding that it does not 'drive home the point of an argument, as in academic work and would not produce a documented and visualised cohesion around a phenomeon, as in much of curating'. Instead it entails 'attempting to enact the event of knowledge rather than illustrate those knowledges'. Irit Rogoff , 'The Expanding Field', in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 46.
172. *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*, London: Sage Publications, 2005, p. 210.
173. See Barad's 'To address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance.' ('Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', p. 74) and 'Past' and 'future' are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world's ongoing intra-activity.' Ibid., p. 69.

earlier period, in the context of artwork produced in the current period, might allow us to understand more clearly the difference between our post-digital time and that of the 1980s in relation to the auratic. The latter saw the onset of a sense of the immateriality delivered up by technology[174] and in the former, we have, over the last decade, seen a return to a concern with materiality and the object. It is Haraway's 'mapping of interference' and Barad's 'constructive interference' which the project aims to effect.

The research uses diffraction as methodology for exploring a contemporary understanding of aura, with the exhibition itself as a kind of 'diffraction apparatus'. Barad discusses being interested in building 'diffraction apparatuses'[175] for analysis and it struck me that curating an exhibition is creating such a diffraction apparatus and it might be possible to create other micro-diffraction apparatuses in and around the exhibition. To test this proposition, I curated an exhibition (in three iterations, in different venues) exploring the relationship between authenticity and notions of the artefact in the post-digital and which worked through (anamnesis), re-worked and diffracted specific elements of the original curatorial strategy of 'Les Immatériaux'.

Firstly, instead of a traditional, authoritative exhibition text, 'Les Immatériaux' had an accompanying audio headset playing interwoven voices reading philosophical and literary texts, put in intra-action with the works in the space. In effect the headset and the works in the exhibition were two stones creating ripples against each other – a diffraction apparatus. In an unpublished interview in the Pompidou archive Lyotard stated his interest in avoiding textual interpretation: 'We must not issue the visitor with instructions, whether an instruction manual or an instructive pamphlet, that is, information booklets. We

174. Prior to a corresponding sense emerging of the materiality of technology infrastructures which enable the 'immaterality'.
175. 'To summarise, what I am interested in doing is building diffraction apparatuses to study the entangled effects differences make.' *Meeting The Universe Halfway,* p. 73.

should use as few text panels as possible, since these are still of the -
order of inscription […] – and instead should use the medium of -
speech, of sound, which belongs to the art of time[…' This aligns with
Lyotard's desire to get beyond the flattening proclivities of language
which he outlined in *Discourse/Figure*. For him, the exhibition was a
spatial medium which had the potential to transcend language.
Ironically, though, the entire exhibition was structured by means of a
linguistic schema[176] but this aversion to text and desire to escape the
hegemony of language was exemplified by the immersive nature of the
installation and the importance of sound as an adjunct to the visual.
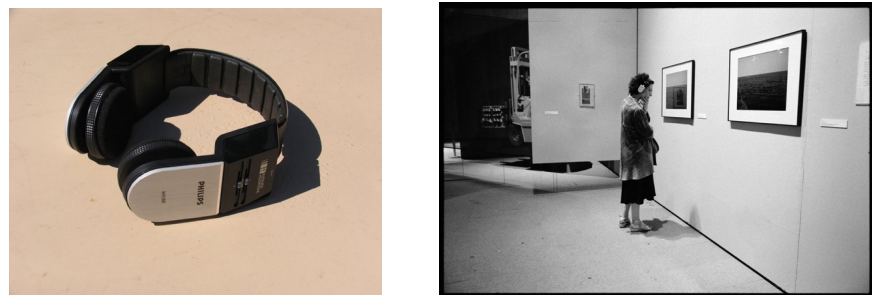
Figure 11. Documentation of audio headset from 'Les Immatériaux', from
Pompidou Centre website

The original headset played unattributed texts which changed as you
moved through the space. Rather than receiving information about
what they were seeing, visitors were receiving texts by Mallarme,
Borges, Baudrillard, Proust, Bachelard, Beckett, or Barthes. This feels
akin to how Barad diffracts different voices from different times in her
writing, so they can intra-act upon each other. Rather than having

*This audio piece can
be listened to at
https://astrangewe
ave.org/SWTS_F.
html by navigating
to the headphones*

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176. 'Lyotard had suggested the conflation between five French words deriving from
the Indo-European root 'mât' (to make by hand, to measure, to build) and the
communication model first developed by Harold Lasswell – 'Who / Says What / In
Which Channel / To Whom / With What Effects?' – later translated into a
communication diagram by Claude Shannon and Norbert Wiener, which Roman
Jakobson would apply to, and amend in light of, linguistics. Lyotard's conflation of
these communication models with the etymological group of mât- terms was hardly
rigorous. What it proposed, however, was an epistemological short-circuit between
heterogeneous discourses, the one poetic, the other scientific, to establish the
following equivalences: matériau = support (medium), matériel = destinataire (to
whom the message is addressed), maternité = destinateur (the message's emitter),
matière = référent (the referent), and matrice = code (the code).' Antony Hudek,
'From Over- to Sub-Exposure: The Anamnesis of Les Immatériaux', *Tate Papers,*,
Issue 12, 2009 <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-
papers/12/from-over-to-sub-exposure-the-anamnesis-of-les-immateriaux>, [accessed
4 February 2020].

any authoritative or objective framing text, I decided, like Lyotard, to introduce an audio work on headphones to intervene and interact with the viewer's sensory experience of the artwork in the space.

Secondly, as part of the non- traditional exhibition catalogue of 'Les Immatériaux', there was a project called *Epreuves D'Ecriture*, (which translates as *Writing Tests* or *First Drafts*). This project set up by Lyotard allowed multiple writers to define and amend specific terminology related to the exhibition linked by Minitel machines – an early version of the internet. I created an online platform on which various writers could respond to some of the terminology relevant to this exhibition, to define, refute or amend what has gone before, creating an interwoven text of different voices. Allowing different writers to input glossary 'definitions' and respond, refute and engage with other's writing was intended to offer a diffractive tool to entangle ideas, collectively and cumulatively, building on each other and making visible and capturing the generation of new thinking in relation to the ideas embodied in the exhibition. This was intended also to be a repository of the thinking provoked by the exhibition, added to by exhibition visitors and seminar participants, creating a composite, polyvocal response and set of insights. The writing project aimed to be a 'useful diffractive tool providing affordances of material entanglements of ideas relationally developed through intra-action with the tools and the writers'.[177] These diffractive apparatuses are discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

Diffraction therefore offers an entangled space for multiple voices to dialogue and to allow for a different space of knowledge or 'work'[178] to be produced in between the physical exhibition and the audio adjunct (which is disjunctive and more open than a typical curatorial frame or rationale) and the glossary as a diffractive way to capture the insights provoked by the exhibition. As such it disrupts some of the hierarchies

My version of Writing Tests exists as an online database at https://astrangewe ave.org/writingtests. php and as a printed publication, included in the appendix

177. 'Diffraction or Reflection? Sketching the contours of two methodologies in Educational Research', Vivienne Bozalek & Michalinos Zembylas, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30:2, 2017, 111–127.
178. Irit Rogoff's phrase, see footnote 48.

of standard institutional and curatorial practices, namely the univocal authority of the curator and the definitive exhibition text. The body of practice aimed to explore diffraction as a methodology for curation and diffract elements from 'Les Immatériaux' with a new iteration which enabled an exploration of the notion of aura in the post-digital, the results of which will be discussed in Chapter Four. First, though, I intend to situate the research in its wider context and topography of aura in the post-digital.

Chapter Three: Research context – aura in the post-digital

    i.   Benjamin's conflicted notion of aura and current discourse on aura in relation to curating.

Research into 'Les Immatériaux' and its counterposing of the artefact and its dematerialisation, brought me to a consideration of the relationship between the auratic and the technologically reproduced, in Benjamin's terms, but for the current post-digital context. It seemed necessary to survey how contemporary scholars had responded to Benjamin's ideas of aura, also to explore how this was reflected in current curatorial practice.

> Even before the global pandemic migrated art viewing online, Google Arts and Culture, Adobe Museum of Digital Media, Artsy, Contemporary Art Daily and similar projects were redefining the public sphere of art spectatorship to the extent that 90-95% of artists' works were experienced via documentation.[179] This creates a situation whereby some believe that the 'qualitative differences in information physical viewership provides are dwarfed by the exponentially larger quantity of information available online'.[180] Artworks become digital artefacts, bringing into sharp relief Benjamin's well known issues around the loss of aura:

>> Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is
>> lacking in one element: its presence in time and space,
>> its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.
>> […] To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura,
>> is the mark of a perception whose "sense of the
>> universal equality of things" has increased to such a

179. Attributed to Michael Mittelman in an MIT lecture, quoted in a press release by Artie Vierkant, <http://chinaartobjects.com/exhibitions/view/artie vierkant/>, [accessed 4 April 2019].
180. Lauren Christiansen, 'Redefining Exhibition in the Digital Age', 2010, <http://thejoggingarchive.tumblr.com/post/11304614393/redefining exhibition in the digital age>, [accessed 7 November 2017].

degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction.[181]

This levelling, 'universal equality of things' could be seen as endemic to the internet – it is echoed in artist Artie Vierkant's post-internet mantra 'everything is everything else'[182] – and online viewing has become even more prevalent in the context of a global pandemic and the closure of galleries worldwide. However, Benjamin's destruction of aura also offers up other creative opportunities – room for play: 'What is lost in the withering of semblance [*Schein*], and the decay of the aura in works of art is matched by a huge gain in the scope for play [*Spiel Raum*].'[183] For this thesis, this 'scope for play' is the space of potential within which contemporary notions of aura could be explored.

Benjamin's definition of aura varies widely in different texts from 1931's 'A Little History of Photography'[184] to 1939's 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' but even within a single essay 'The Work of Art in the

181. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations,* ed. by Hannah Arendt, pp. 217–252, 200/223. In this translation the similarity with Vierkant is more apparent than the Edmund Jephcott/ Howard Eiland translation.
182. Vierkant's multiple equivalent platforms – 'Everything is everything else': Artie Vierkant, 'The Image Object Post-Internet', (para 12 of 40).
183. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility: Second Version' in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, 3: 1935–38*, ed. by Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith, Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 127. This appears in the second version of the 'Work of Art' essay, and in other articulations, as noted by Miriam Bratu Hansen in 'Room for Play: Benjamin's Gamble with Cinema' who also states: 'I don't think Benjamin would have gone Luddite in the face of digital technology, inasmuch as it opens up for human beings another, dramatically enlarged *Spielraum*, a virtual space that significantly modifies the interrelations of body and image space and offers hitherto unimaginable modes of playful innovation.' p. 41.
184. Eg. in 'A Little History of Photography' (1931) aura is what pertains to long exposure portrait photographs and a sense of a shared gaze, an encounter between viewer and image. 'There was an aura about them, a medium that lent fullness and security to their gaze as it penetrated that medium.' ('A Little History of Photography' in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings, 3: 1927–1934*, pp. 507–530, 515–6). Or 'a tiny spark of contingency, of the here and now with which reality has [..] seared the subject' (Ibid., p. 510) which anticipates Barthes' indexical photographic 'punctum' and which is denuded in newer, faster exposures. In 'The Work of Art' essay (1936), photography and film are seen to obviate aura which is now defined as a quality of distance which pertains to original or natural objects with 'ritual value' in original situations. In 'Some Motifs on Baudelaire' (1939) in *Illuminations*, pp. 155–200 and in the 'Was ist Aura' text written on a café notepad (estimated by the Benjamin archive at 1936–39), it is the extent to which an object, person or even word, returns our gaze or attention – an inter-relation of attentiveness. See also footnote 188.

Age of Technological Reproducibility' in 1936 there is a conflicted approach to aura. Benjamin demonstrates a strong fascination for the authentic artefact at the same time as arguing for its termination on political grounds. In one sense he welcomed the superseding of the elitist, bourgeois authentic artefact by the democratic ubiquitous closeness of technologically reproduced media which allowed for *Spielraum*, the prosumer-editor and political progressiveness, in another these new media allowed themselves to be co-opted for the ideological distraction of the masses and disallowed the contemplative possibilities of media such as painting. A similar tension has been at work in recent years with regard to the potentials and perils of networked distribution and in arguments about digital media and modes of attention.[185] As Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker note, 'the mere existence of networks does not imply democracy or equality'.[186] This conflicted stance on aura is also reflected in post–internet art's friction between desiring multiple iterations, producers and global disseminability, whilst also maintaining an authored commodifiable object. Latour picks up on Benjamin's contractions: 'Paradoxically, Benjamin appears to be a prisoner of the Romantic idea of the artist he set out to critique.'[187] Indeed, Benjamin's treatment of aura in later texts is resolutely romantic and seen in terms of a relationship and the return of the gaze:

> To experience the aura of an appearance or a being means becoming aware of its ability [to pitch] to respond to a glance. This ability is full of poetry. When a person, an animal, or something inanimate returns our glance with its own we are drawn initially into the distance: its glance is dreaming, draws us after its dream.

185. Such as Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows*, London: Atlantic, 2011.
186. Alexander Galloway and Eugene Thacker, *The Exploit: A Theory of Networks*, London & Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007, p. 13 & 39, as quoted by Artie Vierkant in 'The Image Object Post-Internet', (para 17 of 40).
187. Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour, 'How to make mistakes on so many things at once – and become famous for it', in *The Work of Art in the Digital Age: Mapping Benjamin*, p.94

> Aura is the appearance of a distance however
> close it might be.[188]

Figure 12. Walter Benjamin, 'Was ist Aura?' Draft of 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit', photograph from Walter Benjamin Archive

This is part of a fragmentary text on aura, written, like many of Benjamin's ephemeral texts, on whatever was to hand, in this case an appropriated café waiter's pad,[189] but this argument was also elaborated in 'Some Motifs on Baudelaire'. If this oscillation between the romantic allure of aura and the political agency of technological reproduction was at work within Benjamin, at a similar point of

188. Translation by Esther Leslie in Walter Benjamin's *Archive Images, Texts, Sign*, ed. by Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla, London and New York: Verso, 2007. This text is similar to part of the argument in 'Some Motifs on Baudelaire', where in contrast to photography, 'Looking at someone carries the implicit expectation that our look will be returned by the object of our gaze. Where this expectation is met… there is an experience of the aura to the fullest extent… "perceptibility", as Novalis puts it, 'is a kind of attentiveness'… To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return.' *Illuminations*, p. 189-90. Later in this essay the notion of aura is restated in more familiar terms: 'a concept of the aura that comprises the 'unique manifestation of a distance'. Ibid., p. 190.

189. The Walter Benjamin Archive notes in an email to me that 'as with many documents in the Walter Benjamin papers this document is not dated precisely. But from the contextual information it is possible to say, and this is fixed in the WBA's archive database, that the manuscript 'Was ist Aura?' (archive call number WBA 264/2) was written approximately between 1936 and 1939 as to continue Benjamin's text 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'.' This fragment is the subject of an artwork by Penny McCarthy, discussed in later chapters.

accelerationist tendencies in the modes of representation,[190] it is not surprising that it is also the case now, as Erika Balsom suggests.

Interestingly Hito Steyerl sees in the poor image the same push and pull, the same problems and potentials Benjamin saw in technological reproduction – on the plus side it 'diminishes the distinctions between author and audience and merges life and art […] enables the participation of a much larger group of producers than ever before […] who become the editors, critics, translators, and (co-)authors of poor images.' But as with Benjamin's concerns about the 'abuse of the apparatus', 'this does not mean that these opportunities are only used for progressive ends' and they can be co-opted by ideology and recuperated by capitalism.[191]

Indeed, Esther Leslie notes that Benjamin's essay was read in a post-internet context as an almost wholly optimistic thesis about the end of authority and the auratic, unrevisable work of art in favour of artwork which 'becomes limitlessly revisable, multiply authored, an object of production as well as consumption'.[192] But that more recently this limitless potential has been seen to be commodifiable and subject to surveillance. Sven Lutticken also suggests that, just as Benjamin talked about film studios creating a new aura around films stars by means of scarcity, the art market seeks to re-auratise digitally reproduced/

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190. Then mechanical reproduction, now digital dispersion.
191. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defence of the Poor image', *E Flux*, Journal #10, November 2009, (para 16/17 of 32).
192. But just as fascism could co-opt technical reproducibility and capitalism could recuperate it – this same 'abuse of the apparatus' happens to the democratising impulse of the post-internet moment. (Leslie cites limited edition artworks for mobiles, editions or high end installations of moving image work, selling individual pixels from artwork, ads on websites, etc.) 'More recent reflections on the artwork in the age of electronic reproduction have been more sanguine about the limitless, anarchic liberated zone of the web, inhabited by the prosumer, people can't help but notice, the fact that the web is covered in advertising or that to use it is to give oneself up to data miners who track our every move. The clouds, servers, limitless creativity, now want to keep it.' Esther Leslie, *The Work of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction*, 2012, video documentation of lecture, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2E1wP9z3Qg>, [accessed 3 May 2018].

disseminable artworks by limiting editions and creating high spec installations of 'the unique cult image in its sacred precinct'.[193]

Contemporary discourse on aura, though, has tended to disavow Benjamin's idea that it is comprehensively abolished in reproduction. In an unpublished interview from the Pompidou archive, Lyotard takes this view:

> The idea of Benjamin was the following: as soon as we started to reproduce things mechanically in an industrial society with electrical techniques then this aspect – the aura – disappears. I'm not at all sure about this. The only point that is problematic is that of singularity. Indeed we are leaving an era in which works were unique, we are moving into an era in which works are multiple. This changes our access to the work of art.[194]

Leslie also suggests that there are still ways of creating digital aura: 'If film and photography meant the decay of aura and the destruction of its distance, does digital space reinstate it or does it change the meaning of aura? […] in contrast to the many commentators who assume that the age of the auratic is definitively over – the options as posed surely do not exhaust the possible presence (or absences) of aura.' [195] Latour concurs and suggests that aura can migrate from

193. Sven Lutticken, 'Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Image', *e-Flux Journal* #08, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/08/61380/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/>, [accessed 2 July 2018]. He refers also to Douglas Gordon's *Pretty much every film and video work from about 1992 until now. To be seen on monitors, some with headphones, others run silently, and all simultaneously,* as a gallery installation that nonetheless 'celebrates the power of images to survive (and indeed thrive on) decontextualization and degradation' and Michael Snow's reworking of his 1967 film *Wavelength* into the DVD *WVLNT,* or *Wavelength for those who don't have the time* (2003), which consists of three superimposed 15-minute segments from the original 45-minute film.

194. *Jean-François Lyotard in Interview with Claudine Farrugia*, unpublished interview, Pompidou Centre archive box 94033/233, p. 11–12, translation by Francis Haselden.

195. 'If film and photography meant the decay of aura and the destruction of its distance, does digital space reinstate it or does it change the meaning of aura? This is, of course, an interesting question […] in contrast to the many commentators who assume that the age of the auratic is definitively over – though the options as posed surely do not exhaust the possible presence (or absences) of aura.' Esther Leslie, 'Book review of *Actualities of Aura: Twelve Studies of Walter Benjamin',* ed. by Dag Petersson and Erik Steinskog Svanesund, Sweden: Nordic Summer University Press, 2005, in

original to facsimile, owing to the very high resolution creating its own awe, as in the case of a reproduced Veronese wall painting in Venice.[196]

Steyerl also suggests that the multiply copied and disseminated digital 'poor image' offers alternate forms of the auratic: 'By losing its visual substance it recovers some of its political punch and creates a new aura around it. This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the "original," but on the transience of the copy […] The poor image is no longer about the real thing—the originary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities.'[197] Groys goes further to suggest that aura is, in fact, endemic to the digital: 'every digital copy has its own here and now – an aura of originality – that a mechanical copy does not have.'[198] Because data is invisible and only visualised in the moment by different software and viewing platforms, it fulfils Benjamin's auratic criteria of 'presence in time and space[…] unique existence at the place where it happens to be'. Groys goes on to suggest that: 'There is no such thing as a copy. In the world of digitalized images, we are dealing only with originals—only with original presentations of the absent, invisible digital original. *The exhibition makes copying reversible: It transforms a copy into an original.*'[199] [my italics This highlights the site of exhibition as the manifestation of the auratic here and now. I'm interested in this sense of the exhibition as a performative moment with potential for the materialisation of a new form of aura and how this can be tested by physical instantiation in

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Theory, Culture & Society, Vol. 24(1), 2007, 147–158, <http://journals.sagepub.com.lcproxy.shu.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1177/0263276407071583>, [accessed 20 March 2018].Also see footnote 192: Esther Leslie, 'The Work of Art in the age of Electronic Reproduction', 2012, recorded lecture.
196. 'The Migration of the Aura or how to explore the Original through its Facsimiles', Bruno Latour & Adam Lowe, in *Switching Codes. Thinking Through Digital Technology in the Humanities and the Arts*, ed. by T. Bartscherer and R. Coover, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011, pp. 275–297.
197. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defence of the Poor image', *E Flux Journal* #10, November 2009, (para 23 and 31 of 32).
198. Boris Groys, 'Subjectivity: Production and Reproduction', in *Monday Begins On Saturday*, ed. by Ekaterina Degot and David Riff, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013, pp. 58–65, 60. Also referenced in *In the Flow*, (London & New York: Verso, 2016) p. 144.
199. 'From Image to Image File—and Back: Art in the Age of Digitalization', in *Art Power* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008, pp. 83–91, p. 91.

curatorial practice, where this transubstantiation between copy to original is taking place.

    ii.   Mark Leckey's 'Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' and 'UniAddDumThs' as curatorial case study and descendant of 'Les Immatériaux'

A case study of curating the auratic object in the post- digital, is provided by Mark Leckey's curatorial project 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', 2013[200] and its follow up 'UniAddDumThs', 2014–15.[201] Both seem to be curatorial manifestations of Benjamin's concern with the dichotomy between the cult and exhibition value of art positioned for the digital age.[202] This exhibition prioritises objects with cult value but places them in a gallery context with those of exhibition value.

200. 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' was first shown at the Southbank Center in London (as a Hayward Touring exhibition) and travelled to Bluecoat, Liverpool, Nottingham Contemporary, and the De La Warr Pavilion Bexhill on Sea (2013).
201. 'UniAddDumThs' premiered at WIELS, Brussels (2014) and travelled to Kunsthalle, Basel (2015) and Sant'Andrea De Scaphis, Rome, Italy (2016).
202. 'Works of art are received and valued on different planes. Two polar types stand out; with one, the accent is on the cult value; with the other, on the exhibition value of the work.' Cult (or ritual) value relates to an object's singularity in a particular context – the 'domain of tradition', of magic or religion: 'the unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value' whilst exhibition value concerns its circulation and dissemination, often by means of reproduction – it 'enables the original to meet the beholder halfway' (eg photograph or phonograph). Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', *Illuminations*, pp. 211-244, 218.

Figure 13. 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', Nottingham Contemporary, 2013

Leckey notes the problematics of curating in physical space in the post-digital context: 'the idea of arranging objects in a room […] it still interests and excites me but at the same time I feel that it's not exhausted, but it's difficult. It's not what we do anymore, we move images around, we circulate images, we fabricate images from everywhere, manipulate them and send them back out. I wanted to make something that was hybrid – in the physical realm but came from the digital realm.'[203] Leckey notes that the human need to get close to, to touch, to manipulate, to 'palpate'[204] digital objects – what Lyotard calls their 'carnal reception'[205] and Benjamin's posited proletarian urge 'to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its

203. In a lecture for Nottingham Contemporary filmed at Nottingham Trent University, 2 May 2013 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g5v1CfhRJT0> [accessed 24.1.18]

204. Ibid.

205. he states ' The question raised by the new technologies in connection with their relation to art is that of the here and now. What does 'here' mean on the phone, on television, at the receiver of an electronic telescope? And the "now"? Does not the 'tele-' element necessarily destroy the presence, the "here and now" of the forms and their "carnal" reception? What is a place, a moment, not anchored in the immediate 'passion' of what happens. Is a computer in any way here and now. Can anything *happen* with it. Can anything happen *to* it? in 'Quelque chose comme communication ..sans communication' in *L'Inhumain:* Causeries sur le temps (Paris: Galilée,1989), p. 118.

reproduction'[206] – is what drives the show and more particularly its follow up.

Leckey also acknowledges his interest in cybernetics; in its original sense of the study of systems of feedback and networks. He acknowledges the impact of cybernetics on 'the long tail':[207] the feedback loop of algorithmic learning which created ubiquitous peer to peer 'prosumption' of images and objects which is our contemporary experience of the digital world. This 'long tail' opening up of self-publishing opportunities, is prefigured by Benjamin's analysis of the reader turning 'into the writer' made possible by technological reproduction.[208]

A diffractive reading of 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' in relation to 'Les Immatériaux' and Benjamin

The exhibition design looks back to *wunderkammer* or surrealist techniques of display which collapsed distinctions between types of objects.[209] In this it also echoes 'Les Immatériaux' (and to a degree

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206. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 217.
207. Discussed in his performance lecture, *Mark Leckey in the Long Tail* (2009), a performance-based work presented at the ICA, London on 7 February 2009 and by MOMA, New York in a theatre at the Abrons Arts Center on October 1, 2, and 3, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oi4NLXHWtHI>, [accessed 2 February 2018].
208. 'Thus, the distinction between author and public is about to lose its basic character. The difference becomes merely functional; it may vary from case to case. At any moment the reader is ready to turn into a writer.' Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', p. 225.
209. Elena Filpovic notes the similarities between 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' and the 'Exposition Surréaliste d'Objets', Galerie Charles Ratton, Paris, 1936 : 'If those displays collapsed the usual hierarchies between objects, eschewing the scientific and classificatory impulses of the Enlightenment museum, so too does Leckey's version and, arguably, so too does the vast global search engine that is the Internet.' 'Mark Leckey, 'UniAddDumThs', 2014-15', *THE ARTIST AS CURATOR Issue #8, Mousse 49*, pp. 19–33, 25, http://www.kunsthallebasel.ch/wp-content/uploads/TAAC_N_8_PDF_web.pdf, [accessed 3 April 2018].

'Cybernetic Serendipity'[210]) in creating an 'aggregation'[211] of objects un-demarcated by art status and concerning itself with the effect of digital technology on our perception of objects, aura and authenticity in a *gesamptkunstwerk*.[212] Lyotard stated this explicit intention of 'turning the exhibition itself into a work of art'[213] in more than one interview. 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' is also 'brought to life by sound'[214] as was 'Les Immatériaux' by the spoken text on headphones. Leckey is also interested in the transubstantiation of objects from material to immaterial, or 'gauzified' (using as example the model of Felix the Cat being broadcast as image for the first time in 1929)[215]. This recalls, in a physical context, the metal gauze which separated the sections of 'Les Immatériaux' and also its conceptual concern with the dematerialising effect of technological systems on perception and on objects.

'Les Immatériaux' opened with the Egyptian bas relief and ended with its reproduction, dematerialised and projected which is effectively the same trajectory Leckey takes between 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' and its follow-up iteration 'UniAddDumThs'. This is

210. This is something 'Cybernetic Serendipity' curator Jasia Reichart pays great emphasis to, in interview – that the work of engineers was not distinguished from that of artists and indeed engineers are afforded the status of artists by being in the exhibition. https://www.afterall.org/online/exhibition-histories-talks_jasia-reichardt-video-online#.Wnwxesacat8 [accessed 4.4.19].
211. Leckey refer to exhibition-making as an aggregation rather than a curation in the Nottingham Trent lecture, see footnote 203.
212. In this it follows a trajectory of projects by artist curators, delineated by Paul O'Neill in which 'More often than not the artist curator's efforts are presented as a combined exhibition work, made up of other artworks and usually supported by a unifying conceptual, physical and structural display framework.' *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, p. 110–11.
213. He refers to the exhibition as '*une expo qui soit un oeuvre d'art*' in interview with Elie Theofilakis, in *Modernes et après*, p. 7, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k4811107j/f15.image>, [accessed 12 February 2018], and when interviewed by Bernard Blistène says: 'I'm particularly concerned with turning the exhibition itself into a work of art.', 'Les-Immatériaux: A Conversation with Jean François Lyotard', *Flash Art*, no.121, March 1985, 8, <http://www.artagenda.com/reviews/les-immateriaux-a-conversation-with-jean-francois-lyotard-and-bernard-blistene/>, [accessed 12 February 2018].
214. Leckey in lecture for Nottingham Contemporary filmed at Nottingham Trent University, see footnote 203.
215. He meshes Felix's transubstantiation by means of broadcast technology with the 1936 'Dimensionist Manifesto' of Hungarian artist Karoly Tamkó Sirató, who calls for sculpture to be 'vaporised'. *Mark Leckey in the Long Tail* (2009).

an ersatz exhibition of 'ontologically liminal stuff'[216] which takes things the logical step further. Moving from the virtual (Leckey's desktop collection of images) to the real ('The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' exhibition) to the virtual materialised again (using 3D scans and other representations of the original objects) 'UniAddDumThs' emphasises objects' fungibility rather than their quiddity. In the initial exhibition, Leckey acknowledged[217] his disappointment in the aura of the objects once assembled, perhaps destroyed by proximity, as Benjamin feared. In the follow up exhibition only works which were already technologically reproduced (eg. an Ed Atkins video and a mass-produced vase in the shape of a uterus) were included in this original form – all others (including a Louise Bourgeois sculpture) were replicated, suggesting that this undermining of the link between authenticity and aura is at the heart of the project: 'The intricate oscillation from image to thing obscures the hierarchical distinction between the original archetype and the replica.'[218]

216. Elena Filipovic, 'Mark Leckey, 'UniAddDumThs', 2014–15', 32, and also noted in press release, <https://artmap.com/kunsthallebasel/exhibition/mark-leckey-2015>, (para 2 of 7).
217. Ibid., 30. 'Leckey admitted that he was slightly disillusioned. However physical, however supposedly imbued with the sensuous presence of the "real," the artifacts in the show seemed to him not any more evocative than the digital images. The originals felt distant.'
218. From exhibition text at <https://artviewer.org/marck-leckey-at-santandrea-de-scaphis/>, [accessed 17 November 2021].

Figure 14. Mark Leckey, installation view, 'UniAddDumThs', Kunsthalle Basel, 2015, Photograph: Philipp Hänger/Kunsthalle Basel

As the curator at Kunsthalle Basel notes: 'Leckey […] seemed to want to rid himself of this notion of aura altogether and to generate a different kind of aura in its stead. While Benjamin declared that awe arises through distance, Leckey was apparently after awe by way of proximity. […] The only way to achieve this desired proximity, he reasoned, was to make copies.' [219] Along with the objects themselves, the support structures of the exhibition were also dematerialized in some way, creating an environment designed to be slightly 'off' in terms of the conventions of display. The hardwood display structure was 'gauzified' into a vinyl backdrop, the lighting changed from an enhancing focal spotlight to 'day for night' filmic lighting, all intended to create a levelling simulacra.[220]

'UniAddDumThs' with its title which sounds like a file name compression, familiar to Steyerl's 'poor image' is perhaps the equivalent of Lyotard's proposed but never actualised follow up to 'Les

219. Ibid.
220. Noted by curator of the host institution Kunsthalle Basel, Elena Filipovic in a lecture 'When Exhibitions Become Form' at <https://vimeo.com/151995116>, [accessed 12 March 2018].

Immatériaux' – 'Resistances' [221] – in that it reverses the trajectory of the original show. In 'UniAddDumThs' Leckey followed though the natural curve of the long tail, as well as echoing Duchamp's *Boite en Valise* in its lack of concern with the authentic. Only one authentic item remained from the original show – the reliquary hand – which functioned like a totem or fetish of the relationship between the digital (literally digits) and the originary.

Elena Filipovic notes how this project lies in a trajectory of experimental curating and thinking relating to the auratic and authentic: '"UniAddDumThs" raises new questions for our time about aura, authenticity, originality, and authorship. And if Leckey's project inevitably inscribes itself in a lineage of inquiry that spans several centuries (running from James, Malraux, Benjamin, and Duchamp to Leckey), "UniAddDumThs" invariably also offers its own curious take on what the real and its replication can mean to us in a post-digital age.'[222] Owing to the affinities stated above, the overlaps and superpositions, I would add Lyotard and 'Les Immatériaux' into this lineage and also situate Leckey's first exhibition iteration – the convocation of objects in physical space – within the wider tendency of foregrounding artefacts in curatorial practice in the last decade.

    iii.   The turn to the artefact in curating and the repositioning of Benjamin's cult /ritual value in exhibitions

This very individual project can also be seen as part of a wider turn to the object in curatorial practice. The artefact has featured heavily in

221. Lyotard apparently proposed (in teaching sessions recalled by artist Philippe Parreno) a follow up or obverse to 'Les Immatériaux' called 'Resistances', which would be around the friction between forces, rather than their free-flowing immateriality, perhaps moving backwards to a 'resistant materiality'. Referenced in Daniel Birnbaum and Sven Olov Wallenstein, 'Spatial Thought', *e-flux Architecture,* November 2016, (para 4 of 16), <http://www.e flux.com/architecture/superhumanity/66879/spatial thought/>, [accessed 24 January 2018].
222. Elena Filipovic, 'Mark Leckey, 'UniAddDumThs', 2014‑15', 33.

major curatorial projects over the last decade – where a concern for authenticity and singularity and the auratic is central, as Erika Balsom notes: 'singular objects inextricable from their respective material histories, absolutely incompatible with the compress-and-copy life of a jpeg'.[223]Indeed this resurgence of interest in the artefact and material culture – a rematerialisation of the art object – has also been linked to the prevalence of remakes and restaging of artworks and exhibitions. Deter Roelstrate notes this entangled position:

> We are caught in a messy tangle of contradictory insights and intuitions: a common acceptance of the fundamental impossibility of originary gestures – 'making it new'; a growing sense that the past is the only destination (indeed a refuge) left to art in these forgetful post-historical times; a renewed passion for both the well-made object and making things well that is easily cast in the nostalgic language of craft and craftsmanship; an ancient fear of repetition and an even older anxiety surrounding what Hillel Schwartz famously called the 'culture of the copy'.[224]

Figure 15. The artefactual 'brain' of 'Documenta 13', 2012

223. Erika Balsom: 'Against the Novelty of New Media: the Resuscitation of the Authentic', p. 67.
224. Deter Roelstraete, 'Make it Re: The Eternally Returning Object', in *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, p. 424.

As examples of this trend, Balsom cites the artefactual 'brain' of 'Documenta 13', 2012 which consisted of hand-made objects with accretions of social political and cultural relations[225] and 'The Encyclopaedic Palace', Venice Biennale, 2013, with its focus on outsider art and objects obsessively created with great time and haptic commitment. I would add the Berlin Biennale 2010 with its central exhibition of Menzel's *Extreme Realism,*[226] 'Art Sheffield 13' which was centred around an installation by Joseph Beuys rather than a theme, Kader Attia & Jean-Jacques Lebel's exhibition of 'enigmatic and polysemic objects', 'One and Other', at Palais de Tokyo, 2018 [227] and Mark Leckey's 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', as just discussed, as a kind of apotheosis of this approach. [228]

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225. Including: Bactrian Princess figures (small figurines, mostly female, made between the late third and early second millennia B.C. in an ancient civilization of western Central Asia, today Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and northern Afghanistan); Vyacheslav Akhunov, *Art cheology*, One of his 200 notebooks with 3,000 drawings, which he drew and annotated between 1974 and 2000 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan; objects damaged in the Lebanese Civil War (1975–90); melted artefacts from the National Museum in Beirut. Interestingly it also included a work by Giuseppe Penone, 'Essere Fiume' (1981) which comprised two stones – one stone found in a river, the other a replica carved from carerra marble.
226. Curator Kathrin Rhomberg invited the American art historian Michael Fried to curate an exhibition with works by Adolph Menzel (1815 –1905) as the core of the Biennial.
227. <https://www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/event/one-and-other>, [accessed 25 March 2021].
228. More recent exhibitions have sought to entangle the artefact more with contemporary 'poor image' culture, for example, James N. Hutchison's exhibition 'Untitled' at The Tetley, Leeds, about which he states that he works, as an artist, curatorially to test out 'what authenticity might mean' by including copies, forgeries and creating a set of 'entanglements', complexities not normally present in a solo show presenting a 'unique vision'. In video interview at: <https://twitter.com/i/topics/news/e647536534?cn=ZmxleGlibGVfcmVjcw%3D %3D&refsrc=email>, [accessed 26 September 2019].

Figure 16. Kader Attia & Jean-Jacques Lebel's 'One and Other', Palais de Tokyo, 2018

Balsom's notes that Carolyn Christov Barkagiev's artefactual core of *Documenta 13* focussed on the 'the emplaced condition of things' – things with Benjamin's cult rather than exhibition value.[229] Balsom's broader contention, is that we are living through a similar period of accelerated distribution mechanisms to that when Benjamin wrote 'The Work of Art' essay. In the 19th Century this revolved around photographic reproduction, cinema and the assembly line, now it is the proliferation of digital images and modes of electronic communication, exacerbated by the pandemic and the move to online presentation.

She notes the rise and fall of the concern for the authentic, from the romantic concern for authenticity from the mid-19th century which denigrated the copy and reified the 'authentic', to its fall from grace in post-structuralism in favour of 'hybridity, reproducibility and purposeful unoriginality' to now a reassertion of the authentic in the post-digital context. In this context 'against the promiscuous circulation of proliferating copies, the singular event or performance or the uniqueness of the handmade object both emerge as sites of intense cathexis'.[230] Her question is whether this approach is a conservative

229. Erika Balsom, p.67. A review in *Frieze* also suggests that this approach mixing contemporary artworks with ancient artefacts frees the curating from any 'pulse-taking' obligation and is 'the start of a probing inquiry into how knowledge is produced and shared and passed from one generation to the next, reaching way back into history and going forward from now'. https://frieze.com/article/get together, [accessed 24 September 2019].
230. Ibid., p 72.

withdrawal from the present and as a singular strategy of a return to the object it may well be. I would argue, though that (taking inspiration from Lyotard and Leckey) a curatorial strategy of interweaving objects of different orders (be they artefacts, singular originals or ripped and distributed copies) may reveal something new about our contemporary understanding of aura. I am interested in whether curating with objects with a palpable sense of time and singularity can, as Balsom suggests, 'mobilise the anachronism of the authentic as a challenge to our present'.[231] This thesis circles around this question which feels more pertinent than ever now.

As discussed earlier it may be possible to undermine the dichotomy of aura and reproduction, cult and exhibition value and to allow for a form of digital, distributable aura and also assign a form of auratic experience to the exhibition itself in a specific place and time. Benjamin referred to aura as a 'strange weave of space and time.[232] I'm interested in whether the 'strange weave' of curating – the drawing together of artworks in time and in space and their intra-action with other artworks and the proximate body of a viewer, in a particular performative moment can also itself create the auratic. Boris Groys and Lucy Steeds both suggest that the original or auratic can be rethought as an event-based 'presence of the present'[233] and a rethinking of ritual in terms of the convocation of artworks and publics in a uniquely new conjunction, which can afford curating auratic status. I agree and this is something which this study materially explores and theorises through

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231. Ibid., p 76.
232. This definition comes midway through 'A Little History of Photography' (and is repeated minus this phrase in the artwork essay): "What is aura actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of a distance no matter how close it may be." 'A Little History of Photography', in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, 1927–1934, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–34*, p. 518.
233. Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, London & New York: Verso, 2016, p.138. See also 'The aura is not lost when an artwork is uncoupled from its original, local context, but is rather re-contextualized and given a new "here and now" in the event of an exhibition – and thus, in the history of exhibitions.' Boris Groys, 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', *e-Flux Journal* #94, October 2018, para 18 of 20, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219462/curating-in-the-post-internet-age/>, [accessed 17.12.18]

curatorial conjunctions of artworks in exhibition.

In the context of the modernist exhibition model being potentially eclipsed by models utilising online, networked culture globally, Steeds argues for the retention of both of Benjamin's opposing terms, with cult value being repositioned as 'the ritual engagement of publics', for 'convening collectivities' by reinstating the 'here and now of the work of art' but not in originary terms, but in the 'here and now of art's display—whether in a museum, on the streets, at an Internet URL, or anywhere else'.[234] Steeds proposes that exhibitions can be auratic if we free aura/ ritual from notions of originality and authenticity and think of it in terms of an 'event-based experience of commonality […] in a particular context, over a particular duration'.[235] In certain texts Steeds seems to oppose the auratic to the entangled[236] but also notes that curation can reconcile this 'auratic functionality of art' with a 'socio-

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234. Lucy Steeds, 'What is the future of exhibition histories? Or towards art in terms of it's Becoming-Public', in *The Curatorial Conundrum, What to Study? What to Research? What to Practice?*, ed by Paul O'Neill, Mick Wilson and Lucy Steeds, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016, p. 22, which goes on to note that within the domain of exhibition histories, this adapted notion of cult value can also be seen as a rationale for the restaging and reconvening of historical exhibitions and performances – a sense of a repeated convocation of a new public around a pivotal moment, with an acknowledgement of the lapse in time between original and the new instance and the opportunity for new insights this allows. However, as Steeds notes, this can too often be about re-inscription into a canon or institutions mining for originary authenticity. She also notes: 'We might ask whether the politics-based potential of art – actualized in the event of its exhibition, as announced by Benjamin – might be complemented or inflected by 'ritual' practices, if these are rethought so that there is no longer a reliance on the 'cult' but a grounding instead in intersubjectivity.' Lucy Steeds, 'Contemporary Exhibitions: Art at Large in the World', introduction to *Exhibition*, Cambridge and London: Whitechapel/MIT Press, 2014, p. 20.
235. 'Art can serve ritual purposes without insisting on originality or authenticity, on the unique apparition of distance, or on individualistic contemplative absorption. If we free our understanding of ritual from notions of fixity, hierarchy and subservience, it may provide us with a renewed basis on which art – in a particular context, over a particular duration – enables an event-based experience of commonality, galvanizing coordinated action.' Contribution to *Aroop* (New Delhi), vol.2, no.1, July–December 2017, 80–81, (special issue ed. by Nancy Adajania, 'Some things that only art can do: A Lexicon of Affective Knowledge').
236. For example counterposing 'distancing us rather than drawing us in […] the individualising imperative of Aura – as opposed to exposability's entanglements' ['exposability ' and 'exhibitability' are used interchangeably as her translation of Benjamin's 'austellbarkeit'], in 'Return and/as response: Minding the Memory of "An Exhibit"', in *Of(f) Our Times: Curatorial Anachronics*, ed. by Rike Frank and Beatrice von Bismark, Berlin: Sternberg, 2019, pp. 24–47, 37). Interestingly she also notes the use of sound as a way to undermine this distinction.

political entanglement'.[237]

It is in the exhibition that the artwork intra-acts with other artworks and with the proximate body – 'a sensory matrix of the haptic, visual and auditory that the spatial exhibition offers and for which curating offers a kind of dramaturgy'.[238] In fact the characteristics of the gallery exhibition align pretty closely to Benjamin's definition of aura in artwork: 'its unique existence at the place where it happens to be', albeit not in ritual terms. If, as Groys suggests, parsing Benjamin: '*the original* is simply another name for the presence of the present – for something that happens here and now'[239] then curating itself perhaps can create this sense of the auratic, by offering the convocation of artworks and subjects in a new conjunction to create the 'here and now' of the exhibitionary moment in 'the place where it happens to be'. It may retain political potential by convening 'affective and discursive rituals' in the space-time of the exhibition.[240] This strange weave of curating an exhibition allows for Barad's 'superposition of beings, becomings, here and there's, now and then's'[241], like waves meeting and becoming amplified, creating an entirely new entity.

Timothy Morton critiques what he sees as Barad's downgrading of objects to merely functions of flows and intra-active relations, wishing to maintain a space for the 'weird thing' and suggest that current tendencies in art and theory which seek to diminish objects are 'constantly struggling against beauty, against the seduction of the aura, against determinacy and the constraints of form'. He opposes Barad's position to an appreciation of the auratic as it reduces the object to a

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237. In 'Retelling 'The Other Story – Or What Now?'
<https://www.afterall.org/exhibition-histories/the-other-story/retelling-the-other-story-or-what-now>, [accessed 7 October 2020], she notes: 'Shimizu's installation was irreverently non-auratic: messy, non-unified, socially intrusive and entangling.' p. 20/21, then notes in conclusion: 'The show has reconciled me to the ongoing auratic functionality of art, while simultaneously encouraging my interest in its concurrent ethical capacity for socio-political entanglement.' p. 21.
238. Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, p. 91.
239. Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, p. 138.
240. Lucy Steeds, 'Contemporary Exhibitions: Art at Large in the World', p. 20.
241. Karen Barad, 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', p. 176.

set of relations. I would refute this, using Benjamin's alternate conception of aura which is a condition of affect, of intra-action, the return of a glance, a sense of distance, exactly such a set of relations between things (be it 'a person, animal or something inanimate'[242]) with a levelled hierarchy between them. [243] Aura does not, and according to Benjamin, never did, reside in the object and is necessarily entangled.

I am interested in this sense of aura in the post-digital, as mutable and multifaceted, no longer predicated on a proximate tethering to or reflection of an originary artefact or context, but something performative and relational that creates its own 'here and now', something based on affect and attention, catalysed by a relationship with objects or images of indeterminate originality. In short something more akin to this later Benjaminian sense of aura as the expectation of the return of attention, intra-active and affective. This is in kinship with diffraction, Benjamin's 'strange weave of space and time' recalls Barad's entanglement and aligns with a post-human intra-relation between people, things, animals or words. This diffractive conception of aura is more appropriate to the post-digital, in that it is not predicated on binaries or tethered to original objects or locations. As Esther Leslie notes in the glossary, though, aura is always 'fuzzy, and fuzzily understood' and this was something I wanted to test out in exhibition.

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242. Benjamin specifically creates this post-human, flattened ontology: 'When a person, an animal, or something inanimate returns our glance with its own we are drawn initially into the distance…', translation by Esther Leslie in Walter Benjamin, *Archive Images, Texts, Sign,* ed by Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla, London and New York: Verso, 2007, p. 41, fig. 12.
243. In fact, Morton's approach of 'weird essentialism' borrows much of Barad's undermining of ontological hierarchies and subject /object separations. He says there are things but they are 'irreducibly uncanny' and cannot be separated into life/ non-life, which is a Baradian position. He also echoes both Benjamin's alternate mode of aura and Barad's intra-action: 'beauty is a weird coherence between me and a thing that isn't me, available in me as an object-like entity that again isn't me, and I can taste it and feel it, but I can't totally grasp it'. Timothy Morton, 'Weird Embodiment', in *Sentient Performativities of Embodiment: Thinking Alongside the Human*, ed by Lynette Hunter, Elisabeth Krimmer, and Peter Lichtenfels, Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Lexington Books, 2016, pp. 19–34, 27.

iv.   Phantom Exhibition: 'Project for an Exhibition' – Report
        on practice

> Throughout, the question of the integration of objects
> into curatorial presentation plays a central role. This
> transformation can occur in different modes – for
> instance in reproduction, documentation or
> duplication. Although the objects involve do not
> dissipate into a state of imperceptibility during the
> course of this transformation, they nevertheless change
> their appearance, materiality, and mediality and
> viewed ontologically, switch from one category to
> another. Processes of transformative reproduction such
> as these may threaten the status of the original as a
> unique object; however in the context of curatorial
> praxis they form the methodological basis for a broad
> pallet of transmedial approaches that generate a
> reciprocal relationship between presentation and
> reproduction.[244]

In relation to Erika Balsom's ideas on the 'resuscitation of the
authentic' I was interested to test out whether the renewed concern for
the authentic in curating represents a regressive withdrawal from the
current post-digital moment or whether a juxtaposition of the
artefactual and the reproduced, in a physically instantiated yet
'phantom' exhibition, could create new curatorial thinking around
these notions.

Taking 'Les Immatériaux' and Mark Leckey's 'Universal
Addressability of Dumb' Things and 'UniAddDumThs' as
methodological precursors, I curated a one-day exhibition at Bloc
Projects, Sheffield, in July 2018 to explore some of these ideas around
the auratic in the post-digital in emplaced exhibition. The title 'Project
for an Exhibition' related to the header of a document I found in the

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244. 'Curatorial Things: An Introduction', in *Curatorial Things*, ed. by Beatrice von
Bismarck, Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019, p. 10.

Tate Archive on 'Cybernetic Serendipity'. It provided a physical document of a moment of potential before the exhibition is actualised, only existing as a curatorial rationale on paper. The status of this project was also somewhere between a speculative paper exercise and a physical exhibition, an exploratory experiment to be worked up to another iteration in future, not a final, fixed form.

This project took as starting point the relationship between the auratic, authentic artefact and the technologically reproduced and dispersed art object and riffed on the trajectory in 'Les Immatériaux' from the Egyptian bas–relief sculpture which opened the exhibition and the images of this artefact, refracted, dematerialised and projected, which ended it. As in 'Les Immatériaux' though, along the way, this seemingly linear trajectory was rendered fluid and entangled in this presentation.

This physical presentation of works was a fleeting, phantom exhibition in reference to Barad's ideas of speaking with ghosts, Steyerl's post-digital 'poor image' which is a 'ghost of an image' and to Sven Lutticken's idea of the 'spectral status of the viewing copy'[245] and his exploration of aura in the tradition of collections of plaster casts of original artworks.[246] These were cited by Malraux as a forerunner of his printed 'Imaginary Museum', itself a precursor of the digital viewing of artworks online. Lutticken also notes that certain exhibitions in the 1800s – of Holbein and Michelangelo – included plaster casts and photographs of works as well as originals. These were seen to retain aura by dint of indexicality – the trace of the original.

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245. An unauthorised copy of AV work which circulates around galleries and collectors for viewing not showing, Sven Lutticken, 'Viewing Copies: On the Mobility of Moving Images', *e-flux Journal* #08, September 2009, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/08/61380/viewing-copies-on-the-mobility-of-moving-images/>, [accessed 23 March 2021].
246. Sven Lutticken, 'The Imaginary Museum of Plaster Casts', <https://svenlutticken.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/sven-lucc88tticken-imaginary-museum.pdf>, [accessed at 5 March 2018].

The project was interested in where the auratic is now situated, in relation to the digital, within an exhibition context. So, most elements of the exhibition were not really there in an authentic or authorised sense; they were ghostly instantiations, ripped from the internet, 3D printed from open-access scans, or watermarked viewing copies of works, unauthorised for exhibition.[247] These were positioned alongside some resolutely auratic works, according to Benjamin's best-known conception of the term, and those directly asking questions of the status of aura in the post-digital. So, whilst some works were (in early Benjaminian terms) evacuated of aura by reproduction, others were presented in their original artefactual form. The project aimed to look at where the copy is able to hold more than the original, and when this auratic 'poor image' transubstantiation does not take place. In doing so it also raised questions about the status of this presentation of works – was it an exhibition, a project for an exhibition, a proposal or something in between?

This slightly rogue methodology sits contrary to my customary curatorial practice which is very much predicated on developing discourse with the artist and collaborating to present works in their optimum format and context, whilst generating a productive friction between objects and their conceptual contexts in the space of the exhibition. It is subject to the critique of the curator instrumentally subsuming works into a curatorial *gesamptkunstwerk*, rather than engaging fully with the material and conceptual particularities of the individual works and practices. Indeed, many works were stand-ins for themselves, operating under degraded, 'poor image' conditions, without authorisation, in ways which the artists were unlikely to have approved of. This, however, felt necessary to test something about the

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247. Although with the exception of Camille Henrot and Taus Makacheva's work, most works were not fully rendered immaterial, as digital files, for example, and such new media has its own materiality and infrastructures, as delineated in New Media Theory from the 1990s onwards:
<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199791286/obo-9780199791286-0307.xml>, [accessed 1 November 2021].

authority of the authentic and an audience's response to this. It is an approach that has been tested by a number of other projects such as Triple Candie and originalcopy which experiment with exhibiting the reproduction or the staging of a situation where the valorisation of authenticity is overturned and 'the original is unfaithful to the copy'.[248] In the same way this provisional exhibition tested out how the original might be unfaithful to the copy, ie how the copy might become auratic in some way, or at least undermine the dichotomy between original and copy. It also explored Groys's contention that the exhibition makes copying reversible, creating a new original from a copy, by its performative, dramaturgical staging of digital files, akin to the performance of score of music. The short duration of the exhibition – just one day – also highlighted its provisional as well as its performative nature. The short duration and the fact that it was for only an invited audience allayed my ethical concerns about this experimental approach to showing work and allowed it to function as a temporary testing ground for these questions around authority and authenticity.

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248. US curatorial collective Triple Candie use this quote from Borges to elucidate their practice. Their exhibitions have 'no art' in them. They describe that a typical Triple Candie exhibition 'consists of reproductions, surrogates, models, stage-sets, or common objects [...] There is no art. […] the shows are generally […] realized without the involvement, permission, or knowledge of the artists whose work may be their subject.' An example exhibition is the first 'survey' of Cady Noland's art, which consisted of thirteen sculptural surrogates built by Triple Candie and four artists using incomplete information gleaned from the internet (Cady Noland Approximately: Sculptures and Editions, 1984–2000).In addition, 'A ditto, ditto device', a show at the Angewandte Innovation Laboratory 'traces the act of copying as an omnipresent yet often invisible artistic practice at the intersection of the digital realm and analogue world'. As part of the arts-based research project 'originalcopy— Post-Digital Strategies of Appropriation', the exhibition serves as a test setting and working model for a re-evaluation of the dichotomy of original and copy from a post-digital perspective. <http://www.ocopy.net/about/>, [accessed 1 October 2021].

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Figure 17. 'Project for an Exhibition', Bloc Projects, 4 July 2018, installation documentation detail – Penny McCarthy and Oliver Laric's work. Photograph: John Hartley

The curatorial methodology was based around a diffraction of the trajectory traced by Leckey and by Lyotard: from artefact to replication. I represented this trajectory by opening the exhibition with a drawing by Penny McCarthy, juxtaposed with a 3D printed object which is part of a project by Oliver Laric and the rest of the exhibition rippled out from this dynamic, generatively to include other works concerning the affect of the authentic or auratic object. The exhibition essentially pivoted on this intra-action between two works and grew generatively from that superposition.

Penny McCarthy's work is a kind of apotheosis of aura – a meticulous drawing of one of Benjamin's ephemeral writings on aura using café notepaper, replicated, but replicated by hand, singular and excessive in terms of haptic labour as a means of reproduction. It is a contradiction and an apogee all at once. It supports Latour's previously noted suggestion that Benjamin was still in thrall to the romantic idea of aura he set out to challenge,[249] something which is at play in the lyrical

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249. 'How to make mistakes on so many things at once – and become famous for it.', Antoine Hennion and Bruno Latour, p. 92.

language in this piece, which equates aura as 'an ability […] to respond to a glance. This ability is full of poetry […] Aura is the appearance of a distance however close it might be.'[250] This oscillation of distance and proximity is at play throughout this phantom exhibition.
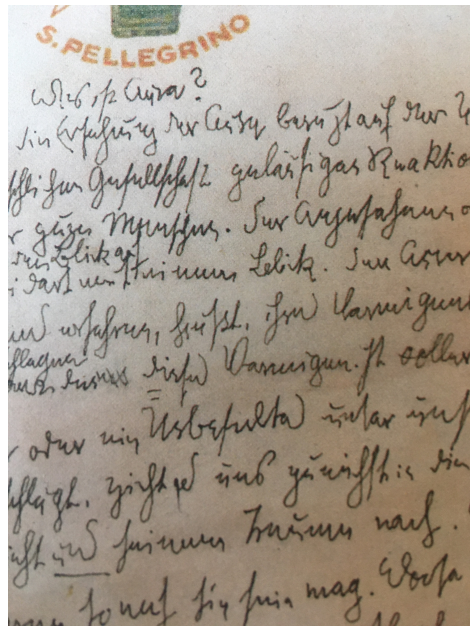
Figure 18. Penny McCarthy, *Aura*, 2018,
paint and pencil on paper, 33 x 48 cm (detail)

250. Translation by Esther Leslie in *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images, Texts, Sign*, edited by Ursula Marx, Gudrun Schwarz, Michael Schwarz and Erdmut Wizisla, p. 45.

Figure 19 - Oliver Laric, *3D Print from Lincoln Scans*, 2014, installed in 'Project for an Exhibition', Bloc Projects, 4 July 2018. Photograph: John Hartley

McCarthy's work, in a riff on Lyotard's dematerialised sculptural artefact, is positioned in an oppositional physical relationship (hung at the same height, across a ninety-degree gallery corner) with one of Oliver Laric's *Lincoln Scans*. These 3-D scans of objects from The Collection Museum, Lincoln were made available to download and use, free from copyright restriction, aiming to 'make the collection available to an audience outside of its normal geographic proximity and treat the objects as starting points for new works'.[251] Laric is interested in the idea that, contra Benjamin, the aura of an artwork may not be dispersed by technological reproduction, but possibly augmented by it. Laric's work points to the possibilities of digital, distributed aura – aura as dataset. A review of his work suggests: 'Gone is the romance of the auratic in these objects. In its place is a romance with information as content, ghosts in the machine – materially present

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251. As part of a project from 2012–13, which first showed at The Collection – an archeology museum and gallery in Lincoln UK, then afterwards as an online exhibition at the New Museum, New York.
<https://www.lincoln3dscans.co.uk/info>, [accessed 4 November 2021].

or not.'[252] I would rather say that in his works the auratic migrates to the information, to the data. In this he is aligning with Groys's notion that if data is actualised anew on each screen, via each 3D printer, or in each exhibition (like a performance of a score of music), it is an original every time and it can be argued that every digital copy therefore has an aura that a mechanical copy does not have.[253] Or as Steyerl puts it: 'This aura is no longer based on the permanence of the "original," but on the transience of the copy.'[254] This amended form of digitally distributed aura also allows for Benjamin's sense of *Spielraum*, or room for play[255], which can be put to political use, so collapses the opposition between the auratic and reproduced object.

Taus Makacheva's work *Tightrope* (2015) also functions as a metaphor for the kind of dispersion at work in Laric's project. It puts ostensibly original, auratic material – sixty-one works from the collection of the Dagestan Museum of Fine Art – in a perilous position as it moves from one storage structure to another (as if from past to future) across a ravine in the hands of a tightrope artist. Referencing the precarity of cultural work and artefacts in the post-Soviet system (and in a context of digital dissemination), the work affectively draws on our feeling for the idea of the unrepeatable authentic artwork in peril, whilst simultaneously undermining this with the knowledge that the works are replicated. In 'Project for an Exhibition', a short section of the longer work was ripped from an artist's talk on YouTube and presented on a monitor, in contrast to its usual presentation as an installed large scale

252. Max Henry, 'Oliver Laric', review of exhibition at Secession, Vienna, Austria, *Frieze*, 12.5.2016, <https://frieze.com/article/oliver-laric>, [accessed 1 April 2018].
253. Boris Groys's argument in *Monday Begins On Saturday*, ed. by Ekaterina Degot and David Riff, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013, pp. 59–64, and *In the Flow*, London & New York: Verso, 2016 p. 144.
254. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', para 23 of 32.
255. Which can also be seen in open source works which invite prosumer participation such as *Touch My Body (Green Screen Version)* (2008), a reworking of Maria Carey's music video for the track of the same name. 'By masking everything in the video other than Carey's physical form in Chroma Key green screen, Laric created a template over which others were able to edit further new versions of the video. In the final video both Laric's original re-edit and those made subsequently by others who located his green screen version online are shown alongside each other.' <http://www.seventeengallery.com/exhibitions/oliver-laric-50-50-2008-↓-↑-touch-my-body/>, [accessed 2 April 2018].

projection in, for example, the Venice Biennale and Liverpool Biennial. Sven Lutticken identifies this kind of high spec, HD, installed, projected video as one way the art market seeks to re-auratise essentially dispersible, multiply reproducible video works, yet here the work was shown, without the artist's consent, in a fragmented and low res version, the 'poor image' cousin of its authorised and awe-inspiring original.

A conversation about drawing, started with McCarthy's work, is picked up by Margarita Gluzberg who discusses drawing as a digital process of a discrete translation or representation rather than an analogue wave.[256] Her work *Hairstyles for the Great Depression* (2010), references the time of Benjamin's writings on technological reproduction and aura, making a connection with similar accelerationist tendencies in reproduction today. These disembodied hairstyles, or wigs – intrinsically artificial devices, masquerading as 'real' hair – were represented in this project as digital prints of jpegs a tiny fraction of the original size, whereby one pencil line represented a hair, so denying access to the physicality of their mark making.

A form of digital drawing, in Gluzberg's terms, could also be seen at work in a project by Philippe Parreno – *With a Rhythmic Instinction to be Able to Travel Beyond Existing Forces of Life,* which integrates hundreds of handmade drawings of a single subject – the firefly – with animation algorithms to create a flickering frame of life. This is based on the work of a British mathematician, John Horton Conway, whose 'game of life' algorithm determines the structure of the work and through which the

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256. Gluzberg sees drawing as digital because analogue is a wave and the digital is discrete points and translating an idea into a medium or from one medium to another 'is intrinsically a digital signal, a digital translation as it's a discontinuous, discrete representation', so posits for this reason that drawing is by nature digital rather than analogue. She suggests we are constantly meshing the analogue and the digital, the translation of the 'real' into data is constantly happening in art. This argument was articulated in a presentation, *The Digital Draw*, at The Drawing Room, 18 April 2016.

lifespan of each animation 'automaton' is governed, creating new unique iterations by means of digital algorithm. Philippe Parreno is on record as being profoundly influenced by 'Les Immatériaux'[257] and this can be seen in the way he often uses the exhibition itself as a medium, with multiple factors – lighting, sound, architecture and artworks inter-relating with a concern for rhythm and dramaturgy. Here again, a highly complex installation using algorithms to drive an animation of physical drawings which creates a unique constellation of images each time, was represented in this project as an installation shot, flattening the work to the status of a hyperlink to an absent original.

Jan Hopkin's drawings expand on this notion of a post-human element in the development of the work in that they are drawn by programmable plotters. Muddying the waters of the 'authentic', the handmade and the technologically produced, they investigate the cybernetic feedback loops between humans and technology. The works are filtered through a timeline impacted by technology since the moon landings (the subject of the drawings are often either the moon or the domestic table the TV sat on when this moment was broadcast). This interface of the domestic and the technological aligns with the interface between human and machine drawing. Hopkin's work is interested in whether aura is lost in the digital, whether these drawings done by plotter are perceived as unique or authentic. Some drawings are created by means of randomised code, meaning the uniqueness of the drawing is guaranteed and, once captured on paper, has an auratic 'here and now', as Groys suggested.

257. See Philippe Parreno in interview with Tom Eccles, *Art Review*, October 2015 <https://artreview.com/features/october_2015_feature_philippe_parreno/>, [accessed 1 March 2018], 'Hans-Ulrich Obrist: The Art of Curation: interviews by Stuart Jeffries and Nancy Groves', *The Guardian*, 23 March 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/mar/23/hans-ulrich-obrist-art-curator>, [accessed 24 September 2019], and Ben Luke, 'The Art Machine: The Centre Pompidou at 40', *The Art Newspaper*, 1 February 2017, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/feature/the-art-machine-the-centre-pompidou-at-40>, [accessed 24 March 2018].

Camille Henrot's *Grosse Fatigue*, like Mark Leckey's exhibition 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', explores the relationship between the world of (ritual) objects and the world of the internet, the overwhelming sense of surplus in both worlds and the means we use to make sense of this. The work came out of a residency at the Smithsonian and is overlaid by a spoken-word piece amalgamating origin myths, drawing a thread back to the fact that Lyotard started his exhibition with an origin myth. Another piece usually prominently and meticulously installed in major exhibition projects (Venice Biennale/ New Museum, New York), here it was presented back on the Apple computer it was clearly made on and whose desktop features in the work. The presentation therefore functions as a kind of mise en abîme, giving a sense of an infinite regress of reproduction. This was also a viewing copy of the work, whose 'spectral status' (Lutticken) maintains the aura and scarcity of sanctioned, saleable editions or installations. The viewing copy was sent to me by the artist's Paris gallery with my name as a watermark down the side to prevent exactly such unauthorised presentation. The dispersible digital file, sent by WeTransfer, becomes even more specific to the curator, created specifically for my solo viewing, for a particular digital incarnation on my laptop screen, here transferred to a public context.

Diana Taylor's work often utilises the grid – a basic means of allowing for reproducibility. The grid of course also references the digital but is hand-screen-printed and overlaid by the handmade, embodying time and haptic commitment. The textile pieces include screen-printed low res images of the aftermath of natural disasters along with motifs, diagrams, digital clip art and stock imagery from printers' catalogues. These are scanned and copied, subjected to digital entropy, each layer overlaying and obfuscating the last like a desktop full of open windows, recalling Camille Henrot's literal use of this trope.

Figure 20. 'Project for an Exhibition', Bloc Projects, 4 July 2018, installation documentation. Photograph: John Hartley

This phantom exhibition, then, aimed to explore where aura, authenticity and the object are located in the post-digital. It also attempted, by the inclusion of poor image reproductions, to tease out the affect of the authentic in the post-digital to see why the inclusion of the 'authentic artefact' has been such a prevalent trope in recent curating. The project moves on from the discourse on post-internet art and its idea that 'for objects after the Internet there can be no "original copy"'. Any version of an artwork, in a gallery, on and offline disseminations, representations and recontextualisations, is equally valuable. As Artie Vierkant, theorist of early post-internet art suggests, this 'marks a denigration of objects and our relationship to space'.[258] As this suggests, in feedback from 'Project for an Exhibition', it was interesting to note the disappointment some felt at the reproduced copy, evacuated of aura and the urge to see the emplaced original in

258. Artie Vierkant, 'The Image Object Post-Internet': 'In the Post-Internet climate, it is assumed that the work of art lies equally in the version of the object one would encounter at a gallery or museum, the images and other representations disseminated through the Internet and print publications, bootleg images of the object or its representations, and variations on any of these as edited and recontextualized by any other author. […] For objects after the Internet there can be no "original copy."' para 14 of 40.

exhibition. There was a deflated affect, a disappointment that works referred to as drawings were presented as prints of drawings, which was felt to be 'disruptive, jarring' and some felt a 'frustration'[259] at being presented with something at so many removes from the original artefact. The headless hairstyles or wigs of Margarita Gluzberg's drawings were empty of a centre, carapace-like, and also evacuated as artworks by being reproduced, there was a rejection of the digital surface. Similarly it was noted how disconcerting the Oliver Laric 3D print was found to be in its ontological slipperiness and odd materiality, like the empty skin or shell of an object, perhaps because 3D prints are built up with a void at the centre to conserve material, perhaps because it was felt denuded of aura. Scans have no interior, they are purely information about surface, a skin. Interestingly this audience response is bolstered by artist and writer Louise Minkin[260] who discusses 3D prints as skeuomorphs (objects made from one material to imitate those usually made from another) that 'operate between the mnemonic and the affective'. She also notes that in Dante's hell the punishment for the copyists was to be flayed, echoing Erika Balsom's point on the denigration of 'inauthentic' reproduction from the romantic period to the mid-20th Century. The flayed skin here becomes the digital object, void of centre. Like a stand in for the affect produced by a historical object, this replica produced a conflicted response. Another audience

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259. Comments from feedback to the exhibition, 4 July 2018.
260. Louisa Minkin 'Out of our Skins', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 15:2–3, 2016, 116–126, < https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14702029.2016.1228820>, [accessed 12 July 2018]. 'The stripping of the skin figures in Canto 29 of the Inferno. Dante's condemned copyists – alchemists and counterfeiters, scratch at the lesions in each other's scabby epidermises. The disfiguring agony of psoriasis is their fitting punishment for 'aping nature' or illicit copying. They strip off the surface of appearance with their fingernails. But in a digital model, unlike a meatspace écorchée, the flayed animal–human Marsyas or the gaping asshole of the Goatse meme, there is nothing to be revealed beneath the skin.' p. 117 and 'Digital objects data-scavenged from the material world, are typically produced as hollow, somehow akin to Benjamin's description of the discarded fetish or second nature: an alienated, reified and dead world. Data here takes on a new presence as skin; a digital flaying or appropriation. Data capture is a form of spoliation; the stripping of assets in economic terms. Digital capture data is processed to produce skeuomorphs. A skeuomorph is etymologically a container-form. As an archaeological term it denotes artefacts made from one material to imitate a form usually made from another. The retention of form but change of materiality is a familiar trope in art practice. Examples of such material displacements might include Meret Oppenheim's fur tea cup, or one of Jeff Koons' mirror- polished, steel Balloon Dogs.' p. 120–121.

member, working with 3D prints of artefacts in museums, noted how they were referred to as 'ghosts' by the curators. Ghosts of these ghosts also populate Diana Taylor's fabric assemblages – screen prints of the wire mesh 'armature' of a 3D scan, flattened and denied form.[261] The affective charge of this ghostly skin, the play between depth and surface, materiality and replication, a problematic ontology in the works and in their presentation, were all seen as points of interest in the curatorial methodology. The curation of the phantom exhibition enabled these overlays and relationships between works with differing levels of materiality and authenticity to draw out insights into the affect and aura of the works and the relationship of this to im/materiality. They started to work diffractively on one another, creating a constructive interference.

Although this exhibition was spectral, not fully realised according to the conventions of curating (some works functioning more like representations or hyperlinks to themselves and artists not notified of this use of their work), something about this unauthorised status and material indeterminacy came through as important to the project. There was a sense from the audience of experiencing something vicariously, a dissonance, that although in a formal, sanctioned art space, some of the artwork is unsanctioned and presented provisionally and at several removes of recursivity. One audience member felt that they were absolved from having an emotional reaction to works (which she felt was less likely with reproduced objects) so felt liberated to think about other things because this artefactual affect had been evacuated from some of the works, so creating insight about what it is we respond to in an exhibition.

Evacuation of aura through reproduction opens a space for other thinking.

There was a question also that if the exhibition were to be actualised formally – 'correctly', would it be of less interest than this phantom

261. Interestingly Diana Taylor chose to write about this subject of skin in the glossary entry for *Writing Tests* – on the term 'Cast': 'An imitation of the original object [...] disguised as the same body with new flesh and skin'.

constellation or would it be possible to make a case for the convocation of objects in space, as Leckey marshalled digital artefacts into physical form to enable a bodily experience of them.

The project also prompted a discussion on curatorial methodology – beyond simply amassing objects in a space – what happens when objects are put together, what is the 'charge of that combination'. It was felt, that in contrast to the touchstone – 'Les Immatériaux' – this was a restrained curatorial conceit, almost invisible, beyond the selection of artists. This notion of the visibility or invisibility of the curatorial is interesting. Natalie Heinich opposes the transparency of traditional curating to the opacity of the mediation of 'auteur' curators like Lyotard whose structures intervene between object and visitor.[262] One audience member noted that curating is often only noticed when it is 'bad', but that lots of things quietly happen inherently in conjunction, by means of things put in proximity,[263] but it is difficult to quantify that friction. Does this productive friction occur in direct correspondence to the degree to which the curating is seen as antagonistic (as Lyotard's was)? Does there need to be something which impedes simple reception and reading to allow the exhibition to 'produce work'?[264] This was a question I wanted to take forward into future iterations. I acknowledged that I didn't want to recreate an overt, overarching structure for what was essentially an experimental test of an approach to authenticity and aura, but explore how to push curatorial ideas forward without recourse to either the traditional transparent approach or the opaque, grand curatorial gesture. I was more interested in 'diffracting', rather than replicating certain curatorial structures from 'Les Immatériaux', which I intended to bring into play in future iterations. These insights, forged through this project, into the materiality and visibility of curating as a practice and a method for research, were illuminating and something I took forward to subsequent iterations. The intention was always to disallow the

262. Natalie Heinich and Michael Pollak, 'From Museum Curator to Exhibition Auteur – inventing a singular position', in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, pp. 231–250.
263. As Irit Rogoff acknowledges, see footnote 34.
264. See footnote 48.

curatorial practice to settle, to take insights from this exercise in the intertwining of the authentic and the reproduced forward to further iterations and re-present new versions, developing the thinking achieved through this first phantom yet physical instantiation.

In between the first and second iteration of this project, I began to become more interested in the methodology of diffraction and realised that the process of developing the practice, rather than being 'a reflective process which impacts the 'first draft' which is re-presented so it embodies the knowledge produced,'[265] could, more interestingly, be a diffractive process which places the researcher at the centre of the research and not in an objective vantage point, reflecting back on the practice, and which could create a nested set of curatorial projects, each testing related research questions, entangled and elliptical.

The linkage between diffraction and the auratic is in diffraction's potential for the undermining of the binary of original and reproduction to create a new understanding of aura.

I was interested in retaining the sense of ontological indeterminacy created by this phantom exhibition by keeping the mix of originals and surrogates but including more artefactual elements which are of troubling ontological status, for example plaster casts of sculptures or authorised reproductions. In this first iteration I was testing a strategy in terms of the selection and display of objects, creating conceptual links between them by means of selection and juxtaposition.[266] In future iterations I aimed to investigate the potential of the exhibition as a diffractive apparatus and also diffract different elements of the curatorial frame of an exhibition – display structures, interpretative text and catalogue. By these means I aimed to see whether by using diffractive methodologies curating can generate new understandings about the auratic in the post-digital. If diffraction undoes dichotomies, including that between original and reproduction, as Haraway

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265. Screenwriting scholar Craig Batty at an event convened by Emma Bolland, 7 September 2018, S1 Artspace, Sheffield.
266. In future iterations it became less about juxtaposition and more about intra-action, as my interest in diffraction and methodology increased.

suggests, does this open up a space for a new understanding of the auratic in the post-digital?

Chapter Four: Creating curatorial diffraction apparatus to investigate the contemporary status of aura.

i.   Introduction – The exhibition as diffraction apparatus

Curating, whilst often considered as a singular authorial activity predicated on selection and presentation, takes place within an, often occluded, larger apparatus of the artworld comprising artists, audiences, institutions, funders, private galleries, shippers, registrars, journals, critical platforms, web aggregators and collectors. Curating is necessarily subject to this apparatus: 'No body of knowledge can exist independently of the system which sustains it. The problem for curators – and artists – is to grasp how they are too 'functionaries' of their own particular system, rather than individuals operating in a field of natural relations.'[267] Whilst more recently theorised as an ongoing research process of 'the curatorial' which takes account of such apparatuses of power and hierarchy, curatorial practice also instantiates in specific exhibitionary moments, which themselves form a micro-apparatus. Julian Myers-Szupinska, in an essay called 'The Exhibition as Apparatus', utilises Agamben's notion of the apparatus – as something which has the capacity to orient, determine or control human behaviour – but notes that, whilst useful in allowing an understanding of how apparently neutral structures can shape behaviour, it remains an abstract tool in relation to art exhibitions. [268]

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267. John Miller, 'Curating and Materialism', in *Meta 2 A New Spirit in Curating?*, ed. by Ute Meta Bauer, Stuttgart: Künstlerhaus Stuttgart,1992, pp. 14–16, 16.
268. Agamben expands on the usage of the term 'apparatus' by Foucault where it was famously used in relation to disciplinary institutions such as the university, the museum and the prison, describing it as 'literally anything that has in some way the capacity to capture, orient, determine, intercept, model, control or secure the gestures, behaviours, opinions or discourses of living beings'. He includes within this 'the pen, writing, literature, philosophy, agriculture, cigarettes, navigation, computers, cellular phones, and—why not—language itself'. Giorgio Agamben, *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, p.14. Agamben's notion of the apparatus is used as a model for exhibition curating by Julian Myers-Szupinska in 'Exhibitions as Apparatus',*The Exhibitionist: Journal On Exhibition Making: The First Six Years*, London: The Exhibitionist, 2017, pp.16–23, with the acknowledgement that 'Agamben's formulation of the apparatus is useful—it

Barad suggests that a diffractive apparatus is a tool for engendering intra-actions and material entanglements of phenomena which create new patterns of relation, in effect a new 'thing' in the world. She develops the thinking around the apparatus as a structure of social and political control in Foucault and Agamben and reads it against a more material sense of the apparatus in science as used by physicist Niels Bohr. This understanding of the exhibition as experimental apparatus can also be drawn from Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, who co-curated several exhibitions at ZKM: 'A museum exhibition is deeply unrealistic: it is a highly artificial assemblage of objects, installations, people and arguments, which could not reasonably be gathered anywhere else. In an exhibition the usual constraints of time, space, and realism are suspended. This means that it is an ideal medium for experimentation […] Too often, exhibitions are not used in this way but act merely as a site for manifesting the autonomy of preformed curatorial tastes.' [269]

Could we think about an approach which merges this concern for the exhibition as experiment to find out something new (Latour's laboratory or Sheikh's 'research exhibition') and Barad's diffractive apparatus? This apparatus is not a neutral device for an objective reading of the world, but an intra-implicated situation which creates new material and discursive intra-actions between phenomena (including the observer and observed) by means of putting them in superposition: 'An apparatus is a tool for producing an alternative understanding of materiality, discursivity, and performativity.'[270]. These three objectives of new insights into *materiality, discursivity* and *performativity* are also useful criteria to attach to curating. They could be used as gauges against which to measure the 'alternate understandings'

Insight into materiality, performativity and discursivity as criteria for the knowledge produced by an exhibition as diffractive apparatus

allows us to ask how a seemingly neutral idea or artefact shapes the lives around it—but in terms of art exhibitions, it remains rather abstract.', p.20.
269. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, 'Experimenting with Representation: Iconoclash and Making Things Public', in *Exhibition Experiments*, ed. by Sharon MacDonald and Paul Basu, London: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 94–108, 94).
270. Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p.191.

produced by an exhibition, in relation to the material or form of the artworks, their conceptual contexts and the degree to which their intra-actions spark discourse and the extent to which curating performs or brings into being a new entity beyond the sum of parts or simple aggregation – the performativity which Groys talks about which makes an exhibition unreproducible.

Given this idea that the exhibition is necessarily performative, part of this performativity involves the sense of selection and exclusion, which makes up the apparatus. Barad emphasises the importance of 'cutting together apart'[271] – a process which undoes dichotomies and makes new conjunctions as it severs, undermining binaries including those of inclusion and exclusion, rather creating 'momentary stabilisations'[272] of phenomena. However, it has been noted [273] that any cut creates a constitutive outside, but this temporary stabilisation can also be a positive attribute in meaning-making, including in curating. Indeed, Barad acknowledges this when she notes another attribute of apparatuses: they are 'boundary-making practices that are formative of matter and meaning productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced'.[274] Following this we could say that curating is a boundary-making practice which makes meaning (discourse) and new material phenomena (exhibitions) but is also implicated in and part of the phenomena that it produces. This form of apparatus is a more positive

271. 'Agential cuts do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart – "holding together" of the disparate itself.' Karen Barad, 'Nature's Queer Performativity', Kvinder Køn og Forskning, 1–2, 2012, 25–54 p. 46, and described further here: 'Agential cuts is the cutting together/apart within phenomena. Agential cuts are momentary stabilizations, doings, rather than beings. They enact that which is inside and outside of phenomena in a single movement. They are two-folded movements that produces the very boundaries through which something is made 'inside' and 'outside', 'this' and 'that', of the phenomena.' Sofie Sauzet, <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/p/phenomena-agential-realism.html>, [accessed 4 November 2021].
272. Ibid., a 'momentary stabilisation' is also a good understanding of a temporary exhibition.
273. For example in G. Hollin, I. Forysth, G. Giraud et al, '(Dis)entangling Barad: Materialisms and Ethics', Social Studies of Science, 47, 6, 2017, 918–941.
274. Karen Barad, Meeting The Universe Halfway, p.146.

structure than Foucault's or even Agamben's, allowing for less deterministic engagement to happen through intra-action.

In a diffraction apparatus, the emphasis is laid on the phenomena rather than objects, which are not presumed to pre-exist a particular superposition, but which are brought into being through that conjunction. Rather than objects which are things that 'are', the diffraction apparatus or exhibition, focuses on phenomena, which are things that 'happen'.[275] In this schema, the selected art objects, put in the diffraction apparatus of the exhibition – a boundary-making practice – create new phenomena (through the intra-action of objects and subjects) and meaning. The exhibition becomes more than the sum of parts, a superposition, a new composite wave.[276] Finally, Barad also notes that apparatuses are also 'material configurations or reconfigurings of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e., they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time)'.[277] This notion and the idea of different 'momentary stabilisations' was particularly pertinent to my multi-iterative approach to exhibition making with this project and to the title of the next stage of this, which echoes Barad's entanglement of spatiality and temporality: 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space'.

With the notion of the exhibition as diffractive apparatus in mind, and with the intention of creating an 'alternative understanding of materiality, discursivity, and performativity' in relation to ideas of the auratic in the post-digital, I set out to create a curatorial project which would also be a diffraction apparatus. The title of this project – 'A

275. This distinction between objects and phenomena is suggested by DGP Kreps, in the essay 'Virtual, phenomenal, real, and mobile' at
<http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/22909/3/VirtualPhenomenalReal-Paper.pdf>, [accessed 20 January 2020].
276. In a way any exhibition could be thought of as diffractive in these terms, although I would argue that not all exhibitions are diffractive in a way that 'produces work', 'constructive interference' or creates a superposition which is more than the sum of parts as a fully diffractive one does.
277. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p. 146

Strange Weave of Time and Space' [278] – was a version of another Benjaminian definition of aura, which also seemed to hold together the interweaving methodology of diffraction, using strategies from different times in curatorial history and the 'here and now' of the auratic and the spatial exhibition.

I wanted to see whether this 'strange weave' of curating – the drawing together of artworks through time and in space and their intra-action with other artworks and the proximate body of a viewer, could also itself create the auratic. Focusing again on the performativity of curating, Groys and Steeds[279] both suggest that the original or auratic can be rethought as an event-based 'presence of the present'[280] and a rethinking of ritual in terms of the convocation of artworks and publics in a uniquely new conjunction, which can afford curating auratic value. This was something I aimed to materially explore and theorise through curatorial conjunctions of artworks in exhibition.

In addition to thinking about the exhibition itself as a diffraction apparatus in and of itself, I wanted to create other diffraction apparatuses in place of more traditional exhibitions support structures – the catalogue and the exhibition guide. One key role of the curator, traditionally, is to orchestrate the critical context for the exhibition, to mediate the exhibition for the audience. The associations of the curator as a go-between or a medium transmitting authoritative information from an inaccessible source is inescapable here and potentially

278. This definition comes midway through 'A Little History of Photography' (and is repeated minus this phrase in the artwork essay): 'What is aura actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of a distance no matter how close it may be.' 'A Little History of Photography' in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: 1927–1934, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–34*, p. 518.
279. See footnotes 233 to 235.
280. '[T]he original is simply another name for the presence of the present – for something that happens here and now.' Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, London & New York: Verso, 2016, p. 138. See also 'The aura is not lost when an artwork is uncoupled from its original, local context, but is rather re-contextualized and given a new "here and now" in the event of an exhibition—and thus, in the history of exhibitions.' Boris Groys, 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', *e-Flux Journal* #94, October 2018, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219462/curating-in-the-post-internet-age/, [accessed 17 December 2018].

disempowering to an audience, but withholding all information is no more empowering. Standard practice would be for the curator to write a situating text on the exhibition, and perhaps also commission essays to accompany the exhibition in a publication whilst also writing a shorter, more accessible interpretative text for the visitor to the exhibition, in the form of handout or wall panel. Whilst often aimed at offering access with sufficient openness to allow a viewer to bring their own interpretations, these texts will inevitably to some degree close off a porous process and offer a singular reading of an autonomous, static exhibition.[281, 282] I was interested in retaining the fluidity of the thinking around the exhibition, its mutability of form, which seemed appropriate to the works in the exhibition and the exhibition's ongoing mutations in different iterations. I wanted to create diffractive apparatuses to stand in the place of traditional catalogue and handout and to do so by reworking (using Barad's entangling of past, present and future) specific curatorial strategies from 'Les Immatériaux' to test how these radical curatorial strategies from the past could help illuminate a question about the auratic in the post-digital context thirty-five years on from their original use. In what follows I will discuss:

The exhibition as diffraction apparatus: the process, content and form of the second version of the exhibition and the various diffractive readings which were made by audience members; the affordances of the diffractive apparatus of sound; and the diffractive apparatus of the glossary.

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281. Such texts also have to be responsive to the demands of institutional frames (house styles) and funding.

282. See a record of tweets in diffractive journal of curatorial process in Record of Practice on the provision or withholding of information in exhibition wall texts.

ii.   A Diffractive Analysis of 'A Strange Weave of Time and
        Space'

> Artistic research is a convergence of materialities;
> sometimes a clash, other times a smooth flow,
> occasionally it is as if different rhythms play in
> counterpoint pulling the researcher in different
> directions. Vision is material, as is the tactile
> engagement with objects; concepts have their own
> materiality, and movement provokes a dance of
> materiality and meaning.[283]

*Diffractive journal
and diagrams
available in Record
of Practice*

The process of curating the exhibition evolved over the period of about
a year, from the first iteration in 'Project for an Exhibition' to the first
incarnation of 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' at Site Gallery,
Sheffield in July 2019 and it felt important to make material the
thinking that goes into the curation of an exhibition, which is usually
tacit and undocumented. I kept what I thought of as a diffractive
journal to document the process in a diffractive way by entangling
thinking, artists' voices from conversations and email exchanges,
artworks, display ideas, images, texts, notes from studio visits, and
diagrams which were useful to me in the development of the curatorial
process. This included a rationale for inclusion for various works,
making tangible an internal dialogue and the usually occluded decision
making (or boundary-making in Barad's terms), conceptual, formal and
pragmatic, that goes into the selection process. It also included thinking
on staging, modes of display and the physical layout of the exhibition,
and a consideration of conceptual and spatial relationships between
works. This began to be articulated in terms of evolving sketchy
diagrams of floor plans, which at first were linear in form, tracing
sightlines and lines of flight between artworks, from the point of view of
an audience member, but which then also started to be articulated in

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283. Susan Kozel, 'The Virtual and the Physical: A phenomenological approach to performance research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 204–222, 204. <http://clab.iat.sfu.ca/804/uploads/Main/RoutledgeCompanion.pdf>, [accessed 26 November 2020].

diffractive terms – with the individual works being the point of origin for emanating waves which overlapped, superimposed and created a new and distinct diffraction pattern, according to the different selections and placement of works and their intra-actions. In this I was using diffraction as a way to 'disrupt linear and fixed causalities', and to work toward 'more promising interference patterns' [284]. This echoes diffraction's basis in optics – in contrast to reflection, diffracted light behaves in ways that couldn't be foreseen prior the experiments.[285] By shifting and changing both the constituent artworks and the placement and display of these, I sought to create the unforeseen, Barad's 'constructive interference' – another way to think about the 'friction' (the phrase brought up in the first exhibition iteration) or the 'work'[286] that the exhibition produces.

Through the process of compiling the journal I had begun to think about the curatorial constellation I was creating in diffractive terms. It felt relevant to the curation and the subject of the exhibition to have this methodology at play; Benjamin's 'strange weave of space and time' definition of aura also suggests to me Barad's 'spacetimematterings'[287] – the idea of the entanglement of phenomena in an emplaced exhibition. Benjamin's later conception of aura requires the entanglement of space

284. Karen Barad, 'Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers', *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies,* ed. By Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/ohp/11515701.0001.001/1:4.3/--new-materialism-interviews-cartographies?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>, [accessed 1 July 2019].
285. In diffraction experiments, 'Light appears to bend when it passes by an edge or through a slit. Under the right conditions a diffraction pattern, a pattern of alternating dark and light lines – can be observed.' Referring to an image of the shadow of a razor blade in a diffraction experiment 'the shadow cast by the razor blade is not the sharply delineated geometrical image one might expect [...] along both the inside and outside edges there are alternating lines of light and dark [the existence of dark lines in light regions and light lines in dark regions] that make the determination of a "real" boundary quite tricky.' Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p. 75–6.
286. Rogoff's phrase, see footnote 48.
287. 'Putting the point another way, phenomena are differential patterns of "mattering"— diffraction patterns dispersed across differently entangled spaces and times, or rather spacetimematterings.' Adam Kleinman, 'Intra-actions – An interview with Karen Barad', *mousse* 34, Summer 2012, <http://johannesk.com/posthumanist/readings/barad-mousse.pdf> [accessed 1 July 2019].

and time, the human and non-human entity ('a person, an animal, or something inanimate'[288]). Barad's similarly post-human thinking suggests that things don't pre-exist their relationships to one another. So Barad's notion of intra-action could be used to suggest that in exhibition the relationship is not one of interaction of pre-existing individual artefacts which pre-date their relationship to eachother, but in this moment and this place, this strange weave of space and time, they are phenomena that materialise through intra-action. As this constellation has never happened before, the works are remade in a way through intra-action, becoming a singular, original exhibitionary moment, a 'momentary suspension' of phenomena, something potentially auratic.

The exhibition as diffraction apparatus also creates an opportunity in which to read insights through rather than against each other in the entangled situation of the show. As Barad suggests: 'Reading insights through one another diffractively is about experimenting with different patterns of relationality, opening things up, turning them over and over again, to see how the patterns shift.'[289] She proposes doing this by using:

> a diffractive methodology – a method of diffractively reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details, together with the recognition that there intrinsic to this analysis is an ethics that is not predicated on externality but rather entanglement. Diffractive readings bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with.[290]

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288. See footnote 242.
289. Ibid.
290. Karen Barad, 'Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers.' *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies,* para 5 of 43.

This methodology moves away from analysing the exhibition in terms of binary pairings read against each other, such as the relationships between the work and the space, form and content, the analogue and the digital in favour of noticing multiplicities, overlays, resonances and resistances, and exploring how these cumulatively might produce new knowledges. As such it was different to the first iteration at Bloc which had not used this methodology and had been more blunt and binary in tone. Using this diffractive methodology, I iteratively diagrammed, mapped and shifted the material and conceptual relationships of potential works for the exhibition (in inter-relation and in relation to the gallery space) in the journal as part of the process of bringing together the constellation of works for this exhibition. As part of the selection process, I wanted to log, the ways in which, for me, these works were entangled and how they created the new multiple yet singular diffractive construct of the exhibition. I was fully aware that this layout plan would change and morph, with the exigencies and pragmatics of the assembly of the works and felt that, at this stage it was still a phantom exhibition, a paper exercise, like the one semi-materialised the previous year. But the process started to map out the dramaturgy of the works in space and how a constellation could be solidified into lines of confluence and superposition in the gallery.
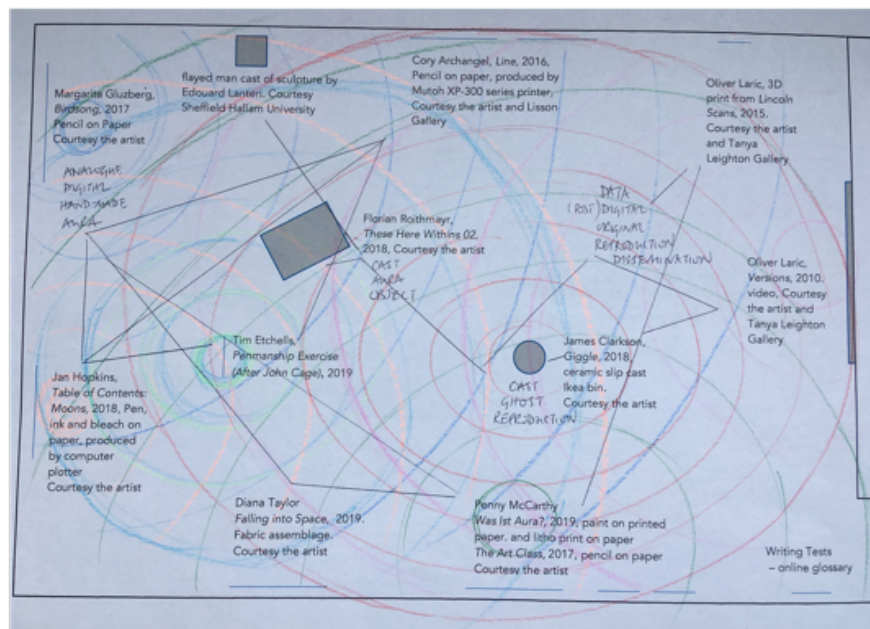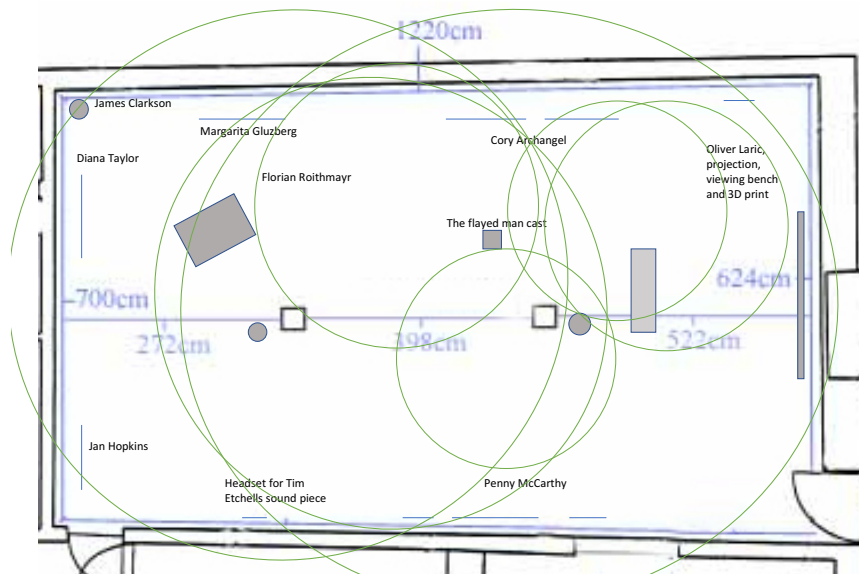
Figure 21. Diffractive diagrams of the curation of 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space'

The journal notes my research into the practices of different artists I thought relevant, including Jerome Harrington, Mark Leckey, Haris Epaminonda, James Clarkson and Florian Roithmayr particularly looking at 3D work which I felt that the exhibition needed, both conceptually and spatially. When the final selection coalesced, the boundary drawn, those considered but not ultimately selected artists and works existed as a ghosted appendix to the final exhibition, part of

the research (Sheikh's *recherche*) but not the material intra-action of the exhibition to develop knowledge (*Forschung*).[291]

The final selection and layout for the exhibition included some works which had been in the first iteration (Penny McCarthy, Oliver Laric, Jan Hopkins), other works by the same artists (McCarthy and Laric each had another work in the show and Diana Taylor showed a newer work), original, authorised versions of work by an artist who was represented by reproductions in the first show (Margarita Gluzberg), along with new works by Cory Arcangel, James Clarkson, Tim Etchells and Florian Roithmayr.

Thinking about Barad's notion of an apparatus as a tool for producing an alternative understanding of 'materiality, discursivity and performativity', I will discuss the curation of the exhibition in terms of the selection of works and how their materiality could be diffractively read through each other to create discursivity and the spatial concerns of curatorial practice and how this might lead to the exhibition's performativity. I will map the way that I diffractively read the works in the final selection through each other, how these selected works started up a reverberating discourse through their materiality.

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291. For example, after exploring various works by Haris Epaminonda which, like a microcosm of the overall approach, set up their own resonances between loaded objects in installation, I moved away from this use of extant artefacts to consider the newly made 'auratic' artefacts cast by Florian Roithmayr, because of the specific materialities of their production methods speaking to the subject of the exhibition on the level of form.

Figure 22. *Was Ist Aura?*, 2019, paint on printed paper and litho print on paper.
Photograph: John Hartley

Again referencing the auratic, artefactual starting point of 'Les Immatériaux', the first work encountered in the exhibition was Penny McCarthy's work – a new version of the work *Was ist Aura?* which was shown in 'Project for an Exhibition'. The first version was drawn from a jpeg found online, McCarthy then remade the work having visited the Benjamin archive and realised that the scale was too large – the original writing was actually on a small waiter's order pad. The redrawn piece also includes the reverse of the page, rendering the work almost sculptural. The drawing is then further replicated as a multiple, as part of a pad of paper, from which individual printed pages can be torn and taken away. The work becomes even more circular as this hand replication of an auratic object on aura becomes mechanically reproduced by a printing process and disseminated, exemplifying Benjamin's 'exhibition value', which brings us closer to the object and therefore diminishes aura. But as Esther Leslie notes in the 'Writing

Tests' glossary, 'There may be something useful and heartening about being able to lay some sort of claim to a small reflection of a less touchable, less accessible original.'[292] McCarthy's practice often involves this kind of replication, by drawing, of 'original' images or texts or digital documents from archives, which (by means of the fallible hand-made processes of replication) creates a new image-object and reflects on the relationship with the original artefact. These replications seem to avoid the associations of the denigration of the reproduced copy, by means of the painstaking labour involved. Like archaic copied manuscripts, they become a new 'authentic' thing, as well as a copy.

Her second work, *The Art Class*, is a drawing of a photograph of a modelling class circa 1905 in the plaster cast room at Sheffield School of Art, which contained educational copies of classical sculptures and was made available to female students at night, at a time when women weren't allowed to study there officially. The photograph was made into a promotional postcard for Sheffield City Polytechnic and McCarthy copied from this, at several removes of reproduction, both mechanical and haptic. As Sven Lutticken discusses, both photography and the cast can be seen as auratic by dint of an indexical relationship to the original[293] – the trace of the original remaining in the copy and this idea of the potentially auratic nature of the cast ripples through the exhibition.

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292. In the entry for copy: <https://astrangeweave.org/editword.php?id=8>, [accessed 8 December 2021].
293. 'One could therefore say that in the case of both photo and cast the element of *contact* remains a guarantee of uniqueness, authenticity and power – and therefore of aura [...] Mechanical reproduction, then, does not forcibly destroy aura, as Walter Benjamin claimed.' Sven Lutticken, 'The Imaginary Museum of Plaster Casts', <https://svenlutticken.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/sven-lucc88tticken-imaginary-museum.pdf>, [accessed 5 March 2018].

Figure 23.   Installation of 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' at Site Gallery. Photograph: John Hartley

Following through the sense of ontological indeterminacy engendered by 'Project for an Exhibition', I wanted to include an artefact which had a disjunctive relationship to the authentic or auratic – a replica or authorised reproduction of some kind.[294] This element became a plaster cast of a 'flayed man', a sculpture by Edouard Lanteri, produced for teaching purposes. One of the remaining few casts of hundreds which were in the same Sheffield School of Art collection depicted by McCarthy, now perhaps rendered auratic by scarcity, it is troubling in its ontology and status. The cast was historically used solely as a teaching aid, as a means to access an absent original, with no intrinsic value attributed to it – a practice known as *Kopienkritik*.[295] This is something Oliver Laric highlights in his video piece in the show (by using images of Roman copies of Greek sculptures) and more directly

294. This aimed at creating a sense of interference – the awareness of unclear ontologies, the fact that the audience doesn't 'know what stuff is' (audience member) implicates readings of other objects.
295. *Kopienkritik* is a methodology that uses the study of copies to understand missing originals (usually using Roman copies of Greek originals). It is attributed to Adolf Furtwängler and set out in *Masterpieces of Greek Sculpture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1895.

in a project called Kopienkritik, for which he curated a selection of plaster casts from the collection of Kunsthalle Basel, shifting the mode of attention they received and thus their status.

Whilst the flayed man is missing his skin, the 3D print from Laric's *Lincoln Scans* series feels as if it is only skin. A hollow rendering, like most 3D scans, it is effectively just a carapace of an object. Its materiality is unsettling: what heft it has is built up with extruded material around a void, leaving contour lines showing the scars of its digital production. It has been suggested that there is a lack of material, mass, presence and a relationship to the body[296] in 3D printed sculpture, or perhaps it is just that this relationship to the body and expectation of a corresponding mass and materiality are highlighted in these troubling objects? The intra-action between the 3D print, the plaster cast and the drawing of the casts seem to function in a way slightly akin to Joseph Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs* or *One and Three Shadows* (1965) (which was included in 'Les Immatériaux'). They offer an entangled insight into questions around origin, representation and material relationship to the viewer. Functioning across different registers, I felt these works could be read through (rather than against) each other, to offer insight into the idea of the auratic in relation to the indexical copy. Via addressing similar questions through multiple materialities, they seemed to create a new cumulative, or diffractive understanding, through their intra-action.

The Laric video work, *Versions* (2010), having been used just as a reference point in relation to 'Project for an Exhibition' became a pivotal addition to this exhibition. This work uses found imagery of Roman and neoclassical copies of Greek statuary; digital renderings of designer furniture; duplicate sections of re-used animation from different Disney films; and locations used in multiple films, alongside images crowd-created as photoshopped memes and the Virgin Mary

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296. Mark Wilsher, 'Virtual and Other Bodies', *Art Monthly*, 427, June 2019, pp. 11–14.

repurposed as an allegory of justice[297], rendered through a kind of liquid digital gloss. The slideshow of images and clips is set to a soundtrack of a computer voice intoning a script about the relationship of the original to the copy, and the dispersion and re-use of the image, which is actually a patchwork of uncited quotations from multiple sources (including Boris Groys, Michel Foucault, Henry James, Anthony Hughes, Joseph Koerner, Susan Sontag, and Friedrich Nietzsche, alongside Laric's own interjections). These cumulatively argue for: 'an innate preference for the represented subject over the real one', which by being 'overtly fabricated and publicly constructed, has more capacity to gather or recollect meaning and sanctity' (ventriloqised from Groys). Digital reproduction then becomes auratic, the copy accrues aura by circulation and repurposing.[298] This is certainly effected in this work which offers a reification of the circulation of the copy in the post-digital and through its borrowed words, argues for its auratic or cultic status, by means of the cumulative accretions of meaning it accrues in each different context. This reading inflects the exhibition more broadly and begins to build a contemporary understanding of aura.

Both in terms of form and content this work increasingly became a key catalyst the exhibition,[299] a stone dropped whose ripples affected all

297. 'In 1608, a statue of the Virgin Mary was taken down from the façade of Basel's town hall and reimagined as an allegory of Justice simply by replacing the baby Jesus with a set of scales.', Dean Kissick, 'I Cook Every Chance in My Pot', *Rhizome,* 30 April 2018, <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2018/apr/30/i-cook-every-chance-in-my-pot/>, [accessed 21 March 2021].

298. Other work by Laric – such as his photogrammetry project *Photoplastik* at Secession, Vienna, 2016 – corroborates this. See for example the interview 'Hijacking classical sculptures in Vienna: Artist Oliver Laric Open-Sources Museum Sculptures and Shows How Technology Has Changed Authenticity' in <https://www.ssense.com/en-gb/editorial/art/hijacking-classical-sculptures-in-vienna>, [accessed 16 October 2020] where Laric notes 'Q: The digital and analog are very much intertwined in your work. A: Yeah, I don't view it as such a binary opposition. Q: Do you think of the digital as an extension of the analog? A: Yes, it's just one thing to me.'

299. Laric's piece here, like the Arcangel, also functioned as a place marker for a broader mode of work. Laric was co-founder of the blog VVork which, by presenting artworks within minimal contextual information, argued for online documentation as a valid art experience and follows through a line of enquiry also found in Seth Price's

other works in the space. This piece seems to also internally work with a diffractive methodology, cumulatively creating a singular superposition of multiple entities. The soundtrack talks about encountering classic stories 'refracted' in other versions. Diffraction is the unexpected other to refraction, creating not the same displaced into a new context but a cumulative new thing, which is what this work does in its concatenation of found imagery and text. The soundtrack also references other quantum thinking which recalls diffraction, discussing the 'quantum superposition' of multiple worlds. It suggests that in our post-digital multiverse, there can be no singularity, only superposition, and aura is created by accretions of meaning through different uses. Or as the voice intones, 'multiplication of an icon, far from diluting its cultic power, rather increases its fame'.

The inclusion of this work seemed to add much more than one more work to the show – its impact was exponential. Its large visual and aural presence created a different superposition with all the other work in the space. In particular, it created more direct resonances with both his other 3D printed work, and other sculptural work in the show, amplifying the effect of other intra-actions.

'Dispersions' and Artie Vierkant's 'ImageObject', a part of the Post-Internet art moment which can be seen to have ceded to a return to the artefact.

Figure 24. Oliver Laric, *3D Print from Lincoln Scans*, 2015, and *Versions*, 2010, installed in 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' at Site Gallery. Photograph: John Hartley

Roithmayr expands insightfully on his thinking on 'the cast' in the Writing Tests project and publication, while Tim Etchells discusses it in theatrical terms, where the play is the mould or vessel to be animated differently by the cast.

For example, the replicated sculptures in the video work recall the flayed-man plaster cast and the absent twin from which it was cast and also the classical cast courts which were part of the inspiration for Florian Roithmayr's research project The Humility of Plaster.[300] The idea of the cast and the experience of the casting process are key concerns in Roithmayr's work. As well as being a mechanical means to reproduce and disseminate objects for educational and other purposes (the curator of the V&A cast court refers to it as a Victorian version of Google Images[301]) it also offers the possibility of a creating a new original.

300. Exploring the materiality of collections housing plaster moulds and casts across Europe, enabled through a partnership between the Museum of Classical Archaeology, Kettle's Yard, and Wysing Arts Centre, culminating in the book *Aftercast*, London: Tenderbooks, 2018.

301. Stated by Becky Knott as part of a talk in the cast court of the V&A at the event 'Copy/Paste', 29 March 2019. 'Explore how digital copies might transform the physical world and the role of copying in preserving cultural heritage.' <https://www.vam.ac.uk/event/6xNRRoxP/friday-late-march-2019>, [accessed 4 May 2019].

Figure 25. Florian Roithmayr, *these here withins 02*, 2018 (detail). Photograph: John Hartley

Florian Roithmayr's work *these here withins 02* draws attention to the auratic specificity of plaster casting, creating unrepeatable indexical records of material intra-actions. He aims to capture the unexpected gestures and occurrences that occur in the gap between mould and cast. These organic-feeling, coral-like plaster pieces exaggerate Lutticken's notion of unique specificity and trace, as they retain the imprint of their instantaneous creation as a cast of expanding foam in the moment of its coalescing. They were shown previously in the context of the cast court at Cambridge Museum of Classical Archaeology, putting different methods and objectives of casting in conjunction with each other, as his work is here positioned so it can be read through the flayed man, Laric's 3D print and video and James Clarkson's slip cast object.

Figure 26. L–R: plaster cast of *The Flayed Man* by Edouard Lanteri; Florian Roithmayr, *these here withins 02*, 2018; Cory Arcangel, *Line*, 2016. Photograph: John Hartley

James Clarkson's work *Giggle* – a singular ceramic slip-cast replica of the ubiquitous Ikea FNISS bin – also engages with questions around casting and reproduction. It functions as an exploration of authenticity in mass production, of how manufactured objects might be haunted by the ideas and forms of the past. This work harks back to Benjamin's time and the upsurge of mechanical reproduction in the c.1930; as Clarkson proposes that the bin is a riff on a design by Keith Murray, a designer who had come to Britain in the 1920s to work for the Wedgwood company, who himself was influenced by the reductive stylings of the Bauhaus. Clarkson is interested in how the copy, with its change of material, functions in terms of our perception and interaction with the object. The work functioned as a skeuomorph

Figure 27. James Clarkson, *Giggle*, 2018 Photograph: John Hartley

– a replica of form in a different material, here a fragile one unsuited to its original purpose. The material process of production – slip casting – recalls the images of sculptures rendered digitally liquid in the Laric video and the slip cast bin and its originary twin interweaves with Laric's cavalcade of images of reproduction and influence. That this is a lowly, mass-produced original, rendered unique by copying, a reversal of the usual direction of reproduction, also chimes with the undermining of this binary of valorisation in Laric's work.

Reading the Clarkson through the Roithmayr, despite differing intentions in relation to the cast, and production processes ranging from industrial to studio, we see a similar material specificity. Even with the intention to create an identical skeuomorph, idiosyncrasies of production have produced a singular artefact. The slip-casting of so large an object is a challenging process, even for an industrial producer, resulting in an object which is an imperfect replica, elliptical rather than round, off-kilter, showing the material duress of its making. The physical fragility and precarity of placement of both objects (one, unplinthed and unprotected on the floor, one balanced high on a slatted support) added to the inclination to read these works through each other and in further intra-action with other sculptural elements in the show.

The different approaches to sculpture in the exhibition (copies pulled from the archive on the screen (Laric), McCarthy's circular drawing of a cast collection made for drawing, a plaster replica (the flayed man), a slip-cast reproduction (James Clarkson's Ikea remake) and sculpture as unique material trace (Florian Roithmayr)) can be read through each other, rather than being placed in counterpoint, allowing a new understanding of the different materialities of reproduction. They oscillate and set off a branching trail of reference, which loops back and entangles the works, rather than a set of comparisons. This entanglement is aided by the fact that the audio from the Laric work

inflects all these works, something which I will return to in more detail. These works, read through each other create resonances and dissonances which Barad notes 'make up diffraction patterns that make entanglements visible'.[302] A cumulative, diffractive understanding of the auratic is therefore produced which could, perhaps, not be traced back to a single work – a form of aura which undermines the usual binary distinctions associated with the term.

Physical support structures, part of the exhibition design for the exhibition, were also intended to draw certain works together – frames, shelves and seats were produced in unpainted beech ply, which gave an unfinished, provisional aspect to the exhibition design, but also a way of drawing together and 'reading through' works like McCarthy's multiple and Laric's 3D print, both presented on an identical shelf.

Figure 28. L–R: Cory Arcangel, *Line*, 2016, and Oliver Laric, *Versions*, 2010. Photograph: John Hartley

302. Interview with Karen Barad, 'Matter feels, converses, suffers, desires, yearns and remembers' in New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies, ed. by *Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin*. para 6 of 43.

Like Oliver Laric, Cory Arcangel's work has a similar lack of concern for the singular object and an interest in making available the wherewithal to reproduce his works, though proprietary software instructions or making his working method open source. His diptych of plotter drawings tests the boundaries of authorship and artificiality. The graphite line drawings are created using an obsolete automated pencil plotter machine, programmed by drawing into a digital pad. Despite these archaic technological means of production (a hybrid of mechanical and digital reproduction and a translation between the two), the repeated drawing retains a painstakingly hand-made feel. Arcangel's work is in some ways representative of the broader sphere of post-internet artwork, whereby open source and networked culture allows production methods to be replicated or restaged, foregrounding the question of the unique value of the artwork. The work functions as a kind of mnemonic or shortcut to these notions. He notes that 'hierarchies of authenticity might be best considered relative,'[303] using the example of music's current tuning standard – whereby C Major is tuned differently now from how it would have been two or three hundred years ago, so a current Bach rendition would be inauthentic to the original, despite being true to its score or code.

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303. 'The Warhol Files: Cory Arcangel on Andy Warhol's Long Lost Computer Graphics'. *Artforum*, Summer 2014, p. 330–331.
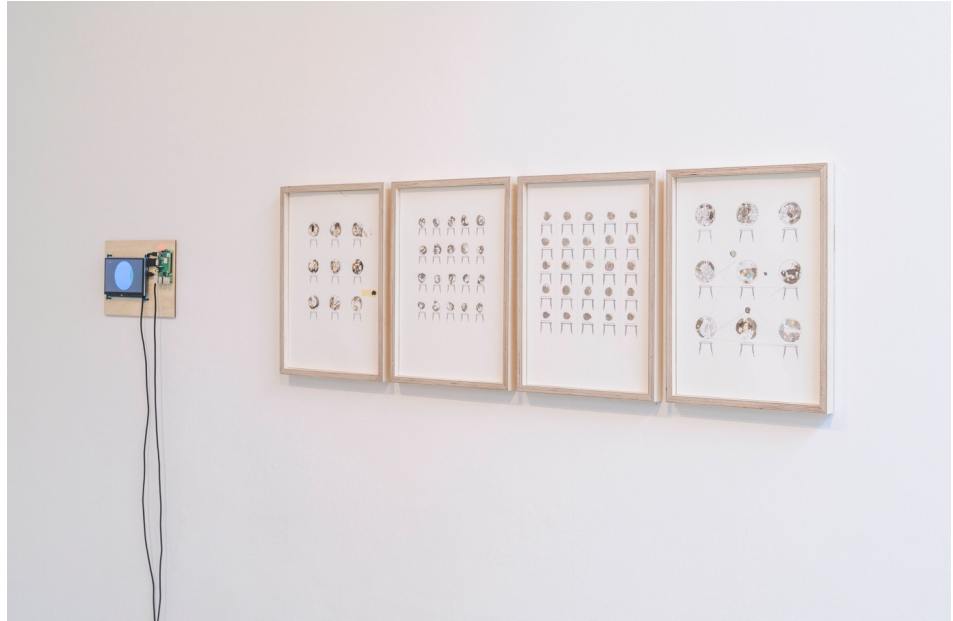
Figure 29. L–R: Jan Hopkins *Many Moons*, 2019, and *Table of Contents*, 2018.
Photograph: John Hartley

Jan Hopkins's drawings are also created by low-fi robot plotters using pens, brushes, ink and bleach investigating the cybernetic feedback loops between humans and technology. The works seem to test Groys's idea that digital is auratic, that abstract code, each time it is rendered or outputted in a specific space and time, is an unreproducable original. These, though, also evidence the specificity of their making, with drips, glitches and slight variations, extraneous to the code and particular to the materiality of production. In this iteration of the exhibition, they were joined by an animation of the moon which is repeatedly drawn by the post-human collaboration, waxing and waning randomly, controlled by the visible circuitry of a raspberry pi.

Cory Arcangel's work therefore occupied similar ground to that by Jan Hopkins, but presents a very simple iteration of the methodology which doesn't have a figurative image to intervene (as Hopkins's does), it becomes solely about repeated human/machine mark making. It feels like the works trace a trajectory between the post-internet and the post-human, with reciprocity between human and machine more easily read in Hopkins's work. The closeness yet distinction between these two practices felt illuminating, beyond mere comparison, it enabled

'carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details,'[304] as Barad suggests.

In Margarita Gluzberg's large-scale drawing of record grooves from a 78rpm record of birdsong, she is reproducing an analogue recording technology (itself replicating 'liveness') in singular, auratic form. She suggests that translating an idea into a medium or from one medium to another 'is intrinsically a digital signal, a digital translation as it's a discontinuous, discrete representation'.[305] For this reason, she posits that drawing is by nature digital rather than analogue, as it is a point of translation, a discrete moment of transmission – unlike the continuous analogue wave. At the same time, she proposes that we are constantly meshing the analogue and the digital and that the translation of the 'real' into data and back to the analogue though perception is constantly happening in art. Our analogue perception only really registers this large work as a representative image at a distance; closer up, it dissolves into gestural graphite marks, the haptic evidence of its making. In this, the works create resonances with Penny McCarthy's drawing, as well as with Jan Hopkins's computer-made drawings and with Diana Taylor's hand-made assemblages.

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304. Ibid.
305. This argument was articulated in a presentation at *The Digital Draw*, at The Drawing Room, 18 April 2016.

Figure 30. L–R: Jan Hopkins, *Many Moons*, 2019, and *Table of Contents*, 2018; Margarita Gluzberg, *Birdsong*, 2017; plaster cast copy of *The Flayed Man* by Edouard Lanteri. Photograph: John Hartley

Figure 31. Diana Taylor, *Falling into Space,* 2019 (detail). Photograph: John Hartley

This interweaving of analogue and digital is also apparent in Diana Taylor's work. Influenced by William Morris and a circular sense of time, the work integrates hand-made craft and flattened 3D scans of fabric, into a re-assembled analogue/digital artefact. The textile pieces include screen-printed degraded web images along with samples of different types of fabric subjected to different forms of scanning and reproduction. These are overlaid, subjected to digital entropy and entanglement. The new work in this exhibition included the 'wire mesh' mapping of the 3D scanning process. Read through the 3D printed digital scans of Oliver Laric's

project they offer instead a flattened topology of code, worked into by hand. The oscillation of these two works, so different in medium, nonetheless illuminates something about the materiality of the digital scan and the idea that it is always a latent original, awaiting instantiation.

Figure 32. Diana Taylor, *Falling into Space*, 2019. Photograph: John Hartley

Rather than offering a single authoritative text about the exhibition in the gallery space, ideas around the exhibition were explored by means of revisiting curatorial strategies from 'Les Immatériaux'. As has been noted, instead of a text or guide to the exhibition, 'Les Immatériaux' used sound and had an audio headset which played excerpts from philosophical and literary texts. Here, the soundtrack from Oliver Laric's video work was allowed to permeate the space with its mash-up of unattributed spoken quotes about the authentic and takes on the function of the headset in the original exhibition.

Tim Etchell's piece on headphones, *Penmanship Exercise (After John Cage)*, allows the visitor to cut off from this soundtrack and listen to another audio work which manipulates and layers original vocal and

instrumental sound from a John Cage project called *Indeterminacy*, in which a male voice describes a mechanical drawing arm (a predecessor of those employed by Arcangel/Hopkins) running amok in a shop window. This short anecdote is then repeated and the sound cumulatively overlaid. There is an orchestrated process of accumulation and decay[306] akin to that which happens when something is multiply replicated and degraded, building to a polyphonic, contrapuntal loop, followed by an ultimate stripping back, leaving us with a moment of the singular, original recording again. The audio from both pieces overlays and inflects the visual work and will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

About the curation in terms of spatial experience: performativity

This selection of works created a temporary 'boundary' which included moving image, sculpture, drawing, audio and 3D printed objects to allow for the questions it raised to be approached across different materialities. Or as Esther Leslie commented on the curation of the show: 'each instance here raises the questions afresh and in a new context'.[307] The analysis above perhaps focuses more on the artworks themselves – in the pond/ripple analogy they are that which made the impact – but I was also very concerned with the ripples and resonances which performatively flowed between them. These seem to cohere around interwoven ideas around ideas of reproduction, the cast, and drawing, areas of overlap which were also expanded upon in the glossary.

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306. It is in conversation with a work by another contemporary of Cage – Alvin Lucier's work *I am sitting in a Room*, 1969. It uses a similar methodology to this piece which begins with Lucier saying "I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed." It proceeds to play this recorded speech back and re-record it until this intention is fulfilled.
307. Taken from recording of a walk-round of the exhibition in its third iteration, at Project Space Plus, Lincoln, 6 November 2019.

The curation also aimed to offer a rich spatial experience for the viewer, in which different densities of form and different physical axes and planes within the space (walls and floor space, vertical and horizontal) were occupied. Proximities and sightlines were also considered – what could be taken in when a viewer entered the space initially, what needed to be viewed from a distance (projected video work, large scale drawing) and what repaid close viewing (intricate small-scale drawing, animation, embroidery). These different densities of time, distance and attention created a varied rhythm of viewing in the space, with some works demanding immediate and prolonged attention, some highly coloured or fast moving and some requiring durational attention to haptic layered graphite or intricate stitching. In this I was hoping to do what Raqs Media Collective note as a curatorial intention to 'syncopate different weights and intensities of attention',[308] to create different rhythms of engagement. Placement of works aimed to put certain works in superposition through sharing sightlines to better enable the viewer to read them 'through' each other (literally in the pictured instance) or being placed in relation through facing each other on opposite walls on support structures made of the same materials (McCarthy and Laric) or by sharing a medium (eg plaster) or production method (casting). Certain works demanded something specific of the viewer – to pick up a multiple or put on headphones,

Figure 33. Plaster cast of *The Flayed Man* by Edouard Lanteri seen through Florian Roithmayr, *these here withins 02*, 2018. Photograph: John Hartley

308. 'Raqs Media Collective offers a unique vision as the Curator of Yokohama Triennale 2020', interview with by Rahul Kumar, *Stir World*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.stirworld.com/inspire-people-raqs-media-collective-offers-a-unique-vision-as-the-curator-of-yokohama-triennale-2020?utm_source=ig&utm_medium=page&utm_campaign=post>, [accessed 9 October 2020].

some came out to meet the viewer demonstrably, as the sound of the Laric video work might reach them before the visuals.

This orchestration of the different resonances and dissonances in the experience of the exhibition was commented on by audience members who experienced the show differently from many exhibitions because of the constructive interferences created via the diffractive elements of sound and the anachronic relationship to a previous exhibition. I asked selected viewers to produce diffraction diagrams of their experience of the exhibition, charting the points where they felt works intra-acted with each other, how the sound intervened onto the visual work, where works could be read through each other, and where insights became legible, as a means to log their diffractive readings of intra-actions of the works.
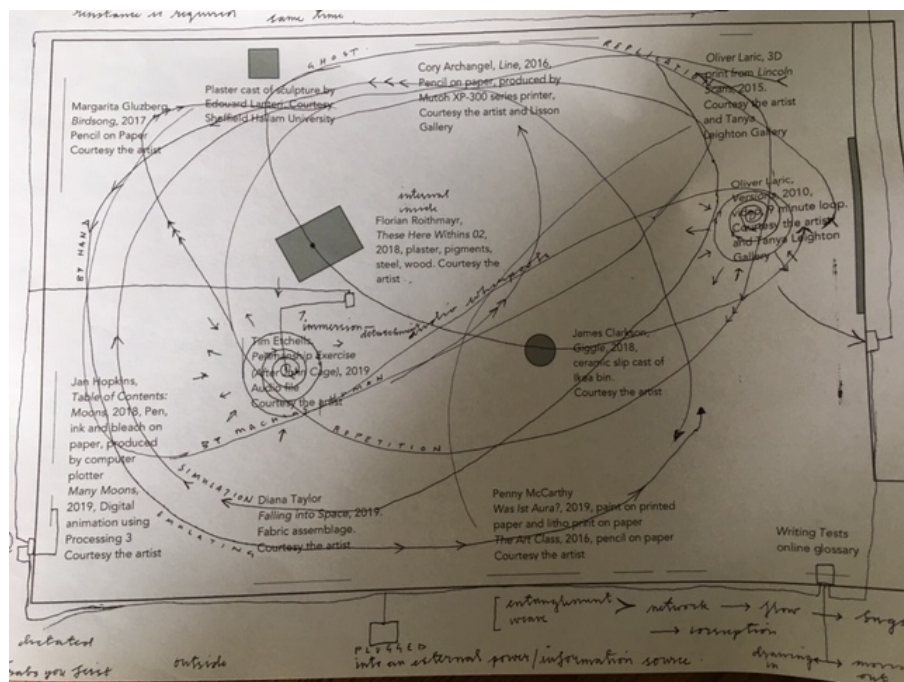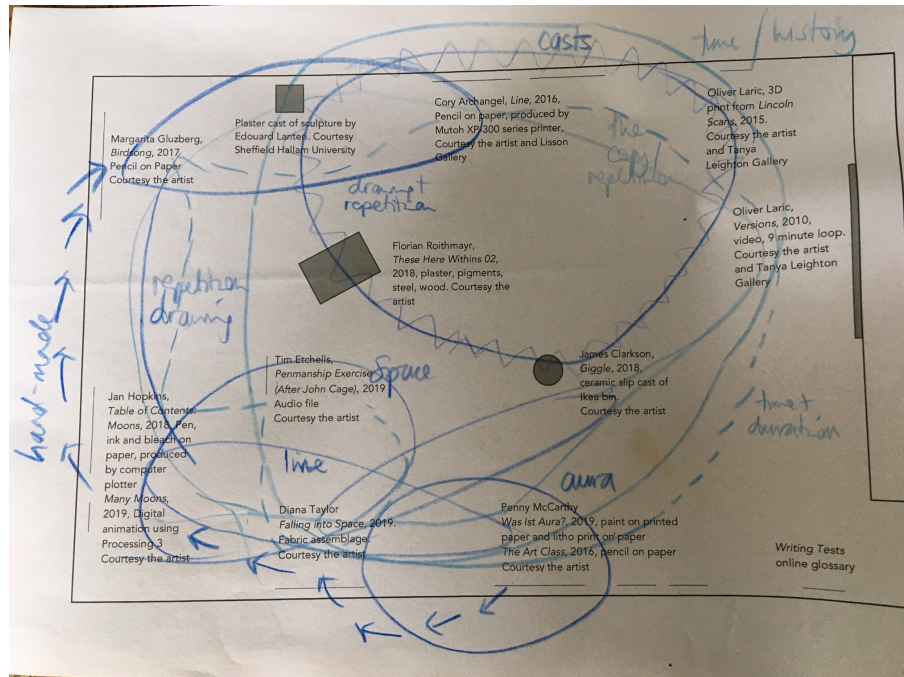
Figure 34. Diffraction diagrams by attenders in response to the exhibition

This mapping of intra-action in the exhibition accords with Hillevi
Lenz Taguchi's Barad-influenced ideas around pedagogical
documentation, a 'mapping out' which can be used in a 'circular' way
which 'entails a re-enactment as we write or talk about what happened,
which makes reading against common sense and taken for-grantedness

possible'. The suggestion is that this 'circular' analysis is about 'identifying the material-discursive intra-activity taking place, the inter-connections and inter-relations between matter, objects and human subjects and how they make themselves intelligible to each other'.[309] This circular reading was literally enacted in some diagrams which noted the superimposition of emanating influences of works.

One audience member felt that there were different densities orchestrated in the curation, which related to the sense of being 'overloaded' – 'overloaded with different kind of densities of time compressed, and how they might interact with each other'.[310] Another viewer noted 'compression' in the area of Jan Hopkins and Margarita Gluzberg's drawings and 'expansions' next to Tim Etchells's audio, drawing attention to this sense of different densities (of both artist's labour and audience's attention) in the exhibition – the degree to which a viewer was drawn in or sent centrifugally outwards and sense of 'difference and resistance'.[311] Another viewer noted this feeling of 'density', whilst making drawn conjunctions between the Etchells and the Laric video and James Clarkson's work, reading through these the idea of the cast as 'movement congealed'. A further diagram noted a similar sense of 'immersion/ detachment', with 'paradoxically waves moving in and out at the same time'. Another noted a sense of 'intensity' at the site of those works demonstrating a mass of hand-made labour and also in relation to Etchells's sound work, reading the hand-made work through the sound.

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309. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi,*Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education*, Oxford: Routledge, 2010, p. 96–7. < https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/shu/reader.action?docID=446938 >, [accessed 8 October 2020].
310. This and subsequent audience comments are taken from a recording of an exhibition visit and seminar on 17 July 2019 and from diagrams undertaken by visitors – transcript and diagrams available in the Record of Practice.
311. This viewer also noted: 'What seems to be important re diffraction is the difference and resistance that makes the particularity of the diffraction of the exhibition in time and space.'

The sense of the exhibition operating on different axes was also highlighted and seen as impossible to capture on the planar diagram. Lacan's notion of the '*point de capiton*' was raised in relation to this - the button in upholstery used to prevent layers of material from moving around, which forms an anchoring point of coherence. Though usually considered as an anchoring point in language, this more sectional, horizontal relation was felt to be at work between, for example, James Clarkson and Margarita Gluzberg's work. The audience member suggested that with a diagram, thinking is in a planar mode, but if time is incorporated (as in archaeological mapping which is in 2D, 3D and in time), it can better express 'the complexity taking place here and how the different axes interact'. So, it was suggested that 'these connections, just like the upholstery button, could be the other way, rotating in time, like a planetary system'. This sense of time and duration as another axis of the curation began to position the exhibition as an event, in a performative mode.

Also discussed was, in contrast to the standard reception of an exhibition, the sense of permission and performativity created by audience interacting with the exhibition in space. As one person takes and handles a Penny McCarthy print, for example, others realise that is 'allowed' and permission is passed on: 'so to me somehow those permissions and the people that are engaging in that space, they are part of those waves too, not just the objects'. This comment echoes Irit Rogoff's observation of the transfer of agency in exhibition visitors by means of a 'proliferation of performative acts by which audiences shift themselves from being viewers to being participants'.[312] This bolsters the sense of the exhibition as a performative (and post-human) moment, a congregation of multiple implicated actants – artworks and audiences – with the auratic, the ritual value of the singular experience of art refigured as this sort of relational, affective convocation in a specific time and space.

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312. In 'How to Dress for an Exhibition', in *Stopping the Process?*, ed.by M. Hannula, Helsinki: NIFCA,1998, pp. 130–151, 131.

Audience response also validated the idea of the diffractive curation as potentially auratic – creating a performative, singular entanglement in time and space. One participant noted that 'once you start talking about entanglement in this context, because one thing is bouncing off another or shedding light on another, or entangled in terms of meaning, if you separate them out, then that doesn't happen. It's performative, it can only happen in that space, it makes the exhibition singular.' This idea of the exhibition as a performative, experimental apparatus opens the possibility for insight to be generated in this singularity by material intra-actions.[313]

In a context where we now see most artwork through online documentation and can even experience exhibitions as virtual walk-throughs,[314] these responses bolster an argument for the auratic potential of a physical exhibition in creating a singular constellation of works and subjects in a specific time and place – following Benjamin's definition of aura as 'presence in time and space [...] unique existence at the place where it happens to be'[315] inflected by Steeds's ritual 'convening collectivities' by reinstating the 'here and now of art's display'.[316] It is significant that it is only in the exhibition that the artwork is entangled with other artworks and with the proximate body

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313. Whilst this might be true of many exhibitions, here I was also aiming to push this further by using specifically diffractive apparatus as instead of traditional support structures to the exhibition.

314. <https://v21artspace.com>

315. Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', in *Illuminations*, p. 214.

316. Lucy Steeds, 'What is the future of exhibition histories? Or towards art in terms of it's Becoming-Public', in *The Curatorial Conundrum*, p. 22. 'We might ask whether the politics-based potential of art – actualized in the event of its exhibition, as announced by Benjamin – might be complemented or inflected by 'ritual' practices, if these are rethought so that there is no longer a reliance on the 'cult' but a grounding instead in intersubjectivity.' Lucy Steeds, *Exhibition*, p. 20. 'Art can serve ritual purposes without insisting on originality or authenticity, on the unique apparition of distance, or on individualistic contemplative absorption. If we free our understanding of ritual from notions of fixity, hierarchy and subservience, it may provide us with a renewed basis on which art – in a particular context, over a particular duration – enables an event-based experience of commonality, galvanizing coordinated action.' *Aroop*, as per note 235.

of a viewer in a 'sensory matrix of the haptic, visual and auditory'[317] – a 'strange weave of time and space'.[318]

iii.   Sound bleed – Sound as diffractive apparatus

As discussed in Chapter One, instead of a traditional, authoritative exhibition text 'Les Immatériaux' had an accompanying audio headset playing interwoven voices reading philosophical and literary texts, put in specific conjunction with the works in the space. Lyotard's approach of eschewing any form of explanatory textual material in favour of a continuous intra-action with sound is one I found very interesting as a potential diffraction apparatus. Lyotard was overt about withholding textual, interpretative information on the exhibition:

> We must not issue the visitor with instructions, whether an instruction manual or an instructive pamphlet, that is, information booklets. We should use as few text panels as possible, since these are still of the order of inscription […] and instead should use the medium of speech, of sound, which belongs to the art of time. […] by using oral speech we can avoid the monotony of written explanation, which generally is of the order of instruction; we can envisage using citations or textual creations, from completely different genres. We can well-imagine poems, fragments of literary prose, instructions in the imperative mode, questions, exclamations, all of this being – at least this is our plan – read by a good, well-known reader, and thus making use of the specific power of speech.[319]

With this approach Lyotard sought to challenge the modernist model of the museum/gallery, the spatial arrangement of which is designed to

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317. Paul O'Neill, in *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures*, p. 91.
318. Benjamin, 'What is aura actually? A strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance or semblance of a distance no matter how close it may be', in 'A Little History of Photography', in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: 1927–1934, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–34*, p. 518.
319. Jean-François Lyotard, 'After Six Months of work...' (1984), in *30 years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, ed. by Yuk Hui and Andreas Broekman, pp. 29–66, 61).

allow for a bourgeois 'synoptic pedagogy', in which the visitor's eye is led through a didactic journey in perspectival space. Instead, he considers the *mis en scène* of the exhibition in terms of 'a deliberate violation against the traditional space time implied by the gallery'.[320] In doing so he privileged time over space, sound over vision: 'displacing the hegemony of vision which usually organises the exhibition space'.[321] Certainly, he foregrounded sound and explored the influence this can have on the space-time of the exhibition and on the viewer. For example, in one part of the exhibition, holograms were paired on the soundtrack with a section read from Blanchot's *Invisible Man* and in another, robots from the Peugeot factories were accompanied on the headphones by a section of Heinrich von Kleist's *On the Marionette Theatre.* The intention was not to offer a multi-sensory experience of coherence, however, but, as Birnbaum and Wallenstein note, the juxtaposition was aimed at disconnecting the senses from each other and further undermining the sense of a coherent subject. This disjunction was keenly felt and documented in the archived visitors book to the exhibition.[322]

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320. Robin Mackay discusses this: 'He explains this approach, at length, in terms of a deliberate violation against the traditional space time implied by the gallery. The gallery is "an establishment of culture – that is to say of acquisition and assimilation of heterogeneous data – within the unity of an experience which constitutes a subject"; its spatial set up is precisely designed in order to facilitate this synoptic pedagogy. Lyotard seeks with 'Les Immatériaux' to overturn this "modern dominant" model of the museum gallery in which the visitor is reduced to an eye moving through a perspectival perceptual space, in a formative journey with a certain didactic finality. The development of an alternative "postmodern" space-time, conceived by Lyotard on the basis of a strange alignment of Diderot's *Salons* with postmodern urbanists, architects and sociologists, recalls signicantly Hultén's urbanist conception of the museum.' Robin Mackay, 'Immaterials, Exhibition, Acceleration', in *30 years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, pp. 215–244, 228.
321. Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition,* Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019, p. 159. They go on to say: 'The conceptual or poetic links between the displayed objects and the soundtrack were probably not always evident to the viewer, since the acoustic dimension possessed an autonomy that occasionally created tensions and discordance rather than harmonising correspondences. […] Generally, however, whoever decided to take off the headphones would have a problem navigating the exhibition, since there were no pedagogical wall texts in the normal sense.'
322. This sense was compounded as visitors had to pay for the loan of the headset and were still denied coherence. This, according to the visitors' books in the archive, was found to be 'an imposition' and the exhibition was found to be 'too much, it's too much' and access to information was seen as an issue: 'is it a luxury to understand an

In past work I have been very interested in how sound overlays the visual image in artwork and exhibition. I curated an exhibition in 2008 called 'Never let the Truth get in the Way of a Good Story' with works such as John Smith's *Girl Chewing Gum* and Hollis Frampton's *Nostalgia*, where sound or voiceover intervenes in, directs and inflects our viewing of moving image.[323] Sound functions here as Agamben's apparatus, controlling and directing response. I also curated an exhibition by Haris Epaminonda in 2010[324] for which we commissioned a holistic soundtrack for a solo show of individual silent film artworks, as a way of creating a type of coherence to singular works, seeing them as installed chronicles of a larger narrative and making them more than the sum of parts. In 'A Strange Weave' the intention was also for sound to overlay the whole exhibition but, taking a cue from 'Les Immatériaux', to allow for the creation of a productive disjunction, a 'constructive interference' rather than a coherence.

The initial intention, then, was to create an additional diffraction apparatus comprising a headset delivering individualised sound to a viewer during their experience of the show. The fact that diffraction is conceived of in terms of waves is particularly pertinent here as it enabled me to think about sound (which is, of course, a wave) intra-acting with and intervening upon an exhibition of physical artworks to create this superposition.

Initially I approached artist Tim Etchells to produce an audio guide similar to that accompanying 'Les Immatériaux', based on his project *Unnatural History: A Reading of Spaces*, 2010, an alternative audio guide

exhibition?' and 'I understood nothing', followed by 'me neither'. Archive box 940330/233 Pompidou Centre Archive, see fig. 5.
323. Exhibition Preview by Robert Clark, 22 November 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2008/nov/22/site-gallery-sheffield-exhibition>, [accessed 8 December 2021], and more information at https://www.sitegallery.org/exhibition/never-let-the-truth-get-in-the-way-of-a-good-story/, [accessed 8 December 2021].
324. 'Chronicles', Site Gallery, Sheffield, 11 Jun – 21 August 2010, <https://www.sitegallery.org/exhibition/haris-epaminonda/>, [accessed 13 January 2022].

for the Natural History Museum at Admont, Austria.[325] I supplied him with a patchwork of appropriated texts which had relevance to the exhibition, its works and associated ideas and we considered the idea of creating a script or spoken piece from them. (Lyotard similarly outsourced this task and the editing of the sound for the headset to Dolores Rogozinski.) However, as the thinking for the exhibition developed it became clear that the ventriloquized patchwork of quotes which formed the sound track for the Oliver Laric video piece *Versions* (2010) functioned in a very similar way to Lyotard's sound collage, ie not as ekphrasis or explanation of the works in the exhibition but as a disjunctive mix of aural provocations with conceptual relevance to the ideas of the exhibition.

Rather than trying to create a discrete, separate viewing space and isolate and contain the sound from this work (as would normally be the case in a group show context), I felt it should be allowed to permeate the space with its concatenation of unattributed quotes about the authentic, the object and its representation. This approach integrated 'sound bleed' or 'sound spill' – usually seen as a negative attribute in curating, something to be contained or eliminated in exhibition – and made a feature of it.[326] This is the moment when the exhibition layout

325. '*Unnatural History* reads the institution as an alien landscape – interpreting its displays and arrangements of wildlife for their significance and possible meaning in unexpected ways.' More on this work at
<http://timetchells.com/projects/unnatural-history-a-reading-of-spaces/?numPosts=12&pageNumber=2&year_filter=&category_filter=sound&action=projects_loop_handler>, [accessed 3 April 2019].
326. Artist Haroon Mirza has made this notion of 'sound spill' a subject of his artwork and curatorial projects, for example. 'Sound Spill is part of a wider body of research undertaken by Haroon Mirza with curator Thom O'Nions and artist Richard Sides. They are interested in the curatorial problem of sound spill, when the audio from one artwork overlaps with that of another in a gallery setting. By and large, efforts are made to minimise sounds mixing in this way. This, to some degree, invariably fails. Artworks with an element of sound always impinge upon other works; they bleed into one another and interact. The focus of Sound Spill is precisely on the point at which they merge. The three artworks presented in this iteration of the project all include an element of sound intrinsic to their conception without being their chief focus. The sound from each work, in this case, becomes part of a larger acoustic composition that acts as both rationale for showing these works together and a creative process in itself.'
<https://spikeisland.polimekanos.com/blogs/2012/01/23/watch-haroon-mirzas-sound-spill/>, [accessed 28 November 2019].

changed to make the video work more integrated within the space, to jettison the idea of using a grey mesh space divider to reference the radical exhibition design of 'Les Immatériaux'[327] and allow sight lines and sound waves to extend between all works. The relationship to the original exhibition became diffractive rather than representative.

Tim Etchells's piece was therefore allowed to take on more of an independent life as a sound piece in its own right, although the stipulation was maintained, as part of the commission, that the work exists on headphones, to allow the visitor to cut off from the Laric soundtrack and listen to a separate audio work on an individual level, moving around the space with an intimate or intrusive sound delivered direct to them, overlaying their experience of the physical work in the space, as in 'Les Immatériaux'. After discussing various options together, throughout the commissioning period we decided on an approach which involved working with found sound – an original recording from 60 years prior. This approach felt like it both offered a disjunctive commentary on the exhibition and added a singular new voice to it.

This commissioned piece – *Penmanship Exercise (After John Cage),* 2019 – manipulates and layers original sound from a John Cage work called *Indeterminacy*. *Indeterminacy* was described as 'Ninety Stories by John Cage, with Music'. Cage recited one–minute stories, plucked randomly from 90 stories written on cue cards, as musician David Tudor played improvised music, out of earshot, in another room. The indeterminacy was in the relationship of narrative to music and vice versa – neither was created to accompany the other intentionally – if they did chime

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327. I initially intended to create a discrete space for the Laric video projection, delineated by a hung grey mesh panel as a reference to this iconic exhibition design: 'the webs were grey, as were the solid walls erected to support heavier items. [...] the grey seems to point to the absence of precisely that kind of futurist affirmation which 'Les Immatériaux' was sometimes accused; it does not herald a bright new future made up of colourfully glowing things but wilfully steps into a penumbra where entities and boundaries blur.' Wallenstein & Birnbaum *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition*, p. 164. When the sound design of the exhibition shifted, this became unnecessary, but the reference to the greyness of 'Les Immatériaux' was retained by painting the entirety of the wall surrounding the projection grey.

together it was not orchestrated. This was appropriate as it is also how the sound would relate to the works in the exhibition, through creating disjunctions, disruptions and, occasionally, random conjunctions.

Etchells selected a story about a malfunctioning mechanical drawing arm in the window of a department store on Hollywood Boulevard and the audio builds from this single, original sample of John Cage's voice and the associated sounds (sci-fi style sound effects, crashes of piano), to create an overlaid, polyphonous, multliply- replicated composition, degrading with the entropy of multiple copies, almost to the limits of legibility, then the layers of sound drop away again to the singular original. In narrative subject matter, then, it is about the technological reproduction of the drawing process, something which had formal links to two other works in the exhibition (Arcangel and Hopkins). In methodology it is similar to another piece by Etchells – *Untitled (After Violent Incident)*, 2013 (which also re-visits a piece by another artist) – in which two protagonists perform the looped choreography of Bruce Nauman's original video in real time.[328] But this work foregrounds the act of technological replication of an 'original' in both subject matter and form. The work was presented on headphones, to be listened to from beginning to end (just under six minutes) but with no prescription as to how an audience member might navigate the space and the other works during this time.

In my curatorial thinking it was also key that there was not a singular soundtrack to the exhibition, that would essentially provide the narrative or voiceover for the show, but that the two sound pieces would also be put in conjunction, meaning a viewer could experience the works in the exhibition with a multitude of different aural adjunct possibilities, with different audio intervening on the experience of different works as the viewer traversed the space. The intention was

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328. See <http://timetchells.com/projects/untitled-after-violent-incident/?numPosts=12&pageNumber=7&action=projects_loop_handler>, [accessed 3 April 2019].

that audio from both pieces overlaid, inflected and 'diffracted' each other and the visual work.

One audience member noted the 'strange material resonance' they felt was at play, with the sound piece. They felt the sound was jarring and at the limit of comfort and its abrasiveness highlighted the material qualities in the works – the shiny ceramic-like golem in the visuals to the Laric video anticipates the sharp edge to the glaze in ceramic objects, which is apparent in James Clarkson's actual ceramic object. There was felt to be an oscillation between the 'scratchy' and shiny surfaces in the show, the hand-produced and the screen-based. They felt that the 'trigger' from the Etchells work, and the impact of the sound, had a sort of motion and it made you think of other motions of materials, in production. This suggests that the sound catalysed a diffractive reading which allowed for new understanding of the materiality in the works, read through each other.

Another audience member felt that the combination of the two sound pieces was effective in amplifying the thinking in the show and the individual works. They felt the Etchells piece to be tactile in the way that it is 'very crafted' but also that the sound and the level of the audio made them feel and think about the making of the work and have a feeling of 'stuff being built'. It was felt that when the other audio (from the Laric video work) mixed in you also had this 'really overwhelming, quite visceral response to feeling overwhelmed by repetition'. They noted that this created a sense of rhythm, duplication and repetition, which permeated the show. It was the mix of the audio, which affected the work for this viewer – the combination of the two sound pieces engendered links between them and animated the other works, particularly the drawings and the more rhythmic pieces.

A viewer also felt that the sound (as Lyotard hoped) brings in the register of time to the show. They found that the sound 'makes you really think about the moment you're in … it becomes very much a performance of the exhibition, that when you hear it with the headset,

it's very different than just walking around show, which is very spatial'. They felt there were these different registers of reading the show. Another audience member agreed that the sound 'disrupted' the way you look at the exhibition.

I took this to be the diffractive 'constructive interference' which I hoped the sound might create. This was consolidated by another comment on the sound: one of the artists present felt that the sound functioned as 'two little whirlpools where you feel you're being sucked in. You've been kind of mesmerised by this repetition, so you have to create some kind of resistance yourself to engage with the show.'

The nature of the spoken voice on the soundtrack to the Laric video was discussed, as some felt the computerised voice offputting, but there was also some discussion as to whether it was, in fact, a human- or computer-generated voice, its status was therefore pointedly indeterminate. Lyotard had laid great emphasis on his soundtrack to the exhibition being read by a 'good, well-known reader,'[329] presumably to help to create engagement with the soundtrack, and this computer-style voice feels designed to engender alienation, creating a distance from the ventriloquized texts, rather than engagement.

The use of sound as a key curatorial strategy, therefore functioned as a diffraction apparatus, intra-acting with different works, drawing attention to the details of their materiality and creating a constructive interference, a force to be succumbed to or resisted in the reception of the exhibition. Both the form and subject matter of the two sound pieces catalysed the creation of a new understanding of the sense of duplication and reproduction created by the works in the exhibition and added to the performativity of the exhibition as form.

329. Jean-François Lyotard, 'After Six Months of Work..', pp. 29–66, 61.

iv.   Glossary: *Writing Tests* – an exercise in diffractive
           writing

The closer one looks at a word, the greater the
distance from which it returns the gaze.[330]

*Writing Tests exists
as an online
database at
https://astrangewe
ave.org/writingtests.
php and as a printed
publication,
included in the
appendix*

Figure 35. 'Writing Tests' glossary installed
on iPad in the exhibition entrance.
Photograph: John Hartley

The exhibition had no
catalogue, instead it revisited
another curatorial strategy
from 'Les Immatériaux' –
Epreuves D'Ecriture (which
translates as *Writing Tests* or
First Drafts). This project
invited writers to cumulatively
create a glossary of terms
related to the exhibition, using
Minitel machines which
networked the participants pre-
internet. According to
Lyotard's 'rules of the game'
they were invited to give their
definitions ('2–10 lines

maximum') of some terms from a supplied list of words related to the
exhibition and also respond to ('refute, complete, modulate, etc') the
definitions of other writers, creating a polyvocal, cumulative definition
of terms. Online collective writing such as Wikipedia or the use of
Google Docs[331] is now commonplace but texts alongside exhibitions are
usually still individually authored, giving a singular, 'authorised'
perspective. For 'A Strange Weave' the artists and invited writers
Michelle Atherton, Erika Balsom, Matthew Cheeseman, Emma

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330. Taken from the 'What is Aura' text, which is source material for Penny
McCarthy's drawing. Translation by Esther Leslie in *Walter Benjamin's Archive: Images,
Texts, Signs.*.
331. Although on such platforms differences between voices are often flattened and it
ultimately reads as one voice.

Bolland, Esther Leslie and Lucy Steeds contributed to a cumulative online glossary of terms related to the exhibition, in a project called *Writing Tests*, which could be viewed and added to at www.astrangeweave.org.

Alongside the constructive interference of sound in the exhibition, this glossary was intended as another additional 'diffraction apparatus', which aimed to put different voices into conjunction to hopefully create a further entangled understanding. Invited writers and artists added to it during the exhibition's preparation and public phases, and visitors could also log on and add their voices to the mix, either in the space or remotely. An iPad displayed the glossary in the entrance to the space and it was also accessible online. The intention was that the glossary offer a diffractive tool to collectively and cumulatively, build on other's work and make visible the generation of new thinking in relation to the ideas embodied in the exhibition.

This intention aligns with Barad's notion of an entangled writing which is responsive and responsible to precursors and other interlocutors. Barad, in her writing often intertwines different voices, from different times, including, but not prioritising her own. The voices are sometimes differentiated in the style of the layout and footnoted but unattributed in the main body of the text, only identifying them later in the text, in brackets, she says, because of the demands of the academic journal.[332] This allows for an 'iterative practice intra-actively reworking and being reworked by'[333] different voices. Manning and Massumi also write in a plural undifferentiated voice, saying, 'One never writes alone. Our words in this book are never without the echoes of the

332. For example in 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', *Parallax*, Volume 20, 3, 2014, 168–187, Barad interweaves different voices from different times. In footnote 65 of her text she notes: 'The author's names are added in brackets here in order to make the diffractive reading more evident while respecting the style of the journal.' She also maintained in the preface of her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* that 'writing is not a unidirectional practice of creation that flows from author to page, but rather the practice of writing is an iterative and mutually constitutive working out, and reworking of "book" and "author"'.
333. Ibid., p. 187.

voices of those whose difference we chose to write with […]. A veritable cacophony. Or better: an ecology.' [334] I was interested in creating this kind of diffractive ecology as an adjunct to the exhibition. I specifically invited Esther Leslie in relation to her writings on both Walter Benjamin and technology,[335] Lucy Steeds in relation to her reconfiguring of Benjamin in the context of exhibition histories and Erika Balsom in relation to her work on the resuscitation of the authentic. This was also a curatorial decision as to my knowledge these writers had not been put in conjunction before, although their work circles around each other's research areas.

I hoped *Writing Tests* would echo the 'superposition' or entanglement effected in the exhibition, in a writing project and provide a tool for the cumulative development of associated ideas. The writers are identified by name in *Writing Tests*, but their words on any particular subject flow, overlap and develop thoughts between multiple writers. Indeed, the glossary was described by an audience member as a 'flowing out' from the exhibition.[336] The glossary is more expansive than a standard exhibition text and offers a space for new thinking to emerge in conjunction with or 'out of' the experience of the exhibition. As Leslie notes in relation to another project: 'The 'accompanying' text that might be more conventionally used to fix, describe and evaluate the meaning of the work is cast in a poetic or reflective mode.'[337]

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334. Erin Manning, & Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, p. 2.
335. Eg *Liquid Crystals: The Science and Art of a Fluid Form,* London: Reaktion, 2016.
336. This offers the opposite route to the text on the exhibition (which was available by scanning a QR code, but not in the space of the exhibition) in which the thinking is more closely related to the materiality and intra-actions of the works, which offers a route 'in' to the works.
337. In relation to a project with Melanie Jackson: <http://melaniejackson.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/seeing-with-a-feeling-eye.pdf>, [accessed 2 December 2019], p. 3.

Figure 36. Web page for *Writing Tests*

I was intrigued to find, that although I had not mentioned the methodology of diffraction to any of the artists or writers, that this notion of entanglement began to emerge through glossary entries. Lucy Steeds in her definition of 'exhibition' writes about 'exhibitions as the durational fields in which people are entangled with each other and the world through art'. She also quotes Frank Moten on the exhibition as 'mobile location of the entangled differentiation of artist, audience and artwork'. Margarita Gluzberg quotes Barad on the potential of bodies to regrow extremities in her entry on 'Materiality' and also writes about entanglement in her entry on 'ghosts': 'Ghosts are trans-temporal entities. They can be characterized by their resistance to linearity and progress. They are disruptors of one-direction narratives, favouring instead a process of entanglement and simultaneous engagement.' Michelle Atherton references diffraction when writing on 'Dissemination': 'but what if we emphasise the dis – to asunder, to break apart as a significant act of dissemination? This is a reversal of authenticating knowledges through interferences and diffractions.' Whilst this may just relate to the currency of Barad's ideas,[338] I would

338. For example, the joint winners of the 2019 Turner Prize twice mentioned 'entanglement' in their acceptance speech.

like to think that this emergence is something endemic to the structure of this diffraction apparatus and evidence of an approach that has current relevance.
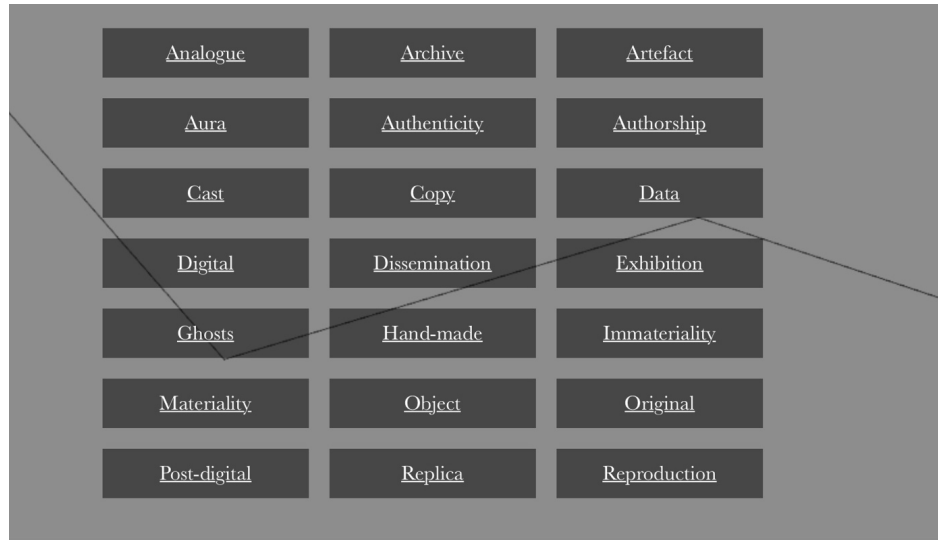
Figure 37. Terms displayed on first page of *Writing Tests* webpage

In *Writing Tests*, a constellation of terms is brought together in a similar fashion to the way Leslie notes that in the Walter Benjamin archive 'An arrangement of keywords for the essay "On the image of Proust" might also be regarded as a constellation.'[339] The constellation of terms were words which I felt were relevant to the exhibition and had appeared repeatedly as touchstones throughout my research. In a way, these words were the points of origin of the ripples of resonance within the project or as an audience member suggested – the '*point de capiton*' which drew planes of resonance together. These were entirely different to those selected by Lyotard. I added a relevant quotation under the heading, as a provocation or jumping-off point and then artists and writers proceeded to add their thoughts about this term, some of which

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339. From *Walter Benjamin's Archive*, translated by Esther Leslie p.232. 'Many of Benjamin's manuscripts transgress linear norms, loosening up writing's sense of direction – some brings words and groups of words into figural elations. … Spatial correlation, proximity of arrangement and writing's orientation generate relationships… An arrangement of keywords for the essay 'On the image of Proust' might also be regarded as a constellation…. Here the thematic groups are boxed and relationships are established by connecting lines.'

respond to the previous one, some follow more singular lines of interest and engagement, some looped back and made cross references. For example, Lucy Steeds in her entry on 'digital' refers to Esther Leslie's entry on 'archive'.[340] Some stand alone, some reverberate and resonate between each other.

Leslie, commenting on the project noted that the project recalled to her Benjamin's *Arcades Project*, itself a collection of quotations and suggested that these links and interconnections should be hyperlinked, truly creating a weave of influence and inference: 'in a sort of intricate structure, cross referencing, and that would create a kind of density – that that would be a strange weave of space and time in itself in a kind of immaterial sense'.[341] This is something that I subsequently did, transposing the citations and echoes into direct digital links, creating the possibility for a rhizomatic engagement with the thinking, a diffractive, cumulative, superposition of multiple voices.[342]

An example of diffractive superposition of intra-active meanings of aura, created by the Writing Tests apparatus – all excerpts from Writing tests highlighted in grey

An example of this kind of 'constructive interference' might be the fact that in Leslie's first entry on 'Aura' she describes it as 'Something fuzzy, fuzzily understood, a kind of halo around things'. James Clarkson picks up and entangles Leslie's reference to halo by referencing the halo around religious figures in early paintings and tracing a trajectory of aura though technology and capitalism: 'Aureola is the word used in religious painting to describe the halo depicted around religious figures heads. A painterly tool designed to create aura in the artwork, elevating the status and emotional impact of the holy figures in these paintings. In the 20th Century the aureola reappeared

340. 'See Esther Leslie, elsewhere on this site, on the archive that is the web'. <https://astrangeweave.org/editword.php?id=13>, [accessed 2 December 2021].
341. From recording of Esther Leslie exhibition walk-round 6 November 2019, available in Record of Practice.
342. Then as a nod to 'Les Immatériaux', the glossary was also printed up, rendered static, linear and material again.

as the halo lamp, which was designed to perfectly illuminate the faces of models during photoshoots. The fashion shoots used this lighting to create an aura around the commodity. In the 21st century the halo lamp is a cheap lighting tool designed to improve the lighting conditions for selfies. These lamps seek to add aura and highlight individuality to your personal image.'

Lucy Steeds highlights Benjamin's antithesis of aura, 'exhibitability', which, like the glossary itself, 'operates collectively and intimately, both affectively and critically, opening onto a play-space of political action'. Erika Balsom then comments on the same obsolescence induced aura, as Leslie in her entry: 'as the oft-quoted phrase goes, that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. Yet today the mechanically reproducible medium of photochemical film appears as eminently auratic, pushed into the domain of authenticity by the advent of electronic media.' Leslie concurs: 'The past becomes auratic, distant, untouchable. The present, electronic, liquid crystal, close up, is all too touchable, our screens, on which our worlds of culture unfurl, at our fingertips' and Steeds follow up with a take on the effects on aura of virtual distribution: 'Aura is museological fetishism. It is controlled through ritual. To what extent is the political play-space opened through virtual proximity – whether you want to say 'via exhibitability' and invoke art or not – controlled through algorithms?'

Michelle Atherton refers back to the exhibition, to the notion of aura referenced in McCarthy's drawing 'Was ist Aura', that of a gaze returned: 'Sensed in this way, aura might refer to a different way of relating "where the thing looks back at you, it is speaking to you, it is somehow getting through".'

Cumulatively, these intra-acting fragments shore up a contemporary sense of aura and intersect with the exhibition in doing so. A similar dynamic is at work with the other terms. For example, McCarthy draws connections to and creates a pertinent commentary on Tim Etchells work, as well as her own, when she writes:

'It is the specific connection between copying and the limits of reproducibility that I find most interesting. I remember the era of Xerox art when running an image or a text repeatedly through the copier or the fax machine would produce something imagistic out of language until another kind of reading would emerge. The photocopier, the Xerox machine or the fax – these machines occupied a transitional moment between the analogue and digital. Yet the pleasure of the photocopy multiplied and pushed to the point of entropic collapse actually extends copying into an even closer attentiveness to matter. […] These melancholy images convey an erosion of reality that is estranged from both the viewer and the narrator, and also, perhaps, embody the failure of technological transmission.In the face of new reproductive techniques, something of this material granularity gets lost.' And Balsom takes this further, reversing the hierarchy of original and copy:

'While the copy may come after the original in individual cases, at a conceptual level the relationship between the terms is reversed. It is only amidst proliferating copies that the notion of originality takes on value. In this regard, the copy comes first.'

The glossary also intra-acted directly with artificial intelligence to create entries. Jan Hopkins – whose work circles around a posthuman notion of human/ machine cybernetic collaboration, used a neural network, called TalktoTransformer.com to generate inputs. The corpus it draws from is any website linked to Reddit that has above a certain number of hits, so the interlocutor is potentially hundreds of websites, changing constantly. She gave the AI a prompt and it completed what came next. This hive mind adds to the glossary something which makes sense syntactically and sounds like a reasonably coherent thought but is a simulacrum of one. Although it doesn't verbatim copy extant language, it processes it and potentially creates new meaning, or a representation of meaning. This is potentially a macro version of the entangled writing project which

Writing Tests set out to attempt, with a potentially infinite number of interlocutors (human and machine) involved in meaning making.

In terms of the intra-action of the glossary and the exhibition, an audience member felt that the glossary allowed a layered view and a different inflection on the exhibition, seen anew each time by being read through a different term, as if through 'photoshop layers'.[343] This idea of a horizontal layering built on the previous reference to Lacan's ideas around the upholstery button. It suggests that the glossary assisted in creating a multi-layered approach to the exhibition – that the exhibition could be diffractively read through the different concepts in the glossary (with each acting as '*points de capiton*', drawing different layers together), as well as in relation to the other artworks. This potentially allowed for a more active engagement and a different mode of activation than a singular authorial exhibition text.

The glossary also functioned as a capture device or repository for thoughts and insights generated from the exhibition – some people added to this directly after seeing the show.[344] These contributions were added into the hyperlinked weave of thought which was provoked by the exhibition.

343. 'I was looking at the words and I can only really take in one at once and relate each word and go around again. You've got something like Photoshop layers with each of the words – so it's going on on lots of different planes.' From audience feedback in exhibition walk-round at Project Space Plus, Lincoln 12 November 2019.
344. For examples: On Materiality: 'As well as it being 'out there in a physical form constructed through time, material and process, materiality is also the synapsual (an invented word?) 'thought shape' made when you think of a substance/thing? Your body feels/imagines the weight, texture, density.'
On Copy: 'We are genetic copies endlessly groping for an impossible original identity. As such, copies are valuable and irreplaceable and precious to our eyes.' On Archive: 'This place is not built to house the death of things. Knowledge bends space and moves in its own realm of reality. Memory is not fixed or finite.'

Ultimately, after the completion of the series of exhibitions and before the completion of this thesis, the content of the Writing Tests online portal was transferred to a printed publication format, from the open — endedness of the digital format to the tactile finality of the analogue. This drew to an end the possibility of continuing to add to the online glossary (indeed one participant who had attended the exhibition, added to the glossary some time later, when lockdown offered him the time to do so). I worked with Daniel Royle (the same designer who had designed the website) to design a publication which made reference to the design decisions from Lyotard's *Epreuves D'Ecriture,* by means of a diffracted reference to the cover design and participants' names and entries being marked by initials and a date stamp, also drawn from the original, to slightly diminish the delineation of individual authorship and facilitate the sense of a cumulative, collective definition.

As Emma Bolland notes in the 'Writing Tests' entry on 'Cast': 'Scatter Possibilities and begin to read. Do NOT set in stone.'

This book, even though printed and rendered static, aligns (as will be further noted in Chapter Five) with Lyotard's notion of the 'good book' in that it can be 'grazed' or dipped into to gather a snapshot of thinking around a particular term, diffracted through different writers' sensibilities. In this it also relates to Barad's definition of discourse as 'not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said.' which derives from a field of possibilities that are 'a dynamic and contingent multiplicity'[345]. The structure of *Writing Tests* both enabled and constrained what could be said (creating an enabling platform to entangle voices, but offering a limited list of terms). In doing so it also undermined the distinctions between exhibition (matter) and discourse (by being present in the exhibition space as an object in and of itself) and drew on a cumulative multiplicity of viewpoints. Indeed the writers take a variance of approaches, with later additions coming from individuals with art–writing practices, so that entries sometimes move from a semi–academic approach, entangled with other scholarly interlocutors, to a more personal, speculative or tangential provocation

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345. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p. 146/7.

to thinking. Writers also, according to their interest, define different meanings of a given term – 'cast' as output from a mould is entangled with 'cast' as the interpreters of a theatrical production (Tim Etchells). 'Immaterial' is both de-materialised but also inconsequential (Matthew Cheeseman). Analogue as designating a continuous rather than a discrete media form and as 'something that tracks the other closely, very closely, continuously. Analogue dogs' (Esther Leslie), which reminds the next writer (Florian Roithmayr) of a shadow, and the final writer of a *doppelganger*, close but not exact. The chain of association is incredibly rich and cumulatively insightful, revivifying the terms themselves with multiplicities of meaning.

The close attention given to these words and their associations and accretions, in some way aligns with Benjamin's suggestion that the relationship with words can also be auratic, in that they might also return our gaze from a distance, as suggested in the quote at the start of this chapter. This is evidenced by the display of the glossary in the exhibition, which put viewers in direct relationship with words.

Display of *Writing Tests*

 The presentation of the glossary within the exhibition, on a touch screen at the entrance to the exhibition, was commented on by one audience member who found the materiality and haptic nature of this interaction interesting, allowing you to enlarge a fragment of text which you drew out of the weave of the glossary.[346] This tactility of the access to the glossary in the space was an important curatorial element, in that it echoes the ability to touch and take a copy of McCarthy's

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346. 'I think it's interesting you access it on a tablet. I've never used a tablet, I use a laptop so I'd forgotten about touch screens, that when I came to use it it'd be big. Actually, the way you materially engage with the screen, you can find yourself with a really big letter or a fragment of a sentence, I actually really enjoyed that.'

work and broader references to haptic labour in some of the artworks. In Leslie's lecture 'Device and Gesture'[347] she expands on this relationship between the screen and the hand. She suggests that 'In communing with our devices we learn a new gestural vocabulary. The touch screen has brought the hand into being as itself a writing tool or a new or other type of device. [...] Our fingertips and other parts of our fingers become sensitised in new ways, developing gestures not previously performed.'[348] Having the glossary available to our touch in the exhibition highlighted this notion of the intertwining of the hand–made, the technological and the haptic in the post-digital period, making us feel the cybernetic network between our bodies and the technology, the one needing the other, as the touchscreens rely on our touch and our gestures to complete a circuit, 'making of the body an instrument'.[349] However, in the glossary Leslie also sounds a cautionary note in that there will come a moment of obsolescence and distance and even such devices will join the untouchable, auratic media of the past: 'The past becomes auratic, distant, untouchable. The present, electronic, liquid crystal, close-up, is all too touchable, our screens, on which our worlds of culture unfurl, at our fingertips. We will find our distance from it one day though. We will no longer be able to make the right gestures on the icy surface of the touchscreen. Our pinches and flicks will trigger the wrong things.'

In relation to the glossary Leslie also echoed the above audience comment about the materiality and intimate nature of interacting with a touch screen, suggesting that it was interesting to have a cross-cutting 'cacophony' of voices, a 'tumble of quotes' interacting, but specifically responded to having to engage with something in an intimate, haptic,

347. Given in Lincoln on 6 November 2019 alongside the iteration of the exhibition there.
348. Ibid.
349. Ibid.

material way to access more immaterial ideas, direct in the exhibition space.[350]

This sense of the haptic in the exhibition was elaborated on by other respondents who appreciated the tactile touch screen of the iPad and related it to the fact that visitors could tear off and take a copy of McCarthy's work. This engagement with the sense of touch in the exhibition was felt, more broadly, to engender a sense of a 'diffracted sensuality', a desire to touch or even just the internal anticipation of touch 'the shape or the synapses of the touch in your body'.[351] In Barad's terms, touch is not a question of one thing simply affecting another, but of the event of touch bringing a new thing into being, from virtuality into actuality via intra-action. The moment of touch is a particular configuration of 'timespacematter'[352] an instantiation of a new material entity comprised of toucher and touched. Barad notes also that theory should be embedded in the material, in touch, 'theorizing, a form of experimenting, is about being in touch'.[353.] The importance of these 'synapses of touch' in the body in this exhibition are further explored in the next iteration of the show by the suspension of haptic and proprioceptive input occasioned by virtual reality.

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350. 'I think it is very interesting, to have multiple voices talk to each other, to talk across each other, and get a kind of cacophany of responses and I love the way that ‒ because what I was saying about screens ‒ you know you have to physically engage with something that's quite you know, it's immaterial, it's thoughts, it's a kind of tumble of quotes but you have to come close, become quite intimate with it, to read or listen to those voices.' Esther Leslie, from recording of walk-round to exhibition in Lincoln, 6 November 2019.
351. Comments from feedback session to Site Gallery exhibition on 17 July 2020.
352. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p. 217.
353. Karen Barad, 'On Touchingt‒he Inhuman That Therefore I Am', *differences* 23, no. 3, 2012, 206‒223, p. 207.

Chapter Five: Exhibitionary Knowledge and the Virtual

i.   The exhibition as spatial form in relation to the VR walkround

For the third iteration of the exhibition in Lincoln, I originally intended to continue or return to the strategy from the first phantom showing at Bloc, to follow the trajectory of Lyotard and Leckey to show a reproduction of the exhibition – just a VR walkround of the Site exhibition in a new exhibition context. The thinking was that this might challenge whether the exhibition itself is reproducible through the growing use of virtual forms. However, I ultimately decided that it would be of more interest to the research to embed this virtual experience in another show incorporating artefacts and objects, so this new mode of remote viewing could be assessed alongside a more direct one.   Certain works were substituted with others by the same artist (Diana Taylor, Jan Hopkins and Margarita Gluzberg – showing a large-scale drawing from the series 'Hairstyles for the Great Depression' which was shown as a small scale reproduction in 'Project for an Exhibition') and some works (the Oliver Laric video projection, Florian Rothmayr's sculpture and the Cory Arcangel dyptich) were absent but viewable via the VR walkround. I wanted to explore what that remove does to our experience of the show, and how it might work to create a kind of *mise en abîme*, a show within a show, which offers a different kind of access to the artefacts. This strategy was intended to give insight as to what the specific experience of an emplaced exhibition is on the viewer – a sensory matrix of haptic, visual and auditory stimulus – and how that might differ from the now prevalent virtual reality walk-throughs of exhibitions in terms of knowledge production and experience of aura.

Figure 38. 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' installed at Project Space Plus, Lincoln. Photograph: John Hartley

Like the Bloc iteration this involved artworks sharing a space with a ghost – in this case the virtual legacy of the exhibition from another space and time. Lucy Steeds writes in the glossary: 'The exhibition archive is what endures when a show ceases. It is also a basis on which we may later attempt the impossibility of revisiting that exhibition. The attempt sharpens and amplifies the arguments that make the exhibition relevant to the present.' The impossibility arrives because of the performativity and auratic nature of the exhibition in its here and now. This is a virtual archive, rather than the paper-based archives I consulted in my research on previous exhibitions, but despite the relative immediacy of the experience of the documentation, including the embedding of video and sound works in the walkround, it is still an impossible document. Lucy Steeds continues: 'Aura is museological fetishism. It is controlled through ritual.' The opposite of ritual in Benjaminian terms is exhibitability and Steeds goes on to question whether digital exhibitability opens up a progressive play space via virtual proximity. This is a question I was interested to test out in this exhibition.

The virtual walkround of an exhibition is a post-digital extension of Benjamin's 'exhibition value' or exhibitability (*Ausstellbarkeit*), a digital

version of the *Spielraum*, or room for play offered by reproduction, albeit a circumscribed one. It is also part of a larger impetus which harks back to Malraux's 'museum without walls', to make artworks accessible, irrespective of geography. Major examples include the many museums' collections available to navigate on Google Arts & Culture[354] or on their own websites[355] and increasingly this resource is also being made available by both biennials and smaller galleries, as both an archive and a way of extending audiences for exhibitions to those who may only access them virtually. One company producing such walkrounds for galleries, in their promotional rhetoric, emphasise the enabling of virtual proximity, overcoming the exigencies of time and space;[356] archiving and allowing access to temporary exhibitions to extend their temporal and geographic reach. Or VR offers close-up access to blockbuster permanent artefacts or collections such as the Louvre's 'Mona Lisa: Beyond the Glass' suggesting VR allows you to a privileged viewpoint impossible in person.[357] Some virtual collections, such as the Kremer Museum, exist in purely virtual form, not as a physical collection, but is also still very much predicated on authenticity and the ability to view stamps of provenance on the reverse of the works.[358] This curiously recalls Penny McCarthy's urge to document the reverse of Benjamin's aura notes and its accessibility to

354. <https://artsandculture.google.com>, [accessed 1 February 2019].
355. Specific museum collections at <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner?hl=en>, <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/visiting/virtual-tours>, or <https://courtauld.ac.uk/gallery/about/3d-gallery-virtual-tour>, [accessed 1 February 2019].
356. Their profile rhetoric states that they are 'Capturing arts, culture & heritage spaces & objects to create interactive 3D virtual walk-throughs & immersive VR experiences. The closest thing to being there.' <https://v21artspace.com> and an example of this kind of VR exhibition walk-through is viewable here: <https://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/record/still-i-rise-in-virtual-reality/>, [accessed 1 February 2019].
357. the rhetoric attached to this also emphasises proximity, it enables viewers to 'go inside the painting… to be within the universe of the painting', to 'get closer to the painting'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=34&v=Au_UpzhzHwk&feature =emb_title>, [accessed 3 March 2019].
358. 'Using VR technology, visitors will be able to examine the artworks' surface and colors up-close, as well as view the reverse of the paintings to explore each work's unique stamps of provenance.' <https://www.thekremercollection.com/the-kremer-museum/>, [accessed 3 March 2019], showcases over 70 17th-Century Dutch and Flemish old masters.

viewers. This desire to see a work in the round is what is often thwarted in most virtual presentation.

Rather than obviating the need for access to original artefacts, this is seen as driving a corresponding desire to see the authentic artwork and this is often articulated around the affect or emotional charge of the original. (As indeed was noted in responses to 'Project for an Exhibition'). The president of the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, notes this affect in relation to VR in museums: 'People are coming to a museum to see real objects because real objects are emotional.'[359] However this notion of the affect of the original has been undermined by a research study tracking physiological emotional responses (via EEG and ECG) to a virtual exhibition compared to a real one, which found little physiological difference between the two experiences in terms of emotional affect.[360]

This question became very pertinent during the pandemic lockdowns of 2020/21, when galleries worldwide migrated their exhibitions online via VR walkrounds and the 'parameters of display'[361] were no longer predicated on physical proximity to an artwork. There was a corresponding increase in discourse about the specificities of work presented online, within which VR is often seen as a welcome alternative to the flat screen[362] and the more transactional online

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359. Quote by Bruno David, at <https://www.museumnext.com/article/how-museums-are-using-virtual-reality/ >, [accessed 3 March 2019].
360. Comparing *Départ-Arrivée* by artist Christian Boltanski at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern in Valencia, with a virtual replication. 'The virtual museum presents slightly more arousal and valence levels than the physical museum. This slight bias could be due to the subjects having no previous VR experience, and the novelty could increase arousal and valence.' Study is available at: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0223881#sec002>, [accessed 12 December 2019].
361. Saim Demircan, 'Remote Working', *Art Monthly*, 451, October 2021, 6–10, p. 6.
362. Ben Vickers, Chief Technology Officer of Serpentine Gallery: 'I'd given up on VR a year or so ago, but the greater sense of presence you get is a relief now there's only the flat screen. Curators are starting to think about how you could host a public event with VR, how you could really deploy it well.' See Charlotte Higgins, 'Forget Titian, here's a talking dog! Is this digital art's big moment?', *The Guardian*, 12 May 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/may/12/digital-art-coronavirus-lockdown-talking-dog-titian>, [accessed 7 October 2020].

'viewing room' for singular works preferred by commercial galleries. VR exhibitions act as a reminder of the interconnectedness of space, bodies and artworks in the event of the exhibition: 'VR exhibitions remind us that artworks come to life in the space of public presentation'[363] albeit that online presentations are often felt to lack the 'aura' of IRL presentation[364].

In a consideration of 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', Groys cites Walter Benjamin's equating of the exhibition of an object with its reproduction, and glosses exhibition and reproduction both as 'operations that remove the artwork from its historical place—from its "here and now"—and send it along a path of global circulation'.[365] Is this virtual dissemination and reception of the same order as the viewing of art objects which are in a proximate space with us as embodied subjects? How does this push and pull of proximity and distance affect us? Can the same productive gap or friction be created here? [366] Can we look askance at artworks from an embodied position? Groys suggests two modes of viewing – the 'frontal' gaze and the 'gaze from within' – which, he suggests, distinguish these two viewing modes. In looking at a painting or a screen, he suggests, we use the frontal gaze, but when we visit a new place or an exhibition, it is not in front

363. J. J. Charlesworth, also 'the VR gallery reminds us that art only really means something when it appears in public, in the visible, physical, social world. An artwork isn't just an isolated object floating in the cold storage of a collector's inventory – it's an event made by an artist, framed by dealers and curators and others, and eventually seen by a public.' *ArtReview*, 17 April 2020, <https://artreview.com/holding-on-to-art-in-real-life/>, [accessed 7 October 2020].
364. See discussion on lockdown viewing in interview with Aindrea Emelife on *Talk* ART Podcast, first released 10 July 2020 and available at <https://play.acast.com/s/talkart/aindreaemelife-quarartinespecialepisode->, [accessed 14 October 2020].
365. Boris Groys, 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', *e Flux Journal*, #94, October 2018, para 2 of 20, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/94/219462/curating-in-the-post-internet-age/>, [accessed 8 October 2020].
366. Critic Adrian Searle suggests not: 'I need a thing in person, the real thing. Preferably something that someone has made. A thing in space and me there with it, something I can relate to with my body as well as my eye.' And acknowledges the push and pull of proximity and distance in objects in exhibition: 'Making proximity and distance their measure, they attract and resist us.**'** 'The sculptures chew at space, blunder and bulge. I feel threatened', *The Guardian*, 23 June 2020,< https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/jun/23/crushed-cast-constructed-review-gagosian-gallery-london?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other >[accessed 7.10.20]

of us, we are 'inside of it'. The thing that sticks in our memory is this embodied relation, which is something which cannot be captured by the artwork's documentation and transfer to the internet, where it again becomes a form of content, but the exhibition itself cannot be reproduced. He suggests, then, that the exhibition is performative – an event (as does Rogoff) and auratic: 'For this reason, the exhibition is not an object, but an event. The aura is not lost when an artwork is uncoupled from its original, local context, but is rather re-contextualized and given a new "here and now" in the event of an exhibition—and thus, in the history of exhibitions. […] This is why an exhibition cannot be reproduced. One can only reproduce an image or an object placed in front of the viewing subject.' [367]

This echoes my experience in researching exhibition histories in the archives of Tate and The Pompidou Centre where the exhibitions, despite being exhaustively documented, are essentially absent. They can only be partially conjured by an askance glance at such things as the annotations of the curator on official minutes, the rhetoric of the draft press release, the aghast comments in the visitors' book, static documentary images, or even selective video images – in other words by a diffractive, cumulative, sensory approach which can however, not replicate the singular event of the exhibition. Various models for the documenting of the spatial qualities of an exhibition have been attempted, from verbatim remakes[368] to digital online

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367. 'Indeed, when we visit an exhibition of contemporary art, the only thing that truly remains in our memory is the organization of the spaces of this exhibition, especially if this organization is original and unusual. However, if the individual artworks can be reproduced, the exhibition can be easily documented. And if such documentation is put on the internet, it then becomes content, ready again for a form-giving operation inside the museum. In this way, the exchange between the exhibition space and the internet becomes an exchange between content and form… Additionally, curated exhibitions of this art can reveal the hidden mechanisms of selection governing the distribution of text and image on the internet.' Boris Groys, 'Curating in the Post-Internet Age', para 18 of 20.
368. for example the restaging of Harald Szeeman's exhibition 'When Attitudes become Forms', which apparently gave an experiential sense of the extreme spatial proximity of artworks.

representations,[369] to the reconstruction by means of a detailed described 'walk-through'[370] – or as Reesa Greenberg delineates them: the 'replica, the riff and the reprise'[371] – but each give a partial, or different type of experience.

This idea of the exhibition as auratic, performative and event-based and therefore resistant to being fully reproduced is fascinating in relation to some more recent archiving activity: reproduction of exhibitions via VR walk-throughs. As discussed, many museums and galleries now offer some form of virtual viewing of collections and exhibitions which offers a horizontally distributed, accessible mode of viewing, but denies this impression on the body, and in some sense denies the body at all.

The impact of the immersive virtual viewing of artworks, can be looked at though the filter of what Hito Steyerl calls 'Bubble Vision'. She notes that in VR and 360-degree video, the viewer is at the centre of a sphere or bubble of vision which has a blind spot at the centre which excludes the self. If you're lucky you get an avatar hand or a head but the body is missing. She relates the VR user at the centre of a sphere of vision to the position of the human at the centre of nature in the anthropocene. Just as the VR user is missing at the centre of the bubble vision, so the human who is ostensibly the prime mover of the Anthropocene epoch, is potentially disappearing.[372] VR, she suggests, is a training ground to get used to this idea: 'rehearsing how to be our

369. Afterall's digital approximation of The Other Story – see 'Retelling 'The Other Story – Or What Now?'' <https://www.afterall.org/exhibition-histories/the-other-story> [accessed 7.10.20]
370. A strategy undertaken by Natalie Hope O'Donnell in 'Space as Curatorial Practice: The exhibition as a Spatial Construct', Ph.D. thesis, Oslo School of Architecture and Design, 2016, <https://www.academia.edu/28429224/PhD_thesis_Space_as_Curatorial_Practice _the_exhibition_as_a_spatial_construct_2016_>, [accessed 20 January 2020].
371. In 'Remembering Exhibitions': From Point to Line to Web', *Tate Papers*.
372. Either due to handing over power and agency to opaque algorithms and invisible data systems, having been automated or superseded by technology or due to ecological crises.

own ghost'.[373] Mark Wilsher sees a similar problematic lack of embodiment in artworks using VR and draws parallels with Donna Haraway's 'god-trick' of 'seeing everywhere from nowhere', a non-situated, non-subjective form of knowledge.[374]

The emplaced space of exhibition is one way not to rehearse Steyerl's abdication of the body and to offer resistance to modes of reproduction – to stage a singular relationship to art objects in space: 'Documentation on a webpage works on a different visual and interpretative register than the physical object itself [...] The conditions of presentation (e.g., gallery, museum, or studio) and how the work is contextualised, installed and framed in relation to its surroundings alters our reading and experience of the work. To stage it in space is to take in to account the embodied and perceptual experience of its imaging and how it impresses on the body as a proximate, material, semiotic thing.'[375] Similarly Paul O'Neill notes the importance of the sensory matrix which an emplaced exhibition offers and notes that 'as well as being linguistic or semiotic, exhibitions are also spatial. They induce forms that migrate between fields of haptic, visual and auditory relations. The group exhibition is a dramaturgical setting for the staging of spatial relations between works and viewers, with curating as an activity that structures such experiences for the viewer and for the

373. These ideas were delineated in lectures at the Serpentine Marathon 2017, *Guest, Ghost, Host: Machine!* documented at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=boMbdtu2rLE&list=PLLrFzV6gBibfi5ES0Is 8QjBSlEs73DuZl>, [accessed 21 March 2018]. This quote appears 10min.43seconds in, and also in a lecture at Stamps School of Art and Design, Michigan University, 2018, documented at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1Qhy0_PCjs,>, [accessed 21 March 2018].
374. Mark Wilsher, in 'Virtual and Other Bodies', *Art Monthly*, 427, June 2019, 11–14, dismisses the emancipatory assessment of virtual spaces allowing for the adoption of alternate identities, (eg, cyberfeminist, à la Laurie Anderson) and evinces what seems a rather conservative anxiety over the loss of the bodily relationship in the production and viewing of sculpture (which he links to dissociative conditions and anxiety in relation to time spent immersed in digital and virtual spaces, which rehashes the negative arguments about screen time for kids.), and Haraway's god-trick of 'seeing everywhere from nowhere', a non-situated knowledge. He similarly calls for a 'new language of embodiment for 3D technologies' and virtual realities, which does not 'leave the body behind'.
375. David M. Berry, Michel van Dartel, Michael Dieter, Michele Kasprzak, Nat Muller, Rachel O'Reilly, José Luis de Vicente, 'A Blogpost as Exhibition', in *New Aesthetic, New Anxieties,* Rotterdam: V2 Lab for the Unstable Media, 2012, 28–31, <newaestheticnewanxieties en 2012.06.22 14.14.30.pdf>, [accessed 7 November17].

work.'[376] He goes on to identify 'Les Immatériaux' as 'a key moment in consolidating the group exhibition as a spatial medium for thought and experimentation'.

Walter Benjamin scholar Samuel Weber proposes, after Benjamin, that we see an exhibition as akin to Brechtian epic theatre. Benjamin refers to Brecht's stage as an '*Austellungsraum*', an exhibitions space – 'a shared space, an aesthetically and politically-loaded gathering that is both defined and yet open'.[377] Lucy Steeds suggests that this criteria of collective physical presence is the toughest critique for online expositions of exhibitions[378] as it loses the sense of bodily presence in the physical exhibition space.[379]

Ironically, post-internet art, responding to classic institutional critique of the space of the gallery and following through a critique from net.art, initially posited that the work of art lay equally in the version of an artwork encountered in a gallery, online, as a pdf, and as bootlegs and remakes by other authors – any node in the network was equally valorised. However one of the key articulators of post-internet practices, Artie Vierkant noted: 'This marks a denigration of objects and our relationship to space – if an object before us in the gallery is only one of an infinite multitude of possible forms that object can take, its value to the viewer becomes little more than a curiosity'.[380] The post-internet moment was therefore short-lived and was followed by a reinstating of the primacy of the gallery as an end point, with post-

376. Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Cultures,* p. 91. '[Lyotard] distinguished the exhibition as the manifestation of a philosophy and tested the concept of the exhibition as a sensorial experience with its own qualities and properties that collectively produce its own genre of art in which ideas, artworks, objects and zones of interpretation intersect sensorially, philosophically and spatially.' 91–92.
377. From remarks after Samuel Weber's paper, 'Pictures After an Exhibition' at Afterall event 'Arts Exhibition Histories Online', 16 November 2017, from recording supplied. <https://www.afterall.org/events/art s exhibition histories online>, [accessed 5 May 2020]. *Writing Tests* provided another such shared discursive space.
378. Such as Afterall's online reimagining of Rasheed Araeen's 1989 exhibition *The Other Story*.
379. From remarks after Samuel Weber's paper at Afterall event 'Arts Exhibition Histories Online'. See note 375.
380. Artie Vierkant, 'The Image-Object Post Internet', para 38 of 40.

internet practices focusing on 'the artistic use of the internet as a mass medium and the translation of it's content into physical space'. [381]

Elizabeth Grosz, in her earlier take on virtual reality, in 2001, opposes concerns about the loss of the body in VR (such as Steyerl and Wilsher's) and echoes the similarity between the virtual and other modes of potentiality. She argues against disembodiment as endemic to the virtual[382] and 'the separation of VR from the real and the material, the simulation from the original'.[383] Her approach is more in line with Barad's entanglements, rather than binary oppositions, which sees computer-based VR as a space of projection and potential, fundamentally no different from 'the virtual reality of writing, reading, drawing, or even thinking'.[384] Like Barad she suggests, 'This relation between the virtual and the real prefigures and is entwined with a whole series of other oppositional terms—among them, mind and body, culture and nature, origin and copy.'[385] She suggests further that an intra-action and entanglement of the virtual and the real or actual is always at play, one is nested within the other, and that what's needed is 'reconceptualising the real and the relations of embeddedness, the nesting or interimplication (perhaps another name for difference) of the virtual and real within each other'.[386] Grosz's 'embeddedness' and 'interimplication' recall strongly Barad's superposition and entanglement and the post-digital position of the intertwinedness of the material and the digital. She asks whether 'it is no longer clear where matter converts into information and information is reconfigured as matter or representation'[387] which was

381. Jenifer Chan, 'Notes on Post Internet', in *You are Here: Art after the Internet*, p. 116.
382. 'I am less interested in the displacement from the physical to the conceptual, from the body to the mind, because I do not believe that such a displacement occurs now, or ever.' Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside – Essays on Virtual and Real Space*, Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2001, p. 84–5. <https://monoskop.org/images/8/80/Grosz_Elizabeth_Architecture_from_the_Outside_Essays_on_Virtual_and_Real_Space.pdf>, [accessed 12 December 2019].
383. Ibid., p. 81.
384. Ibid., p.77.
385. Ibid., p.80.
386. Ibid., p.88.
387. Ibid., p. 87.

The intra-action of the real and the virtual – reading Grosz through Barad

also the key question asked by 'Les Immatériaux' and 'A Strange Weave'. Barad, however, takes this idea of interimplication further in her notion of intra-action and diffraction which, drawing from quantum thinking, allow also for a 'superposition' of elements which are separated by time and space, intra-acting as one; something which is particularly pertinent to Virtual Reality, which has similar attributes of in some ways overcoming space-time separation.

Figure 39. VR walkround installed as part of 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space',Project Space Plus, Lincoln. Photograph: John Hartley

To return to Grosz's interimplication of matter and information; certainly matter was literally converted into information in the VR walkround and information converted into matter in Oliver Laric's 3D print, but the intertwinedness was not necessarily something that came though audience members' experience, rather the distinction between matter and information was highlighted, as a difference in the potential to lead to thought. An audience member in the Lincoln version of the exhibition suggested that the VR 'because it's information' was 'not an experience that leads to thought'. This was set against the data output in the Oliver Laric 3D print which was seen as 'more than information'.[388] The viewer felt that this issue circled around a contrast

Matthew Cheeseman on Exhibition in 'Writing Tests': 'The virtual tour of A Strange Weave of Time and Space is not the same as the exhibition, but rather a translation. Like all translations it is a wedding, it has something borrowed and something new.'

388. 'Everything in this age has aura it needs to be divided into other understandings. That said the VR is a poor relation to the appropriated object used for art (such as

to a memory of the original show, a holding onto an embodied experience. As Francesco Stocchi notes, reproducing an exhibition involves three types of audience: 'those who saw the original and cannot help but make reference to the nostalgic aura of their previous experience, those who are familiar with or studied the exhibition thanks to reproduced materials, or third person accounts and whose experience will be akin to physically entering an archive; and those who are discovering it for the first time'. [389] He suggests this involves the superimposition of different modes of time, the linear, measurable chronos, stretching back into history and the experiential kairos: the 'opportune moment'. This anachronic superimposition clearly causes some cognitive dissonance in a spectator who has seen both iterations.

This response also aligns with the Groys notion of the exhibition being unreproducible, even if all the elements of it are reproduced (as many of the elements of this exhibition were), because of its performative nature in which we are part of the strange weave of this particular event in a particular moment – a conjunction or convocation of things and people and space. The gaze from within an exhibition rather than the frontal gaze of the screen means that the thing that is retained in memory is this embodied relation, which is perhaps what this audience member is highlighting. This distinction is also highlighted by Maria Lind (albeit intended as a distinction between the practice of art historical and curatorial research): 'Rather than representing, "the curatorial" involves presenting – it performs something in the here and now instead of merely mapping it from there and then.' [390]

The VR was felt to offer a 'mediated relationship, disembodied curiosity' which was less affecting than work which was more

Laric) – I relate to this – it is more than information.' Visitor response from exhibition walk-round, Project Space Plus, Lincoln, 12 November 2019.
389. In the essay 'Every Critical act is a Creative Act', in *When Attitudes Become Form Bern 1969/Venice 2013*, pp. 443–450, 445.
390. Maria Lind, 'The Curatorial', *Artforum* 68, 2, October 2009, 103. Reprinted in *Selected Maria Lind Writing*, ed. by Brian Kuan Wood, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010, p.65.

'materially visceral'.[391] The removal of the possibility of touch and embodied relation to works in VR, functions to highlight the way the artworks elicit 'synapses of touch' in the viewer and also increase awareness of the materiality of the VR interface.[392] This highlighting of the importance of tactility allows viewers 'to position themselves more consciously, critically and creatively'[393] in relation to the reproduced VR experience. It seems that the potential in VR identified by Grosz, is yet to be actualised on an experiential level and the physical proximity to an artefact, even if created through digital reproduction (as with the Laric sculpture), is still felt as part of the charge of the performative, auratic potential of an emplaced exhibition.

See Becky Shaw on Materiality in 'Writing Tests': 'As well as being 'out there' in a physical form constructed through time, material and process, materiality is also the synapsual (an invented word?) 'thought shape' made when you think of a substance/thing? Our body feel/imagines the weight, texture, density.'

In a discussion of James Bridle's now defunct tumblr blog as exhibition – *The New Aesthetic* – it has been noted that the final image was of Cornelia Parker's work *Embryo Firearms*,1995 (casts of Colt 45 guns in the first stage of production, blocky and unformed), the objectness of which was entirely flattened and commodified by this online presentation. The writers suggest that it matters whether you are encountering the work spatially or as a jpeg because staging it in space takes into account the conditions and context of its presentation and 'how it impresses on the body as a proximate material-semiotic thing'.[394] This recalls again the 'synapse of touch', the perception of the potential for a physical intra-action, engendered by an embodied relationship to a material art object in space.

This is something referred to by Laure Prouvost in discussing her work *Re-dit-en-un-in-learning CENTER* at Lisson Gallery, October 2020. She

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391. Visitor response to Lincoln exhibition, 12 November 2019.
392. One audience member said the wooden plinth that held the trackpad, heated by the technology within, brought her back to a sense of physicality.
393. Anne Cranny-Francis, *Technology and Touch: The Biopolitics of Emerging Technologies*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p.34. Quoted by Kay Are in 'On touching back: Learning from objects, in and out of virtual reality, in *Hacking the Anthropocene: Archive*, pp. 71–94,
<https://www.academia.edu/37730897/On_touching_back_Learning_from_object s_in_and_out_of_virtual_reality_authors_pre-press_copy_>, [accessed 16 January 2020].
394. 'A Blogpost as Exhibition', in *New Aesthetic, New Anxieties,* p. 30.

notes that we are often now 'feeling through screens, breathing through screens' and the video element of this installation includes a virtual gallery walk-through on iPhone, before the work was installed, with the gallerist's fingers physically pointing out spaces. Prouvost suggests the work itself is about 'how I can embody the space or understand the movement of bodies in the shell that is the gallery space – that's a huge struggle when you're pixels talking and you're trying to feel a space just through images and that's alienating but also can I use it in a way that brings connection and play to the situation?'[395] She suggests that every sculptural object has a residual sensation from us having touched that material before and that when viewing objects 'we're not just looking we are touching as well' – perhaps these are the synapses of touch, the latent sense of proprioception, referred to by the visitor to 'A Strange Weave'.[396]
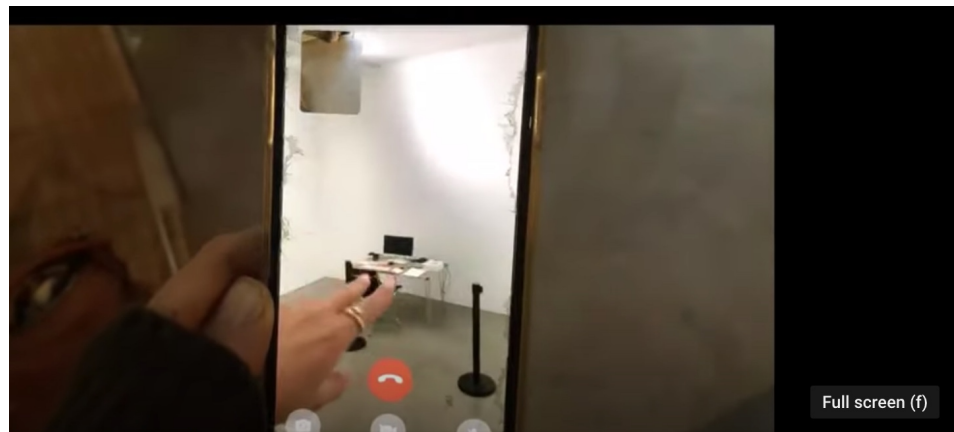
Figure 40. Laure Prouvost, still from film component of 'Re-dit-en-un-in learning CENTER', Lisson Gallery, October 2020.

Can curatorial practice, in creating the emplaced exhibition which plays on 'synapses of touch', offer insights into the status of the auratic in the post-digital that could not be gained otherwise – through discourse alone or through online presentation? Terry Smith distinguishes curatorial knowledge production from that created by an

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395. From *Sculpture Talk: Laure Prouvost*, organised by Yorkshire Sculpture International, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpX8TEES-Z4>, Released 15 October 2020, for a week.
396. Ibid.

art historian or critic by referring to 'exhibitionary knowledge' – things you learn from actually walking round an exhibition in real space.[397] Smith discusses the fact that catalogue deadlines mean that curators often write about the exhibition before it has been actualised, meaning that this writing can only be about the 'subject' of the exhibition, not its 'exhibitionary content'.[398] The meaning of the exhibition, he suggests, only emerges when it is installed, by means of a network of interactions between the artworks, through which process 'there's a constant production of new knowledge'.[399] This aligns with much of the discourse around 'practice as research' and in particular with Henk Borgdorff's thinking which also argues for a situated knowledge as part of artistic research and the importance of a bodily interaction with the world to bring this about. (Like Lyotard he references the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to argue for this). He suggests that to see this insight only through subsequent verbal explication reduces research to a 'decoding exercise'.[400] The notion of the exhibition as a space to produce thinking that is not textual but arises out of material intra-actions (producing insights on materiality, performativity and discursivity) is key to this idea of diffractive curating. (This links back to Philippe Parreno's description of 'Les Immatériaux' as 'a place to think, to produce thought', rather than a display space.[401]) Barad's diffractive close through-readings of the intra-action of different materialities, seem also to demand this direct embodied relation. This

397. Terry Smith, *Talking Contemporary Curating*, ed. by Kate Fowles, New York, Independent Curators International, 2015, p. 283.
398. Ibid., p. 45.
399. 'Curatorial Practice as Production of Visual & Spatial Knowledge', *Contemporaneity*, Vol 4, No 1, 2015, documented at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281512381_Curatorial_Practice_as_Production_of_Visual_Spatial_Knowledge_Panel_Discussion_October_4_2014/fulltext/56410cdc08aec448fa6045d2/Curatorial-Practice-as-Production-of-Visual-Spatial-Knowledge-Panel-Discussion-October-4-2014.pdf>, [accessed 20 January 2020].
400. 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts,* ed. by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, London: Routledge, 2010, p.59.
401. 'And one exhibition changed my life, *Les Immatériaux* by Lyotard. I am still haunted by that show, by the way it was made, the way it was produced, the fact that it was an exhibition not as a display of objects but a place to think, to produce thought.' Philippe Parreno quoted by Ben Luke in 'The Art Machine: The Centre Pompidou at 40', *The Art Newspaper*, 1 February 2017. See also footnote 90.

embodiment, was curiously drawn attention to in the installation as, due to the exigencies of the installation, a person operating the trackpad for the VR walkround might have their shadow appear on screen, placing them in some senses back into proximity with the works depicted, or highlighting their lack of proximity – in either case disrupting the sense of mise en abîme and reinstating a sense of corporeality in relation to the work.

A quality of distance is, of course, something Benjamin identifies as endemic to the auratic and distance is also what is overcome or removed by the digital – digital flattens distance and allows a form of access across geography. In this it participates in Benjamin's discourse around the progressive potential of reproduction, in exactly the same way Oliver Laric's *Lincoln Scans* project does. However, the digital in other ways retains the distancing effect of the screen, the fact that bodily proximity is denied, that despite the tactility of the touch screen, we can still not put ourself in a time-space relation to an object.

The exhibition and the inter-relation with the VR prompted a discussion around the notion of aura being predicated on attention, rather than any form of authentic or original status, proximity or distance.[402] This notion of attention chimes with Benjamin's later conception of aura (replicated in the '*Was ist aura?*' text and drawing), which is the thing which 'returns your gaze'. This response suggests that works may become auratic by responding to a quality of attention and being felt to return it. In this conception, aura exists in the way

402. Visitor comment, from recorded session 12 November 2019, available in Record of Practice: 'I wondered if I paid enough attention to any one thing whether its aura would be greater than if I didn't pay it any attention.. So rather than a thing arriving with aura, is it something like a quality of attention? Something which is a relationship that's grown with time, space and openness.' And, also, 'I don't think it depends on it being the original unique thing now. It's gone through so much - our world has changed so much through mechanical reproduction, through digital reproduction, that aura has a different sense for us now, and it still in line with what he meant for it, it's just it's not to do with this original, unique thing anymore. And I think that attention is something has to do with that, what we, either individually or collectively, choose to give attention to.'

that we perceptually animate something by our attention and it animates us.

Figure 41. Installation view of 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' at Project Space Plus, Lincoln. Photograph: John Hartley

ii.   Lyotard's notion of the figural in relation to the emplaced exhibition, VR and the glossary

In Lyotard's Ph.D. thesis which became his first published book – *Discourse, Figure*[403] – he offsets linguistic discourse against 'figure' which he designates as the element of the visual which is untranslatable into language. He suggests that text lacks depth and once viewed and parsed does not allow for meaning to be altered, whereas the physical surface of an artwork offers different levels of experience via different degrees of proximity and intensity. The figural is transmitted via

403. Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, essentially an attack on Saussure and Jakobson's structural linguistics – which he regarded, as Kiff Bamford suggests, as: 'a field of discourse which does not allow for thickness and denies the presence of the figure', Kiff Bamford, *Lyotard and the 'figural' in Performance, Art and Writing*, London: Continuum Books, 2012, p. 20.

intensities rather than communication, signification systems are disrupted to create a space which is not available in discourse. 'Les Immatériaux', in many ways, seems an embodiment of this thinking (with its aversion to textual inscription as interpretation) more than of his more oft-cited work on post-modernism. And curatorial practice more generally could be said to deal in the figural in this sense – that which is not available to discourse.

In this schema, the differing proximities and densities viewers found in the Site Gallery exhibition, express the figural and it may explain the lack of this intensity felt in viewing the VR in the next iteration. As Kiff Bamford notes on the figural: 'the screen of new media does not operate in the same way: there is little revelation or pleasure gain from increased pixellation or optical blindness of the digital screen'.[404] The 'thickness' of the figural is absent in screen-based representation. The figural offers, instead of 'reading' an image, a spatial engagement with a 'plastic event', involving the desiring body. This could be related to the 'diffracted sensuality' that a viewer found in the Site exhibition, the role of gestures and movements, attractions and repulsions, and perhaps explains the affective[405] charge of the proximate viewing of art in contrast to virtual viewing. Here 'affective' means something which is distinct from emotion as it defies description, and resists articulation through language, but implies intra-action in time and space – encounters in the world, rather than interiority. For Brian Massumi, following Spinoza, affect is the capacity to affect and be affected, and for Bamford, parsing Lyotard, affect is 'related to the temporality of an event as an affective intensity is felt but cannot be defined'. Affect can perhaps, then, happen in intra-action between audience and the event-based exhibition. Indeed, affect has many of the mutating characteristics which Benjamin assigned to aura, particularly the late conception of aura, as the capacity to return the gaze, and chimes with a capacity to affect and be affected.

404. Bamford, *Lyotard and the 'figural'*, p. 18.
405. Ibid., p. 81.

A strange weave of time and space

Figure 42. Title of the exhibition, drawn by Penny McCarthy

Lyotard does not uphold a binary opposition between the textual and the figural, however. He acknowledges that we must use language to talk about art, but notes that the figural exists also within language. It exists in the moments in which language is slowed down or blown up, when the smooth flow of representation is interrupted, when attention is drawn to 'the thickness of the line in the letter' and when 'graphic elements become something other than arbitrary signifiers in a closed system'.[406] Lyotard references, as an example, Mallarmé's poetic disarrangement of type in the poem *Un Coup de des jamais n'abolira le hazard*. For me this imbrication of the letter and the line relates to Penny McCarthy's drawing of the exhibition title (and more broadly her drawn replication of text) which was used as a graphical identity for the exhibition, and which both communicated but slowed down or disrupted communication by drawing attention to the drawn line in the letter. This emancipation of the graphical from communication (figure from discourse) also recalls the viewer's response to the enlarging of sections of the glossary text on the touch screen, so it becomes material, more than just information. Indeed, the glossary aligns with Lyotard's ideas on the 'good book' in which 'linguistic time' is deconstructed so that it consists of 'fragments that in principle can be rearranged in various configurations', something 'that the reader could dip into anywhere, in any order: a book to be grazed'.[407]

The figural appeals to what Lyotard calls an 'ability to induce bodily resonance'[408] which recalls the comments on the activation of 'synapses

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406. Ibid., p. 22.
407. Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, p. 13. Hopefully *Writing Tests* is such a book.
408. Ibid., p. 206.

of touch' in the exhibition. The figural gives a way to articulate the importance of the resonance with the body in the exhibition as event but does not exclude this also happening via the digital. It also enables an enmeshing of Barad's criteria for the (curatorial) apparatus: 'materiality, discursivity and performativity'. This suggests how diffractive curating might find things out differently from language, and by working with the figural, how it might perform 'affect'. Indeed, the notion of the figural and the diffractive can be read together as both imply an entangled approach between the textual and the visual, subjects and objects, and a move away from representation to a material understanding of what is viewed, as well as the enmeshing of different spaces and times: 'Figure opens out another space-time which isn't yet, not already, caught up in the rhythmic rule of before and afterwards.'[409] With the figural, Lyotard develops Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology with its basis in the 'intertwining'[410] of subject and object, both in and of the world, in and out of time, a precursor to Barad's entanglement. Reading the figural through diffraction perhaps allows for an understanding of affect in exhibitions in the post-digital, which itself allows a new understanding of aura as intra-action.

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409. Lyotard, 'Presence', trans. Marian Hobson and Tom Cochran, in *The Language of Art History*, ed. by Sali Kema and Iva Gaskell, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 20.

410. Merleau-Ponty suggests that 'there is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other' in *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans Alphonso Lingis, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968, p.138. Merleau-Ponty's theory of 'reversibility' has many affinities with a diffractive methodology as in this 'chiasmic' approach, two positions, or subject and object do not simply reflect upon each other, they are intertwined and entangled. This is also put in relation to ideas of touch: 'Merleau-Ponty elaborates reversibility initially with respect to seeing, but immediately introduces the tactile: I touch and the world touches me, I touch my own act of touching and am subject and object both within myself.' From Susan Kozel, 'The Virtual and the Physical: A phenomenological approach to performance research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, ed. by Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, London: Routledge, 2011, pp. 204–222, 206, <http://clab.iat.sfu.ca/804/uploads/Main/RoutledgeCompanion.pdf>, [accessed 26 November 2020]. Henk Borgdorff also references Merleau-Ponty in the same publication to make claims for the pre-reflective, embodied knowledge enabled by artistic research which, like diffraction, is also set in opposition to reflection: 'Part of the significance and singularity of artistic research seems to lie in its appraisal and articulation of this pre-reflective knowledge as embodied in art practices and products.' in 'The Production of Knowledge in Artistic Research', in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, pp. 44–64, 59.

Conclusion

> The past matters and so does the future, but the past is never left behind, never finished once and for all, and the future is not that which will come to be in an unfolding of the present moment; rather the past and future are enfolded participants in matter's iterative becoming.[411]

Figure 43. Cover of printed version of *Writing Tests*, designed by Daniel Royle

This image is the cover of the publication made of the glossary *Writing Tests*, thirty six years after the original *Epreuves D'Ecriture* was published. The image references the original catalogue cover and its cellophane wrapping, which partly obscures the graphical identity for 'Les Immatériaux' – a fingerprint manipulated to form a spiral[412]. The image also recalls for me a diffraction diagram, which is appropriate as this experiment in diffractive writing is also in intra-action, superimposed with the original.

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411. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p.181.
412. By Luc Maillot of Grafibus. The origination of the new cover design is documented in the diffractive journal in the Record of Practice.

Whilst undertaking the writing up of my research, another exhibition which took 'Les Immatériaux' as touchstone opened at the Ullens Centre for Contemporary Art, Beijing.[413] The legacy of the exhibition, contrary to its initial reception, is now fully entrenched in exhibition histories and continues to catalyse new curatorial productions.

I set out to perform an anamnesis and diffraction of an exhibition to see how that might affect current curatorial practice – a looking back that moves to entangle different times together. To 'exorcise the ghosts of our immediate future' – to see how the relationship between art, technology, the artefact and the reproduction had shifted by superimposing or diffracting it in an anachronic timeframe. To use the contradictory tenses of the archive to conjugate the future.

However, the intention was not to materially revisit specific curatorial strategies from an exhibition from the past and document this to retroactively 'see what happened', rather using Hillevi Lenz Taguchi's notion of pedagogical documentation 'as a creative actualising of the event, making it 'material' in front of us',[414] not retrospective or prospective, but through a non-linear approach to time: 'In every repetition we make […] there is a new version of what was before that differentiates itself from the past, but contains and transforms it at the same time.' They suggest a laying out of documentation to 're-visit, re-live or re-enact and unfold some of the multiplicities and differentiations of the event, but instead of thinking of such action in terms of a progression from past to present to future, we think about it as an ongoing duration of the event.'[415] This is what 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' sought

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413. 'Immaterial / Re-material: A Brief History of Computing Art', UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, September 26, 2020 to January 17, 2021.
414. Hillevi Lenz Taguchi, *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education (Contesting Early Childhood)*, p. 93.
415. Ibid., p. 95.

to achieve; to create an ongoing duration of the exhibition as event, in anachronic superposition with a precursor to see what this composite entanglement could elucidate about our contemporary notions of aura within the post-digital. I was interested in how an interweaving of past, present, digital, handmade and original and reproduction, offered by a diffractive methodology could undermine these dichotomies and how curating could thereby potentially produce the auratic by this diffractive means, by creating an intra-active phenomena, creating aura through affect.

> apparatuses are material (re)configurings or discursive practices that produce (and are part of) material phenomena in their becoming[416]

I aimed to materialise and theorise a mode of diffractive curating by creating diffractive apparatuses within curating and in doing so add to the discourse around curatorial practice. I saw the exhibition, the sound piece and the glossary as creating these apparatuses. 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' aligned with Barad's definition of diffraction apparatuses in as much as it involved 'material configurations and reconfigurings of the world that re(con)figure spatiality and temporality as well as (the traditional notion of) dynamics (i.e. they do not exist as static structures, nor do they merely unfold or evolve in space and time)'.[417] It was not just a bringing together of artworks to elucidate a thesis, it was creating phenomena, intra-actions and affects in multiple iterations; it was 'productive of, and part of, the phenomena produced'.[418] In this I hope it succeeded in being a 'research exhibition' that produces exhibitionary knowledge, rather than presenting pre-existing research – to be 'an exhibition producing ideas through the display of objects in a space'.[419]

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416. *Meeting The Universe Halfway*, p. 186.
417. Ibid., p.146.
418. Ibid.
419. Artist Philippe Parreno's succinct description of 'Les Immatériaux' in Philippe Parreno and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, *The Conversation Series 14*, Cologne: Walter König, 2008, p. 17.

This was achieved by means of a curatorial approach which created an oscillation between original and reproduction which undermines their opposition, working diffractively with the structures which underpin exhibition making and creating discursive apparatuses, and exploring the importance of haptic embodiment and the performativity of the exhibition.

So, what did this entanglement elucidate? I believe that this study provides evidence for the following:

The curatorial resurgence of interest in the artefact and in revisiting the archive of exhibition history need not be a conservative withdrawal from the current post-digital moment and need not situate us in a hauntological loop, cannibalising our past, but can create a new composite intra-action of old and new.

The idea that a contemporary sense of aura is linked to affect and intra-action (in the collective event of an exhibition and in other contexts), no longer necessarily to either artefactual singularity or digital dispersability. Indeed, that the auratic and the entangled need not be oppositional.

The idea that diffractive curatorial apparatuses give a more generative experience of the exhibition than more straightforwardly textual or univocal ones. That these foreground materiality, discursivity and performativity in the exhibition and change the way we create exhibitionary knowledge in the event of an exhibition.

The sense of 'synapses of touch' or 'bodily resonance' – a cognitive understanding of a bodily relation to artworks – is still an important element of curating in the post-digital whether it involves artefactual or digital material or exists on or offline.

Diffractive approaches to curating can register 'the interference patterns [of artworks] on the recording films of our lives and bodies'.[420]

i.   The contribution of the research

The contribution includes the curatorial outputs which entered the public realm – 'Project for an Exhibition', the two versions of the exhibition 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space', two essays published on Site Gallery's Medium account, the VR walk-through of the exhibition and *Writing Tests* – the online and printed versions of the glossary created to accompany the exhibitions. By diffracting elements of an iconic earlier exhibition, they also add to the discourses around the revisiting of archival exhibitions and exhibition histories.

Using diffractive methodologies which create 'constructive interference' and inherently question the distinctions between original and copy, the project adds to a contemporary understanding of aura in the post-digital which is nested within and superimposed on, rather than in opposition to reproduction and dissemination. The research also argues for the distinct space offered by the emplaced exhibition to create a sense of aura through event-based performativity, affect and intra-action in a convocation which is always singular and distinct, but does not suggest that this is the only way to experience aura.

These projects were iterative explorations of the affordances of diffractive apparatus as alternate curatorial devices for exhibition interpretation. A report commissioned by Engage Scotland: 'Mapping Interpretation Practices in Contemporary Art,'[421] suggests that multi-

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420. Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium: FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience*, p.16.
421. By Dr Heather Lynch, May 2006 available at <https://engage.org/resources/mapping-interpretation-practices-in-contemporary-art/>, [accessed 2 February 2019].

modal, experiential forms of interpretation generate 'a sense of excitement and potential' and involve the audience more directly in meaning-making, in contrast to more traditional forms which deliver an authoritative textual interpretation. These modes also invite input from audiences rather than viewing them as passive receivers of the univocal authorised ideas around an exhibition. The approach to this taken in this study could have applications for exhibition interpretation more generally, where the overlay of sound onto an exhibition as a whole can shift audience interpretation or experience of the exhibition and cumulative, open access glossary projects can expand on and inflect ideas encountered in an exhibition. The absence of a singular authorial interpretation or exhibition text or even multiple univocal essays for exhibition catalogues allows the naturally diffractive process of curation more space to amplify the generative superpositions created in exhibitions. The cumulative and polyvocal response in the glossary and the fact that this could be added to by visitors as well as invited writers, allows the exhibition to fulfil Barad's claims for the discursivity of the diffraction apparatus. This approach to interpretation could be applied to exhibitions irrespective of content and aligns with current interest in disrupting hierarchies and orthodoxies of interpretation. This is certainly something I will seek to do in future work.

Specifically, the online glossary (a bespoke online open access database created for this project) is a model that could be used to create a shared space to collectively and iteratively create meaning around an exhibition, or a themed lecture series, or simply a set of terms. It offers a way to capture insight and diffract multiple voices; reading them through each other to create a form of composite, collective knowledge.

The diffractive approach can offer a mode of analysis to explain why some exhibitions produce 'work', ie are more than the sum of individuated elements and become a superposition which acts on itself and the issues at play (including the Baradian criteria of materiality,

discursivity and performativity). This approach can be more broadly applied in curating.

Having been through the era of the auteur curator in which the univocal curator's authorship is primary, this research suggests another model which in part eschews this omniscient curatorial position, and instead diffracts and diversifies multiple voices. Lyotard, one of the ghosts engaged with in this research, was also interested in this, but ironically, by aiming to undermine the clarity of the univocal curator's voice in 'Les Immatériaux', he in fact succeeded in accelerating the primacy of the auteur curator.

The research posits a blended approach to curating, that eschews the binary between artefact and reproduction, analogue and digital. It encompassed an emplaced physical exhibition, alongside a VR element which offers greater access across time and geography, as well as longevity. Whilst not replicating the embodied experience of exhibition, the VR document reminds us of its importance and offers a more vivid form of exhibitionary knowledge than the forms of documentation usually found in the exhibition archive.

In this the research is timely, this hybrid approach is robust and able to offer a way forward in challenging times for access to art in galleries.[422] This approach offers enhanced access to audiences, enabling exhibitions to span time and space. [423]

422. With reference to the pandemic, as also noted by Saim Demircan: 'What will be the effect of the hybridity or the blending of virtual and physical space in ways that incorporate new digital-based viewership alongside established bricks and mortar models of gallery attendance?', 'Remote Working', *Art Monthly,* 451, November 2021, 6–10, p.7.
423. It's interesting that lockdown has enhanced access to the arts for disabled people and also lowered the carbon footprint of the artworld as fewer people are travelling internationally to see exhibitions, biennales and art fairs. See Francis Ryan, 'Covid lockdown opening up world for people with disabilities', *The Guardian,* 20 April, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/20/covid-lockdown-opening-up-world-for-people-with-disabilities >, [accessed 4 November 2020].

The research overall offers an understanding of the affordances of a diffractive curatorial frame, rather than an interpretative one and theorises a diffractive curatorial approach through practice. This is a distinct addition to curatorial discourse which is yet to fully articulate curating through a diffractive approach or posit that specific diffractive apparatuses could impact on curatorial practice and audiences' experience of it.

ii.　　　How to apply the knowledge gains/ What needs further study

In current work I am developing forms of audio interpretation for a major public sculpture project by artist Ryan Gander, whereby interpretation will be in the form of audio files involving the interweaving of multiple voices accessed by audiences on their phones via QR code. In this I am following through Lyotard's exhortation to eschew text for sound in the interpretation of art and also aligning with the development of multimodal forms of interpretation that are more responsive to neuro-divergence and different access needs. This is an approach that my research has shown to be generative of rich associations, and in moving away from an authorial, univocal approach to a curatorial frame, capable of levelling hierarchies.

Further study is needed on the conditions of viewing post-pandemic as we go forward and what impact the accelerated digitisation of viewing might have on curating and our relationship to the artefact and the experience of the auratic in the post-digital. In fact, the pandemic may move us past the post-digital and fully to this sense of a blended approach to curating and artwork presentation. The lineage of entanglement in terms of analogue and digital, artefact and reproduction, which spans from Lyotard to Laruelle, from Grosz to Groys, from Benjamin to Barad could be extended to see where this diffractive approach might lead.

New developments in the art market which impact on the relationship between the digital and the authentic, are rich for further study. A Non-Fungible Token (NFT), representing a digital artwork by Beeple, has been auctioned for £69 million and Damien Hirst has also forayed into this blockchain-based arena with a project called 'Currency'. Interestingly, the buyer of the Beeple work suggests that the work's value lies in the way it represents time and haptic commitment over a thirteen-year period,[424] not dissimilar to the way value is ascribed to 'hand-made' work. In NFTs the resuscitation of the authentic has perhaps reached its apotheosis via the re-introduction of ideas of scarcity and authenticity into the circulation of digital images as commodities.

Figure 44. Twitter exchange between McKenzie Wark and Cameron Winklevoss re Non-Fungible Tokens

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424. 'To us, Beeple represents the most iconic artist of this digital generation and this piece in particular, we believe, is the most valuable piece of this generation. Not because it's digital and not because it's an NFT, but because it represents compressed time and the only thing you can't hack in this digital world is time. Skill is transferable and technology becomes obsolete.' *Artnet*, 12 March 2021,<https://news.artnet.com/market/the-buyer-of-the-69-million-beeple-nft-metapurse-1951561>, [accessed 17 March 2021].

iii.   Addendum:

Figure 45. Installation image of the zone 'All the Copies' by Liliane Terrier and Jean-Louis Boissier in 'Les Immatériaux'

In the first year of this study, I was asked to produce an alternative research poster, which would in some way encapsulate my research. I had just visited the Pompidou archive to look at information on 'Les Immatériaux' firsthand and had found a number of documentation images which were not labelled as to what site of the exhibition they were from. This image fascinated me in its contemporaneity. Particularly if considering the contemporary, as Agamben does, as something out of time: 'that relationship with time that adheres to it though a disjunction and an anachronism'.[425] This disjunction again echoes the oscillating functions of *Nachtraglichkeit* and anamnesis, something deferred or revisited, which is appropriate to my methodology in this study. The image spoke out of the past but could easily have been a contemporary work by Philippe Parreno or Pierre Hughye, with its integration of technologies, drawing and biological matter. It was difficult to place, as to whether it was an installative

425. Giorgio Agamben, 'What is the Contemporary', in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays,* trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 83.

artwork or simply a concatenation of quotidian objects and technologies, neither of which would have been out of place in 'Les Immatériaux'. It contained a sense of the handmade (the drawing) positioned in relation to technology (photocopier and slide projector), in a levelling context including flora and fauna, objects, artworks and audience. The image would not settle and remained intriguing. I selected the image and made it into a poster to represent my research but was still unable to identify exactly what it was that it documented.

Near the final phase of the research, my reading finally led to a detailed description of a site of the exhibition which sounded as if it might describe this image. 'The zone "All the Copies" took the problem of support translation and representation down to a basic level. 'Everything can be photocopied', states Lyotard in *Inventaire* as a comment to this interactive site where the viewers were invited to create their own mechanically produced images of household objects. [….] In this way "All the Copies" was a site for the collective production of pictures of the world, a visual factory of sorts that highlighted the circulation, variation and modulation of images in a world of immaterials.'[426] Further research corroborated that this was indeed the zone depicted in the image I had selected.[427] There was a thrill in realising that it was an installation which had such relevance to the subject of my research. The installation was devised by media artists Liliane Terrier and Jean-Louis Boissier. Viewers were able to make photocopies of artworks, artefacts and objects in the space,

426. Daniel Birnbaum and Sven-Olov Wallenstein, *Spacing Philosophy: Lyotard and the Idea of the Exhibition*, p. 177.
427. In documentation of a presentation made by Liliane Terrier, 'The Image of the Immaterials' at the conference *Back to the Exhibition Les Immatériaux* , organised by Ari / Ciren with the DEA of Paris, 30 March 2005, at the École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, available at http://www.arpla.fr/canal20/adnm/?p=4162, with pdf of presentation images here: <http://www.arpla.fr/canal20/adnm/wp-pdf/TLC_projection.pdf >, [accessed 25 February 2020]. Also described in Antonia Wunderlich's *Der Philosoph im Museum: Die Ausstellung "Les Immatériaux" von Jean François Lyotard*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2008, p. 148, which is untranslated into English and available here:
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=jpFLCgAAQBAJ&lpg=PA148&dq=Liliane%20Terrier%20les%20immateriaux&pg=PA148#v=onepage&q=Liliane%20Terrier%20les%20immateriaux&f=false, [accessed 25 February 2020].

including plants, animals (live terrapins), foodstuffs and a child's Wellington boots, and add to a display of photocopies in the space and also children could fax copies from workshops in another area of the museum. As Penny McCarthy notes in the glossary, 'The photocopier, the Xerox machine or the fax – these machines occupied a transitional moment between the analogue and digital. Yet the pleasure of the photocopy multiplied and pushed to the point of entropic collapse actually extends copying into an even closer attentiveness to matter.' This relationship of matter and its reproduction and reception which is staged in this image seems at the heart of this research.

Terrier and Boissier, in their preparatory information for the site, also state their interest in this reproductive technology: 'the photocopy confronts the image in a disturbing way with its 'copy': it combines the speed of its appearance and the affirmation of its distance'.[428] The Benjaminian concern with distance and dispersion, is revealed as integral to this project, as it is to my research. Photocopies and fax machines were the contemporaneous technologies to disseminate text and image, with a more drastic degrading effect, creating a poorer image which might not attain the emancipatory auratic power of Steyerl's digital 'poor image', in their granular materiality, but were on the way to it. The *Spielraum* of the 'circulation, variation and modulation' afforded by the technologies of reproduction and their impact on artwork, curating and the auratic have been the core of this study and it is appropriately circular to find out these issues were also in play in this image which had fascinated me from the start.

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428. Quoted in Wunderlich, ibid., p. 148, cited as deriving from Boissier and Terrier, 'Project for *Les Immatériaux*: the photocopy at work', Archive box 94033/234. Translation mine.

Postscript:

In his essay, 'Can Thought go on without a Body', Lyotard notes the hesitant way in which writing and thought proceeds, which is pertinent to this study:

> ...groping towards what it 'means' and never unaware, when it stops, that it's only suspending its exploration for a moment (a moment that might last a lifetime), and that there remains, beyond the writing that has stopped, an infinity of words, phrases and meanings in a latent state held in abeyance, with as many things 'to be said' as at the beginning.[429]

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429. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Rachel Bowlby and Geoffrey Bennington, London: Polity, 1991, p. 17, quoted by Kiff Bamford in *Lyotard and the Figural in Performance, Art and Writing*, p. 106.

Table of Figures:

Glossary of Terms

Affect: A philosophical term, deriving from Spinoza, via Bergson, Deleuze and Guattari and Brian Massumi which emphasises bodily experience. Massumi distinguishes emotion from affect and locates affect in encounters in the world, rather than the interiority of a psychological subject. His definition is influential so quoted here: '*L'affect* (Spinoza's *affectus*) is an ability to affect and be affected. It is a prepersonal intensity corresponding to the passage from one experiential state of the body to another and implying an augmentation or diminution in that body's capacity to act.'[430]

Anamnesis: an intentional recalling to mind, a 'temporal reactivation',[431] in a Freudian context (*Durcharbeiten*) bringing back to mind the unremembered or repressed and a 'working through' via psychoanalysis, for Lyotard 'the labour to keep open the passage through which may come what has not yet come'.[432] Originally found in Plato in relation to the idea that the soul is immortal but each incarnation forgets and must recollect what it knew. In the lecture Logos, Techne, or Telegraphy (1986), Lyotard referred to three type of memories: namely, bleaching (frayage), scanning (balayage) and passing (passage), corresponding respectively to habit, remembrance and anamnesis. According to Yuk Hui in relation to Lyotard: 'The act of anamnesis is one of resistance against systematisation.'[433]

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430. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. and foreword by Brian Massumi., Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. xvi.
431. A phrase used by Kiff Bamford, in relation to Lyotard's use of anamnesis, in *Lyotard and the 'figural' in Performance, Art and Writing*, London: Continuum Books, 2012, p. 94.
432. Jean-François Lyotard, 'Anamnesis of the Visible', *Theory, Culture & Society*, *21*(1), 2004, 107–119, p. 108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276404040483>, [accessed 1 April 2018].
433. 'Anamnesis and Re-orientation: A Discourse on Matter and Time' on 'The Nachtraglichkeit of Les Immateriaux', p.201 in *30 years after 'Les Immatériaux': Art, Science and Theory*, ed. by Yuk Hui and Andreas Broekman, Luneburg: Meson Press, 2015, https://meson.press/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/9783957960313-30-Years-Les-Immateriaux.pdf [accessed 1.2.2018].

Artefact: an object showing human workmanship or modification as distinguished from a natural object / a defect in an image (such as a digital photograph) that appears as a result of the technology and methods used to create and process the image.[434]

Aura: Walter Benjamin's term variously applied but most usually used for the specific quality of an artefact (or natural phenomena) which inheres in an original, rather than a reproduction, a 'ritual' object rather than an exhibited or disseminated one.

Critical surplus: the critical impact of an exhibition which can only be ascertained some time from its original reception.[435]

Cutting Together-apart: – a process which undoes dichotomies and makes new conjunctions as it severs, undermining binaries including those of inclusion and exclusion, rather creating 'momentary stabilisations' of phenomena. 'The quantum understanding of diffraction troubles the very notion of dicho-tomy – cutting into two – as a singular act of absolute differentiation, fracturing this from that, now from then…' [436]

Diffraction: 'a modification which light undergoes especially in passing by the edges of opaque bodies or through narrow openings and in which the rays appear to be deflected, also a similar modification of other waves (such as sound waves) or of moving particles (such as electrons)'.[437] Used by Donna Haraway as an

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434. 'Artefact', in Meriam Webster Dictionary [online], < https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/artifact> [accessed 3.2.22].
435. Charles Esche, 'Coda: the Curatorial', in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating,* p. 243.
436. See 'Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart', *Parallax*, Vol 20, 2014, Issue 3: 'Diffracted Worlds – Diffractive Readings: Onto-Epistemologies and the Critical Humanities', pp. 168–87, and 'Agential cuts do not mark some absolute separation but a cutting together/apart – "holding together" of the disparate itself', Barad, K, (2012) 'Nature's Queer Performativity', *Kvinder Køn og Forskning* 1–2: 25–54, p 46.
437. 'Diffraction', in Meriam Webster Dictionary [online], <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/diffraction> [accessed 3.2.22].

opposing mode of relation and analysis to reflection and by Karen Barad as one in which quantum diffraction experiments undermine the essential separateness of entities, undermining dichotomies and implying their essential entanglement and intra-action. Diffraction produces constructive interference.

Entanglement: 'To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating.' [438]

Ersatz – a substitute, generally inferior, of something else or not real, genuine or authentic.

Exhibitionary knowledge: the knowledge that is gained by the experience of an exhibition.[439]

The figural: the disruptive force that works to interrupt systemic approaches in reading and seeing. It is part of an opposition between *discourse*, related to structuralism and written text, and *figure* (a visual image), related to phenomenology and seeing. Lyotard aims to defend the importance of the figural and sensual experience such as seeing, but also deconstructs this opposition, and attempts to show that discourse and figure are mutually implicated.[440]

Hauntology: originally coined by Jacques Derrida[441] to refer to the persistence and recurrence of the past, temporal disjunction and the sense that there is no temporal point of pure origin, the present is only

438. Karen Barad, *Meeting The Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007, p. ix.
439. Terry Smith 'Talking Contemporary Curating' in *ICI perspectives in Curating*, Ed. by Kate Fowles, New York, Independent Curators International, 2015, p 283.
440. Jean-François Lyotard, *Discourse, Figure*, trans. Antony Hudek and Mary Lydon, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011.
441. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans Peggy Kamuf, London: Routledge, 1994.

ever perceivable in continuum with past and future. Taken up by Mark Fisher[442] to discuss a nostalgia for a lost future and incapacity to escape existing forms and imagine the new (ref. Frederic Jameson[443]) in popular culture and music.

Intra-action: 'Intra-action is a Baradian term used to replace 'interaction,' which necessitates pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other. Intra-action understands agency as not an inherent property of an individual or human to be exercised, but as a dynamism of forces in which all designated 'things' are constantly exchanging and diffracting, influencing and working inseparably.' [444]

Nachtraglichkeit: deferred action, sometimes translated as 'afterwardsness' or retroaction, a mode of belatedly understanding. First used in psychoanalytic sense by Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), later used by Hal Foster[445] as a means of recoding traumatic events in relation to the avant-garde.

New Aesthetic: a term, coined by James Bridle, used to refer to the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the Internet in the physical world, and the blending of virtual and physical. Deriving from a now defunct blog by Bridle and popularised by Bruce Sterling in an article for Wired magazine.[446]

Poor Image: term coined by artist Hito Steyerl for the replicated, degraded and dispersed digital image on the internet which although a ghost of its originary source, gains power and a new form of 'aura' by

442. Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life*, Alresford: Zero Books, 2014.
443. Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, London: Verso, 2005.
444. 'Intra-action', New Materialism Almanac [online],Whitney Stark, <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/i/intra-action.html> [accessed 12.11.20].
445. Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* , Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,1996.
446. Bruce Sterling, 'An Essay on the New Aesthetic', Wired blog, April 2, 2012, [accessed 05.04.2012].

the emancipatory agency involved in its creation and dispersion, creating an alternative economy of images. [447]

Post-digital: '"Post-digital, once understood as a critical reflection of "digital" aesthetic immaterialism, now describes the messy and paradoxical condition of art and media after digital technology revolutions. "Post-digital" neither recognizes the distinction between "old" and "new" media, nor ideological affirmation of the one or the other.' [448]

Spacetimematterings : forces in producing material-cultural phenomena through the intra-actions between human and nonhuman (matter) that also recognizes that time is entangled with space and matter.

Virtual Reality: the computer-generated simulation of a three-dimensional image or environment that can be interacted with in a seemingly real or physical way by a person using special electronic equipment

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447. Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *E Flux Journal #10*, November 2009, <http://www.e flux.com/journal/10/61362/in defense of the poor image/ >, [accessed 6 November 2017].
448. Part of a definition created in a workshop and published in *A Peer Reviewed Journal About.. "Post Digital Research"* (Volume 3, Issue 1), (2014), p.5, <https://aprja.net//issue/view/8400>, [accessed 24 September 2018].

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Videos

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Archival material

Archive box 940330/233 Pompidou Centre Archive

Record of Practice:

- Diffractive journal of curatorial process
- Transcript of audience feedback seminar 17 July 2019, Site Gallery and diffraction diagrams from seminar
- Transcript of audience feedback seminar 12 November 2019, Lincoln and diffraction diagrams from seminar
- Transcript of audience discussion/ exhibition walk-round with Jeanine Griffin, Esther Leslie and students in the exhibition at Project Space Plus, University of Lincoln, 6 November 2019.
- www.astrangeweave.org website, including *Writing Tests* online glossary and VR walk-round

Diffractive Journal of Curatorial Process

A strange weave of time and space [449]

Project outline:

Background:
In 1985 Jean Francois Lyotard's influential exhibition on our relationship with technology 'Les Immatériaux' opened with an artefact – an Egyptian bas relief - and ended with images of this artefact, refracted, dematerialised and projected. This curatorial conceit of the trajectory between the auratic, (Walter Benjamin's term for the authentic, original artefact, singular in space and time) and the technologically reproduced, dispersed and viewed art object seems still relevant in our current period which is similar to Benjamin's in its acceleration of technological reproduction and dissemination, though now by digital rather than mechanical means.

This exhibition also heralded the immateriality of the circulation of what artist/theorist Hito Steyerl terms the 'poor image'450 which is 'a ghost of an image. The poor image has been uploaded, downloaded, shared, reformatted, and re-edited. It transforms quality into accessibility, exhibition value into cult value, films into clips, contemplation into distraction.'2 Yet there has recently been a resurgence of interest in curating involving 'the authentic' or auratic451 material object in international exhibition projects (eg. Documenta 13 and Venice biennale 2013, recent Palais de Tokyo shows by Neil Beloufa, George Henry Longley and Kader Attia and Jean Jacques Lebel – heavy with objects with particular social and political significance).
Critic Erika Balsom suggests that set 'against the promiscuous circulation of proliferating copies the singular event of performance or the uniqueness of the handmade object." become important again. Like Steyerl she uses Benjamininan terms to describe this: 'Objects inscribed by time, as far away from free-floating signifiers as one can get. To put it in Benjamin's terms: they privilege cult value over exhibition value. They are singular objects, inextricable from their respective material histories, absolutely incompatible with the compress and copy life of a

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[449] This version of a definition of aura by Walter Benjamin comes midway through 'A Little History of Photography' (and is repeated minus this phrase in the artwork essay) "What is aura actually? A strange weave of time and space: the unique appearance or semblance of a distance not matter how close it may be 'A Little History of Photography', p518, in *Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings: 1927-1934*, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931-34. Ed. by Michael W Jennings, Howard Eiland, Gary Smith (Harvard and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999)

[450] Hito Steyerl ' In Defense of the Poor Image', *E Flux*, Journal #10 – November 2009. http://www.e flux.com/journal/10/61362/in defense of the poor image/ , accessed 6 November 2017
[451] Erika Balsom: 'Against the Novelty of New Media: the Resuscitation of the Authentic', in Omar Kholeif *You are Here: Art after the Internet*, p.72

jpeg'. And she suggests: 'A desire for authenticity has emerged as a reaction to shifts with new media technologies at their core."3

So is this renewed concern for the 'authentic' in curating a conservative withdrawal from the current post digital moment or is this juxtaposition able to create new thinking? What is the experience of the auratic artefact and conversely can aura be created by digital artworks and indeed by curating exhibitions in a particular space and time? This seems very pertinent in our current post-digital context –which is defined as a lack of 'distinction between digital and analogue materiality '452 - the intertwined condition of art and digital media.

This project proposes to put in intra-action in space resolutely auratic or 'authentic' objects, those muddying the waters of the auratic and their 'poor image' cousins that have been filtered through digital reproduction or distribution. The trajectory from auratic object to its atomised replication, taken in 'Les Immatériaux' is represented by a juxtaposition of work by Penny McCarthy and Oliver Laric. For example, Penny McCarthy's work is a kind of apotheosis of aura – a meticulous drawing of one of Benjamin's ephemeral writings on aura, written on café notepaper, replicated, but replicated by auratic means, singular and excessive in terms of haptic labour as a means of reproduction. It's a contradiction and an apogee all at once. This piece is put in relation to with a 3D print of one of Oliver Laric's Lincoln Scans – a series of 3D scans of historical objects which he made open source by placing them online with no use restrictions. This artefact is disconcerting in its ontological slipperiness and odd materiality, like the empty skin or shell of an object. It would be accompanied with Laric's video Versions (2010) (https://vimeo.com/17805188) intersperses unattributed critical and creative texts in a seamless voiceover about the auratic and by doing so becomes its own original thing in the world.

A constellation of works will ripple out from this conjunction with other pieces concerning the affect of the authentic or auratic object such as…

V1.at Bloc - Margarita Gluzberg's 'digital drawings', and Taus Makacheva's Tightrope which puts ostensibly original, auratic material in a perilous position as it moves from one storage structure to another, over a ravine, as if from past to future use and Camille Henrot's Grosse Fatigue which, Like Mark Leckey's exhibition 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', explores the relationship between the world of (ritual) objects and the world of the internet. Jan Hopkins's work is interested in whether aura is lost in the digital, whether her drawings done by drawing bots are perceived as unique or authentic. Some drawings are created by means of randomised code, meaning the uniqueness of the drawing is guaranteed and, once captured on paper, has an auratic 'here and now'.

V2. Margarita Gluzberg's 'digital drawings', Haris Epaminonda's clusters of objects and display structures, an object from Mark Leckey's exhibition 'Uniadumths' whch replicated objects and artworks from the original exhibition 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', Cory Archangel's plotter drawings replicating a drawn line, James Clarkson's replication of the ubiquitous Ikea bin, which in turn took its form from an early 20th c ceramic artists' work. Diana Taylor's work integrates haptic craft and flattened 3D scans of fabric, into a re-assembled artefact. Also included will be other artworks and also artefacts from the Sheffield Hallam 'special collection' which are troubling in their ontology – copies or plaster casts of originals.

This project takes 'Les Immatériaux' as a precursor and a kind of degree zero of experimental curation in relation to the digital –   It's unorthodox exhibition design integrated artwork and non-artwork, in a labyrinthine structure, darkened mesh-delineated spaces, and it had an

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452 'On Remembering a Post-Digital Future', James Charlton, in A Peer Reviewed Journal About… **Post-Digital Research, 3.1 (2014)**
http://www.aprja.net/on-remembering-a-post-digital-future/ accessed 25.9.18

audio guide on radio headsets that didn't interpret the exhibition but played unattributed philosophical and literary texts, changing as the viewer moved through the space.

It was also extremely unpopular, the visitors book in the Pompidou Centre archive is full of outrage, especially about the audio guide. It was found very alienating - Lyotard specifically wanted to create 'disquiet' and 'incertitude' in relation to concerns about how technology would impact on us.

The project will revisit this idea of the audio headset adjunct to the exhibition. The original headset played unattributed texts which changed as you moved through the space (rather than receiving information about what they were seeing, visitors were receiving texts by Mallarme, Borges, Baudrillard, Proust, Bachelard, Beckett, Barthes). For this project I've invited Tim Etchells to weave together a polyvalent audio piece addressing these ideas around aura and the authentic as both an overlaid frame or filter to the objects in the space and a piece of work in its own right. The form and subject of the individual artworks in the exhibition: auratic and artefactual or dematerialised and dispersed will interact with each other in space and with the audio piece.

Also – Epreuves D'Ecriture / Writing Tests (https://monoskop.org/images/f/f9/Les_Immateriaux_Epreuves_d_ecriture.pdf) Also part of the project will be a reworking one of the writing projects Lyotard created as an alternative to a traditional catalogue. Epreuves D'Ecriture translated as Writing Tests or First Drafts was a proto Wikipedia like project set up by Lyotard where invited writers responded to, defined and amended specific terminology related to the exhibition linked by Minitel machines, an early version of the internet. Original words included: artificial, author, code, dematerialisation, material, mutation, translate, seduce, nature, navigate… I will invite writers to engage with this process (eg Antony Hudek, who has written on 'Les Immatériaux', Lucy Steeds of Afterall's exhibition histories project, Esther Leslie, Tim Etchells, Penny McCarthy, Michelle Atherton, Sharna Jackson (Site Gallery), Yuen Fong Ling and others) to respond to

some of the terminology relevant today, as an exercise in collective, interactive writing at a distance to create a kind of generative glossary of terms to accompany the exhibition project.

Des mots
artificiel / auteur / capture / code / confins / corps / dématérialisation / désir / droit / écriture / espace / façade / flou / geste / habiter / image / immortalité / improbable / interaction / interface / langage / lumière / miroir / monnaie / matière / matériau / matériel / matrice / maternité / méandre / mémoire / métamorphose / multiple / mutation / nature / naviguer / ordre / preuve / prothèse / réseau / sécurité / signe / simulation / sens / simultanéité / souffle / temps / traduire / vitesse / voix /

Des auteurs
Hubert Astier - Nanni Balestrini - Mario Borillo - Christine Buci-Glucksmann - Daniel Buren - Michel Butor - Paul Caro - Michel Casse - Daniel Charles - François Chatelet - Philippe Curval - Jacques Derrida - Marc Guillaume - Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe - Bruno Latour - René Major - Jean-Claude Passeron - François Recanati - Jean-Loup Rivière - Maurice Roche - Pierre Rosenstiehl - Jacques Roubaud - Isabelle Stengers - Dan Sperber - Tibon-Cornillot - Jean-Noël Vuarnet -

La règle du jeu
Passer de l'inscription graphique à l'affichage électronique : sonder les effets des "nouvelles machines" sur la formation de la pensée.
1. Vous recevez une liste de 50 mots relatifs à la problématique de la manifestation "Les Immatériaux".
2. Vous donnez votre définition (2 à 10 lignes maximum), sur papier, de quelques-uns de ces mots (15 à 20 minimum).
3. Vos définitions, ainsi que celles des autres auteurs, sont saisies et mémorisées.
4. Vous accédez à cette mémoire par une machine à traitement de texte mise à votre disposition pendant toute la durée de l'expérience.
5. Votre machine est reliée en réseau à celles des autres auteurs.
6. A partir de cette situation, il vous appartient :
• d'enchaîner à quelque fin que ce soit (réfuter, compléter, moduler, etc.) sur vos premières définitions;
• en vous connectant aux autres auteurs, d'enchaîner d'une part sur leurs définitions et d'autre part sur leurs propres enchaînements, à quelque fin que ce soit.
7. Nous souhaitons, en particulier, que vous commentiez les modifications que cette situation entraîne dans votre expérience d'écriture.

Curatorial development: Jan 2019

Original artists list, as above:
Penny McCarthy
Oliver Laric
Camille Henrot
Taus Makhacheva
Jill Hopkins
Margarita Gluzberg
Tim Etchells audio piece

Practical issues – in Site's project space is that there is only really room for one installed video projection.. Both Taus Makhacheva and Camille Henrot would require this so originally intended selecting between these works and having Oliver Laric on monitor. Sketched this on scrap paper – first mapping out of the show as it could be in Site's project space.

THANKYOU!
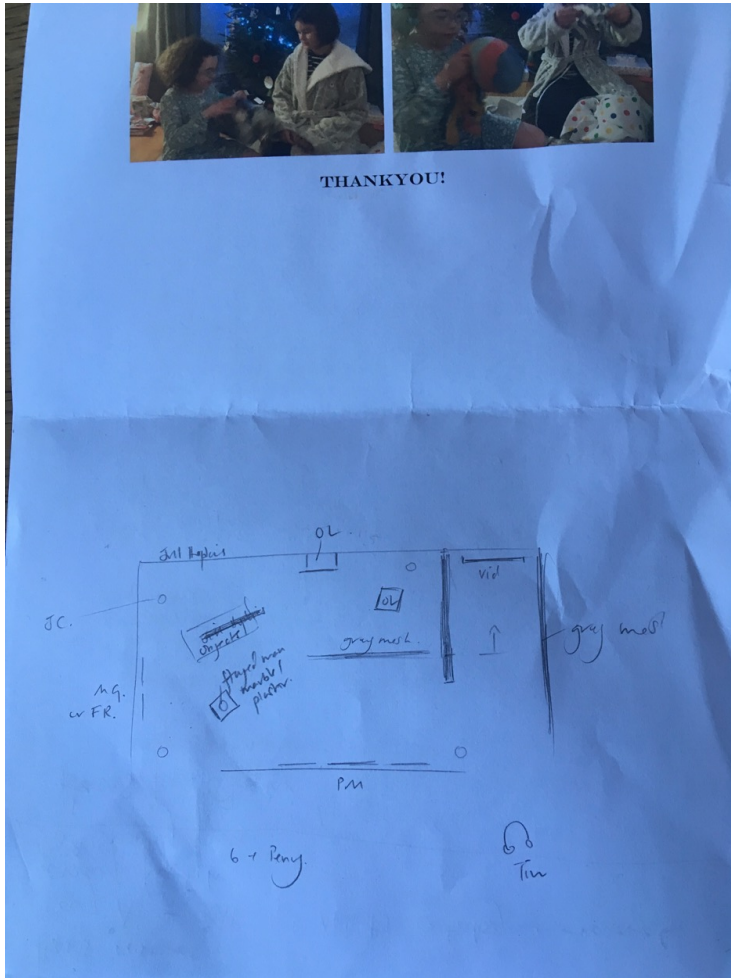
However Oliver Laric confirmed his involvement in January and stipulated that the Versions video piece must be projected in its own space with open sound. This may then have to replace the other in the viewing space..
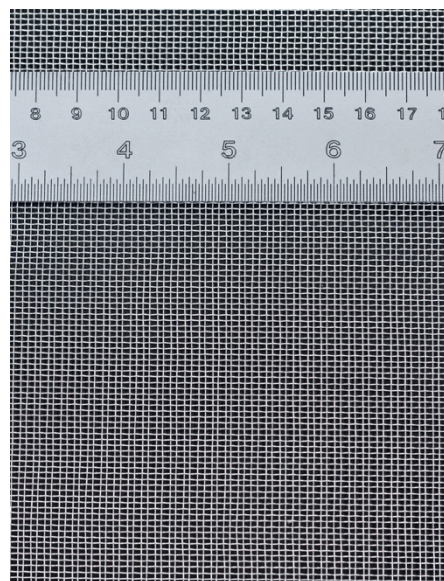
Viewing space should also be made of grey mesh in homage to 'Les Immatériaux' – research threw up this:
 Insect mesh - https://www.insectmesh.com/insect-mesh grey 30m x 1.2 fibreglass 100, steel metal 287, aluminium 157 30 m x 1.2m £157, Stretched on a baton at floor level and suspended. Also to cover wall of cupboards in space.

So a second layout started to emerge, from some of these practical considerations but also to take into account newly researched works:
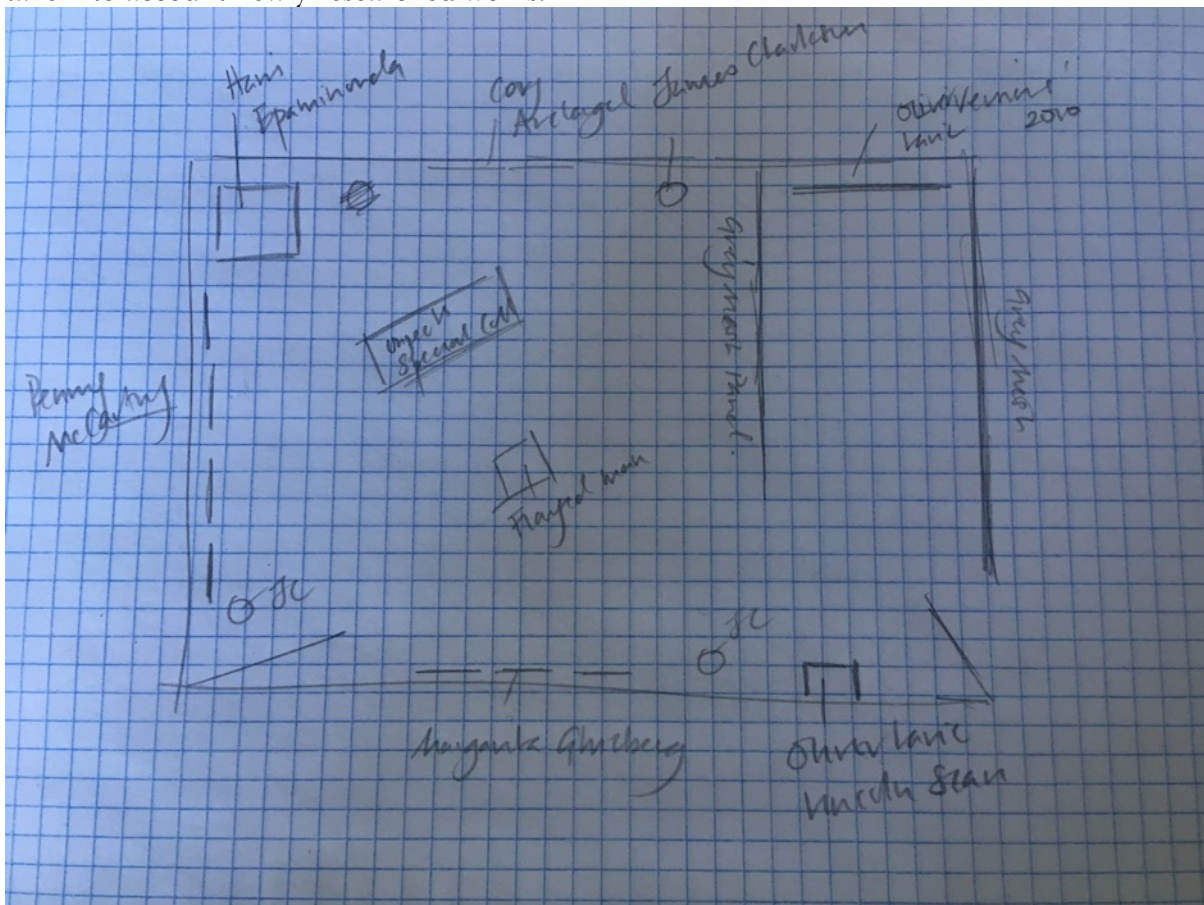
Oliver Laric 3D print positioned opposite his video and from there there are sightlines and a conceptual line through the plaster casts and objects from the special collection to Haris Epaminonda's found object installation with its own specific history. Also Oliver Laric and Penny are still in relational positions at either end of the gallery.

This layout plan will change and morph, with the exigencies and pragmatics of the assembly of the works – funding for transport may not be forthcoming, some may be unobtainable, this is still a phantom exhibition, a paper exercise, like the one semi-materialised at Bloc. But it is starting to map out the dramaturgy of space and how a constellation could be solidified into lines of confluence in the space.

Core pairing, referencing 'Les Immatériaux':

Penny McCarthy - Aura, The Art Class 2016, new distributable versions of aura drawing? works from Villa Medici sculptures of Naiobe and her children?

Oliver Laric – Lincoln scan and Versions 2010 (https://vimeo.com/17805188)
Requirements: open audio and projection space for OL

Artefacts: Objects from special collection and flayed man - marble version via Andrew Sneddon
Rationale for inclusion: references the history of plaster casts in education and museum history and links to Sven Lutticken's notion of aura being retained through the indexical trace in plaster and photography
Requirements: local transport, insurance

Options:

Margarita Gluzberg, Hairstyles for the great depression
Rationale for inclusion: the interweaving of Benjamin's time (30s) and ours and the diffraction of digital and analogue – she describes them as 'digital drawings'..
Requirements: I/T (insurance and transport required)

James Clarkson, Giggle, ceramic slip cast replica of Ikea FNISS bin or possible new work?

Rationale for inclusion: the exploration of authenticity in mass production, but not by digital means, by industrial ones – again harking back to Benjamin

I did a studio visit with James as was really interested in his replica Ikea bin: "I started to think about how serially manufactured objects are rarely perceived as authentic, yet they retain a sense of originality as an archetype of something we feel the object might represent. A good example is the earliest version of the Citroen Picasso or the seasonal use of International Klein Blue that yo-yos between cat walk and Primark. In each of these examples there is an absent original object …. The work I have been making recently is carrying on this exploration of originality and repetition of ideas through objects, thinking about what they might represent beyond their function. … its the slippages between influence and object, which I really want to explore further. "
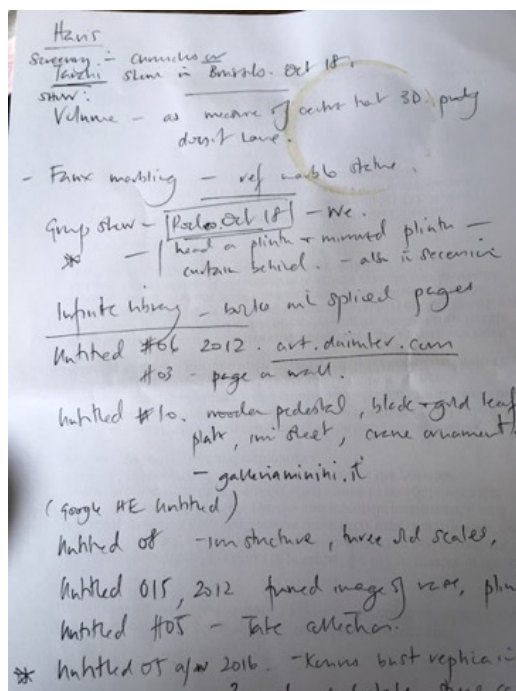
Haris Epaminonda

Possible works:

Haris's work shuttles between film and object-based practices, increasingly the latter. I spoke to her recently about reshowing Chronicles (shown in 2010 at Site and Tate Modern) in Nostalgic Whiplash and talked also about the possibility of borrowing a work for the show. I also revisited the recording of a studio visit I did with her in 2013, where it becomes clear that just as the films offer a repository for accretions of time, so too do the works that involve found objects, with the objects, often from Japanese

culture where a vase form would continue to be perfected over hundreds of years, functioning in the way Erika Balsom describes, as singular objects, as far away as possible from the cut and compress world of the jpeg.

A piece that was in Rodeo show in Oct 2018 and also in secession show may be still in UK? Sculptural bust, two plinths and blue curtain.

Installation view, WE, Rodeo, London, 2018. Photo: Plastiques
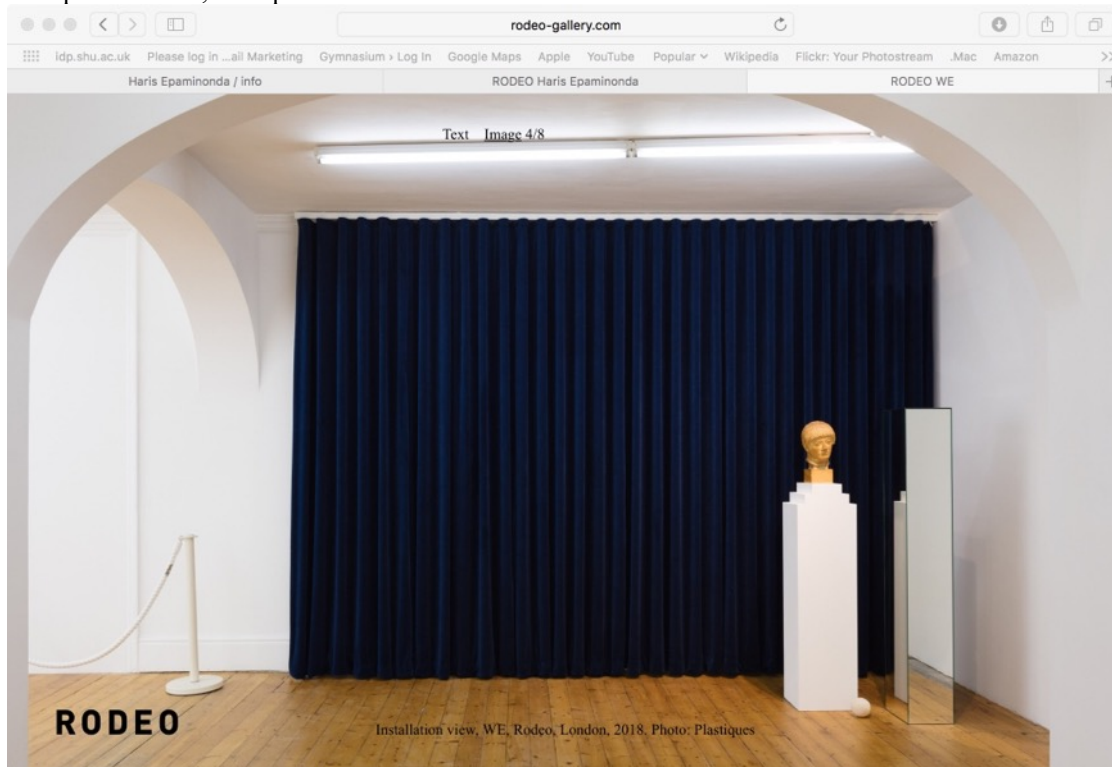
Rationale for inclusion: - as above
Requirements: transport and insurance.

New works researched since this layout:

Cory Archangel – Line 2016

Cory Arcangel
Line 2016
Pencil on paper, produced with Mutoh XP-300 Series printer
169 x 96.8 x 4 cm (each)
66 1/2 x 38 1/8 x 1 5/8 in
ARCA160005

This is a diptych of Plotter drawings, produced with the Mutoh XP-300 Series plotter, an automated,
if out-dated printer that draws using miniature pens or pencils. Evoking an earlier series from 2010, which
intentionally incorporated images that ranged from the mundane to the exotic in order to test the boundaries of
artificiality and obsolescence. New works for 'currentmood' feature a line drawn three times, printed 20 times,
then framed as a diptych.

Rationale for inclusion: – similar ground as Jill Hopkins, but has broader association with post-internet.. very simple iteration of the methodology which doesn't have a figurative image to intervene – just about the human/machine mark making.

Requirements: this one is available from Lisson - check in the UK – insurance and transport

Mark Leckey object from Uniaddumths? A copied object
Rationale for inclusion: the influence of this project on the research and the ontologically slippy nature of these objects –like the Laric

Requirements: depending on whether sculptural or wall-based. loan request sent to Cabinet

If this is a sculptural object it would be put into direct relationship/sightline with the Oliver Laric. Flayed man/ Haris Epaminonda.. If not available consider Florian Rothmayr in this position.

Florian Rothmayr - Plaster objects – unique material residues of plaster processes with all its accreted meanings in terms of casting…

Rationale for inclusion: makes cross- connections to the plaster casts and Penny's art class drawing, and Lutticken's indexical argument again… Possibly less tight to the concept, though.

Requirements: borrow from Tenderpixel, transport and insurance – VERY fragile

Possibly Heliya Badakshan's work uses plaster in a similar way – do a second studio visit .

Diana Taylor – new works with flattened 3d Scans, worked into by hand, collapsing and compressing time and analogue and digital processes, as Massumi says asymmetrically.. Have the sense of an absent void, like the inverse of the Laric 3D print which introduces the internal void to an erstwhile solid object. Sens of the skin of an object again
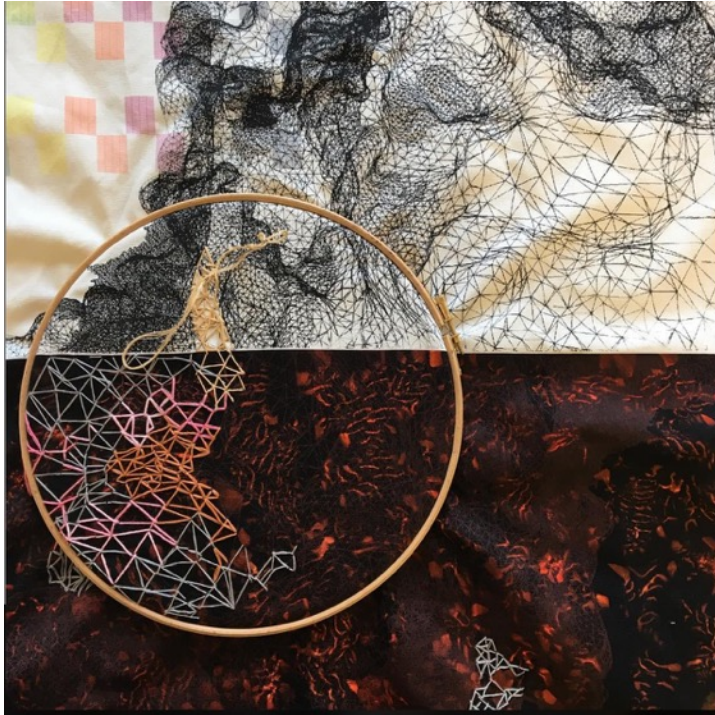
Rationale for inclusion: makes the above connections and exist as auratic objects embedded in the digital

Requirements: local transport? Insurance

Possibles:

Jerome Harrington - Plasticine Diderot

Plasticine Diderot involved the translation of an engraving from Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopedia into a three dimensional statue made of five different colors of Plasticine (made by Nick Palmer). During each of the ten minute working sessions a different color of Plasticine was used, so that the finished object had a grain or patina, a visualisation of the structure of

this working time. The build up of colored material and its distribution was structured by this timing method, not by the aesthetic choice of the maker. Once finished, the statue was squashed into a ball and then using a mechanical press squashed into a flat disk. This object was shown to groups of students invited to make a close reading of the object, this ekphrasis as edited and available on headphones reminiscent of a museum audio guide – which authoritatively tells you what you are looking at. However, unlike the authoritative voice of the institution, the text is contradictory in nature reflecting the different interpretations of the object

Rationale for inclusion: issues around the transformation of the material object, the embedding of time in material which is part of the auratic..
Requirements: remaking the work! The plasticine has been scrapped. The audio guide would clash with the overall audio piece (too much swapping of headphones..) so this would need reworking, so is less plausible..

Do I need another 'poor image' referencing artist? (Penny's aura work – she now realises has more in common with poor image as the drawing made from a photo is totally the wrong scale..)

There are these works referencing poor image and digital dispersion, but possibly too tight to topic..

https://vimeo.com/262316960
http://tamarajanes.ch/tja_savethepoorimage.html
 http://tamarajanes.ch/download/tja_cv.pdf

Andrew Norman Wilson?
http://documentspace.com/exhibitions/andrew-norman-wilson/

other ideas:

Ryan Gander Hologram – Instagram

also Jacques Monory paintings in 'Les Immatériaux' painting morphing to reproduction…

Tim Etchells – audio piece – development..

Had a debate as to whether to move ahead with this or whether I needed to own this element of the diffractive curatorial method more, rather than hand over to a voice which may be too dominant or direct. But, although riskier, I am more interested in what might happen with Tim than in creating a patchwork of found quotes (which anyway is what the Laric video work does). Hopefully the glossary will provide this type of diffractive merging of voices and I can think of, as Michelle suggests, different ways to enact diffraction in the curation – in the install, in the selection of works, in the reframing for Lincoln (work with the exigencies of the space and lack of invigilation/ insurance by making something virtual for there?)

[references - Other audio/ diffractive exhibition adjuncts:

On muteness of objects….https://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2018/stories-of-almost-everyone/
Artists and institutions have adopted the role of speaking on behalf of reticent artifacts and the otherwise inert byproducts of material culture.
The challenge that textual mediation poses to the inherent muteness of objects provides a framework for thinking through the potential for ideas facilitated by art to expand into other realms of thought. The varying artistic approaches brought together for this exhibition are as equally emboldened by a faith in objects to communicate their inherent value, as they are skeptical of the conditions of museological mediation and art's promise to convey meaning.
audio guide written and narrated by Kanishk Tharoor for the exhibition. (also bbc radio 4 museum of lost objects..)

See also Walter Benjamin show, 2017
https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/the-arcades-contemporary-art-and-walter-benjamin
the poet Kenneth Goldsmith will annotate each work with appropriated texts - a patchwork of footnoted quotes in concrete poetry form..]

28th February 2019

contacted
Haris Epaminonda and Rodeo, further to conversation with Haris.
Diana Taylor
James Clarkson
Lisson re Cory Arcangel
Cabinet re Mark Leckey,
Tim re commission
Andrew Bracey re firming Lincoln dates

Esther Leslie (Yes), Antony Hudek and Lucy Steeds re writing

So current artists list would be:

Cory Archangel
James Clarkson (TBC)
Haris Epaminonda (TBC)
Tim Etchells
Margarita Gluzberg?? (TBC)
Oliver Laric
Mark Leckey sculptural replica from Uniaddumths - (TBC) if not perhaps Florian Roithmayr
Penny McCarthy
Diana Taylor (TBC)

Flayed man cast/ objects from special collection

Could Taus Makhacheva tightrope work be projected small without dedicated space?, same size as a wall-based work..? Tim knows her so could be in touch direct..

Layout could be
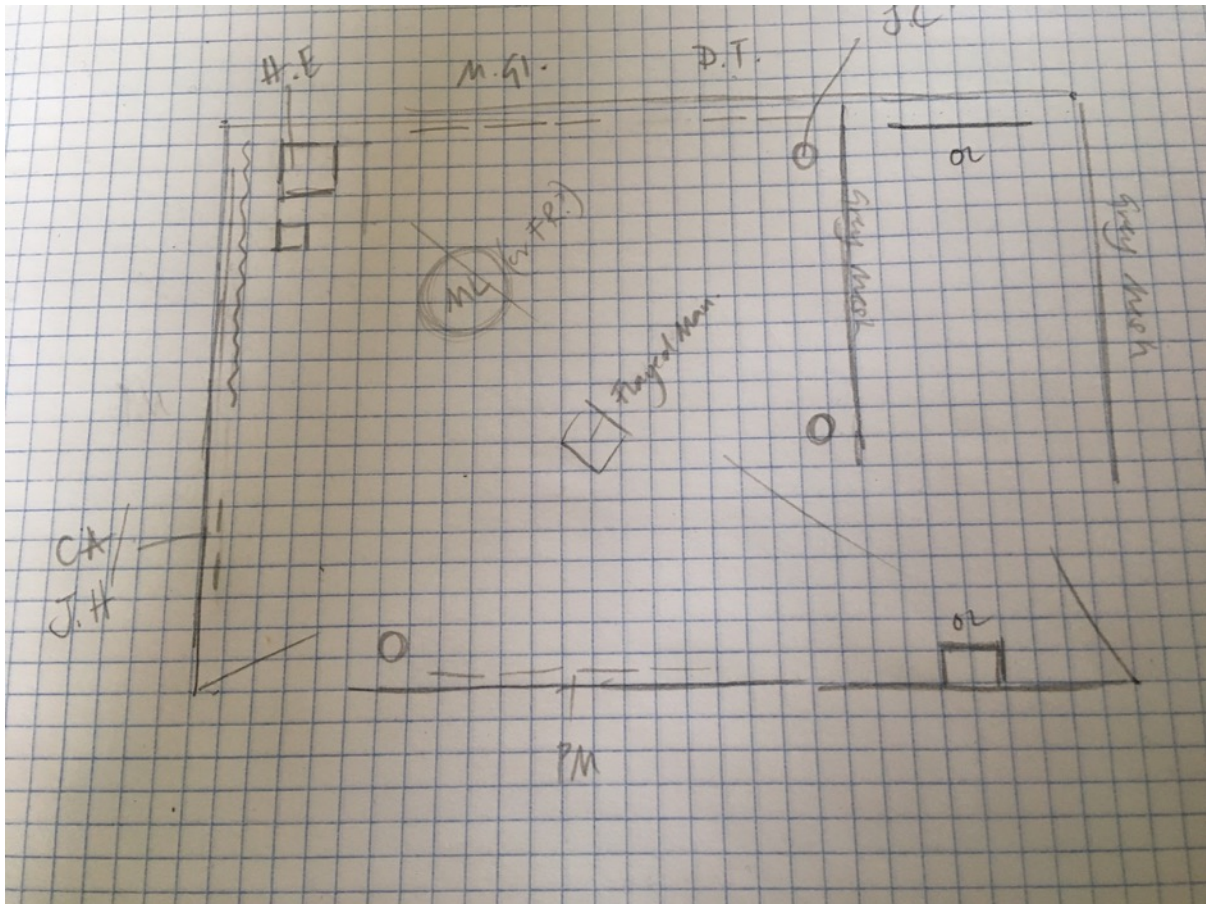
Second iteration in Lincoln would strip out all the works requiring insurance/ invigilation – possibly replace with replicas? Or virtual version somehow..

Mon 4 March 2019

Skype meeting with Tim.

This has been our email exchange to date:

6 November 2018

Hi Tim,

I wanted to follow up from our conversation at the Site opening about producing an audio work for headphones in relation to an exhibition around the artefact in the post-digital context. I was so delighted you thought you might be able to do something for this.

To give you a bit of background:

I'd noticed that there was such a lot of 'stuff' in exhibitions these days – handmade objects or those with particular historical or social significance. Venice in 2013 was like this and Documenta 13 and recent shows at Palais de Tokyo were heavy with objects - interesting that in a post-digital situation, where replicated jpegs and memes fly around, objects and 'authentic' or 'auratic' objects are becoming more important perhaps.

So I am working on an exhibition project to bring together resolutely auratic or 'authentic' objects, those muddying the waters of the auratic and their 'poor image' cousins that have been filtered through digital reproduction or distribution. This began with a counterposing of a work by Penny, called 'Aura' which you've no doubt seen (a drawing of one of Benjamin's ephemeral writings on aura, written on café notepaper, replicated, but replicated meticulously by hand - it's a kind of apotheosis of aura) with a 3D print as part of a project by Oliver Laric - a series of 3D scans of historical objects which he made open source by placing them online with no use restrictions. This 3D printed relief sculpture is really disconcerting in its ontological slipperiness and odd materiality, like the empty skin or shell of an object.
So a constellation of works will ripple out from this conjunction with other pieces concerning the affect of the authentic or auratic object such as possibly Margarita Gluzberg's 'digital drawings', Taus Makacheva's Tightrope (which again you'll have seen) which puts ostensibly original, auratic material in a perilous position as it moves from one storage structure to another and Camille Henrot's Grosse Fatigue which, Like Mark Leckey's exhibition 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things', explores the relationship between the world of (ritual) objects and the world of the internet. Jan Hopkins's work is interested in whether aura is lost in the digital, whether her drawings done by drawing bots are perceived as unique or authentic. Also Oliver Laric's video work Versions (2010) (https://vimeo.com/17805188) mashes up unattributed critical texts in a seamless voiceover about the authentic and by doing so becomes its own original thing in the world. I'll also be looking to include other artworks and also artefacts which are troubling in their ontology – maybe copies or plaster casts of originals.
Penny & I are working this up and fundraising for it, to happen at Site Project Space, likely early summer next year, in a period when the main space is closed for changeover.

So to come to the point: I think I mentioned I was also really interested in an exhibition by philosopher Lyotard at the Pompidou in 1985 ('Les Immatériaux') which mixed artefacts and technology and had various really interesting curatorial ideas. One was that it had an audio headset which didn't interpret the exhibition but played unattributed philosophical and literary texts in relation to it. This was wildly unpopular and generally confounded people.. (I went to the Pompidou archive and read the visitors books which even via my bad translation I can tell is full of outrage…)

But I'd like to revisit this idea of the audio headset both as a kind of frame or filter to the exhibition project and a piece of work in its own right. I immediately thought of you - it would be fantastic if you could produce an audio work for this. I could supply some archival material or text excerpts that have cropped up in my research if you felt it appropriate as it might be interesting that different voices are merged or interwoven, like with the Lyotard project, but equally happy to leave this open. It could be something people could download to their phone to listen to and we'd also have it on mp3 players with headphones as you enter the space. I'm also interested in also reworking one of the writing projects Lyotard created as an alternative to a traditional catalogue. Epreuves D'Ecriture - which translates as 'Writing Tests/ First Drafts' - was a proto Wikipedia-like project set up by Lyotard where invited writers responded to, defined and amended specific terminology related to the exhibition linked by Minitel machines, an early version of the internet. Original words included: artificial, author, code, dematerialisation, material, mutation, translate, seduce, nature, navigate… I'm going to set up a new version of this and invite writers to offer some definitions for now. It would be fantastic if you were willing to be involved in this too, this will be much less work – perhaps offering a handful of definitions into the mix, choosing your own terms to 'define'.

I have access to some funding for this from Sheffield Hallam via the PhD, but we are also hoping to expand the budget via an Arts Council application.

11 November 2018

Hi Jeanine

Thanks for this… now a (bit) more considered response.

Basically all this sounds good to me. I mean in the broad sense of an audio work that is some kind of frame/filter on the exhibition and at the same time a work all of its own.

I think my interest in the audio-guide / commentary is rather bound up with the kind of address it permissions, esp the everyday-but-extraorindary relation produced by the intimacy of a voice in your ear.
My audio-guide work in Admont, or say my audio/auto-theatre work The Quiet Volume with Ant Hampton, for libraries, both work through a kind of direct address that is personable and human-scale rather than (for example) though great slabs of dense literary or academic text. So they're as much about generating relation as they are about processing complex content. Though of course the dynamic production and manipulation of relation is also a kind of content.

Interesting that both my Admont work and The Quiet Volume effectively sought to draw attention to things present in their respective contexts but not typically included in any analysis of the environment or works contained in it. So the Admont piece was very focused on the narrative implications of taxidermied specimens being placed near each other in the museum, or those narratives produced by their 'accidental' proximity to say a fire extinguisher or by being placed in a damaged display case etc. And The Quiet Volume drew lines between the content of books one read from and the physical organisation of the library space, the proximity of other people in the library, the social relations and interactions between users, also tuning the listener/reader to the great amount and kinds of sounds that were happening around the room, esp ironic given the library as a space deigned for silence.

The thing that also interests me in the context of your project is wondering how an audio work itself might also approach the topic of aura, original/copy and so on. Might there be something about impersonating/copying tonality. I'm also struck by the polyvalence of the Lyotard project you mention. What might be other ways of thinking about that etc. Also wondering about *voice*.. in terms of say texture, accent, rhythm, tonality.

I don't have a concrete sense how all (or some) of this might resolve into a work - beyond 'audio for headphones and download' - but maybe that's OK for now.

Let me know what you think.

Tim

12.November 2018
Hi Tim,

Lovely to be reminded of The Quiet Volume, I so loved the experience of that work and hadn't thought about it in this context, strangely. I suppose the difference with other two projects is that you were responding to a fairly static physical context whereas with this exhibition the fine detail (what's where etc) is still under development, but if we approach it in the way you suggest whereby it explores correlative ideas around aura and authenticity etc, this hopefully should not be a hindrance.

I think Lyotard's approach with the dense literary and academic texts on headphones, whilst interesting, was one of the things that made his exhibition so alienating and I'm for sure not wanting to replicate that! I was quite interested in the idea of almost ventriloquising or layering different ideas and voices (I've been reading some stuff by Karen Barad who writes about this in her ideas around 'diffraction', and who layers different voices from different times in her critical writing) and I think this might well chime with your interest in polyvalence and your approach to authenticity through impersonating tonality.. It will also be interesting to see what kind of relation is eventually created between visual and auditory material. Years ago I did an exhibition at Site called 'Never let the truth get in the way of a good story' which was around how narrative or voiceover related to the visual - overlaying, undermining, taking precedence or supporting, and in this new context the audio could create an interesting palimpsest and yes, the address and intimacy of a voice in the ear is incredibly powerful. Penny mentioned that you regularly worked with a sound recordist - would you want to work with him again, do you think? No need for any concrete sense of the work yet, lets just continue the discussion. If all goes to plan with funding, we will aim for it to happen early summer next year, so hopefully we can work to that timescale.

Thanks so much for your thoughts on this, I'm very excited to see how it evolves.

All the best,

Jeanine

All good to go ahead. He wants list of works, image and couple of lines on each, plus my list of quotes etc..

In relation to Penny's aura being the wrong size he raised Simon Starling's 3 white desks, original was designed by Francis Bacon – they were made by cabinet makers according to lower and lower res scans..

Simon Starling, Three White Desks, 2008 - 2009, A copy of a writing desk designed by Francis Bacon for Patrick White (circa 1932) built in Berlin, Germany by the cabinetmaker Uwe Küttner with reference to a 30 megabyte scan of a vintage print from the National Library of Canberra, Austarlia., A copy of a copy of a writing desk designed by Francis Bacon for Patrick White (circa 1932) built in Sydney, Australia by the cabinetmaker Charmian Watts with reference to an 84 kilobyte jpeg made and transmitted with a mobile phone by Uwe Küttner, Berlin. A copy of a copy of a copy of a writing desk designed by Francis Bacon for Patrick White (circa 1932), built in London, England by the cabinetmaker George Gold with reference to a 100 kilobyte jpeg transmitted in an email by Charmian Watts, Sydney., Dimensions variable

Talked about replicating/ copying by copying voices..

Re Derek Beulieu – Associate of Kenneth Goldsmith remaking Warhol's Book of A – A Novel by removing all but punctuation and sound effects in brackets.. also rewiring finegans' wake by drawing it without looking at paper

Talked about diffracting the original (exhibition/ curatorial methods) not replicating it and he said yes to the glossary..

He gave me Taus Machacheva's email

I emailed Modern Institute on the offchance that there is an edition or other related work re the Simon Starling..

6 March 2019

Meeting with Penny – discussed the Taus Mackacheva work and how closely or otherwise it fits the show conceptually (the auratic is a side issue within that work.. and not really a digital connection) and the amount it has already been shown and decided perhaps it was not needed and space is not expansive for another projection.

See Col & Michelle talk about the 'As much about Forgetting' project. Wonder about inviting Col to project patterns onto the flayed man as another way of diffracting, optically, as well as the audio diffracting aurally. Would it be too instrusive in the space – perhaps would work as an event..? Could suggest patterns from 'Les Immatériaux' – eg

8 March 2019

Rodeo wrote that the curtain from the piece I wanted won't fit the architecture and can't be remade as they no longer make the fabric. They propose some collages.

Haris Epaminonda, *Untitled #17 b/h*, collage on paper, framed, 30 x 23 x 3 cm, 2016   Haris Epaminonda, *Untitled #19 b/h*, collage on paper, framed, 30 x 23 x 3 cm, 2016

Thank you so much for sending this through. Haris and I have had a look and unfortunately it seems that neither of the two curtains we have will fit the space height wise. Furthermore, Haris recently found out that the fabric she used to make the curtains is no longer in stock, and so further production sadly will not be possible!

As Haris will also not be able to come to Site for the installation, we are wondering whether it might be best to propose a work that is much simpler but would still of course be beautiful within the context of the exhibition. Haris has suggested a series of collages that she showed in the gallery in 2017, which are really special and she thinks could be very nice for this show. I am attaching here a PDF with details of those. All are in London, so very easy to get to you!

Do let me know your thoughts on this, and apologies again that the curtain work won't be possible.

All my best,
Katy

I love these but struggle to find the direct connection with the show – emailed back to double check no object based work is available.. 13.3.19

15th March 2019

Read Florian Roithmayrs book Aftercast. The second essay has lots of crossovers in terms of the auratic and reproduction, specific to sculpture and casting, linking a bit to Sven Lutticken on plaster casts.

Sent him the following email:

Dear Florian,

I'm a curator and PhD researcher based in Sheffield. I worked at Site Gallery until 2011 and am now collaborating with Site on my PhD. I was very interested by your project at Site in 2014 and more recently your exhibition last year at Tenderpixel and I wanted to enquire whether it might be possible to show your work in an exhibition I'm curating which will take place at Site in July.

It's a group show which will explore notions of aura & authenticity in the post-digital context. Other invited artists will include Cory Archangel, James Clarkson, Tim Etchells, Oliver Laric, Penny McCarthy and Diana Taylor. Amongst other works, there will be a 3D printed relief sculpture from one of Oliver Laric's 'Lincoln Scans' and a figurative sculpture from Sheffield Hallam University's cast collection and in relation to these I am really interested in the auratic specificity of plaster in the way that you use it. The essay by Alexander Massouras in your book Aftercast crosses over with a lot of my research for the project and I was sorry to miss your exhibitions in Cambridge last year which sound fascinating. I was particularly struck by your work 'forma no 20' and 'forma no 21' at tender pixel and documentation of 'these here withins 02' which I think was shown in Cambridge. So this is really a preliminary approach to see whether you might be interested and it might be possible to loan one of these works for the show (which will be in the same space occupied by your Platform project) from 11 - 28 July. I'd be delighted if so.

Best wishes,

Jeanine

18th March 2019

Received the below from Florian:

Dear Jeanine,

Thank you for your email and getting in touch.
Great to hear you are interested in the auratic specificity of plaster - Alex Massouras also gave a really fascinating talk at Kettle's Yard - when I get around to distilling it, I can send you an audio file.

I'm very happy to discuss this some more, what you have in mind and how etc. I have very good memories of the gallery space at Site but have to admit I haven't seen it since the expansion/renovation.
I have also attached images of another forma work in concrete / plaster.

All the best,

Florian

Dear Florian,

Thanks for your email and I'm so glad you're interested in discussing this further. Thanks also for these images of other forma works - these also look fascinating - what kind of scale are they?

I would love to be able to include a piece from this body of work in the exhibition and it would be great to know if a work might be available. Install will be from 6th July and I will be arranging art transport for another work from Lisson's store in Ely, Cambridgeshire, so if there is a piece in that area (I understand you have a studio at Wysing), they could perhaps be transported together.

I'm happy to speak on the phone or Skype to discuss this further, if that's easier?

All the best,

Jeanine

And a response from Margarita Gluzberg to say Birdsong drawing is available.

Continuing tying these down.

Also firmed up with James Clarkson his involvement – whether with Giggle or a new work.

New mesh samples arrived and made a meeting with Anna to talk about making screens.

Should these cover the cupboards or should this be board/ more traditional screen?

Antony emailed so say too busy with teaching to do the Epreuves d'Ecriture project.. suggested he could add in his input later mid June as the additions to the online glossary will continue through the exhibition.

Emailed to ask Emma C – she got back to say too busy at present.

Suggested to Florian R to meet in London when down for the V&A copy/paste event. This is perfect as he has some of the work from Cambridge on show in London so we will meet and see the work and discuss his involvement on 29th.

28th – met with Jan and Diana to confirm their involvement and discuss works.

Jan and talked about how the work is evolving – feels like it is going into finer detail in terms of the ideas present in the work shown in Bloc. The grid (derived from the faux gingham melamine table top of the table in the original images) is still really important and finding the material and emotional connotations of technology is her core concern it seems. She is doing new plotter drawings of grids/ gingham, and theorising things via Benjamin Batten's idea of the stack (https://mitpress.mit.edu/books/stack) whereby technology has different layers of protocols which a command must move down through and then ascend again, even for a simple task (eg the sending of an email – which seems direct) – these stacks feel sedimentary like Jussi Parikka's mode in 'A geology of media' and the bottom level is the physical, which is where Jan's interest essentially resides – looking back to the just pre-digital time and the stuff of things.

Also looked at randomised animations of the table/moon conjunction that could work alongside the drawings and talked about presentation – wall-based this tie rather than in/on a vitrine. She is thinking of a framing technique using birch ply which echoes the table edge. Almost tray like. Agreed to meet again to finalise exactly which drawings to show and how to frame them, and whether a little animation on a tiny screen with all its technology visible, alongside would be a good addition.

Then met Diana who showed me again the piece that I had liked so much in the seminar, and asked what I thought of a new addition of a collaged section of teatowels and stone images, which I felt was part of a different kind of vernacular, more attuned to the paintings. The assemblages are now tying up more, with post disaster imagery and architectural images, matching at points to create a kind of horizon, almost creating a topography which extends from the 3D scan point cloud. Still really like the idea that this creates layers of representations of representations of fabric, hung as a textile. The embroidery which echoes the point cloud also feels rhizome like. She is still thinking of hanging unstretched, more provisional and avoid the idea of the edge.. Again, we'll talk again nearer the time as to exactly what is included, but I explained the space available.

28 March 2019

met Jeremy Lee (SHU) re creating a VR walkround of the exhibition which could then represent the exhibition in some way at Lincoln. He may be able to do it or will send contacts who might be able to get some students to do it. I will set aside some budget for this.

29th March 2019 – meeting with Florian Roithmayr

Some of his work from Cambridge shows last year are installed in a building foyer near Victoria. We meet there and talk through the work and the project.

Notes from our discussion:

The sculptures are created by intermingling expanding foam and plaster in a box and then chipping off the foam – the creation of the form is near instantaneous but time it takes to reveal the form is intensive.

They are coloured to remove the familiarity, coloured before pouring so coloured throughout. Not truth to materials, the opposite, sidestepping the familiarity of material. Set in rigid grid like structures that recall drying racks, spaces between for the circulation of air, and imply the process. Materials of these also sidestepped eg scaffolding poles are powder coated to flatten them and make them seem like drawing. Oak slats sit between with tiny wedges keeping the separation and balance between objects. They look very fragile but are sturdy. Created in an instant of expansion and entanglement of materials. A here and now, marker of specificity. Index of time and space.

Round white objects are made from the remainder plaster of other works, swirled around, creating uneven thicknesses, delicate and holey in places, chunky in others. These are separated by rough mid strips and are balanced precariously.

Other piece refers to bits of moulds clubs in casting room, hung on pole, the idea that a subordinate material or a process could be a work in itself. Particularly en masse, cumulatively.

High piece made of fibreglass was inspired by detritus of another work-curved mdf boards. Again the gap is important-the boards are separated by metal rods, they are representations of voids kept apart by voids.

Find the expanding foam works the most compelling – almost organic in their form but created by the entanglement of matter. The conjunction with the gridded, pristinely powder coated box and ghost plinth works really well and would work with the scaffolding poles which will hang the space divider – maybe consider also powder coating these..? This show in London ends June so this work could be collected from Wysing for the show at Site.

5th April 2019

On way back from Wales I emailed to get a quote from Aardvark art transport to collect Margarita Gluzberg poster tube from London, Cory Archangel from Ely and the above piece from Wysing £200 plus vat each way. Had to check this as seemed cheap compared to £145 for a part load, but correct – now checking if Site's insurance will cover works in transit, 'nail to nail' as it used to. If not need to send Aardvark insurance values to get a separate quote. They are 6000 MG, 12,000 FR, 60,000USD CA

Then I will:

Formally offer each artist a fee of £250 to include some writing into the glossary

Update exhibition info and image and plan and send to Tim

Rethink on layout.

Watched Laric video again and suddenly felt that this vetriloquised collation of quotes should be the sound piece to the show? How do I square this with Tim's commission – let that just be a sound piece in and of itself, intimate on headphones, static rather than peripatetic –and able to exist at a remove from the show too, downloadable?

Open up the Laric, scrap the mesh divider, show on the cupboard wall, with a mdf screen across the whole wall. Mdf is 240 high so screen could be that high.. and projector could go on

shelf. Still need seating and speakers etc.
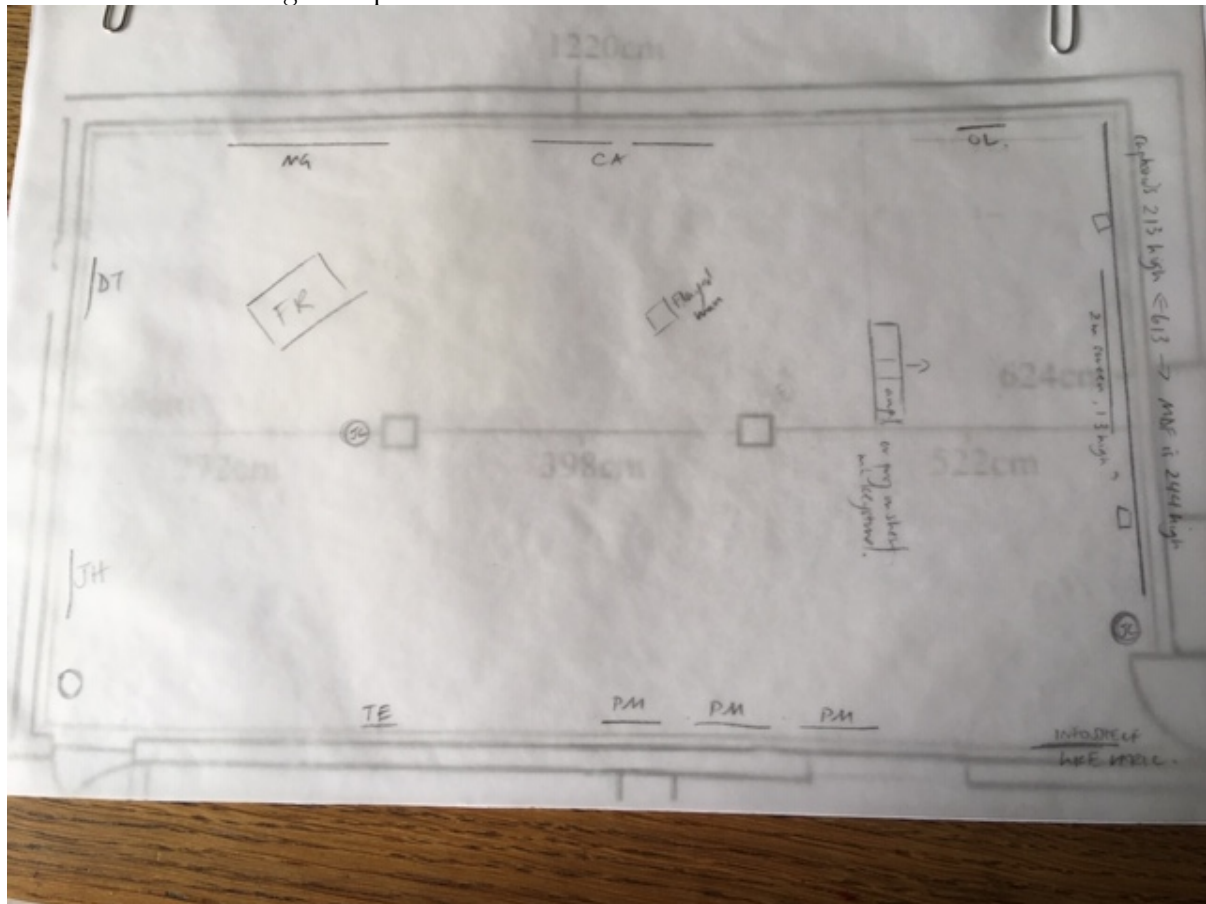
Get another shelf made like the Laric for info and visitors book, position opposite.

So just need 5 sheets of 2440 x 1220 x 6mm? (6mm is £13 per sheet) mdf 5 sheets make up 613 wide, paint – paint out screen grey surround? More time consuming in install but doable – may need another install person to do this while John does the hang.

How to represent the grey mesh, then – does his matter? Felt that these hanging curtains made of the fibreglass mesh were not the best replication and might bow and sway. Could paint the whole wall gray and white out the screen, to give that sense of greyness.. paint ahead of time and leave 2 panels unpainted and paint those out in the space and fill edges and paint.

On take down – recycle? Bloc?

Latest version of layout plan..
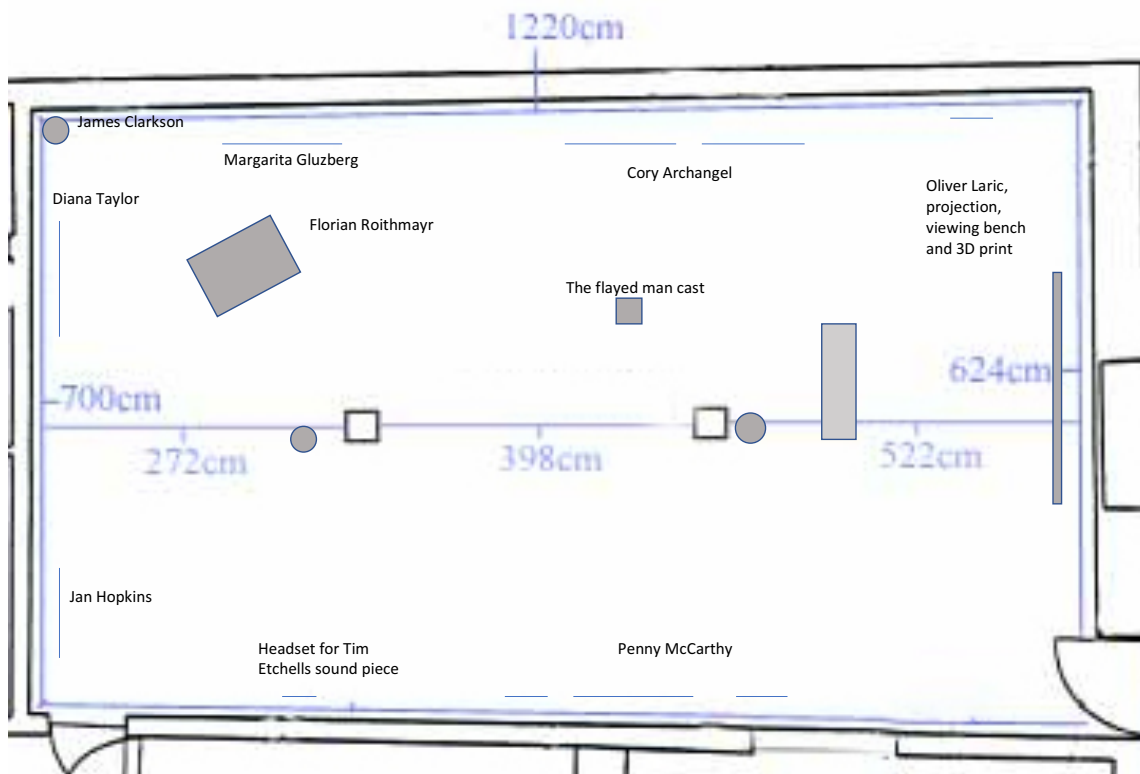
and with the diffractive relationships marked roughly..
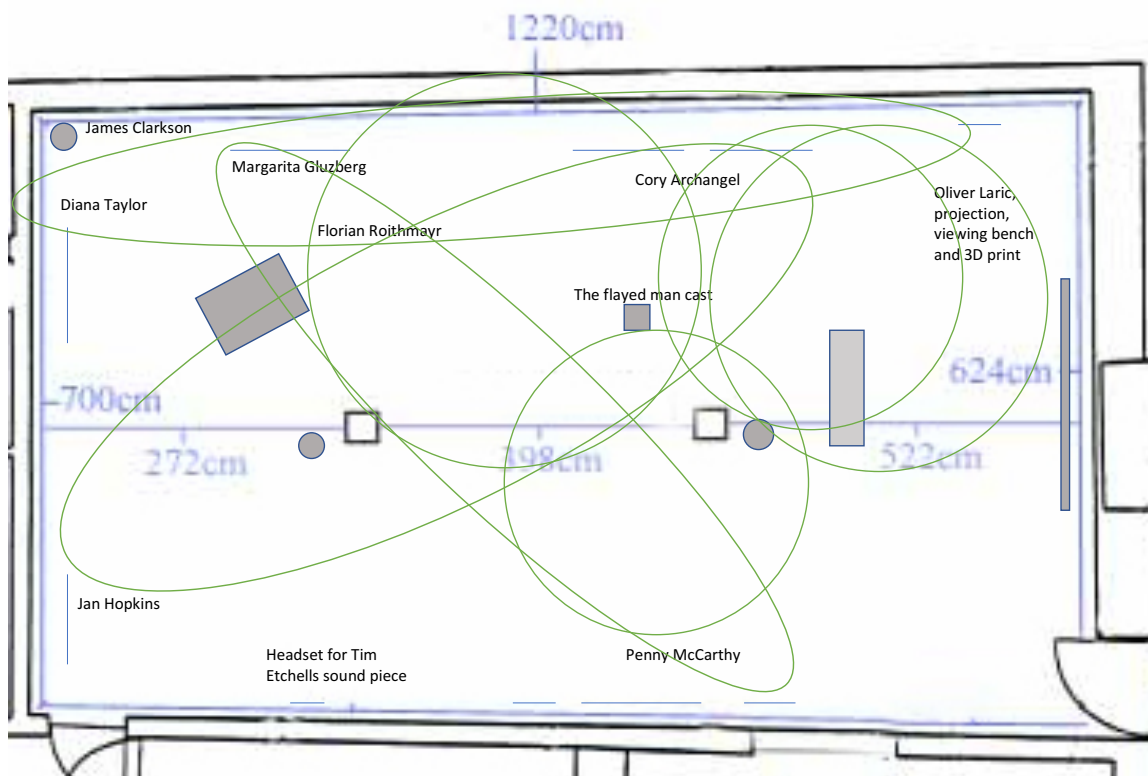
or better :
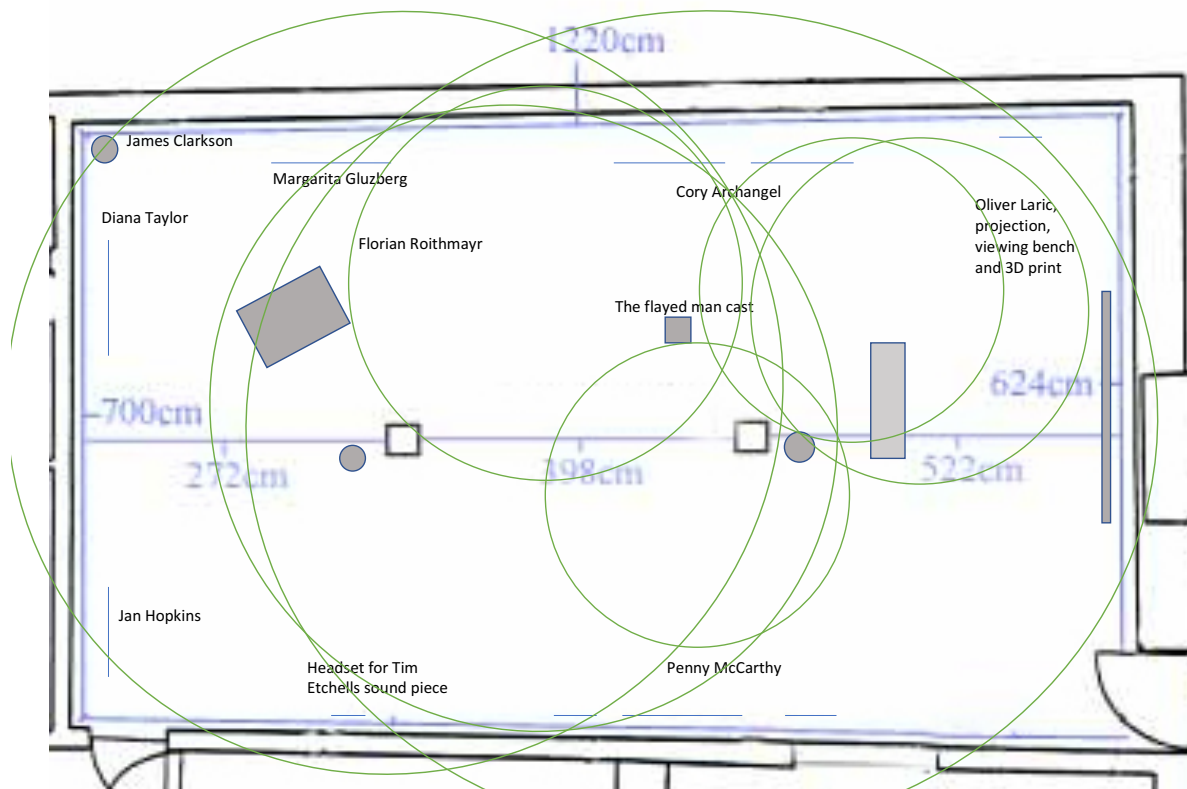
ripples/ superpositions/ intra-actions:

Laric and flayed man – one is just a skin, one has none.. also both ontologically strange in terms of their status as copies.

Diana and Laric – 3 d scans used very differently – one to disseminate and open up to a prosumer, one as a quite personal exploration of autobiography and the hand crafted artefact

James Clarkson's bin and the Laric copied object – one by digital one by industrial processes, process of dissemination in reverse directions (from 30s ceramic piece to Ikea assembly-line to ceramic slipcast semi-industrial process in short run...)

Jan and Cory Arcangels plotter drawings

Penny and Margarita Gluzberg's drawings- same medium used very differently.. one auratic one 'digital', but not opposed..

Florian Roiythmayr's instantaneous auratic cast and the flayed man and Oliver Laric on a continuum – auratic, auratic by scarcity or by indexicality and non auratic or auratic by means of dataset.. (Boris Groys)

Margarita and Penny's hand drawings and Jan and Arcangel computer drawings (one made auratic by editioning and scarcity by being in the art market?)

May/ June 2019

Started writing an interwoven text on the works – just for me, as I plan not to have this available, but really struggle with the idea of withholding information – so decide to write this and have it available as a link/ QR code on the handout in the space, like the link to the glossary. So the information is available but not adjacent to the exhibition. I imagine people could access it afterwards.. https://medium.com/site-stories/a-strange-weave-of-time-and-space-5600ef4554c3

Also wrote an intro text as Site will require one but aimed to have this pose questions only and introduce the artists very minimally.

Noticed this.. https://frieze.com/article/materiality-information-fiona-tans-odes-bygone-data-systems

After not hearing anything for a while from Tim I nudge with an email:

On 12 Jun 2019, at 10:08, Jeanine Griffin <jeaninegriffin@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hi Tim,

I realise I haven't done you a contract, I can do this if you'd prefer, or you can just invoice me on the basis of the agreed fee of £1000 then as discussed there is up to £500 for production of the audio piece (this will need to include the headphones, mini SD cards etc). Penny mentioned there is someone you often work with for sound recording but let me know if I can help with this..

Also wanted to let you know that there will be an opening on Thursday 11th July, 6-8pm, hope you can make it..

The accompanying online glossary of terms is now up and running too, with entries by Esther Leslie, Lucy Steeds, Erika Balsom and some of the other artists - be wonderful if you were able to also input into this over the coming few weeks. Instructions to get started are below.

And if you're in Sheffield and want to meet up just let me know..

All the best,

Jeanine

 I receive this..

On 16 Jun 2019, at 17:23, T J Etchells <sheffieldtim@mac.com> wrote:

Hi Jeanine

Hope you are going well.

Spent some more time on the audio-guide this week… pursued a couple of ideas but nothing I am too happy with just yet. Will keep going.
Might be good we meet this coming Wednesday in case you might be around? I'm in Sheffield for the day. Let me know if we would meet.
Struggling with a lot of questions about it - the kinds of questions I carry with me, so nothing out of the ordinary - just trying to figure a way that it can work for me.
When we meet it may be useful to chat through those… I can tell you/ show some of the reject thinking!

Question in the meantime - I guess I am wondering how close to 'guide/frame' it needs to be… I got a little way with something but that seemed more like 'audio work'… and less in the guide/frame category but then I doubt it.
And form wise - are we fully committed to audio? Some of my issues seem to come down to the discrete time-based format that the guide/frame seems to imply/demand..
Not really pushing in any specific other direction here… just testing possible ways of thinking about it...

I also did a bit of stuff today on the Definitions site. It's great I think - enjoyed reading material from others. Will go back to it.

Finally, a bit of a footnote - I wonder if you know this video work of mine. Did we speak about it in relation to this show?
http://timetchells.com/projects/untitled-after-violent-incident/
You can see the first 15 minutes of it here: (whole piece is 67 mins).
https://vimeo.com/95405885
Pass; vitrine

until soon

Tim

I respond:

Good to hear from you and yes I can meet on Wednesday morning - 10am ok? Sharrowvale or town?

Just to respond briefly to your questions - I would love it if the work could still resolve as an audio piece, to retain the sense of a relationship to 'Les Immatériaux', but am happy for it to be more audio work than guide.. I think it will inevitably be a kind of frame since audio overlays itself on the visual, and I had assumed you would want to take this your own way.. (In fact the one in 'Les Immatériaux' was not a guide at all, but a series of very loosely related texts.). The Oliver Laric video piece in the space will have a soundtrack (simulated female voice) on speakers (https://vimeo.com/17805188), so I do like the idea that you could put

headphones on and cut this one off and have a more intimate voice in your ear.. That said, I'm of course open to suggestions.. we can discuss on Weds.

Thanks so much for inputting into the glossary - that's brilliant and thanks also for the link to the work - I'll take a look.

Hope that helps for now and see you Wednesday.

All the best,

Jeanine

Met with Tim 19th June 2019

He showed me 3 options for the work.
closest to the audio guide idea – but one he was least happy with, the voice of the audio guide, was troubling him.. It was a single sentence inviting the listener to pay attention to the idea of the original in relation to the works in the pace and their interelations, repeated, slowed, sped up and delivered with a laugh in the voice etc. It was appropriate and recognisably Tim's work but also we felt would have diminishing returns as you listened to it
A layering of a John Cage recoding from the Indeterminacy album. Radiophonic Workshop type sounds layered with Cage relating a story about seeing a mechanical drawing arm on hollyood boulevard, going rogue. Tim then layered the souds so it build to a cacophony, then strips of again. Felt very resonant in relation to the show (which includes two works done by robotic plotter..)
A reading of a found/ gathered, manipulated series of texts from advertising and life which he's been collating this year. Eg:

Crazy schedules. Mad dash to airports and mad dash across town. Loopholes in the law / Loopholes in the letter of the law. Turn over the page and try to feel better again. You don't always feel better with time. Thank you to my family, my partner and my daughters. And after the New Deal the Real Deal and after the Real Deal the Raw Deal and after the Raw Deal, No Deal. A festering atmosphere of booze and resentment. The page you are trying to view cannot be shown because the authenticity of the received data could not be verified. Man addicted to and entirely composed of secrets seeks woman without morals, loyalty or belief system. Capitalism has won, but will it be any easier on those who live for tomorrow? Her close friend (and rumoured lover). Methods of looking. Cast a very close eye. There seems to be no limit to the violations to their liberties that Americans will put up with in the catchall name of counter terror.

Recalled to London in disgrace after a fatal intrigue, recall in London a disgrace. A final intrigue. London. Finally. London. Disgrace. London in disgrace. A fatal London. Recall in London. A fatal London disgrace. Disgrace recalled in London. Recall in disgrace. Fatally intrigued. Intrigued of London. A London intrigue recalled in disgrace. Grace. Disgrace. Grave and disgrace. Grace and this grace. The responsibility of an individual who faces a fork in the road. A fork in the road. The responsibility of an individual. The responsibility of an individual who faces a fork in the road and is required to take a decision that will have probably morally dubious consequences. Take a decision that will have morally dubious consequences. Take a decision that will have dubious consequences. Take a decision that will have consequences. Take a decision. A decision. Incision.

This was great and very recognisably Tim's style, but felt less of a connection to the project and also felt like it could have existed in multiple formats and contexts. 2 is definitely audio so adds to the relationship of audio and visual I wanted to get at..

I released him from the feeling that he needed to do an audio guide and we both felt that the Laric collage of quotes does this anyway, so this work could just be a work but add to the diffraction of the visual by the overlaying of audio. The piece in its harnessing of a ghost voice and replaying a major figure from art history, has resonances with James, and the subject with Jan and Cory A..

I sent him this on 21 June:

Hi Tim,

Thanks so much for running me through your thinking on Wednesday, and sending me the extra material. It was great to get a handle on the different approaches you were considering. My initial reaction was that I loved the idea of layering the John Cage excerpt and that it feels like it would be such a resonant piece within this particular exhibition. I've mulled on it and it remains my favoured approach, I think. The collaged and manipulated found text was wonderful, but as you said, it felt like this could exist in multiple different contexts and formats whereas the Cage piece would of course have to be audio and feels like it would just sit brilliantly in this context. So, be good to know your thoughts but I'd be delighted if you were up for going with that idea.

All the best,

Jeanine x

Rewatched Oliver Laric after this.. there's a bit on superposition and quantum worlds… need to find out who this is quoting..

Also on refraction:

'Refraction – diverse perspective of a movable event.'

'Same, same but different, the multiverse is composed of a quantum superimposition of infinitely many, increasingly divergent, non communicating parallel universes or quantum worlds. …. All outcomes exist simultaneously but do not interfere further with eachother, each single prior world having split into mutually unobservable but equally real worlds.'

This from Penny:

20.6.19
Hiya
Just letting you know that I've asked ASAP to make the waiter's pad. I went down there this morning and they seem great. I was sort of wishing that I was asking for something really complicated because they seem up for challenges! So, that should be ready for the show and Will has the spec for the shelf too.
px

Penny McCarthy
Reader in Fine Art
Course Leader Postgraduate Fine Art

Hi Penny,

Ah that's brilliant - I'm so pleased! I think that has a lovely circularity to it in the same way the drawing does so they are great companion pieces.

I also met Tim yesterday to run through a number of ideas he had and he has one which works with John Cage and David Tudor's Indeterminacy piece. (https://we.tl/t-pYmNXtOnNd) - there's a section where Cage talks about a mechanical drawing arm in a shop window, which Tim repeats and layers, which I really like as an idea.. there was another which was a collage of found writing, spoken out, repeated etc which was lovely too but felt also like it would find a home in another context, whereas this one feels like it is really pertinent to the show, has to be audio and is slightly different to Tim's usual mode of working.. we are mulling a while but I think this may be the one.. He had also attempted a kind of address to the show, closer to the original idea, but was less happy with this and it was less interesting too. The audio collage of related texts ('Les Immatériaux' style) will be provided by the Laric sound in the whole space and then you'll be able to shut this off and listen to Tim's more intimate piece..

I'm chuffed everything is coming together..

J x

Yes- I agree with you about the Cage piece. It feels like a more complex approach to the show – and really nice that it has that relation to a parallel moment in history. I'd still quite like to hear his commentary – just out of interest. I imagine you are keeping an archive of all the choices you have made anyway?
I was just thinking about how rich this project is proving to be. The glossary is one of those things that you can never quite imagine until it happens. I love how textured it is.
I hope the project gets the audience it deserves.

Looking at Pierre Huyghes 'umwelt' at serpentine – as a auratic exhtion which can never be seen in the same way twice – an ecosystem of neural network produced images, flies, breeding and the visitor's presence impacting the above.. reveals the ritual of the exhibition –

'When what is made is not necessarily due to the artist as the only operator, the only one generating intentions and that instead it's an ensemble of intelligences, of entities biotic or abiotic, beyond human reach, and that the present situation has no duration, is not addressed to anyone, is indifferent, at that moment perhaps the ritual of the exhibition can self-present.' Pierre Huyghe in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, 2018

Installing – 6.7.8 July 2019 with John Hartley.

Working with John is a pleasure as we have a shorthand of many years working together putting up exhibitions, and a trust of each other's working methods.

The work is meticulously condition checked by Angelica and laid out for hanging, while we extend the wall for the Laric projection. When we come to hang, some changes to my plan become obvious.. the large wall drawing has to go on the end wall in a high and narrow space, rather than the back wall – too similar in scale to the Cory Arcangel to go adjacent. The space left by this is taken up by the flayed man who needs his back to the wall as he is so fragile and needs some empty wall around him. This puts Diana's work where Tim's headphones were to be, which move onto a girder, like a listening post.. Diana's larger work now doesn't look right as it is the same orientation and close to the same size as Penny's Art Class.. so this is switched for an assemblage which is more portrait orientation.. this is hung with the side perpendicular rather than the top, as this strong black print dominates and sets your eye off, if not dead straight..

So interesting how much changes when the shift is made from scale plan to stuff in space.. and how inescapably obvious it is once the works are interacting in the gallery. Again points to the performativity of curating and responsiveness to inter-relationships in space.

This new layout then looks like this:

Margarita Gluzberg, *Birdsong*, 2017 Pencil on Paper Courtesy the artist

Plaster cast of sculpture by Edouard Lanteri. Courtesy Sheffield Hallam University

Cory Archangel, *Line*, 2016, Pencil on paper, produced by Mutoh XP-300 series printer, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery

Oliver Laric, 3D print from *Lincoln Scans*, 2015. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

Oliver Laric, *Versions*, 2010, video, 9 minute loop. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

Florian Roithmayr, *These Here Withins 02*, 2018, plaster, pigments, steel, wood. Courtesy the artist

Tim Etchells, *Penmanship Exercise (After John Cage)*, 2019 Audio file Courtesy the artist

James Clarkson, *Giggle*, 2018, ceramic slip cast of Ikea bin. Courtesy the artist

Jan Hopkins, *Table of Contents: Moons*, 2018, Pen, ink and bleach on paper, produced by computer plotter *Many Moons*, 2019, Digital animation using Processing 3 Courtesy the artist

Diana Taylor *Falling into Space*, 2019. Fabric assemblage. Courtesy the artist

Penny McCarthy *Was Ist Aura?*, 2019, paint on printed paper and litho print on paper *The Art Class*, 2016, pencil on paper Courtesy the artist

Writing Tests online glossary

So I have so far tried to map the relationships in various ways.

With circles/ ripples passing through different points on a related circumference..
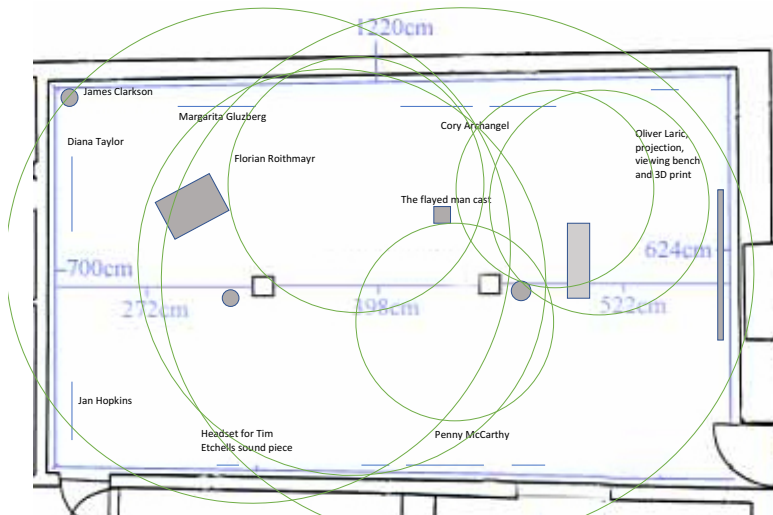
with two main foci – drawing and the cast, which each ripple out affecting eachother…
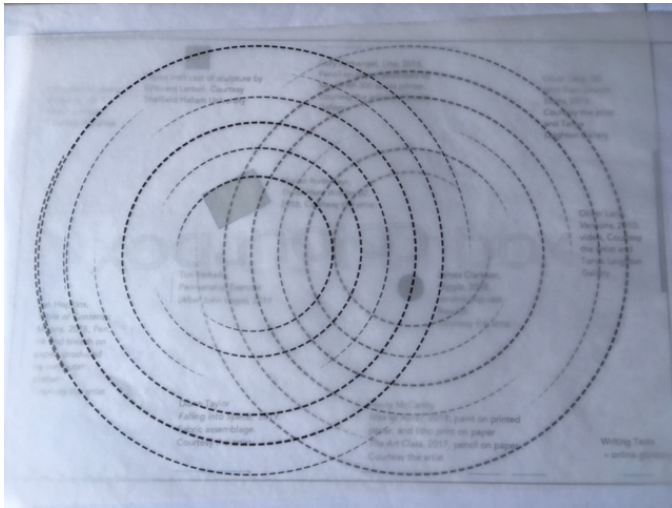
and one where each work sends out ripples which interact with each other work
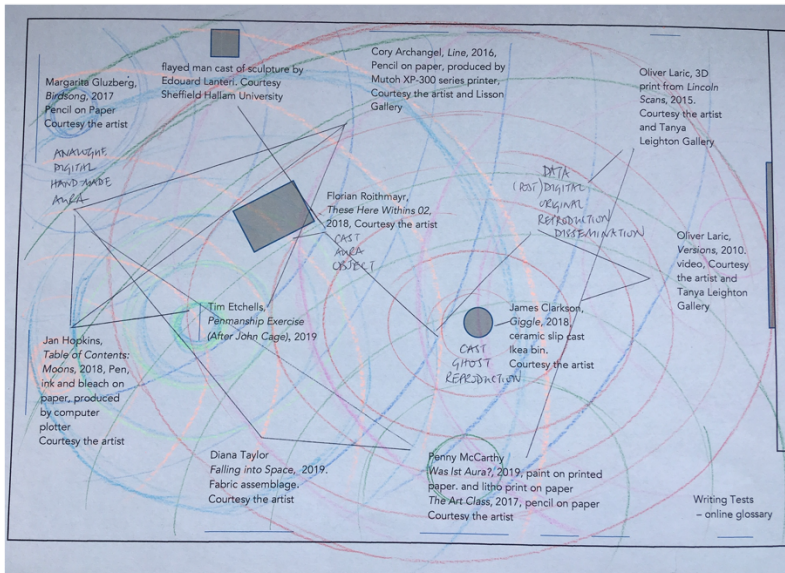
I also note the similarity of diffractive diagrams to Walter Banjamin's diagrams:
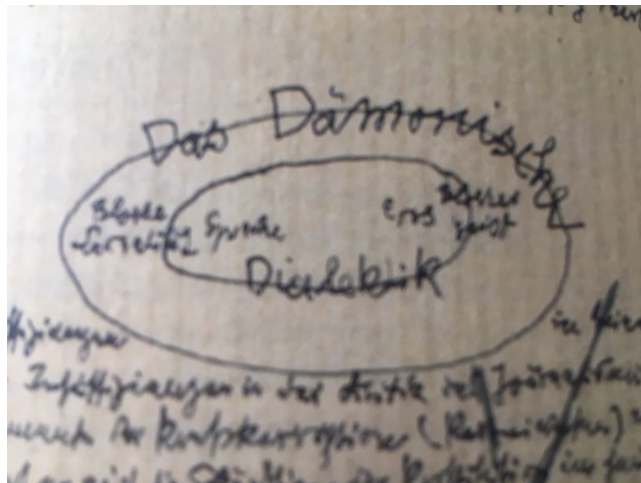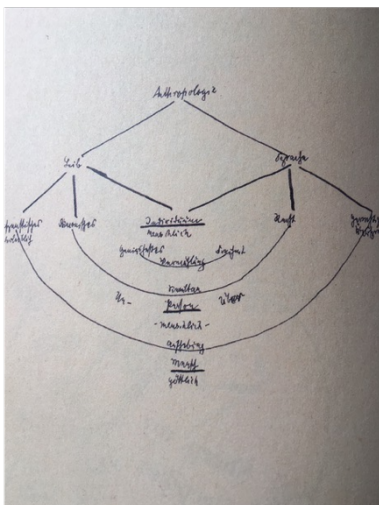
I will ask participants at the seminar to do a similar diagramming exercise to see where other people find resonances and overlays.

Thinking about interpretation – how much information to offer and how, I found this twitter thread interesting, mostly advocating for a traditional labelling approach, but also the idea of giving the viewer's interpretation 'something too bump up against' – this friction is what I was interested in, not a text which delineated response. (read L>R)

Mike ✍️ 🇪🇺 @doublene... · 9h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

Contemporary art is v often difficult and rarely 'speaks for itself'. Curators who opt for no interpretation are actively exclusionary to those members of the audience they feel have wandered into the wrong building. Completely at odds with the idea that art is for everyone.

💬 1 🔁 ♡ 10 ↥

Sean wárs @WWRRSS... · 8h ···
Unless the text is all written in hyper academic way that just excludes those without an academic understanding anyway. A lot of art text actively pushes to make people think it is 'not for them'.

💬 2 🔁 ♡ 6 ↥

Tweet your reply

🏠 🔍 🔔 20 ✉️

< **Tweet**

♥ Tom Emery liked

Emalee Beddoes-Davis ···
@EmaleeBeddoes

Thought of the day. Do curators who prefer not to have artwork labels or intro texts actually mean it or are they just really smart and saving weeks of work? Both?

Sean wárs @WWRRSS... · 8h ···
Replying to @doublenegativeM and @EmaleeBeddoes

Unless the text is all written in hyper academic way that just excludes those without an academic understanding anyway. A lot of art text actively pushes to make people think it is 'not for them'.

💬 2 🔁 ♡ 6 ↥

Mike ✍️ 🇪🇺 @doublene... · 7h ···
Yep. It's at odds with the idea of getting people through the door and putting them at ease so that they'll come back. As someone who's written this stuff (and no doubt got it wrong from time to time), you've got to put yourself in the audience's shoes.

💬 1 🔁 ♡ 1 ↥

Tweet your reply

🏠 🔍 🔔 20 ✉️

< **Tweet**

getting people through the door and putting them at ease so that they'll come back. As someone who's written this stuff (and no doubt got it wrong from time to time), you've got to put yourself in the audience's shoes.

💬 1 🔁 ♡ 1 ↥

Mike ✍️ 🇪🇺 @doublene... · 7h ···
I'd say there's been work since those International art English conversations a while back to address a lot of the worst offenders. Having said that you still see language that would prove difficult for those in the sector to decipher – never mind your casual viewers!

💬 🔁 ♡ 1 ↥

Tweet your reply

🏠 🔍 🔔 20 ✉️

Sayyara Huseynli @Say... · 6h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

I work in a museum with no labels. The person who started it intended for visitors to make their own meanings. I think it takes away the pressure to read a bunch of art historian jargon which can often be seen on curatorial texts. It is more open and inviting

💬 1   🔁   ♡   ⬆️

Rebecca Mileham @r_... · 4h ···
I don't want to read art historian jargon either. There are other options. I mean, I am sure you get something out of seeing 'stuff' with no context, it could still be beautiful like a garden full of plants, but maybe it could be more?

Tweet your reply

🏠   🔍   🔔20   ✉️

Rebecca Mileham @r_... · 4h ···

I am all for visitors bringing their own meanings, and honoring those. But I like the idea of giving them something to bump those meanings up against.

💬   🔁   ♡ 1   ⬆️

Meadow Arts @Meado... · 9h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

This made us laugh! We are on the side of the label, and you need a highly engaged audience to leave them out completely. When there's some sort of exhibition map/guide with the interpretation info, it can sometimes be confusing to negotiate if there are no labels.

💬   🔁   ♡ 4   ⬆️

Rebecca Mileham @r_... · 9h ···

Tweet your reply

🏠   🔍   🔔20   ✉️

Rebecca Mileham @r_... · 9h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

😄 I have no patience for the 'it speaks for itself' argument. It takes weeks of work because it's difficult, but worthwhile, no?

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 8   ⬆️

Meadow Arts @Meado... · 9h ···
It is worthwhile for your audiences.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 4   ⬆️

Rebecca Mileham @r_... · 9h ···
Exactly. I suppose, unless your audience is 'other people who are clones of me'.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 3   ⬆️

Meadow Arts @Meado... · 9h ···
Where is this mythical unicorn audience...?

Tweet your reply

🏠   🔍   🔔20   ✉️

Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

They don't care about visitors.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 3   ⬆️

Jane Audas @JaneAudas · 4h ···
So true. Labels can be read. Or not. When there is nothing, there is no choice.

💬   🔁   ♡ 2   ⬆️

Annette French @netty... · 9h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

The qr code exhibition guide approach infuriates me. Stop making the visitor do the work!

💬   🔁   ♡ 8   ⬆️

Empathetic Museum · 2h ···
Replying to @EmaleeBeddoes

No wall labels are like going to a party where no one says hello

💬   🔁 2   ♡ 7   ⬆️

Tweet your reply

🏠   🔍   🔔20   ✉️

Opening photos..
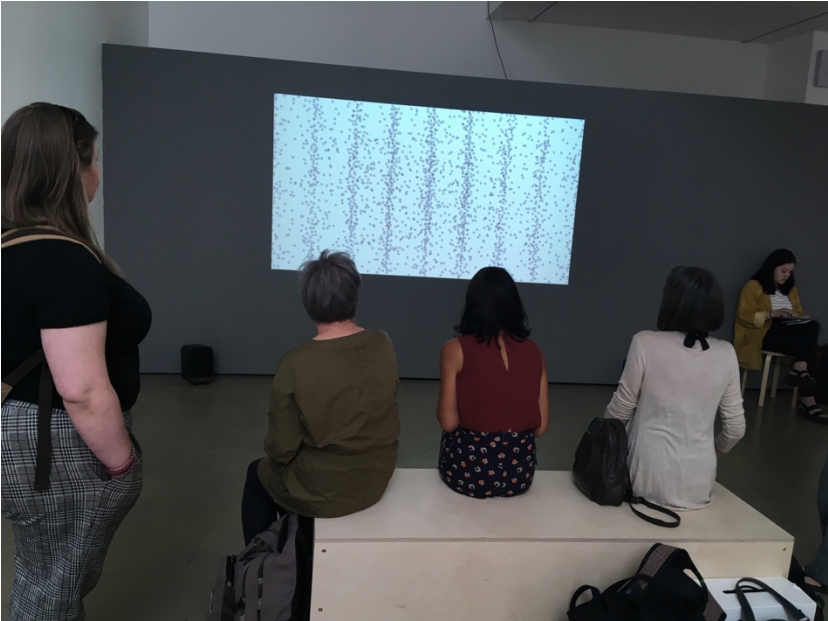
Responses:

Matt Cheeseman –

Great show at Site!

Contemplating eternity from the wide expanse of the horizontal moment...

Mandy Gamsu:

https://www.instagram.com/p/B0L3zh6FQWJ/?igshid=172hyg88giph7

an online review:
https://thatlooksqueer.home.blog/2019/07/18/a-totem-timeline-auratic-replication/

We must now attribute value in this new world where the data surrounding an object is as if not more important than its history…

A strange weave of time and space at Site Gallery collates a series of pieces in an attempt to explore aura in the post digital world. Video, sculpture line and fabric are presented in delicious juxtaposition.

Florian Roithmayr's These Here Withins 02 with its abstract brutalist dimensionality dominates the space, but through the pocked cavities the strained anatomical beauty of Edouard Lanteri's sculpture can be viewed.

Oliver Laric's works display the beauty and beast of repetition, 3D prints of religious iconography in Lincoln Scans 3D scans of artefacts from Lincoln cathedral made freely available to rework and 3D print against a display of rotoscoping and the immediacy of animation in Versions. In sharing the data with the world is the craft of the stonemason lost to time or in a heightened state of appreciation? Has the aura been lost?

It is easy to dwell in the absolutes of our world. Binary constructs help us relax into our lives. The most enticing questions have no answer. When we consider our own place within the works the question of aura becomes more complex. Placing ourselves into the mind of the artist and the hidden worlds of creation yet to be imagined.

Perhaps this is why Birdsong by Margarita Gluzberg and Falling into space by Diana Taylor envision the best means of answering the unanswerable. Interpolated threads and abstract forms in an otherwise flat surface. A view otherwise unseen.

Becky:

Dear Jeanine
Thankyou so much for yesterday, it was the best possible last seminar. I loved every minute, the show is fantastic and I absolutely love the glossary- I am very excited to see how you will

use it in your research, is a brilliant way to get round 'collecting response'. I was also so pleased that Toni, Tim, and Louise were there are there is so much overlap with their work.
Have a great summer with hopefully some rest! Bx

The plan for the Lincoln iteration:

The plan I to show here the VR walkthrough which has been produced -
https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fimmdesigns.com%2F
Application%2FJeanine.html&data=02%7C01%7C%7C05b6ad58e297482bb71b08d73
787de38%7C84df9e7fe9f640afb435aaaaaaaaaaaa%7C1%7C0%7C637038928987811216&a
mp;sdata=E6OdYkSoMDrovD4BNlr9dHayRYymtG6L9d7WYhBlBxo%3D&reserved=
0
alongside some of the original works. Some are impossible to show due to the lack of insurance and invigilation in the space, so to make a merit of this, the idea was to dematerialise the show slightly and test out the feeling of immediacy, vs the access to the fuller show on VR.

This might test out some of the ideas rehearsed in the Art Monthly article by Mark Wilsher ('Virtual and other bodies' June 19 Art Monthly 427, p 11-14) on the lack of embodiment in screen based versions of sculptural works… as discussed at the seminar:

"There was an article about the troubling materiality of 3Dscans and prints in Art Monthly. It's really interesting, it talks about how we are trying to relate to this material with our material bodies and it doesn't reciprocate in some way. So we find it troubling."
Michelle Atherton 45:28
Yeah, yeah. That article.. It was interesting. And in terms of your, your show, is the phrase of 'diffracted sensuality'. Which I think is really in a lot in what I saw going round. I went round quickly so that's really a first impression and also I guess what's interesting about this in relationship that that (article) is actually the thing about the body - I'm not sure - I think the loss of the body I feel is overanxious in that article.

Jeanine Griffin 46:16
And actually it just really makes you feel that more and actually with an odd object that doesn't have that kind of heft.. you feel that the distinction - rather than not feeling that you have a body you feel it more, I think if you have a different relationship to it. But I think he's mostly talking about screen based stuff isn't he.."

This also reminds me of Hito Steyerl's 'Bubble vision' lecture…

Many museums and galleries now offer some form of virtual viewing of collections and exhibitions (See images of google camera in serpentine marathon pamphlet..) which denies this impression on the body, and in some sense denies the body at all..
The impact of the immersive virtual viewing of artworks, can be looked at though the filter of what Hito Steyerl calls 'Bubble vision'. She notes that in VR and 360 degree video, the viewer is at the centre of a sphere or bubble of vision which has a blind spot at the centre which excludes the self —- if you're lucky you get a hand or a head but the body is missing. She relates the VR user at the centre of a sphere of vision to the position of the human at the centre of nature in the anthropocene. Just as the VR user is missing at the centre of the bubble vision, so the human who is ostensibly the prime mover of the Anthropocene epoch, is potentially disappearing (either due to handing over power and agency to opaque algorithms

and invisible data systems, having been automated or superceded by technology or due to ecological crises) and VR is a training ground to get used to this idea – 'rehearsing how to be our own ghost'.453

My first draft layout for the space was as below, which misses out the Laric projection, Florian Roithmayr's sculpture and the Cory Arcangel, the latter two for reasons of insurance and security and the former for more conceptual reasons, but actually they feed into the same enquiry – by removing these artefacts with very specific materiality which needs protection, but showing these via the VR, what is that doing to our experience of the show, and how does it work to create a kind of mise en abime, a show within a show, which has variations and different kinds of access to the artefacts?
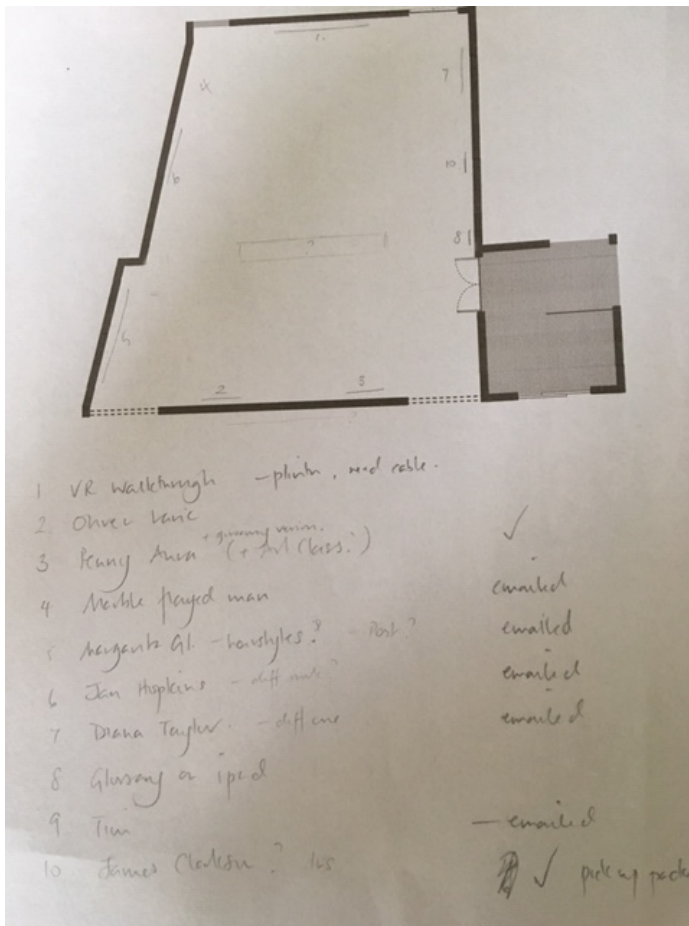
2 October 2019

I had a conversation with Penny about the layout and whether to reinstate the Laric projecton so to keep the two audio diffractions of the exhibition, rather than just one which might then seem like the soundtrack to the show. We agreed that in terms of generosity to audience, you would keep this Laric projection integral, but in terms of testing something new, trying the VR version was more interesting and useful for the research. The video will play whenever someone navigates to that section in the VR of the site show. This quite a hard decision, especially since this work feels quite integral to the show, as was commented on by Esther Leslie, on viewing the VR walkthrough "That panopto visualization is a great gadget. The exhibition looks really intriguing. I love the animation work there. Exciting!"

More excitingly, I've also arranged for Esther Leslie to come up and see the show and give me some feedback and to do a talk:

"I can do something called:'Device and Gesture: On our Hands and our Machines'
It is a Benjaminian take on screen culture and how we are remade in its image/touch. Perhaps it is a tabulation of our tablets. "

5 Oct 2019 -   I found out that there was a temporary wall in place in the space which might change this orientation and layout as it offers a better light shield for projection in what is a very light space...

Andrew sent this iphone photo 7.10.19

An alternative layout might then be..
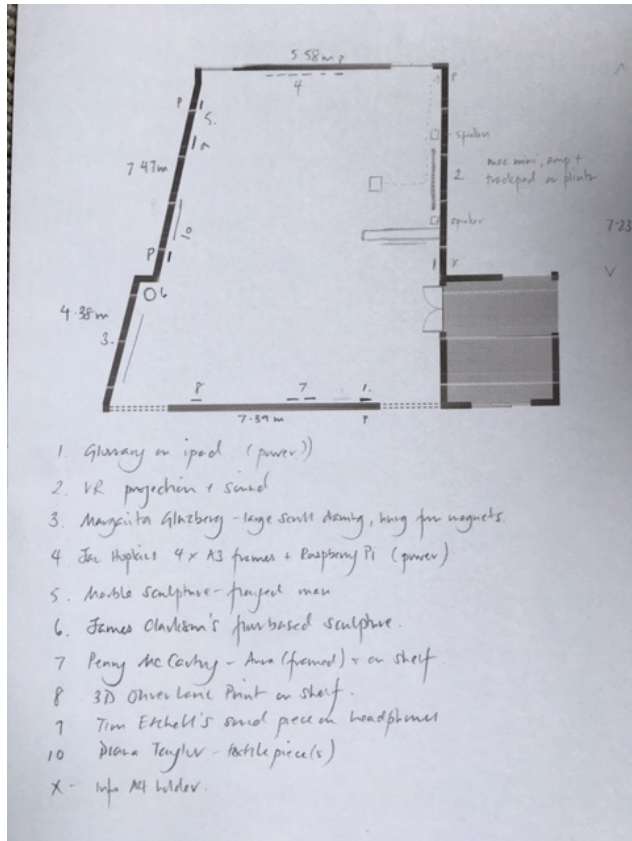
 I emailed the technician who will be installing with me:

Hi Brad,

I'm so pleased you're free to install this show - its a version of one I did at Site Gallery in July, which was the VR walkround I sent you, which is going to be incorporated into this version.

I'm thinking the layout will be as below (there is a wall in the space at the moment which I will make use of to shield the projection from the natural light rather than building another temporary wall - on attached photo)

I'll go through what's needed in each case..

1. is just securing an iPad in a lockable mount on the Wall, running to power below.
2. Danny from the university is hopefully helping with this, so we can use the integral ceiling mounted projector to project the VR walk round I sent you, from Mac mini. I'm having a plinth with one removable side made to house the Mac mini and an amp, then trackpad on top. We'd then need to run speaker cable and VGA/HDMI and power out, along the floor and up to speakers and projector, and across to power. (Dotted line on diagram) This is the only bit where there may be some variables really..

3. 150x270cm drawing on rolled paper, hung with magnets (supplied), unglazed
4. Hang 4 x A3 framed drawings and a raspberry pi on backboard, run to power
5 marble dust cast freestanding figurative sculpture - just lifting out of van and putting in place..
6. Slip cast ceramic cast of Ikea Fniss bin - just putting in place - slightly delicate..
7. 2 framed works and a shelf to be hung
8. 3d print on shelf to be hung
9. 2 sets of headphones on hooks to be hung
10 1 or 2 textile piece to be hung with command strips from batten in hem at top.
x - perspex info holder to be hung

Hope that sound ok and hopefully doable in a day, with some help on the projection? Would you remind me of your day rate?

Look forward to working with you again.

All the best,

Jeanine

Tim Machin is checking with the university insurance as to whether I can take Penny's The Art Class which is owned by the university.

So that will leave me with the following artefacts:

Oliver Laric 3Dprint
Penny's aura drawing and multiple.
marble version of the flayed man sculpture – to be more robust and also show another version
Margarita Gluzberg's hairstyes drawing
Jan Hopkins – moons and different animation..
Diana Taylor – different piece?
James's bin

Other: Tim's sound piece and VR and glossary (who will charge Tim's headphones – leave plugged in?)

17th October 2019

I had a meeting with Michelle to talk about progress and the show in Lincoln.

She suggested I need to think about what diffraction is for me and how how it functions. I need to take a position on the positions I delineate in the literature review - determine what's important and how I am testing arguments via the practice at Site and in Lincoln. Think

about the notion of interference - what does that mean for me and for the audience. Lincoln can be even more experimental - the diagramming of interference is nice - keep this element in the Lincoln seminar. She suggested doing the diagramming exercise actually in the space of exhibition at Lincoln because in a seminar it's a space of reflection rather than diffraction and to give people time with this exercise.

The idea of diffraction in curating- on one level is of course it's obvious - things rub up against other things - what do I take from that model? what exactly resonates between things? interesting part is in what or how people understand the exhibition differently.

Re the VR walkthrough, I noted my concern about having the Laric only represented at this remove, as I'd discussed with Penny how it would be more generous to the audience to have this installed, but more interesting for the research to have it at one remove - she agreed it was important to use this VR version and test this out - She wondered whether I should have the VR walkthrough animated so it opens the space up because the panning motion opens that space up. I suggested that I wanted the individual to navigate that space so it became a more singular experience. We looked at the Oliver Laric on the VR walkthrough and noticed that the film was buffering - this seems appropriate to his work which is a kind of mise en abime of the internet anyway. Michelle liked the fact that with the VR walk through the space of the Laric is at one remove like the Camille Henrot work in the bloc project (presented as a viewing copy on laptop).. She said she missed that in the Site exhibition.. that is a type of curatorial interference both of the other projects hold - an interference that not that is not in the Site show, a different layering and a testing of the auratic.

She noted that the Laric is so different from Penny's works which interject the sensitivity of the hand and drawing whereas the Laric compresses and has the flatness of that type of representation - deadening through representation in some way. He seems to be a parallel to Leckey and the second show of reproduction (Uniaddmths) - there seems a great dissatisfaction in the relationship to objects and this shifts in the film because it's animated and as its native to the context this works.

Maybe aura is just the question of how do we perceptually animate something, which could be a culturally constructed response. The question of the auratic is about the relationship between the tangible and the digital - about what the auratic is and how it is held - in interferences - perhaps it is about the relationship between the internal space of the gallery and the external space of the internet and the glossary.

Michelle found a strong element of the Site show was the Tim Etchells sound piece she found it captivating but it also blocks out other stuff.

I mentioned the idea of having two sounds which interfere with each other rather than one which might have formed a simple narrative to the exhibition and that that is part of how diffraction works in relation to sound waves and interference..

 Michelle suggested that I track the dynamic between the works - what would be a diffractive analysis of the show? How do you mark the instant pull of some works which is different from the quieter works - they work on different wavelengths, different frequencies, some eminently instagrammable so are high frequency in Michelle's terms.

 Michelle suggested that I chart audience responses as they first see the show and then have a conversation and then chart those responses again at the end to see what the conversation

about the work how that impacts on the reading of the exhibition. She also suggested that from the two exhibitions I could track what people echo in terms of the theory and then pull that element out of the literature review. (eg people in the glossary have talked about diffraction and entanglement)

At the start of literature review is the idea that the return to the object is a potentially conservative approach to curating or is it about things becoming undercut and the production of a new space.

 I should test the virtual space playing with the auratic and testing it out

 I noted that I didn't feel it was an exhibition proper really in the same way that the Bloc exhibition hadn't been but Michelle suggested in this wrongness there was an energy.

 I noted that James Clarkson had asked who was in the exhibition so he could put this on his website and I couldn't really tell him because some artists are represented in the virtual walk through but not physically in the show - so are they in the show or not? Michelle thought this was a really interesting thing to draw out - the copy is not listed as a work and to get Esther to comment on this

Michelle referenced HKW in Berlin and the idea of how the experiment of the exhibition acts back onto the idea of the exhibition. If this is a research exhibition how is this different from any exhibition where things rub against each other ? Thinking about the Leeds exhibition (James Hutchinson at The Tetley – a solo show which includes copies of others work), triple canopy, Sherrie Levine - the copy in the exhibition seems more acceptable now than ever.

We discuss the virtual reality as kind of piece in itself - was sitting somewhere between a piece and a documentation - she suggested I see what has been written about the Lawrence Lek piece.

 I also suggested that I would have the VR piece on an iPad for the seminar which could be navigable more intuitively.

 I mentioned that Penny had said that Deborah Chadbourn had found it difficult to access the Site exhibition and wondered whether this was the reliance on sound for interpretation rather than text. Could ask Deb to elaborate..

 Finally we talked about the glossary Michelle asked whether I would add any new terms now I mentioned that the only other term that had been raised in the seminar had been 'time'. Michelle questioned whether the glossary was in essence diffractive - was that this interference or differing frequencies did the fact that there was no one point of view or line of arguments mean it is diffractive is it just an aggregate or of knowledges or is it new knowledge? She suggested that out of the thesis could potentially come a new glossary. We discussed the idea of printing it up as a kind of gloss on the glossary. She thought it might be possible to rethink its form rather than printing it - siting it within Site's medium publication or could it grow and change? She mentioned an online thesaurus that was built up of dots so it animated it almost like a cloud structure this is something I could think about it.

Install

Install at Lincoln working with Brad who worked on Gymnasium, was straight forward. Some repositioning of Margaritas work needed and light levels a little bright for the projection but works due to shadow from temporary wall.

6 November 2019

Meet Esther Leslie in Lincoln and show around her the exhibition. She delivers the lecture: 'Device and Gesture: On our Hands and our Machines' which is, of course, brilliant, wide-ranging, eclectic yet absolutely to the point.

This is followed by a walkround the exhibition which is documented separately – but Esther makes a brilliant suggestion of hyperlinking the glossary entries so you get the strange weave through the internet too. Will look into doing this.

November 19th 2019

I did a session with the the MA/ Andrew Bracey on the research and then a walkround with the students to get their responses, which are documented separately. Some really interesting ideas around aura as attention which chime with Benjamin's later thinking.

Post exhibition period.

I work with Daniel Royle on creating the publication for the Writing Tests project.

Hi Dan,

I'm well, thanks, hope you are too and you're finding a way through this challenging period. I was thinking about contacting you, actually, so glad you've got in touch. I wondered whether you might possibly have some time for this project now, but I know everyone's time is differently committed at the moment. I have hardly any time at the moment with two kids at home, but am still hoping to get this produced soonish. The SHU printing dept is closed at present but it would be good to have the design ready for when they reopen or possibly think about other production options..

Since we spoke a new writer has unexpectedly added a definition to each category (time on hands during this period, I think..) and I have added some hyperlinks between definitions in

the online version, but the structure is the same. I may ask Site gallery for an ISBN and if so may produce a few more for them to sell in the shop, but essentially a very short print run will be fine.. I think I would add a short biog for each writer which I'll need to work on and send you through but I imagine just a paragraph for each, if you could leave space for this at the end, along with funders logos etc, that would be great. Otherwise, all the content will be as on the website (including the intro page for the start..)

Look forward to hearing your ideas!

all the best,

Jeanine

1 July 2020 Hi Dan,

Just for reference before we speak here's the original project as it was printed up in 1985:

https://monoskop.org/images/f/f9/Les_Immateriaux_Epreuves_d_ecriture.pdf

Not that we need to refer to this, just for information, really..

Jeanine

6 July 2020

Hi Jeanine,

I have attached a small presentation, which just outlines the general idea so far. It may seem a bit confusing and needs a little imagination/explaining at this stage as I am unable to mock anything up properly from my flat but I have made a little dummy just so it's easier to imagine.Here is a link (https://we.tl/t-5FCvlcZ2dJ) to a quick video as well which shows the dummy, I can also show this when we talk it through.

I think it's important to say, so far I have mainly focused on the structure and how it can be produced in an interesting way at little to no cost and the actual design, in terms of typesetting etc, is very rough and is just too 'paint a picture'. But, I hope it acts as a good starting point at least.

Let me know when you're are free to talk it through.

Dan

An exhibition and research project exploring notions of aura & authenticity in the post-digital context.

The selected works circle around the complex relations between the auratic, (Walter Benjamin's term for the authentic, original artefact, singular in space and time) and the technologically repro-duced, dispersed and viewed art object prevalent in the current post-digital period. Including video, sculpture, drawing, audio and 3D printed objects.

Artists and writers involved include:
Cory Arcangel, Michelle Atherton, Erika Balsom, Matthew Cheeseman, James Clarkson, Tim Etchells, Jan Hopkins, Esther Leslie, Margarita Glazberg, Oliver Laric, Penny McCarthy, Florian Roithmayr, Lucy Steeds and Diana Taylor.

Curated by Jeanine Griffin

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND   SITE GALLERY   Sheffield Hallam University

i.   Analogue

is a sibling, a kin, a something that tracks the
very closely, continuously. Analogu

by *Esther Leslie*,
Monday, 17 June, 2019

Your mention of dog makes me also think

by *Florian Roithmayr*,
Sunday, 23 June, 2019

What is analogue about the medium often ca
film"? The idea that "analogue" designates o
opposed to the discreteness of the digital, on

The moment one moves to a consideration
itself, to the relationship between frames, c
becomes but an illusion created by the ma
digital is understood as a logic rather than
technology, perhaps "analogue" film was al
its sampling of reality at 24 frames per seco
"photochemical film" instead would be m

by *Erika Balsom*,
Friday, 28 June, 2019

What is interesting is that there has been a p
'real' analogue world can be represented by
So the 'real' analogue sound wave is merely
a discrete digital signal. What happens then
is represented, when the interpretation of o
longer viable on the above terms

by *Margarita Glazberg*,
Tuesday, 2 July, 2019

Your mention of dog makes me also think

by *Florian Roithmayr*,
Sunday, 23 June, 2019

What is analogue about the medium often ca
film"? The idea that "analogue" designates o
opposed to the discreteness of the digital, on
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A Strange Weave of Time and Space   Writing Tests

A Strange Weave of Time and Space

Writing Tests

by
Jeanine Griffin

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Artists and writers involved include:
Cory Arcangel, Michelle Atherton, Erika B[alsom,] Matthew Cheeseman, James Clarkson, Ti[m Etchells,] Jan Hopkins, Esther Leslie, Margarita Glu[zberg,] Oliver Laric, Penny McCarthy, Florian Roit[hmayr,] Lucy Steeds and Diana Taylor.

Curated by Jeanine Griffin

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND   SITE GALLERY

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i. Analogue

is a sibling, a kin, something that tracks the othe[r]
very closely, continuously. Analogue dogs

by Esther Leslie,
Monday, 17 June, 2019

Your mention of dog makes me also think of sh[...]

by Florian Roithmayr,
Sunday, 23 June, 2019

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In 1985, as part of the exhibition Les Immateriaux, at the Pompidou Centre, co-curator Jean Francois Lyotard issued a number of writers with minitel machines and a list of words to create a cumulative glossary of terms related to the exhibition.

Although pre-internet, these machines allowed the writers to view each others writing in real time and respond and add to them to create a polyvocal set of 'definitions', with multiple voices interwoven. The result was Writing Tests or First Drafts and which was then printed up as part of the exhibition catalogue. In Lyotard's "rules of the game" writers were invited to give their 'definitions' ("2-10 lines maximum") of multiple terms from of a supplied list of words related to the exhibition, and also respond to ("refute, complete, modulate, etc") the inputs of other writers.

Now with collaborative online writing prevalent with Wikipedia etc, but with exhibition catalogues still mostly comprised of univocally authored essays, this project is being revisited to cumulatively and collectively define a new set of terms, in relation to the exhibition ' A Strange Weave of Time and Space'.

Glossary of Terms:

i.	Analogue	xiii.	Copy
ii.	Aura	xiv.	Dissemination
iii.	Cast	xv.	Hand-made
iv.	Digital	xvi.	Object
v.	Ghosts	xvii	Replica
vi.	Materiality	xviii.	Artefact
vii.	Post-digital	xix.	Data
viii.	Archive	xx.	Exhibition
ix.	Authenticity	xxi.	Immateriality
x.	Copy	xxii.	Object
xi.	Dissemination	xxiii.	Object
xii.	Hand-made	xxiv.	Replica

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Front cover

Example spread
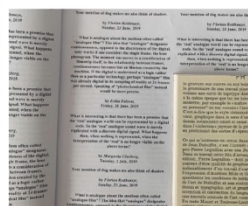
Paper example

7 July
Hi Dan,

This looks really interesting - I think I'm getting the idea from the video and I love the complex folds but simple binding idea. I wonder about having different glossary terms on the same page as each other and whether these should have a page to themselves (one idea for the file/folder idea was that pages could be shuffled to read in any order..), but I do like the way you can find the terms easily with the numbering and the look of the columns and of course we can discuss this. I'm also happy to align with the website design you did and follow through some elements here (even if just font..)

I've also been looking at the budget left over from the project overall and I have £600 remaining which could go towards the design and print costs for this, so ideally some fee for you plus some print costs. So we could perhaps have a slightly less DIY approach if needs be.. Maybe the exterior cover could be printed professionally and in an off standard colour.. sure there are various options.

Thanks so much for the time you have put into this so far, really appreciate it. How about speaking on zoom about 6pm on Thursday - would that work for you?

All the best,

Jeanine

Hi Jeanine,

Glad you are happy with this starting point, yes definitely a little more could be achieved then with the budget. How many are you looking to produce ideally?

Thursday works well for me!

Speak soon.

Dan

On 10 Jul 2020, at 07:55, Jeanine Griffin <jeaninegriffin@hotmail.com> wrote:

Hi Dan,

I was thinking about the glossary publication and had a sudden revelation that the folder style binding won't seem as unusual/ interesting in the context of a PhD which will also all be A4 bound and also won't work particularly well for Site's bookshop. I wondered whether there's a way to use the thinking you've done so far but shrink it, so its a smaller (A5 or less?), more handleable object, that could be digitally printed either at Hallam or commercially? I realise that we'd probably have to lose the metal binding, but could live with stapled, stitched or even loose (heavier) sheets in a smaller folder. With smaller and more pages, could we have the cover/folder scored to create a kind of spine?

Sorry this didn't occur to me when we spoke. I'm sending some images of publications I've edited or been involved in before (done by Versus, designers republic and Joff and Ollie) - just thinking about size, the grey Gymnasium one is A5. Also another A5 Hallam-produced publication I had which was stitched (with raw edged spine) with loose cover which is really nice.

Let me know what you think.

All the best,

Jeanine

On 7 Aug 2020, at 16:42, Daniel Royle <hello@danielroyle.com> wrote:

Hey Jeanine,

I hope you are well and enjoying this weather!

Just wanted to let you know that I have been working on revised/more resolved version of what we previously spoke about including a change of format etc, will hopefully be ready to send over towards the end of next week, with the aim of getting everything rounded off by the end of this month? If that suits you? Just wanted to give a quick update incase you were wondering. Speak soon. Thanks for picture references btw!

Best,

Dan

Daniel Royle

17 Sept 2020 draft design
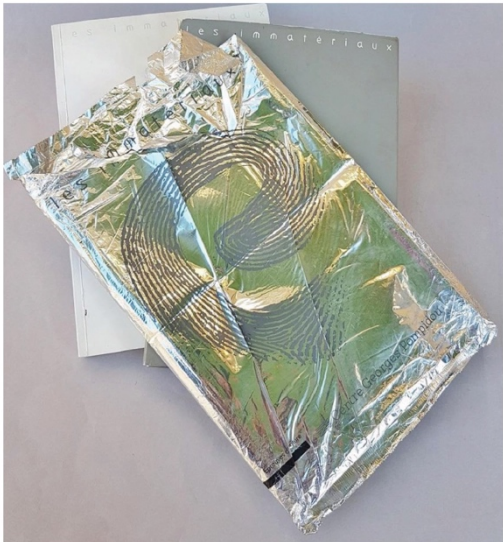
Reference image of original catalogue
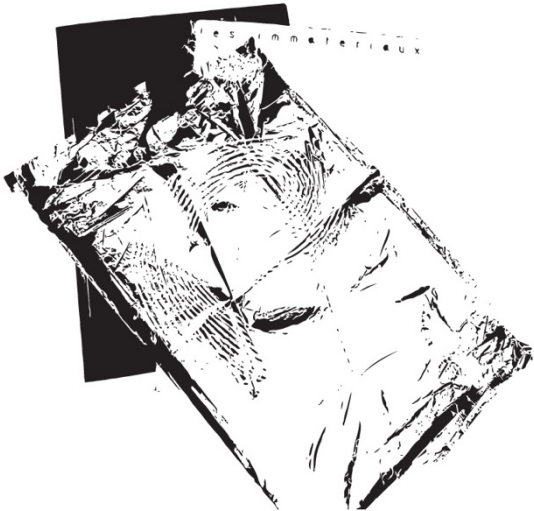
Manipulation of reference image

Writing Tests

An research project by Jeanine Griffin

Flat plan of cover

Writing Tests   A Strange Weave of Time and Space

An exhibition and research project
curated by Jeanine Griffin.
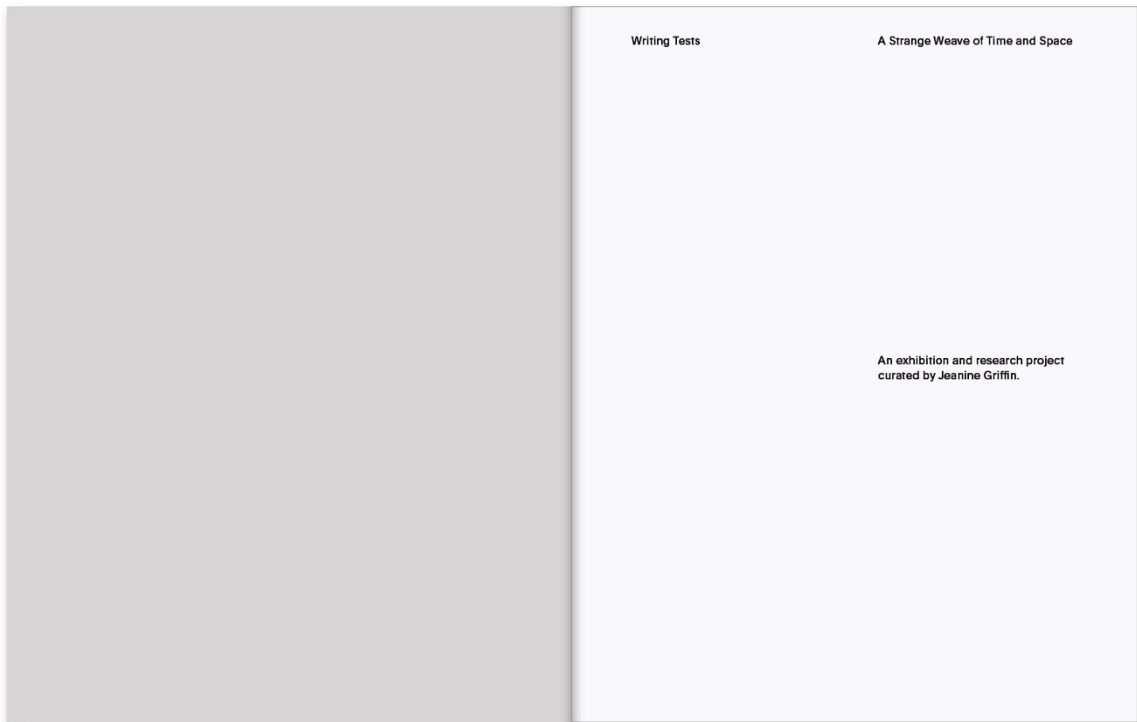
Contributors

Michelle Atherton (ATHE.) is an artist and academic. She works with images researching particular moments or sets of conditions in our collective histories. The work uses a remix aesthetic, incorporating sound, image, text and lighting effects to create frag-mented narratives as hooks to explore our slippery perceptions of the world. The aim is look again at matters that seem settled, beyond question, but where in-herent instability opens into other questions of material states, refusals, politics and new imaginaries. Her research has been sup-ported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council and shown throughout Europe in galleries, museums, festivals, conferences and via publication. Recent exhibitions include Spor Klübü, Berlin; Autonomy Middlesbrough Art Weekender, UK; Viborg Kunsthal Denmark 2019; Kunstraum Gallery, Linz, Austria; Tatton Park Biennale UK; Kino Babylon, Berlin; Zeppelin Museum, Germany. She lives in London and is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University, UK.

Erika Balsom (BALS.) is a senior lecturer in Film Studies and Liberal Arts at King's College London. Her book After Uniqueness: A History of Film and Video Art in Circulation,2017, explores how artists and filmmakers have conceived of and confronted the reproducibility of film and video. She is the author of Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art (2013), the co-editor of Documentary Across Disciplines (2016), and a frequent contributor to magazines such as Artforum, frieze, and Sight and Sound. Her scholarly work has

appeared in journals including Cinema Journal, Screen, and Grey Room, and she has contributed to exhibition catalogues for artists including Sarah Sze, Candice Breitz, and Rachel Rose. In 2017, she was the international curator in residence at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery/Len Lye Centre, New Zealand, resulting in the 2018 screening programme and publication An Oceanic Feeling: Cinema and the Sea. In 2018, she was awarded a Leverhulme Prize and the Katherine Singer Kovacs essay award from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Emma Bolland (BOLL.) is an artist and writer who working across literatures, translation, script and screenwriting, performance. and moving image. This includes an investigation of the problematics and ambiguities of an expanded understanding of translation— between languages and language codes, and between modes of writing, reading and speaking. They are a co-editor at Gordian Projects, a small press operating at the intersection of artist's book, art writing, and archive; an Associate Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University for the MFA/MA/BA in Fine Art, and was the 2019 artist-writer in residence at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University of Sheffield. Recent publications include: 'Fictions: Disrupting an Orthodox Real', co-authored with Namita Elizabeth Chakrabarty, in Imagined Spaces, eds. Gail Low and Kirsty Gunn, Dundee University, 2020; 'Subjects of the Gaze: script development as performance', co-authored with Louise Sawtell, in Script Development: Critical Approaches, Creative Practices, International Perspectives, eds Craig Batty

and Stacy Taylor, Palgrave Macmillan, ;Over, in, and Under, Dostoevsky Wannabe, 2019.

Matthew Cheeseman (CHEE.) is a writer. He works across fiction and non-fiction, often collaborating with artists to create books and pamphlets. At the University of Derby he is Associate Professor of Creative Writing and leads the MA Creative Writing. Trained as a folklorist, he researches print culture and writes about neoliberalism. He runs a small press, Spirit Duplicator (@sduplicator) and posts as @eine on social media. Recent publications include On the water, Southampton: Solent Press, 2017 (Editor); Route 57 Issue 13: Don't add up, London: Spirit Duplicator, 2017; 'Dracula's fangs' in The Derby Critical Edition of Dracula, Derby: Peregrine, 2019 and essays to accompany exhibitions by Matt Stokes at Site Gallery in Sheffield and Florian Roithmayr in Brussels, Sheffield and London.

James Clarkson (CLAR.) is interested in understanding the relationship between everyday objects, culture and technology. The objects he is interested in are often simple and mundane; a car, a waste paper bin, a cardboard box. He uses these objects as materials, manipulating them into ghostly bodies, which act as a reflection of where we are now. This investigation is underpinned by a fetishised interest in materiality; his sculptures sometimes exist as a bricolage of hacked up, raw edged, repurposed objects and at other times are shiny, slick, glossy replicas. Through this duality between reframing and replicating his work finds a playful approach to unpicking the speculative interconnectivity of things. Creating a formal language that

combines found objects, historical con-notations and artistic creations, Clarkson explores the connections between reproducibility, the everyday and art history. Recent exhibitions include the Coventry Biennial; Light, Observed, Karst, Plymouth; Order and Limitation, Contruction House, S1 Artspace, Sheffield; Malevolent Eldritch Shrieking, Attercliffe TM, Sheffield and he participated in A Strange Weave of Time and Space, Site Gallery Project Space, Sheffield, and Project Space Plus, Lincoln University, 2019.

Tim Etchells (ETCH.) is an artist and writer based in Sheffield and London. His work shifts between performance, visual art, and writing, and is presented in a wide variety of contexts, from museums and galleries to festivals and public sites. Since 1984, he has been the leader of the ground-breaking, world-renowned Sheffield performance group Forced Entertainment, winners of the 2016 International Ibsen Award. His work in visual art has been shown in institutions including Tate Modern, Hayward Gallery, and Witte de With (Rotterdam), whilst his performances – either solo, with Forced Entertainment, or in collaboration with other artists, choreographers, and musicians – have been presented in venues including the Barbican Centre, Centre Pompidou Paris, Volksbühne Berlin, Tanzquartier Wien (Vienna) and Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, to name a few. His public site commissions have included projects for Times Square (New York), Derry-Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013 and Glastonbury festival. Etchells has developed a unique voice in writing fiction and is currently Professor of Performance

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Analogue

GRIF. 001	11 MAY 2019.	'Strictly speaking, all apparently analogue vorms are smoothed accumulations of digital, that is, discontinuous forms, like the illusion of movement formed from the multiple images on the filmstrip.' 'The Dust That Measures All Our Time', *Steven Connor*
ROIT. 001	29 MAY 2019.	…suggests that something is not in isolation but with something else, or more precisely, through something else. Maybe also amongst. In any case, it simply cannot be or be done on its own.
LESL. 002	17 JUN 2019. SEE RESPONSE ROIT. 002	is a sibling, a kin, a something that tracks the other, closely, very closely, continuously. Analogue dogs.
ROIT. 002	23 JUN 2019.	Your mention of dog makes me also think of shadow.
BALS. 001	28 JUN 2019.	What is analogue about the medium often called "analogue film"? The idea that "analogue" designates continuousness, opposed to the discreteness of the digital, only works if one considers the single frame, the lone photogram. The moment one moves to a consideration of filmstrip itself, to the relationship between frames, continuousness becomes but an illusion created by the machine. If the digital is understood as a logic rather than as a particular technology, perhaps "analogue"

10 Analogue

film was already digital in its sampling of reality at 24 frames per second. Speaking of "photochemical film" instead would be more precise.

GLUZ. 001	2 JUL 2019.	What is interesting is that there has been a premise that the 'real' analogue world can be represented by a digital code. So the 'real' analogue sound wave is merely replicated with a discrete digital signal. What happens then, when nothing is represented, when the interpretation of the 'real' is no longer viable on the above terms?
CHEE. 001	APR 2020.	Bread. Neanderthal. Warm. A hairy hand and a smooth hand. When the fear is history daring to repeat itself. Difference, resonance, all those words. One tradition of the doppelgänger; that it is close, not exact. Fighting fantasy.

11   Analogue

Archive

GRIF. 002	14 MAY 2019.	'The archive is a record of the past, at the same time it points to the future. The grammatical tense of the archive is thus the future perfect, 'when it will have been'. *Carolyn Steedman, Dust*
LESL. 002	30 MAY 2019.	Archives have their own glossary. It includes terms such as access conditions,

11   Archive

18 Sept 2020

Hi Dan,

Just been through the design a bit more closely - I love it - just a few points and amends to text on the attached.

I've been in touch with Site to request an isbn. Let me know what the printers come back with.

And you enjoy your weekend too!

All the best,

Jeanine

19 Sept 2020

Hi Jeanine,

I'll get to work on the complete first draft and am happy with all the feedback. One thing quickly, the 2020 dates belong to Mathew Cheeseman as per the website, is this something that should still change?

I will post a dummy tomorrow, I think the size is really nice and is kind of unusual in a nice way as it quite wide. This is a reason I'm reluctant to reduce the size anymore as I feel the size is currently really nice and gives the terms plenty of room and the size they need due to richness of each term. This dummy is mainly to communicate the thickness of both the book and papers, and dimensions. The paper inside is very similar to the paper we will be using but not exact and the cover is simply a similar weight of paper as our paper will be grey.

Thanks for your feedback :)

Best,

Dan

The book is completed and sent to the artists and writers and Site Gallery bookshop Sept 2021

Jeanine Griffin 0:03

Thank you for coming, amazing turnout.

So I thought I would just run through a bit of an introduction to the project, some information around the show and the research project it's part of and then it would be really great to get your feedback and on the show, and hopes it might elucidate some of the terminology in the glossary projects, but I'll talk through that.

So, my research asks what is the role or authenticity in the artefacts and exhibitions in the post digital context and aims to explore this by reworkingor diffracting curatorial strategies from the past. In 1985, Jean Francois Lyotards influential exhibition on our relationship with technology 'Les Immateriaux' opened with an artefact - an Egyptian bas relief - and ended with images of the artefact refracted de-materialised and projected. This curatorial conceit of the direct trajectory between the auratic - Walter Benjamin's term for the authentic, original artefact, singular in space time - and the technologically reproduced, dispersed and viewed object seems still relevant in our current period which is similar to Benjamin's in its acceleration of the technological technological reproduction and dissemination though of course now by digital rather than mechanical means. This exhibition also heralded the immateriality of the circulation of what artists and theorists Hito Steyerl terms the poor image: The poor image is "the ghost of an image. It's been uploaded, downloaded shared reformatted, re edited, transforming quality and accessibility, exhibition value, into cult value'.

In the current post digital moment there's recently been resurgence of interest in curating involving the authentic or erotic material objects and international exhibition projects like the venice biennale and documenta, and critic Erika Balsam suggests that "set against the promiscuous circulation of proliferating copies the singular event of performance or the uniqueness of the handmade object become important again". And like Steyerl, she uses Benjaminian in terms to describe this, she talks about "objects inscribed by time, as far away from free floating signifiers as one can get - to put in Benjamin's terms they privilege cult value over exhibition value, the singular objects inextricable from their respective material histories, absolutely incompatible with the compressed and copy live for the JPEG". And she suggests that a desire for authenticity has emerged as a reaction to shifts with new media technologies at their core. So is this renewed concern for the authentic and curating a conservative withdraw from the current post digital moment? Or is this juxtaposition able to create new thinking? I wanted to explore this by curating an exhibition in a gallery space which intertwined the present in the past the analogue and the digital and the original and the replication. Its title is taken from Benjamin's description of aura or one of them - A Strangew Weave of Tine and Space - , and involves a variety of artwork which is variously artefactual, original, indexical, analogue, digital copied, reproduced, or somewhere on the continuum in between. In doing this, I also wanted to revisit certain curatorial strategies from the exhibition Les Immateriux by defensively riffing on strategy from previous research exhibitions from the curatorial archive, I hope to not produce the same displaced in time but to map the interference between them and illuminate what's different now.

So firstly, instead of a traditional authoritative exhibition text Les Immateriaux had an audio headset playing interwoven voices reading philosophical and literary texts put in conjunction with the works in the space. And I found an unpublished interview with leotard and the Pompidou archive in which she said "we must not issue a visitor with instructions whether an instruction man or instructive pamphlet that is information booklet. We should use a few text panels as possible since these are still of the order of inscription and instead should use the medium of speech of sound which belongs to the art of time." So in the exhibition downstairs, the soundtrack from the Laric video work permeates the space with its mashup of unattributed quotes about the authentic and Ti Etchell's piece on headphones allows the visitors to cut off from the soundtrack and listen to an audio work which manipulates and layers original sound from a John Cage work and the audio from both pieces kind of overlays and inflects and hopefully diffracts the visual work. Secondly, instead of a traditional exhibition catalogue, for Les Immateriaux, with monographic information etc, there was a project called Epreuves D'Ectriture, which translates as Writing Tests or First Drafts. This was a kind of proto Wikipedia like project, set up by Lyotard, where multiple writers were invited to define and amend specific terminology related to the show. And they were linked by minitel machines, which was kind of early version of the internet. So I created an online platform on which various writers have responded to some of the terminology relevant to this exhibition to define, refute or amend what's come before, creating an interwoven text of different voices. So I didn't want to simply reenact, reprise or reflect but to diffract these previous strategies and not just map the differences between now and then, but the effects of these differences. To explain to diffraction Donna Haraway says that "Diffraction does not produce 'the same' displaced, as reflection and refraction do.

Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear.'

So I wanted to use this methodology of diffraction both as a way to articulate the curatorial process and a way to analyse it differently. So diffraction is a methodology proposed by Donna Haraway and then subsequently expanded by Karen Barad. It derives from scientific phenomena and describes the way waves of any kind water light or sound, combine when they encounter an obstacle, overlapping and forming a composite wave. When the individual waves interfere with each other, they produce a diffraction pattern. And we see diffraction patterns in daily life in the rainbow pattern of a CD or an early an oily puddle, and in the interaction ripples of two stones dropped to water. Barad takes this further to its use in quantum physics and it's undermining of a Cartesian metaphysics of separation. In diffraction experiments, waves are shown to behave like particles and vice versa. So this undermines the separateness of subjects and objects and implies their entanglement. And without using the term diffraction, the theorists Manning and Massumi described this process as part of their thinking around research creation. They say "A stone dropped into a pond produces a ripple pattern. Two stones dropped in the same pond produce two ripple patterns. Where the ripples intersect, a new and complex pattern emerges, reducible to neither one nor the other."
 And it also describes the process of a classic diffraction diagram. Manning and Massumi also call this process a 'conceptual interference pattern'. And Brad calls it 'constructive interference', which I think is a really wonderful way of describing what happens in creating an exhibition, creating this concatenation of visual and conceptual ideas entangled materially in a specific space and time.

I guess in the context of a group show with multiple artists and artworks, this diagram would be amplified with multiple ripple emitting works in the mix, multiple voices, each creating new interventions with others in that vicinity. New narratives formed by the waves of influence, touch and intermingle. And a subject moving around this or through the space of interaction brings its own resonances and complexities. So the representation might be more like this photo of ripples in water with multiple points of diffraction and intersection.

So I think that several aspects of this theory of distraction make it a really useful way of articulating what happens in curating generally, but also in particular, in curating which brings different times different voices and artworks into physical conjunction in a group show. In curating, the selection, and counterposing of objects in space, can setup and often disjunctive spatial, nonlinear narrative, and potentially a productive friction between works, a constructive interference, whereby different words intervene on and inflect others by means of generative interactions. So rather than elucidating or demonstrating a thesis, the juxtaposition of works can proliferate meanings which might not have been foreseen before that specific conjunction. The strange weave of a particular constellation of artworks in a curatorial moment create something like the composite wave of diffraction - more than the sum of parts, which is not simply accretive or cumulative but creates something additional, singular and distinct. And people like Simon Sheikh or Irit Rogoff talk about the the research exhibition as one which enacts knowledge or research rather than displaying or illustrating it. And Barad talks about being interested in building diffraction apparatuses for analysis. And it struck me that curating an exhibition is or could be creating such a diffraction apparatus, and that it might be possible to create other diffraction apparatuses around the exhibition, perhaps one by removing an accompanying authoritative or objective framing text, and allowing audio work to intervene and interact with your sensory experience of the artwork in the space. And secondly, by producing a linked diffractive writing apparatus where different voices are interwoven and interact upon each other. Allowing different writers to input glossary definitions and respond, refute and engage with others writing offers a diffractive tool to untangle ideas cumulatively and collectively building on each other and making visible the generation of new thinking in relation to the ideas embodied in the exhibition. If diffraction is about reading insights "through rather than against each other to make evident that always already entanglement of specific ideas, and their materiality", this again is very much how ideas and artwork might be read in an exhibition, as distinct but constituent elements of a whole read through rather than against each other whilst entangled and superimposed. By being entangled in a curated constellation the works will necessarily be read differently than if they were considered separately, or even in a different special relationship to one another, hopefully creating new insights. In this way, the exhibition also functions as a mode of analysis a way to see individual works and the broader discourses they sit within differently. So in terms of analysis of data diffraction sets itself against reflexivity as a mode of analysis. Donna Haraway again writes on this and also brings things neatly back around to the subject to the research - the idea of the uratic or authentic - when she says that: "Reflexivity has been recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real.. diffraction is an optical metaphor.. diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogenous history, not about originals. " So it would be really nice to think about how it's possible to read the works in the show through rather than against each other, and how the, I suppose the ripples, emitted by

these words create a new thing that perhaps, couldn't be predated by any of the singular artworks. And Barad suggests this is about "reading insights through one another by experimenting with different patterns of relationality and building new insights attentively, carefully reading for differences that matter in their fine details."

And, I've been trying to think about this through kind of diagramming the exhibition. And this is just a process that I suppose I go through when I'm trying to think about how an exhibition that's effectively a paper exercise might then be transposed into space. So just the kind of joins that originally thought that were different, totally different artworks, and these and also started thinking about things in sight lines, so these lines - quite a linear approach. And everything change and getting a bit more professional. And then started thinking about how the ripples might interact with each other and where the different sort of nexuses of relationships might be. And this is the final layout, which hopefully, you've maybe got one of them downstairs, because I started just playing around with different this seemed to be two kind of nexuses is one around drawing, perhaps, and one around the cast that kind of roughly interacted with each other. But then when I started thinking about each individual work emitting these kind of relationships to each other, it got a lot more complicated. But even so you can kind of start to feel where you could actually impose a point on these these waves. And so that at certain points, I guess, different works have a relationship that build together and you could think about the idea of the cast or the or,the objects, kind of positioned on that, diagram. And I was looking at Benjamin's diagrams as well, which is strangely similar, some of them are quite similar shaped.

So I wondered if you would - it be brilliant to get your feedback generally. But I wondered if we might start doing a little diagram and think of something like that. Whereby you could perhaps mark on the plan where you think some of these relationships might elucidate something about some of the terminology, perhaps in the glossary, and I put that up on the screen, actually, while we're doing it. But if you wouldn't mind it'd be really useful for me. I've got my sense of where relationships lie or where things inflect upon each other and how the sound also inflects on the visual work. But yes, if we start with that then we can just discuss further. And then it will be amazing if you are willing to then think about some of the terminology in the glossary, which I can put up on the screen. And then maybe, with a view to kind of thinking about that - whether there's been anything in the exhibition that has affected your thinking about those terminologies, and maybe write into the glossary, it's open to anybody can log in and add their voice to that, so hopefully there will be just some time for general discussion as well.

You don't need to follow that specific sense of diagramming. I mean, it would just be really interesting to see, just get a sense of how you feel the works relate and interrelate and how they could be read 'through rather than against' each other.

In terms of the terms in the glossary - it'd be lovely if this was a way of capturing some of your thoughts about and from the exhibition. So if there are other terms that inform how you might think about some of these, if you were willing to write into it, or if you don't want to write into this on the spur of the moment, you could just email me or scribble something down.

Rose Butler 24:00
How did you choose the vocabulary, the terms - were they based on the original project?

Jeanine Griffin 25:11
No they were different - These were just things that came up regularly in the reading around the project that I thought with a kind of cumulative approach, the writers that I invited might add something interesting to. I invited Esther Leslie, Lucy Steeds and Erika Balsom. And Penny, and Michelle, and Yuen and Shana as well.

 I wasn't quite sure how it would be engaged with, how much people would write in and because the original rules of the game - were simply 2- 10 lines maximum, and then respond, refute complete, modulate the inputs of other writers. So there is a degree to which people are following on but actually people are also just reinterpreting, giving their own interpretation and it's been quite a rich discussion, I've been really pleased,

Penny McCarthy 26:23
..and some really nice bouncing between people.

Jeanine Griffin 26:29
And what's really strange, actually, is that quite a few people have used terminologies that are related to diffraction and entanglement. And I've thought about this as kind of the back end to the exhibition, so I haven't mentioned that to any of the writers. So Lucy Steeds talks about it in 'Exhibition'.... she talks about the artist,

the viewer and 'the work that is the mobile location of their entangled differentiation. That work is the exhibition.'

Margarita talks about - in the ghost section - she talks about 'favouring the process of entanglement and simultaneous engagement' and she also quotes Karen Barad, weirdly. So it's interesting that that's come through without having talked about that bit of the project.

But anyway, it would be really nice to get just general feedback as well. Any thoughts about the way the audio engages with the physical and visual objects in the space and how this kind of enables that kind of diffraction of the ideas in the exhibition... or any other feedback will be very gratefully received.

Becky Shaw 27:58
I've written 'this one's scratchy'. I'm really interested in the strange material resonance going on.. The sound of the sound piece. I love the sound piece, I really like that it's at the limit of what I can cope with. That banging is jarring. There's something about the scratchiness that instantly picks up - in the Oliver Laric video there's that bizarre kind of gollum rotating really slowly, so ceramic-y and shiny, you almost predict - you know how ceramic things have rough edges, the glaze goes to the bottom of the thing and forms an edge, so then I started looking at James Clarkson's shiny bin and the scratches.., so I had this little oscillation between scratchy and shiny, quite puerile, really, not very intellectual, - And the slippery surfaces and the screen's slippery surface and where the scatchy edge of the screen would be. And then Penny's drawing is kind of rubbing-y. So it's got a whole different physicality, it's not scratchy, but it's still - graphite is still like one thing depositing surface on another - in the studio image. So, I'm loath to say it, as it feels like I'm saying – ' in this exhibition there are all these different qualities', but its more than that, because I'm thinking about the material qualities in a way I wouldn't - because of the trigger from the Etchell's sound work, and it's that impact I think that's like has a sort of motion and it just makes you think of other motions of materials.

Rose Butler 30:22
It really punctuates the work, doesn't it, the sound piece.

Becky Shaw 30:27
Yes.

Rose Butler 30:28
It felt like the combination of those two sound pieces as well. Tim's being very .. tactile in the way that it is very crafted but also the sound and the level of the audio makes you feel and think about the making of the work and have a feeling of stuff being built. When the other audio mixed in you also had this really overwhelming, quite visceral response to feeling overwhelmed by repetition. Being overwhelmed by information, too much going on. Which to me is about is about kind of, yeah, it's about that kind of rhythm, duplication and repetition.

Jeanine Griffin 31:20
Which comes through the Laric as well..

Rose Butler 31:23
So yeah, so the audio was doing that, the mix of the audio, which really affected the work for me - the combination of the two pieces and the way that I was making links between them and reading it and it animated, in some cases more than others, particularly the drawings and the more rhythmic pieces.

Jeanine Griffin 31:55
Yeah, Penny mentioned that the she sat with sat with Tim's audio piece watching the Laric…

Penny McCarthy 32:04
Yeah..So there's something...there's different densities in the work, and I think, it relates to that sense that you're being overloaded, because I found that we're going to be overloaded with different kind of densities of time compressed, and how they might interact with each other. And then I was incredibly aware of the 'strange weave', and what it means because it's actually - its context is textural, context comes from the idea of a weave so you to keep flipping back to 'con text' - 'with texture'. If once you once you start to think about the root of what's being proposed.

I thought there was a word missing from the glossary - I really wonder about 'time' as another way of looking at the show.

Jeanine Griffin 33:06
That's interesting. Because I just recently found again, that Lyotard quote about sound being of the order of time, as opposed to inscription..

Penny McCarthy 33:16
It makes you really think about the moment you're in when you're hearing the sound. It becomes very much a performance of the exhibition, that when you hear it with the headset, it's very different than just walking around show, which is very spatial. So you see these different registers of reading.

Rose Butler 33:35
But it's interesting isn't it. I always, when I get headphones on, think I go into an editing space. Audio, really loud audio, can detract from the crap edit, or it can extenuate it. So it's kind of like either adding punctuation to what you're looking at or making you totally ignore it. So it's kind of disrupting the way you're looking.

{Curatorial as disruptive}

Jeanine Griffin 34:12
Yes, I mean, I was originally thinking about isolating or insulating the Laric and the soundtrack the way that you would normally in exhibition and at some point, I just realised that actually that formed the thing that Lyotard did in 'Les Immateriaux' with his sound piece of these unattributed series of patchworks of text, which is actually exactly what the audio to the Laric piece is. And to just let that be - the idea of sound-bleed which you are usually trying to contain in an exhibition - but actually to let that be, performed that function in a way. Then I wasn't quite sure how that would then work or engage with Tim's work. So it's interesting, you're talking about the two working together.

Jan Hopkins 34:54
I think the audio, for me, I see them like two little whirlpools where feel you're being sucked in. You've been kind of mesmerised by this repetition. And it requires some kind of.... it's kind of paradoxical, because you think audio can radiate outwards, and yet I was feeling pulled into this thing, sucked down into it, so you have to create some kind of resistance yourself to engage with ....

Penny McCarthy 35:37
It's the moment, in Tim's piece, where there's that bang - it's really disruptive. It's kind of jarring, dissonant.

Rose Butler 35:46
And enjoyable too in a weird way.

I was also thinking about the difference between entanglement and weave, because weave is really, really ordered isn't it. Precise and forming a pattern. Whereas entanglement is much more chaotic. And if you think of that in digital terms they're very, very different.

Gary Simmonds 36:30
What's entanglement in digital terms, or is there even a weave in digital terms?

Jeanine Griffin 36:33
I guess the weave is a grid in digital terms, isn't it.

Gary Simmonds 36:39
They're sort of dots - I always think about digital as points. When you talk about waves creating a sort of layering, I always imaging digital to be kind of individual points. So can digital be a weave? I'm sure it can.

Penny McCarthy 36:58
 It is in Diana's work.

Jeanine Griffin 37:03
It's interesting, that the work downstairs actually one of the few that doesn't have the grid screen printed on it, actually, isn't it?

Diana Taylor 37:09
Yes, I mean, I suppose it's part of the 3d scanning process and the cloth.

Rose Butler 37:18

It's the punch card jacquard loom isn't it - the link between weaving and digital - but you can also think of that in terms of sound with the organ grinder with the punch card for audio to go through. But I suppose entanglement, digitally, would that be more chaotic? A chaotic, algorithmic randomness..?

Tim Machin 37:44
Like a corrupted file.. . that's the risk of this kind of process – that the overlap, the diffraction actually corrupts, obscures, breaks it or stops the meaning. Prevents..

Jeanine Griffin 37:59
And it becomes cacophonous.

Tim Machin 37:44
Or clogs it up.

Penny McCarthy 38:06
Or is it that once you start talking about entanglement in this context, because one thing is bouncing off another or shedding light on another, or entangled in terms of meaning, if you separate them out, then that doesn't happen. It's performative, it can only happen in that space, it makes the exhibition singular.

Toni Buckby 38:33
A weave is a linear structure, a weave is a reading of time because it can only be constructed one on top of the other, you can't start a weave in the middle, whereas a tangle you can go in from any point.

Becky Shaw 38:54
When you try to untangle something, you don't literally literally work backwards through the process. You can't unravel production processes backwards.

Toni Buckby 39:14
Yeah, there's a difference because I work with weaving and embroidery and weaving you can only do.. it's a it's a completely linear way of doing things, you have to set it up and then you can only do it like that, you could actually record it and see it going whereas an embroidery you can start pretty much at any point and go, skip between parts.

Jeanine Griffin 39:35
So it was appropriate, that Diana's work is one of her embroidered rather than woven pieces.. there's no weaving in that one.

Toni Buckby 39:36
other than the cloth..

Michelle Atherton 39:47
There's also a way to see weave as not just in and out.. it not the only way that one might see that... It's also a structure that's connected in many places, depending on what it's made out of.... things can flow through it in any direction.

Jeanine Griffin 40:12
(to Jan Hopkins) Is your randomness - you know, things that that are generated randomly - would that be kind of a version of digital entanglement? Like when you were talking about the algorithm (to Rose Butler).

Jan Hopkins 40:24
Mm. Not sure really....

Rose Butler
To me it's when it goes wrong..

Toni Buckby
..glitches..

Penny McCarthy 40:38
But is entanglement also referring to this show's entanglement with the Lyotard.

Becky Shaw 40:45

Someone was telling me the other day, some example of Lacan... an image he uses in a piece of writing about how 'things are together'.. the upholstery button, I don't know if anyone's read it? 454

Miles 40:45
Like the suture, he uses..?

Becky Shaw 41:15
Someone told me about the button and drew me a little model of an upholstery cushion button, which holds all those things together for a moment but they're not actually joined.. And it feels like a kind of a section, a sort of horizontal type of ...hold together as opposed because I always think of these things as really… I was trying to think about that, you know, on a plan like that, the concentric lines of the diffraction become planar. And like James Clarkson bin is that way and, Margarita Gluzberg's work feels that way that way. And so it's almost archaeological .. I was thinking about archaeological mapping, you know, as 2d, 3d 4d, AND in time and the complexity of that sort of taking place here and how the different axes ... the moment it's a plan you think in plan don't you. But actually these connections, just like the upholstery cushion, could be the other way, rotating in time, like a planetary system, you know.

Jeanine Griffin 42:28
That's really appropriate to the Barad because she entangles, obviously, materials, but also uses the same thing to talk about time - that future-past, hauntological sense of time.

Tim Machin 42:40
With your photo of the ripples in the pond, there's the temptation to see it as only a plan, isn't there. It was in 3 dimensions.

Jeanine Griffin 42:50
Yes. Should have given you some play dough..

But yes, I know what you mean, that's, I mean, that's why it's not representative isn't it. It's interesting that the visual plan is how you work things out. But then, of course, when I came to install, things went in completely different places than the previous plan, because it was quite clear that you know, things weren't right which had seemed fine on the on the planar view. And the materiality of particular things being incredibly fragile as well, that came into play.

Penny McCarthy 43:28
But is there something also about each of these things sending echoes or ripples back to its original referent. Because they coalesce in this space and you make particular readings of them in this space, but they're bouncing back to an originary moment.

Louise Finney 43:59
It's kind of like when Becky was referencing archaeology, in archaeology there's this archeological site but there's also an archeological way of looking, which is take everything off layer by layer.. you're not just looking at the thing that you get to at the bottom - you need to acknowledge all the layers that you've stripped away.. So each work has layers in itself and then in relation to the other works and then in relation to the gallery itself.

Jeanine Griffin 44:31

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454 [https://nosubject.com/Point_de_capiton -]

It literally designates an upholstery button, the analogy being that just as upholstery buttons are places where "the mattress-maker's needle has worked hard to prevent a shapeless mass of stuffing from moving too freely about,[1]," so the *points de capiton* are points at which the "signified and signifier are knotted together."[2] The *point de capiton* is thus the point in the signifying chain at which "the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification" and produces the necessary illusion of a fixed meaning.[5

Point de Capiton or "quilting point" "anchoring point" is the interaction of the signifier and the signified which they are knotted together, fixed and stablized. In the daily symbolic world of discours, the continuous unstable sliding of the signifier is separated from that of the signified. If not with the point de caption, there would not be a fixed position to situate the dissemination of meanings. On those quilting points, the meaning is distributed, disseminated and stablized just like an upholstery button stitching on the material. "It's the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated retroactively and prospectively." (Lacan, Seminar III, 267-8) https://sachara.wordpress.com/2007/10/04/le-point-de-capiton/]

..and that doesn't necessarily follow with the digital materiality of some things like 3D prints because that feels like it has because the print was built upon its back in and it's got these contour lines of the extrusion of this material, and of course, but it's just a hollow object. So if you did follow that methodology, you would find the void since that skin is just a carapace. It kind of is a like a trompe l'oeil of that architectural process.

There was an article about the troubling materiality of 3D scans and prints in Art Monthly. It's really interesting, it talks about how we are trying to relate to this material with our material bodies and it doesn't doesn't reciprocate in some way. So we find it troubling.

Michelle Atherton 45:28
That article.. it was interesting. And in terms of your, your show, I wrote down the phrase 'diffracted sensuality'. Which I think is really in a lot in what I saw going round the exhibition. I went round quickly so that's really a first impression and also I guess what's interesting about this in relationship that that (article) is actually the thing about the body - I'm not sure - I think the loss of the body I feel is overanxious in that article.

Jeanine Griffin 46:16
And actually it just really makes you feel that more and actually with an odd object that doesn't have that kind of heft.. you feel that the distinction - rather than not feeling that you have a body you feel it more, I think if you have a different relationship to it. But I think he's mostly talking about screen based stuff isn't he.

Becky Shaw 46:38
It's like when people talk about kids and video games as a 'bad thing'… I've just scanned the essay and its really like an Elizabeth Grosz essay written in I think about 2000.. in 'Architecture from the Outside' but on virtual reality and it kind of looks at this and it doesn't mean anything 'virtual', but it sort of sort of talks about the way the two terms circulate around each other but it doesn't go this far about absence in fact it sees it being almost about escapism, virtuality particularly, particularly as Elizabeth Grosz is feminist, the male escape to the virtual, of endless possibilities, really interesting to in relation to this.

There's all this stuff...there's a guy, at MMU – David Russell - an education writer, I just saw them present something and education people are worrying about what it means to research other people, particularly children, and objectivity, and viewer and subject and he is drawing on Deleuze and talking about .. flying over surfaces, which sounds like a thing education researchers wouldn't like because its detached, but about moving over a checkerboard of surface in that you always know where the whole is. And every time you access it, you access the whole it's never a partial access. Really interesting, really peculiar and he talked about having an eye over your entire body. It's sounding more and more ridiculous.. But something about surfacing and how we relate to phenomena, surface, our surface, 'I', if you like is all over, and relates to a thing that is also all over. So feels really connected to that planar thing and the surface as all over with that object..

Penny McCarthy 49:11
What I was thinking, doing my diagram, was that I couldn't, make the writing text connect up to anything because it's a different language, a different kind of interpretive function.

Jeanine Griffin 49:33
Do you think it's jarring with exhibition?

Penny McCarthy 49:39
No, but it's this idea of diffraction. How one thing reflects, diffracts, bounces off another seem to actually work for objects. seemed to be really spatial and I couldn't then make it a linguistic proposition. I could make a screen and the process of making the word tests part of it; integrate with the whole but I couldn't find a diffractive logic for it.

Jeanine Griffin 50:26
In one of the Barad essays, a bit like the Laric soundtrack, she quotes lots of different people and kind of merges them into the writing, and she only identifies them in the footnotes and she says she's only doing that because it's a journal and she's got to. And obviously people are identified by the names in that. But I just like the idea that these things were kind of cumulative and a little bit collective like… like there's some little asides. Like 'that makes me think about a dog'. And just little call and responses sections, but often they're just kind of moving on with their own agenda. But just the cumulative nature of multiple voices working together was the way that it kind of felt like it was diffractive for me. It depends how people have engaged with that. Because I think some

people have just followed their interests. And, and I don't think I wanted it to be like a forum where someone says, No, I disagree or this. So it's like a tit for tat. But I think, in the ones that feel like they've got going, there's that sense of kind of a cumulative or collective form of writing.

Penny McCarthy 51:37
Where you see someone nudging someone else, for sure.

Becky Shaw 51:45
I think its interesting you access it on a tablet. I've never used a tablet, I use a laptop so I'd forgotten about touch screens, that when I came to use it it'd be big. Actually the way you materially engage with the screen, you can find yourself with a really big letter or a fragment of a sentence, I actually really enjoyed that.

Penny McCarthy
Oh, that's really nice.

Jeanine Griffin 52:09
This is perhaps what Esther Leslie is talking about in the glossary when she says aura is essentially a timeline, everything becomes auratic when it becomes anachronistic in some way. And so she talks about, when 'we can't make the right gestures on the icy surface of the touchscreen, our pinches and flicks do the wrong things..'

Debbie 52:34
It is something you can touch... as well, you pick up the headphones in Tim's piece and you can touch the screen, you can pick up the sheet, tear the sheet from the pad (Penny McCarthy's work).

Louise 52:34
But that felt so different to touching the touch screen - there are preconditioned ways you can interact with artwork

Debbie 52:36
Thinking about the sculptures and the 3D print, which you can't touch, well, I guess I could have done, but historically you're conditioned not to touch things in the gallery.. part of one's body's response to that object, is by picking it up, feeling and handling it, imagining it to be one way, then handling it.

Jeanine Griffin 53:40
Did that impact on you when you realise you can take Penny's piece?

Debbie 53:44
Yes, I was delighted actually.

Penny McCarthy 53:48
It's also the only way you can see the back of the picture.

Rose Butler 53:51
I thought it was cast, at first, that you'd 3D printed the pad ... I didn't like it.

Penny McCarthy 54:05
I know, I really, really want people to take them

Jeanine Griffin 54:11
It's a massively satisfying perforation to tear too...

Debbie
There's nothing to say, you can take one, unless you see someone else taking one.

Gary Simmonds 54:27
There's something interesting.. I didn't know there were headphones till Becky passed them to me, so there's that sense of permission that gets given by that space, the people in the space so there's an absence of presence, of people in there, that's what gives you permission - when I saw Chloe in there at the opening with Penny's sheet, I thought ah, ok , I get this and I remembered. That sense of how those permissions are handed on.. So to me somehow those permissions and the people that are engaging in that space, they are part of that sense of those waves, people are part of those waves too, not just the objects.

Penny McCarthy 55:08
It's funny in terms of that phrase, Michelle, use 'diffracted sensuality' - because I'd like to put my hands on Florian Roithmayr piece - how many of these pieces, how many different kinds of sensation they are triggering.

Jeanine Griffin
There's a lot of tactility, it's quite haptic..

Penny McCarthy 55:30
..which is almost the opposite of what I was expecting.

Becky Shaw 55:37
They're not all actually touch are they, it's like you know, your internal feeling of the touch, your anticipation of it that; the shape or the synapses of the touch in your body, that isn't the actual touch.

Penny McCarthy 55:58
There is something about, what Gary's describing, how they trigger something desiring, in that deleuzian sense.

Diana Taylor 56:08
I think it's interesting how you've drawn that, shown how you curated the works or thought about it afterwards, with the networks between things. It made me think of the radio 4 programme by James Bridle – 'New Ways of Seeing (after John Berger)'. The idea that that he walks through the city exploring these invisible networks between buildings and how they're related through the internet. It just made me think of that connection between things in space that's invisible.

Tim Machin 56:54
Re the diagram .... there are the gaps too the things that don't connect up, the moments of silence, the bits between, like when you put the headphones on and you suddenly feel the quiet and all you can hear are your own thoughts.. then you hear the piece.. its the stuff that's not connected, the other stuff, the unseen.

Jeanine Griffin 57:29
Does that give a kind of space for..?

Tim Machin
I suppose thinking about the ripples again, it's the bits that are left, isn't it ... those little diamonds.

Penny McCarthy
I thought one of the things about the headphones is that it very, very directly refers you to something going on outside of space and in another time. So there's something, which is throughout the show, but not as profoundly, which is one time overlaid with another time. I was simultaneously in Site Gallery and in 1960s New York, looking in a shop window.

[…]

Jeanine Griffin
So in relation to what you (Penny) were saying about the relationship with the glossary… I was hoping that the glossary might also be a way of kind of capturing any thinking that came through the experience of the show, I suppose, as well as the writing that happened before the exhibition. So I wonder whether that would work, whether you would be interested in writing into that either now or later, or it'd be really nice to think that was a way of kind of capturing some of the thinking that came out of the show. We could do it now or I could harangue people for it later.

Michelle Atherton 59:16
This is not thought through, but this phrase that's being used "the exhibition as medium", something spoken about by artist Philippe Parreno... he uses this, he's an exemplar of that kind of practice

Jeanine Griffin 59:54
And, 'Les Immateriaux' is a prime example of that. Parreno cites that as the source of his ideas on the exhibition as medium.

Michelle Atherton 1:00:10

I'm trying to think about this in relationship to that, because sometimes, when that's talked about now, and people write about his shows, it says he does that through the works and how they are situated in space, obviously, and how the works are in dynamic with an institutional structure and how his works then point to different sort of senses of time, in different works. Sometimes it is said that other shows don't do that. Because of the singularity of the work, you know, the sense that the works have their own world in terms of their reference points and construction of meaning. And that seems really weird extreme, sort of binary, set points. And it feels that some of the things that you are talking about here, speak to that, that discourse and that argument. And then, one of the things I'm sort of thinking about the really nice thing you said about the compression of time, and the temporality that is being played with here, and the thing of elements of resistance in certain work, so I feel resistance and I can't quite bridge that gap. So that was the thing about temporality in relation to this as a sort of medium element within the show.

Jeanine Griffin 1:01:00
Because he often intervenes really overtly with things like lighting and sound and environmental factors.

Michelle Atherton 1:01:59
It's interesting - it's a particular way of working, there are different temporal things that work out, through different works..

Jeanine Griffin 1:02:36
Yeah, I suppose it's something about how much duress you can put work under. I mean, he can put his own work under any kind of duress he likes.. I guess in a group context, the overlaying of the audio on to other works, is about as much duress as I was willing to place upon them, I suppose.

Michelle Atherton 1:02:59
It's all sense of dynamics, isn't it, it's not formulaic.

Penny McCarthy 1:03:18
It's interesting to think about your intervention, where you've had.. how authorial the show is, your voice in the show, the show as a kind of composition or orchestration and where you are willing to test, push at stuff and be disruptive and where you drew lines, like that one: 'right, I'm not going to complicate this work further'.

Jeanine Griffin 1:04:05
Well, there was there was a point where I thought I should do the audio headset in the way that they'd done it in 'Les Immmateriaux'. So he, I think, just commissioned someone to collate a load of texts and then got people to read them out. And I thought maybe I should do that and started collating all these texts and thought maybe I could work with someone to orchestrate this and create a kind of dramaturgy of it in some way. And then I think I realised, Well, firstly, I was more excited about seeing what Tim might do with that idea, of the headset than something that I might do with it, that was this kind of patchwork of references and texts. And then I also realised that the Laric did that, was already doing that role. And I'm actually just letting that kind of bleed through the space and form a kind of interlocutor to the exhibition would do that role much better than I could, I think. So I stepped back from that. And then also just that also released Tim to do something different with that headset, but I maintained that I just wanted the idea that you would be able to put something on that would cut you off from the other soundtrack and give a kind of different space of relation with the show and I think audio automatically sort of trumps the visual doesn't it, I did a show once called 'Never let the truth get in the way of good story' with Hollis Frapton's 'Nostalgia' and John Smith's 'Girl Chewing Gum', where the soundtrack automatically kind of trumps the visuals because you key into that and that narrative is so strong. And 'Nostalgia' is all about that relationship isn't it...But I think just to play around with and allow that.. and I didn't know what Tim was going to do for a long time. And to allow that to be something that just was quite open and with the knowledge that it would give you that the gap that Tim was talking about, the space to see the show in a slightly different way.

Penny McCarthy 1:06:02
There's also something really important in that, though, that it is not just the Oliver Laric soundrack or just Tim's voiceover. If you'd only had one that would become THE narration of the show.

Re the writing into the glossary:

Jeanine Griffin 1:07:17

I'm going to do to another iteration of the project in Lincoln in November. So I'm hoping to keep the glossary going until then kind of just see where it goes and then do a similar seminar over there then.

And then possibly in the original they printed it up as part of this massive catalogue that had all their meeting notes and all the rest of it in it. So it's possible I might try and then call and end to it then print it up. 'Object' is empty so far if anyone wants to input there..

Jan Hopkins 1:09:19
I've been playing around with this thing called GPT2 to which is a kind of a text generation thing I thought we might be fun to let this programme respond to some of the terms. It can be nonsense but it can be fun.

Jeanine Griffin 1:09:50
You explained to me how it works - it's a neural network, isn't it?

Jan Hopkins 1:09:54
Well, yes, a machine-learning thing. And it actually uses Reddit - the corpus is any website that's linked to Reddit that's got above a certain number of hits, whatever that is. So I started off with "one could therefore say that in the case of both photo and cast, the element of contact remains fixed, the one that changes the colour is the one that changes the colour of the object seen, and will therefore be deceived by the eye. This theory, while correct, is still the subject of debate" and it goes on.

Jeanine Griffin 1:10:54
What did you put in, what did you search for?

Jan Hopkins 1:11:01
I started with Margarita's 'Cast'. Ah no it's the Sven Luttiken quote.

Jeanine Griffin 1:11:05
So you put in the first part of the sentence and asked it to fill in the rest?

Jan Hopkins 1:11:11
 So you give it a prompt, and then it completes what it thinks should come next.

Jeanine Griffin 1:11:26
It sounds quite plausible, doesn't it.

Jan Hopkins 1:11:43
It does doesn't it. It might really be interesting. It's just throwing in another mind to the pot, isn't it. I don't think mine can tell you that much but this hive mind might..

Jeanine Griffin 1:12:10
A hive mind..!

Jan Hopkins 1:12:11
Anybody can use it online. And I'm working on a model, eventually, my own model with my own corpus. This one is called Talk to Transformer.com

Jeanine Griffin 1:12:39
So your interlocutor there is, hundreds of websites potentially.

Jan Hopkins 1:12:41
Yeah, loads and loads.. I tried the term 'analogue' and you got a lot of technical and legal stuff in there. I don't know why, really, I think it's the language. So the word analogue and digital, but you can keep putting the same prompt and it will come up with different things, so you can just keep going and going and see what comes up.

Jeanine Griffin 1:13:31
And in relation to your work downstairs that's a similar process in terms of a randomised - setting in train a randomised algorithm to produce individual, either drawings or animations, isn't it?.

Jan Hopkins

Yeah, there is randomnesss built in, otherwise, you just get thrown back at you that were copies of whatever. I think the interesting thing about it is that it doesn't exactly copy things... It's not just picking out a lump of text that it's found somewhere else and giving it to you. It's processing it.

Jeanine Griffin
It's creating a new new syntax as well.

Jan Hopkins 1:14:15
Yeah, I think it uses TensorFlow.

Jeanine Griffin 1:14:19
I'm really just trying to kind of get at your interest with that, and how that relates to your interest in the use of random algorithms in your work, I suppose?

Jan Hopkins
Yeah, I think it's just giving up an agency, it's something other that you're working with, that's giving you things and surprising you and maybe doing some of the heavy work.. it goes out and looks for stuff that you haven't got time to look for.. and it might come back with a load of rubbish but it's fun to play with. Sometimes they throw up interesting ideas.

Jeanine Griffin 1:15:16
On that idea of surprise... when the glossary started to get a bit of momentum, I realised I hadn't asked the designer to tell it to alert me every time someone put in a new entry. So I would just log into the backend every day and see if there was anything new. And it was really exciting and a sense of getting this kind of gift, as someone logged in at 9 o' clock at night or whatever. And seeing the generative, development of the interweaving of these texts was really nice. And I was quite glad I hadn't asked for an alert...

Jan Hopkins
I really like the idea of the glossary as it's a kind of flowing outwards from the exhibition, isn't it. Then I thought that the text generation thing was pulling it back in, so it's like... Thinking about the work in the show and thinking about how some of it's plugged in and some of it isn't. On an external network. And it got me thinking about whether the auratic is 'unplugged' or 'acoustic' and it made me think of Bob Dylan (being called traitor) - is that part of it? That it has to be unplugged....... but different parts of the show are plugged into something else? And I think the glossary does that in a nice, reciprocal way.

Jeanine Griffin 1:17:11
I wonder if the Laric is kind of an answer to that and the idea of...the traitor idea. There's a quote in the soundtrack, I think it's Boris Groys - it's the only one of two, that I have managed to identify in that collage - but the idea that things gain in sanctity and meaning by being reproduced and being disseminated and plugged in.

Becky Shaw 1:17:43
A practical question but those amazing animation clips - are they real, did he actually find them.. or has he had them drawn..?

Penny McCarthy 1:18:00
You can find them online..

Becky Shaw 1:18:05
I've never seen them before - Christopher Robin doing the movements of Mowgli - its extraordinary.

Rose Butler 1:18:20
It's quite common with animators because the walk sequence is so difficult, so you just map the animation onto a model.

Jeanine Griffin 1:18:23
Presumably at that point as well they'd have been cell animaton so would have been very analogue, would have been drawn...

Penny McCarthy 1:18:35

I've found some of those cells on ebay before - two from Bambi. I've got a folder on my desktop - not specifically those - but Felix the Cat animations - and my god, Felix the Cat, is so often interacting with the mysteries of technology.

Jeanine Griffin
But he's Mark Leckey's technology talisman, Felix the cat, isn't he? He was one of the first figures to be transmitted via TV. I'm slightly confused, because Logey Baird did a ventriloquist dummy didn't he - that was the first TV transmission because a human couldn't withstand the heat of the lights required. But I'm sure Leckey says that Felix the Cat is the first transmitted subject to he thinks he's like this talisman or icon of technology.

Penny McCarthy
Felix is always - from like, 1918 - Felix is always on the telephone. And then he has to get through the telephone. So there's a kind of a transformation through the use of technology. And then you see Felix and the other problem with the telephone - how to get into the telephone, he gets into the telephone and you see him transmit himself down the line. When it gets to the other end, he can do things he couldn't do before. So he can take his tail off to dig a hole... I've been holding these things trying to work out what I could do with them but probably only talk about them or use them in a lecture. It's really strange idea that runs through Felix, which is that the there's a kind of mystic element to technology or a transformatory element. But also, it's really that its mechanical, because of the time that it's been made in. And there's another thing for me, which is that the animations are so crude. That actually all this is signified with some lines... they're really quite stimulating.

Becky Shaw 1:20:40
That sequence with Mowgli is so beautiful - Mowgli and Christopher Robin - one american and one british reference. What got me was the gestures of the child and also the feet...

Penny McCarthy 1:21:16
... But also that landscape which might be Africa or might be a garden in England.

Becky Shaw 1:21:24
It so dislocating - it is shaking it up your understanding of what something is .., you just. I actually couldn't believe it. And I thought he'd made it as I thought it couldn't be real.

Louise.
When I first saw those on youtube I felt like I'd been robbed. Damn you Disney, I've just had the same experience over and over again disguised..

Diana Taylor 1:21:32
where do the texts come from in that work..?

Jeanine Griffin 1:21:56
I haven't identified all of it. So there's a bit of Boris Groys, there's a bit of Henry James, the novelist...the bit where he talks about the real thing and like liking the representation more than the real thing. And Boris Groys's other thing about how get data becomes auratic because it's constantly performative and it's being enacted anew every time it's opened on the screen, this virtual, invisible, original.

But there's lots that I haven't been able to find, you can google some - that's the beauty of identifying things via Google and a lot of the images actually. Someone identified some of the football images - because I didn't understand that bit - as being about some kind of really iconic goal apparently, in the World Cup. And the bit which is talking about Photoshop is a, an image of missiles in Iraq that was multiply photoshopped as a kind of ironic gesture, I suppose pre-fake news. So yeah, there's lots and, in a way, I didn't track them all down, as it is just kind of a lovely palimpsest of things.

Becky Shaw 1:23:10
There's an essay by Rachel Withers about, when Mel Jackson, made that animation about making technology, GPS - pretty old now – 10-15 years old, She made this animation about the production of a phone. And it's literally a narrative, it's really, it's so on the edge of being information. It's very straightforward, but Rachel Withers wrote this essay and Esther Leslie told me about it because she was really interested in it because it's all about plasticity of the space and materiality of the space of the animated and I think it might have talked about ' No face just a mask' - what's it called?

Jeanine Griffin 1:23:56

Pierre Huyghe's anime project? (No Ghost just a Shell)

Becky Shaw 1:24:15
It's got that same thing about what this face is as an entity .. and how it relates to the material of what's being shown and its substance....I do find that the, the computer voice grates.. 'not this again'..

Jeanine Griffin 1:24:42
Someone said it sounded like the Elizabeth Price that was in the gallery before..

Becky Shaw 1:24:48
Even though we know he's using it deliberately to repeat, it feels quite dated, Like you have this weird reaction to it.. like ah, could he not have done it a different way.

Jeanine Griffin 1:25:00
Yeah, I mean, I assumed that was a computer generated voice but then the other people have questioned that so I'm not sure.

Jan Hopkins 1:25:14
If it is it's a really good one..

Becky Shaw
Is it a person acting being a computer generated voice?

Jan Hopkins
I don't know they're really good now.

Jeanine Griffin 1:25:18
But it's interesting, because in the Lyotard archive, he's talking about how they'll get some really good, very well known actors, you know, voice actors, to record these texts. People absolutely hated, as I've talked about before, they hated this soundtrack because it was just baffling and I think quite long. So obviously, but he thought that the sort of tenor of this kind of quite intimate address would cut through that if it was you know, someone like Stephen Fry - or whoever the equivalent of Steven Fry was in France in 1985 - would kind of cut through that and I suppose, the Laric, by doing the computer voice that way, which is the opposite of that and is trying to be alienating and not address you...

Toni Buckby 1:25:56
It's not a computer generated voice as there's a glitch in it. There's a point where she starts saying a word then restarts it.. don't know whether that's a typo she's reading.. and it is a computer..?

Miles 1:26:16
Or if the sophistication of computer generated voices now includes glitches..

Toni Buckby 1:26:16
 We're getting we're getting into territories of uncanny valley there. I went to a conference a couple weeks ago in Manchester which was all about that 'Atmospheric Memories' that's on, and there was lots of talk about Google assistants and lots of interesting chat about the ethics of using female voices for these assistants but they were discussing the fact that if the voices if the systems become too realistic, people don't trust them. So they're now talking about purposely giving them slightly jerky voices because as soon as it gets too realistic people know it's a machine and trust levels drop.

Becky Shaw 1:27:06
Is that also in relation to chat bots?

Toni Buckby 1:27:06
Yeah it's to do with this uncanny valley stuff it's just it's really quite interesting and yeah, this voice has just been developed to be gender neutral which is quite interesting..

Jeanine Griffin 1:27:37

Brilliant , we should probably wrap up. Thankyou very much. Please do add to the glossary if you're interested and I'm going to gather your diagrams.

Transcribed by https://otter.ai

Diagrams created by participants follow:

Margarita Gluzberg, Birdsong, 2017, Pencil on Paper, Courtesy the artist

Plaster cast of sculpture by Edouard Lanteri. Courtesy Sheffield Hallam University

Cory Archangel, Line, 2016, Pencil on paper, produced by Mutoh XP-300 series printer, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery

Oliver Laric, 3D print from Lincoln Scans, 2015. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

Florian Roithmayr, These Here Withins 02, 2018, plaster, pigments, steel, wood. Courtesy the artist

Oliver Laric, Versions, 2010, video, 9 minute loop. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

Tim Etchells, Penmanship Exercise (After John Cage), 2019, Audio file, Courtesy the artist

James Clarkson, Giggle, 2018, ceramic slip cast of Ikea bin. Courtesy the artist

Jan Hopkins, Table of Contents: Moons, 2018, Pen, ink and bleach on paper, produced by computer plotter; Many Moons, 2019, Digital animation using Processing 3, Courtesy the artist

Diana Taylor, Falling into Space, 2019. Fabric assemblage. Courtesy the artist

Penny McCarthy, Was Ist Aura?, 2019, paint on printed paper and litho print on paper; The Art Class, 2016, pencil on paper, Courtesy the artist

Writing Tests online glossary

Handwritten annotations (top):
scratchy (this pen is scratchy too) the scratch deposits are surface on another.

The dots of the moon echoed in this diagram by James Clarkson bin

Concentric lines

scratchy edge of the glossy

shiny surface of graphite

concentric circles

scratchy ceramic and liquid - congealing.

Scratchy

rubbing velvety.

the cast as a surface, movement congealed ... Roland Barthes writing on plastic — it takes the shape of something else and makes a meniscus — living/dead etc.   3

Entanglement / Weave

Margarita Gluzberg, *Birdsong*, 2017 Pencil on Paper Courtesy the artist

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Writing Tests online glossary

1

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the motion — whirlpools → paradoxical waves → in X out at the same time. the curation IS UNPLUGGED — ACOUSTIC

GHOST REPLICATION

internal mode

immersion

REPETITION

SIMULATION

BY MACHINE BY MAN BY HAND

another mind

pathways dictated by chance is what grabs you first

outside

PLUGGED into an external power/information source

[entanglement / weave] → network → flow → bugs] → corruption

drawings moving in out

Top sheet (page 6):

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Writing Tests online glossary

Handwritten annotations (green): look more closely · Active · Can I touch? · difference? · similarity · intensity · coerce · Why did I look at that repeatedly · overlap · sensory touch · sound · artefact · difference · similarity? · needed to listen/watch over repeatedly but then became repetitive + predictable, grating after a while · difference similarity? · layering · yes – I can touch.

6

Bottom sheet (page 4):

Margarita Gluzberg, Birdsong, 2017 Pencil on Paper Courtesy the artist

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Writing Tests online glossary

4

What's seems to be important re: diffraction – is the
difference + resistance that enables the potentiality of the diffraction of the architecture in time + space

Ressonance – (relations)

Composition

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Birdsong, 2017
Pencil on Paper
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steel, wood. Courtesy the
artist

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Penmanship Exercise
(After John Cage), 2019
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Expansions

James Clarkson,
Giggle, 2018,
ceramic slip cast of
Ikea bin.
Courtesy the artist

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Writing Tests
online glossary

Diffracted sensuality

Based on show

KEY → communicating
with each other
← intermittent
(((over-
arching
→ communicating
extraneously
outside of each other

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Writing Tests
online glossary

over arching narrative + video work gets less further back room

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Writing Tests online glossary

Top diagram (handwritten annotations: casts, time / history, The capital repetition, draw + repetition, repetition drawing, hand-made, space, time, aura, time + duration)

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Writing Tests
online glossary

Bottom diagram (handwritten annotations: ~ Digital / analogue, Materiality)

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2019, Digital
animation using
Processing 3
Courtesy the artist

Tim Etchells,
*Penmanship Exercise
(After John Cage)*, 2019
Audio file
Courtesy the artist

James Clarkson,
Giggle, 2018,
ceramic slip cast of
Ikea bin.
Courtesy the artist

Diana Taylor
Falling into Space, 2019.
Fabric assemblage.
Courtesy the artist

Penny McCarthy
Was Ist Aura?, 2019, paint on printed
paper and litho print on paper
The Art Class, 2016, pencil on paper
Courtesy the artist

Writing Tests
online glossary

10

From diagrams:

1. Entanglement/ Weave - A red circle running Tim/ James/ Cory /plaster cast and a blue on Margarita, Jan, Diana, Penny, Laric. Tim's radiating out in spokes within the red circle, green one linking Penny, James, Cory. (Rose?)
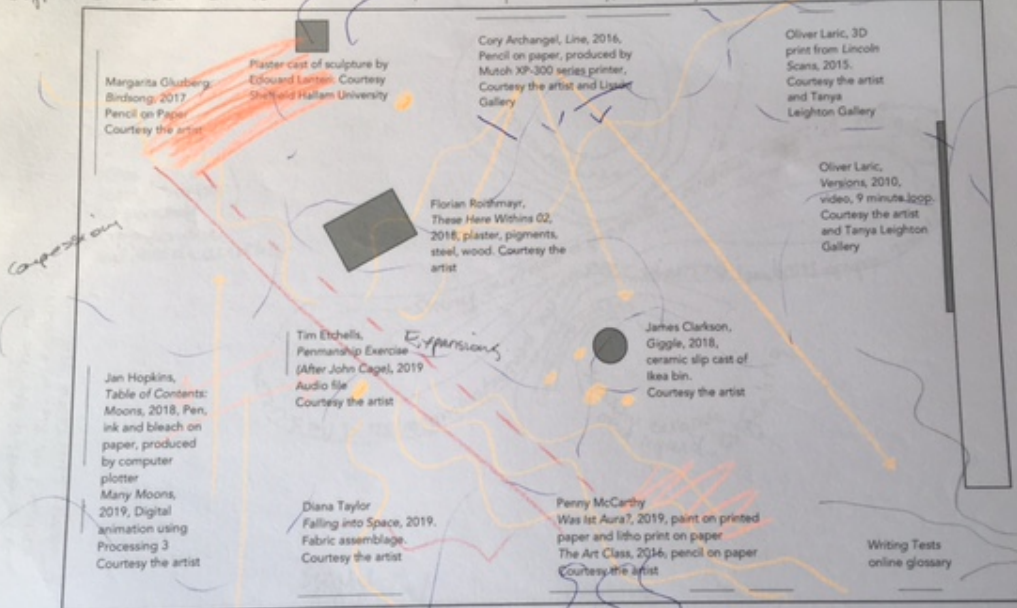
2. 'What seems to be important re diffraction is the difference and resistance that makes the particularity of the diffractio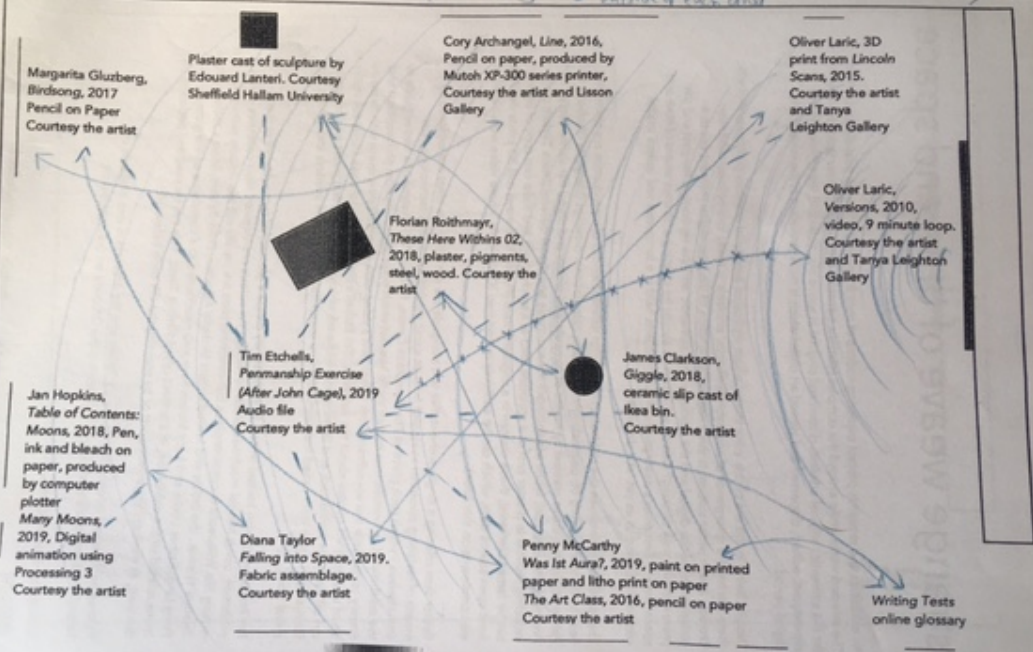n of the exhibition in time and space. Resonance = relations. 'Diffracted sensuality' (Michelle?) 'Compression' 'expansions', lined emanating from Cory Arcangel to Florian and James and between Penny and Margarita

3. Becky? 'texture/context/density.. there is no centre here.. the dots of the moon (Jan) echoed in this diagram and James Clarkson's bin.. scratchy (this pen is scratchy too) the scratch deposits one surface on another. Diana's 'scratchy', Penny 'rubbing/ velvety'.. the cast as surface, movement congealed.. Roland Barthes writing on plastic – its takes the shape of something else and makes a meniscus – living/dead etc.

Concentric lines emanating from Cory Arcangel, an ellipse between Tim's and Laric with this written within: shiny surface of graphite, scratchy edge of the glossy ceramic white sculpture/ the scrape and then the plastic/liquid surface of the screen. Concentric circles also from James's - scratchy ceramic, once liquid –congealing.'

4 & 5 – linear connections between works – no text

6. Jan – the audio like whirlpools, sucked in, resistance is required – paradoxical waves – in and out at the same time. Is the auratic unplugged / acoustic. Some plugged (into external power/ information source. Entanglement/ weave > network > flow> inscription, drawing in/ moving out.

Tim's immersion/ detachment.
Words: replication/ ghost, by hand, repetition, simulation/ emulating. Whirlpool emanating from Laric.

7. had a key (Louise?)

communicating with eachother:
Writing Tests and Penny, Penny and Cory and Margarita and plaster man, Jan and Diana, James and Florian and plaster man, Writing Tests and Tim

intermittent – Tim and all other works
overarching – the Laric emanating outwards ' overarching narrative of video work gets less further back in the room'.
communicating extraneously/ outside of eachother – Laric and Tim

8 Debbie? – ellipse very like 3 between Laric and Tim – 'sensory touch, sound, overlap
re Laric – needed to listen / watch repeatedly but becomes repetitive and predictable, grating after a while
Diana – layering
Tim –intense
Margarita – loo more closely, intensity
plaster man – archive, can I touch?
Penny – yes I can touch
James – artefact
loop from Penny, Cory, Margarita, Diana – 'difference/similarity'

9 very linear, short emanations

10 key: dots, wave and concentric circles
digital/analogue – Cory, Jan, Florian, Oliver
materiality- Margarita, James, Diana, Penny
weaving time/space: emanating from Oliver to Cory, Florian, James, Diana

11. time history at top
a loop with casts, one with aura, time and duration, space, hand-made, repetition/ drawing (Margarita > Cory)

12 various loops in red, particularly between casts and Laric video

13 various loops in pencil – particularly Laric 3D scan, James and plaster cast and between Tim and Cory

Seminar, Project Space Plus, Lincoln, 12 November 2019

Andrew Bracey 0:05
There's the idea of theory as something to explain the thing that already existed, to give a context or a 'stone' (reference to diffraction - stones in pond creating ripples)

Unknown Speaker 0:15
Its like - the theory is what's leading it - no - absolutely not. The practice is leading me to the theory - I don't seem to be able to get it to latch on - no its just another really useful thing that allows a way in to a situation that's already there - its following. So when you talked about the diffraction - it's something that's already there. It's already happening.. its a way to be able to understand something. It's not like, you come across something. And you go, Oh, yes, I'll see how I'll play that.

Jeanine Griffin 1:12
And that's what I think - when you go to shows that are really well curated, rather than feeling like things have been corralled under a theory or heading and just makes you think - this is what everything *is* about..! I remember going to the Encyclopaedic Palace show at Venice and thinking that.

Andrew Bracey 1:30
I thought you were going to talk about that with the auratic object - as it was full of that too wasn't it.

Jeanine Griffin 8:43
Yes! So there are certain things in this exhibition that aren't really here - the statue's there – he's there - but this piece is by Florian Roithmayr - a large scale plaster cast - So he's done a huge research project around the auratic specificity of plaster. That piece was - so unlike this plaster cast (flayed man), which is a replica of a classical sculpture used by art schools as a teaching aid - he creates these plaster casts which are created in a singular moment. So they are the inverse of expanding foam. He pours plaster and expanding foam into a box at the same time. And then obviously, it expands and coalesces. And you're left with this, and then he chips off the expanding foam. It creates this like almost coral like structure, which is the representation of the moment when the expanding foam, expanded and interacted with the materiality of the plaster. So it's this very specific sort of synchcronic relationship between these two materials that is absolutely auratic - couldn't be reproduced. And it's just an incredible object. Very, very delicate, very friable. So we couldn't we couldn't bring it here but I also wanted to kind of have the idea that some of the elements in this show are represented differently or at a remove. So this is another work by Margarita Gluzberg, but it's a different work to that one in the previous show. Diana's work is a different work, but again similar. So, some of the things that you can see here (on VR) on are physically absent from this space. So, you can only view some of these things at this remove of technological reproduction, which is very appropriate, I think for the Oliver Laric - that video piece is all about the idea of technological reproduction and what that does, that constant re-use and re-appropriation - he shows the Disney animation cells which have been reused and talks about how about re-use and re-appropriation actually approaches the auratic, .. it gathers sanctity by being reused - like the poor images is degraded, but it gains a kind of energy and auratic potential. So that feels like it's quite appropriate to have it at a yet another remove - that work is available on YouTube, so it's is embedded in here (VR walkround). But you can only see it in this context - rather than it being installed and being quite immersive so that you would kind of have a bodily relationship with it. With these things you have this just this screen relationship with it - like the Boris Groys text I sent. I was really interested in that, because he talks about the difference between 'frontal vision' and this 'gaze from within'. The frontal gaze is when we see documentation of an artwork - we see an image on the screen and the idea of if you visit a place, you're within it and if you visit an exhibition, you're within it your embodied and you have a viewpoint which takes in certain things and , do you have a point of view point which takes in certain things and doesn't take other things. There might be someone blocking you gaze of something else.. And that moves on in time as well. So you can't just go back to where you left off on the screen. So it's quite interested in what - and I'd be really interested to know what you think - what this does to the viewing experience. So some of them you can see them here, some of them you can't - the different pieces of work, some which are a very physical presence - the Florian Roithmayr looms over you - how that changes your relationship to those works by being viewed at a remove.

The other text I sent - the Art Monthly one (Wilsher, Mark 'Virtual and Other Bodies', *Art Monthly* no 427, June 2019, 11-14) - I was really interested in the way that he talks about how our expectations, when we come to, particularly sculptural work, are related to our bodily reaction to it, our expectation that it's got a similar materiality to us, or the fact that, you know, the artist worked around it making this project the, the piece has a relationship to their body and now it has a relationship to our body in the space. And how that is different and what happens to the relationships to the body in VR.

Hito Steyerl, who talks about the poor image, also talks about VR as 'Bubble Vision' - that we lose our bodies, you know, in a game, you might see hands, but that's it, so you're just a viewpoint. So, I'd be really interested to hear what you feel personally about the relationships that you have perhaps mapped a little bit on the layout plan - whether any points coalesce. And then secondly about the VR element which is new to this exhibition and in relationship to those texts...

audience member 13:38
I'm really interested in how VR has been used for training purposes and therapy and also noted that some dementia patients also have been subject to VR simulations where by taking them back into the past and providing them with scenarios - things that are there that are not there.. and the detachment that people experience seems kind of odd to me say, in a military context where people are trained for certain situations, which are simulated. And then there's the opposite ends, like VR to try and de-traumatise them. How much of the future is, is going to be spent in a virtual world? And how often are we going to actually have the opportunity, but would we have the opportunity anyway to physically actually be - we're provided with opportunities to actually experience gallery spaces that we wouldn't normally have, but - and that's a great thing - whole museums and libraries that we got access to courtesy of this - sometimes that's all we've got left. It's got really positive angles to it but I can see the real kind of nightmare side to it, in that I can see us all, in the future, not actually living in something concrete.

Jeanine Griffin 15:18
What do you think that does the viewing experience in relation to artwork and exhibitions?

audience member 15:26
What scares me is it cheapens it and not in the sense of going around the gallery but also I'm thinking about the whole conditioning of the experience to just viewing everything - oh yes, I can view it online. Okay, I've got that I can, I can view it online, it kind of maybe desensitises people..

audience member 2 16:00
But doesn't it make a difference that we aren't viewing online here - we are within a gallery space.. we can't be so detached from it, it just add another layer..

audience member 16:06
Yeah, it's just me going off on a tangent, worrying about the effects long term of how people will be conditioned in the future.

Jeanine Griffin 16:19
In that Art Monthly text, he's kind of very concerned about the lack of, you know, the effect on mental health and the lack of this embodied aspect. And I wonder whether that is is actually the case or whether those those things like when you see the Oliver Laric which is a replica of a relief sculpture, and you and then you find out that it is a 3D print and you know, that it's void inside and it's made up of this extruded material. I don't know if that just makes you more aware of your body because you're, you're aware of how you would normally react to something with that heft - that kind of physicality, but actually then you become more aware that it's different and that makes you think about that relationship a bit more. Do you find that?

audience member 3 17:04
Do you think if you didn't become aware of that, that's a completely different experience? I think that's an interesting question, because there's nothing you can do to physically make it happen, but being aware of something has such an impact? And what about the text then should that alert us to that or not..?

Jeanine Griffin 17:34
Well, yeah, this is part of what I wanted to experiment with. I wanted to experiment with it but I was really uncomfortable about withholding information. So in the end I provided a link to an an essay on the handout, you can click through to it, there's a QR code. So you get that information if you want to, but it's again, it's at one remove. It's not in the space here for you. In the end, I couldn't do the Lyotardian thing and just not provide that information because that's kind of part of what the curatorial process is for me. But I do like the idea that it's not up front so you have the relationship with the objects first if you want to. .... Is there anything that's come up through your diagramming?

audience member 3 18:21
For me, the ripples counteracted the other ripples from some of the objects..

Jeanine Griffin 18:28

and sort of overwhelmed them?

audience member 3 18:29
Yes and when the audio is turned off, the ripples were bigger around selected pieces

Jeanine Griffin 18:33
Which pieces – do you think?

audience member 3 18:37
Those two for me (audience member points at Penny's wall based drawings)

Jeanine Griffin 18:44
So the kind of the handmade haptic traditional drawing pieces? Interesting.

audience member 2 18:57
I thought also that the sound created different ripples - it kept bouncing around - it kind of, the headphones rippled into everything because of its content.

Jeanine Griffin 19:14
People previously talked about that being quite grating quite, almost quite aggressive. It's, you know that the level of it is quite extreme and you know, you can just take it and it builds then it pulls back to a single version - it builds and builds and builds up and then it goes back to the original.

audience member 2 19:27
I wondered if it was exemplifying in sound what we're seeing, and that's why it took everything in it - sort of embodied in audio what the exhibition was.   I mean, which is perhaps why that got a little bit confused ripple wise..?

Jeanine Griffin 19:49
Yes, I think it does. I mean, that has obviously a kind of literal relation to the kind of automated drawing arms which, which is kind of an early version of what Jan is working with here - robot plotters that do the drawings for her. And so I love the idea that that's, you know its describing the 60s version of these automated drawing arms going awry in that John Cage recording. But actually what Tim's done with that audio in terms of replicating and reverbing it and overlaying it is kind of what Laric's doing with this piece (*Versions,* 2010), and I'm really interested in the idea of what trumps what in an exhibition context. So the audio is such a pervasive thing, you know, and the audio on a film is manipulative, and it tells us what feels and so the audio in an exhibition almost overlays and inflects our understanding. So someone was talking about, watching the Laric with the Etchells sound track, and how that kind of did something different as well. So it allows multiple different, slightly kind of randomised, almost like, like someone like Stan Douglas, who does randomised visuals and sound, you can create multiple different versions of the exhibition by looking, looking at that while a particular bit the soundtrack is on or while having the headphones on.

audience member 3 21:12
With regard to the sound - because you're kind of cocooned with this one. This one - if you're looking around, the sound is still there, so it draws you back, something will catch your attention.. and you're gone again.

Jeanine Griffin 21:25
But I like the fact that these to work against eachother, so you don't get a simple soundtrack to the exhibition. In the original space (at Site), you could hear that sound pervasive the whole time. This one you when you navigate off it, it turns off for a minute. But I like the fact that then that intervenes with the headphones. So you've not got a singular soundtrack to the exhibition that tells you what to feel about everything. And that kind of loops around - it just becomes pervasive to your thinking.

audience member 3 21:51
You've just described this piece of work to us (Florian Roithmayr), but if you weren’t here we wouldn't have that description. So you would automatically think it was a man made sculpture.. So you think that you would know how it felt? But again you're cheated I suppose.

Jeanine Griffin 22:16
Yes. I think that's where - although you can, you know, you can circumnavigate with that technology, you can get pretty close, you can zoom in, you can see that the, the visuals are quite good when it's not quite so light - but you can't get that sense, that sense of materiality from it in the same way.

Jeanine Griffin 22:37
In the same way you get different types of materiality from that sculpture (Laric). Than the one you see up the road because it's from here - it's from The Collection, which is another nice reason for it coming back here because this has gone around the world, it's been reformatted, people can just download - so he scanned these objects from The Collection. They've been shown at the New Museum in New York, and people can download them and do what they want with them basically, they can print them out as I've done or they can re edit them as a file. And so it's kind of gone into this global circulation and then come back as an object here, which is curious.

audience member 3 23:13
I think - I don't even know what it's called the mouse - track pad thing. I think that in itself becomes something because when I initially came in, it was like, what is this? And it wasn't until you see other people doing it that you go, oh ok..

Jeanine Griffin 23:31
And the person who made this made it so you can have it on an iPad and just kind of go like this as well (move it around). So that's another option, which is a bit less clunky, but for the purposes of exhibition, that was the best way, or you can have goggles - that kind of thing. So you'd get a little bit potentially closer but then there's still this, the barrier of the screen in some way, even if it's close up.

audience member 2 23:54
The thing with headphones and becoming immersive in the space... I think it does something, expands the gaze somehow maybe it's just your perception I don't know, because that gaze you know - we can only see in front of us but we've seen from all sides - something changes when you put the headphones on and I'm not quite sure, without doing it again or giving it more thought, how to describe it.

Jeanine Griffin 24:34
Someone else said it takes you to a different time and space than the one you're in - obviously it's it's using an original piece from the 60s - you're in New York in the 60s and I guess with sound - it's easier to achieve with sound than visuals isn't it because you have to have an imaginative engagement with it to embody it in some ways. Boris Groys, in another text, talks about the digital always being an original because the digital file, it's just a disembodied bit of data. So it's always original every time you open it on your desktop or particular software, it's the original. Is it because it's specific to the colour balance on your monitor or you know, so in a way perhaps the sound is similar to that.

Unknown Speaker 25:15
I think it influences you so profoundly in a space that maybe I'm just imagining my gaze is shifted to a different level of attention. Yeah, maybe that's it.

Jeanine Griffin 25:31
Maybe that's why the audio track was also so unpopular, at the Pompidou Centre because people were just wandering with this, this soundtrack coming to the and they had to make the connections between the art was it wasn't delineating that relationship for them. It was just hugely unpopular and really kind of bamboozled, and upset people. And perhaps it is just because of that, that's quality of sound.

audience member 3 25:59
Yes, it's quite sickening, I think, cos you're trying so hard to grab each each layer..

Jeanine Griffin 26:03
Yeah, and hold on to it. Yeah.

Jeanine Griffin 26:10
Did any of the terminology from the glossary kind of seemed particularly pertinent as you're walking around doing the diagrams?

audience member 4 26:22
I was looking at the words and I can only really take in one at once and relate each word and go around again. So as well as the ripples can't remember the word now it was diffraction Yeah. As well as diffraction you've got like Photoshop layers with each of the words - so its going on lots of different planes. Yeah, I can only take them one at a time. It's all too much. But the disembodied-ness... A couple of things were disturbing. The disembodied-ness was disturbing, but that I hadn't thought about the masculinity ..? (the Haraway god view?)

that was a bit worrying. But when I came to here (the plinth containing the computer equipment) I felt my body come back because there's a bit of a warmth here coming from the wood... it really brought me back to earth a bit.

Jeanine Griffin 27:11
Oh, that's interesting. I guess cos it's unfinished as well.

audience member 4 27:17
Yes. Something about the texture and the warmth you're getting because of the electricity I imagine, but I like that..

Unknown Speaker 27:27
So you said you used the phrase as one at a time, like layers - was there one particular one that you looked at?

audience member 4 27:32
Well we've only been here a few minutes so I've only had chance to think about 'originality', so quite random look at originality, then you go get another word. You could really be here all week. There are a lot words there and lots of comments. Yeah, there are differences big differences are just subtle differences in everybody's points of view.

Jeanine Griffin 27:53
I really like the idea about the layers. That's a lovely idea - like Photoshop wise - because it's planar rather than linear..

audience member 4 28:03
Yeah, I love this thing here but it is not described.

Jeanine Griffin 28:08
The drawing? Yeah, so these works are both by Penny McCarthy so she works on replicating archival material. They're both by her, they're made at different times. But this one is a drawing of the cast room at Sheffield, Hallam University when it was the independent art school and women were allowed in at night because they couldn't go and study officially in the day time. So they are working from casts of classical sculptures of which they have hundreds and hundreds in which he is the last one (flayed man cast). So again, I was talking about this last week - he almost gets a kind of auratic quality due to scarcity. And Benjamin talks about like film stars becoming auratic, even though they are multiply reproduced, the access to them is limited. So they get a kind of aura by scarcity .. A theorist called Sven Lutticken talks about that as well that, you know, if an artist makes an edition of a video work, which is in theory, multiply reproducable, but in order to create a commercial value or an auratic sense - it is editioned in a edition of 10 and it's only installed in very high end way in a gallery so it's not shown on someone's domestic TV, you know, so the idea of aura can be reinstated by creating a sense of scarcity is also interested in relation to him (flayed man cast) and things like that (Laric 3D print) , which is multiply reproducible in any possible way.

Jeanine Griffin 29:39
Are there any other terminologies that anybody picked up on, kind of, situated on their diagrams.

audience member 2 29:53
I wondered if I paid enough attention to any one thing whether it's aura would be greater than if I didn't pay it any attention.. So rather than a thing arriving with aura, is it something that - a quality of attention? Something is a relationship that's grown with time, space and openness.

Jeanine Griffin 30:22
Yes, well, Benjamin talks about the sense of concentration and attention being diffused by eg film because he can't sit and look at it because the frame the frame is whipped by and this idea of distraction created by the reproduction, but then he sees the positivity is in that distraction in terms of being able to make your own version or to kind of engage with it in a more productive way than just as a kind of contemplative view. And, but I think that's interesting that you could reinstate aura, you know, the more you look at a Disney Animation cell frame from youtube, you could reinstate it with a sense of aura. And also this - the text on aura that Penny's reproduced in those two documents is a Benjamin text where he's written it on a cafe notepad. But then he takes it in a really romantic direction - the translation talks about aura being the ability of an object or a person to return your gaze, this poetic ability. So it's super poetic and kind of romantic and about that idea of the gaze. So maybe the works that return you're gaze are the works, that you engage with to such a degree that they start to return that gaze then they become auratic ones..?

audience member 2 31:45
And I was thinking I haven't given any attention to the thing you've picked up and want to take home (Penny's sheet from the pad) at all.

Jeanine Griffin 31:53
Is that because it seems throwaway and dispersable?

audience member 2 31:57
I'm just drawn by things that are more materially visceral, I think. Even drawn more to the disembodied ambiguity of what whatever that is (The VR walkround).

audience member 4 32:21
It's like a souvenir (Penny's pad sheet). Yeah. So it will go into my archive..

Jeanine Griffin 32:26
Yes. Well she originally drew it from a JPEG online and then she realised, when she got in touch with the Walter Benjamin archive, she did it completely the wrong scale because - again it talks about scale in that Art Monthly article - you don't get scale online (just like when you do your shopping online and you get a massive tub of washing powder). These things online don't have a sense of scale. So she originally did it bigger like it was a piece of notepaper. Actually it's a waiter's order pad.. and also the colour balance was totally wrong because she was just viewing it on particular screen. So when she saw the original, she remade it the right size. And I encouraged her to make this, this disposable version because what she also did was paint the reverse and of course, you can't see that on the on the framed version (we thought about ways of maybe showing that but everything felt a bit clunky, you know, perspex mounting to see both sides). So I suggested, well why don't we produce it, put it back into reproduction, into dispersion so people can take it away and it's back into mechanical reproduction. So you can see the reverse. So, it's like an apotheosis of aura and a contradiction all at once, isn't it? It's, it's a copy but it's a copy made by very time dense processes.

Andrew Bracey 34:04
She made the back of it?

Jeanine Griffin 34:07
She painted the back because she got finally got access to the original - I guess that's the difference of working with digital archives or working with physical archives.

audience member 5 34:34
I like the fact that that you can take it home again, also the glossary, and take time over it..

Jeanine Griffin 34:40
I'd love it if you were interested in adding to that I can show you how to do that. And you could either do it now or if you would do it while the shows on that would be amazing.

Jeanine Griffin   34:50
And if you'd also write me something and then the visitor's book I would really appreciate that as well.

Andrew Bracey 35:28
So what's the difference .. cos I'm like you, this is my third one of these (Penny McCarthy's take away print). And there's something so seductive about it that so different - cos we could just take it away as a phone image or grab the image from a screen as a jpeg, like she did in the first instance, there is something about the taking away of the physical thing So how does that fit with your ideas for the show and like, aura in the age of digital reproduction.

Jeanine Griffin 36:09
It's interesting that Esther (Leslie) talks about it in one of the glossary terms - in aura - the idea that there's something heartening and the idea that you could have a, you know, the original idea that you can have a postcard in your house, that closeness - you want that kind of proximity and Lyotard talks about our wish to palpate things - like digital things and Mark Leckey also, in this really interesting show called 'The Universal Addressability of Dumb Things' which was about, he said, our desire to be in physical proximity and almost touch and palpate digital objects. So I think there is very much that kind of desire and that affect of that isn't there? And whether that is because of the you know, the dematerialised, the immaterial nature of these things that actually to have something, also maybe it's something to do with the relationship to its making. That it's a

haptic making process that there's been.. a body has laboured over it and Penny gets repetitive strain injuries from making these drawings. And a bit like we're talking about the sculpture that that sculpture has a relationship to its original maker in the studio and then it's put in a relationship to you in an exhibition space. And I suppose that haptic connection perhaps is there from the process of its making and the process of you're taking it away, maybe

Andrew Bracey 37:29
Because I saw this in Site, so I saw it in reality and then seeing it there - it just leaves me cold - the VR thing leaves me cold in a way that the show didn't and the show doesn't and all I can equate it to is that it's because it's information - that's like information and it's not, for me, it's not an experience that leads to thought - it's something that's there to document to be able to remember visually? Yeah, it's not like a spur in the way that something when it's - and it's not always about it being in the space physically because I'll have plenty of spurs that are about coming across something (in books?). But I think it's because for me, that doesn't relate to my memory. That doesn't relate to what I was thinking about in the space. Yeah, the intimacy of it. It's kind of like it's this thing that's just like 'look at this information here'. It's a different thing that doesn't grab me in the same way. I'm wondering if it's to do with memory.

Jeanine Griffin 38:41
That's interesting. Boris Groys talks about the exhibition, it not being not being possible to reproduce an exhibition in the same way it's possible to reproduce an artwork, because it's an event, because we are physically present and that's why I like the idea of the 'strange weave' - we are part of this strange weave of this particular event in this moments and this conjunction of things and people and spaces. And I kind of ascribe to that, I think, that it's a performative thing. It's a convocation of people as well as artworks. And in a way it can't be reproduced.

Andrew Bracey 39:17
That's interesting, because there's been a number of re-creations of exhibitions.

Jeanine Griffin 39:20
Yes.

Andrew Bracey 39:21
And while have never seen any of them where I have seen the original and the replica, I suspect it's not the same. Because even if it was exactly the same, it wouldn't be the same.

Jeanine Griffin 39:39
Well time has elapsed - Yeah, it's the idea of reflection and diffraction - if you reprise something, exactly. That's an idea of reflection, isn't it? Whereas diffraction is trying to do something different with those, that gap of time.

Andrew Bracey 39:53
It's almost like - taking the stone and the ripples thing... Even if you put the same stone in the same spot. or just one stone, the ripples will be different. they won't be replicated exactly..so even if you put the same thing in the same place, but a different time, it would be different.

audience member 3 40:15
If you don't replicate it, though, it's just a memory for you. It doesn't travel.

Andrew Bracey 40:24
That's why things like a legacy is so important. So, you know, that's an important bit to have that as a legacy thing that's after that event has gone or why the art world still produces printed catalogues. So, you know, there's something that does live on, that's beyond the memory of the individuals that there's something else that is there for others.

audience member 3 41:00
I think about Allan Kaprow's happenings - and how he said they wouldn't be recorded then sort of gave in to it.. and now it's something that's been recreated.

Andrew Bracey 41:15
It's interesting as how many people did actually experience the happenings in the first place.. but for me it's like the classic thing of the Sex Pistols gig in the free trade hall in Manchester that 30 people went to it and yet

every single one of those people were effected so the ripple went out.. so we are all affected by their experience of it - we can't all experience everything as much as I try..

Jeanine Griffin 41:50
That Mark Leckey exhibition. He did a really interesting thing - rather than touring the exhibition, he made another version. That was like the poor image version of the original exhibition. The original had all these objects that were brought together. And it was called the 'Universal Addressability of Dumb Things'. The follow up was like a contraction of that name. It's 'Uniaddumths'. This is like a filename contraction. And all the original objects in the first one were replicated for the second show apart, only things that were already reproduced were shown unchanged. And there was just one thing that was left that was the original object, which was like a reliquary hand, like with it was almost like a pun on the digital - like digits.

Andrew Bracey 42:32
The one that was in Nottingham Contemporary ..

Jeanine Griffin 42:32
And that was the original show. Yeah. And then he did one in Germany. Yeah. So it's become like a gesamptkunstwerk, this exhibition, and it's all replicated and the lighting is different. And so it's like fake lighting, like filmic lighting. And I just think that's really important. It's the same is trying to get at the idea of aura by making copies, by making digital copies. So it's just that idea of accessibility again, isn't it but maybe aura can be within that sense of accessibility and dispersion and copying as well.

Andrew Bracey 43:15
I'm kind of with you - that aura mean something different now than it did for Benjamin undoubtedly the aura - it's coming from the digitally reproduced many times thing, then it's, it's what? It's what it's surrounding, but also what you are, what you are, yeah. What are you wanting to give attention to?

audience member 2 43:41
It can't be aura if you don't give it any attention, can it?

Andrew Bracey 43:51
I don't think it depends on it being the original unique thing now. It's gone through so much - our world has changed so much through mechanical reproduction, through digital reproduction, that aura has a different sense for us now, and it still in line with what he meant for it, it's just it's not to do with this original, unique thing any more. And I think that attention is something has to do with that, what we, either individually or collectively, choose to give attention to.

audience member 2 44:25
 I didn't know about the effect of the repeat as well. Just thinking of the metaphysical, quantum.... we know that anything that you repeat is always different. Everything once repeated is different.

Jeanine Griffin 44:55
Does repeat have more of a more of a sense of temporality to it? Than reproduction? So thinking about repeat in relation to Tim, because that's what that's doing. It's repeating it's layering, but in my head it's more to do with time then kind of dispersion and copying, would you say, is that what you're thinking?

audience member 2 45:15
I suppose we'd have to decide to do something different between repeat and a copy because I don't know whether a copy is always the same. I suspect not.

Unknown Speaker 45:37
Where was is that Boris Groys said that thing about each JPG being unique?

Jeanine Griffin 45:42
It's in 'In the Flow', in one of the chapters in that. The idea that every digital file is an original because they are immaterial bits of data that are actualized anew every time they appear. It's just true isn't it? Because it's like that thing about, you know, colours may be different than they appear on the screen. And they are brand new every time and every different kind of form of software platform actualises it slightly different. So he talks about it being like a score of music. So the score is the data, and Cory Arcangel talks about like if you played a Bach piece now it will be different because the scales are tuned differently than they were 300 years ago. So actually it will never be the same because we're working to a different kind of baseline in terms of the music so the score will always be actualised differently.

Andrew Bracey 47:57
I don't know how many of you looked through the glossary, but I found it really useful and really, really rich. The way people have come in and often thrown curve balls -

Jeanine Griffin 48:11
Yes, Esther just says aura is 'something fuzzy, fuzzily understood' - because it is so problematic a term. And yeah, and interestingly, a lot of people brought in ideas around the diffraction idea which I hadn't told anyone about, I just had it as a kind of back end methodology for me thinking about the show, so I didn't mention that to any of the artists particularly. But actually that idea of entanglement and diffraction - having Karen Brad is quoted in there by someone. But it just was really interesting that the phrase entanglement comes up quite a lot. And so it's really interesting to me that that it kind of almost validates the idea that that's something that's at work in an exhibition.

Unknown Speaker 48:49
That's almost in the flow of things - Barad is quite prominent at the moment - in the flow of people's thinking.. in the flow as well. Yeah.

audience member 3 48:54
She has an aura..

Jeanine Griffin 49:12
Yeah. So if anybody wants to input. Otherwise the, the analogue version over there (visitor's book) would also be appreciated..

Andrew Bracey 49:22
The old fashioned way - cos I, I saw it and thought it was odd as we're so not used to doing that any more.

Jeanine Griffin 49:32
And but I think because it was such an interesting artefact in the in the Pompidou archive it was almost the most interesting thing that kind of jumped out. The actual response of viewers to this quite difficult, show.

Unknown Speaker 49:47
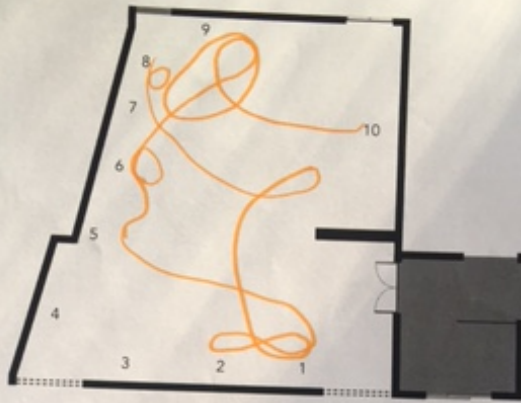You said it created rage..

Jeanine Griffin 49:49
 Lyotard talks about wanting to create unease about our relationship to technology and it absolutely did, it succeeded because it was, it was despised at the time it's only recently that it's been reassessed.
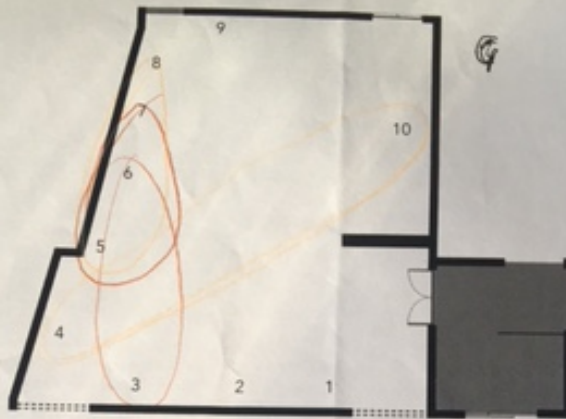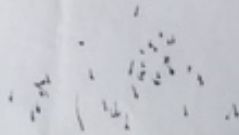

Seminar attenders diagrams follow:

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2. James Clarkson, *Giggle*, 2018, ceramic slip cast of Ikea bin. Courtesy the artist

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A strange weave of time and space

An exhibition and research project exploring notions of aura & authenticity in the post-digital context. The selected works circle around the complex relations between the auratic, (Walter Benjamin's term for the authentic, original artefact, distant and singular in space and time) and the technologically reproduced, edited, dispersed and viewed art object which is more prevalent in the current post-digital period.

Despite being in the era of the 'poor image' where replicated jpegs and artworks proliferate digitally, there has been a resurgence of interest in 'authentic' artefacts in many international exhibition projects and in wider culture. Is this a regressive rejection of the post-digital moment or can a juxtaposition of the digital and the analogue; the 'authentic' and the replication; the past and the present create new thinking? Can an exhibition be auratic by creating a 'strange weave of time and space' (one of Benjamin's descriptions of aura) - objects held in a temporary and unique spatial conjunction, close to us yet 'at a distance'.
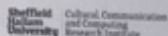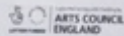
The relationship between the original art object and different modes of reproduction are tested out here by an interweaving of: painstakingly created representational drawings (**Margarita Gluzberg** and **Penny McCarthy**); those created by means of computerised plotter and digital translation (**Jan Hopkins**); fabric assemblages of hand-made and digital material (**Diana Taylor**); casts - including replicas (a plaster cast of a sculpture used as a teaching aid and a slip cast copy of an Ikea bin by **James Clarkson**), and 3D prints deriving from open source data, which can be endlessly reproduced (**Oliver Laric**). A virtual reality walkthrough of a previous version of the show, at Site Gallery, is also included as an 'exhibition within the exhibition', at one remove, which questions the importance of physically inhabiting the space of exhibition in the context of the now prevalent remote viewing of artworks and exhibitions.

Rather than offering a single authoritative text alongside the exhibition, its ideas are explored by means of revisiting curatorial strategies from an iconic exhibition on art & technology - *Les Immateriaux* - which took place at The Pompidou Centre, Paris in 1985. Instead of a text or guide to the exhibition *Les Immateriaux* had an audio headset which played excerpts from philosophical and literary texts. Here the soundtrack from Oliver Laric's video work in the VR walkthrough permeates the space with its mash-up of unattributed quotes about the authentic. **Tim Etchell's** piece on headphones allows the visitor to cut off from this soundtrack and listen to an audio work which manipulates and layers original sound from a John Cage work called *Indeterminacy*. The sound from both pieces overlays and inflects the visual work.
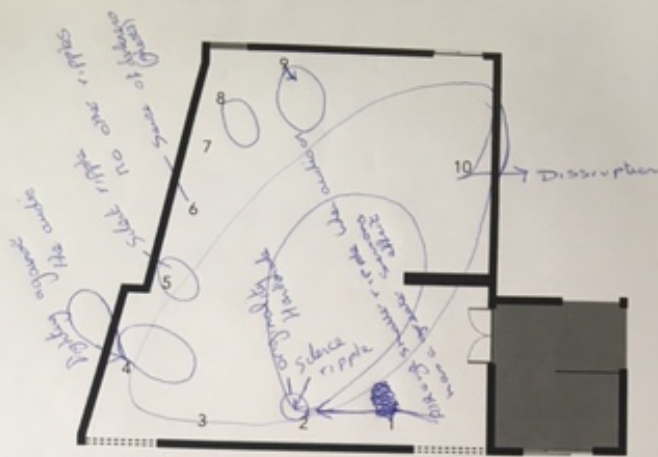
Les Immateriaux also invited writers to cumulatively create a glossary of terms related to the exhibition, using Minitel machines which networked the writers pre-internet. Now collective online writing like Wikipedia is commonplace but exhibition texts are usually still individually authored. For *A Strange Weave..* the artists and invited writers Michelle Atherton, Erika Balsom, Yuen Fong Ling, Esther Leslie and Lucy Steeds have also contributed to a cumulative online glossary of terms related to the exhibition, in a project called *Writing Tests*. This can be seen and added to on the ipad, at www.astrangeweave.org or by scanning the QR code below left.

Further background information on the exhibition and the artworks is also available at https://medium.com/site-stories or by scanning the QR code on the right below.

Curated by Jeanine Griffin

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

SITE GALLERY

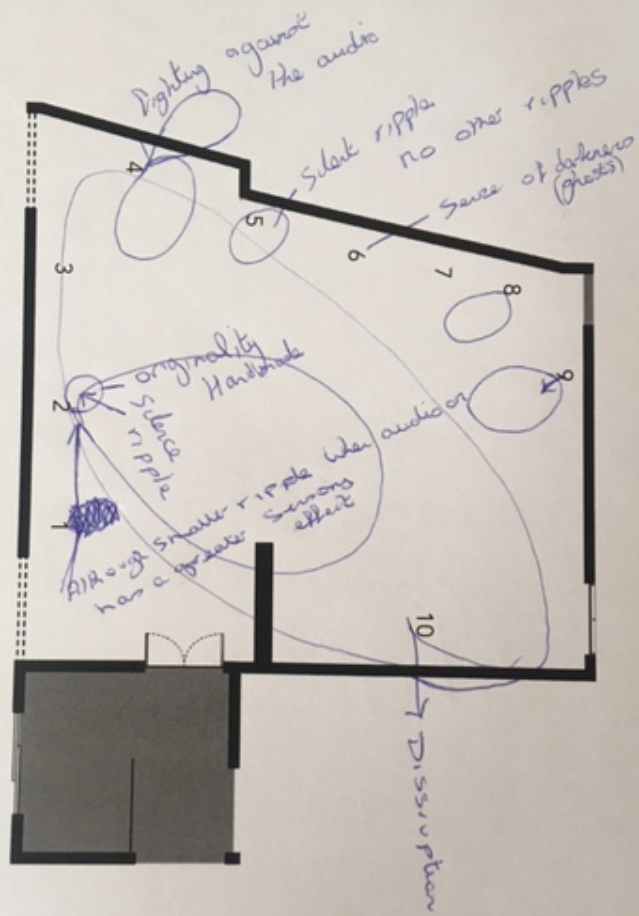Sheffield Hallam University — Cultural Communication and Computing Research Institute

PTO

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Pointing against the audio

Silent ripple

no other ripples

Sense of darkness (ghosts)

Originality
Handshake

Silence ripple

Although smaller ripple when audio on has a greater sensory effect
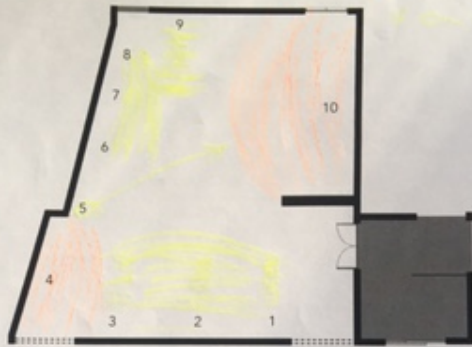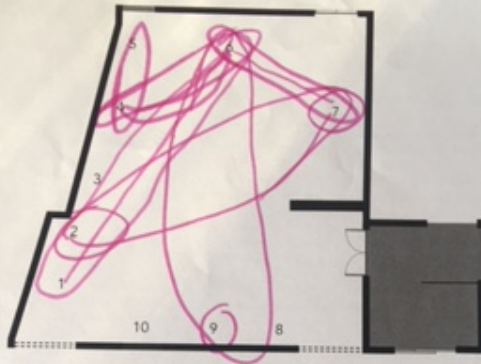
Disruption

2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

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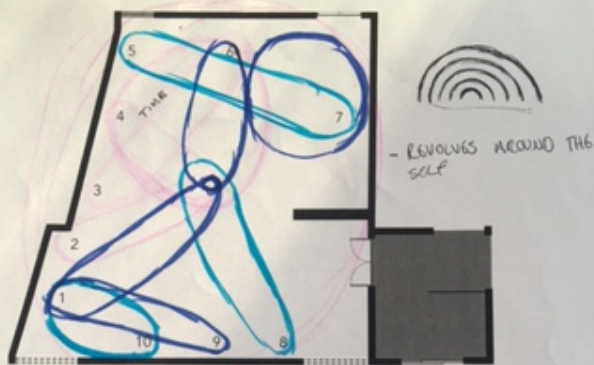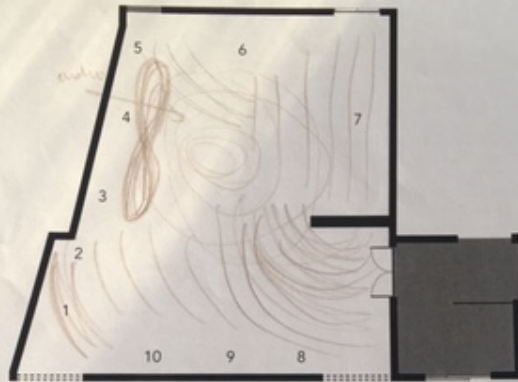
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Handwritten annotations on the floor plan:
- TIME
- REVOLVES AROUND THE SELF

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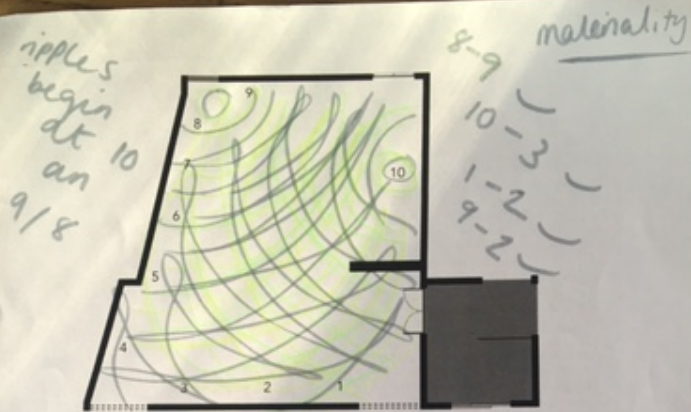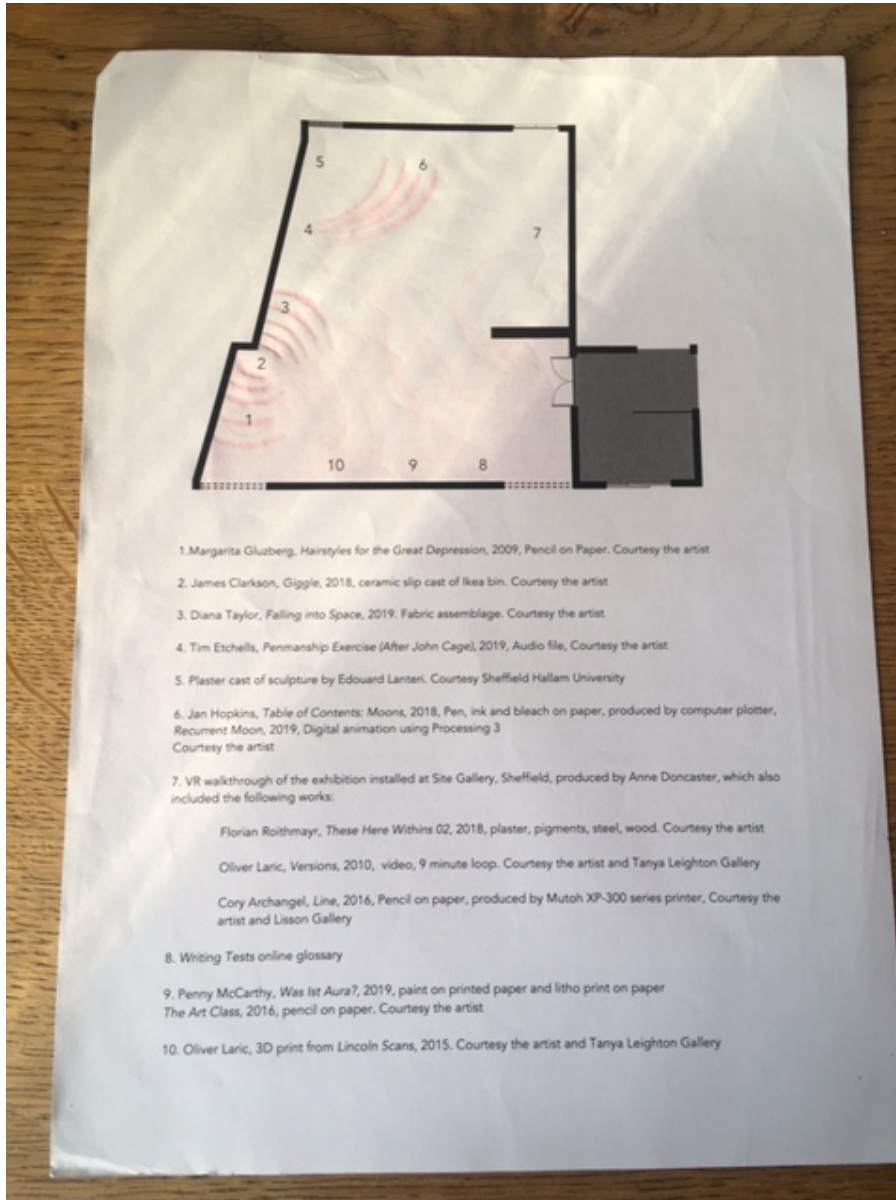
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ripples
begin
at 10
am
9/8

8-9
materiality
10-3
1-2
9-2

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6. Jan Hopkins, Table of Contents: Moons, 2018, Pen, ink and bleach on paper, produced by computer plotter, Recurrent Moon, 2019, Digital animation using Processing 3
Courtesy the artist

7. VR walkthrough of the exhibition installed at Site Gallery, Sheffield, produced by Anne Doncaster, which also included the following works:

   Florian Roithmayr, These Here Withins 02, 2018, plaster, pigments, steel, wood. Courtesy the artist

   Oliver Laric, Versions, 2010, video, 9 minute loop. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

   Cory Archangel, Line, 2016, Pencil on paper, produced by Mutoh XP-300 series printer, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery

8. Writing Tests online glossary

9. Penny McCarthy, Was Ist Aura?, 2019, paint on printed paper and litho print on paper
The Art Class, 2016, pencil on paper. Courtesy the artist

10. Oliver Laric, 3D print from Lincoln Scans, 2015. Courtesy the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery

From diagrams:

Grey and yellow waves, circles on VR and between flayed man and Jan's work "ripples begin at 10(VR) and 9/8 (flayed man/ Jan)"
Phrase "materiality" highlighted and Relationships noted between:
8-9 (jan/flayed man)
10-3 (VR/Laric)
1-2 (glossary – Penny)
9-2 (Jan and Penny)

pink pencil :

ripples out from VR and from Margarita and Penny and between James and VR

Purple Pen:
4-5, 6-7, 7-2, 9-6, 6-4,1236,

Yellow:

8-9, 9-3&1, 10-2, 5-10, 6-10, 7 with all

blue Pen:

10- 'disruption' and 10 with 2,3 and 4, circles emanating from 6 and 8

4 (margarita) fighting against the audio
5 (James)silent ripple (no other ripples)
6 (Tim) sense of darkness (ghosts)
2 (penny)" "originality, handmade silent ripple", although smaller ripple, when audio is one has a greater sensory effect

multicoloured pencil:

VR "mediated relationship disembodied curiosity"
Tim " enhances attention, shifts direction and focus of the gaze"

Ripples emanating from all of the work

Blue pen (Andrew?)
 Tim etchells is like this (scribble) and this – box with 'focus' written in it.

Everything is connected! Everything in this age has aura it needs to be divided into other understandings. That said the VR is a poor relation to the appropriated object used for art (such as Laric – I relate to this - it is more than information'. It is the opposite of the audio guide. The strange thing with the VR is the space that I intruded with my shadow on the screen – I disrupted.

"empty space in centre allows the..?

Yellow and orange pencil:

Connections 1-3, 5-10, 6-7-8,

Orange pen:
" a certain promiscuous relationsip to originality"
and winding line between 1,25,6,8,9, ending at 10

orange and brown pencil:

lops between 3 laric & 6 Diana and 5&7 james and tim and 4 (margarita) and 10 (VR)

pink pencil:

james emanates to margarita dn diana

tim emanates to Jan,

VR emanates to all

Blue pen, pink pencil:

'Time' is written near to Tim, outside of diagram is written" revolves around the self'

margarita linked to Penny and to laric

VR linked to flayed man and circles interconnect in centre

Brown Pencil:

VR emanates out straight..
Emanates out from margarita
Moebius strip between diana and flayed man with 'audio' written inbetween.

Discussion with Jeanine Griffin and Esther Leslie and students in the exhibition at Project Space Plus, University of Lincoln 6 November 2019.

Esther Leslie 0:13 (on entering..)
Esther Leslie: we are losing the art of surgery because doctors in their training, are so unused to using their fingers. There's a general decline, but there are other specific knowledges and capacities to look at computer information which are based on this..

Andrew Bracey 1:40
It felt too much like a good opportunity because we've got both Jeanine & Esther here. You obviously installed the show and Esther saw it briefly before the talk but just to get some - because I know you've (EL) been involved with the glossary and thinking about some of the concerns that.... and it picks up quote a lot of the things you were talking about in the lecture.

Esther Leslie 2:32
It does, It's a really lovely show and I love this piece - thinking about imitation - this is Penny McCarthy's perfect copy of Benjamin's text/ letter, this note about aura - what's fascinating about that is that it speaks socially of the fact that he's working in a cafe, that he has no money, no place to be and study and he's finding any scrap of paper he can find and he's writing about aura, the magic [...] of the singularity of the art object and reflecting on that in order to then produce some great thoughts about the end of aura in the age of technological reproduction. It's the perfect facsimile of that and it becomes itself an artefact. Then I think about my own fetishistic interest in Benjaminian objects and how it becomes, even in its multiplicity, or because of its multiplicity, it soaks into itself a certain kind of magic, or at least erases the question about value and originality......

Next to that we've got the glossary where Jeanine gave us words related to Benjamin's ideas and words beyond that about the authenticity of art, the value of art, exhibition, value, all sorts.. and some modern notions around data and so on, and invited us to sort of communicate or to give our ideas in relation, to give definitions in the glossary mode, which I think is very interesting, to have multiple voices to talk to each other to talk across each other, and get a kind of cacophany of responses and I love the way that - one because what I was saying about screens you know you have to physically engage with something that's quite you know, it's immmaterial, it's thoughts, it's a kind of tumble of quotes but you have to come close, become quite intimate with it, to read or listen to those voices. It's very simple but also limitless in certain ways and I suppose what one would need to do now - because in some ways that reminds me more of Benjamin's great big work 'The Arcades Project' which is a collection of quotations, I sort of feel it should all be now hyperlinked to each other, in a sort of intricate structure, cross referencing, and that would create a kind of density - that that would be a strange weave of space and time in itself in a kind of immaterial sense.

And the other artworks.. each one is fascinating and there's a lot of reflection. This piece I find really intriguing and Jeanine and I were talking about earlier and the title is 'Hairstyle from the Great Depression' so the title is kind of referencing women's hair styles in 1929, say. If thinking about the wall street crash in the 30s and the depression, so prior to the shift in the global north and beyond, running up to the second world war and I was recalling how Benjamin talks about the permanent wave as a fashion in hairstyles.

And he sees some kind of fossilisation, sort of emblematic of this kind of catastrophic eruption of capitalism into the world, which then posits itself as the end of all history or the culmination of everything and he sees this fossil-like permanent wave as an emblem of that static-ness and there can only be a kind of eternal return of reproduction [….]so, I was just thinking about the ways in which, but what's interesting about Benjamin and Krakow is that they read things like fashion or triviality as deeply adorned in social significance. This is not to impute to Margarita Gluzberg any of that...

It's an extraordinarily beautiful work of art and, I'm told, that although there are elements of it that seem almost machine-like, it's all hand drawn.

So then its raising questions in relation to work over there. (Jan Hopkins) about a conversation between the machine and human and digital methods, and whether digital/ post-digital art can have aura, does have an originality, an authenticity, that is auratic or beyond aura..in the sense that Benjamin wants to advocate, in the case of some of the works, including thinking about casts and taking plaster casts.. this piece from Sheffield Hallam collection - in some ways this is a minor piece that is just used for drawing exercises and there would have be many of them but this is the last remaining one so it accrues a type of value - it moves from the realm of mass reproduction into rarity. And then staging it here as an object is raising the questions around its uniqueness which then raises questions around its aura, though I feel that it's so precarious there, I can just

imagine someone kicking it over.. which is the same issue with the imitation of the Ikea bin, in a slip cast mode and again, they seem very vulnerable, the way they're staged or the fact that that could be overlooked or used as a bin, in the same way that you know.. Gustav Metzger in the Whitechapel had these carefully curated piles of rubbish that the cleaners dutifully took away.

Esther Leslie 10:17
So it's that play again with questions of value and whether the designer you know, the industrial design person is an artist, it's Duchampian question - Duchamp's taking the urinal for example, and the bottle rack and putting it into the context of art - is it the space that makes it an artwork or does it remain an object. And these are questions you may have encountered that each instance here that raises the questions afresh and in a new context. So I think it's a really beautiful selection of works.

Do you want to say anything.?

Jeanine Griffin 11:06
Yes, the exhibition is called 'A Strange Weave of Time and Space' because as well as riffing on one of Walter Benjamin's early descriptions of aura, this idea of the auratic object which is singular in time space and not reproducible; it also seems to me a really interesting description of the process of an exhibition that is a corralling of a constellation of works into a particular space and time and a particular audience that actually almost approaches a kind of entangled, singularity in itself, so it becomes kind of a unique set of circumstances and might maybe approach the auratic.

So I was really interested in that and then the research revolves around these ideas of aura an authenticity and the object in the post digital context. We're in a context of the dematerialised object, the poor image, as Hito Steyerl terms it, the ever circulating proliferation of jpegs and degraded copies and there has been a corresponding resurgence of interest in the artefact and the object , perhaps because of the ubiquity of copies, the hand-made object or the singular event of performance become more affecting..? And whether that might be more of a regressive withdrawal from the current post digital moment. So I wanted to curate an exhibition in a physical space that might tease out some of those ideas. It is also related to past exhibitions that are specific to the relationship between art and technology, the past to the present moment, the analogue and the digital, the copy and the reproduction and how you might tease out some of those ideas in a physical relation to some of those objects which have different a ontology and status in relation to the copy/ original, analogue/digital and different nodes along that continuum.

This exhibition is the second iteration of this and here has a kind of show within the show - virtual reality representation of a previous show, in which some objects in there are not visible in this space, some are objects by the same artist but different works and some not there. So, really trying to think through something about remote viewing - when most of the artwork we see is online, might be might be representation of an artwork or a representation an exhibition - increasingly galleries are producing these virtual reality walk throughs. So if you're not in the physical proximity, or don't make it within the time span of the exhibition, you can still access a version of that exhibition, But is that the exhibition in itself or is the exhibition an event that cannot be reproduced as Boris Groys suggests. He, in a way we touched about in your talk, Esther, talks about different kinds of viewing for things -' frontal viewing' where you're looking at a screen or 'viewing from within' where you are actually physically embodied in the space.

All these ideas are really interesting in relation to certain objects - for example the 3D prints. You relate to them as a body, assuming a similar kind of materiality, but the 3D print has a different kind of materiality - it is actually a void inside, it's made up of extruded material and you can see the digital abrasions of that process on it. Then your embodied relationship with it is slightly different.

Andrew Bracey 14:51
I can't get out of my mind the fact that the icon of the readymade for Duchampians - Fountain -   the urinal - the ones that we see now are all hand made. Because the original was lost. And then when he came to edition them in the mid 60s..they couldn't find it so had to hand make it to make it look mass produced, and it made me think of James's work - in the future they won't be able to find any examples of the Ikea bin but there'll be the James Clarkson version..

other course leader 15:31
or if in the future they are able to make digital printing better not show its scars, and be more seamless.. it won't show physical markers.

Penny McCarthy 15:46

Sorry to jump in, but I just been thinking about the collection of casts, plaster casts in the V&A, which were all about to be thrown away 18 months ago. Because real estate is always an issue they wanted to get rid of that whole collection of casts and actually, they're essentially valueless as they only exists in mass production to replicate the original. But the point being that sometimes they're the only representation of that thing that doesn't exist anymore. So the value is actually educational. And they also acquire, as no doubt that Oliver Laric 3D print will well as well, a value. That was not ever expected, by representing something like, you know, something lost in Palmyra. It's just that, looking at that old plaster – there's a big argument that nobody ever teaches from the plaster cast anymore. But, but, but there's an important part of history, represented by the fact that people want skill.

Jeanine Griffin 16:57
The curator of the cast court at the V&A, referred to it as the Victorian version of google images. That it was basically a search engine for artefacts and the physical version of google.

Andrew Bracey 17:12
Tristram Hunt, the director of the V&A gave a talk here recently and he mentioned about having the only surviving plaster casts of certain sculptures.. So within 18 months, it's got to be something that has redeemed value.

Penny McCarthy 17:26
I know, I know. And Trajan's column in Rome is so destroyed by pollution that without the V&A version we would have no idea about its detail.

other course leader 17:45
It reminds me of the copy of the magna carta in Lincoln. And, of course, there were originals but also 'original copies' scribed for dissemination – yes, copies were important weren't they..

Esther Leslie 18:07
Okay, in a way that that sort of bolsters Benjamin's claim, in the sense that the copy - that there is a copy produces a certain accessibility, and a certain capacity to engage with it and without all the protocol of it being the original - as you're saying, you know, kind of educational value , a different kind of value.

Penny McCarthy 18:38
It's the context in which the copy operates. In the V&A's cast collection, It operates in terms of a value system versus the real estate that could be gained by the loss of it.

Esther Leslie 18:52
Well yes, different enmeshments of value..

Yeah, well they're getting rid of Blythe House aren't they - that is an extraordinary repository of seemingly random items. I was there looking at milk marketing board stuff which was in the same room as AIDS educational material, but again land value in Kensington means that it will be moved. Which then changes literally the conditions of accessibility.

Andrew Bracey 19:34
Fabulous.

Esther Leslie 19:36
Thank you.

Appendices:

- *Writing Tests* publication
- Essays published on Site Gallery's Medium pages:

  https://medium.com/site-stories/retrospection-from-exorcising-ghosts-to-nostalgic-whiplash-fb4ef0c6603c

  https://medium.com/site-stories/a-strange-weave-of-time-and-space-5600ef4554c3
- Video of 'Exorcising the Ghosts of our Immediate Future', Discursive Event, 6 December 2019, Site Gallery, Sheffield. Available at : https://vimeo.com/679108514, password: Ghosts Video