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**A Study of Curation, Location and Temporality in Contemporary
Art Fairs**

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A Study of Curation, Location and Temporality in Contemporary Art Fairs

by Pryle Behrman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of
Westminster for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy by Published Work

December 2022

ABSTRACT

This PhD by Published Work critically analyses a series of five exhibitions curated by the author at London Art Fair between 2016-2020, which form the portfolio of projects within this thesis. Each exhibition explored notions of temporality and site, focusing on how these concepts are reframed and problematised by being examined within a contemporary art fair.

The motivation for the projects stemmed from researching curated art shows from recent years that addressed notions of time and finding a lack of analysis in relation to how these might be affected by their location, which suggested a new field of enquiry. To address this area, the curatorial aim of each exhibition within the portfolio sought to test how differing conceptions of temporality – whether an artwork might be considered permanent or ephemeral, finished or unfinished, occurring now or in the past – might impact upon and be impacted by ideas of site – such as whether an artwork is physical or virtual, located within the art fair or situated elsewhere.

The methodology that guided the portfolio of projects was transversal and brought together analytical systems from three differing areas of intellectual enquiry, combining a rhizomatic approach, which emphasised the interconnected nature of the exhibitions, with methods derived from phenomenology (to promote a questioning of received definitions relating to location and time) and institutional critique (to critically engage with the art fair setting). The outcomes from the portfolio support the contention that curatorial practice, temporality and site are not discrete elements within a contemporary art fair environment, but rather forces that are wholly interdependent. Additionally, the physical and temporal boundaries of the exhibited artworks, and the exhibition as a whole, might be considered problematic to define with any fixity.

This PhD thesis proposes a twofold contribution to new knowledge as a result: firstly, that a fuller appreciation of the interaction between curation, setting and temporality within curated exhibitions at contemporary art fairs requires a conceptualisation of these three factors as being a single entity; secondly, that this entity can encompass, without contradiction, multiple definitions of both location and temporality.

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LIST OF ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

A total of ten PDFs of accompanying material have been submitted to the University of Westminster VRE alongside this thesis.

There are two PDFs for each of the five exhibitions in the portfolio of projects. The PDFs labelled 'accompanying images' contain images of the exhibition space, exhibited artworks and floorplans, as well as, where relevant, images of performance events and panel discussions related to the exhibition. The PDFs labelled 'accompanying documentation' contain exhibition handouts, catalogue essays, tour schedules, publicity material and press coverage.

The full list of PDFs submitted as accompanying material are:

- Project 1 – PLAY ART DATA MONEY – accompanying images
- Project 1 – PLAY ART DATA MONEY – accompanying documentation
- Project 2 – Stranger Collaborations – accompanying images
- Project 2 – Stranger Collaborations – accompanying documentation
- Project 3 – Quick, Quick, Quick – accompanying images
- Project 3 – Quick, Quick, Quick – accompanying documentation
- Project 4 – Afrofuturisms Past – accompanying images
- Project 4 – Afrofuturisms Past – accompanying documentation
- Project 5 – Playtime – accompanying images
- Project 5 – Playtime – accompanying documentation

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Pryle Behrman

December 2022

1. INTRODUCTION: the division between time and place

"If art is to have a role or a meaning at all in the age of real-time technologies it is to keep our human relation with time open". Charlie Gere (2006, p. 13)

"Public spaces are always plural and ... [in these sites] critical art is art that foments dissensus, that makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate." Chantal Mouffe (2007)

How can art affect our understanding of time *and* place? Such a large question can, undoubtedly, provoke many different avenues of enquiry, but this PhD thesis focuses on five exhibitions that I curated between 2016 and 2020 that were inspired by the ways in which this question has often been presented as two, obviously separate, questions: either about time, or, alternatively, about location.

As shown in the above quote, Charlie Gere, for example, has argued that notions of temporality hold the key to understanding critically engaged practices within the arts. In *Art, Time and Technology* (2006), he asserts that real-time technologies have made society value the current moment above all else and, as a result, humanity has lost an attachment to time, or, more specifically, any understanding of the world that relies on some extension away from the present, which is the cornerstone of a politically driven engagement with societal development, history or memory.

In this, Gere echoes the arguments of Paul Virilio and Andreas Huyssen, who have both contended that society's attachment to the present, created and exacerbated by real-time technologies, is destroying any sense of place as well: in

Open Sky (1997), Virilio writes “This is what the teletechnologies of real time are doing: they are killing ‘present’ time by isolating it from its here and now, in favour of a commutative elsewhere that no longer has anything to do with our ‘concrete presence’ in the world, but is the elsewhere of a ‘discrete telepresence’” (Virilio, 1997, pp. 10-11); in *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia* (1994) Huyssen concurs that technology has created a world in which “Speed destroys space, and it erases temporal distance. ... A sense of historical continuity or, for that matter, discontinuity, both of which depend on a before and an after, gives way to the simultaneity of all times and spaces readily accessible in the present” (Huyssen, 1994, p. 253). While an attachment to place thus features in the writings of all three theorists – Gere, Virilio and Huyssen – it is a critical re-evaluation of temporality that leads the way in reconnecting society with both time and place.¹

Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, is one of a number of influential theorists who have associated a re-evaluation of society with artist interventions focused on specific locations within the public realm, as summarised by her quote that opened this chapter. Citing such examples as the anti-advertising ‘Nike Ground’ project in Vienna by artists Eva & Franco Mattes (2003), and the contribution of artists to campaigns such as ‘Reclaim the Streets’ in Britain and ‘Tute Bianche’ in Italy (Mouffe, 2007), Mouffe’s analysis builds on the extended tradition of highlighting the importance of public spaces in activism as seen in Hannah Arendt’s *The Human Condition* (1958) and Jürgen Habermas’s *The Structural*

¹ Further influential theses arguing that an engagement with issues of temporality can drive a progressive re-evaluation of society have been provided by Kimberly Hutchings in relation to global politics (Hutchings, 2008) and Dipesh Chakrabarty in the field of postcolonialism (Chakrabarty, 2007): Hutchings has posited that “the challenge of thinking the present of world politics is the challenge of thinking heterotemporality, ultimately neither one present nor many presents, but a mutual contamination of ‘nows’ that participate in a variety of temporal trajectories” (Hutchings, 2008, p. 166); Chakrabarty has argued that “the assumption of a continuous, homogeneous, infinitely stretched out time that makes possible the imagination of an ‘always’ is put to question by subaltern pasts that makes the present, as Derrida says, ‘out of joint’” (Chakrabarty, 2007, pp. 95-96).

Transformation of the Public Sphere (1989). For Mouffe, Arendt and Habermas, political engagement requires an active public realm that, in some sense, goes beyond temporality: Arendt, for example, writes that “the existence of a public realm and the world’s subsequent transformation into a community of things which gathers men together and relates them to each other depends entirely on permanence. If the world is to contain a public space, it cannot be erected for one generation and planned for the living only; it must transcend the life-span of mortal men” (Arendt, 1998, p. 55).

I first noticed the frequency with which temporal and locational factors are conceptualised as separate spheres in contemporary art when writing an article reviewing an exhibition of works by David Claerbout for *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* (Behrman, 2012). Visiting Claerbout’s mid-career retrospective – titled ‘The Time That Remains’ – at WIELS in Brussels in early 2011, I was struck by how a show in which notions of time were constantly questioned by the exhibited works was not linked to the site within the exhibition literature (Snauwaert, et al., 2012), even though WIELS itself was clearly designed with a play of temporalities in mind.

In Claerbout’s *Kindergarten Antonio Sant’Elia, 1932* (1998), for example, a vintage black-and-white photograph is subtly reanimated through digital manipulation so that two bare saplings within a still image are enlivened with the addition of foliage that is set in gently vibrating motion. This piece was one of several artworks in the show that presented time in stasis mixing unexpectedly with time in flow, which formed an evocative dialogue with the interior architecture of WIELS: the industrial past of the former brewery is referenced by the huge, mid-20th century copper brewing vats sitting in the ornately tiled entrance hallway, which visitors must traverse before reaching the gallery spaces; then, on entering

the exhibition, the viewer is suddenly fast-forwarded into a markedly different, 21st century environment designed to showcase contemporary artworks.



Figure 1. Alan Bond, *Kino*, 2014, projection room constructed from recycled laminates

As a result of the research undertaken for my article about Claerbout, I started to examine within my own curatorial practice how setting could influence the temporal understandings and experiences of audiences for contemporary art. I began with an exhibition called 'It's me, not you' that I curated for the Society of Scottish Artists Annual Exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh in December 2014, which comprised a programme of video art and experimental film shown within a self-contained projection room titled *Kino* (Figure 1) that was created by artist Alan Bond. With architectural elements that referenced both early, small-town cinemas and the Barcelona Pavilion from 1929 designed by Mies van der Rohe and Lilly Reich, this structure contained its own seating, walls and ceiling, and sat wholly within a room of the Royal Scottish Academy. By making

the projection room a sculptural object in its own right, *Kino* was designed to highlight the importance of setting even when entering a blacked-out screening space;² it was also created with temporal considerations in mind, as the aim was to provide a visually enticing yet relatable environment that would encourage a longer engagement with the exhibited artworks, which might otherwise be challenging to achieve as the Annual Exhibition is a largescale event that spans multiple rooms within the Royal Scottish Academy.

Following the show at the Royal Scottish Academy, I sought to broaden and deepen my exploration of temporality, art and site by curating a series of conceptually linked exhibitions rather than a one-off example. I chose to concentrate upon one setting in response to Henri Lefebvre's insight that the meanings generated by a single location are not static but develop over time due to the surrounding social and political factors (Lefebvre, 1991). By focusing on one exhibition context, an analysis of this "production of space", to use Lefebvre's terminology (Lefebvre, 1991), could become part of an investigation that has at its heart a focus on the co-dependent nature of a sense of place and temporality.

As a result, I curated a series of five exhibitions between 2016 and 2020 – titled 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY', 'Stranger Collaborations', 'Quick, Quick, Quick', 'Afrofuturisms Past' and 'Playtime' – that form the portfolio of projects submitted for this PhD by Published Work (as described and analysed in detail in chapter 5). These exhibitions were situated within a dedicated exhibition space called the Art Projects Screening Room (which I redesigned for each iteration) at London Art Fair, which occurs in January each year at the Business Design Centre, Islington. I

² In *The Optical Vacuum: Spectatorship and Modernized American Theatre Architecture*, Jocelyn Szczepaniak-Gillece (2018) has analysed both the 20th century development of 'neutralized' cinemas (whose architecture and interior design would supposedly have no impact on the audience's experience of the films shown) and also how this goal was unobtainable, since not only is it evident that "space constructs us as spectators, but also that spectatorial space shapes cinema's role in the larger cultural imaginary" (Szczepaniak-Gillece, 2018, p. 10).

selected the location of an art fair as this is a setting in which time is always uppermost in the minds of visitors, since there is such a profusion of artworks to see within a limited timespan – a maximum of 6 days in the case of London Art Fair, but in practice usually within a visit of a few hours – as well as in the thinking of exhibitors, given the need to cover costs within the relatively short time available for sales.

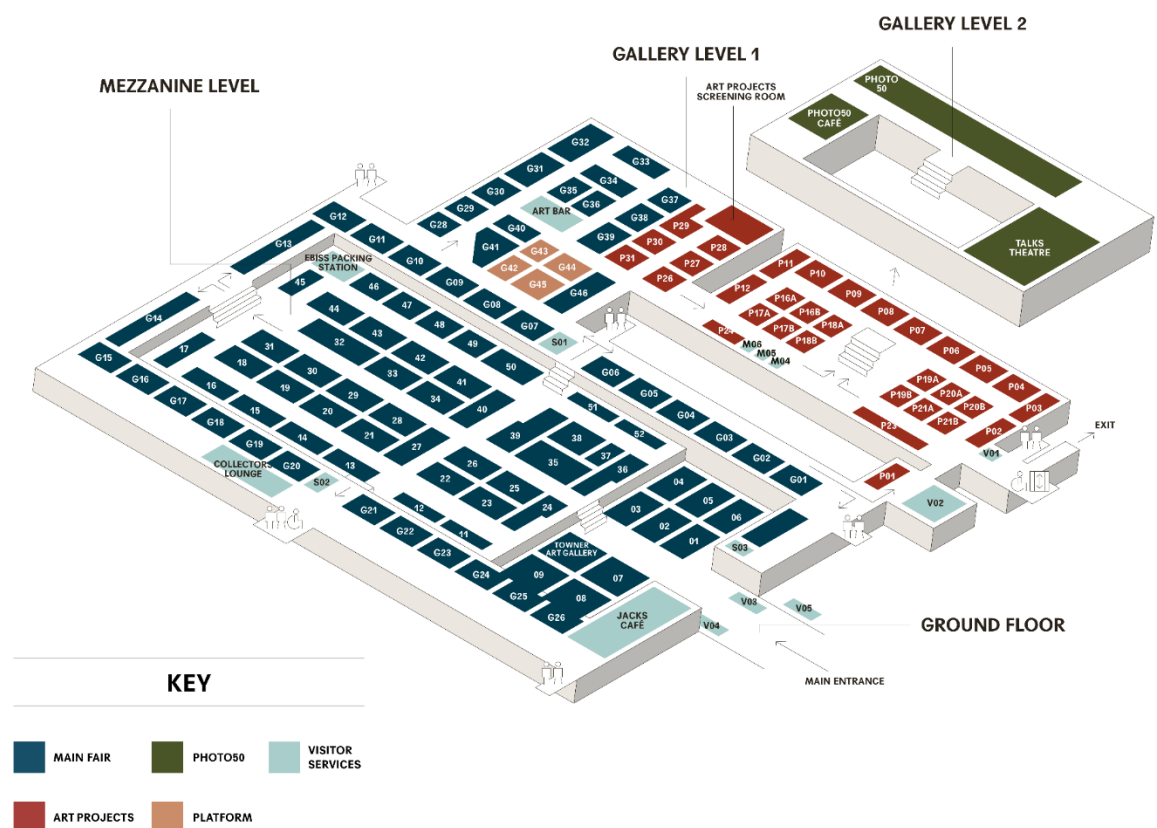


Figure 2. London Art Fair 2019 floorplan

During the years spanned by the portfolio of projects, 2016-2020, there were two other curatorial interventions in each London Art Fair (see Figure 2): Photo50, a photography-themed exhibition led by a different curator or curatorial group each year, and a curated presentation organised by a different public museum each year of highlights from its collection. Another recurring curatorial element within London Art Fair is the Art Projects section (for which the author was a

selection panel member) in which each stand had its own curatorial concept as proposed by the exhibiting gallery. In 2019 and 2020, these other curated elements were augmented by a new section titled Platform, whereby a collection of gallery presentations were brought together by an invited curator around a single theme (ceramics in 2019 and textile art in 2020) within a dedicated area of London Art Fair.

The additional images that have been submitted alongside this thesis contain floorplans for each iteration of the Fair from 2016-2020, but Figure 2 shows the typical locations within London Art Fair of the Art Projects Screening Room, Photo50, and the exhibition of a public museum collection (which was Towner Art Gallery in 2019), as well as the two curated sections of multiple gallery stands: Art Projects and Platform. As can be seen in Figure 2, Art Projects, Photo50 and Platform were situated near to each other, which allowed visitors who had a particular interest in exploring curated presentations to readily move between these three areas of the Fair. My discussion with the London Art Fair team about the placement of these three sections also included considering the dialogues that could be opened up by placing two sections that highlighted a particular medium – photography in the case of Photo50, and ceramics or textiles with Platform – adjacent to Art Projects, in which, by way of contrast, the focus was more upon socio-political themes.

The curatorial approach that I adopted for each exhibition at London Art Fair between 2016-2020 sought to explore alternatives to the separation between temporal and locational effects highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. Specifically, I investigated how these might better be conceptualised as an 'entanglement' of factors that are wholly interdependent, in a manner similar to the theories of Karen Barad. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, Barad writes:

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. ... time and space, like matter and meaning, come into existence, are iteratively reconfigured through each intra-action, thereby making it impossible to differentiate in any absolute sense between creation and renewal, beginning and returning, continuity and discontinuity, here and there, past and future. (Barad, 2007, p. ix)³

With Barad's conceptualisation in mind, the curation of the five exhibitions within the portfolio of projects sought to question and re-examine what might be understood as temporality and location within a contemporary art fair, additionally drawing on Miwon Kwon's contention that the 'site' of an artwork might not be one physical location, but rather a network of interconnected 'discursive elements'.⁴ In doing this, the portfolio of projects sought to problematise where both the physical and temporal boundaries of the artworks, and the exhibition as a whole, might lie: 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' and 'Stranger Collaborations' included time-based artworks that spanned a greater duration than that of London Art Fair and were sited in multiple locations both inside and outside its walls; 'Quick, Quick, Quick' formed dialogues with other gallery booths and a panel discussion that took place in different spaces and at different times; 'Afrofuturisms Past' featured films and videos that intermingle ancient, modernist and contemporary elements, which might be considered problematic within the

³ Barad's use of entanglement, as the subtitle of the book makes clear, builds on the notion of entanglement within quantum physics, but extends it to an understanding of socially constructed meanings as well as physical properties.

⁴ Giving the example of Mark Dion's 1991 project *On Tropical Nature*, which Dion conceptualised as containing the artist's field trip to a Venezuelan rainforest, two exhibition sites in Caracas, and being "part of the discourse concerning cultural representations of nature and the global environmental crisis" (Kwon, 2002, p. 28), Kwon argues that "in advanced art practices of the past thirty years the operative definition of the site has been transformed from a physical location – grounded, fixed, actual – to a discursive vector – ungrounded, fluid, virtual" (Kwon, 2002, pp. 29-30).

context of art fairs, such London Art Fair, that market the exhibited artworks as sitting wholly within one of these temporal demarcations; lastly, 'Playtime' sought to undermine any clear division between work and leisure times, and workplaces and leisure spaces, by including artworks that sought to 'pay' the viewer for their time within the exhibition.

The manner in which this temporal and spatial fluidity was explored in each exhibition within the portfolio of projects will be discussed in detail in chapter 5 below, but as a whole the curation of the portfolio of projects engaged with notions of site and time that were as open as possible to reflect Kwon's advocacy of embracing the "dialectical tension" (Kwon, 2002, p. 166) that can be created within site-specific practices.

2. RATIONALE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

“Questions about time are evidently especially timely. Wasting and waiting; regression and repetition; non-consummation and counter-productivity; the belated and the obsolete; the disjointed and the out-of-synch – these are all familiar tropes in the work of contemporary artists, and point to a widespread questioning of the idea of time”. Amelia Groom (2013, p. 12)

The exhibition literature for David Claerbout’s retrospective at WIELS (as discussed in the previous chapter) is symptomatic of many other texts analysing how contemporary art might challenge and reframe our understanding of time, as they contain comparatively little discussion of how artworks might address notions of temporality differently in different exhibition contexts. The above quote by Amelia Groom is an apt summary of her anthology of writings about time from which it is taken, in that the focus of analysis is on temporal questions raised by the artworks themselves, rather than any issues of temporality raised by where the works are displayed.

This is echoed in other anthologies that survey temporal issues in art – such as *Time in the History of Art: Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*, edited by Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey (2018), and *Not Now! Now!: Chronopolitics, Art & Research*, edited by Renate Lorenz (2014) – as well as recent single-author investigations, for example *Time, Duration and Change in Contemporary Art: Beyond the Clock* by Kate Bretkelly-Chalmers (2019), *Movement, Time, Technology, and Art* by Christina Chau (2017) and *The Past is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* by Christine Ross (2012).

As a result, this PhD thesis is proposing that, taken as a whole, publications about contemporary art and time have not contained any detailed analysis of the impact

of where the artworks under discussion might be exhibited, and this constitutes a gap in the literature. To be clear, the argument is not that the lack of analysis in the above texts of the interaction between art, temporality and location should be considered an obvious or unjustifiable omission, since these books often have a different focus in mind: *Not Now! Now!* (Lorenz, 2014), for example, links the manner in which art can challenge temporal concepts with current debates in postcolonial and queer studies; *Time, Duration and Change in Contemporary Art* (Bretkelly-Chalmers, 2019) seeks to create a dialogue between art and scientific fields that similarly explore alternative frameworks of time, including psychology, neuroscience, physics and environmental sciences. The aim of this thesis is to define a new area for research, which will then complement other investigations in this field.

This opportunity for a new avenue of research is equally in evidence when examining curated art exhibitions devoted to the topic of time. Even though these events involve artworks being brought together for a specific setting, such as an art gallery, museum or art fair, references to the location are relatively rare (as will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3). Exhibitions in which the setting has not been critically analysed in the accompanying literature are much more numerous, with recent examples including: '24/7: A Wake-up Call for Our Non-stop World' at Somerset House, London in 2019-2020 (Cook, 2019; Somerset House, 2019); 'Time, Forward!' at V-A-C Zattere, Venice in 2019 (Kholeif & Sarkisov, 2019; V-A-C, 2019); 'Days of Endless Time' at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. in 2014-2015 (Lapham, 2014; Smithsonian, 2014); 'Marking Time' at Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney in 2012 (Kent, 2012; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 2012); and 'Tomorrow' at Art Sonje Center and Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul in 2007 (Kim, et al., 2007; Art Sonje Center, 2007).

The paucity of analysis into the impact of location on temporal-focused art exhibitions continues when surveying the literature on contemporary art fairs, despite the fact that, as analysed by Paco Barragán (2008; 2020) and Paulette Brien (2016), curated exhibitions have increasingly become a fixture at these events. Brien's MPhil thesis *A Consideration of the Art Fair as Curatorial Platform* (2016) remains a rare exception with its in-depth analysis of the role of curation within art fairs, although, as will be discussed in chapter 3, this text does not seek to analyse the temporal considerations that might be addressed by, or impact upon, these exhibitions. More generally, book-length studies about art fairs remain few in number and, amongst those published in recent years, the role of curated exhibitions (whatever their chosen theme might be) within art fairs accounts for a minor proportion of the overall analysis (see Gerlis, 2021; Garutti, 2014).⁵

Studies into how the specifics of the exhibition context impacts upon both the issues raised by artworks and their reception have been, since the 1960s, the cornerstone of the literature of institutional critique, but a survey of the key texts in this field from recent years (Fraser, 2018; Marstine, 2017; O'Neill, et al., 2017; Voorhies, 2017; Ciric & Cai, 2016) reveals, once again, scant mention of the particularities of art fairs, with the overwhelming focus continuing to be on museums and art galleries.

The field relating to how temporal issues raised by curated art exhibitions are impacted by their location within a contemporary art fair can be illustrated by the central overlap of the three circles shown in Figure 3. It is through addressing this

⁵ This shortage appears linked with a broader trend within the wealth of recent literature analysing the contemporary art market, in which discussions of the specific characteristics of art fairs are relatively rare and the overwhelming focus is upon the workings of high-profile collectors, art dealerships and auction houses (see Lazzaro, et al., 2021; Glauser, et al., 2020; Fillitz & van der Grijp, 2020).

underanalysed area that this PhD will provide an original contribution to knowledge.

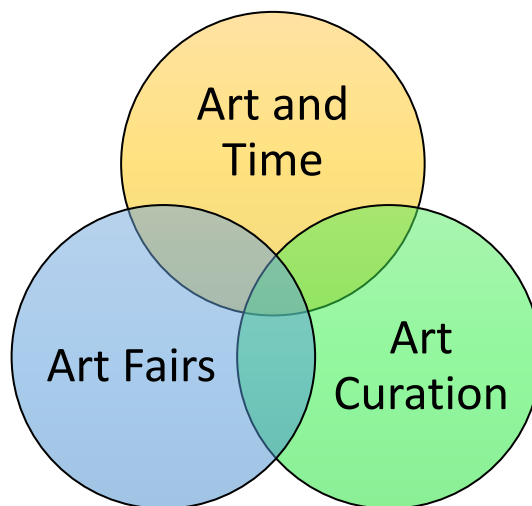


Figure 3. Rationale for this PhD thesis

To investigate this subject, both within the portfolio of projects and this PhD thesis, it was divided into three research questions examining the interaction between the three fields of art curation, contemporary art fairs and temporality in art, which can be represented by the areas where two of the circles in Figure 3 overlap. These three questions are:

- 1) How do curated exhibitions within contemporary art fairs differ from those located in other settings?
- 2) What temporal issues can be raised by artworks within contemporary art fairs?
- 3) What issues might be examined by curated art exhibitions that employ the theme of temporality?

The recent literature, artworks and curated exhibitions that relate to these questions form the context of this PhD thesis, which is described and analysed in the next chapter. This context then informed the exhibitions that comprise the portfolio of projects, which, as will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 5, all sought to explore specific aspects of the research questions.

3. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

3.1 The Scope of this Contextual Review

As discussed in chapter 2, the rationale for this PhD derives from examining and identifying a new field of enquiry activated when three research contexts meet: the practice of art curation, the site of contemporary art fairs, and artworks that can be considered to address concepts of time. Whilst there is a paucity of critical texts and exhibitions addressing the interaction between these three areas, there is a significantly greater number of sources that are closest to this field of enquiry by virtue of addressing the overlap of two of the three contexts: curation within contemporary art fairs, artworks that examine time within contemporary art fairs, and curated exhibitions exploring notions of time. It is these three overlaps that provide the focus for the contextual review undertaken in this chapter.

3.2 Curatorial Practice within Contemporary Art Fairs

To analyse recent curatorial practice within contemporary art fairs, this chapter addresses both standalone curated exhibitions set within a dedicated space and curated sections encompassing multiple gallery booths or sites, as well as how curatorial input has been utilised within the design and overarching theme of an art fair as a whole. First, however, is an explanation of the rationale that dictated which fairs were chosen as the key events to focus upon within this chapter.

In selecting which art fairs to analyse for this PhD thesis, the initial choice was based on the 40 events highlighted by the 2020 Art Basel & UBS report into the art market (McAndrew, 2020) as being either one of the “major art fairs” (McAndrew, 2020, p. 207) or a high-profile “smaller, specialized, or regional” art fair (McAndrew, 2020, p. 206) that attracted visitor numbers that were often

commensurate with those of the major art fairs, for example 120,000 attendees in the case of Art Beijing (McAndrew, 2020, p. 209).⁶

For this PhD thesis, these 40 fairs were augmented with four additional fairs – two from Africa (Art Joburg and ART X Lagos), one from the Indian subcontinent (India Art Fair) and one from Australasia (Sydney Contemporary) – to further extend the geographical reach of the survey, as these three regions only contributed one art fair (Cape Town Art Fair) amongst the 40 fairs highlighted by the Art Basel & UBS report. This resulted in a survey sample of 44 art fairs in total and, for each of these fairs, the curatorial elements for their 2019 edition⁷ have been compiled in Appendix 1.

As shown by Appendix 1, a curated section is almost uniformly present amongst contemporary art fairs, although they often feature very broad curatorial themes, such as a presentation of solo exhibitions, as seen in 'Tomorrows/Today' at Cape Town Art Fair, or two-person shows, as seen in 'Dialogues' at ARCOmadrid. The curated sections were usually housed within a dedicated space, but could also form a thematic link between the booths of several private galleries, such as with 'Disegni' at Artissima, curated by João Mourão and Luís Silva, which was "the section of the fair open to all forms of contemporary drawing" (Artissima, 2019), or link sites within the main fair with locations in the wider urban area, as with 'Oplà. Performing Activities' at Arte Fiera, curated by Silvia Fanti, "a programme of actions that take place at the Fair, on its fringes and in the city" (Arte Fiera,

⁶ Note that in highlighting 40 art fairs, the Art Basel & UBS report provides a significantly more international and detailed overview than shown in other recent literature about art fairs and the art market, which concentrates on a much smaller subsection of these 40 fairs, namely ARCO (Madrid), Art Basel (Basel, Miami Beach and Hong Kong), FIAC (Paris), Frieze (London, New York and Los Angeles) and The Armory (New York): see Adam (2018), Robertson (2018), Thompson (2018), Garutti (2014) and Velthuis & Curioni (2015).

⁷ Although this PhD thesis was written in 2020-2022, 2019 was chosen as a better representative sample of the activities of international art fairs due to the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 onwards causing many art fairs to either cancel, postpone or radically reshape its offering (see the final paragraph of section 3.2 below for further discussion about this).

2019d). None of these exhibitions in 2019, however, sought to analyse their situational context within an art fair; where site-specificity is addressed – for example in ‘Disruptions’ at Art Basel Miami Beach (Art Basel, 2019c) and ‘Parcours’ at Art Basel (2019e) – this was linked with the artwork’s location in a non-art-fair site within the wider city.⁸



Figure 4. Sunday art fair, Ambika P3, London, 2017

As highlighted by Paulette Brien (2016), there is another area of curatorial intervention in art fairs that transcends the discrete sections highlighted above and in Appendix 1, namely when a curatorial approach guides the fair as a whole. Focusing on Independent (New York), Sunday (London), VOLTA (Basel and New

⁸ Curated exhibitions and events that address the context of an art fair have certainly occurred in other years: the ‘Performance’ section of Sp-Arte 2018 in São Paulo, for example, curated by Paula Garcia, referenced the endurance of organisers, gallerists and visitors who participate in art fairs by featuring durational performance works that lasted, uninterrupted, eight hours per day for the entire five days of the fair (Garcia, 2020; SP-Arte 365, 2018b). Examples such as this, however, remain a rare exception.

York) and Sluice (London) as key examples of these 'curated art fairs', Brien suggests three areas of curatorial intervention in these cases: "curators are part of the decision-making systems of who exhibits in the fair, how the fair is spatially designed and how the presentation of the artworks is considered" (Brien, 2016, p. 9). The latter two criteria focus on re-evaluating "the dominant art-fair architecture of individual wall-defined booths within a grid-like layout" (Brien, 2016, p. 9), concentrating on improving the viewing experience by employing a more open layout with fewer dividing walls and less rigid demarcation between gallery presentations (see Figure 4, for example), allowing dialogues to form between artworks situated on different stands.

Notably absent from these curatorial interventions is an overarching curatorial theme. In the rare examples where it is present, such as the early editions of VOLTA New York that began in 2008, these are, again, thematically very broad: VOLTA New York 2008 was titled 'The Eye of the Beholder' and addressed "among other themes, beauty and its opposite" (VOLTA, 2008); the 2009 edition was called 'Age of Anxiety' and was thematically even more wide-ranging, featuring "projects that reflect on many of today's social and global issues including the economy, the environment, gender and race relations, as well as matters intrinsic to art making" (VOLTA, 2009). VOLTA has since discontinued this approach, dropping the use of titles for its art fairs and replacing them with dedicated curated sections, mirroring the policy of the art fairs listed in Appendix 1.

SPRING/BREAK Art Show, held annually in New York and Los Angeles, is an unusual example of an art fair that seeks to incorporate a curatorial approach in both its overarching theme and at the level of the individual booths. Each year, stands are allocated either to an independent curator or a gallery with its own

named curator.⁹ Since 2019's theme, 'Fact and Fiction', was applied to SPRING/BREAK in both New York and Los Angeles (as occurs in every incarnation of SPRING/BREAK), this meant that there were 85 different curatorial interpretations in New York (Artforum, 2019) and a further 45 in Los Angeles (SPRING/BREAK Art Show, 2020) as a result. SPRING/BREAK's approach to themed art fairs raises two questions: firstly, whether 130 individual presentations can still be considered as following one theme; secondly, as with VOLTA in 2008 and 2009, it is difficult to envisage which galleries would or could be excluded from such all-encompassing topics, since SPRING/BREAK 2019 is embracing both fact and its opposite in fiction.

The deliberately broad nature of these curatorial themes appears designed to help these art fairs stand out in a crowded marketplace¹⁰ – as such themes, and any curator associated with them, are the focus of the marketing of the fairs (VOLTA, 2008; 2009) – whilst simultaneously ensuring that their freedom of operation is not compromised in any way. It is also noteworthy that, even within such broad themes, little regard is paid to the specifics of an art fair. A rare exception is POPPOSITIONS art fair in Brussels, which varies its curatorial agenda annually, and its 2015 incarnation was framed around critiquing the art market whilst also celebrating the sociability that art fairs can encourage, highlighting three key aims: 'Let's Invent a New Economy', 'Let's Turn Art Fairs into Artistic Laboratories' and 'Let's Get Together' (POPPOSITIONS, 2015).

It is perhaps even more surprising that the art fair context has been so sparsely analysed by curated exhibitions given that, as Paco Barragán has argued, art fairs

⁹ It is not unusual for a gallery booth within other art fairs to have a named curator for its presentation as well (Yablonsky, 2010), but this is left to the discretion of the gallery and not dictated by the art fair organisers.

¹⁰ The 2020 Art Basel & UBS report calculated that 285 international art fairs took place in 2019 (McAndrew, 2020, p. 189).

have increasingly shown the influence of New Institutionalism¹¹ and its embedding of self-criticality within art institutions. Barragán has termed this development 'New Fairism', whereby curators within art fairs are generating "a new way of understanding and reformulating the function of the fair as an institution and artistic structure" (Barragán, 2008, p. 48), looking to answer the question: "How can we make it so that the art fair will be part market, part meeting point, part laboratory, part pedagogical workshop and part curatorial platform?" (Barragán, 2008, p. 48).¹²

This reticence to address the context of the art fair suggests a continuing wish to keep aesthetic appreciation, and the curatorial practices that support it, separate from the functioning of the art market, since (it is believed) the latter only contaminates a proper understanding of the former. Analysing this mindset, Olav Velthuis has argued that the art world continues to divide itself into two "hostile worlds" (Velthuis, 2007, p. 24), with art on one side and the market on the other, using the term first coined by the economist and sociologist Viviana A. Zelizer in 2005 (Zelizer, 2009, p. 20) to define goods and services that are deemed appropriate for the marketplace and those that are not.

This lack of contextualisation amongst curated exhibitions within art fairs is taking place amidst recent developments that, reflecting the rationale of this PhD thesis, demonstrate that temporal contexts are becoming increasingly important as well

¹¹ Lucie Kolb and Gabriel Flückiger have defined New Institutionalism as a conceptual framework found within art institutions that was "used to encompass a series of curatorial, artistic and educational practices that, in various places around the turn of the Millennium, developed concrete ideas to change art institutions, their mandates and formats: art institutions were to function as sites of research and socially engaged spaces of debate" (Kolb & Flückiger, 2013, p. 5).

¹² Barragán characterises the rise of pedagogy and curatorial statements within art fairs as their 'biennialization', and argues that this blurring of boundaries between art fairs and biennales is equally evident in the intrusion of the art market into largescale curated exhibition, which he terms the 'fairization' of biennales; Barragán contends that one effect is not driving the other, rather that both are the inevitable result of the increasing dominance of neo-liberal capitalism in the global economy (Barragán, 2020).

as locational ones. As Brien highlights, 'curated art fairs' are often characterised as 'satellite fairs' that take place alongside larger fairs such as Art Basel, Frieze and The Armory, occurring at the same time and elsewhere in the same city. This provides them with their context of operation:

Various positioning themselves as a complement, alternative or an opposition, satellite fairs benefit from the increased footfall and press profile that the larger fairs bring. These larger fairs also provide a wider context within which satellite fairs can differentiate and define themselves. Just as non-curated art fairs have proliferated, so too have the satellite fairs which have evolved not only as a response to the larger art fairs, but also as a response to each other. (Brien, 2016, p. 7)

Brien then cites an interview she undertook with Darren Flook (co-founder of Independent with fellow gallerist Elizabeth Dee), in which he argued that the context of an 'art fair week' should give satellite fairs such as Independent greater curatorial flexibility and encourage experimentation, since, by sharing a locale and running time with other art fairs, the core function of satellite fairs as a forum for selling is never in doubt (Brien, 2016, p. 95). Another attraction for the galleries exhibiting in a satellite fair that runs coevally with a larger fair is the wish to promote themselves to the latter's organisers in the hope of securing inclusion in a subsequent edition of the bigger fair. As a result, Kamiar Maleki, director of VOLTA, is happy to characterise each of VOLTA's editions as "a feeder fair to larger fairs" (Maleki, 2021).

The rise of the 'art fair week' has resulted in fairs increasingly marketing their offer as a time-specific 'experience' that is not bound to one location. Art fairs are a prime example of what B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore termed the 'experience economy', in which "experience stagers must constantly refresh their

experiences: change or add elements which keep the offering new, exciting and worth paying money to experience all over again" (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999, p. 95). Barragán argues that art fairs are inescapably (and in fact ontologically) part of the experience economy, since "the art fair as a concept represents par excellence the paradigm of that experience economy: a center where a limited offer of artworks on sale allows ... one to transcend the mere category of "spectator" in order to become a "role-player" through research, bargaining and (though not necessarily) buying a work of art" (Barragán, 2008, p. 29).

The manner in which art fairs have developed in recent years provides further confirmation that art fairs are abiding by Pine II and Gilmore's aforementioned advice to "constantly refresh their experiences" (Pine II & Gilmore, 1999, p. 95). For Barragán, the addition of curated sections is the key example of this: "we shouldn't be surprised that the curator's presence at art fairs is each time more overwhelming, given that it is becoming the differentiating element for making an art fair stand out among the mass of fair proposals" (Barragán, 2008, p. 39); Olav Velthuis highlights the addition of specifically-timed events, noting that in art fairs "contemporary art is packaged as a social and cultural experience, livened up by the artistic performances and round-table discussions of experts, which have now become a standard element of the art fair format" (Velthuis, 2012, p. 32); Brien notes that art fairs now "extend the visitor experience beyond the art fair through their off-site food and drinks offers, through their tie-ins with specific partners such as hotels, restaurants and transport providers, as well as by offering specific and tailored [often off-site] VIP programmes" (Brien, 2016, p. 44). In all of these cases the location is becoming more diffuse, with the timespan of the fair being the main limiting factor.¹³

¹³ This extension of the visitor experience beyond the site of the art fair is another example of how, echoing Barragán's analysis discussed in footnote 12, art fairs have become 'biennialized' (Barragán, 2020), as art fairs now reflect biennales in reaching across multiple locations within the host city, but only for a limited time.

This development of art fairs being framed by time rather than site was dramatically reinforced in 2020-2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced many art fairs to move to online-only events.¹⁴ As a result, access to these events became independent of any physical location but remained limited in time to the same 'art fair week'.

Curatorial interventions within art fairs thus occurs on various levels: at the level of standalone presentations within a dedicated space; across multiple sites within a fair, as seen in 'Disegni' at Artissima (2019); within the fair and across the host city, as with 'Oplà. Performing Activities' at Arte Fiera (2019d); or it can provide a theme for the whole event, as utilised by SPRING/BREAK (2019; 2020). As will be discussed in chapter 5, two of the exhibitions within the portfolio of projects – 'Stranger Collaborations' and 'Quick, Quick, Quick' – highlighted the presence of these different layers via a curatorial approach that sought to open up a dialogue between the curation of the exhibition itself and similar curatorial themes found in other presentations within the wider art fair.

3.3 Artworks Addressing Time and Contemporary Art Fairs

Amongst the plethora of artworks addressing conceptions of time that have been exhibited within contemporary art fairs, an interesting dialectic has arisen with artworks that critique how art fairs encourage attendees to ignore the passage of time and, conversely, works that highlight the ways in which visitors to art fairs might have a heightened awareness of time passing.

¹⁴ The 2022 Art Basel & UBS report about the art market reveals that, from a sample size of 391 art fairs that were due to take place in 2020, 75 moved to being solely online, while 192 were cancelled and only 124 continued as a physical event (McAndrew, 2022, p. 94).

The first strategy adopted by art fairs to create a sense of timelessness unconnected with the outside world derives from their most common method of display. As discussed in section 3.2 above, contemporary art fairs are usually divided into individual stands that conform to the archetypal white cube exhibition space, which Brian O'Doherty (1986) famously argued creates environments that are divorced from any specific time¹⁵ and place.¹⁶ However, art fairs might be considered to push the dislocation from place even further than art galleries, given that a week before or a week after the event the site will host a markedly different corporate or social gathering, and thus look and function very differently.

An example of a fair-based artwork that sits in opposition to this strategy and overtly attempts to reconnect visitors with events taking place concurrently in the outside world is *Erratic Weather* (2019) by Maotik, which was presented in the 'Plugin' exhibition of new media work at Contemporary Istanbul in 2019 (Maotik, 2019; Contemporary Istanbul, 2019a). *Erratic Weather* was a multimedia presentation in which meteorological information (such as temperature and humidity) was accessed from an online database and processed in real time, generating visuals and sounds that enveloped the viewer in immersive representations of current atmospheric conditions.

The second strategy adopted by art fairs in order to promote a sense of stepping out of time reflect the methods utilised by many different types of retail sites that

¹⁵ O'Doherty writes: "Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial – the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics. Works of art are mounted, hung, scattered for study. Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes. Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of "period" (late modern), there is no time. This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status" (O'Doherty, 1986, p. 15).

¹⁶ O'Doherty: "The white cube is usually seen as an emblem of the estrangement of the artist from a society to which the gallery also provides access. It is a ghetto space, a survival compound, a proto-museum with a direct line to the timeless, a set of conditions, an attitude, a place deprived of location" (O'Doherty, 1986, p. 80).

aim to keep customers consuming, as analysed by Richard Seymour (2019). Referencing locations such as casinos, pubs and even opium dens, Seymour notes that these generally eschew anything that conveys a sense of time passing: windows are blocked out, there are no clocks and, rather than meals and drinks timed around lunch or dinner, there is a constant supply of refreshments (Seymour, 2020, p. 64), all of which are symptomatic of art fairs as well.¹⁷

This link between confusing a person's notion of the current time and boosting sales appears to be critiqued and parodied in Laure Prouvost's *How to Make Money Religiously* (2014) when it was exhibited at the 2019 LOOP art fair in Barcelona by carlier | gebauer gallery from Berlin (LOOP, 2019b). The work is built from a montage of rapidly changing visuals, sounds, texts and spoken dialogue that reference email scams, thus raising the idea that art fairs might be characterised by similarly unscrupulous selling practices. Throughout the video, it is difficult for the viewers to be sure which historical time is being referenced and how much of the work they have seen: this is not only due to the narration being disjointed and the video playing in a loop, but also because different years periodically flash on the screen in a non-sequential order and the loop contains two marginally different versions of *How to Make Money Religiously* shown consecutively. The latter aspect of Prouvost's video seems to encapsulate the experience of many when attempting to navigate the multitude of stands and artworks contained in art fairs, since this continually prompts the visitor to question: "Have I seen this before?"

Running counter to the attempts of art fairs to encourage attendees to forget the passage of time are their duration and size. Art fairs traditionally take place over a short period of time – on average 5 days (McAndrew, 2020, p. 208) – but with the

¹⁷ Many supermarkets utilise similar strategies that combine the lack of clocks and windows with the provision of instore dining (Rupp, 2015).

number of gallery stands often entering the hundreds and the list of exhibited artists running into the many thousands,¹⁸ visitors cannot hope to engage with all that is on offer, but nonetheless are prone to 'fair fatigue'¹⁹ through trying to see too much.

Considerations of time are thus heightened in art fairs, since they simultaneously promote the feeling that time is short, but also that the amount of time spent has been too long. Art fairs such as *viennacontemporary* have attempted to counteract the sense of visual overload by introducing limits on the number of works shown on each stand (*viennacontemporary*, 2018), but this approach remains rare; as Amanda Coulson (former Director of VOLTA art fairs) has highlighted, attempts to restrict the number of exhibited artworks are often challenged by the exhibiting galleries who see it as lessening the chances of sales (Brien, 2016, p. 82), while, from the organiser's viewpoint, art fairs need to retain a certain critical mass of exhibiting galleries in order to remain viable (Brien, 2016, pp. 82-83).

The notion that every minute must be made to count when visiting art fairs was foregrounded and critiqued by Kris Martin's *Mandi XVI* (2007), part of Frieze Projects at Frieze art fair in 2007. For this work, a minute's silence was announced over the PA system during one of the busiest times of buying – 4pm on the preview day – with all those present being encouraged to temporarily still the wheels of commerce and "refrain from activity in respect of the moment" (Wilkes, 2007). This idea of playfully diverting visitors from purchasing was extended in Flavio Favelli's *Hic et Nunc* (2019), which was placed in the entrance to Arte Fiera

¹⁸ Art Basel 2019, for example, contained 290 gallery stands (McAndrew, 2020, p. 11) housing work by over 4,000 artists (Artlyst, 2019).

¹⁹ The term 'fair fatigue' has been applied to both the experience of attempting to see all the artwork at an art fair and the exhaustion of trying to visit too many fairs, as was explored in an early explanation of the term by Marc Spiegler (2006).

in Bologna in 2019. Arranged as an amalgam of a gallery and a waiting room, Favelli's installation comprised an eclectic range of sculptural objects and ample seating that deliberately tried to distract attendees from the rest of the art fair before their visit had even begun (Arte Fiera, 2019c).

The feeling that the sheer size of art fairs makes them appear to be an exercise in endurance (and perhaps endurance with little reward) was poetically addressed by Bettina Fung's *I am tired with you* (2019) at Art Central, Hong Kong in 2019. For her performance, the artist placed a largescale printing plate on the floor, covered it with heavy-duty pigment, and then layered a piece of paper on top. Fung then invited members of the audience to play the role of a printing press and join her on the paper (sometimes writing on its surface, or alternatively standing still or even lying down), whilst reflecting on how an artwork (in this case a monoprint) can be created by a group of people doing nothing. In pointed contrast to the frenetic pace that characterises the rest of the art fair, Fung's performance emphasises how inaction and a lack of effort can result in an artistic and sociable outcome (Art Central, 2021a; Fung, 2021).

What is apparent in regard to the works discussed in this section is that they raise issues that are specific to their location within an art fair, showing the influence of place on artworks that explore temporal issues. Prouvost's *How to Make Money Religiously* can clearly be read as a critique of art fairs when shown at LOOP, but would have conjured very different associations when it was exhibited as part of her solo show at New Museum, New York in 2014 (New Museum, 2014; 2020). Likewise, Kris Martin's *Mandi XVI* appeared as an explicitly anti-consumerist statement when it temporarily halted the preview day of Frieze art fair, but much less so when the same work was shown in an exhibition exploring rituals at Aspen Art Museum, Colorado in 2018 (Aspen Art Museum, 2018). This conclusion inspired the staging of the five curated exhibitions in the portfolio of projects –

each of which examined conceptualisations of time – within the context of a contemporary art fair.

Kris Martin's *Mandi XVI* made a specific comment based on the timing of when it was staged – during the preview day – and the exhibitions within the portfolio of projects included artworks that responded to the different temporal dynamics that occur during London Art Fair, which has a significantly higher number of visitors during the evenings of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (when private and/or special events occur – see Figure 5) and also at weekends relative to other times it is open.



Figure 5. 'Playtime' exhibition during London Art Fair Preview Evening, Tuesday 21 January 2020, showing visitors engaging with interactive beanbags by Studio Hyte

Time Is Speeding Up (2017) by Ruth Catlow and Gareth Foote, which was exhibited in 'Stranger Collaborations' in 2017, captured these different visitor flows throughout the run of London Art Fair via a webcam that took an image of the exhibition space every two minutes during opening hours. The participatory workshops that were staged as part of 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' in 2016 occurred on Thursday evening and on the weekend, not only to increase the number of participants, but also to maximise the viewers of these events. This was to reinforce that the issues raised by these workshops (and other forms of interactive artwork) not only spur discussions amongst participants, but also amongst those who witness these events (as seen in Figures 5 and 6).



Figure 6. Alison Ballard, *Play Art Data Money Game Jam*, participatory workshop, London Art Fair, Saturday 23 January 2016

The artworks discussed within this section have highlighted the different individuals and organisations that might act as intervenors within art fairs: section 3.2 above highlighted the differing layers of curator-led intervention, while Bettina Fung's *I am tired with you* at Art Central, Hong Kong is an instance of a commissioned work that is therefore a joint intervention by an artist and the commissioning art fair; Prouvost's *How to Make Money Religiously* is an example of a gallery-led intervention, since carlier | gebauer selected an artwork that was created and exhibited before LOOP and re-presented it within an art fair context. The different actors that could be intervenors within art fairs inspired the incorporation of artworks in the portfolio of projects that sought to give an active role to visitors, in particular in relation to affecting the economics of art fairs, as seen in the site-specific installation by Studio Hyte in the exhibition 'Playtime', and by Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan's video game titled *Play Art Data Money* in the exhibition of the same name (both of which will be discussed in detail in chapter 5).

3.4 Curated Exhibitions Examining Art and Time

After researching recent curated exhibitions of art that address conceptions of time, it is apparent that the default position appears to be to treat the exhibition site as a neutral setting that doesn't impact upon the curatorial themes and thus does not require analysis within the exhibition literature. This can be seen in 'Tomorrow' at Art Sonje Center and Kumho Museum of Art, Seoul in 2007 (Kim, et al., 2007; Art Sonje Center, 2007); 'Marking Time' at Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney in 2012 (Kent, 2012; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, 2012); '0 to 60: The Experience of Time through Contemporary Art' at North Carolina Museum of Art and Penland School of Crafts in 2013 (Wheeler, et al., 2013); 'Time, Forward!' at V-A-C Zattere, Venice in 2019 (Kholeif & Sarkisov, 2019);

V–A–C, 2019); and '24/7: A Wake-up Call for Our Non-stop World' at Somerset House, London in 2019-2020 (Cook, 2019; Somerset House, 2019).²⁰

In the rare instances where an exhibition examining art and time does address its setting within a gallery or museum, this can be quite brief, as in the case of 'Floating Hours: Moon is the Oldest Clock' at Deoksugung Art Museum in Seoul in 2010, which only passingly mentions that the museum is a place of calm in contrast to the frenetic pace of contemporary life in the surrounding city. The show's press release states that "this special exhibition has been found on the belief of recovering the delicate sense of time vastly forgotten in contemporary society where speed is virtue ... There is no better place than Deoksugung Art Museum for an exhibition of this theme. An unlikely cove of peace in the heart of a bustling city, the old palace garden embodies the elapse of time" (National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea, 2010).

All of the aforementioned exhibitions took place within gallery spaces regularly devoted to curated art shows and, in the handful of cases where the impact of the setting is discussed at length within the accompanying literature, this is almost always because the exhibition has taken place in non-gallery spaces. 'Artempo' in 2007, for example, was housed within the stately, but aging rooms of Palazzo Fortuny in Venice, which created an interesting dialogue between the artworks and the evocative surroundings that served as their backdrop. Writing in the catalogue, exhibition organiser Axel Vervoordt muses that: "The walls of the second floor are like a modern-day fresco whose making was only possible through 300 years of existence. It has a singular beauty. It is hard to be as

²⁰ The argument here is not that these exhibitions are unsensitive to their surroundings – certainly, all are curated in a manner that responds thoughtfully to the architecture of the gallery spaces – the point is that these exhibitions do not address how an analysis of time might be impacted by the exhibition being housed within an art gallery, which, as discussed in section 3.3, is a location that is far from neutral.

authentic as these walls, but artists like [Mimmo] Rotella and [Saburo] Murakami, with their 'peeling pictures', try to achieve the sensation experienced before these timeworn materials" (Carriari, et al., 2007, p. 29).²¹

'Tempus Fugit: Time Flies', an exhibition at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City in 2000, spanned three different settings within the museum, and it is instructive to note the divergent manner that the artworks were discussed in the exhibition literature depending on where they were situated. The three sections of the show were: a presentation of 20th century art, a selection of work already in the museum collection from previous centuries, and a conservator's studio. In the latter section, visitors could "peer into the conservator's lab to see how works of art can change over time, during the artist's creative process and through the effects of natural aging" (The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, 2000). For the selection of artefacts from the museum's collection, 12 works were chosen but left in place rather than being moved to a dedicated exhibition space. As curator Jan Schall explained: "the linear temporal paradigm governing the chronological arrangement of the Nelson-Atkins' permanent collection is interrupted and offset by focusing on twelve *in situ* works of art that address diverse concepts of time. Each juncture is marked by a working clock that tells what time it is, literally, in the world locations referenced by each object" (Schall, 2000, p. 15).

Both of these sections of 'Tempus Fugit' were therefore conceptualised as countering the idea that artworks are frozen in time, either by showing them in an unfamiliar setting (the conservator's studio) or by bringing the passing of time (as shown by a clock) into their current location. However, this was in marked contrast with the section of 'Tempus Fugit' that focused on 20th century artworks. As with the exhibitions highlighted at the start of section 3.4 above, these works

²¹ Note that works by Saburo Murakami, but not by Mimmo Rotella, were included in the exhibition.

were displayed within a dedicated gallery space and the setting was ignored in the exhibition literature, which treated the site as if it produced no temporal interaction with the artworks worth considering.²²

There was one other non-gallery location for 'Tempus Fugit' in which the temporal expectations of that site were challenged – the exhibition catalogue. In the introductory chapter, Schall explains how she sought to match the exhibition's questioning of a linear, forward-travelling conception of time with a temporally experimental catalogue, in which the usual flow of essays are broken up by "lists, definitions, quotations, adages, and jokes [that] lend dynamics to the overall composition of the catalogue, while empty pages serve as rests" (Schall, 2000, p. 17).

Although this isn't addressed in the exhibition literature for 'Tempus Fugit', the dispersion of the exhibition across multiple settings in the museum extended and highlighted the investment of time required to engage with an art exhibition, while the insertion of a timepiece next to several of the exhibits meant that visitors were reminded of (and could even measure) the time required to engage with individual artworks as well.

An extended analysis of the temporal nature of engaging with art, and traversing an exhibition as a whole, was provided by the catalogue for 'Time Zones: Recent Film and Video', which took place at Tate Modern, London in 2004. Focusing on presentations of video art, curator Jessica Morgan explores how this artform foregrounds temporal considerations relative to other media in her essay 'Time After Time': "While our traditional museum experience provides autonomy over

²² The exhibition catalogue (Schall, 2000) addresses temporal considerations extensively – it includes 12 essays by different authors examining differing aspects of art and time in the 20th century – but only in relation to the artworks themselves, and not the impact of how and where they might be viewed.

the time of viewing – we come and go as we choose, the painting or sculpture remains the same – the video projection denies us this authority. We are victims of its timing” (Morgan, 2004, p. 22). Morgan then uses the example of *Untitled* (2001) by Jeroen de Rijke and Willem de Rooij, which was exhibited in ‘Time Zones’, to analyse how time-based media can challenge the atemporal feel of ‘white cube’ galleries (as discussed in section 3.3 above) and highlight the temporal investiture required to engage with artworks: “De Rijke and de Rooij give almost equal importance to the times of projection and non-projection in their work: the latter frequently lasts longer ... [which reflects] the artists’ insistence on pause, reflection, and a heightened awareness of the cognitive labour required for perception” (Morgan, 2004, pp. 23-24).

Elsewhere in the exhibition catalogue for ‘Time Zones’, Peter Osborne analyses how all video presentations – even looped ones – within art galleries emphasise the temporal nature of engaging with this medium due to their staging differing markedly from cinemas: in the latter, viewers are expected to remain in one seat and immerse themselves in the viewing experience for the duration of the film; in art galleries, visitors are usually free to exit and leave at any time and have a choice of standing and seating locations, all of which provides a continuing break from the passive immersion found in cinemas. Osborne writes: “The marked spatiality of the modes of display of film and video in art spaces, on the other hand, and crucially, the movement of the viewer through gallery space, undercuts the false absolutisation of time to which cinema is prone” (Osborne, 2004, p. 72).

‘Shaped by Time’ at Copenhagen’s National Museum of Denmark in 2012 highlighted two further ways that artworks involve a temporal engagement: firstly, they embody the knowledge accrued over time by the individual artist and, secondly, they encapsulate the wider cultural knowledge (that the artist may tap into or react against) built over many millennia. The exhibition featured works by

contemporary artists inserted amongst the museum's permanent collection of artefacts dating from 13,000 BCE to the start of the 21st century and, as curator Milena Hoegsberg explains in the accompanying catalogue, this linking of the present with the dawn of human history shows the full span of "processual time, the time it takes to research and produce works and knowledge" (Hoegsberg, 2012, p. 18).

3.5 Conclusions from the Contextual Review

While chapter 2 demonstrated that the overlap between the practice of art curation, the site of contemporary art fairs, and artworks that address concepts of time has been underanalysed, this third chapter provides additional evidence for this contention by examining the field as a set of interdependent factors. Section 3.4 explored how contextual issues are rarely addressed within time-focused art shows in dedicated exhibition spaces – such as those found in museums, galleries and art fairs – despite the fact that, as shown when discussing temporal artworks in section 3.3, the setting (in this case an art fair) can have a significant impact on the way that these artworks are read and understood; in addition, as shown in section 3.2, art fairs are a particularly fertile site to examine temporal considerations.

The methods by which the interaction of art curation, conceptualisations of time and the specific site of London Art Fair is explored and critiqued by each exhibition within the portfolio of projects for this PhD is examined in detail in chapter 5, whilst the overall methodologies that guided the selection of these methods is the focus of the next chapter.

4. METHODOLOGIES

4.1. A Transversal Methodology

As highlighted in the previous chapter, if the specific site of London Art Fair is to be critiqued by the portfolio of projects, a methodology was required that would enable a critical stance to be maintained even though the exhibitions would not be possible without London Art Fair's support and funding. Addressing the issue of how critique from within is possible, Gerald Raunig has recommended a "transversal" approach (Raunig, 2009) by which different areas of intellectual enquiry are brought together to ensure that boundaries of thought are still being crossed.

This insight inspired a transversal methodology being utilised for the portfolio of projects, bringing together three additional, diverse methodologies that are nonetheless unified by a concern for enabling criticality to be maintained from within established institutions and ways of thinking: firstly, a rhizomatic approach, which emphasises the interconnected nature of the exhibitions within the portfolio; secondly, a methodology derived from phenomenology that promotes a questioning of received definitions relating to location and time; and, lastly, an analytical framework derived from institutional critique to critically engage with the institution of the art fair.

Within the individual exhibitions in the portfolio of projects, a transversal approach that incorporates inspiration from beyond the art world can be seen in the inclusion of a literature-focused study centre in 'Afrofuturisms Past', the commissioning of design agency Studio Hyte to create interactive seating for the exhibition 'Playtime', and the inclusion of GIFs as a significant example of short-duration artworks in 'Quick, Quick, Quick'. In the latter case, the wish to fully

embrace a transversal approach drove the ongoing conversations with the participating artists about how the GIF artworks would be displayed in relation to the films and videos: the initial conception was to show different media on different screens, but, if a parity between all the exhibited media was to be established, it was decided that all artworks should be presented equally on one showreel.

4.2 Curation as Rhizomatic, Practice-based Research

The rhizomatic approach mentioned above was a hybrid of Lizzie Muller's curatorial methodology (Muller, 2011) and the rhizomatic research methodology conceptualised by the group of artist-educators led by Rita L. Irwin (Irwin, et al., 2006).

Lizzie Muller's methodology builds on Stephen Scrivener's analysis of creative practices, in particular Scrivener's contention that research is habitually integrated into creative practices through periods of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (Scrivener, 2002).²³ Reflection-in-action occurs within the flow of practice (for example during the creation of an artwork) and can change the course of that flow; the natural pauses that regularly occur in practice (for example on completion of a project) provide opportunities for reflection-on-action, enabling a practitioner to learn from what has happened in order to inform future decisions and directions. This creates an iterative structure in which reflection-on-

²³ Scrivener's analysis builds on Donald Schön's theory of 'the reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983; 1987), which examined how research enquiry can occur within professional practices. Schön argued that the generation of knowledge involves a dynamic 'transactional' relationship (Schön, 1983, p. 150) between the practitioner and the situation, in which the practitioner is not creating artificial scenarios to test a hypothesis *in vitro*, but also not merely seeking unquestioning confirmation of existing opinions: "The practice situation is neither clay to be molded at will nor an independent, self-sufficient object of study from which the inquirer keeps his distance" (Schön, 1983, p. 150). Schön's book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (1983) also provided Scrivener with the term 'reflection-in-action'.

action can produce new knowledge (for the practitioner, but also knowledge that is potentially communicable to others), which is then further developed in the next period of activity.

Muller argues, with reference to her own curatorial projects, that Scrivener's conceptualisation can, in turn, be readily applied to curation (Muller, 2011). This insight inspired the curatorial methods utilised for each exhibition within the portfolio of projects: for example, integral to the exhibitions 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' and 'Stranger Collaborations' were artworks that were generated during (rather than before) London Art Fair via participatory workshops and interactive performances, which highlighted 'reflection-in-action' and how new understandings can be found within an unfolding creative process.²⁴ An analysis of how visitors navigate around the various different presentations within London Art Fair, based on knowledge gained from previous iterations of the Fair, drove the curatorial decision to site two exhibitions within the portfolio of projects – 'Stranger Collaborations' from 2017 and 'Quick, Quick, Quick' from 2018 – on the path to other presentations by private galleries that explored similar themes; these two exhibitions therefore benefitted from examples of 'reflection-on-action'.²⁵

Dividing creative practice into alternating stages of 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action' can, however, suggest a straightforward linearity in the progression of enquiry, in which the questions posed before each project are (to

²⁴ The emergence of new insights during a research project has alternatively been characterised by Rebecca Lyle Skains as serendipitous, but within a specific definition of serendipity that she emphasises is a cognitive process that goes beyond mere luck (Skains, 2018, p. 90). When new insights occur in a research project, the practitioner must first recognise the significance of these unforeseen developments and then analyse how they can positively impact upon the initial research questions. Skains places serendipity at the centre of a practitioner's research methodology because frequently these "serendipitous connections begin to emerge as answers to specific aspects of the research question" (Skains, 2018, p. 95).

²⁵ These visitor routes are explained in more detail in sections 5.2 and 5.3 about 'Stranger Collaborations' and 'Quick, Quick, Quick' in Chapter 5.

some degree) answered by the project, which then generates new questions for the next project.²⁶ With this in mind, the methods used within the portfolio of projects also reflected the view propounded by Rita L. Irwin, Ruth Beer, Stephanie Springgay, Kit Grauer and Gu Xiong, who conceptualise the research process as more fluid and the possible interconnections more varied. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987), they turn to the rhizome as an apt metaphor, as rhizomes “create interconnected networks with multiple entry points” (Irwin, et al., 2006, p. 71), which is closer to the reality of practice-based research being “an embodied living inquiry, an interstitial relational space for creating, teaching, learning, and researching in a constant state of becoming” (Irwin, et al., 2006, p. 71).

Since the portfolio of projects, as analysed in this PhD thesis, was conceived as a single body of enquiry spanning a series of five exhibitions, the linkages between the curatorial methods adopted and the individual artworks selected were always conceptualised as being rhizomatic. As will be discussed in detail in chapter 5, and summarised in the conclusion in chapter 6, the artworks exhibited as part of the portfolio of projects all sought to address the second research question – what temporal issues can be raised by artworks within art fairs? – from different angles, and the curatorial methods employed for each exhibition similarly aimed to provide a multifaceted answer to the first research question – how do curated exhibitions within art fairs differ from those located in other settings? This conceptualisation enabled linkages to be formed between artworks and curatorial approaches that crisscross the five different exhibitions in the portfolio and draw together the portfolio as a whole.

²⁶ Hazel Smith and Roger T. Dean also recognised this as overly simplistic when they emphasised that the research process in the creative arts that they characterised as combining ‘practice-led research’ and ‘research-led practice’ (Smith & Dean, 2009), which might sound straightforwardly iterative and linear, is better visualised as generating ‘web-like’ interactions (Smith & Dean, 2009, p. 21).

4.3. A Phenomenological Methodology

Whilst a rhizomatic curatorial methodology was key to guiding the theme of the exhibitions within the portfolio of projects, another methodology supported the curatorial layout within each exhibition, as well as further informing the approach to selecting the exhibited artworks.

As shown in the research questions detailed in chapter 2, a methodology was required that would support a viewer in reconsidering conceptualisations of time via an interaction with artworks within a curated exhibition. For this, a phenomenological approach was chosen as a framework for supporting the key elements that this would involve: reflecting upon the experience of engaging with artworks, reflecting upon how different artworks might thematically interact, discussing the issues raised by the artworks with others, and providing a forum for reanalysing existing beliefs.

The phenomenological methodology chosen for the portfolio of projects built on the theories of Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi (2012), reconceptualising their approach to encompass exhibition curation. Gallagher and Zahavi characterise a phenomenological methodology as involving four steps:

- (1) The *epoché*
- (2) The *phenomenological reduction*
- (3) The *eidetic variation*
- (4) *Intersubjective corroboration* (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012, p. 31)

The first step in this process involves an individual suspending one or more beliefs that they currently have about the world (for example, and for the purposes of this PhD, their conception of time). This 'bracketing' of beliefs in the

hope of looking anew is labelled *epoché* by Gallagher and Zahavi, following Edmund Husserl's use of this term in his *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy*, first published in 1913 (Husserl, 2014). This *epoché* is undertaken with the full knowledge that a person's beliefs about the world can never be fully 'bracketed', since the world would be wholly unintelligible without recourse to any preformed frames of reference. As the authors explain: "phenomenologists argue that a view from nowhere is unattainable ... This is so, not because such views are incredibly hard to reach, but because the very idea of such views is nonsensical" (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012, p. 27). As a result, the aim of the *epoché* is to willingly embrace potential subjectivities as a valuable (and unavoidable) part of the reflective process: "phenomenology ... although it requires a suspension of our natural, everyday attitude, it also takes that attitude, that *being-in-the-world*, as part of the subject matter to be investigated" (Gallagher & Zahavi, 2012, p. 28).

The next step, termed the *phenomenological reduction*, again following Husserl (2014), involves analysing how specific objects or situations appear to our experience after 'bracketing' out preconceptions. The goal is to perceive the essential character of these experiences or, in Husserl's maxim, to return "to the things themselves" (Husserl, 2001, p. 4). Once more, this is done with a recognition that complete objectivity is impossible, but this does not mean that insights cannot be gained, particularly when, as with the *epoché*, an analysis of subjective attitudes can and should be incorporated into the reflective process. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty summarised in *Phenomenology of Perception*: "The most important lesson which the reduction teaches us is the impossibility of a complete reduction. ... But it is clear that the essence [i.e. a wholly objective essence of an object or situation] is here not the end, but a means, that our effective

involvement in the world is precisely what has to be understood and made amenable to conceptualization” (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. xv-xvi).²⁷

Step 3 is labelled *eidetic variation* by Gallagher and Zahavi, which involves attempting to analyse what is essential to any category of objects or experiences by imagining what can be modified, added or removed without changing their taxonomy (for example, on examining a tree, how can its size, colour, structure or constituent matter be imaginatively varied while it still remains recognisably a tree). The final step - *intersubjective corroboration* – aims to make explicit that the quest for invariant, essential characteristics is not tied to the peculiarities of a person’s own experience, but that these are only confirmed or dismissed after comparison with the accounts of others.²⁸

This four-stage phenomenological approach was then mapped onto a curatorial methodology for the portfolio of projects. The first two steps in Gallagher and Zahavi’s methodology provide a framework for considering how a collection of artworks might be selected to effectively prompt a re-examination of an existing conception of time, focusing on whether they generate experiences that encourage a suspension of previously held beliefs while also presenting one or more alternative conceptualisations. In the portfolio of projects, this was utilised in, for example, the curation of contrasting linear and nonlinear experiences of time in the exhibitions ‘Quick, Quick, Quick’ and ‘Afrofuturisms Past’, as well as presenting artworks that explore the differences in temporal flows within the

²⁷ The argument of phenomenologists that a method can contain contradictions but still generate useful insights seems to have been ignored by Derrida when he argued in *The Problem of Genesis in Husserl’s Philosophy* (Derrida, 2003) and *Speech and Phenomena* (Derrida, 1973) that Husserl’s theory of phenomenological reduction is undermined by an unacknowledged ‘contamination’ of subjectivity in the search for essential characteristics.

²⁸ Gallagher and Zahavi’s terms *eidetic variation* and *intersubjective corroboration* are not direct quotes from Husserl’s *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy* from 1913 (Husserl, 2014), but are meant to summarise two of the key approaches found in this book, since it discusses eidetic methods and the role of intersubjectivity in confirming hypotheses in several sections.

virtual and physical worlds in the exhibition 'Playtime'. A phenomenological approach that highlights alternative conceptualisations similarly drove the decision to add a wall of diagrams that evoke corporate brainstorming events into the exhibition 'Playtime' (as will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5), which was prompted by a desire for the exhibition space to further reflect the unifying theme of the exhibited artworks, namely whether locations can readily be separated into a place of work or a place of leisure.

The next two steps of the phenomenological methodology provide further support for the role of curation in enabling a re-examination of existing attitudes, since curatorial practice involves bringing together artworks that address a theme for the exhibition visitor to analyse and compare with adjacent works (facilitating *eidetic variation*), and then discuss their findings with others (generating *intersubjective corroboration*). Whilst a reflective attitude involving eidetic variation can be encouraged by any well-chosen presentation of different artworks that follow a curatorial theme, Gallagher and Zahavi's methodology emphasises the importance of balancing unvarying and varying elements, which inspired the variety of media seen in the fixed-duration artworks (almost all one minute long) brought together for 'Quick, Quick, Quick'. The central role played by intersubjective corroboration informed the incorporation of interactive artworks, and the sociality they encourage, within the portfolio of projects, as seen in the utilisation of collaborative 'game jams' in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY', the interactive beanbag seating in 'Playtime', and the performative artwork *Time Is Speeding Up* in 'Stranger Collaborations'.

In total, the wish to support an attitude of continual questioning, an avoidance of fixed definitions and the importance of engaging with the views of others²⁹ unifies the four steps of the phenomenological methodology adopted.

4.4. Institutional Critique from Within

In order to address the first research question (as detailed in chapter 2) of how curated exhibitions might be impacted by, and also critically engage with, their location within a contemporary art fair, the portfolio of projects was guided by a philosophy of institutional critique, in particular institutional critique from within, as conceptualised by Andrea Fraser (2005) and Dorothee Richter (2012), and further informed by Chantal Mouffe's advocacy of 'agonistic spaces' (Mouffe, 2007).

Critically investigating how setting impacts upon works of art has been a mainstay of the field of institutional critique throughout its history,³⁰ but the first question that should be addressed is the degree to which any critique provided via a curated art exhibition might be compromised by the fact the curator (as was the case for the portfolio of projects in this PhD) has been selected and approved by the institution within which the exhibition takes place. Addressing such concerns, Andrea Fraser has argued that institutional critique has too often retained a chimerical dream of criticising art institutions from a position of untainted purity on the outside. A more honest approach, Fraser advises, is to recognise that anyone involved in institutional critique is already and inescapably

²⁹ Although, as footnote 27 illustrates, Derrida was often critical of a phenomenological approach, he vigorously defended it in 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas' (Derrida, 1978) against Levinas's charge that it was not concerned with an engagement with alterity, praising Husserl's writings as "a body of thought careful to respect exteriority" (Derrida, 1978, p. 121).

³⁰ See Hito Steyerl's 'The Institution of Critique' (Steyerl, 2006) and Maria Lind's 'Contemporary Art and its Institutional Dilemmas' (Lind, 2011) for perceptive overviews of the various phases of institutional critique.

institutionalised within the wider institution of art, as the latter is (and always has been) much more than solely the physical locations where artworks are exhibited:

The institution of art is not only “institutionalized” in organizations like museums and objectified in art objects. It is also internalized and embodied in people. It is internalized in the competencies, conceptual models, and modes of perception that allow us to produce, write about, and understand art, or simply to recognize art as art, whether as artists, critics, curators, art historians, dealers, collectors, or museum visitors. [...] So if there is no outside for us, it is not because the institution is perfectly closed [...] or has grown all-encompassing in size and scope. It is because the institution is inside of us, and we can't get outside of ourselves. (Fraser, 2005, pp. 281-282)

Dorothee Richter has summarised this conundrum by referencing Derrida's famous dictum: “*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*” (Richter, 2012, p. 4; Derrida, 1997, p. 158). Richter argues, with particular reference to her own curatorial practice, that any critique of the artworld must accept that it is part of the same discourse as the object of criticism, but emphasises that “nevertheless, it does seem important to me to take a particular position within the discourse” (Richter, 2012, p. 4).

This contention that institutional critique remains possible (even though there is no ‘outside’) echoes the first stage of the phenomenological methodology as detailed in section 4.3 above, since recognising that one's own position cannot be wholly objective does not preclude the ability to engage critically.³¹ Whilst arguing, like Fraser, that it is (and always has been) incorrect to characterise artists as avant-garde outsiders separate from the wider society, Chantal Mouffe

³¹ This contention also echoes the discussion in chapter 3 that examines how artists can be commissioned by art fairs and yet still take a critical position in relation to these events.

believes that public artworks and art exhibitions can still be 'agonistic spaces' (Mouffe, 2007) that challenge existing orthodoxies. These spaces never expect or seek the emergence of consensus, which separates them from the idealised conceptions of the public realm articulated by Hannah Arendt and Jürgen Habermas (in Mouffe's reading of their writings); instead, these locations keep open an active debate between a range of conflicting viewpoints (Mouffe, 2007).

The wish to create 'agonistic spaces' within London Art Fair drove a strategy of curatorial interventions that suggested alternatives to the economic and temporal imperatives that guide art fairs, in particular the ever-present need for organisers to encourage the rapid circulation of visitors in the hope of maximising the number of artworks seen and thus expected sales. Within the portfolio of projects, the exhibition curation often sought to slow the movement of visitors through the space by, for example, the creation of a study centre area in 'Afrofuturisms Past', screening an approximately one-hour long showreel in 'Quick, Quick, Quick', and the incorporation of interactive artworks that in some sense 'rewarded' extended viewing in 'Playtime'.

The artworks and workshops that comprised 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' were also designed to offer a forum within London Art Fair to create and discuss alternative visions for the future of the art market that contrasted with the latter's constitution elsewhere in the Fair. The timing of the workshops resulted from a consideration of how the agonistic nature of participatory workshops might be augmented by encompassing the broadest possible range of viewpoints, with the resulting decision that they should occur on weekends as well as weekday evenings, as weekend attendees have a greater age range (often due to the prevalence of family groups) and a higher percentage of visitors who have not been directly invited by an exhibiting gallery.

The 'Methods' sections in the following chapter include a greater discussion of the specific methods that drew upon the methodologies discussed in this chapter for each exhibition in the portfolio of projects, starting with 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' at London Art Fair in 2016.

5.1 PROJECT ONE: 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' at London Art Fair, 19-24 January 2016



Figure 7. Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan, *Play Art Data Money*, 2016, online platform game, laptop, gamepads and projector, London Art Fair 2016

5.1.1 Overview

As discussed in chapter 3, within curated exhibitions addressing notions of time there has been a paucity of analysis about how these might be affected by their location. This inspired the curation of a series of five exhibitions at London Art Fair between 2016 and 2020 that examined issues of temporality with a particular focus on how these questions might be reframed or problematised by being posed within a contemporary art fair. 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' was the first exhibition in this series and focused on questioning a number of the axioms on which artworks are presented within art fairs, in particular that they have been

completed and are ready for purchase. As an alternative, 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' featured artworks by Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan that were constantly evolving, alongside sculptures by Rhea Myers that could be manufactured on demand at any time and in several different permutations. These time-based issues formed the basis of a curatorial intent to explore alternatives to the traditional economics of an art fair, which also encompassed offering the exhibited artworks for purchase at more than one price point or for no cost at all.

5.1.2 Context

'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' was co-curated by the author and arts organisation Furtherfield; it formed part of a series of exhibitions and events in 2015-2016 organised by Furtherfield titled 'Art Data Money' (Furtherfield, 2015) that critiqued existing financial structures within the art market and beyond, exploring alternative digital currencies as well as the challenges and opportunities provided by the field of big data.

'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' also formed a dialogue with other coeval art exhibitions and events examining the potential futures of the art market and the wider economic structures that impact upon it. The issues addressed generally fell into two categories: the ongoing 'MoneyLab' series initiated by Institute of Network Cultures, Amsterdam in 2014 (Lovink, et al., 2015; Gloerich, et al., 2018; Institute of Network Cultures, 2020) and 'Money No Object' at Victoria & Albert Museum and The White Building, London in 2014-2015 (Hinder, 2019) examine alternative currencies and systems of exchange, such as cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs); the continuing 'Economia' series that began at Natlab, Eindhoven in 2017 (Baltan Laboratories, 2017; Mink & Oosterhuis, 2018) has a wider focus on

imagining and exploring alternatives to capitalism itself, often from an environmental standpoint.

The years spanned by these exhibitions were marked by a number of influential texts that cited ideas suggested by artworks and artistic projects whilst also exploring alternatives to existing economic structures, such as Max Haiven's *Art after Money, Money after Art: Creative Strategies Against Financialization* (2018), *Disrupting Business: Art and Activism in Times of Financial Crisis* edited by Tatiana Bazzichelli and Geoff Cox (2013), and *The Heretic's Guide to Global Finance: Hacking the Future of Money* by Brett Scott (2013), as well as the essays featured in *MCD (Magazine des Cultures Digitales)* issue #76 titled 'Changer l'argent' (Diouf, et al., 2014-2015).

Within the context of art fairs, one of the most radical alternatives to existing practices was provided by The Free Art Fair in London in 2007, 2008 and 2009, at which the exhibited artworks were given away for no cost to those who either joined a queue on the final day in 2007 and 2008, or had entered their name into a draw in 2009 (The Free Art Fair, 2009). The differential between the price of artworks at these fairs and elsewhere within the art market was particularly marked as a number of the participating artists commanded high prices at auction and in private galleries at the time: for example Marlene Dumas, who contributed a piece to The Free Art Fair 2009, had sold a painting titled *The Visitor* (1995) at auction the previous year for over £3 million (Sotheby's, 2008).

The possibilities opened up by computer games to explore alternative social and economic structures played a central part in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' as well (see Figure 7 and section 5.1.5 below), which echoed other curated explorations of this field, in particular: 'Videogames: Design/Play/Disrupt' at Victoria and Albert Museum, London in 2018-19 (Foulston & Volsing, 2018; Victoria and Albert

Museum, 2019); 'New Gameplay' in 2016-17 at Nam June Paik Art Center in Yongin, South Korea (Nam June Paik Art Center, 2016; Park, 2017); and 'Global Games'³² in 2015-16 at ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany (Schwingeler, 2015; Goethe-Institut, 2016).

5.1.3 Project Aims

Whilst all of the exhibitions, art fairs and critical texts mentioned in section 5.1.2 above examined alternatives to capitalist economic structures and explored new digital systems of exchange, 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' had a different focus on challenging some of the foundational assumptions that usually characterise the process of selling artworks: firstly, the presumption that an artwork is either finished (and available for sale) or unfinished (and therefore not yet available); secondly, the standard practice of an artwork only having one selling price (notwithstanding that this could, as with The Free Art Fair, be zero).³³

The curatorial aims of 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' were therefore to examine:

1. How the conception of an artwork being 'finished' at a given point in time might be problematised
2. What issues are raised when an artwork is offered for multiple different prices within an art fair

³² 'Global Games' inspired the ongoing touring exhibition 'Games and Politics', developed by Goethe-Institut and ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, which addresses similar curatorial themes; since 2017, 'Games and Politics' has toured to venues in Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, South America and Oceania (ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, 2020).

³³ Whilst the advertised selling price for an artwork displayed in an art fair or a private art gallery might be different from the price for which it is eventually sold, due to the possibility that this might vary as a result of negotiations between buyer and seller, the artwork has still commanded a single selling price; as an alternative, artworks exhibited in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' were offered at multiple price points from which the buyer could select their own preference (see section 5.1.5 for more details).

3. How an audience's engagement with a curated exhibition within an art fair can be extended through artworks that are created before, during and after the fair.

In addition, due to the position of the exhibition space within London Art Fair (see section 5.1.4 below), 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' aimed to explore:

4. How an audience's engagement can be extended via an exhibition that is experienced differently depending on the viewer's direction of movement through the space.

5.1.4 Methods

The co-curation of 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' with Furtherfield started with the generation of content for an online platform game by Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan that was to be exhibited at London Art Fair 2016 (see Figure 7). For this, Ruth Catlow, Co-Artistic Director of Furtherfield, was invited by the author to Writtle University College in Essex (at which the author was Course Scheme Manager of the Art & Design programme at the time) to lead a 'game jam' on 24 November 2015 with students from Writtle's undergraduate and postgraduate Art & Design courses.

The game jam was a workshop-style event comprising drawing and discussion that tasked the participants with devising potential constituents for the platform game – a setting, a mission, a hero / heroine, tools, obstacles and rewards – with the overall goal of creating a collective vision for the future economy of the art world. The conversation around the art market was extended with three subsequent game jams that took place during London Art Fair (see Figures 8 & 9), this time led by artists Alison Ballard and Lauren Angelkov Cummings, which followed a similar format to the event at Writtle University College.



Figure 8. Alison Ballard, *Play Art Data Money Game Jam*, participatory workshop, London Art Fair, Saturday 23 January 2016

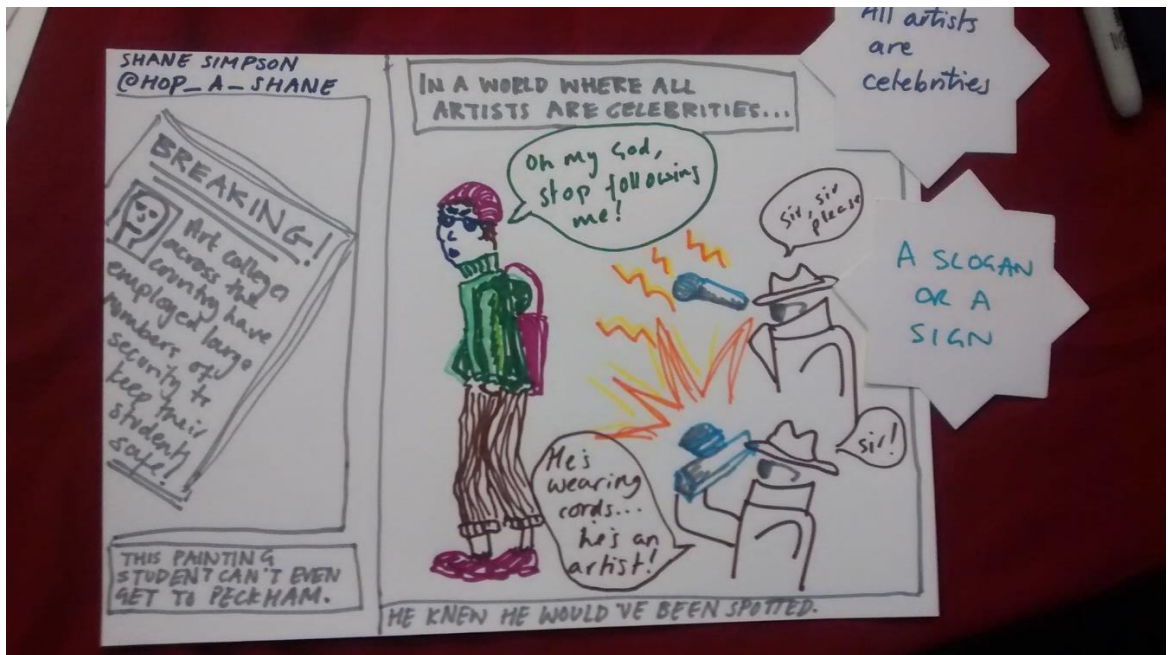


Figure 9. Artwork by Shane Simpson created at *Play Art Data Money Game Jam*, participatory workshop, London Art Fair, Saturday 23 January 2016

The curatorial layout of 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' at London Art Fair strove to address the challenges of a space that was enclosed on three sides (by the outer walls of the building on two sides and by another exhibition stand on the other) and thus would only have a single point of entry/exit (see Figure 10). Within such exhibition spaces, a common approach would be to curate a sequence of artworks that would commence at the entrance and progress into the space from that point, although visitors will then be travelling against this curatorial progression when retracing their steps in order to leave. 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' addressed this dilemma through artworks that might suggest different readings depending on whether they are being experienced as the visitor travels into or out of the exhibition.

To illustrate this, Figure 10 includes a possible route, marked with blue arrows, into 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' and then through to the final room within the exhibition, followed by a potential route out of the exhibition marked with red arrows. Looking firstly at the blue arrows, on entering the space, visitors start with Rhea Myers's work (denoted by green rectangles in Figure 10), which introduces possible ways to challenge existing art market structures, then progress to the 'game jam' tables (the blue circles in Figure 10), where visitors can suggest their own alternative art market, and finally end with the *Play Art Data Money* (2016) platform game³⁴ (in the blackout area marked in grey), in which an alternative art economy has been constructed.

³⁴ Note that within this project 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' is the title of the exhibition while *Play Art Data Money* is the title of the online platform game by Catlow and Flanagan; this nomenclature reflected the thematic links with Furtherfield's 'Art Data Money' series (see section 5.1.2), but with an additional focus in the platform game and associated game jams on the importance of exploring the issues raised through the use of creative play.

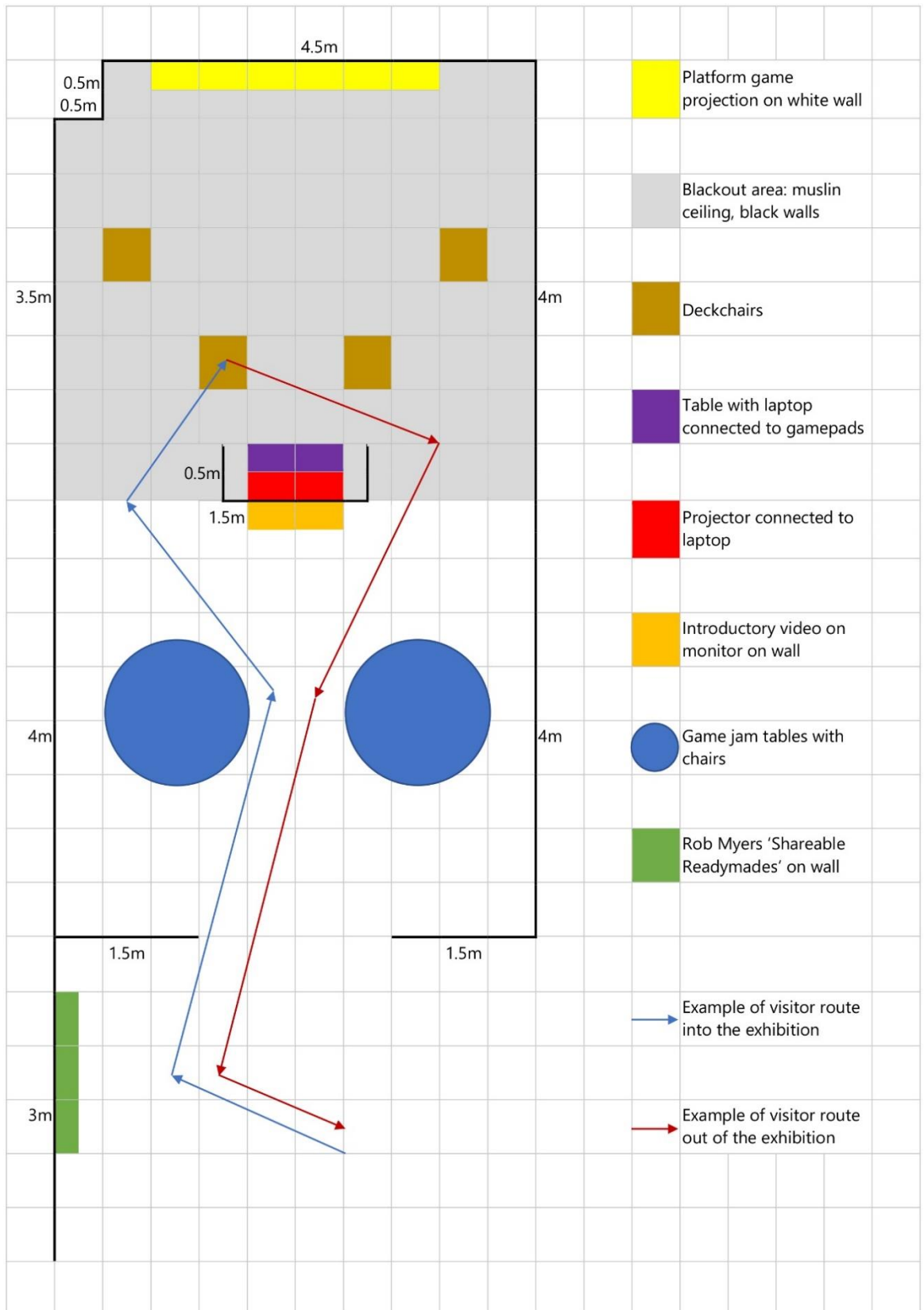


Figure 10. Schematic plan of 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' showing layout and possible visitor route through the exhibition

When leaving the space, visitors could potentially follow the red arrows in Figure 10 and first experience a playful realisation of an alternative art market that has already been completed via the *Play Art Data Money* platform game, then build their own version of the art market at the 'game jam' tables, before being given the tools to download and construct an artwork by Rhea Myers in the future (see the next section 5.1.5 for a fuller explanation of all these works). As a result, irrespective of whether the visitor is travelling into the exhibition or back out of the space, the artworks can be read as a forward temporal progression.

5.1.5 Artworks

Rhea Myers exhibited three wall-mounted sculptures in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' from her 'Shareable Readymades' series that recreate, in miniature, iconic artworks from the 20th century: *Urinal* (2011) references Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917); *Pipe* (2012) references René Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* (1929) and *Balloon Dog* (2011) references Jeff Koons's series of sculptures of the same name that began in 1994. These three sculptures by Myers can be purchased in a variety of media and at a variety of prices: for example, *Pipe* was offered for £99 in white nylon plastic or orange nylon plastic, while it was £999 when created in raw silver; alternatively, the digital files that enable anyone with access to a 3D printer to print out multiple copies of these works (and at a size of their choosing) are available to be downloaded for free via Myers's website (Myers, 2020).³⁵

³⁵ Note that Rhea Myers exhibited under the name of Rob Myers in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY'; the artist has subsequently requested that her name is listed as Rhea Myers for both past and present work (Myers, 2021).

The series therefore took mass-produced objects (urinals, smoking pipes and balloon dogs) that had been appropriated by artists and transformed into items of rarity (and thus much higher monetary value) and turned them back into objects that could be reproduced endlessly. In doing this, 'Shareable Readymades' presented a marked alternative to the single price at which pieces are usually offered in art fairs, since purchasers can choose the amount they would like to spend ranging from £999 down to zero (assuming that they have access to the necessary 3D printer and printing materials).³⁶

The series sought to challenge the established protocols of the art market in other ways too, as each purchase from the series came with a 'Certificate of Inauthenticity', which is an image of a certificate for a wall drawing by Sol LeWitt that has been doctored and signed by Myers. This was designed to undermine and satirise the art market practice of producing certificates of authenticity to create limited editions within media that, by their very nature, could be reproduced in high numbers, such as photography and video (and in endless numbers, if these media are in a digital form).

Furthermore, 'Shareable Readymades' provided a contrast to the usual presentation of completed works within art fairs, as the temporal and physical locations of these sculptures are left deliberately open to interpretation: was each artwork completed when it was printed out and presented at London Art Fair?; or was it completed earlier when the 3D printing files were finalised, and thus the work exists online?; alternatively, perhaps the artwork is only completed later when the visitor to London Art Fair downloads the files, prints the sculpture and

³⁶ As 'Shareable Readymades' features appropriations of appropriation in art, this series can also be viewed as part of a multi-authored series of artwork which, in the case of Myers's *Urinal*, can be traced back to the original designer of the urinal that Duchamp appropriated and will continue for as long as artists utilise and reinterpret the urinal image. Within the context of an art fair, this raises questions about the criteria for judging the artworks on display (throughout the fair) as being singular contributions to art history that deserve the advertised selling price.

then displays it in a setting of their choice?; finally, is the artwork the entire process, which exists both online and offline, that started with the original 3D digital model and will continue until new copies of the sculpture cease to be printed out?

This concept of an artwork being an ongoing process of unfixed temporal and spatial location is echoed in the *Play Art Data Money* platform game by Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan and its associated game jam events, since this is a deliberately open-ended project based on the idea of starting, extending and maintaining a discussion. As detailed in section 5.1.4, the project began with a game jam at Writtle University College, which provided content for the platform game but also, as a fundamental component of the event, initiated a conversation about the future of the art market amongst those directly invested in it working in a sustainable and equitable manner – students who hope to enter the arts economy soon after graduation.

The three game jams at London Art Fair extended this discussion in time and into a new location, as did the sharing of images produced at these events to an audience beyond London Art Fair via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using the hashtag #playartdatamoney; new perspectives on the issues raised were additionally provided by the game jams being led by artists Lauren Angelkov Cummings and Alison Ballard on these occasions. The debate about potential reconfigurations of the art market was also continued by discussions generated by those playing the platform game at London Art Fair, as well as those who accessed the game online elsewhere in the world. To complete the game, players take on the role of a character called 'Art Angel' and must jump through levels choosing from and collecting various conceptions of an asset – including

artworks, Bitcoins and social media likes – and this collection builds into a statement about which of these markers of value the player prizes the most.³⁷

Although *Play Art Data Money* and its series of game jams are therefore not tied to a single location, the project, being initiated for (and largely taking place at) London Art Fair, does contain a very tangible sense of place – that being how an art fair is an ideal setting for conversations about the future of the art market.³⁸

5.1.6 Conclusions

Reflecting the curatorial aims as highlighted in section 5.1.3, Catlow and Flanagan's *Play Art Data Money* project questioned the conception of an artwork being finished at a fixed point in time (the first aim) by emphasising the generation of an ongoing conversation as well as distinct 'art objects' (such as the game jam drawings and online platform game); the project also extended audience engagement via the game jams that took place before and during London Art Fair, as well as the social media conversations that were prompted by the drawings that resulted from these events (addressing the third aim).

Rhea Myers's 'Shareable Readymades' series questioned the concept of a work being finished at a fixed point in time (the first aim), challenged existing practices within the art market by offering artwork at multiple different price points (the second aim) and extended an audience's potential engagement through artworks that can be realised after London Art Fair (thus addressing the third aim). The

³⁷ A video showing a playthrough of *Play Art Data Money* is available online at <https://vimeo.com/766542756> (password: LAF2016).

³⁸ This notion of an online artwork nevertheless retaining a connection with a specific site – whether this is an urban area or an arts-based event – has been a feature of the other platform games by Catlow and Flanagan, such as those produced after game jams in Southend-on-Sea (to envisage a better future for that locale) in 2013 and at the 'Web We Want' festival (discussing the future of the internet) at Southbank Centre in London in 2014; this series is collectively titled 'Play Your Place' (Catlow, 2016a).

curation of the exhibition as a whole also strove to extend the audience's engagement by suggesting two different readings depending on whether the artworks were experienced when progressing into, or exiting from, the exhibition space (the fourth aim).

Relative to the other exhibitions that form the portfolio of projects for this PhD, 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' focused upon the ways that time-based and locational considerations can be brought together to critique the current constitution of the art market. Reflecting the overall aim of this PhD, 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' also sought to examine the issues raised by a curatorial approach that addresses both temporal issues (through project aims 1, 3 & 4) and site-specific considerations related to the exhibition's location within an art fair (project aims 2, 3 & 4).

This approach echoes the recent reanalysis of the first phase of institutional critique in the 1960s and 1970s that seeks to reappraise its successes and failures. As Andrea Fraser has argued in her essay 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', the seminal early artworks of institutional critique evinced a clear recognition that temporal considerations are just as important as locational factors; in analysing artworks by Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers and Daniel Buren from the time, Fraser argues that: "these works further acknowledge the historical specificity of any critical intervention, whose effectiveness will always be limited to a particular time and place" (Fraser, 2005, p. 280). Developing this idea, 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' explored extending the aforementioned link between time and place to an analysis of how this might relate to exhibition curation as well as individual artworks.

5.2 PROJECT TWO: 'Stranger Collaborations' at London Art Fair, 17-22 January 2017



Figure 11. Ruth Catlow in collaboration with Gareth Foote, *Time Is Speeding Up*, 2017, interactive installation and online video, webcam image captured at London Art Fair on 18 January 2017

5.2.1 Overview

'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' at London Art Fair in January 2016 explored the idea of an art fair being the location that artworks might be initiated and developed, rather than only the site of their presentation once completed, thus questioning the criteria for judging an artwork to be 'finished' at a fixed point in time.

'Stranger Collaborations' in January 2017 extended this notion by not only providing a platform for artworks that were generated onsite at London Art Fair, but also exhibiting performative works from the past that were radically recontextualised and thus in some sense 'restarted' by their inclusion in the exhibition.

The artworks exhibited in 'Stranger Collaborations' all highlighted the possibilities opened up by the internet for collaborating: how it has expanded the ways that artists can be inspired by, use and remix each other's work; how it has enabled artists to stage performances linking physically distant groups via real-time technologies; how it has resulted in people who have never met creating (sometimes unknowingly) an artistic partnership online.

5.2.2 Context

'Stranger Collaborations' sought to investigate the positive potentials of online interactions, as opposed to the negative aspects that have been persuasively mapped in, for example, *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future* by James Bridle (2018), which explores the ways that technology is increasingly atomising society, and Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), which argues that humanity is increasingly preferring interactions mediated via technology, as real-life conversations link us too directly to "the sometimes messy, often frustrating, and always complex world of people" (Turkle, 2011, p. 7).

Recent exhibitions that examined online artistic collaborations – such as 'We Are Not Alone' in 2016 at 20-21 Visual Arts Centre, Scunthorpe (Szpakowski, 2016; Shutter Hub, 2016); 'Net Work' in 2014 at Platform, Munich (Abrahams & Jamieson, 2014; Platform, 2014); 'Conversations Electriques' in 2013 at La Panacée, Montpellier (La Panacée, 2013; Cougy, 2016); and 'Being Social' in 2012 at Furtherfield Gallery, London (Furtherfield, 2012) – emphasised how artists have used the internet to broaden collaborative participation beyond art world 'insiders'. This approach was exemplified by the inclusion of additional artworks within 'We Are Not Alone' created by visitors to the exhibition who responded to

its themes around digital collaboration; these contributors were given an artist fee in line with that received by the other participants in the show and their works were also discussed and analysed within the exhibition catalogue (Szpakowski, 2016, pp. 26-29). The incorporation of works by visitors in 'We Are Not Alone' is symptomatic of another theme within the highlighted contextual exhibitions: since the viewers of online artworks have control over when, where and how these works are viewed – since they can choose any time and many different possible settings and internet-enabled devices – they should more accurately be considered to be actively contributing to the curatorial process rather than passive recipients.

These contextual exhibitions, and 'Stranger Collaborations' itself, echoed studies that have subsequently been undertaken analysing the artistic benefits that have emerged from the shift to online rather than in-person collaborations during the COVID-19 pandemic. These studies have, for example, detailed how: the new networks opened up by online collaboration have prompted new stylistic approaches to be explored among individual creatives (Fram, et al., 2021); online events have embraced the audience as co-creators (Rossetti & Bomfim, 2021); and increasing online contact between different arts organisations has produced evidence of a greater emphasis on cooperation above competition (Rentschler & Lee, 2021).

These studies also highlighted the extensive and wide-ranging negative results of the enforced online-only collaborations during the COVID-19 pandemic, ranging from increased feelings of isolation amongst creatives (Fram, et al., 2021) to the cancellation of art events that could not transfer to online delivery (Rentschler & Lee, 2021). The curated exhibitions discussed in this section similarly warned against romanticising the virtual world by solely focusing on its beneficial outcomes, frequently underscoring that online collaborations do not occur in a

neutral space, but one that is increasingly dominated by corporate interests, in particular those of social media companies. Many of the exhibited artworks sought to challenge or subvert this dominance, as typified by *Web 2.0 Suicide Machine* created by moddr_, exhibited as part of 'Being Social' at Furtherfield Gallery, which enabled visitors to delete their social media profiles, removing even the historical records kept by the social media company in question.

5.2.3 Project Aims

Studying the primary drivers of the financial success of social media companies, Richard Seymour, in his book *The Twittering Machine*, analysed how this success is built upon temporal considerations, since the design and content of social media applications are focused on keeping consumers online and disconnected from offline notions of time for as long as possible. The experience of social media, Seymour explains, "is organized in a trance-like flow. The user is plunged into a stream of real-time information and disciplined to stay constantly ahead of it. Twitter highlights not the time and date of posts, but their age and thus *currency*: 4m, or 12h, as the case may be" (Seymour, 2020, p. 65). In addition, Seymour highlights that the deliberately addictive nature of social media applications is designed to entice users to drop out of the society that physically surrounds them in favour of a perennially detached "uniform distancelessness" (Seymour, 2020, p. 56).

While the exhibitions mentioned in section 5.2.2 above explored the breadth of collaborative possibilities facilitated by the internet, 'Stranger Collaborations' sought to focus upon how conversations that occur online create interactions that have an uncertain position both temporally and spatially, echoing the aforementioned analysis of Seymour. Integral to this exploration of temporal and spatial uncertainty was that 'Stranger Collaborations' should occur in what, on

first impression, might appear to be a specific place (London Art Fair) and a specific time (from 17-22 January 2017), before then exploring how this first impression might be questioned and problematised. As discussed in chapter 3, an art fair is an apt site to critically examine experiences that aim to subvert a sense of time and place due to the widespread use of white cube exhibition spaces and the avoidance of anything that conveys a feeling of time passing (such as clocks, windows to the outside world, or fixed mealtimes).

In addition to these considerations, 'Stranger Collaborations' sought to explore the various nuances of what a 'stranger' might be in the context of online collaborations, in particular how this might unfold over time and the issues this raises: does the artist know the participants before the artwork commences? Do they meet as a result of the artwork? Do they never know anything about each other even after the artwork is completed?

As a result of these and other issues raised by the artworks themselves (see section 5.2.5 below), the curatorial aims of 'Stranger Collaborations' were to examine:

1. The temporal and locational issues raised by artistic collaborations formed online
2. How a curated exhibition within an art fair setting can comment upon interactions that occur in virtual spaces
3. How an audience's engagement with a curated exhibition within an art fair can be extended through artworks that are experienced differently onsite and offsite.

5.2.4 Methods

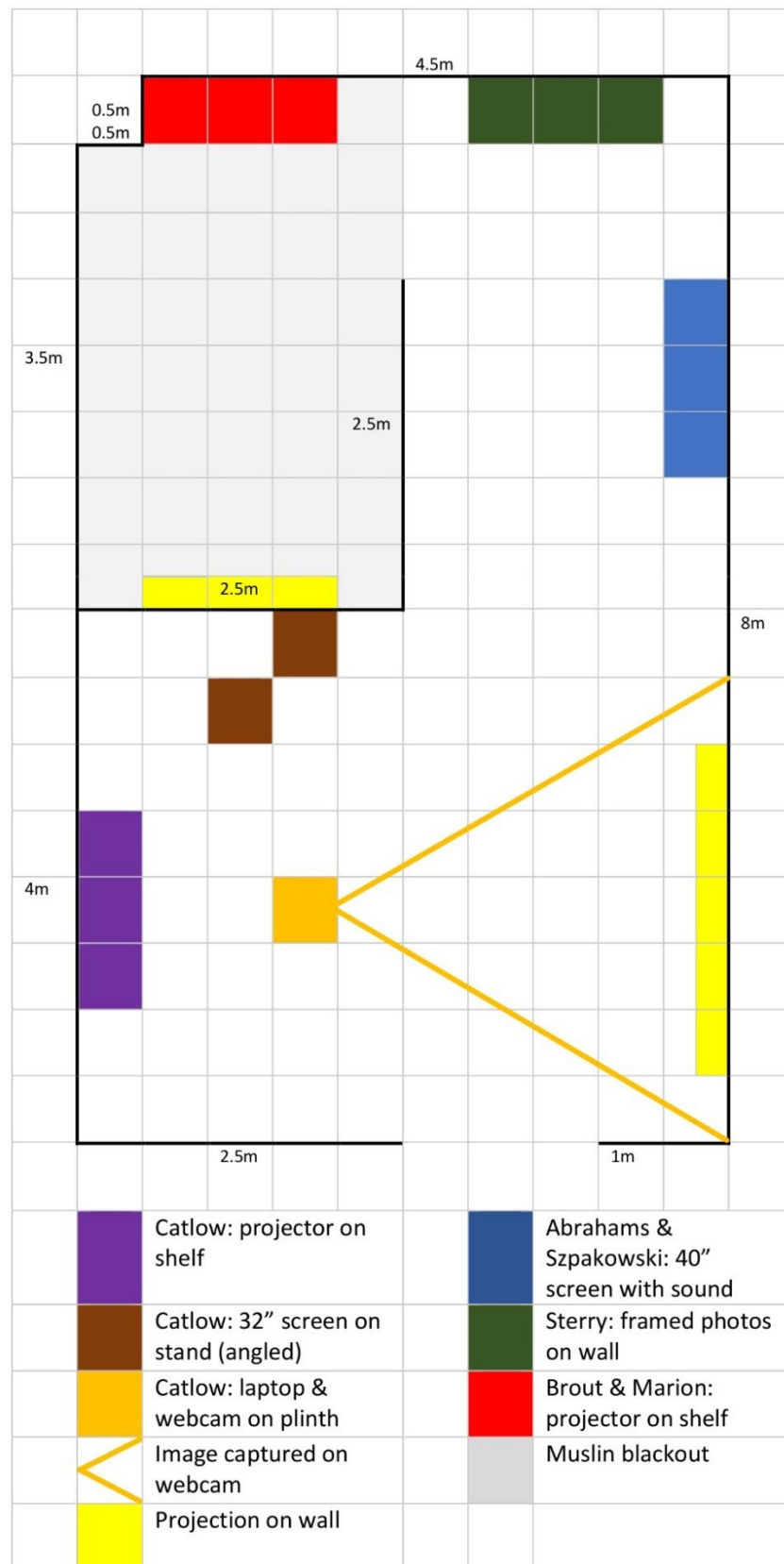


Figure 12. Schematic plan of 'Stranger Collaborations' showing exhibition layout

The choice of exhibition title – ‘Stranger Collaborations’ – served two purposes: first, and most obviously, it was chosen to succinctly reflect that the show featured collaborations between people who were previously unacquainted; secondly, by linking ‘stranger’ with a positive word that evokes mutually-beneficial interactions, the exhibition sat in opposition to the demonisation of ‘the stranger’ in contemporary society, as analysed by Sara Ahmed in *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (Ahmed, 2000). As a salient example, Ahmed highlighted the negative repercussions of equating strangers with threat in such phrases as ‘stranger danger’, used in discourses around crime prevention and personal safety (Ahmed, 2000, pp. 32-37).

The curation of the exhibition was designed so that the sequence of artworks that visitors experienced after entering the space (see Figure 12) would be marked by a gradually slowing pace: the first work encountered was *Time Is Speeding Up* (2017) by Ruth Catlow and Gareth Foote, which featured a number of fast-paced interactive elements; the visitor would next encounter the similarly-paced, but less interactive video works by Annie Abrahams and Michael Szpakowski, followed by Liz Sterry’s photographic stills and finally a slowly-unfolding, meditative video by Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion (see section 5.2.5 below for more information about these artworks). The pacing of ‘Stranger Collaborations’ was thus designed to enable visitors to progress from the high intensity of the art fair environment outside of the space towards a more reflective environment at the end of the exhibition.

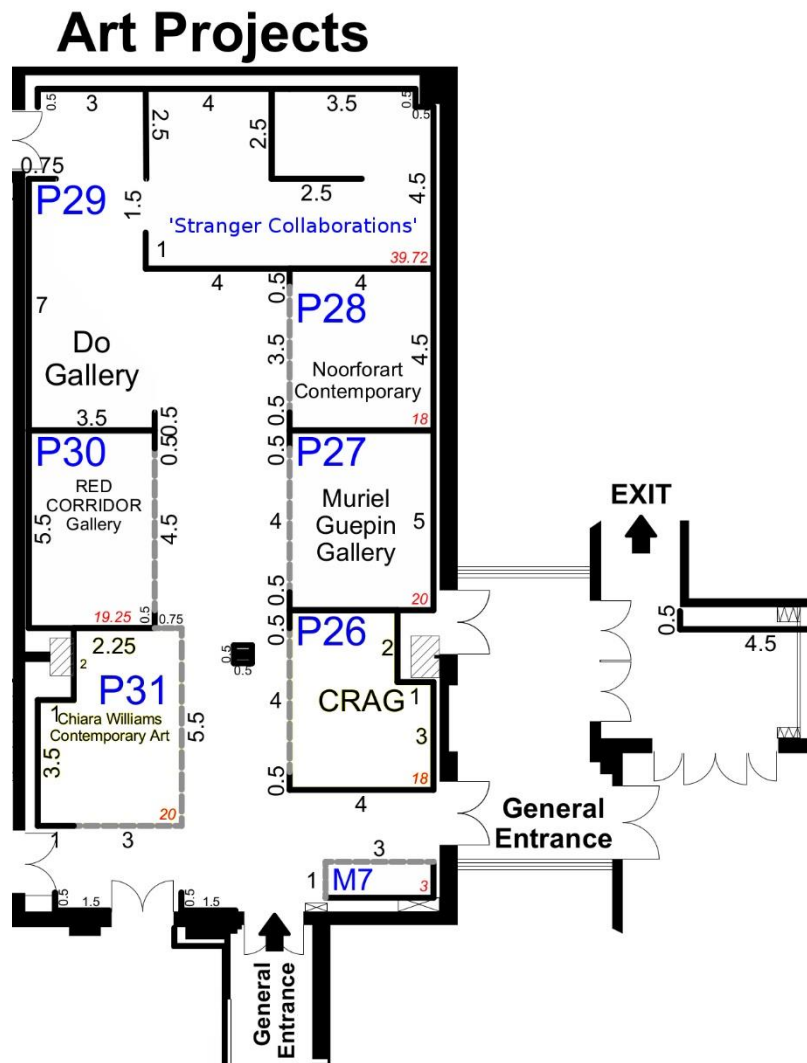


Figure 13. Section of London Art Fair 2017 floorplan showing area containing 'Stranger Collaborations'

The curatorial approach was not limited to the exhibition space itself but sought to expand the dialogues generated by 'Stranger Collaborations' through consideration of its location within the wider layout of London Art Fair. The curation of the Art Projects section as a whole (undertaken by the author as part of a selection panel for this section of London Art Fair) placed three other exhibitions on the primary visitor route towards 'Stranger Collaborations' (see Figure 13) that echoed its exploration of multiple temporal and/or spatial locations: Victoria Lucas's multimedia installation at Chiara Williams Contemporary Art (stand P31 in Figure 13) examined how representations of

gender can be repositioned both online and within spatial contexts, such as deserts, that have often served as platforms for alternative social structures (Chiara Williams Contemporary Art, 2016); the paintings of Zdenek Trs on CHIONO REISOVA ART GALLERY's stand (P26 in Figure 13) were a contemporary reimagining of the illusionary spaces generated within the genre of *trompe-l'œil* (Kodl Contemporary, 2021); Yong Il Shin's solo show at Do Gallery (stand P29 in Figure 13) explored how quotations from *Jikji* (the oldest-known book printed with movable metal type) and natural materials that evoke prehistory could be incorporated into contemporary painting (Han Collection, 2018).

5.2.5 Artworks

As discussed in section 5.2.3 above, 'Stranger Collaborations' sought a more nuanced understanding of what a stranger might be within online artistic collaborations, exploring the differences and commonalities between approaches that involve: creating artworks via the contribution of multiple people who never meet; inviting the participation of strangers who then become known to the artist and each other; providing a setting in which participants are not directly invited but contribute through some element of happenstance, becoming known to the artist and each other as a result; and staging online artworks that might prompt people to meet in the real rather than the virtual world.

In *Time Is Speeding Up* by Ruth Catlow and Gareth Foote, an image of the exhibition space was captured by a webcam every two minutes throughout the run of London Art Fair (see Figures 11, 12 & 14). Each image was then added to an online video, which was fixed at 30 seconds in length, so, as more and more images were captured and uploaded, the frame rate increased and the video appeared to show a world that is speeding up over time. The inspiration for *Time Is Speeding Up* stemmed from a phenomenological approach to time,

exploring how experiences of temporal flows might appear to shift over a lifetime. As Catlow has explained, the artwork "is about how life seems to speed up as we get older, based on the reflection that when I was one day old, a day was my whole life, but on the second day one day was only half my life, etc." (Catlow, 2016b). During the exhibition, as more and more frames were added to the online video that remains fixed in length, the sequence of images became faster and faster until the video approached a blur in which the participants are almost lost whilst other static, non-human elements, in particular the exhibition space, come to the fore. Ironically, the final version of the online video was only completed at the very end of London Art Fair, becoming fleetingly visible on the screen in the exhibition space just at the moment when all visitors are asked to leave.

In *Time Is Speeding Up*, the vast majority of visitors whose image is captured via the webcam are unknown to the artists, and will remain so, but the artwork leaves open the possibility that the participants might not remain unknown to each other; conversations between individuals and groups could be generated on witnessing each other interacting with the artwork, in particular as an element of theatricality was encouraged, with a wall text in the installation asking visitors to: "Please pose, draw or write messages to become part of the piece". As daily updates about the artwork's progression were posted to @TimeSpeedsUp on Twitter, this created the additional possibility that participants might engage with the artwork and converse with each other online (see Figure 14). *Time Is Speeding Up* therefore contrasts offline collaboration, in which the collaborators need to share a specific space and time, with online collaborations that allow a greater diffusion of location and temporal span.



TimeSpeeds... @TimeSpeeds... · 18 Jan 2017 ...

But on the second day, one day was only half your life, Time Is Speeding Up @LondonArtFair
gtp.ruthcatlow.net/laf/



furtherfield



TimeSpeeds... @TimeSpeeds... · 18 Jan 2017 ...

Visitors to @LondonArtFair put on an art show and an LAF FACE for Day 2 of Time Is Speeding Up
gtp.ruthcatlow.net/laf/ @furtherfield

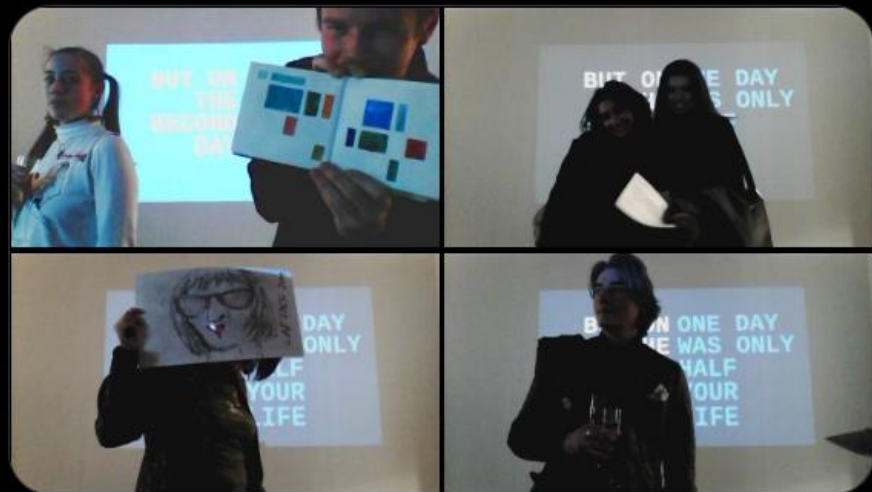


Figure 14. Ruth Catlow, screenshot from @TimeSpeedsUp Twitter account, 2017

Despite the aforementioned wall text for *Time Is Speeding Up*, which explained that the installation involved images being taken of the exhibition space, it was inevitable that some visitors would not register this information and therefore the webcam images were both of visitors who were aware of their image being captured and those that were not,³⁹ reinforcing that collaborations can form online between people who might not realise they are part of a collaborative grouping.

The works of Michael Szpakowski and the artistic partnership Émilie Brout & Maxime Marion in 'Stranger Collaborations' extended this idea by appropriating the creations of others who are unknown to the artists and whose identities remain anonymous (as with *Time Is Speeding Up*), but, in addition, the anonymous collaborators almost certainly never expected their actions would be re-presented as constituents of an artwork: Szpakowski's *Shit Happens in Vegas* (2012) remixes images from Google Street View to stage a vicarious cruise through Las Vegas and his *I am Getting a Cat* (2012) combines vintage footage found online with texts from two cat-related Twitter feeds; Brout & Marion's *Gold and Glitter* (2015) is a mass collaboration between innumerable unknown authors, as it is a shimmering, largescale video loop comprising hundreds of different animated GIFs montaged together that the artists found when searching online for any image that is gold in colour.

In the case of Szpakowski's *Shit Happens in Vegas*, it might appear, on first impression, that the artist's careful editing of images from Google Street View recreates a journey that actually occurred at a specific time; however, any sense

³⁹ In doing this, *Time Is Speeding Up* was also making a wider point that visitors to any exhibition or retail space (and London Art Fair combines both functions) would regularly have their image captured by cameras within these locations whether they have consented to this practice or not.

of fidelity to physical and temporal reality breaks down on closer inspection, as the sudden changes in weather seen in the sky reveal that these images were captured over multiple journeys, rather than a single one. The physical and temporal location of *Gold and Glitter* by Brout & Marion is also deliberately confused, since the artists have alternatively exhibited the artwork as an online webpage (<http://www.goldandglitter.net/>), or as a largescale projection (as it was in 'Stranger Collaborations'), or as a plinth-based sculpture comprising an iPad showing the webpage surrounded by hundreds of small, decorative gold-coloured trinkets (Brout & Marion, 2015). As a result, it is left open as to how the artwork is physically constituted, and whether it is best experienced when visiting an exhibition at a specific time or can equally be seen online at any time.

The contributions of Annie Abrahams and Liz Sterry to 'Stranger Collaborations' centred on the creation of temporary online communities that become 'safe spaces' in which socially-proscribed behaviours – such as public anger or private alcohol consumption – are accepted and even embraced. In Abrahams' *Angry Women Take 2* (2011), people that the artist had met via the internet, but who were not all known to each other, came together to cathartically vent their anger in an online video conference;⁴⁰ the performance had no preset length, but continued until all of the participants agreed that they had no anger left. Sterry's *Drinking Alone with the Internet* (2013) documents a succession of online performances in which the artist sought to engage with people she had never met via an open call, inviting them to meet

⁴⁰ At the time of the work's creation in 2011, video conferencing was a relatively rare experience, and each session of the 'Angry Women' series was presaged by the artist explaining to the participants how to install and navigate the necessary software for the performance to occur; the widespread use of video conferencing from 2020 onwards, often for many hours each day, due to the lockdowns prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic means that the prevalence of frustrated screams in the 'Angry Women' series now can be read as a satire on the use of video conferencing itself.

online to dress and drink like a designated Star Wars character chosen by the artist; the result was a poignant virtual party in which a group of strangers are united by their shared pop-cultural interests, and yet it remains apparent that, from another viewpoint, everyone is still very much drinking alone.

The works by Abrahams and Sterry explored the apparent disconnection between the temporal and physical location of the viewer compared to the events shown in the artworks. Abrahams's video and Sterry's photographs both show a collaboration that the viewer cannot join, since it has already occurred; however, both works were designed to be seen in exhibition spaces – Sterry's series was deliberately realised as framed photographic stills rather than being kept as a video recording of the online event – so the viewer could, in fact, be situated in the ideal time and location to experience the work.

5.2.6 Conclusions

'Stranger Collaborations' featured artworks that are in some sense both here and not here, happening both now and at some other time. Participants in *Time Is Speeding Up* needed to be present at London Art Fair during a particular 6-day timespan, but the resulting video could only be experienced online (and thus elsewhere) from the end of London Art Fair onwards; Sterry and Abrahams documented events that occurred in no single location, but at a specific time, and yet the resulting works were always designed to be viewed within a physical exhibition space on some other occasion. Brout & Marion's *Gold and Glitter* can be experienced differently in different exhibitions, or not physically encountered at all (by being viewed online); Szpakowski's *Shit Happens in Vegas* holds out the promise of experiencing a drive through Las Vegas whilst simultaneously making it abundantly clear how far the online journey is from the real world. This retention of opposites within an artwork echoes Robert Smithson's dialectic

between 'site' and 'non-site', and how an artwork within a gallery might also represent a location elsewhere (Flam, 1996, p. 364), but with an additional emphasis on a dialectic between different temporalities as well.

Relative to the other curated exhibitions in the portfolio of projects within this PhD thesis, 'Stranger Collaborations' focused on the difficulties that might occur when attempting to give a fixed temporal and situational definition of when and where an artwork (in particular one that utilises new media) is located. Reflecting the first two curatorial aims of 'Stranger Collaborations' (as listed in section 5.2.3 above), the exhibition analysed the uncertain nature of the physical and temporal location of the presented artworks in order to suggest that interactions that occur in virtual spaces – whether these be under the auspices of artistic collaboration or social media or real-time technologies or any combination thereof – seem to evade any fixed definition relating to time and place. The way that *Time Is Speeding Up* could be divergently experienced as an interactive installation or an online video, during London Art Fair or afterwards, also linked to the third aim of 'Stranger Collaborations': to extended audience engagement through artworks that exist differently onsite and offsite.

The manner in which 'Stranger Collaborations' sought to incorporate different temporal as well as spatial registers informs the overall aim of this PhD to investigate how artworks might address concepts of time differently in the context of a curated exhibition sited within a contemporary art fair, as 'Stranger Collaborations' explored how multiple temporal registers can be acknowledged and experienced in order to present an alternative to the drive towards creating atemporal 'non-sites' elsewhere within an art fair.

The manner in which the artworks within 'Stranger Collaborations' can be conceptualised as existing within temporal and situational spaces that differ from

the viewer has commonalities with the philosophical field of new materialism (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Coole & Frost, 2010; Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012), which has generated several examples of innovative thinking around the extent to which objects might be considered as acting independently of humanity. Jane Bennett, for example, has contended that many objects previously considered inanimate and passive are more accurately viewed as 'vibrant matter':

I look at how found objects (my examples come from litter on the street, a toy creature in a Kafka story, a technical gadget used in criminal investigations) can become vibrant things with a certain effectivity of their own, a perhaps small but irreducible degree of independence from the words, images, and feelings they provoke in us. I present this as a liveliness intrinsic to the materiality of the thing formerly known as an object. (Bennett, 2010, p. xvi)

The findings from 'Stranger Collaborations' provides support for the contention that Bennett's conceptualisation can usefully be extended to works of art as well.

5.3 PROJECT THREE: 'Quick, Quick, Quick' at London Art Fair, 16-21 January 2018



Figure 15. 'Quick, Quick, Quick' installation view at London Art Fair 2018

5.3.1 Overview

'Quick, Quick, Quick' took as its starting point the interactive artwork *Time is Speeding Up* by Ruth Catlow and Gareth Foote that was exhibited in 'Stranger Collaborations' at London Art Fair the previous year. Whereas *Time is Speeding Up* explored changing temporal flows and the way that time appears to pass more quickly as a person ages, 'Quick, Quick, Quick' addressed the widely held belief that society is pressurising individuals into working and living at express speed (see section 5.3.2 below for more on this notion) and sought ways that this could be undermined and counteracted.

'Quick, Quick, Quick' approached this goal by giving the initial appearance of pandering to the pace of contemporary living by bringing together a selection of short-duration artworks – animated GIFs, films and videos – that were (almost all) around one minute in length. However, the artworks on display were united by their use of brevity to encourage the viewer to look for longer, with slowly unfolding imagery that extols the benefits of spending time appreciating the often overlooked. The exhibition aimed to use rapidity against itself, taking an alternative approach to theorists and art events (see section 5.3.2 below) that sought to counter speed with slowness.

5.3.2 Context

Characterising the pace of contemporary life as excessive, and growing ever faster in relation to previous generations, has a long history. It had become a common lament by the late 19th century, finding expression in a wide range of journals and periodicals,⁴¹ and, by the latter years of the 20th century, philosophers and cultural critics had proposed a range of causes for this ever-quickenning pace: Martin Heidegger (1966) argued that it was an imperative born of accelerating technological advances;⁴² Fredric Jameson (1991) added the effects of the global network of capital and proliferation of mass media imagery to the rapid development of new technologies; Jacques Derrida blamed the post-World War

⁴¹ An example of this can be found in an opinion piece in *The Lancet* of 20th October 1883, which argued that: "It is, unfortunately, one of the chief characteristics of modern business to be always in a hurry. In olden times it was different. ... If those who furnish the 'City men' of to-day with medical counsel would go right down to the bottom of things and try to cure the evil of this mental habit, they would do far more to prevent the spread of nervous disease and to arrest the thousand-and-one troubles of body and mind which spring from work and high pressure" (Wakeley, 1883, p. 697).

⁴² Heidegger wrote in *Discourse on Thinking*: "No one can foresee the radical changes to come. But technological advance will move faster and faster and can never be stopped. In all areas of existence, man will be encircled ever more tightly by the forces of technology. These forces which everywhere and every minute claim, enchain, drag along, press and impose upon man under the form of some technical contrivance or other – these forces . . . have moved long since beyond his will and have outgrown his capacity for decision" (Heidegger, 1966, p. 51).

Two arms race and the spectre of nuclear war, which created an economy obsessed with production at speed, since a few seconds “may decide, irreversibly, the fate of what is still now and then called humanity” (Derrida, 1984, p. 20). As a result, Derrida believed that “no single instant, no atom of our life (of our relation to the world and to being) is not marked today, directly or indirectly, by that speed race” (Derrida, 1984, p. 20).

If humanity has long felt that life is inexorably speeding up it has also long sought alternatives. Not surprisingly, these have frequently involved advocating the benefits of slowing down, as proclaimed in the Slow Food Manifesto signed in Paris in 1989 by delegates from 15 countries (Slow Food, 2017). Written by founding member Folco Portinari (Slow Food, 2019), the document argued that the 20th century “first invented the machine and then modelled its lifestyle after it. Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus: ‘the fast life’ that fractures our customs and assails us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest ‘fast-food’. Homo sapiens must regain wisdom and liberate itself from the ‘velocity’ that is propelling it on the road to extinction. Let us defend ourselves against the universal madness of ‘the fast life’ with tranquil material pleasure” (Slow Food, 1989).⁴³

This belief that speed is best countered with slowness has inspired a number of exhibitions featuring artworks (in particular moving image works) that are experienced over a long duration, such as ‘Days of Endless Time’ at Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. in 2014 (Smithsonian, 2014; Lapham, 2014), ‘AV Festival 12: As Slow As Possible’ at multiple venues across the northeast of England in 2012 (Searle, 2012) and ‘The Art of Deceleration’ at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany in 2011-2012 (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg &

⁴³ The Slow Food movement has inspired many allied initiatives, including the annual Slow Art Day (Slow Art Day, 2020) that aims to encourage viewers to look at individual artworks for longer.

Brüderlin, 2012). As typified by Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg's introduction to 'The Art of Deceleration', the curatorial approach of these exhibitions sought to chart how "the fascination for unleashed motion was accompanied by the search for an aesthetic of slowness" (Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, 2012).

The genre alternatively labelled 'slow film' or 'slow cinema' (de Luca & Jorge, 2016; Flanagan, 2012) has also inspired a number of film festivals and events devoted to this field, such as the annual Slow Film Festival in East Sussex (Slow Film Festival, 2020) and Slow Film Fest in Rome (Slow Film Fest, 2021). Echoing the motivation of the contextual exhibitions highlighted above, as well as the Slow Food movement, in seeking to counter the rapidity of current society, Slow Film Festival's website explains that "the festival specifically explores slowness amidst the accelerated tempo of contemporary life" (Slow Film Festival, 2020). Similarly, whilst emphasising the diverse nature of slow cinema, Tiago de Luca and Nuno Barradas Jorge nonetheless believe that a unifying thread within the genre is that slow cinema "shares its discursive genesis with a much larger socio-cultural movement whose aim is to rescue extended temporal structures from the accelerated tempo of late capitalism" (de Luca & Jorge, 2016, p. 3).

The exhibition in 'Quick, Quick, Quick' of short-duration artworks that are, in most instances, around one minute in length took inspiration from other presentations of one-minute artworks, notably the 'One Minute Television' series, a collaboration between BBC Two's *The Late Show* and The Arts Council that screened moving image artworks on UK television in the early 1990s (British Council, 2020; Mulvey & Sexton, 2007, p. 156), and the ongoing Festival do Minuto that began in Brazil in 1991 (Festival do Minuto, 2022). As will be discussed in section 5.3.5 below, 'Quick, Quick, Quick' sought to place such events into a historical context by tracing the recurring creation of one-minute moving image works back to the very start of cinema.

'Quick, Quick, Quick' also added to the relatively few examples of animated GIFs being presented as an artform within curated exhibitions, despite the format being used as a medium by such high-profile artists as Cory Arcangel and Lorna Mills, with notable exceptions being 'GIF Free for All' at 4th Computer Art Congress, Rio de Janeiro in 2014 (4th Computer Art Congress, 2014; Miller, 2014) and 'Stop and Go - The Art of Animated Gifs' at MGLC - International Centre of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana in 2018 (Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, 2018), as well as the series of exhibitions curated or co-curated by Rhizome: 'The GIF Show' at RX Gallery, San Francisco in 2006 (Rhizome, 2006); 'Loop Dreams' at 201 Mulberry, New York in 2016 (Connor, 2016); and 'TIME_FRAME' at Gallery 151, New York in 2017 (Sutton, 2017).

5.3.3 Project Aims

The curation of Rhizome's exhibitions sought to give a broader context for the place of animated GIFs within contemporary art by including other media, such as interactive artworks, printmaking and sculpture, that were influenced by GIFs; however, unlike 'Quick, Quick, Quick', these shows did not set up a dialogue between GIFs and short-duration films and videos.⁴⁴ 'Quick, Quick, Quick' also took a different approach to exhibitions such as 'Days of Endless Time', 'AV Festival 12: As Slow As Possible' and 'The Art of Deceleration', as well as events such as Slow Film Festival and Slow Film Fest, by attempting to challenge the pace of contemporary life via short- rather than long-duration artworks.

⁴⁴ Attempts to provide a critical overview of the use of animated GIFs by artists, such as the series of articles by Paddy Johnson for artnet (Johnson, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c; 2014d), have also not analysed animated GIFs within the context of other short-duration artworks.

In addition, the location of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' within an art fair provided the opportunity to form dialogues between short-duration moving image works and artworks in other media situated elsewhere in London Art Fair that address similar issues.

As a result, the curatorial aims of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' were to examine:

1. How speed can be used against itself in attempts to counter the pace of contemporary life
2. How differing forms of short-duration artworks might inform each other within a curated exhibition
3. How an audience's engagement with a curated exhibition in an art fair can be extended via the use of short-duration artworks, as well as through forming links with exhibitions and events with similar themes occurring elsewhere in the fair.

5.3.4 Methods

The curation of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' embraced the collaborative possibilities opened up by both the field of one-minute artworks and situating an exhibition within an art fair.

While the artworks were presented within a typical screening room layout, with the entire programme projected on a loop onto one wall of a blacked-out space containing individual seating (see Figure 15), the curatorial approach was not limited to the space itself but sought to expand the dialogues generated by 'Quick, Quick, Quick' through consideration of the location of the exhibition within the wider layout of London Art Fair.

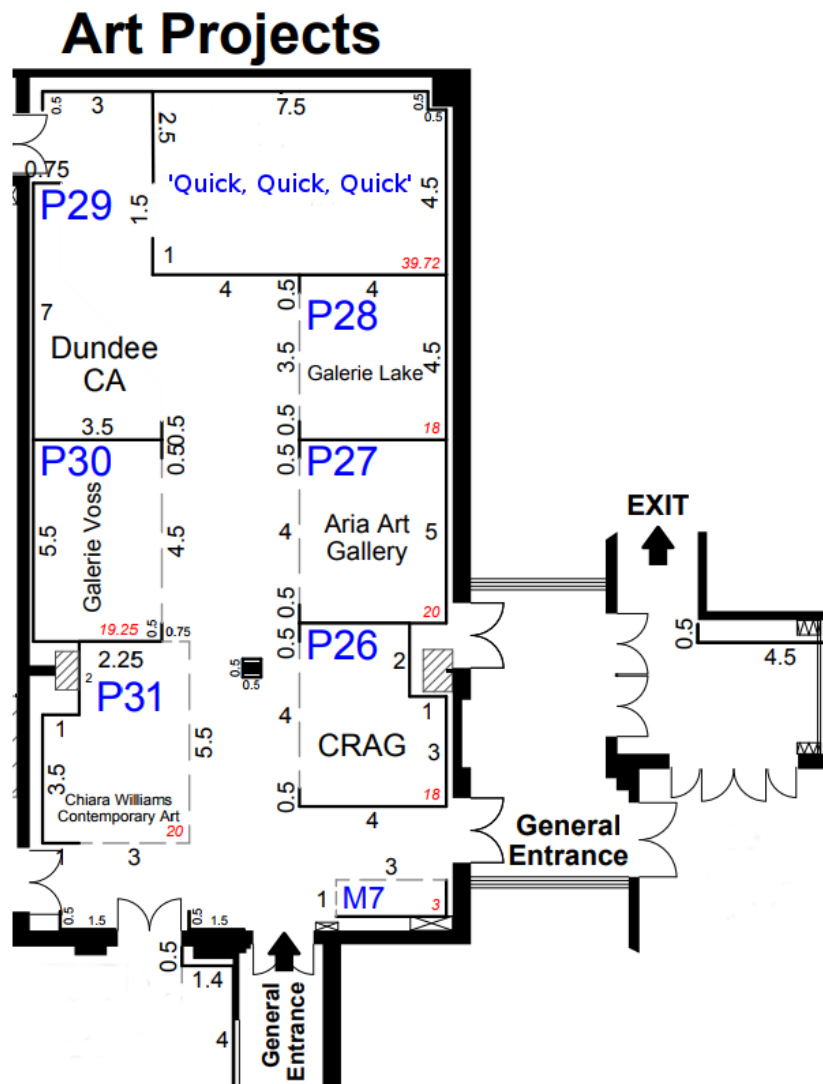


Figure 16. Section of London Art Fair 2018 floorplan showing area containing 'Quick, Quick, Quick'

The curation of the Art Projects section as a whole (undertaken by the author alongside other members of the selection panel for this section of London Art Fair) placed two other presentations on the primary visitor route towards 'Quick, Quick, Quick' that also addressed the pace of contemporary life. These were a solo exhibition by Andrea Guastavino (presented by Aria Art Gallery, stand P27 in Figure 16) of photographs created from early 20th century negatives that were found abandoned in a rubbish tip (Aria Art Gallery, 2018) and Frances Richardson's solo show for Chiara Williams Contemporary Art (stand P31 in Figure

16), in which the shape of Post-it notes was translated into a series of largescale wooden sculptures (Chiara Williams Contemporary Art, 2018); both exhibitions sought to counter the ephemerality of contemporary consumerism by transposing easily-discarded items into objects of greater permanence, using this process to reference, amongst other things, the brief timespan of art fairs.

The next element of collaborative curation involved inviting Kerry Baldry to curate 'an exhibition within an exhibition' by selecting highlights from her own 'One Minute' project to include within the programme of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' (see Appendix 2 for the complete list of artworks exhibited). The third instance of collaborative curation centred on discussions with the participating artists about the optimal way to present animated GIFs, which have no preset timespan and therefore could loop indefinitely, alongside video and film works that all have a fixed duration. As a result of these conversations, it was concluded that, in order to reinforce that animated GIFs should be appreciated on equal terms with other artworks, they should be integrated into the showreel of videos and films and set to loop for approximately one minute, so that their timespan matches the other works.

The creative overlaps between differing forms of short-duration artworks that were explored in 'Quick, Quick, Quick' were further analysed in a panel discussion held at London Art Fair on 18 January 2018, which was chaired by the author and featured Abigail Addison, Director of Animate Projects and Short Animation Programmer for Edinburgh International Film Festival, artist Michael Szpakowski, whose artwork was included in 'Quick, Quick, Quick', and Nag Vladermersky, Festival Director of the London International Animation Festival. In addition, the themes of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' were given further context by analysing them alongside similar ideas explored elsewhere in the Art Projects section in an introductory text published in the London Art Fair catalogue (Behrman, 2017) and

also in the daily tours of Art Projects during the run of the Fair (both undertaken by the author).

5.3.5 Artworks

The exhibited works in 'Quick, Quick, Quick' were selected to trace a line of influence that ran back to the short films created by the Lumière brothers in the 1890s and early 1900s. The exhibition included *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (1895), Louis Lumière's first film and also the first of 10 short films, all under 1 minute long, shown by the Lumière brothers in the inaugural paid public screening of their work on 28 December 1895 at Le Salon Indien du Grand Café in Paris. Film historians Simon Popple and Joe Kember, amongst others, have cited this event as the "birth of public cinema" (Popple & Kember, 2004, p. 7).

The continuing appeal of the aesthetic of early films inspired remo (a Japanese collective formed to promote moving image artworks) to propose 'The Lumiere Rules' in 2007 as a challenge to artists to create videos that are no more than 1 minute long, with a fixed camera, no sound, no zooms, no edits and no effects (remo, 2007). These rules therefore recast the technical limitations that dictated the style and duration of the early films of the Lumière brothers – since the integration of sound and the utilisation of moveable cameras were not yet available, and the films shown at Le Salon Indien du Grand Café had to be hand-cranked through the projector (Abel, 2005, pp. 92-94, 538 & 597) – as aesthetic choices. Doing this, remo argued, would uncover "a new discovery in places you casually pass by, and scenes you tend to miss by clipping out moving image,"⁴⁵

⁴⁵ As shown by research undertaken by James E. Cutting and Ayse Candan, a shot time of one minute results in a focus upon one scene that is many times longer than the average shot duration in contemporary cinema; their article 'Shot Durations, Shot Classes, and the Increased Pace of Popular Movies' incorporated data from 9,400 English-language and 1,550 non-English-language movies from 1912 to 2013 and revealed a uniform decline in shot duration, with, for

which in turn will demonstrate “the potentials of moving image as a medium lying in everyday life” (remo, 2007). ‘Quick, Quick, Quick’ included three videos by remo showing their early experiments in 2006 whilst they were formulating these rules.

Amongst those who have creatively reinterpreted ‘The Lumiere Rules’ are Lumière et Son, a year-long project by Sam Renseiw and Philip Sanderson that ran from November 2009 to November 2010 (Renseiw & Sanderson, 2012). The collaboration produced 45 videos, all (except one) being approximately one minute long, of which a selection of 8 chosen by the author were exhibited in ‘Quick, Quick, Quick’. Throughout the series, Renseiw provided silent footage in the style of the Lumière brothers (although usually in colour) and Sanderson added the *son* (the soundtrack), using a variety of sources including found recordings and snippets from film scores.

As discussed in section 5.3.4, ‘Quick, Quick, Quick’ also included a selection of 38 works by different artists chosen by Kerry Baldry from volumes 1-9 of her ‘One Minute’ series. This series, started in the same year as the launch of ‘The Lumiere Rules’ in 2007 (Szpakowski, 2012), traced another line of influence for contemporary short-duration artworks, as it was inspired by Baldry’s participation in the ‘One Minute Television’ series mentioned in section 5.3.2 above.

The animated GIFs presented alongside the films and videos in ‘Quick, Quick, Quick’ were produced by three artists – Karan Singh, Alan Resnick and Peter Burr – who were selected by the author from amongst those who exhibited in the seminal series of GIF exhibitions curated or co-curated by Rhizome (see section 5.3.2). These artists provided works that exemplified how animated GIFs loop to create engaging, poetic statements from the briefest of means.

example, the average in Hollywood films declining from a mean of approximately 12 seconds in the 1950s to under 4 seconds in the 2000s (Cutting & Candan, 2015).

5.3.6 Conclusions

Returning to the aims of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' as highlighted in section 5.3.3, the exhibition provided a wider context for short-duration artworks by presenting GIFs alongside films and videos, in addition to exploring thematic links with works of differing media exhibited elsewhere in London Art Fair. A greater durational engagement by the audience with the project was encouraged through a combination of three factors:

Firstly, the location of the screening room adjacent to conceptually linked solo exhibitions, as well as the allied panel discussion, catalogue text and programme of tours, helped ensure that the dialogues created by 'Quick, Quick, Quick' extended temporally as well as spatially beyond the viewer's presence within the exhibition space itself. Secondly, as highlighted by Michael Szpakowski in a review of Kerry Baldry's 'One Minute' series, the rapid changeovers found in programmes of short-duration artworks aid longer viewing times, since, while it is possible that "you'll be irritated occasionally (many of you, of course, at quite different points)," it seems certain that you are "never bored ... because there's always something new, never more than 60 seconds around the corner" (Szpakowski, 2012, p. 129).⁴⁶ Thirdly, the works chosen were designed to coalesce into an overall narrative, almost one hour in total, tracing the continuing echoes of the Lumière brothers' films in a range of contemporary moving image art, as well as allowing an extended meditation on the diversity found in the field of short-duration artworks.

⁴⁶ It is apparent from the overall argument in the review that Szpakowski considered the quality of the works exhibited to be the key factor in ensuring the audience remained engaged, but his point here is that the format is an engaging one in its own right as well.

'Quick, Quick, Quick' therefore sought to create phenomenological experiences of time that commingle brevity (when considering each individual artwork) and longevity (looking at the duration of the exhibition screening as a whole). Furthermore, whereas 'Stranger Collaborations' at London Art Fair in 2017 examined how artworks might be conceptualised as occupying different temporal and locational spaces to the viewer, the curation of 'Quick, Quick, Quick' created a dialogue between linear and discontinuous movements in both time and location in the visitor's experience of a series of artworks: the individual works screened in 'Quick, Quick, Quick' moved between multiple topics, but at a regular tempo and combined into an overall narrative, and a temporal and locational break occurred as the viewer travelled between 'Quick, Quick, Quick' and the other similar-themed exhibitions and events within London Art Fair highlighted in section 5.3.4.

Reflecting the overall aim of this PhD, 'Quick, Quick, Quick' brought together curation, time and site to, in this case, explore combinations of discontinuous temporal and locational elements. This echoes the analysis of Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker (2010), who have argued that 21st century culture can be characterised as oscillating between markedly different approaches, beliefs and temporal reference points. Furthermore, they argue that this oscillation occurs even within single artworks, and, in order to further examine the latter idea, the next project for London Art Fair – 'Afrofuturisms Past' in January 2019 – explored linear and asynchronous narrative structures within individual works of film, video and literature.

5.4 PROJECT FOUR: 'Afrofuturisms Past' at London Art Fair, 15-20 January 2019



Figure 17. 'Afrofuturisms Past' installation view at London Art Fair 2019

5.4.1 Overview

'Afrofuturisms Past' featured key works of film, video and literature from both sub-Saharan and North African communities, as well as the USA, Jamaica, Canada and the UK, that have explored the past experiences and future possibilities of Africa and the African Diaspora through a range of alternate and imagined realities. Whereas 'Quick, Quick, Quick' at London Art Fair 2018 sought to explore continuous and discontinuous temporal flows, both when moving from one artwork to the next in a screening of moving image works, and also when travelling between exhibitions within an art fair, 'Afrofuturisms Past' featured pieces that incorporated one or more alternatives to a linear temporal flow within

a single work – for example by presenting narrative elements that featured discontinuous jumps in time, parallel temporalities, temporalities flowing in reverse, or looping narratives.

The programme sought to highlight key examples of the many different creative reinterpretations of science fiction, documentary, historical fiction, fantasy, straight drama and magic realism that are a feature of Afrofuturism's innovative nature, showing how the genre continues to evolve and mutate, which has in turn ensured its continuing influence. 'Afrofuturism's Past' also explored methods to extend an audience's engagement with a curated exhibition within an art fair through the integration of a 'study centre' of allied research material in the form of essays, novels and film trailers.

5.4.2 Context

When cultural critic Mark Dery first coined the term Afrofuturism in the early 1990s, it was in the context of describing science fiction by African-American writers such as Samuel R. Delany and Octavia E. Butler. Dery argued that: "Speculative fiction that treats African-American themes and addresses African-American concerns in the context of 20th century technoculture – and, more generally, African-American signification that appropriates images of technology and a prosthetically enhanced future – might, for want of a better term, be called 'Afrofuturism'" (Dery, 1994, p. 180).

The influence of Dery's initial conceptualisation has meant that the designation of a creative work as 'Afrofuturist' continues to habitually exclude artists based in Africa, as seen in the Tate's definition of the term as "a cultural aesthetic that combines science-fiction, history and fantasy to explore the African-American experience" (Tate, 2020). The continuing association of the term with African

diasporic communities alone meant that the 2012 exhibition 'Superpower: Africa in Science Fiction' at Arnolfini in Bristol, which surveyed "the recent tendency for artists and filmmakers to apply the forms and concerns of science fiction to narratives situated in the African continent" (Arnolfini, 2012), explicitly stated that, since the focus was on Africa itself, the curation was consciously "avoiding such genres as Afro-futurism, which located the means of producing the future amongst the African diaspora specifically" (Arnolfini, 2012).

More recent exhibitions on the theme of Afrofuturism, including 'Afrofuturisms Past', have taken a different approach by embracing the term in order to contend that it should have an expanded, more global definition. This can be seen in the inclusion of artists from both Africa and the African diaspora in 'The Shadows Took Shape' at The Studio Museum in Harlem in 2013-14 (Keith & Whitley, 2013; The Studio Museum in Harlem, 2013), 'Regarding Africa: Contemporary Art and Afro-Futurism' at Tel Aviv Museum of Art in 2016-17 (Direktor, 2016; Tel Aviv Museum of Art, 2017), 'Afro-Tech and the Future of Re-Invention' at Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV), Dortmund in 2017-18 (Arns & Saavedra-Lara, 2018; Hartware MedienKunstVerein, 2017) and 'In Their Own Form' at Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago in 2018 (Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2018).

Although Dery's conjoining of Afrofuturism with science fiction remains a significant aspect of the curatorial focus in the exhibitions highlighted above, with HMKV introducing its show by stating that "the artworks project decidedly African and diasporic sci-fi visions" (Hartware MedienKunstVerein, 2017), overall these exhibitions (again, including 'Afrofuturisms Past') emphasise how the genre has evolved well beyond its science fiction origin, with Museum of Contemporary Photography explaining that: "Afrofuturism refers to a cross-disciplinary genre that combines science fiction, Afrocentrism, fantasy, technology, and non-

Western mythologies as an intellectual and artistic strategy to reimagine and repurpose the fraught past, present, and future of the transnational black experience" (Museum of Contemporary Photography, 2018).

5.4.3 Project Aims

While emphasising that the term Afrofuturism now has "an amorphous nature", curator Ashley Clark has simultaneously argued that it is still "united by one key theme: the centring of the international black experience in alternate and imagined realities" (Clark, 2015); scholar Alondra Nelson has similarly defined Afrofuturism as being primarily concerned with "speculation and utopia ... part of the resilience of Black culture and Black life is about imagining the impossible, imaging a better place, a different world" (Asim, 2016, p. 25). One of the primary methods through which alternate realities are depicted and explored in Afrofuturist film, video and literature is via eschewing a single, forward-flowing temporal structure in favour of utilising one or more narratives flowing in reverse, looping, or jumping back and forward in time; where the storytelling does appear to progress forward in time, this is often within a world of multiple, parallel realities in which different historical eras are existing side by side.⁴⁷

'Afrofuturisms Past' aimed to highlight and examine this experimental approach to time and history in Afrofuturism, which had added resonance within an art fair, since an artwork's value is frequently linked to where it fits within a grand narrative of the development of successive styles and movements in Western art, particularly during the Modernist period. In addition, artworks are usually

⁴⁷ See section 5.4.5 for further analysis of the artworks in 'Afrofuturisms Past' that utilise these differing narrative structures, for example Fayçal Baghriche's *Le sens de la marche* (for narratives flowing in reverse), Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* (looping narratives), Sammy Baloji's *Mémoire* (jumping back and forward in time) and Theo Eshetu's *Lightning Strikes* (for parallel realities).

designated as belonging to one of three broad, but separate historic eras – antique, modern or contemporary – within both art fairs and art auctions.

In response, the curation of 'Afrofuturisms Past' aimed to examine:

1. How site-specific and temporal considerations commingle in Afrofuturist works
2. How Afrofuturist works question conceptions of time and social development as a forward-travelling, linear phenomenon
3. How an audience's engagement with a curated exhibition within an art fair setting can be extended through the integration of allied research material.

5.4.4 Methods

There were two initial curatorial challenges with staging 'Afrofuturisms Past' within London Art Fair: the first was to ensure that the exhibition didn't fall into the historic trap (as discussed in section 5.4.2 above) of treating Afrofuturism as a precise rather than ever-evolving genre; the second was to encourage visitors to spend the necessary amount of time to engage with the breadth of Afrofuturism (given the ongoing challenge of visitors to art fairs being confronted with many more artworks than can be accommodated into the available viewing time).

The response to these challenges involved the creation of a 'study centre' (see Figure 17) before the entrance to the screening room. This study centre contained examples of Afrofuturist literature, including the essay 'Black to the Future' by Mark Dery (in the anthology *Flame Wars*) that coined the term Afrofuturism, and excerpts from some of the key Afrofuturist feature-length films. Among the literature provided, the emphasis was on works that would reward even a relatively brief amount of reading time: collections of short stories or novels that

were structured in a manner that meant a sense of the overall work could be gleaned from whichever section was chosen (Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren*, for example, is written as a continuous loop, with the beginning of the book completing a sentence that starts at the end of the text).

This study centre showed the influence of the 'educational turn' in curatorial practices in the early 21st century (Rogoff, 2008; O'Neill & Wilson, 2010), whereby educational spaces referencing universities, art schools and/or libraries were integrated into individual installations⁴⁸ and sometimes throughout an exhibition, as seen in the reading matter incorporated into several spaces in the 'Academy' series of projects at Kunstverein in Hamburg, Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen and Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven in 2005-06, curated by Bart De Baere, Charles Esche, Kerstin Niemann, Angelika Nollert, Dieter Roelstraete and Irit Rogoff (Nollert, et al., 2006). However, inserting a study centre within an art fair has an additional effect relative to the utilisation of this method within an art museum or biennale, since the time required to engage with the provided texts runs counter to the rapid circulation of visitors upon which the economics of art fairs are predicated (as discussed in chapter 4).

The overall design of the study centre space in London Art Fair reinforced the link to Afrofuturist themes, firstly through the use of Clip font for the signage (see the red wall in Figure 17), which referenced the font used for the film *Space is the Place* (an excerpt of which was on show), and secondly through the colour scheme featuring red and green walls within the study centre (again, see Figure 17) leading onto a black-walled screening room space, which echoed the three colours of the Pan-African flag designed by Marcus Garvey in 1920.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Thomas Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument* at Documenta in Kassel in 2002 (Hirschhorn, 2002) and Alfredo Jaar's contribution to the 2010 Liverpool Biennial – *The Marx Lounge* (Liverpool Biennial, 2010).

The moving image works exhibited in 'Afrofuturisms Past' were presented in a continuous loop, both with the projection of videos in the screening room and the film excerpts shown on a monitor in the study centre space. This method of display is common within art fairs and many other exhibition fora, but was deliberately chosen in this instance as a reference to the use of looping narrative structures in Afrofuturist works, such as the aforementioned example of Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* and also Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen* (see section 5.4.5 below). This link was reinforced by the screening being presented without any advertised start times, which meant that, as with *Dhalgren* and *Yeelen*, the visitor would enter the works at a random point in the narrative.

5.4.5 Artworks



Figure 18. Djibril Diop Mambéty, still from *Touki Bouki*, 1973, 35 mm film, 95 mins

The trailers from feature-length films shown in the study centre space served to introduce the temporal experimentation that is characteristic of Afrofuturist filmmaking in both Africa and the African Diaspora. In Djibril Diop Mambéty's

1973 film *Touki Bouki*, traditional Senegalese practices and timescales are shown as very much alive in the present, as illustrated by the interspersing of rural cattle-herding scenes amidst the contemporary, urban action, and as symbolised by the bull horns affixed to the front of the motorbike used by the main protagonists (see Figure 18).

In John Coney's *Space is the Place* from 1974, musician Sun Ra is presented as a cross between a futuristic spaceman and an ancient Egyptian mystic, although Sun Ra's focus remains rooted in the here-and-now, for example when he discusses the present-day concerns of African-Americans in a youth centre in contemporary Oakland; Sun Ra is also shown travelling in time: first to 1940s Chicago and then back and forth between the present and an indeterminate temporal limbo where he plays cards with a malevolent 'Overseer' to determine the fate of the Black race.

The timeframes within Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames* (1983) and Souleymane Cissé's *Yeelen* (1983) are similarly undefined. *Born in Flames* depicts America ten years after a socialist revolution, but it is uncertain whether this is the near future of our world or the present day of a parallel realm; wherever this is, social progress remains in limbo, as racism, classism, sexism and heterosexism remain dominant within society. The historical setting of *Yeelen* is likewise left unclear, with a languid pacing that further reinforces the sense that the narrative occurs within a dreamlike, atemporal Mali in which a half-human, half-animal augur connects the present with the future and time flows forwards, backwards and in loops.

A similarly experimental approach to temporality is evident in the literature in the study centre space, with accounts of time travel (between present-day Los Angeles and plantation-era Maryland) in Octavia E. Butler's *Kindred* (1979),

temporal loops in Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* from 1975 (as discussed in section 5.4.4) and alternate, parallel worlds in Steven Barnes's 2003 novel *Zulu Heart* (in which Islamic Africa became the dominant world power whilst Europe remained primitive and the source of slave labour).

In the screening room, the curatorial focus was on Afrofuturist video works created either in Africa or by the North African Diaspora, further moving away from Dery's initial conceptualisation of Afrofuturism as solely the creation of African-Americans who are part of the sub-Saharan African Diaspora. The programme featured digital videos by Fayçal Baghriche, Theo Eshetu and Sammy Baloji that reimagine urban spaces as sites where cultures and temporalities combine in unexpected ways.

Le sens de la marche (2002) is set in the heart of France, as symbolised by the Champs-Élysées in Paris, and performed by Fayçal Baghriche, an Algerian immigrant. As the video unfolds, it becomes apparent that the scene is being shown in reverse, with Baghriche originally filmed walking backwards, but now (due to the video's editing) apparently travelling forwards. The work reimagines the stereotype of the immigrant being out of step with the surrounding society by presenting a world in which the rest of the city is behaving oddly and the outsider (in this case a member of the African diaspora) is the only one going in the 'right' direction. By disrupting the expected temporal flows, the piece questions which society or culture is the source of progress and successfully navigating the way forward.

Theo Eshetu's *Lightning Strikes* (2009) documents the 24-metre-tall Obelisk of Axum's repatriation from Rome in 2005, after it was taken as a war trophy from Ethiopia by the Italian occupying forces in 1937. The combination of close-ups and medium-distance views reveals the granite Obelisk's details as well as its

monumental presence in Axum, suggesting that an artefact from the past has been allocated a central role in shaping the future path of the city's identity, as well as that of the Ethiopian nation as a whole. It is shown surrounded by scaffolding and illuminated in bright, powerful lighting, generating a space-age feel that adds to the video's uncertain temporality, as the 4th century Obelisk begins to look decidedly futuristic.

Sammy Baloji's haunting video *Mémoire* (2007) is set in Lubumbashi, the second largest city in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, within the ruins of what was once a thriving copper mine. Against this backdrop, Baloji has created a video that is part documentary, part dreamscape, blending sinuous choreography by dancer Faustin Linyekula with a soundtrack of successive Congolese leaders (first Patrice Lumumba and then Joseph Kasa-Vubu, Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent-Désiré Kabila) promising political and economic renewal. Poetically woven together, these elements evoke a legacy of colonial violence (social, political and environmental), followed by postcolonial hope and its gradual demise, with the insertion of dance within such an incongruous setting holding out a fragile hope of reimagining and reinvigorating a desolate site through creativity.

5.4.6 Conclusions

With reference to the aims of 'Afrofuturisms Past' as highlighted in section 5.4.3, the selected artworks and literature all challenged conceptions of time as a singular, linear phenomenon by adopting a variety of approaches: jumping between different historical eras (as seen in Butler's *Kindred* and Coney's *Space is the Place*); reversing or looping the flow of time (Baghriche's *Le sens de la marche* and Delany's *Dhalgren*); creating alternative and parallel realities (Barnes's *Zulu Heart* and Eshetu's *Lightning Strikes*). These temporal experimentations are, in turn, inexorably linked to location-oriented questions: is what is being seen an

atemporal limbo outside of any particular time and place (as suggested by, for example, Cissé's *Yeelen*); is the setting this world or somewhere else that is both familiar and markedly different (as in Borden's *Born in Flames*)?

Conversely, the fluid approach to temporality seen in the exhibited works was often used to comment upon very specific locations, as seen in all three video works shown in the screening room, which are set in the heart of Paris, the city of Axum and a decaying copper mine. This emphasis on place was echoed by the utilisation of a study centre to encourage a greater durational engagement in the themes of 'Afrofuturisms Past', which (addressing the third aim of this project, as listed in section 5.4.3) served as an interesting counterpoint to the continual circulation of visitors upon which the economics of art fairs rely. Likewise, works such as Borden's *Born in Flames* and Baloji's *Mémoire* that questioned the idea of society improving over time served as a marked contrast to the modernist orthodoxy of art 'progressing' from one stylistic revolution to the next, which (as highlighted in section 5.4.3 above) is a prevalent narrative within art fairs, particularly those, like London Art Fair, which focus on the markets for Modern as well as Contemporary artworks.

Reflecting the overall aim of this PhD, 'Afrofuturisms Past' therefore examined how artworks can suggest temporal questions that are inseparable from locational ones. In doing this, the exhibition echoed Michel Serres in his questioning of the 'classical' (by which he meant linear) conception of time and progress. In a discussion with Bruno Latour, Serres argued that: "we are always simultaneously making gestures that are archaic, modern, and futuristic ... every historical era is likewise multitemporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic" (Serres & Latour, 1995, p. 60). Serres was focusing upon society as a whole in this discussion, but, relative to the other exhibitions that comprise the portfolio of projects in this PhD, 'Afrofuturisms Past'

highlighted the variety of multitemporal gestures that can be found even within single works of art.

5.5 PROJECT FIVE: 'Playtime' at London Art Fair, 21-26

January 2020



Figure 19. 'Playtime' installation view at London Art Fair 2020

5.5.1 Overview

Whereas 'Afrofuturisms Past' at London Art Fair 2019 featured artworks that questioned the notion of a linear temporality by, amongst other strategies, blending past, present and future, 'Playtime' at London Art Fair 2020 focused on the segmentation of the present in contemporary society into either work time or leisure time, and analysed the relevance of a tangible boundary between the two. The exhibition featured artworks that enabled visitors to explore how their time might be monetised within contemporary society in unexpected ways, particularly examining how participants in leisure-time activities are increasingly contributing their labour to corporate revenue generation, both knowingly and unknowingly.

5.5.2 Context

'Playtime' engaged with the concept of 'playbour', first coined by Julian Kücklich (2005) in relation to the video games industry. Kücklich analysed the widespread practice whereby companies release open-source versions of video games that allow people to modify them in order to, for example, alter the principal characters or add new scenes. These companies then monitor the reception of these modifications (usually abbreviated to 'mods') in online discussion groups, using this information to inspire changes to future game releases. The role of the original mod in driving these changes is usually left uncredited and the time of the person or people involved in creating the mod remains unremunerated.

Kücklich was building on the analysis of Tiziana Terranova, who highlighted that the usage of free labour is thriving in the digital age: "Simultaneously voluntarily given and unwaged, enjoyed and exploited, free labor on the Net includes the activity of building Web sites, modifying software packages, reading and participating in mailing lists and building virtual spaces" (Terranova, 2000, p. 33). The concept of 'playbour' also echoed the insights of Italian autonomist Marxists such as Antonio Negri, Mario Tronti and Paolo Virno in the 1960s, who argued that capitalism has expanded beyond the sphere of production into society as a whole, producing what they termed the 'social factory'. Tronti developed this term in his 1962 essay 'Factory and Society', where he argued that: "at the highest level of capitalist development ... the whole of society becomes an *articulation* of production, the whole society lives in function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive dominion over the whole society" (Tronti, 2019, p. 26).

Amongst recent exhibitions with a similar curatorial theme to 'Playtime', three strands have emerged in relation to the blurring between work and leisure in

contemporary life: first is the ongoing erosion of a defined time for rest away from work, as explored in '24/7: A Wake-up Call for Our Non-stop World' at Somerset House, London in 2019-20 (Cook, 2019; Somerset House, 2019);⁴⁹ the second is the blurring between work and leisure in relation to a defined location, as seen by the 'Work/Leisure' series of residencies, in particular the 2016 edition that focused on the particularities of the leisure industries in Blackpool (Work/Leisure, 2022); and lastly art events such as 'CAPTURE ALL', the 2015 transmediale festival in Berlin, which explored how financially-valuable data can be extracted from all human activities (transmediale, 2015). 'Playtime' sought to analyse the extent to which these three strands are interconnected by focusing on how leisure time might be another example of work to be economically exploited, with particular reference to the specifics of an art fair location.

5.5.3 Project Aims

The monetisation of leisure seems a particularly relevant topic to explore within an art fair since, in this setting, the economic imperatives of the exhibiting galleries (who need to cover a significant outlay in securing a stand, transporting and insuring artworks, and paying staff costs) meet the leisure time of visitors. Furthermore, each visitor becomes an important economic unit on entering an art fair in ways that are different to other arts events.

For publicly funded art organisations, visitor numbers are vital for securing funding and, ideally, additional private sponsorship, whereas for private art galleries, visitor numbers are very much secondary to securing sales. Within art

⁴⁹ The similarities and differences between 'Playtime' and '24/7' in curatorial approach and artistic content were further explored in a panel discussion held at London Art Fair on 23 January 2020, which was chaired by the author and featured Sarah Cook, curator of '24/7', as well as artists featured in 'Playtime': Arjun Harrison-Mann and Ben Cain from Studio Hyte, and Samantha Humphreys.

fairs, overall viability is inexorably linked to sales, but the curatorial abilities and salesmanship of the individual galleries also play a significant role, whereas the art fair itself has sole responsibility for boosting the number of visitors well beyond the sum total of the galleries' contacts, as well as, crucially, encouraging these attendees to circulate around the fair to visit as many stands as possible (hence the prevalence of regular tours during the run of art fairs – see Figure 20).⁵⁰ Thus each visitor's presence – their body – becomes an economic unit on entering an art fair (whether they have paid for entry or not) and the body's value varies depending on its movement around the fair.



Figure 20. Pryle Behrman introducing 'Playtime' to a tour group at London Art Fair 2020

⁵⁰ In addition to the number of visitors, demographic studies of attendees are important for all types of arts organisations as well of course: publicly funded organisations often focus on ensuring the diversity of their audience, whilst for art fairs and private galleries the net worth of individuals is key.

As a result of these considerations and additional, linked issues raised by the artworks themselves (see section 5.5.5 below), the curation of 'Playtime' aimed to examine, with particular emphasis on the site of an art fair:

1. The hidden value of leisure time activities
2. The ways in which the human body becomes an economic unit during leisure time
3. How workplaces and leisure spaces are becoming increasingly indistinguishable
4. How private spaces are complicit in society's engagement with consumerism.

5.5.4 Methods

The layout of 'Playtime' (see Figure 19) was designed to reference the increasing integration of notions of play within workplace settings as a method to boost productivity. The utilisation of beanbag seating mirrored its use in the 'breakout spaces' found in many contemporary offices and one of the inner walls featured a floor-to-ceiling collage of brainstorming visuals (found via a Google search of copyright-free images) that are representative of the productivity-focused creative outputs often produced in these areas. The siting of 'Playtime' was also designed to open up a dialogue between its curatorial themes and other locations in the fair, as the entrance to the exhibition was adjacent to London Art Fair's private hospitality lounge, another site in which what might be characterised as a leisure activity (visiting an art fair) could equally become a work-based event (attending a corporate function).



Figure 21. 'Playtime' wall signage at London Art Fair 2020, 61.5 cm x 150 cm

The design of the signage for 'Playtime' was intended to support this theme of the blurring of work and leisure, in particular the role of social media companies in this development, as addressed in Samantha Humphrey's works (see section 5.5.5 below). The lettering of the signs on the outside walls of 'Playtime' (see Figure 21) utilised Segoe UI, the non-proprietary font used by Facebook and Twitter, and the signs themselves were shaped as rectangles with rounded edges that referenced smartphones.

5.5.5 Artworks

Within the exhibition, three digital animations by David Theobald highlighted that strategies to boost corporate profitability are no longer confined to the workplace and retail sites, but have seeped into all aspects of contemporary life, including private spaces: Theobald's *The Internet of Things (IoT)* (2018) contains a vortex of scrolling text taken from the marketing literature for an array of domestic smart products, such as smart fridges, emphasising how home appliances are complicit in increasing the rapidity of an individual's purchasing behaviour. *Heigh-Ho* (2014) features a forlornly soundtracked retirement party that evokes the feelings of

ennui that might accompany leaving work when so much of a person's life is defined by their profession, with the future (represented by a wristwatch) populated by an array of (perhaps unwanted) purchases associated with leisure, such as a garden gnome. If retirement and the parties associated with it thus encourage unnecessary expense, *Workers' Playtime* (Figure 22) further suggests that this is because play has become just another part of the production line, as symbolised by a robotic arm juggling party balloons.

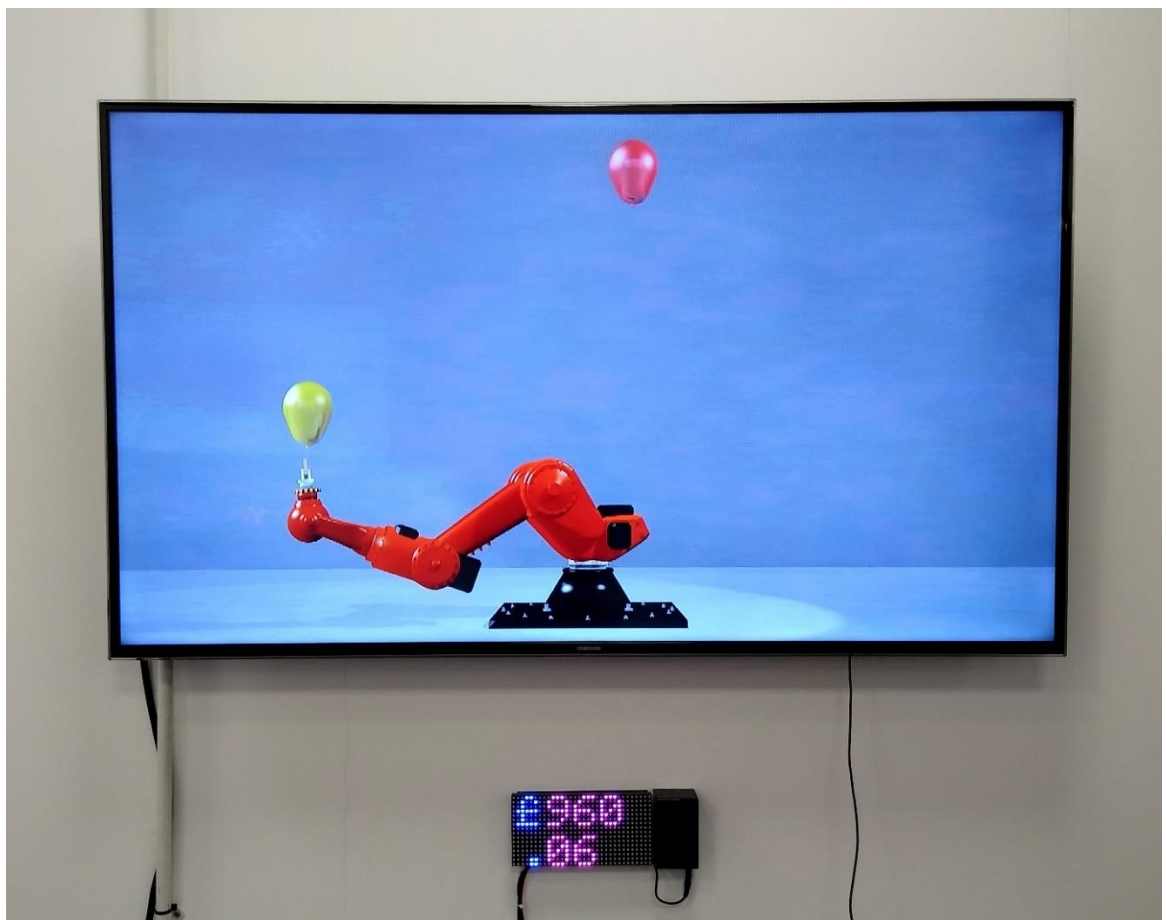


Figure 22. Monitor showing David Theobald, *Workers' Playtime*, 2011, looping digital animation, 5 mins 51 secs, edition of 6; LED display is part of interactive seating designed by Studio Hyte at London Art Fair 2020

As discussed in section 5.5.3, it isn't solely spending that has monetary implications during leisure time, but all aspects of a person's existence, even

where one is physically located. In response, Studio Hyte's installation, specially commissioned for 'Playtime', playfully examined the monetary value of each person's engagement with the artworks on display and featured three interactive beanbags and LED displays that were linked to three 55" monitors showing David Theobald's digital animations. Studio Hyte calibrated a visitor's interaction with the artworks in terms of the 'body's economic value' or 'BEV', using this acronym as a logo on the beanbags (see Figure 19). Visitors who watched one of the animations whilst sitting on a beanbag saw the sale price of £1,000 for each video rapidly fall on the LED display (see Figure 22), reaching a maximum discounted value of £750 after 10 minutes. When the visitor stood up from the beanbag, the discount earned was expressed as a BEV code as well.⁵¹

Independent of a person's physical location, social media interactions provide financial benefits to a range of corporate interests, perhaps most obviously in the marketing boost given when approvingly mentioning these companies, but also through the value of individual profiles and the data this provides to social media platforms. Many of the constituent elements of this value are hidden, as revealed in the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data scandal, first reported in 2015 (Davies, 2015). In reaction, the artworks of Samantha Humphreys presented in 'Playtime' sought to pose the question: if leisure time is so valuable to others, shouldn't an individual be given more in return?

⁵¹ A video showing a visitor to London Art Fair 2020 engaging with Studio Hyte's interactive beanbags, and recording how the LED display responds, can be accessed online at <https://vimeo.com/766552109> (password: LAF2020).



Figure 23. Samantha Humphreys, *Smartphone Social Media Performance* at London Art Fair, 23 January 2020

Humphreys staged two performances during London Art Fair – one on the evening of Tuesday 21 January and another on the evening of Thursday 23 January – during which attendees could present their smartphone to her desk if its screen was showing one of London Art Fair’s social media channels. Humphreys then drew an image of the screen onto a pre-prepared wooden block that was a similar shape and size to their smartphone (see Figure 23) and gave the resulting artwork (see Figure 24 for an example) to the visitor free of charge.⁵² Some of the outcomes from similar performances were also displayed by the entrance to the ‘Playtime’ exhibition space throughout the run of London Art Fair.

⁵² Note that this did not leave the artist unremunerated for her contribution to ‘Playtime’, as Humphreys received an artist’s fee as well as additional funds to cover the cost of materials and travel.

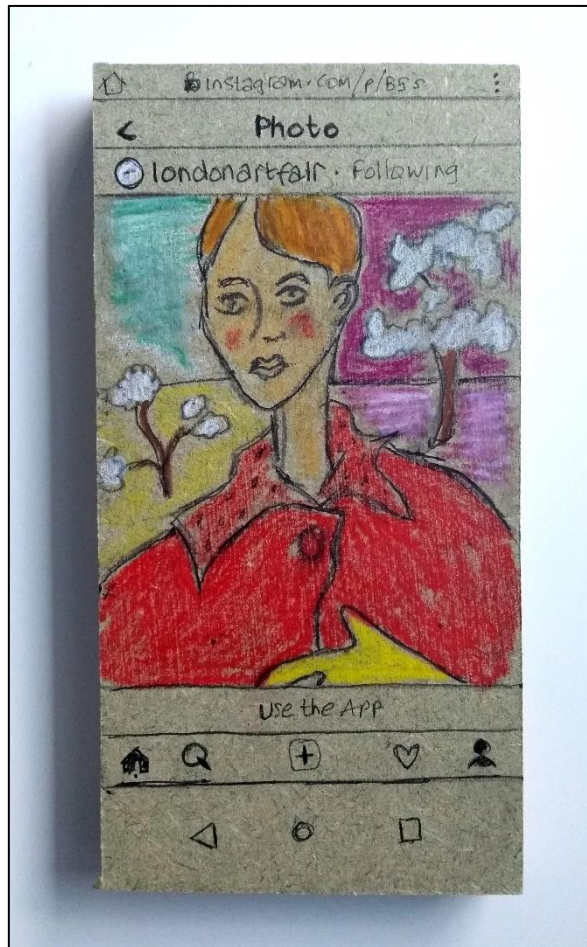


Figure 24. Samantha Humphreys, artwork from 'Smartphone Social Media Performance' series, 2019-20, mixed media, 14.5 cm x 7.5 cm x 1.2 cm

By turning what might be considered ephemeral and low-value social media interactions into a permanent artwork, these performances sought to raise the worth of these interactions so that it is more in line with their true value, before donating the resulting artworks back to the visitors in symbolic recognition of each individual's role in boosting the marketing reach of London Art Fair.

Humphreys posted images of the works she created on her Twitter and Instagram accounts, and recipients were encouraged to post a photograph of their artwork on social media as well, thus completing the circular flow of images from the virtual space of social media into the 'real' world and back to the virtual world.

5.5.6 Conclusions

Returning to the aims of 'Playtime' as outlined in section 5.5.3, the artworks in the exhibition explored how temporal demarcations between work and leisure appear increasingly untenable. In addition, and conceptualised in spatial as well as temporal forms, the artworks highlighted how consumerism has permeated all facets of contemporary life in both overt and covert ways, colonising acts of play (as seen in the installation layout and Theobald's *Workers' Playtime*), private spaces (Theobald's *The Internet of Things*), personal conversations (Samantha Humphreys's performances) and even the body's location and movement (Studio Hyte's interactive beanbags and displays). As Jonathan Crary has argued, sleep might now be the last barrier to the total penetration of capitalist working practices into all hours of the day (Crary, 2014).

Whereas 'Afrofuturisms Past' highlighted the variety of multitemporal gestures that can be found within a single artwork, 'Playtime' extended this variety to include an examination of how socially-constructed categories of time – in this case work time and leisure time – might be simultaneously referenced within one work (as shown by all the artworks within the exhibition). Additionally, 'Playtime' augmented the combination of different locational spaces that can be found within a single artwork, with the mixture of virtual and real that was also a feature of the art in 'Stranger Collaborations' being extended to include the commingling of private and public spaces in 'Playtime'.

In total, the findings from 'Playtime' suggest that retaining a belief in fixed boundaries in relation to temporal concepts such as work time and leisure time, and location-based ideas such as workplaces and leisure spaces, hinders an analysis of the wide-ranging economic and social effects that have resulted from

their increasing commingling. As Mel Y. Chen has argued in their analysis of who and what is designated as being either 'animate' or 'inanimate' (Chen, 2012), it is instructive to consider what political and societal biases are being supported by the conceptualisation of different characteristics in terms of unquestionably fixed demarcations.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

“Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative ... Siting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.” Donna Haraway (1988, p. 595)

Following on from Chen’s theories discussed in the previous chapter, Haraway’s contention that conceptual boundaries are inherently mobile and elusive is a recurring theme running through this concluding chapter, which first summarises how the outcomes from the portfolio of projects answered the initial research questions, before exploring how these findings propose a reconceptualisation of the boundaries between (and within) notions of location and time in relation to curated exhibitions of art.

To recapitulate, the three initial research questions of this PhD thesis asked:

- 1) How do curated exhibitions within contemporary art fairs differ from those located in other settings?
- 2) What temporal issues can be raised by artworks within contemporary art fairs?
- 3) What issues might be examined by curated art exhibitions that employ the theme of temporality?

Answering the first research question, the portfolio of projects highlighted how curated exhibitions can intervene in contemporary art fairs by presenting artwork differently from the rest of the fair, interacting with other events occurring

elsewhere in the fair, and providing alternatives to the art market as it is usually constituted in art fairs. This was achieved by:

- a) Exhibiting works that are for sale at multiple price points, such as Rhea Myers's 'Shareable Readymades' series in 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' (which are artworks that could either be bought or alternatively downloaded for free as 3D printer files), and David Theobald's videos in 'Playtime', the price of which varied depending on how long they were viewed
- b) Including works that may or may not be present within the exhibition, and thus may or may not be for sale, as seen with the artworks that comprised 'Stranger Collaborations', which could be conceptualised as performances happening in the art fair, or online artworks occurring elsewhere, or perhaps multipart works that combined the two
- c) Exploring how a curated presentation within an art fair might inform and be impacted by the other events that surround it, as seen in 'Quick, Quick, Quick', which was situated in a room within London Art Fair that brought together other exhibitions that explored similar themes relating to short-duration artworks
- d) Disrupting the number of artworks that can be viewed within a visit to an art fair through the use of a study centre in 'Afrofuturisms Past' and interactive seating that offered financial inducements for remaining within the 'Playtime' exhibition space for an extended time.

Responding to research question 2, the portfolio of projects illustrated that artworks presented within contemporary art fairs can raise temporal questions specific to the art fair site in relation to:

- a) The timespan of an art fair, as was questioned by Ruth Catlow and Mary Flanagan's *Play Art Data Money* (shown in the exhibition of the same

name), which centred on provoking discussions about the future of art fairs through collaborative events that occurred both before and during London Art Fair, as well as via a platform video game that was launched at London Art Fair, but which will continue to be played long after the event

- b) When an artwork is finished and thus available for sale, which 'Stranger Collaborations' raised via Ruth Catlow and Gareth Foote's *Time Is Speeding Up*, an artwork that recorded performances that occurred over the duration of London Art Fair and thus was only finished at the moment that the fair closed
- c) How the time spent viewing artworks can be extended within art fairs, with 'Quick, Quick, Quick' employing the rapid changeovers found in screenings of short-duration artworks to induce longer viewing times amongst visitors
- d) Whether artworks fall into defined eras, such as modern or contemporary, which art fairs (such as London Art Fair) rely upon to promote the types of artworks on display, as was challenged by the multitemporal films screened in 'Afrofuturisms Past', such as Sammy Baloji's *Mémoire* that combines visuals of a copper mine from both the present and modernist eras, as well as audio snippets drawn from multiple different points in the 20th century
- e) How art fairs are complicit in the monetisation of leisure time in contemporary life, which was critiqued by Studio Hyte's interactive sculptures in 'Playtime' that suggested even the act of relaxing in a beanbag can be recast as employment that should be rewarded by lowering an artwork's selling price.

Lastly, research question 3 was answered by the portfolio of projects showcasing the range of issues which can be examined by curated art exhibitions that employ the theme of temporality:

- a) 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY' examined how the meanings that are generated by artworks change in relation to the temporal sequence in which they are experienced, exploring how the viewer's understanding of the same artworks might differ when moving in different directions through the exhibition
- b) 'Stranger Collaborations' investigated both how an exhibition of performance-based art can be conceptualised as bringing these works into the present and how what is displayed might be documents of events that remain forever fixed in the past
- c) 'Quick, Quick, Quick' explored the variety within short-duration artworks created in different media, such as film, video and animated GIFs
- d) 'Afrofuturisms Past' examined how a range of linear, asynchronous and multitemporal narrative structures can be employed and combined in moving image artwork
- e) 'Playtime' satirised the blurring of leisure and work time in contemporary life through the utilisation of informal beanbag seating and brainstorming visuals within the exhibition to evoke the 'breakout spaces' found in many contemporary offices.

Importantly, the answers to the research questions listed above do not describe discrete effects, but rather results that are, in fact, inexorably interdependent and intertwined.⁵³ The location-specific answers to research question 1 were achieved precisely because the artworks also raised temporal issues and, furthermore, these temporal issues were reliant upon the supporting curatorial structure. Studio HYTE's interactive sculptures in 'Playtime', for example, would not have challenged the standard operation of the art market within art fairs (and addressed research question 1) without promising to reward the viewer's time

⁵³ This has also been highlighted in the concluding sections in chapter 5 for each exhibition within the portfolio of projects: see sections 5.1.6, 5.2.6, 5.3.6, 5.4.6 and 5.5.6.

(informing the answers to research question 2) and being part of an overall curatorial strategy of satirising the blurring of work and leisure in contemporary life via the artworks chosen and the half-work, half-play space in which they were exhibited (which responded to research question 3).

Since the findings from the portfolio of projects contend that temporal and locational questions, activated and highlighted through curatorial practice, are, in many situations, co-dependent, this suggests that analyses of curatorial choices, site and time in relation to contemporary artworks will benefit from considering these factors as interdependent, as visualised in Figure 26, rather than separate influences, as illustrated in Figure 25.

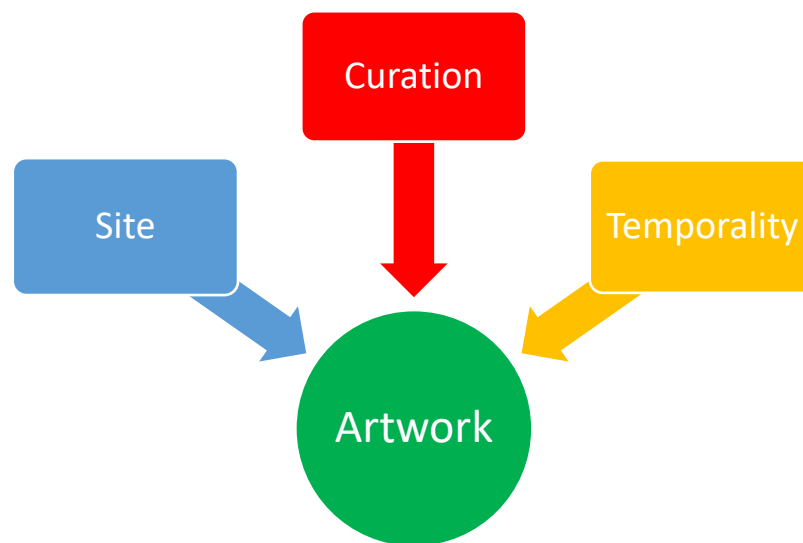


Figure 25. Curation, location and time as influences acting upon artworks

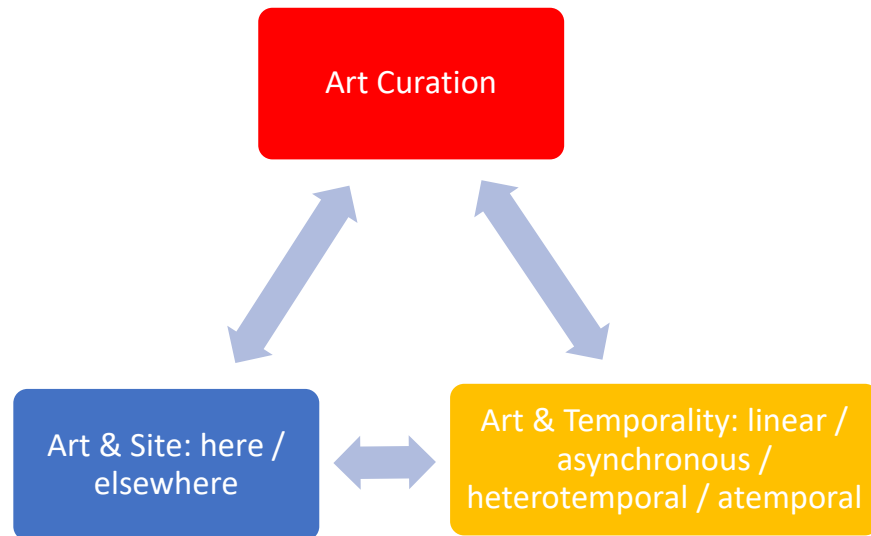


Figure 26. The symbiotic relationship between curation, location and time

Whereas Figure 25 conceptualises place, time and curatorial intent as three forces acting upon exhibitions of art, which siloes their effects from each other, this PhD argues that an interpretation of art exhibitions is richer if (as well as the aforementioned conceptualisation) an additional layer is applied that analyses how these three factors are continually interacting. This is visualised in Figure 26, which, echoing the outcomes from the portfolio of projects, illustrates that time informs and impacts upon an artwork's site, an exhibition's curation always has a temporal element, and curation perennially contains elements that are site-specific. This conclusion reflects how Karen Barad's notion of the entanglement of temporal and locational effects, as introduced in Chapter 1, has been an ongoing theme in the research covered by this thesis, but the findings from the portfolio of projects have reinforced that curation is a third entangled element that can be added to time- and site-related factors.

The dynamic and multidirectional nature of these interactions between location, temporality and curation has commonalities with Helmut Draxler's analysis of the constantly shifting relationship between curator, artist, institution and artworks

within exhibitions. Draxler argues it is incorrect to assume there is a fixed direction governing who or what is driving the interpretive meanings generated by an exhibition, since there are continual: “shifts within the ‘systems’ of relationships in which the individual and the institution, the mediated and the unmediated, the primary and the secondary are always already interrelated” (Draxler, 2012, p. 6). The findings from the portfolio of projects provide evidence that Draxler’s analysis can be extended to contend that curation, temporality and location are another example of interdependent terms that cannot be easily divided.

The findings from the portfolio of projects and Draxler’s analysis further suggest that curation can be considered as interdependent with different factors (with time and location in relation to the portfolio of projects, and with the artist, institution and artworks in Draxler’s case) depending on the subject that is being analysed. Therefore, an overall conceptualisation is needed that enables location, curation and temporality to become both wholly fused entities, but also elements that can be divided and combined with others forces in different circumstances when conceptually useful. This appears to be precluded by one aspect of Barad’s characterisation, whereby “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” (Barad, 2007, p. ix).

The missing element for the overall conceptualisation being proposed in this thesis can be found in *Object-Oriented Ontology* (2018) by Graham Harman, which argues that conceptualisations which fuse together multiple entities might be better understood as a single ‘object’ in its own right. The constituent entities could be real, fictional, natural, artificial, human, or non-human in nature, and be brought together in any combination. Importantly for this thesis (and separating Harman’s theories from Barad’s), the fused nature of these conceptualisations

doesn't preclude that other combinations of the constituent elements are possible as well (Harman, 2018, p. 12).

In Harman's *Object-Oriented Ontology* (2018) and *Art and Objects* (2020), he discusses this idea in relation to artworks, but this PhD is the first instance of which the author is aware that explicitly argues how this conceptualisation can also be applied to curation. However, precedents for this approach can be discerned in, for example, Nicolas Bourriaud's contention that curated art exhibitions have increasingly become understood and analysed as a single 'unit' rather than an agglomeration of individual artworks (Bourriaud, 2002, pp. 71-72).⁵⁴

Another consistent feature of the outcomes from the portfolio of projects is a continual questioning of boundaries, specifically boundaries related to where an artwork is located and what temporality it occupies: is the artwork situated in the art fair, or is it situated elsewhere, or is it some uncertain combination of the two?; is the art object present in front of you now, or are you seeing a record of a past event, or maybe what is on display is a proposal for an artwork that is yet to be created?

This unifying feature suggests that an analysis of location and temporality within curated exhibitions might bring together multiple, ostensibly separate conceptualisations of these terms, as suggested by the insertion in Figure 26 of 'here / elsewhere' in relation to site and 'linear / asynchronous / heterotemporal /

⁵⁴ Bourriaud seems ambivalent about this development, recognising that it does occur "to the detriment of the individual work" (Bourriaud, 2002, p. 72), but without suggesting any remedial action in response by artists or curators; this PhD does not seek to support any such hierarchy that would prioritise the intentions of curators above artists, arguing instead, as highlighted earlier in this chapter, that curation and artworks (as well as temporal considerations) can beneficially be analysed as co-dependents, in addition to the benefits of analysing the works within an exhibition individually.

atemporal' in relation to time. The exegesis of 'Stranger Collaborations' in the previous chapter discussed how the artworks within this exhibition were in some senses present *and* absent, both physically *and* temporally; this echoes the findings from the other exhibitions within the portfolio of projects, for example 'PLAY ART DATA MONEY', which featured artworks that are an amorphous combination of permanent, physical object and ephemeral, online performance.

As a result, the portfolio of projects not only questioned whether there is a fixed boundary between different types of location (such as present or absent) and temporality (linear or asynchronous, atemporal or heterotemporal), but, furthermore, it proposed that it is not contradictory – rather, it is positively beneficial – to analyse the ways in which artworks might be considered to display multiple locations or multiple temporalities simultaneously.

In doing this, the portfolio can be considered as a practical application of what Diana Coole and Samantha Frost have theorised as “a multimodal methodology, one congruent with ... multitiered ontologies” (2010, p. 32). Embracing multitiered ontologies enables multiple definitions of what characterises an entity or effect to be potentially accepted, instead of attempting to locate one definition that encompasses all possibilities. This attitude is, in turn, supported by a multimodal methodology that seeks to retain and critically analyse any notional contradictions in these definitions, rather than seeking to resolve differences with the aim of then jettisoning one or more of the definitions that have been posited. Returning to Coole and Frost's conceptualisation, this approach is thus “post- rather than anti-Cartesian. It avoids dualism or dialectical reconciliation” (2010, p. 8).

In addition, the analysis within this thesis examining how the boundaries between differing locations and temporalities are being continually crossed in the portfolio

of projects reflects the transversal approach that was highlighted as the primary methodology in Chapter 4. Translating Barad's theories of entanglement and Harman's object-oriented ontology into the field of art curation can also be considered as a transversal act, which further underlines how this approach has provided the methodological framework that structures this thesis as a whole.

To summarise, this PhD thesis is proposing a twofold new contribution to knowledge: firstly, a full appreciation of the interaction between curation, location and temporality in exhibitions within contemporary art fairs requires a conceptualisation of these three factors as being a unified, singular entity; secondly, this entity might encompass multiple notions of location (for example present and absent) and temporality (potentially singular, plural, linear and nonlinear) that can be analysed and understood through the utilisation of a multimodal approach that embraces multitiered ontologies.

Whilst the findings from the portfolio of projects support the validity of this twofold proposal within contemporary art fairs, further research could potentially confirm whether this is equally valid within other exhibition locations. In addition, and looking beyond the interdependence of curatorial, temporal and locational factors that is the focus of this PhD thesis, future research might also be beneficially undertaken into how else art may evince multitiered ontologies and which other aspects of the art world – from how art is conceptualised to how it is created, displayed, promoted, analysed and sold – could utilise an interpretive framework that considers previously separate factors as a single, unified entity for analysis.

Employing this approach is potentially a logical continuation of two strands of Andrea Fraser's thinking highlighted earlier in this thesis: the belief that art is

inseparable from the institution of art (Fraser, 2005),⁵⁵ and the contention that any effective, critical intervention by an artwork will always be limited to a particular time (Fraser, 2005, p. 280). Another way to analyse these two ideas might be an approach that characterises art, institutions and time as a further example of a wholly interdependent, singular 'object' to be critiqued.

⁵⁵ In the article 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', Fraser writes: "The institution of art is not something external to any work of art but the irreducible condition of its existence as art. No matter how public in placement, immaterial, transitory, relational, everyday, or even invisible, what is announced and perceived as art is always already institutionalized, simply because it exists within the perception of participants in the field of art as art, a perception not necessarily aesthetic but fundamentally social in its determination ... what Pierre Bourdieu called *habitus*: the 'social made body,' the institution made mind" (Fraser, 2005, p. 281).